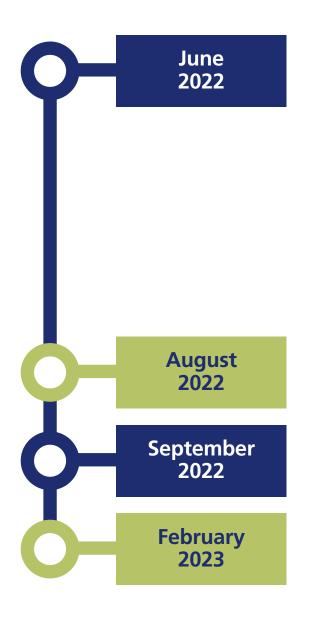






# **CONSULTATION PROCESS**



- Consultation launched
- Consultation web pages on www.bedfordcollegegroup.ac.uk www.centralbeds.ac.uk
- Consultation brochure produced
- Notices in Luton News and The Guardian
- Press release to all local media
- Social media posts
- Stand at Central Bedfordshire College's open day
- Email to all stakeholders
- Consultation deadline
- Consultation results published
- Copy of report to Secretary of State
- Proposed merger date





## **CHAIRS OF GOVERNORS' THANK YOU**

Thank you for responding to our consultation about the proposed merger between Central Bedfordshire College and The Bedford College Group. At this time, with so many challenges and changes to our lives, it is very heartening, even inspiring, to see the responses to our consultation document, by so many of the people who really matter, the stakeholders.

We are delighted with the numbers of responses, and the majority 'vote' in support of our merger. We will take the concerns mentioned very seriously, and engage with those parties, particularly the parents and local residents, who are unsure about the merger.

We have said that there will be greater learner and employer choice through a wider range

of education and training opportunities and progression routes, combining strengths, talent pool of staff, resources and facilities, and building on established specialisms. We will take pains to continue to communicate these vital elements to ensure that our exciting and ever-expanding area of Bedfordshire, where skills and vocational qualifications are so important, will be a model for an area which has previously been neglected, lacking aspiration.

The merged college will help to provide that aspiration through a strong, stable, and well managed further education institution.

Please take a few minutes to read the results of the consultation in this document.

#### Professor James Crabbe JP

Chair of
The Corporation
Central Bedfordshire
College



#### Allan Schofield

Chair of
The Corporation
The Bedford
College Group

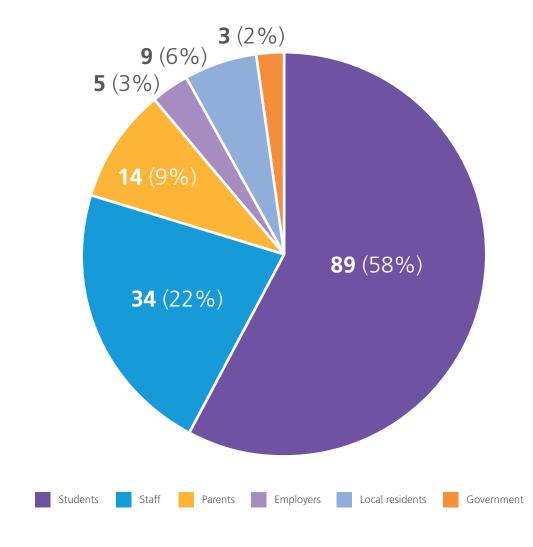






# **RESULTS OVERVIEW**

We were delighted that we received **154 responses** to our consultation survey. This gave us a strong indication that many people view the merger as important. We were particularly pleased to see that there was high engagement from students.

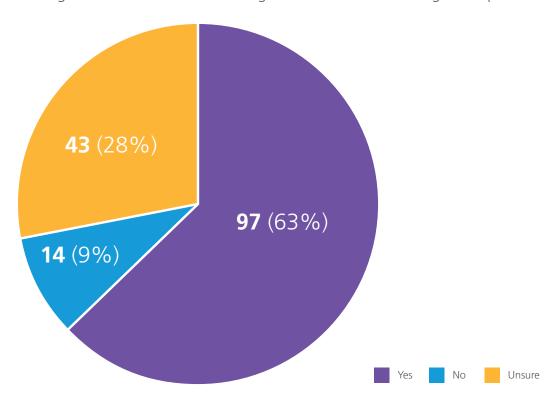






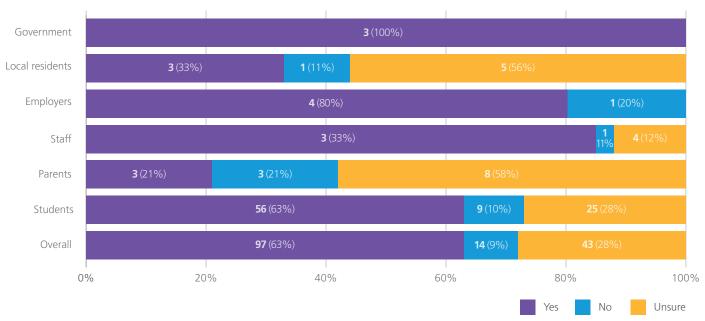
## **SUPPORT FOR MERGER**

We were reassured that the majority of stakeholders participating in the consultation, **63%**, **support our plans** to merge Central Bedfordshire College and The Bedford College Group.



This detailed breakdown shows how each stakeholder group viewed the merger. We were pleased that all the government responders, and the majority of employers, staff and students support the merger proposal.

We will be launching a communications campaign to parents and local residents highlighting the benefits of the merger as some responders in these groups said they were 'unsure' about what the merger means for them.



#### **MERGER BENEFITS**

The proposed merger will create one of the most exciting college groups in the UK with an income of more than £76 million and 18,000 learners. At the heart of the merger is the ambition to deliver first class education and training to meet the needs of learners, local businesses and the wider community. The merger will:

- Increase influence through the creation of a single, clear, major strategic educator in the south east midlands
- Create greater capacity to engage nationally and regionally with partners and stakeholders to bring increased benefits to local communities
- Improve financial stability, ensuring and enhancing the continuity of local provision and a cost-effective infrastructure to deliver maximum return on public investment
- Provide stronger capacity to invest in developing new curriculum to meet national and local priorities, such as apprenticeships and higher level technical and professional qualifications

- Maintain Central Bedfordshire College's unique features and brand to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning for learners, staff and employers
- Ensure greater learner and employer choice through a wider range of education and training opportunities and progression routes, combining strengths, talent pool of staff, resources and facilities, and building on established specialisms
- Support the government's priorities for enhancing skills and training.

We were delighted to receive so many positive comments from the people who took part in the consultation:

"THE MERGER MEANS BETTER EDUCATION FOR ALL" STUDENT "IT SEEMS LOGICAL TO INCLUDE ALL THE COUNTY COLLEGES IN ONE GROUP" STAFF "IT WILL PROVIDE A STRONGER
FE OFFERING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
ACROSS THE COUNTY"
GOVERNMENT





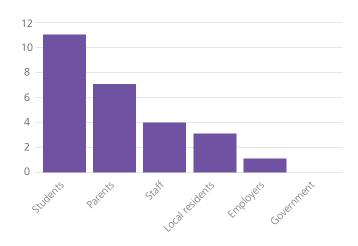
"I FEEL IT WOULD OFFER A WIDER HORIZON OF LEARNING NOT JUST STUDYING BUT A VAST COMMUNITY OF STUDENTS AND STAFF GETTING TO KNOW DIFFERENT PEOPLE" STUDENT

"WIDER EXTENSION OF LIBRARY RESOURCES AND STUDY SKILLS, INCREASED KNOWLEDGE AND DIVERSITY" STAFF

### **POSSIBLE CHALLENGES**

A minority of those who took part in the consultation, 17%, raised some concerns about possible challenges or adverse affects of the merger.

The top concern was regarding travel between the two colleges. Others were concerned that the number of courses could be reduced or that staff could be made redundant.





"TRAVEL, TIME, EXPENSE, Probably bigger classes" Parent "...IF THE MERGE CREATES LESS
COURSES OVERALL"
STUDENT

"I AM WORRIED THAT STUDENTS WILL HAVE TO TRAVEL FURTHER AND CLASS SIZES WILL BE BIGGER" PARENT



"...REDUNDANCIES WILL HAPPEN TO CUT COSTS IN THE NEAR FUTURE" STAFF "MAYBE THE SERVICE MAY BECOME LESS PERSONAL WITH LOTS OF ADMIN ERRORS AND POOR CUSTOMER SERVICE" STUDENT

"VERY CONCERNED ABOUT STAFF REDUNDANCIES" EMPLOYER "STAFF MAY LEAVE AND WORRIES ME" STUDENT "CONCERNED THAT CUTS TO SUPPORT STAFF NUMBERS OR HOURS WOULD NEGATIVELY IMPACT PROGRESS MADE IN PROVIDING ACADEMIC SUPPORT" STAFF



#### **OUR RESPONSE**

We understand that there can be a lot of uncertainty during times of change, however we want to reassure those people who may have had some concerns that courses and teaching staff will continue to be based at their current locations. In addition, our long-term aim is to be able to add new courses to meet local demand and increase choice.

Regarding staff job security, The Bedford College Group has a strong track record of successful mergers and bringing together the staff from two institutions without any redundancies in the past. What's more, the different locations of the two colleges means there will be no need to cut any courses.

## **PRIORITY AREAS**

Participants who took part in the consultation offered the following suggestions for sharing good practice and areas that should be prioritised:

- Study skills and learning resources
- Careers and student support services
- Student mental health

- Providing wider choice and opportunities
- Opportunities for students and staff to get together from other colleges.

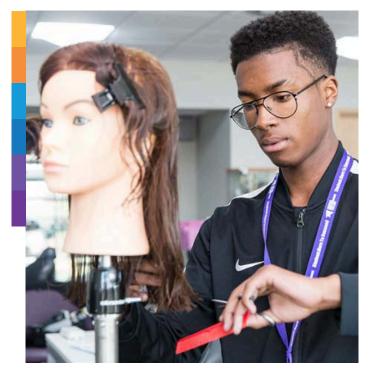
#### **OUR RESPONSE**

We are pleased that the suggestions we received from the consultation are aligned with our future plans. We will support Central Bedfordshire College to develop their study skills and achieve greater progression to advanced and higher levels, enabling students to realise their career potential.

The 10 year picture will be one of consistent excellence in the quality of provision; a major

presence in Leighton Buzzard; record learner numbers; a network of community learning centres; and a reputation for innovation and research

The communities in South Bedfordshire and Luton will see Central Bedfordshire College as the leading provider of post-16 education in the area.





### **NEXT STEPS**

This is just the start of an ongoing conversation with students, staff, parents, local residents, employers and the government, providing opportunities to give feedback and shape the new organisation.

In the next few weeks and months we will ensure:

- The consultation report goes to everyone who requested a copy in addition to the Secretary of State
- Further email communication to all Central Bedfordshire College's stakeholders providing feedback on the consultation and responding to concerns raised
- On-line or face-to-face events in the Autumn term with Central Bedfordshire College's students, parents and employers

- Dedicated talks at Open Days prior to merger
- Share consultation results with staff at The Bedford College Group and Central Bedfordshire College.









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