

Accountability Statement

Accountability Statement & Policies - Steadfast Training.

1) PURPOSE

Steadfast Training Ltd (Steadfast) was established in 2005, and has developed into a Prime contractor for Apprenticeships, Adult Skills and Employment programmes with the Department for Education (DfE), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), as well as Combined and Local Authorities in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, Greater Lincolnshire and Norfolk. From our Head Office and 2 delivery hubs in Spalding, Lincolnshire, our centre in Peterborough and a range of community delivery venues across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, Greater Lincolnshire and Norfolk, we deliver demand-led accredited and non-accredited training programmes, meeting skills needs of jobseekers and employers alike.

All our provision is regulated by Ofsted and as a provider rated as 'Good', we also hold industry-relevant standards, including full Matrix Accreditation for the provision of Information Advice & Guidance, *Disability Confident* status and membership of the Chartered Institute for Further Education, a quality kitemark for excellence in further education and skills.

We also hold Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials Plus accreditations.

Steadfast's vision - "*Growing Potential for All*" – is based on a strong, inclusive ethos that promotes personal development, achievement, and progression for staff, partners, and learners. This strategic direction is underpinned by our mission to:

- Make each participant's learning journey a valued, enjoyable and quality experience.
- Be flexible and responsive in all forms of employer engagement.
- Serve our partner employers by delivering nationally recognised, professional training and learning for the benefit of the individual, employer and service user.
- Ensure continuing improvement through our quality standards.
- Be dedicated to reducing costs and building better futures.
- To help job seekers understand their options and develop the knowledge and skills set needed to enter the work force with confidence.

We achieve this by developing learners' skills and personal confidence, raise their aspirations and employment opportunities and achieve outstanding learner success (based on, for instance, ASF achievement rates of well over 80%). We also impact positively on local social and economic prosperity by promoting and demonstrating local leadership through our relationships and collaboration with other organisations, for instance, Jobcentre Plus, the Peterborough Youth Hub, Housing Associations (e.g. Cross Keys Homes), charitable organisations (including The Ferry Project/Wisbech and The Light Project/Peterborough), as well as networks such as Tackling Worklessness in Peterborough (TWIP) and the Bondholder Breakfast.

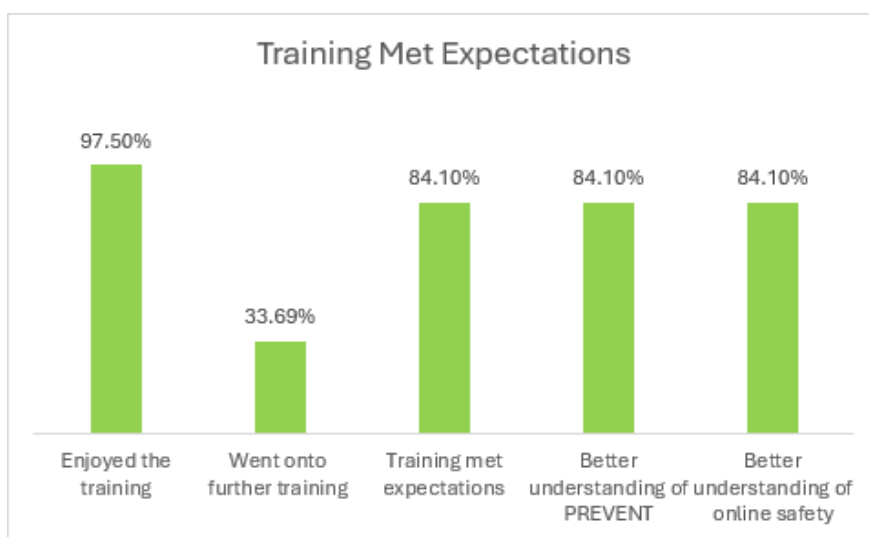
We also use our resources to achieve maximum impact, for instance through the use of emission-free vehicles as mobile training centres that help us to take learning into local communities, particularly Cambridgeshire's FE Coldspot areas of East Cambridgeshire

Learners are central in all that we do and Steadfast has an excellent track record with learners and employers, which has been recognised by successive MATRIX and Ofsted reports. Ofsted 2023 reports that Steadfast *'work effectively with regional and local stakeholders, e.g. JCP, the NHS and local combined authority'* and that we *'support employers to develop the local workforce, support staff retention and provide career pathways to professional registration'*.

The report goes on to say that Steadfast's courses *'link to meaningful progression opportunities'*, as they have a *'clear focus on raising aspirations and improving prospects for adults to re-enter the workplace and re-engage with society'* and that Steadfast has *'designed a well-planned and responsive curriculum to support economic and employer needs'*. It concludes by highlighting that our *'learners benefit from a supportive and calm learning environment, which encourages a culture of respect and tolerance'*.

Our latest MATRIX report states that Steadfast *'puts client need at the forefront'* and *'supports all clients as lifelong learners.'*

This is supported by recent learner feedback on Steadfast's adult skills provision:



We also collect employer feedback via business surveys and quarterly account reviews, alongside monitoring employer reviews on Find-Apprenticeship-Training site to benchmark training relevance. Latest satisfaction ratings show an 'excellent' score, with 96% stating we adapt well to needs. Ofsted endorsed our work with employers by commenting that we ensure *'employers are involved well in planning learning programmes that meet business needs and learners' interests'*.

2. CONTEXT and PLACE

Steadfast Training Ltd (Steadfast) is a multi-regional training provider whose Head Office is in Spalding, Lincolnshire. Three Directors and a robust Senior Management Team lead the organisation, with delivery across the East of England and the Midlands. As the organisation continues to develop, we have established four key pillars which support the business - Apprenticeship Delivery, Adult Skills, Employability and our End Point Apprenticeship Assessment Organisation.

We have been trading for over 20 years, holding direct contracts with the DfE and devolved and local authorities (including Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority, Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority, Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils), and continue to adapt to meet the emerging needs of regional and local labour markets, the Government's agenda for skills and our various contractual and funding-related requirements.

In order to ensure that our provision aligns to skills needs and priorities within all our delivery of Adult Skills Fund and Skills Bootcamp provision, we regularly consult and assess the relevant areas' strategic economic plans, as well as the Government's '*Get Britain Working*' White Paper, which all emphasise the importance of getting more people with the right skills into work. In light of recent Government changes, these plans remain relevant, as they outline a comprehensive response to tackle economic inactivity and support people into good work.

The government's proposals aim to create an inclusive labour market where everyone can participate and progress in work, addressing the root causes of unemployment.

Based on our past/present ASF/Multiply/UKSPF/Apprenticeship delivery, as well as strong demand from learners, local jobcentres and community-based/charitable organisations, we have continued to focus on delivering programmes that embed confidence-building, resilience, health and wellbeing and life-skills training to help residents overcome barriers to education and employment and encourage learner progression to further learning and volunteering opportunities (e.g. Lincolnshire Family Learning), as appropriate.

Our delivery also embeds elements of numeracy support (e.g. financial literacy/benefit calculations), and provides defined progression routes to volunteering, employment or further education/training in a range of vocational areas that show strong labour market growth, e.g. Care, Management, Education and ICT.

The data sources we use to help us develop our delivery offer include regular and thorough analysis of monthly DWP Labour Market Statistics (shared by provider forums and JCP Partnership Management teams in our delivery areas), ONS/NOMIS data, consultation of the relevant Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), close cooperation with Local Authorities (including consultations with South Holland, Boston, East Lindsey and South Kesteven districts regarding the delivery of our UK Shared Prosperity Fund contracts), as well as our monthly learner and employer surveys that help us understand current/future social and economic indicators affecting the areas we operate in.

Existing infrastructure includes our Spalding and Peterborough training centres and the use of community venues in deprived areas (e.g., St Neots, Ely, Wisbech). Further outreach is delivered by peripatetic tutors using zero-emission electric vehicles as mobile training centres (equipped with laptops/projectors/Wi-Fi), reaching learners close in their communities and accommodating travel needs. This directly meets needs of residents by increasing access to work and training in a region that is '*constrained by the rurality of some areas*' (LSIP).

This is complemented by our tutor-led virtual classroom model providing small cohort and 1-2-1 delivery via Teams and other digital platforms (e.g. 'The Vault') for those who still require remote access (e.g. due to social anxiety).

From our discussions with JCP and latest Labour Market data, we also know that worklessness due to ill-health has been rising steadily, particularly for those who are inactive claimants with health conditions or illnesses lasting more than 12 months.

In Greater Lincolnshire, the Disability Employment rate stands at 56.2% (42.3% of all UC claimants have health condition). Our Personal Wellbeing courses focus on mental health, aimed to help residents struggling to contemplate work by breaking down progression into smaller steps (e.g. volunteering). Our courses embed mental well-being, healthy-eating and confidence building support to learners, aimed to help residents struggling to contemplate the world of work by breaking down the progression towards employment into smaller steps, with volunteering, work-placements and further training being the initial learning aim.

The Government's White Paper confirms that *employers have a vital role to play through their recruitment practices in creating inclusive workplaces that protect health and support retention and rehabilitation for disabled employees and those with health conditions*.

As a *Disability Confident* employer, we support the engagement of individuals with protected characteristics by working with JCP's Disability Advisors (DEAs) and employers to support learners' (re-)entry into work after illness and make managers more perceptive to needs of new staff (eg. mentoring for mental health/learning issues) to support job sustainability. Our Employer Engagement team identifies employers who are open to flexible working arrangements, so disadvantaged learners can work around their commitments (e.g. childcare, disabilities). We also advise employers ([Gov.uk/Access-to-Work](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)) on reasonable adjustments in the workplace to ease entry for learners with specific physical or mental barriers (flexible start/finish times; support with transport costs).

We also understand that Youth Unemployment continues to rise across all our delivery areas with *The King's Trust* reporting that 31% of NEET individuals cite poor mental health as a key barrier, a situation worsened by COVID-related social distancing, especially for today's 19-23 year olds.

Across Cambridgeshire, youth unemployment has surged to its highest level in a decade (ONS/Dec '25), with a 10% increase over the past year. Many young people face barriers such as social anxiety/lack of resilience to deal with life challenges and difficulty in conversations, impacting their education and employment opportunities despite actively seeking jobs. In Greater Lincolnshire, for instance, we also know that the 18-24

claimant count has risen in the past year by 11% compared to national rise (9.4%) and against overall claimant count rise (all ages) of 1.84%.

Many young people also having assessed needs ranging from an inability to conduct conversations; social anxiety and lack of resilience/inability to deal with life challenges and rejection, which we address through our Resilience and Personal Development and Social Skills provision. We have also been extending relationships in 2025/26 with Youth Trailblazer organisations across the CPCA area, e.g. Inspire2Ignite, and since the launch of the Peterborough Youth Employment Hub in November 2025, have attended the new venue on a weekly basis, providing training and guidance to support local young people into work, education, and meaningful opportunities.

Strong employer relationships are at the core of our delivery model for all pre-employment and workforce development provision, ensuring learners gain labour-market relevant skills that employers need/demand, allowing local businesses to recruit the talented employees they need and, as a result, achieving positive progressions for learners into work, including through our delivery of Sector-Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) and the guaranteed interview aspect of this model.

We work with a wide range of companies across a variety of key and underpinning sectors, who have been offering interviews to our past and present learners with over 60% of course completers having successfully progressed into employment, resulting in an overall into-work rate of all learners of well above 30%.

We also have strong working links with the National Careers Service (NCS), who have been providing IAG sessions at our training hub in Peterborough and South Holland, DWP Primes (REED, SEETEC, Shaw Trust and *AKG*), Housing Associations (e.g. *ACIS* and *CKH* – from whose premises we also deliver face-to-face provision), as well as *Citizens Advice* and *CPSL MIND* and *Connect To Work* providers across all our delivery areas who are referring learners, including those with mental health conditions, to our provision.

Steadfast will continue to meet the needs of the specific economic and social characteristics of the areas where we deliver our services. This includes offering individualised, flexible and inclusive education/training service for employed, unemployed and economically inactive residents.

As per our current delivery, we will continue to reach those furthest from the labour market, evidenced by high uptake (53%) of learners from deprived wards (Dogsthorpe/Bretton/Arbury/King's Hedges and FE cold spot areas, including East Cambs and St Neots, as identified by Grant Thornton's FE Feasibility Study 2024).

Based on our strong urban and rural market presence (e.g. *The Lighthouse/Ely*; *Little Paxton Hub*), delivery from within JCP offices (e.g. Ely, Norwich and Great Yarmouth), as well as partner co-location arrangements (e.g. *CKH*), we ensure delivery in trusted, DDA-compliant community spaces. Provision also includes all local authority areas within Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, prioritizing most deprived 10% of local communities (e.g. Peterborough with lowest economic activity rate at 76% (LSIP) and

Fenland), with deprived wards (e.g. Waterlees Village, Staithe, Paston) that are among the lowest LSOAs nationally.

3. APPROACH TO DEVELOPING THE ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT

Our overall approach to identifying key priorities and target outcomes has been to focus on subject areas that support CPCA's key and underpinning sectors with immediate/future vacancy needs (construction, education, care) and upskilling demands, including sector-specific and more generic skills, e.g. management and digital learning.

Health & Social Care has significant recruitment demand, as highlighted by LSIP and the 'Further Education Cold Spots' study (Grant Thornton), expected to see the strongest employment growth over the next decade due to '*ageing population and health sector jobs being relatively immune from technological change and automation*' (LSIP). With the second-highest employment requirement in Cambridgeshire, we continue working with JCP and stakeholders (e.g. *REED*; *JARK*) to recruit candidates for pre-employment and SWAP courses in the sector.

Education & Teaching saw a 7,900 drop in professionals (2023 vs. 2022). Our provision supports entry routes into the sector (Level 1+2) via SWAPs and workforce development (Teaching Assistant and School Business Professional qualifications at Levels 3 & 4).

Construction accounts for largest number of businesses in East Cambridgeshire, with high warehouse/factory space and growing retail demand. As a result, our courses address construction/CSCS, warehousing and customer service/retail skills.

We also aim to expand **IT & Digital** qualifications (e.g., Level 3 Data Technician, Level 5 Data Analyst) relevant to Clean Energy and Green Tech. CPCA job growth in this sector lags behind national averages (LSIP), whilst we know there is demand from employers we currently support commercially with digital skills.

Our **Employability/21st Century Skills** (under LOTs 1 & 2) get candidates 'work ready', focusing on communication, self-motivation, problem-solving and digital literacy—skills most in demand by employers (LSIP), whilst we also emphasize workplace behaviours (timekeeping, teamwork, professionalism).

Self-employment and ILM qualifications support business growth, leveraging CPCA's entrepreneurial culture and leadership development to drive job creation.

Ofsted 2023 noted that Steadfast's courses '*link to meaningful progression opportunities*', as they have a '*clear focus on raising aspirations and improving prospects for adults to re-enter the workplace and re-engage with society*'.

While most courses are accredited, our '*Get Ready for Work*' workshops support young people and those with mental health challenges, embedding confidence-building, resilience and mindfulness into vocational training.

The range of external stakeholders that Steadfast regularly liaises with and consults to ensure our skills delivery plan meets local labour market needs is wide and includes partnerships within the adult skills and employability sector that were developed over years of operating in our delivery areas. This is supported by memberships in groups like TWIP, GET Group and business networks (e.g., Chambers, Federation of Small Businesses, Bondholder Breakfast) that have given us an excellent understanding of local labour market and skills needs. We regularly engage with CPCA *Growth Hub*, *Growth Works with Skills* and key business sectors through events (e.g., Cambridgeshire CVS, Hunts Forum). Our relationships across the FE sector (CCP; IEG; CRC; other ITPs) ensure delivery integrates with local/regional offers (e.g., ASF, Skills Bootcamps, Apprenticeships and cross-referrals with WEA on education Level 1 & 2 courses). This avoids duplication by offering flexible, roll-on/roll-off provision and supports a lifelong learning culture, particularly for priority residents.

We use relationships with Housing Associations (e.g. Cross Keys, ACIS), Local Authorities (East Cambs/Fenland etc) and NHS (CPFT; Cambridgeshire & Peterborough ICS) to engage disadvantaged learners and work with JCP and DWP Primes (e.g. *REED*) to upskill long-term unemployed *Restart* participants. We also work with *Waythrough* on candidates with mental health conditions and Interventions Alliance (for ex-offenders), supporting homeless groups via YMCA and *The Salvation Army*, facilitating 'warm handovers' prior to delivery in local communities.

JCP (Peterborough) commends Steadfast as the '*5th leg on the chair to help support us - flexible, responsive and always willing to engage at short notice*', with '*open, warm communication*' and '*always able to resolve any queries or issues that arise swiftly*'.

Ofsted comments on our partnership approach that '*Steadfast's partnership working and membership of an extensive range of working groups increases opportunities for learners and improves the planning of programmes*' and that we ensure '*employers are involved well in planning learning programmes that meet business needs and learners' interests*'.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL PRIORITIES

Steadfast's intent is to continue to contribute to national, regional and local priorities, based on our successful ASF, apprenticeship and employability support delivery in 2025/26.

We review our strategic objectives annually through the Self-Assessment Reporting (SAR) process and this ensures that our delivery plan and targets align with the needs the labour market, as identified through consultations with our wide range of stakeholders and highlighted in the LSIPs in Greater Lincolnshire, the CPCA area and Norfolk and Suffolk.

In addition to the Adult Skills programmes mentioned above, Steadfast also offers a broad range of Apprenticeship Standards tailored to our employer organisations' requirements and responsive to the needs of the labour market. Many of our Apprenticeship employers are large levy payers within Healthcare and the Public Sector. However, we also work closely with SMEs to ensure we continue to meet the skills needs of learners and address local and regional priorities (e.g. Health & Social Care with its significant recruitment demand, as highlighted by the LSIP and the 'Further Education Cold Spots' study (Grant Thornton, 2024)).

It is worth noting that there has been significant political change over the past couple of years, as well as in recent weeks, and as an independent training provider, Steadfast has had to adapt to subsequent policy shifts, the industrial strategy, Skills England report, the Get Britain Working white paper (as mentioned above), as well as LSIP updates. We also need to consider the anticipated developments regarding devolution in Norfolk and Suffolk in our strategic planning.

National labour market policy has also provided additional challenges for the skills sector. For instance, in recent months, apprenticeship and workforce development provision in general (including under our ASF '*Skills for Growth*' programme in the CPCA area) has been noticeably impacted by the increase in the rise of the minimum wage (and apprenticeship pay), which has placed additional financial pressure on smaller employers and influenced their capacity to take on new staff, including apprentices. Our Self-Assessment Review (SAR) remains an inclusive process to help us incorporate the views and opinions of employers, learners, external stakeholders, and staff and identify how to address these challenges.

This approach is underpinned by our robust curriculum planning strategy and learner and employer/stakeholder feedback. Steadfast continuously collects feedback from learners, employers and stakeholders (JCP, charities, e.g. The Purfleet Trust) to shape curriculum design and that has fed into the development of our delivery plan.

For instance, in 2025, we worked with JCP Peterborough to develop an intensive ESOL assessment and delivery model, addressing demand for a structured pre-entry English offer. This was successfully implemented with 153 learners completing the provision. Of those, 52% reported improved confidence, 33% pursued further ESOL training and 17% progressed into employment.

Our curriculum is entirely demand-led and assessed by our Business Development team. The Operations team evaluates feasibility based on labour market needs, existing

provision, internal capacity and funding. The Quality & Curriculum Manager ensures appropriate qualifications, accreditation costs and staff availability before launching any new training provision.

Based on the same principle, reflecting current data and having reviewed local needs, we have identified the following strengths, as well as priority areas for performance improvement:

1.

Steadfast's provision is strongly aligned to priority and underpinning sectors, particularly health, education, construction, retail and hospitality, manufacturing and agri-food. Employer partnerships are well established, enabling responsive apprenticeship delivery and workforce development via ASF/Skills for Growth. We are aware of a growing demand in digital capability, as well as Health & Social care, Transportation, maintenance and Warehousing & Distribution, which requires further expansion of our delivery offer and support employees to progress onto accredited Level 3+ qualifications and/or apprenticeships.

2.

Whilst the engagement of unemployed and economically disadvantaged cohorts of local residents has worked very successfully, particular challenges still remain in relation to engaging more residents in areas with a lack of FE provision (FE Coldspots). This also includes individuals who struggle to access remote or fully-online learning offers.

3.

We have made great progress during 2025/26 in engaging those aged 19-23 who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) but need to increase these efforts to reach more young people struggling to enter employment and training to maximise our ASF allocation for the younger age groups.

4.

We regularly review our curriculum offer to support new contracts and have strengthened our apprenticeship provision with new standards, based on analysis and employer feedback. However, we have identified areas for improvement and will ensure we meet and exceed all elements of our Apprenticeship Accountability Framework in the next academic year.

In response to the above challenges, Steadfast will, for 2026/27:

- Increase delivery to reach disadvantaged residents in deprived communities, including FE Coldspots across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough.
- Expand provision to reach more learners in sectors aligned to LSIPs via ASF and apprenticeships delivery.
- Increase apprenticeship participation and employer engagement.
- Strengthen progression routes from Entry, Level 1 and Level 2 programmes to Level 3+ provision.
- Maintain achievement rates at or above national averages across all provision types.

The above will lead to the following outcomes:

1. Increase of community engagement and face-to-face delivery from 41% to 46% to residents unable to access our virtual classroom due to lack of digital skills or IT equipment.
2. Increase participation of NEET and economically inactive learners by 3%.
3. Increase the number of active employer partners by 5%.
4. Increase apprenticeship starts by 5%, with growth focused on priority sectors.
5. Deliver increased ASF enrolments in agri-food, manufacturing and digital sectors of 5%.
6. Achieve achievement rate for apprenticeships of 70% and ASF of 89%.
7. Achieve progressions either into employment, in-work progression or Level 3+ provision of 75% across all provision types.

5. CORPORATION / GOVERNING BODY STATEMENT

Steadfast works closely with the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority, Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority and Local Authorities, as well as Jobcentre Plus, Third Sector organisations and business groups (Chamber of Commerce; FSB), employers, and other FE providers to ensure our provision aligns to the priorities highlighted in Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) and national sector priorities. This ensures that we offer skills support that meets the needs of individuals and local labour markets.

Ensuring that we continue to meet these skills needs, Steadfast is subject to internal and external audit. We have a robust leadership structure in place, comprising the Board, Senior Management Team (SMT), and Governance team. Regularly scheduled Board/SMT meetings (bi-monthly) and Governance meetings (bi-monthly) enable strategic oversight and ensure accountability.

Steadfast's Board of Governors includes two former DfE employees and a Director of a Chartered Accountancy firm.

The senior team reviews comprehensive performance data monthly, including learner progress, functional skills outcomes, achievement rates, early leavers, funding status, destinations, and regional performance. This allows for timely interventions and responsive action planning.

The governance team have formulated and agreed the vision and strategy for the company, including defining the ethos, values and aims of the organisation.

The governance team meets bi-monthly and has a review plan covering all elements of the Seven principles of Good Governance. They report to the Board bi-monthly and raise any issues that need to be considered. They can also co-opt other staff members as required.

All Steadfast personnel, including the Board, the Governance Scrutiny Committee, and Senior Management Team contribute to the development of our delivery plans, in alignment with our annual Quality Cycle review.

Ofsted noted that our new Governance arrangements indicated that managers acknowledge the benefits of external governance and have appointed well-qualified governors to provide external oversight and scrutiny.

On behalf of Steadfast Training Ltd, we hereby confirm that the organisation's accountability statement and delivery plan as set out above reflects our statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the company board on 31st July 2026.

Signed Off:

Chair of Governors:

Dr Diana Pudney

Di Pudney

CEO:

Jason Parnell

Jason Parnell

Dated: 11th August 2026