Fircroft College Careers, Education Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) Strategy Statement 2025-28

Fircroft College's CEIAG strategy is built on a foundation of inclusive education, social & climate justice, and meaningful progression into good work. In response to regional challenges and our accountability objectives, we have developed a strategic approach that follows the progression of adult learners from initial engagement to sustainable employment.

We define good work in line with the TUC as employment that is not only secure and fairly paid, but also rewarding, fulfilling, and enables individuals to achieve their potential. It encompasses job satisfaction, personal growth, and contributing to the sustainability of society and the planet. Alongside global citizenship, this definition underpins our curriculum intent and informs every stage of our CEIAG provision.

Context and Challenge

The West Midlands faces significant socio-economic challenges, including the lowest employment rate (69.6%) and highest unemployment rate (6.5%) among combined authorities nationally. A substantial 26.1% of the population is economically inactive, largely due to disability and ill health, declare a physical or mental challenge or disability at 70% with poorer outcomes for women, disabled people, global majorities, and young people.

Fircroft College works with adults who are furthest from the labour market. Whilst 97% of our adult students are of working age (19–65), 85% are unemployed, and of those, 53% are economically inactive and 70% of learners at the college declare a physical or mental health challenge or disability. These figures reflect the deep-rooted barriers many learners face in accessing employment. We understand that skills and qualifications alone are not enough; for many, confidence, recovery, managing mental and physical health, behaviours, and attitudes are key to re-engaging with education.

At the heart of our strategy is a commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, recognising the importance of preparing learners to thrive in diverse and dynamic workplaces, communities, and everyday life. We actively promote inclusive values and intercultural competence, empowering learners with the awareness, empathy, critical reflection and communication skills needed to engage confidently and respectfully in diverse and evolving environments. Our approach ensures that all learners, regardless of background, identity, or circumstance, are supported to access opportunities, challenge discrimination, and contribute meaningfully to inclusive environments. This is especially critical in a diverse region such as the West Midlands, marked by disparities in employment outcomes for women, disabled people, the global majority and young people.

Fircroft College aligns its CEIAG Strategy to our own Bespoke Progression Model

Our CEIAG strategy recognises that individualised learners' skills development, alongside the growth of their aspirations, confidence, and readiness for future education, training or employment are continually supported and progressed at every stage of their journey**.**

1. **Mental/Physical Health and Wellbeing First**

For many of our learners, their starting point will be supporting their physical and mental health recovery to enable re-engagement with learning, life and ultimately employment; These are key foundational steps for our economically inactive learners for example, especially those experiencing challenges around physical and mental health and wellbeing. The aim of this foundational stage is to begin to address barriers such as trauma, mental and physical health challenges, long-term unemployment and social isolation. Within this stage, learners are encouraged to redirect personal strengths such as resilience and problem solving towards their own personal growth and progression, while developing key personal and interpersonal skills including confidence, autonomy, critical thought, conflict resolution, and strategies for managing mental and physical wellbeing. These capabilities are not only essential for personal growth but also form the core foundations of employability skills and contribute to developing the capacity to maintain sustained employment, as well as equipping learners with the emotional and behavioural readiness needed to thrive in future learning and work

environments. We currently deliver a programme of Personal and Social Development short courses (fully immersive 3-day, 2-night residential learning), which accounts for 50% of our enrolments. This is ultimately the stage where learners begin to believe in the possibility of further academic and employment engagement, progress to further learning as a next step and build the confidence to imagine longer-term goals and aspirations that may have previously felt out of reach.

2. **Digital Inclusion and Access**
   In a region where 56% of adults lack essential digital skills and digital poverty is prevalent, we tackle digital exclusion through our curriculum and residential offer, delivering Digital Functional Skills and ensuring learners have the opportunity, skills and confidence to use digital tools in a variety of contexts such as learning, employment, enrichment, understanding e-safety and accessing relevant services. As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly embedded in everyday life and the workplace, we also support learners to develop awareness and foundational understanding of technology and its uses, implications, and ethical considerations, so they are able to engage with emerging technologies and participate in a rapidly evolving digital society.
3. **Core Skills Development and Critical Thinking Skills**
   We prioritise the development of English, mathematics, language acquisition, and essential skills, equipping learners to progress towards Level 2 qualifications and build the competencies and priority skills needed for further education, training or employment. This is vital in a region where 1 in 4 adults have poor literacy and numeracy skills and many do not hold Level 2 maths and English qualifications. Alongside these foundational areas, we actively foster a broad range of critical thinking skills throughout the learning journey. Learners are supported to question assumptions, analyse information, draw evidence-based conclusions, and evaluate different perspectives. They also develop problem-solving skills, the ability to make reasoned decisions, and the confidence to apply knowledge in unfamiliar or real-world contexts. By embedding these critical thinking capabilities into adult education, we empower learners to become more independent, reflective, and adaptable—better prepared to navigate complex challenges in learning, work, and everyday life.
4. **Sustainability and Green Skills**
   Learners are introduced to green skills and climate justice throughout the learning journey as well as within specialised green skills courses, educating them around sustainable living, civic duty and enabling them to contribute to a sustainable economy.
5. **Subject and Vocational Development**
   Our aim is to work with employers and stakeholders to co-design curriculum content, ensuring it is relevant, responsive, and aligned with local labour market needs. This enhances employability and opens up progression routes for our learners. The college's offer aims to progress or upskill learners in the priority health, leadership and management, education, sustainability and digital sectors as well as work within voluntary organisations and community development initiatives. Alongside other FE colleges and ITPs, we work with higher education providers such as Newman University and Wolverhampton University to offer progression opportunities for our level 3 learners
6. **Supporting Progression into Good Work and 'in work' Progression**
   The final goal is to support learners into good employment; jobs that are secure, meaningful and aligned with their aspirations. Our recent J2 research shows that the college helped 95% of respondents to pursue their goals and ambition, 94% to more ably socialise, work and communicate with others, 93% to learn, work or study independently and 92% were better prepared for working life. We offer individualised one to one and group careers and progression advice, including rights and responsibilities, as well as working with National Careers Service, Department for Work and Pensions and Job Centre Plus.

Inclusion

Fircroft College recognises that addressing disadvantage and empowering our learners to successfully navigate through barriers to progression is central to creating equitable career preparation and pathways to good jobs. We aim to ensure all learners, regardless of background or circumstance are supported, valued, and empowered to succeed by:

1. Removing barriers to progression for underrepresented or disadvantaged groups and promoting equality of opportunity.

2. Promoting inclusive values and intercultural competence across progression and careers guidance.
3. Ensuring learners feel respected, safe, and supported to achieve their potential.
4. Tailor to reflect diverse learner needs, including those who are economically inactive, from global majority backgrounds and/or facing socio-economic disadvantage.
5. Monitor and evaluate how engagement with stakeholders—including employers, civic and community groups, and education providers—contributes to sustainable learner progression, ensuring meaningful outcomes and continuous improvement.

Intent

Fircroft College delivers holistic, inclusive, and personalised careers education and guidance for adult learners that:

1. Prioritises mental and physical wellbeing as the foundation for re-engagement with learning and life. We support learners, such as those who are economically inactive, to overcome barriers such as trauma, long-term unemployment, and social isolation, helping them build confidence, resilience, and emotional readiness for progression.
2. Embeds careers guidance across the learner journey, ensuring it is tailored to individual aspirations and contextualised within personal development and curriculum goals, fostering confidence, independence and career clarity.
3. Provides access to current labour market information and career pathways to support informed decision-making and progression planning.
4. Delivers impartial, personalised advice and guidance that promotes equity, challenges stereotypes, and supports all learners.
5. Integrates digital inclusion and digital awareness and foundational understanding into the curriculum, enrichment and residential offer, equipping learners with essential digital skills for life, learning and careers.
6. Focuses on core skills development, including English, maths, language acquisition, study/work readiness and critical thinking skills, supporting progression towards Level 2 qualifications and beyond.
7. Introduces sustainability and green skills throughout the curriculum, preparing learners and enabling contributions to a sustainable economy.
8. Ensures employer encounters are logged and evaluated, enabling learners to gain meaningful insights into workplace expectations and valued skills.
9. Supports exploration of diverse progression routes, including employment, volunteering, further study, and how environmental and economic changes influence future opportunities.
10. Embeds Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion across CEIAG, promoting intercultural competence and inclusive values to prepare learners for diverse workplaces, communities, and everyday life, with a focus on addressing regional disparities in employment outcomes.
11. Develops learners with personalised careers progression in mind at a time that aligns with each learner's needs and goals.

Implementation

1. Careers and progression guidance is proactive and personalised, helping learners set realistic and aspirational goals based on their strengths and circumstances.
2. Progression planning is embedded across all stages of the learner journey.
3. Where relevant, curriculum intent and content are co-designed with employers and stakeholders, ensuring alignment with local and regional labour market needs and future-focused sectors such as health, education, sustainability, and digital.
4. Learners develop the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and confidence needed to succeed in further learning, volunteering, or employment, with a strong foundation in emotional and behavioural readiness.
5. Destination tracking and learner feedback demonstrate progression outcomes, including secure, meaningful employment, further study, or volunteering aligned with individual aspirations and the concept of "good work."

Impact Quality Assurance and Evaluation of Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)

Fircroft College is committed to continuously evaluating and improving its CEIAG provision to ensure it meets the evolving needs of adult learners. A range of quality assurance mechanisms are used to measure effectiveness and impact:

1. Learner voice is central to our evaluation process. Feedback is gathered through student voice, feedback forms, and impact surveys to understand learner experiences and outcomes.
2. Individual feedback is collected following careers guidance and IAG interventions, enabling us to assess the relevance, quality, and personal impact of the support provided.
3. CEIAG is reviewed as part of the College's annual self-assessment and quality improvement planning, ensuring it remains responsive, inclusive, and aligned with strategic priorities.
4. External validation through the Matrix Standard provides an independent measure of the quality and effectiveness of our CEIAG services.
5. Destination data is monitored and analysed to evaluate learner progression into further learning, volunteering, or employment, and to inform future planning.
6. Key Performance Indicators are reported regularly to Management Team and Governing Body, supporting strategic oversight and accountability.

Responsibilities of Students

1. Where appropriate, engage in Personal Wellbeing and Development. Learners are responsible for actively participating in activities and support that improve their mental and physical health, building resilience, confidence, and emotional readiness for learning and employment.
2. Commit to Digital Inclusion. Learners should take ownership of developing their own essential digital skills and digital awareness, applying these skills in learning, employment, and everyday life.
3. Develop Core Academic Skills. Where relevant to the individual, learners are expected to engage with English, maths, and language acquisition to build foundational competencies necessary for further education or employment.
4. Develop critical thinking skills and objective thought. Learners are expected to consider diverse perspectives, challenge their own stereotypes and assumptions, and apply reflective judgement when engaging within the college environment and their learning.
5. Participate in Sustainability and Green Skills Learning. With global citizenship at the heart of the college, learners have a responsibility to understand and apply principles of climate justice, civic duty and sustainable living, contributing to a greener economy and society.
6. Pursue Subject and Vocational Learning. Learners should actively engage in vocational and subject-specific education that aligns with local labour market needs and their personal aspirations, including progression to higher education or sector-specific roles.
7. Take Ownership of Career Progression. Learners are responsible for engaging with careers and progression advice, setting realistic goals, and pursuing pathways into secure, fulfilling employment or further training, including 'in work' progression.