




**Fircroft Adult Education College**

1018 Bristol Road  
Birmingham B29 6LH

**Contact**

0121 472 0116  
hello@fircroft.ac.uk  
www.fircroft.com

 @fircroftcollege  
 /fircroftcollege  
 @fircroft\_college

# Learning to become a better world

Impact Report | 21/22

# About us

We are the only adult residential further education college in the Midlands and we are also a charity. We give thousands of people in the local community the opportunity to progress positively with their lives in the direction of their choice, through education. Our offer allows students, guided by us, to choose their own learning journey.

As well as helping them to take a practical approach to their learning, we encourage a holistic approach for students who are perhaps unconfident with education, unused to socialising in a busy environment or who need help to manage emotions such as anxiety and stress, before they study a more mainstream course.

We are situated in a manor house that once belonged to George Cadbury Jnr. who began the college by educating some of his workforce at lunch times. The college continues the Cadbury ethos of social justice and for over one hundred years remains a

vibrant and accessible place in the heart of the West Midlands.

Our impact on people and organisations from the local community continues to grow – largely enabled by our main funder, the West Midlands Combined Authority.

As well as assisting people into work and volunteering roles with local voluntary sector organisations, we are helping people within work to learn new skills and improve their job prospects. We help people to give themselves a better life

and our social justice themes of sustainability and combatting climate change; anti-racism; minimising digital poverty and promoting good mental health are themes that we see as urgent, relevant and that need positive action.

This report highlights our impact over the academic year of 2021/2022.

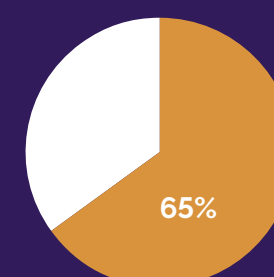
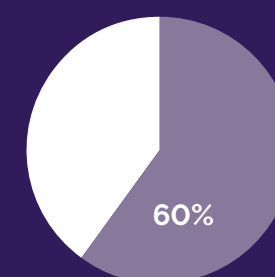
03

“Please never lose faith in people like us, who have lost faith in ourselves”

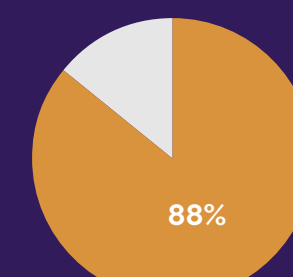
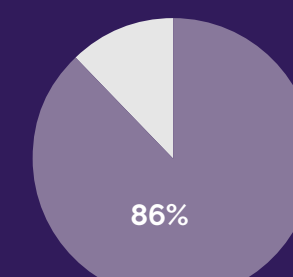
Personal and Social Development Student

# Our Students

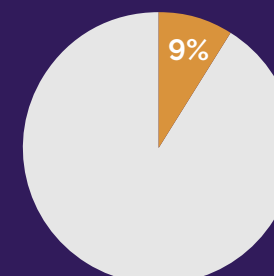
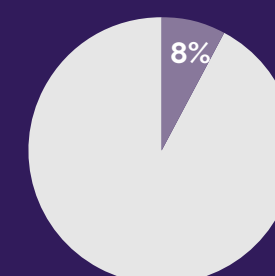
2020/2021 2021/2022



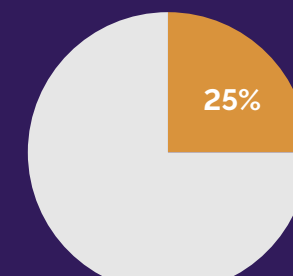
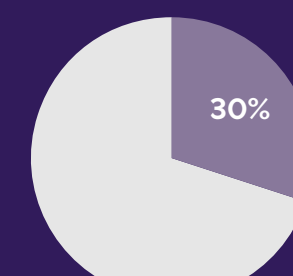
From most disadvantaged wards



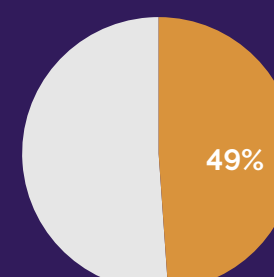
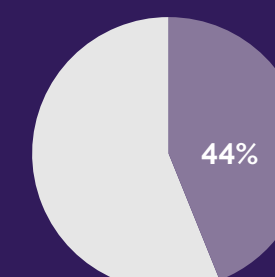
Unemployed



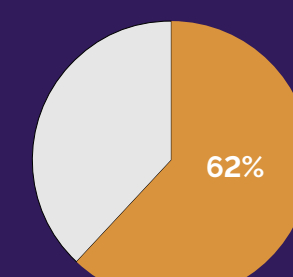
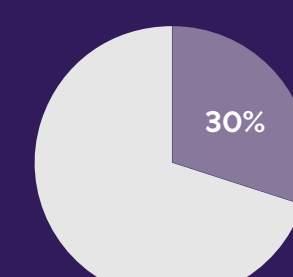
Under 25 years old



Over 50 years old



Ethnic minority backgrounds



Have no Level 2 qualification

The information for this report comes from an internal impact survey.

**100%**  
Pass rate  
on Access  
to Higher  
Education  
Diplomas

**93%**  
Pass rate  
for all  
other  
courses

**23%**  
got themselves  
online for the  
first time

**18%**  
alumni  
progressed  
into jobs

■ ■ more  
understanding  
of my new  
role ■ ■

**The learning  
journey  
through to  
progression**

**18%**  
students  
progressed into  
volunteering

■ ■ Tutors spend  
quality time  
with me 1-2-  
1 showing  
how I could  
improve my  
grades ■ ■

■ ■ I gained a  
job as an  
online trainer  
after gaining  
my AET. It's  
changed  
my life ■ ■

**50%\***  
students  
progressed to  
further study  
\*18% of them internally

**44%**  
improved  
their digital  
skills

**22%\***  
progressed  
in work  
\*with increased pay,  
responsibilities or hours

volunteer peer  
mentor mentor  
online trainer engagement  
support worker carer manager  
event manager customer service adviser  
home from hospital care  
Self employed retail assistant  
education director

**05**

# Personal and social development

Our personal and social development courses play a big part in many of our students' lives. Some may not have been in education for some time; some may be in recovery; some may have mild learning disabilities or lack confidence. We are there for them and we realise that to move forward and progress, they may need to enrol onto several personal and social development courses prior to studying more academic programmes.

**46% of students** felt they can now manage their feelings and behaviour better as a result of coming to Fircroft

**47% of students** said they felt their health and wellbeing had improved since studying at Fircroft

**44% of students** felt more resilient after their course(s)

The ways Fircroft has helped students include:

*'Helped with wellbeing'*

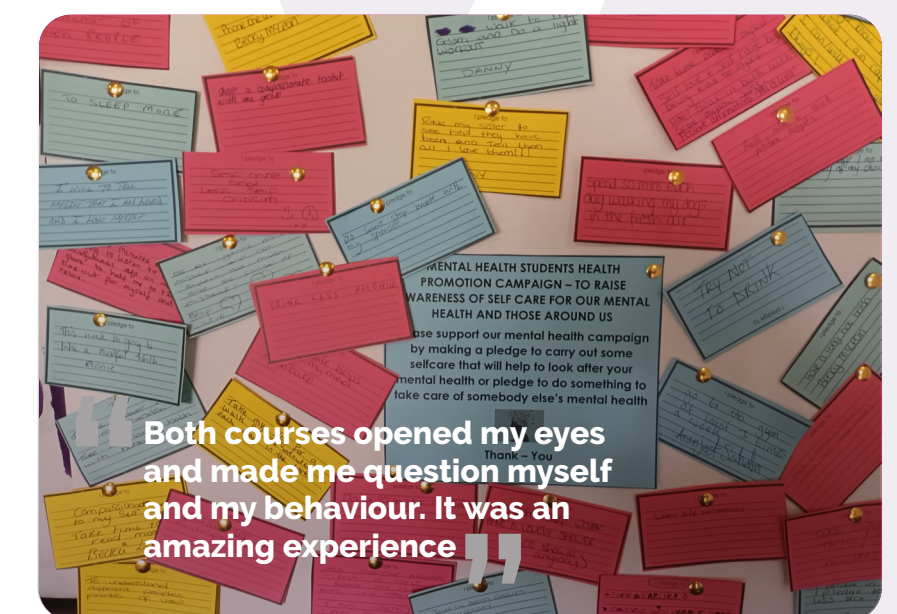
*'Made me more aware'*

*'Resilience and coping with a change in circumstances'*

*'Improved my confidence in getting back into education'*

*'Being able to talk to more than one person in class'*

We offer more qualifications and collaborate with the rest of the education sector to create pathways for students who want a career and the higher skilled jobs which employers in the region struggle to fill.





# Advice and Guidance

Giving good Information, Advice and Guidance to our students before they start a course and then periodically throughout their time at Fircroft, is essential, to help them to achieve and progress.

Our Matrix Assessor said:

“It was only through discussions that some staff were able to disaggregate the IAG that they provide within the curriculum because it has become such a fundamental part of their role. They recognise potential barriers and help students to confront and overcome them by positive reinforcement and a blend of challenge and support.”

Our students said:

“All the courses I took provided me with skills and opportunities to go on to further learning.”

“I can't thank Fircroft enough. You've helped change my life for the better. I was in a bad place when I went to Fircroft and gaining the qualification I did really boosted me. I've been able to create opportunities for myself that I didn't think were possible.”

**97%**  
**OF STUDENTS  
MADE THE RIGHT  
COURSE CHOICE**

**91%**  
**OF STUDENTS  
PICKED COURSES  
RELEVANT TO  
CAREER PATH\***

# Learning in the community

We ran a number of high profile projects within the local community working with strategic partners across the region. We continue to generate income that allows us the flexibility to deliver some of our courses out in the community to meet demand and develop a pathway leading eventually to the students studying courses at Fircroft. **These include:**

## ESOL for Integration

Managed for Birmingham Adult Education Service on behalf of the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

### Activity:

Delivery and co-ordination of social mixing classes

### Successes:

- Over 106 students engaged
- Over 14 online and face to face courses delivered
- 25 volunteers supported project delivery

## PURE 2 (Placing Vulnerable Urban Residents into Education and Employment)\*

3 ESOL classes with community third sector partners; 1 partner teacher training course completed; 2 Skills for Confidence and Work courses delivered

**Activity:** Delivery and co-ordination of social mixing classes

### Successes:

- 30 students recruited for the 3 ESOL classes
- The teacher training programme led to partners setting up their own informal ESOL provision
- The partnership working has led to an innovative SWAP style programme, delivered at Fircroft (see 'Our Partners' page)

\*ESF funded project managed by Birmingham Adult Social Care


## Digital Futures Project Led by the Good Things Foundation\*

### Successes:

- 14 students engaged onto a further education pathway
- Taster courses delivered, strategic partnership meetings and Information Advice and Guidance given to students
- Students stated they had improved their English language speaking and reading skills; ability to use email; it increased their confidence

\*Funded by the Community Renewal Fund





“ Being away from home and the responsibilities there, meant I could immerse myself into the learning ”

Students tell us how refreshing and relaxing it is to be in such an environment, able to mix with people from different walks of life but with a similar focus, leaving their everyday lives behind for a few days and focusing on themselves and their aspirations.

The beautiful, calm and inviting 6 acres of grounds help to confirm to our students they are in a safe, supportive and inviting space where they can physically and mentally open their minds and start believing what they thought was impossible, could now be possible.



# Residential Learning

Our unique selling point is residential learning. Students are able to step out of their 'every day' and come to a tranquil and beautiful place to focus on themselves, meet new people, study something they feel they need to progress in life and refresh, relax and revive.

## Benefits of residential learning quoted by our students

I was able to focus primarily on my learning

Helped me to focus away from distractions

I had enough time for my studies and 24 hours access to support and library

A stable environment and fostered social interaction

I was able to use time in the evening for studying and preparing for the following day

After the course I sit with my study fellows and we study together

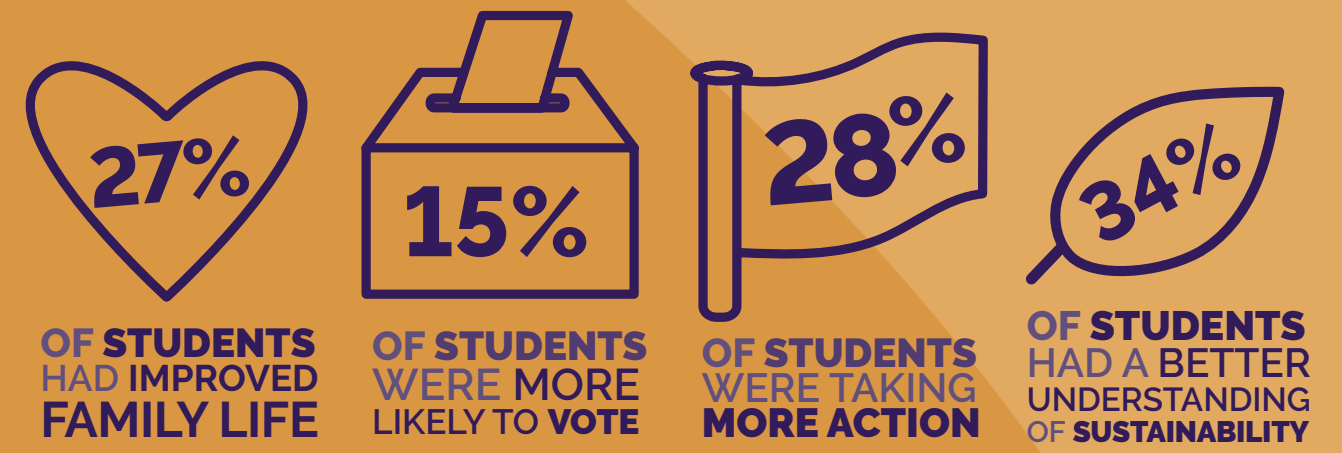
I was relaxed, fed, and ready to learn

11

# Our social impact

Our mission is 'To promote social and climate/environmental justice by providing adults with an excellent learning environment for personal, professional and political development'.

We are inclusive and value diversity in all its forms, having been awarded College of Sanctuary status in February 2021; the Green Gown Awards' Campus Health, Food and Drink category in 2022 and we are members of the Black Leadership Group. We deliver learning to become a better world.



## Our 2022 Matrix assessor said:

Conversations with teaching staff at the College reveal a deep commitment to supporting the development of students and a pride at being a part of meaningful social change

## Our actions include:

- We address the regional priorities identified by the West Midlands Combined Authority and the Local Schools Improvement Plan, specialising in a few key areas
- We are open to working with anyone but especially local third sector organisations who share our mission, work with the same clients and are employers themselves
- As well as addressing the skills employers say they need, we address the skills society needs



# Sustainability and Climate Change

In 2022 we won the Green Gown Award in the Campus Health, Food and Drink category. A remarkable achievement when considering the much larger education competitors in the same category, all with admirable and inspirational award submissions.

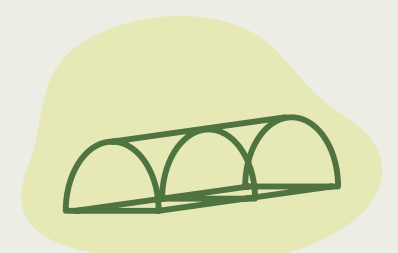
The college has a number of green initiatives including:



A 4000ltr composting unit on site



A new vegetable garden in design with an aim of 25% of ingredients being grown on college grounds by July 2023



A new polytunnel nursery built



Partnering with local community programmes such as Spring to Life to develop a Mother Garden site



We have a cross college team leading the college's Green approach



A new Fircroft College Green Pledge is in development

# Our Partners

We have a wide range of partners across the West Midlands region. The relationship we have with our partners is invaluable to the college and we have huge respect for the fantastic work they do with their clients to help get them to the place they want to be. It is our pleasure to work together with our partners to improve people's quality of life and help them to achieve and progress.

In 2021/2022 we developed closer relationships with our partners:  
Inviting them to contribute to the curriculum through partner roundtables and visiting the college as guest speakers.

Delivering joint programmes with partners such as:

- Skills for Aspiring Support Workers with Trident Reach and the Department for Work and Pensions, recruiting and training students wanting to work in the third sector
- Our Free Thinking programme working with partners with service users in new communities
- Children's centres, NHS hubs and GP surgeries – promoting short courses and our longer Level 2/Level 3 health and wellbeing courses
- The People's Future Lab – climate action pedagogy
- A progression agreement with Newman University is in place for our Access to Higher Education (Social Science and Humanities) diploma
- ESOL delivery programmes with locally based charities such as Barnardos and the Red Cross
- Mother Garden Bootcamp in partnership with Spring to Life CIC, giving students the opportunity to learn about creating community gardens and self-sufficiency using the Fircroft 6 acres of grounds as a canvas for learning

