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The Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
The Correspondence & Enquiry unit
1 Horse Guards Road
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SW1A 2HQ

Our Ref: MP02350

1 April 2025

Dear Rt. Hon. Rachel Reeves MP,

I am writing to encourage you to prioritise investment in the further education sector in the upcoming comprehensive spending review.

The 2025 spending review offers the government the opportunity to prioritise spending on its five missions and to make progress towards the six milestones set out by the Prime Minister in the Plan for Change.

Colleges such as Solihull College and University Centre in my constituency are place-based anchor institutions with the simple ambition to help people and employers to succeed, and to support their communities and local economies to flourish and grow. Colleges support young people and adults to realise their ambitions and talents, help employers innovate and access skilled workers, and bring communities together while securing economic growth. They are delivery agents for the government's missions and ambitions - but they need investment and support to maximise their impact and the speed at which they can work.

It was therefore very disappointing to see recently announced cuts to the Adult Skills Fund. Adult skills funding delivers exactly what the Secretary of State for Work & Pensions has said is needed - helping people get the skills and confidence to gain productive work as well as supporting the government's economic growth objectives. But cuts like this make it harder and harder to reach the adults who want that support.

The announcement of £625 million of college investment to meet the skills needs in the country's construction sector is welcome. However, to ensure that every one of the industrial strategy sectors, plus the NHS, can depend on colleges to support their skills needs it's vital that this investment is followed by more in the spending review.

The Association of Colleges (AoC), the membership body for the sector, has set out four priority areas where colleges need investment and where government will be able to see both quick and lasting returns, that I support:

1. **A coherent skills fund** for the growth-driving and priority sectors highlighted in the industrial strategy and Plan for Change. A single skills fund should join up funding to support the growth, opportunity and work plans.
2. **Expansion in 16-18 education places and teaching capacity** for the growing population of young people who need college education and training.
3. **Education and skills for people currently not in work** so that they can secure good

jobs. The recent cuts to the Adult Skills Fund pose a big barrier to achieving this.
4. **Action to improve pay and buildings** so that colleges can recruit and retain high-calibre staff and provide industry-standard facilities for students.

The need for investment is evident given the rising number of young people and the need for more adults to acquire skills to get into good jobs and to contribute to identified growth sectors.

I would strongly encourage you to consider these recommendations and ensure the spending review empowers colleges to upscale their work to reach more people, across all communities and work with more employers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Manuela Perteghella', written in a cursive style.

Dr Manuela Perteghella MP
Member of Parliament for Stratford-on-Avon