

Annual Report 2025

The **Skills Academy** is a virtual academy led by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) along with our delivery partners:

- **Ringway** – Term Maintenance Contractor
- **WSP** – Professional Services Contractor
- **Tarmac** – Structural Maintenance Contractor
- **M Group Highways** – Street Lighting Contractor

Together, we aim to build a long-term workforce of skilled highways, construction, and civil engineers, supporting key priorities from GCC's Strategy 2022–2026:

Improving Our Roads

Sustainable Growth

Strategic objectives

Our Academy offers high-quality pathways into and within the Highways sector, focusing on attracting, developing, and retaining talent from all backgrounds. Our core goals:

- Amplify awareness of the Academy via GCC's corporate recruitment and marketing platforms
- Build meaningful relationships with education providers to increase student engagement
- Deliver on Social Value commitments with our partners
- Boost apprenticeships for both new entrants and existing staff
- Provide clear training and development routes across all levels

Raising awareness

We've expanded our visibility across Gloucestershire by:

- Launching a dedicated Skills Academy website featuring apprentice video interviews for National Apprenticeship Week
- Collaborating with GCC's Adult Education and Enterprise Hubs to reach wider audiences
- Participating in the Gloucestershire Cornerstone Employer Group
- Celebrating Women in Engineering Day (23 June 2025) where 40% of our highways workforce proudly represents women—double the national average
- Attending job fairs in Stroud, Gloucester, and Cheltenham



Schools and further education engagement

We've joined the STEM Learning Network, with staff volunteering as STEM Ambassadors to promote engineering careers. Our engagement this year includes:

- **Henley Bank Academy**
– STEM week & Year 10 visit to Shire Hall
- **Maidenhill School** – Dragons Den Careers Event
- **Rednock School** – STEM Careers Day (Years 9–13)
- **Hartpury College & University** – Careers Event
- **University of Gloucestershire** – Careers Event
- **Gloucester College** – Careers Event
- **Denmark Road School** – Business Networking Event

We've also hosted work experience placements for Year 10 pupils and university students throughout the year.



Social value

Our Academy is committed to widening access to the industry from under-represented groups by:

- Recruiting from local FE colleges
- Engaging with: Women's Engineering Society, Care Leavers, NEETs (young people not in employment, education or training)
- Supporting programmes like:
Gloucestershire 50/50 – employment support for over 50s
- **100 Futures** – 100 hours of work experience for ages 16–24
- Work experience for ex-forces, neuro-diverse individuals, and prisoners awaiting release

Ringway actively participated in the Multiply Programme to boost adult literacy and numeracy, and was shortlisted for the Construction News Workforce Awards in the 'Excellence in Learning and Development' category.



Apprenticeships

As of September 2025, we supported over 30 apprentices, spanning technical, non-technical, and management roles. Apprenticeship levels range from Level 2 to Level 7, in partnership with the University of Gloucestershire, local colleges, and training providers.

| Apprenticeships | Level | Providers | GCC | Partners |
|--|-------|---|-----------|----------|
| Groundworker Arboriculture | 2 | Local FE College | | 4 |
| Business Administrator Customer Service Specialist Health and Safety | 3 | Local FE College Gloucestershire County Council | 1 | 2 |
| Data Practitioner Associate Project Manager Civil Engineering | 4 | Gloucestershire County Council Gloucestershire County Council Local Training Provider | 15 | 1 |
| Operations Manager | 5 | Gloucestershire County Council | 2 | 1* |
| Business Management Civil Engineering | 6 | University of Gloucestershire University of the West of England | 2 | 1* |
| Masters in Business Administration (MBA) | 7 | University of Gloucestershire | 2 | |
| | | Total | 22 | 9 |

* Graduate/supervisory placements



We also held **two networking events** to celebrate and connect apprentices with senior managers across the partnership.

Training and development

Our offerings are based on a 2024 Training Needs Assessment. Delivered training includes:

- **Construction Design Management (CDM)** – Awareness & Client-focused
- **Highways Law** – Introduction & Advanced
- **Lean 6 Sigma** – Yellow, Green & Black Belt
- **Project Management (APM PMQ)**
- **Court Training**
- **Water Safety**
- **Conflict Management**

How have we done?

Here's how we've measured against our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

| KPI | Area | Performance Measure(s) | Current Standing |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| KPI1 | Apprentices in the Workforce | % of our workforce who are apprentices. | 15% of GCC Highways staff are undergoing apprenticeships. |
| | | % of people completing their apprenticeships. | 80% of those starting apprenticeships finish them. |
| KPI2 and KPI3 | Equality & Diversity Social value | Encourage apprentices from under-represented groups in terms of sex, socio-economic groups, ethnicities and age. | We have recruited staff directly from a local FE college and engaged with the Women's Engineering Society, Care Leavers, young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs). |
| | | We will aim to engage with (for example): School leavers and those who have previously been in care, the unemployed, ex-offenders, ex-Forces and career changers. | Support has also been given to the Gloucestershire 50/50 and the 100 Futures programme. We have also offered a range of work experience opportunities to school leavers, prisoners awaiting release, ex-forces and individuals. Several staff are STEM ambassadors and have taken part in school STEM careers fairs. |
| KPI4 | Roles within Highways | Ensure apprenticeship programmes are in place from Levels 2-7 covering a range of roles in Highways. | There are a range of apprenticeships available from Level 2 through to Level 7. |
| KPI5 | Staff Promotion & Retention | Ensure apprenticeship pathways are in place allowing staff to see how they can progress. | Some roles within Highways offer 'career grading' to enable staff to see a pathway they can follow and the requirements for promotion/advancement. Further work is required across the majority of roles. |
| KPI6 | Quality of Provision | Establish a network of providers across the range of levels. | There is a local supplier for the Level 4 Civil Engineering apprenticeship and a strong relationship has been built with Gloucestershire College and the University of Gloucestershire. |

Future Developments

We're exploring new skill areas including:

- **AI-powered customer engagement**
- **Automated scheduling for logistics**
- **Video and AI tech for road surveys**
- **Heatmap-driven data analysis**

The Academy remains committed to improving its journey, both as a collaborative partnership, but also by promoting itself across the Highways, construction and public sectors. This is an integral part of GCC's overall strategy to raise and support priority skills in Gloucestershire, one of which is civil engineering. The work with schools will continue and it is hoped that more people from under-represented groups will choose to work in the sector. The Academy will continue to lobby local educational establishments to support Highways (particularly within Civil Engineering) and maximise opportunities for existing staff to 'upskill' and gain professional qualifications.