

Barnfield College is a further education college that provides young people and adults with the qualifications and skills they need to be successful in life and work. We have circa 1550 16-18-year-old students on roll and a further 550 adults.

We offer a broad range of courses, including apprenticeships, which are aligned to local and regional skills needs including in-demand job sectors such as Engineering, Construction and Digital. Linking with Luton airport, we have recently introduced an Aeronautical Engineering pathway which will see young people trained and qualified to successfully secure employment and contribute to the local economy in an area that has a shortage of skills.

As chair of the Employment and Skills Partnership Board, I have seen first-hand how partnership working between Luton Borough Council, local training providers and employers, working towards a shared vision, has created a strong, collaborative focus on improving opportunities for all. This is already having a measurable impact. Last year 870 Barnfield College students benefitted from meaningful work experience opportunities with local employers where they developed technical and professional skills relevant to their chosen career pathway. Of the students that left college to enter employment, 78% secured work locally. The remaining 22% secured employment in surrounding areas such as Hertfordshire and London.

One example relates to a young person that joined the college's SEND department a few years ago. The student studied with at the college for two years developing basic skills and knowledge such as time-keeping and travel safety. They then progressed to a supported internship at Luton airport in retail, further developing skills in communication, customer service and working as a cashier. At the end of the placement, the student was offered permanent employment. I am happy to report that the student is still successfully working at the airport and enjoying all the benefits of employment. These types of opportunities would not be possible without partnership working with organisations such as Luton airport that have a wide range of employment opportunities available.

In a town, such as Luton, that has high levels of deprivation, it is essential that there is a continued focus on economic growth leading to better career prospects that provide aspiration for both young people and adults. We know that local people already contribute significantly to the workforce of the airport and its supply chain. There remains the issue however that perhaps too

many of these are at the lower-skilled and lower-paid end of the market. The challenge is to find ways for local people to access higher skilled, higher paid job opportunities. The proposed airport expansion will bring, much needed, increased job opportunities across a whole range of employment sectors providing greater access to career prospects and earning potential.

Collaborative working between Luton Rising, London Luton airport and training providers, such as Barnfield College, will offer young people and adults the opportunity to develop the skills they need to enter the local jobs market and work towards higher paid jobs, thus improving economic productivity, job prospects and life chances for the people of Luton.

The college is committed to providing up-to-date, modern facilities where students can enjoy their learning. The 68m investment into our campus re-development is benefitting our students with access to state of the art, industry standard facilities. Our latest development will provide a four-storey, high-tech Construction and Engineering centre where students will have access to the latest equipment and technologies supporting them to develop the modern skills needed now and in the future, and will provide opportunities for the local workforce to be upskilled to meet the needs of the proposed airport development and ensure they have the skills required to adapt to changing workplace demands.

Barnfield College fully supports the London Luton airport expansion.

More than that, for so many partners working across so many sectors to secure better prospects and outcomes for local people and families, we would go so far as to describe the airport's potential growth as a generational opportunity. And one we are eager to engage with to support the best possible futures for our young people, in particular.