

MERGER PROPOSAL CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

For the proposed merger of
Selby College and **Wakefield College**



STRONGER TOGETHER

Date of publication: Thursday 16th December

INTRODUCTION

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the public consultation, which was open from 21st October to 22nd November 2021.

Consultation is an integral part of the merger process. We believe it is vital that all stakeholders of both colleges have a say when significant changes of this nature are planned. We are satisfied that there was opportunity for everyone engaged with both colleges to have their say and to feedback comments.

This report reviews the responses received during the consultation period in full. It also addresses and clarifies issues raised.

Alongside this document, please do also refer to the Merger Consultation Document, which outlines the rationale for our merger proposals,

the positive impact we believe the merger will have and the clear benefits to stakeholders - <https://stronger-together.org.uk/merger-consultation-document>

As you will see, feedback was overwhelmingly in favour of the merger between Selby College and Wakefield College, which is scheduled for 1st March 2022, and we are delighted that we have the support of our stakeholders to progress with our exciting plans. We will take all views expressed into consideration during our detailed planning and onward communications.

Thank you for your support and interest.



Richard Stiff
Chair of Governors,
Selby College

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Stiff'.



Andrew McConnell, OBE
Chair of Governors,
Wakefield College

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. McConnell'.



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CONSULTATION PROCESS

The public consultation period ran from Thursday 21st October to Monday 22nd November, closing at 5.00pm. During this period, we undertook an open and transparent public consultation process to ensure that the views of learners, staff, employers, partners and other key stakeholders were received and used to inform the final merger proposal. To this end:

- The consultation fully complied with statutory requirements for the proposed dissolution of a further education college corporation (in this case, Selby College)
- A detailed merger consultation document was made available to all relevant stakeholders, detailed below, and made available publicly via the websites of both Selby College and Wakefield College, via the joint merger microsite <https://www.stronger-together.org.uk/> and paper copies were made available upon request
- All stakeholders were invited to respond to the consultation questions relating to the merger proposal through a variety of mechanisms, including –
- Online survey - accessible from the merger microsite www.stronger-together.org.uk. An invitation to respond including links to the document and the questionnaire, was sent out via email to all stakeholders
- Promoted via social media
- Paper form – in the ‘Stronger Together’ consultation document – available in both institutions
- By email - to one of two specific addresses set up for the consultation – merger@wakefield.ac.uk and merger@selby.ac.uk
- In writing - to one of the two Clerks to the Corporations
- Three public consultation events and an online consultation event
- Statutory notices were placed as advertisements in the Selby Times (local publication) and The Guardian newspaper (national publication) outlining the planned merger at the start of the process

Stakeholders consulted

We invited comments and feedback from our stakeholders about the proposed merger through an email, which included links to the consultation document and the consultation questionnaire. We sent this to the following stakeholders and groups –

- FE or sixth form colleges
- Schools or academies
- Local authorities
- Members of Parliament
- Education and Skills Funding Agency
- FE Commissioner
- Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Key partners and employers
- Secretary of State for Education

We also welcomed the views of all members of our colleges' communities and encouraged interested parties to feed back their comments or concerns. This included parents, students, staff and local universities, employer groups, third sector organisations and advisory bodies. In all, more than 17,000 emails were sent to stakeholders asking them to engage with the consultation process and to respond to the merger questionnaire.

In addition, we communicated with staff within both colleges throughout the process, through all staff briefings, email communications, frequently asked questions on the staff intranet, corporate news items and advertised drop-in sessions with the Executive and Senior Leadership Teams.

Consultation Meetings

Three public consultation events were held at each of the main sites –

- 5.30pm-6.30pm on Monday 8th November at Wakefield City Centre Campus
- 5.30pm-6.30pm on Thursday 11th November at Selby Campus
- 5.30pm-6.30pm on Thursday 18th November at Castleford Campus

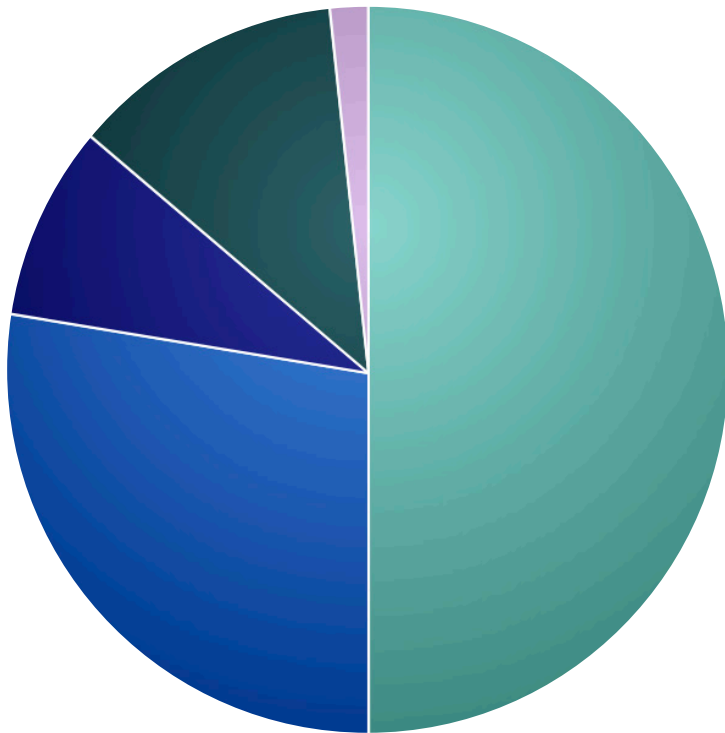
In addition, a number of staff meetings were organised for staff to feed back their views, these were offered at each campus and also online.

OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION

Who responded

We received 58 responses from a range of stakeholders. The vast majority of responses were from college staff. An overview of respondents is provided below –

Respondent Type	Number	Percentage of responses
Current Wakefield College Staff	29	50%
Current Selby College Staff	16	27.6%
External Partners and Employers	5	8.6%
Learners / Parents	7	12.1%
Other	1	1.7%
TOTAL	58	100%





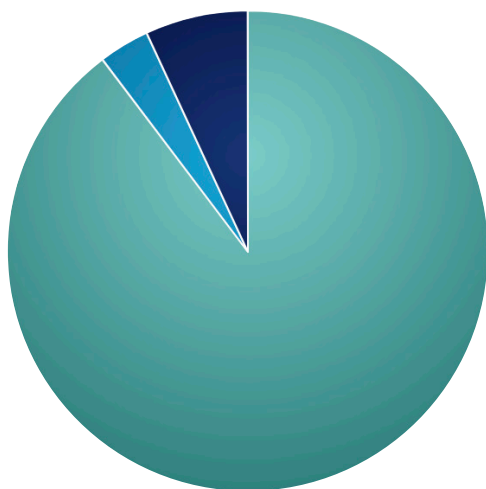
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FEEDBACK ON SPECIFIC QUESTIONS VIA THE MERGER CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1

Do you support the proposal for the merger of Selby College and Wakefield College as outlined in this Merger Consultation Document?

Answer	Number of Responses	%
Yes	52	89.7%
No	2	3.4%
Not Sure	4	6.9%



Examples of positive comments –

- Opportunities to strengthen and consolidate our regional position as an institution, and develop our course offer for our student s/ stakeholders - a course offer that genuinely responds to the demands of our region. The merger, with three well positioned campuses, will help us maintain or improve this. *(Wakefield College Staff Member)*
- It brings together educational communities; lending them to strengthen their positions in the educational sector; at a time that is right. Education is undergoing the greatest change in years with Standards and T levels and the collaboration that can be created through this merger will support the three colleges to grow. *(Wakefield College Staff Member)*
- It will enable the colleges to grow and offer more. *(Employer)*
- I think both colleges will provide excellent opportunities for their students and the local community, including in expansion of their Higher Level Education opportunities *(External Partner)*
- I agree with the value of the merger and the enrichment of the educational offer in the Yorkshire M62 corridor. *(External Partner)*
- The proposals seem fair and reasonable with consideration given to all involved. *(Selby College Staff Member)*

- Excellent opportunity for growth of the College, bigger better more effective team-working, promotion and new job role opportunities. *(Selby College Staff Member)*
- I believe all three colleges can benefit greatly from a group with aligned goals to help improve the learning of all students and help them secure their futures in their desired careers. *(Selby College Student)*
- Growth creates critical mass and improves sustainability. The Authority Boundaries should not hinder the location choices people make and I would like to see East Riding reflected in this given the close proximity to Goole. *(External Partner)*

Examples of concerns expressed/ questions raised –

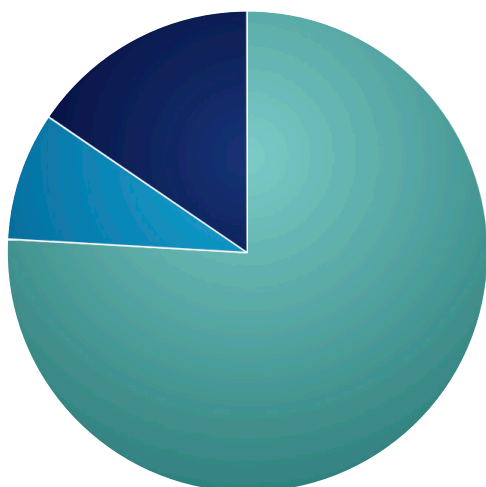
- The long term financial health of the combined college is not sufficiently outlined. *(Former Employee)*
- Selby would be too far for my son to travel if his subjects were moved there. This could disrupt his education if another course/ college needed to be found. *(Wakefield College Parent)*
- I feel Selby College will lose its autonomy. *(Selby College Staff Member)*



Question 2

The proposed name for the newly merged group is Heart of Yorkshire Education Group. Do you support this?

Answer	Number of Responses	%
Yes	44	75.9%
No	5	8.6%
Not Sure	9	15.5%



Examples of positive comments –

- I understand how difficult and long the process must have been to find a suitable group name. This name evokes the passion held by staff. *(Wakefield College Staff Member)*
- It places you geographically, but has a wonderful emotional link – Heart of Yorkshire... *(External Partner)*
- I think the name reflects the ambitions for the local communities and draws them together geographically. I do agree that the names of each individual college should be maintained as that reflects the understanding of students, families and businesses in the local communities. *(External Partner)*

- The location of our three campuses – in Selby, Castleford and Wakefield - means that we will be in the 'Heart of Yorkshire' geographically and our aim is to be the beating heart of the communities we serve, all of which are in Yorkshire. I support this. *(Wakefield College Staff Member)*
- Support this. *(Employer)*
- The name makes sense geographically and is one that evokes a feeling of strength and pride in what we do. *(Selby College Staff Member)*
- Name is simple yet straight to the point. *(Wakefield College Student)*
- It will help students and staff. *(Selby College Student)*
- A proud name for a proud region. *(Wakefield College Staff Member)*

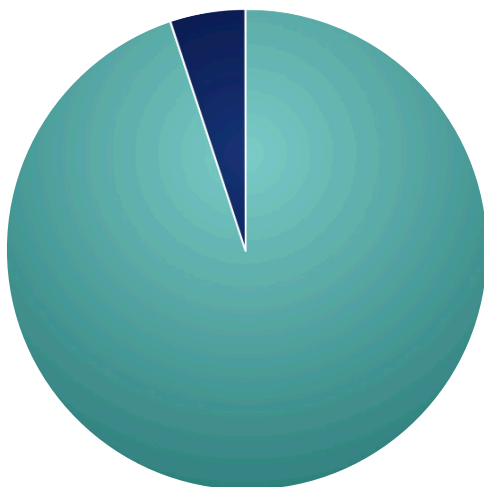
Examples of concerns expressed / questions raised –

- The name is not appropriate in my opinion. It needs to be more serious and academic focused. *(Wakefield College Staff Member)*
- I think the name needs to be shorter and more succinct. *(Selby College Staff Member)*

Question 3

Selby and Wakefield Colleges will retain their individual names and identities and the Castleford Campus will be renamed as Castleford College. Do you support this?

Answer	Number of Responses	%
Yes	55	95%
No	0	0%
Not Sure	3	5%



Examples of positive comments –

- I think it is reassuring that each campus will retain their identity. *(Wakefield College Staff Member)*
- I believe local people and local businesses relate to local service names, the Group name I imagine is more for the strategic overarching strategy. *(External Partner)*
- The individual identities are important for local stakeholders, including students and employers. *(External Partner)*
- Given the geographical distance between each site, giving each centre its own "College" status is fully justified. Castleford students don't necessarily see themselves as "Wakefield College" students, They are "Cas" students. The centres share so many common and standardised aspects, and will continue to do so, but to be recognised as independent colleges will make our offer more transparent. *(Wakefield College Staff Member)*
- Retaining a link with local towns is important to ensure local ownership and support. *(External Partner)*
- While all three colleges will be unified under one Group, they may still have their individual freedoms to retain their own identities and act in the way they see fit to better their students' interests. *(Selby College Student)*

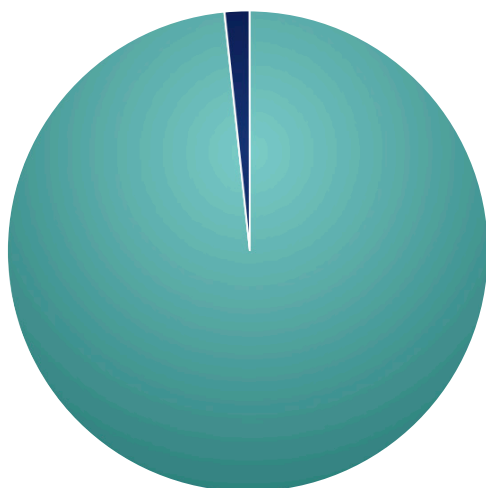
Examples of concerns expressed / questions raised –

- Agree that Selby should keep its name, but not sure about Castleford being named as a College in its own right, I would have thought it would have better positivity still being more linked to Wakefield College as it always has. *(Wakefield College Staff Member)*

Question 4

As a combined group, we plan to offer a high-quality, responsive curriculum, maintain and widen the range of opportunities for students and to expand our employer-focused provision and services. Do you support these aims?

Answer	Number of Responses	%
Yes	57	98.3%
No	0	
Not Sure	1	1.7%



Examples of positive comments –

- Why would any stakeholder disagree?!
(External Partner)
- This is what is required for local business and the communities, as well as meeting student needs. It also meets the Government and LEP agendas and funding needs. (External Partner)
- Any expansion and more opportunities is good. (Wakefield College Parent)
- This is all I want for the education journey of my students , the best possible education experience. (Selby College Staff Member)
- This is absolutely right.
(Wakefield College Staff Member)

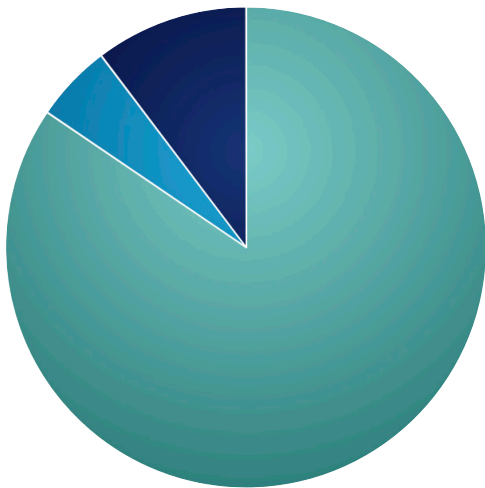
Examples of concerns expressed / questions raised –

- No concerns expressed or questions raised.

Question 5

Do you think all stakeholders of the two colleges, including students, employers, other external stakeholders/partners and staff will benefit from the merger?

Answer	Number of Responses	%
Yes	47	84.5%
No	3	5.2%
Not Sure	6	10.3%



Examples of positive comments –

- I think there will be more opportunities for all, whether that be official benefits or development opportunities. I think the offer for employers and students will be strengthened. *(Wakefield College Staff Member)*
- I believe external stakeholders will benefit from the merger. I believe staff will also benefit if it opens up room for progression, sharing best practices and if both colleges are aligned on staff benefits. *(Selby College Staff Member)*
- As a larger entity with more stable funding the staff are supported and their longer term prospects enhanced. Students will most likely have access to wider learning opportunities and will very likely have enhanced job opportunities linked to businesses served by both partners. *(External Partner)*
- From my personal view, I believe students will benefit greatly from this as well as other stakeholders as a merger can give a better financial position which in turn provides better education and work for all who attend and are employed at the given colleges. *(Selby College Student)*

Examples of concerns expressed / questions raised –

- It does not seem viable that this could be possible. I feel Selby College will be swallowed whole by the larger Wakefield College and lose its identity eventually. This will impact on Selby's individuality. *(Selby College Staff Member)*

Question 6

Any other comments

There were some additional comments within this section.

Examples of positive comments –

- Looking forward to the opportunities, development and learning involved with the merger process as well as the prospects when we have merged.
(Wakefield College Staff Member)
- Working with both colleges it seems clear that they have a similar approach to providing high quality and enriched learning experiences, as well as a broad range of social and work opportunities. Both are well-matched and I wish the two organisations every success.
(External Partner)
- Exciting times ahead!
(Selby College Staff Member)
- I am personally very excited for the merger. I embrace change in a very positive manner. I have worked at Selby College for 19 years and feel a valued part of the Selby community, adding other avenues to this will give better opportunities for myself, the students and our community. *(Selby College Staff Member)*
- I believe this merge can help solidify the three colleges' standings in Yorkshire and improve the given education within our region. This may allow local communities to benefit greatly from this new group and likely allow students to receive high-quality education, improving their chances in their desired careers and career partners to the colleges.
(Selby College Student)

Examples of concerns expressed / questions raised –

- As staff of the current Wakefield College work across both campuses, will we be asked to remain at one? Or will we continue to work across both / all three sites?
(Wakefield College Staff Member)
- Will there be any staff losses as a result of this merger? Will staff be made redundant or not?
(Wakefield College Staff Member)
- My only concern is the amount of pressure on some teams and managers leading up to the merger. *(Selby College Staff Member)*

FEEDBACK FROM THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION EVENTS

Three public consultation events were held at each of the main sites.

No objections to the merger were raised at these events.

FEEDBACK FROM THE STAFF CONSULTATION EVENTS

Three staff consultation events were held at each of the main sites, along with a number of other staff engagement activities and meetings.

A query regarding the transfer of staff with regard to Supporting Futures Selby was raised. This was discussed and the process will be communicated effectively during the TUPE transfer process.

OUR RESPONSE TO CONCERNS RAISED DURING THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Long-term financial health of the College

The colleges have been working together closely since the decision regarding merger was made on 22nd June 2021. We have a clear understanding of the financial position of both and have undertaken a detailed joint financial planning exercise that demonstrates the financial security, strength in merger and long-term financial viability.

Rigorous financial checks have been undertaken during robust due diligence processes conducted on both colleges prior to the decision to merge being made. These due diligence processes have been overseen by external audit companies.

The merger will deliver a college with 'good' or 'outstanding' financial health, even without any changes to the operating model of either party. Our aim will be to deliver a suitably ambitious strategic plan that is predicated on realistic targets for growth, with a fully-costed curriculum plan that is financially sustainable.

Requirement of students to travel between sites

In practical terms, for our students, very little will change. There will be no difference to where students study – they will continue to be a student where they currently learn. Our staff who currently engage with our students, both teaching and support staff, will stay the same, and courses will continue as planned.

There will be no disruption or interruption to the delivery of provision and there will be no requirement for students to travel to different

campuses for curriculum/classes. There may be occasions where it would be beneficial to offer opportunities that engage the wider college community - to enhance the student experience, enrichment, inter-college sport, master classes or guest speakers etc. In this case, we would ensure transport is provided.

Selection of the proposed Group name – Heart of Yorkshire Education Group

The results from the formal consultation process indicate clear and majority support for our new name – 77% were fully supportive and liked the name. Fewer than 10% of respondents did not like the name, for various reasons. The remaining respondents, who were not sure, were not interested in the name or didn't have a clear opinion. We believe this is a wholly positive result – as expected, everyone has a different view on a name and not everyone is going to agree completely!

It should be noted that prior to going out to formal consultation, we undertook a robust pre-consultation, research exercise to determine the proposed name option. This involved consulting with representatives of all stakeholder groups at an early stage in August and September 2021. This involved staff, employers, partners, students and governors - more than 70 individuals in total. We presented several names to them for discussion and feedback, and the preferred option was overwhelmingly Heart of Yorkshire Education Group. We were therefore comfortable with proposing this name throughout our formal consultation process.

College(s) losing their autonomy and identities

We recognise the uniqueness of our existing individual colleges and campuses, and plan to maintain their names and identities underneath the group name Heart of Yorkshire Education Group – with local brands for Castleford College, Selby College and Wakefield College. They are well known and have strong reputations within their specific communities, and we plan to continue to use them with our locally-based stakeholders, in particular local students and parents.

Merger impact on staff

Change is can often be unsettling, particularly if staff feel they don't know what's happening. We have endeavoured to communicate frequently with colleagues in both colleges, and provide reassurance through face to face and online briefings, meetings, regular written updates and responding immediately to questions. We are committed to maintaining a consultative approach with staff throughout all stages of the planning processes.

Delivery of the merger process itself requires additional thinking and planning and, as a result, workloads can increase. We are constantly mindful of this and have been cautious around making immediate changes. We have taken a considered approach to minimise additional work required prior to merger. Of course, we will want to drive forward on change to benefit our students and to ensure the effectiveness of our new institution, but this will be planned carefully, taking into account existing commitments and workloads.

The strength of the financial position for the new group will allow us time to take a measured and meaningful approach to any changes. We are clear that this merger is not being driven by a need to make short term efficiencies or staff cuts. We will work closely with colleagues to understand the strengths and areas for

development to support the delivery of our new strategic objectives.

There are no current plans requiring staff to travel between sites, other than arrangements that are already in place. As we review plans and arrangements post merger we will, of course, consult and communicate with staff on an ongoing basis.

We recognise that our people are the key to us effectively serving the needs of our communities. We want the new organisation to be a great place to work and study; our people are key to the merger success

NEXT STEPS

As this document demonstrates, the overall outcome to the consultation was a majority support for the merger and for the proposed name 'Heart of Yorkshire Education Group. Following on from the Consultation Process, the Boards of both colleges met to approve the merger –

Wakefield College on Tuesday 7th December and Selby College on Tuesday 14th December.

It was agreed that an application be made to legally change the name of Wakefield College Further Education Corporation to Heart of Yorkshire Education Group, which is now in progress.

The merger is scheduled to take place on 1st March 2022.

Full engagement and communication with all stakeholders of both colleges will continue up until the point of merger and beyond.

Please visit www.stronger-together.org.uk for regular updates.

Contact details for further information



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Joint dedicated microsite

www.stronger-together.org.uk



**The
merger is
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Contact Details



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