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# Candidate Brief

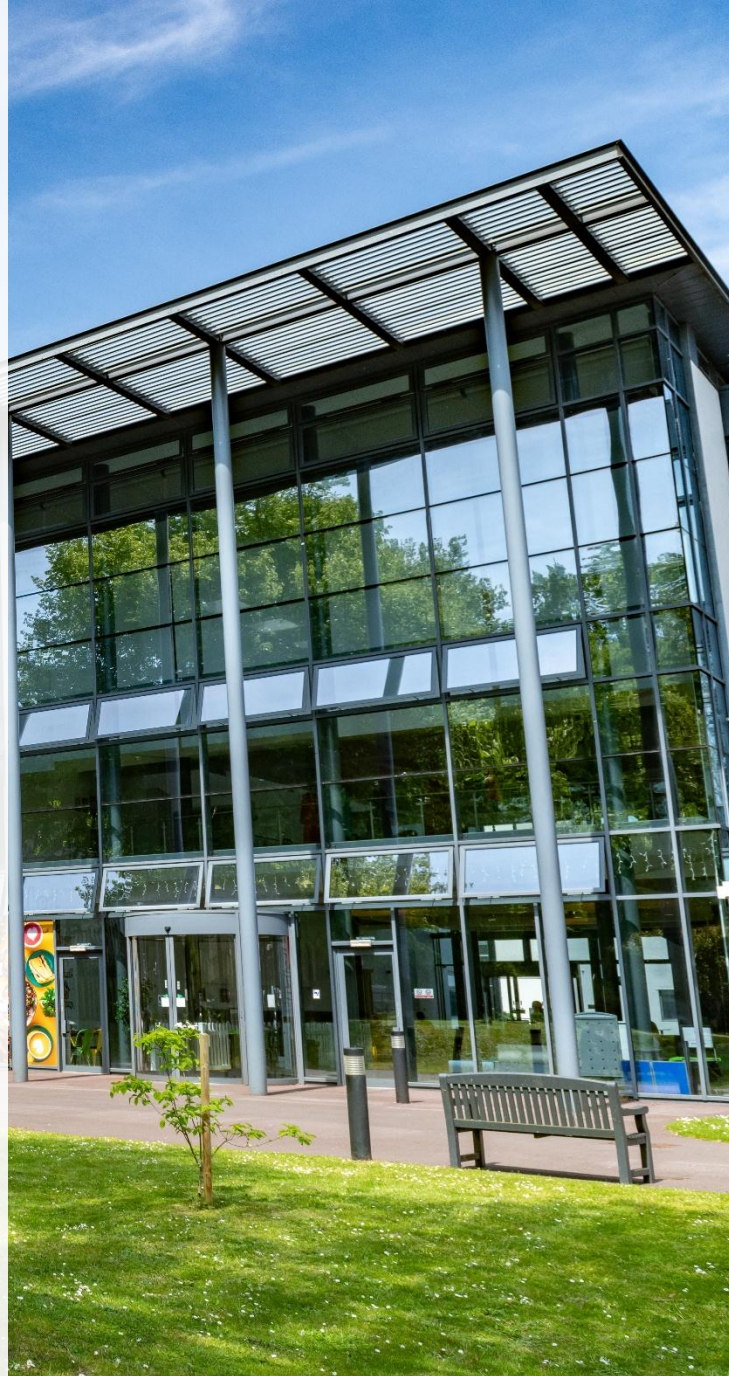
## Chief Information Officer

### South Hampshire College Group

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**March 2026**



**D O D D P A R T N E R S**

— B O A R D & E X E C U T I V E S E A R C H —

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# South Hampshire College Group

South Hampshire College Group formed through the merger of City College Southampton, Eastleigh College and Fareham College on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023. The merger of the three local Further Education (FE) colleges into a new regional college group came about through a Department for Education (DfE) review of post-16 provision in the local area. This review produced a strong evidence base to conclude that bringing together the colleges would secure the long-term availability of a comprehensive, coherent and accessible FE and Skills offer to meet the needs of the local area in a financially resilient and sustainable structure.

## Strategic Plan

The Corporation undertook its second annual review of the three-year strategic plan in May 2025 and agreed to maintain the existing strategy for its third and final year before a new strategic plan is developed in summer term of 2026.

The strategic plan has so far provided a secure focus on priorities which balance the significant work required to fully embed a complex merger of three standalone colleges into a fully integrated college group, whilst simultaneously ensuring a clear focus on quality improvement, meeting employers' needs, securing financial resilience and enabling student success.



## Ofsted

South Hampshire College Group was inspected by Ofsted in May 2025. The outcome of the inspection was an overall effectiveness judgement of 'good'; all provision types, and key judgement areas were also graded as 'good'. Additionally, the college group was judged to be making a 'strong' contribution to meeting skills needs.



This skills contribution judgement is an excellent recognition of the regional leadership of collaborative funded skills programmes and the deeply embedded employer engagement across the college group.

The Ofsted report represented a hugely important milestone for the college group, recognising the hard work of all colleagues in securing the benefits of merger, and, at the same time, improving the quality of education.

## Post Merger Developments

The second year of merger has seen the three previous colleges become fully integrated into a single organisation. IT and MI systems have been aligned, staff have been able to access new contracts with standardised terms and conditions, policies have been updated and agreed with trade unions, governance arrangements have strengthened, staff development has been expanded and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment improved and standardised.

Our recruitment of full-time students has been strong and better than planned in the merger business plan. We have achieved a 5% growth year-on-year for the first two years of merger and expect to achieve this again in the next academic year. Apprenticeship recruitment is also strong, and we have made full use of our Adult Skills Fund allocation.

## Strategic Objectives

### Provide Outstanding Education, Training and Support

Following the Ofsted inspection, and the feedback received, we will continue to pursue this strategic objective with an enhanced focus on further improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. We will seek to further develop our teachers through targeted CPD. We will continue to develop our tutorial and enrichment programmes and widen our participation in work experience for all students.

### Benefit Employers' Skills Needs

Our apprenticeship and adult skills provision are judged to be 'good' by Ofsted and have improved significantly since merger. Being recognised by Ofsted as making a 'strong' contribution to meeting skills needs is an excellent endorsement of our strategic plan vision: 'our work will support the skills needs of employers and improve regional productivity, economic development and social mobility'.

As we develop the next stages of the curriculum strategy, informed by the Post-16 Education and Skills Whitepaper, and the Curriculum and Assessment Review, we will capitalise on our strengths in apprenticeships and adult skills, and build on already strong relationships with employers. Our strengths here will place us in a strong position for fulfilling the region's skills needs under devolved public funding arrangements. To do so we will further develop our strategic relationship with the future Mayoral Strategic Authority.



### Be Sustainable, Agile and Resilient

The success of the merger was predicated on ensuring financial resilience within a two-year timeframe. Since merger, the college group has invested significantly in capital improvement of the facilities, and, in doing so, has consolidated to smaller, higher-quality, more efficient estate. The financial turnaround of the college group has been significant, and we have still maintained the ability to provide year-on-year cost of living linked pay increases for all staff.

### Creating Better Futures

Our core purpose still binds us as a college group. There are numerous examples of the social impact of the college group. The success and development of our students are our reason for being, and their success is a result of our hard-working and committed workforce. As we go into the third-year post-merger, we have achieved the formation of a single college group, secure in its financial standing and able to provide high-quality education, training and support for the communities that the colleges serve.

## Regional Context

The three colleges of South Hampshire College Group sit within the former Solent LEP region and are within Hampshire County Council area. Southampton College is within the Southampton City Council Local Authority, Fareham and Eastleigh Colleges are local government districts with borough status.

The colleges all sit within the region covered by the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce. The Hampshire Chamber is the Employer Representative Body (ERB) which led the development of the Solent region's Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). A separate LSIP was developed for the north of the county, across the EM3 LEP

boundary. The Chamber of Commerce is now working on a combined LSIP for the county, which will support the new Mayoral Combined County Authority when this comes into effect. The college group works with a number of other employer representative groups, including Business South and Maritime Solent.

The Solent region extends across eight local authorities and is a key economic hub anchored around the Isle of Wight, the two cities of Portsmouth and Southampton, the New Forest, the M27 corridor and the Solent waterway.



The Solent's position also means it is one of the UK's most important gateways to European and global markets. It has direct highway and rail links to London and other strategic national corridors, as well as international connections through Southampton Airport and the ports of Southampton and Portsmouth, which lie just 20 nautical miles from the world's busiest shipping route from Shanghai to Rotterdam.

## Mission & Values

### Mission Statement

South Hampshire College Group is committed to creating better futures for all of our students. It is our mission to enable students, apprentices and regional businesses to enjoy successful futures through high-quality technical and professional education and training.

It is our aspiration to lead a better distributed, accessible and collaborative group of South Hampshire Colleges. Through this, we will provide

outstanding education and training across a wide community of students and employers in the Solent region. Our work will support the skills needs of employers and improve regional productivity, economic development and social mobility.

We will be an agile organisation, constantly developing and improving, while remaining responsive to policy and reforms in further education, and adaptive to the changing needs of the region's employers.

### Core Values

- **Collaborative** - We recognise we are stronger together and greatly benefit from working in partnership, within and outside the college.
- **Inclusive** - We are individually and collectively, proactively inclusive. We always treat others with respect, value diversity and ensure we are supportive of one another.
- **Aspirational** - We aim to create better futures with high expectations, professional standards and innovative approaches.

For more information about South Hampshire College Group visit: <https://shcg.ac.uk/about-us/>

To review the 23/26 Strategic plan visit: <https://shcg-strategicplan>

## About the Role

South Hampshire College Group (the College) is seeking an experienced and visionary Chief Information Officer (CIO) to lead the strategic development and delivery of its information, digital and data strategy. As a key member of the executive leadership team, and working closely with the Board, the CIO will play a pivotal role in shaping the College's digital future, ensuring technology, data and systems effectively support high-quality teaching, learning and operational excellence.

The successful candidate will provide strategic leadership and accountability for the provision, resilience and evolution of digital, data and technology capabilities that underpin the work of South Hampshire College Group.

The CIO will be the executive lead for IT services, digital transformation, cyber security and data governance, ensuring the College's technology infrastructure is secure, resilient and aligned with institutional priorities and regulatory frameworks and compliance standards.

Working collaboratively with teaching and professional services teams, the CIO will drive innovation, enhance the student and staff digital experience, and support the College's ambition to deliver outstanding education and skills development.

The CIO will lead South Hampshire College Group's transformation into a fully data-enabled organisation, ensuring decisions at all levels are informed by high-quality analysis, trusted KPIs and forward-looking insight, using the College's own data and any publicly available relevant data sources. To do so, the CIO will design and implement a Data Strategy, Performance and Insights function to support the delivery of the College's next strategic developments.

This is an exciting opportunity for a forward-thinking leader to make a lasting impact by embedding digital capability at the heart of the College's strategy and enabling technology to transform how the College teaches, learns and operates.



# Job Specification

**Job Title:** Chief Information Officer (CIO)  
**Report to:** Chief Executive Officer

## Purpose

The role is accountable for the provision, resilience and ongoing evolution of digital, data and technology capabilities across South Hampshire College Group, with executive level leadership and oversight of all IT and data functions. It will lead the organisation's transformation into a fully data enabled environment, ensuring decisions at all levels are informed by high quality analysis, trusted KPIs and forward looking insight derived from both internal and relevant external data sources. The post holder will lead the design and delivery of a new Strategy, Performance and Insights function, while shaping and implementing an Information, Digital and Data Strategy that enhances the experience of learners and staff and equips students with essential digital skills for their future.

The role will identify and lead digital transformation initiatives that improve operational resilience and user experience, while overseeing the reliability, security and continuous improvement of IT infrastructure. It will ensure robust and future focused cyber security measures and data protection safeguards are in place at all times. As a member of the Executive Leadership Team, the post holder will work closely with the College Leadership Team to develop and implement both strategic and operational plans.

## Key Accountabilities

- Develop and implement a college-wide digital strategy, ensuring technology supports teaching, learning and business operations.
- Oversee the management and development of secure, reliable and scalable IT systems infrastructure.
- Ensure the College has effective systems in place for data management and cyber security that comply with legal and ethical standards.
- Establish robust IT and Cyber Security governance and risk management frameworks.
- Work with MIS to develop Power BI driven reporting to provide accurate, real-time data insights and business analytics for business improvement and operational planning.
- Develop effective mechanisms for collecting feedback on the use of digital tools and platforms from all users, including students and staff, to guide improvements in digital strategy and implementation.
- Develop a data-driven culture to inform decision-making in recruitment, retention and performance tracking.
- Ensure digital inclusion for all students, including those with additional learning needs.
- Ensure highest levels of data integrity and preparedness for data audit assurance.
- Report using accurate and meaningful information to the Corporation Board, the Executive and wider stakeholders both within and outside the College, providing robust and clear analysis to underpin a culture of continuous improvement.
- Oversee and provide compliance and good governance of legislated Data Protection requirements.
- Consistently demonstrate a commitment to integrating digital technologies into our strategic goals and implement a robust policy framework that supports the adoption and ethical use of digital technologies and AI across the College.

## People

- Make appropriate arrangements for the appointment, monitoring, development and welfare of all staff under the postholder's areas of responsibility.
- Promote discipline and professional standards of conduct and encourage the commitment of all staff, leading by example.
- Provide outstanding leadership and management to direct reports and promote a culture of creativity, innovation, excellence and equality across the postholder's areas of responsibility.

- Contribute to whole college strategic and operational management through participation in formal committees and meetings, leading working parties and working closely with colleagues on resolving college wide problems and issues.

### **Policies**

- Support the Executive and Senior Leadership teams in the development, implementation and monitoring of relevant plans, policies and procedures.
- Prepare and present policies, procedures and strategic plans in respect of the postholder's areas of responsibility for the Corporation, as required.

### **Finance and Management Information**

- Ensure there are effective information systems in place throughout the college to provide robust data to support the College's management and day-to-day business.
- Ensure effective systems are in place to manage, protect and control all college data and inform decision making, and ensure that those systems comply with statutory requirements.

### **Performance Management and Quality Improvement**

- Liaise with the Chief People Officer on the implementation of a professional development strategy to ensure teams under the postholder's areas of responsibility have the necessary skills and qualities to deliver excellence.
- Lead the teams under the postholder's areas of responsibility to ensure the College provides the highest quality of service and fosters a culture of excellence and innovation in all that it does.
- Ensure that appropriate targets are set and agreed throughout the postholder's areas of responsibility teams and that performance against them is monitored and, where necessary, steps are taken to improve.
- Ensure that the College at all levels is committed to the development and personal growth of all individuals that it employs or serves.

### **Partnerships and Reputation**

- Ensure that the College develops and maintains a constructive relationship with appropriate external stakeholders relevant to the postholder's areas of responsibility.
- Ensure that the College responds effectively to national and regional Government-led initiatives relating to further education and cyber resilience.

### **Health and Safety**

- Ensure that the Health and Safety policy and procedures operated by the College meet all statutory requirements and that they are regularly reviewed for compliance and effectiveness.

### **Equal Opportunity**

- Adopt and promote a positive attitude towards equality of opportunity for all within the college. Ensure that the related policies and procedures are adhered to and that all statutory requirements are met by all staff within the postholder's areas of responsibility.

### **Professional Standards**

- Develop, maintain and exhibit the quality standards appropriate to the post and promote a culture of integrity and transparency throughout all college activities
- Undertake appropriate staff development activities that support personal development and the changing needs of the College and its environment.

# Person Specification

## Qualifications

You will hold a degree or equivalent, alongside relevant professional qualifications in IT or Management Information Systems. You will demonstrate a clear commitment to ongoing professional development. A higher degree and/or a recognised leadership or management qualification would be advantageous.

## Essential Experience

- Proven experience in a senior IT leadership role, such as CIO, CTO or Director of IT or MIS, within an organisation of significant scale and complexity.
- Strong knowledge of IT infrastructure, cybersecurity, management information systems and digital learning technologies.
- Experience of leading change and continuous improvement across IT infrastructure and data systems.
- Demonstrable ability to analyse complex data and use insights to inform strategic decision making and organisational improvement.
- Experience of building and maintaining effective relationships with a wide range of stakeholders.
- Strong understanding of digital accessibility and inclusion principles.

## Desirable Experience

- Significant experience of leading large scale organisational change programmes.
- Experience implementing cloud-based technologies and AI-driven analytics.

## Knowledge

- A thorough understanding of the digital, data and technology challenges facing the further education sector, wider education, or comparable public sector environments.
- A deep understanding of statutory, regulatory and compliance requirements relevant to IT, data and digital services.

## Personal Qualities and Skills

- A strategic thinker with a vision for digital transformation in education.
- Strong leadership and communication skills.
- Strong creative skills and abilities to deliver innovative solutions to meet the needs of the organisation and its customer-base.



# Terms

## Remuneration

The remuneration for this position will be circa £110,000, dependent upon experience (more may be available for an exceptional candidate).

## Annual Holidays

The annual leave entitlement is 35 days per annum, plus recognised public holidays.

## Pension Scheme

The holder of this post will have access to a the LGPS pension scheme.

## Relocation Package

Relocation support will be in line with HMRC guidelines.

## Checks

This appointment is subject to satisfactory pre-employment references and DBS clearance. We operate a policy of Safer Recruitment under KCSIE Guidance.

# Timeline

The following timeline is indicative and should only be used as a guide. This may be subject to change.

Process	Date
Close for Applications	9am Monday 27 <sup>th</sup> April 2026
Interviews with Dodd Partners	w/c 4 <sup>th</sup> May 2026
Shortlist Meeting	w/c 11 <sup>th</sup> May 2026
Interviews with South Hampshire College Group	Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> May 2026

## How to Apply

Dodd Partners are undertaking the recruitment process on behalf of South Hampshire College Group. If you wish to apply for this position, please supply the following:

- A covering letter highlighting your suitability and how you meet the **Essential Experience** criteria detailed within the Person Specification, along with your current remuneration details.
- A comprehensive CV setting out your career history, with responsibilities and achievements.
- All applications should be emailed to Dodd Partners at your earliest convenience and no later than **9am Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2026**, to [contactus@doddpartners.com](mailto:contactus@doddpartners.com).

Should you wish to have an informal discussion about the role, please contact John Dodd on 07545 431 848 or 01244 738 450. Alternatively, email: [johndodd@doddpartners.com](mailto: johndodd@doddpartners.com)

