

North East Skills Advisory Panel

Local Skills Report

March 2022



Contents

Section 1: Foreword	3	Section 4: Skills strategy	22
Overview of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership	3	Strategic skills priorities	24
What is our ambition for 2024?	4	Section 5: Skills action plan	29
Section 2: Skills Advisory Panels – Introduction	5	Recommendations from the evidence base	29
Skills Advisory Panels: the national context	5	Skills Action Plan - Delivering our ambition	29
North East Skills Advisory Panel (SAP)	5	Section 6: Assessment of progress	34
COVID-19 response	6	Key deliverables - What we will deliver between April 2021 and March 2022	34
Section 3: Skills strengths and needs	8	Section 7: Case studies	44
Overview of the North East LEP area	8	Case study one - Industry Insights Sessions	44
Demographics	9	Case study two - Health and Life Sciences Framework Development	45
Qualifications	9	Case study three - Industry Insights Sessions	45
Skills strengths	10	Section 8: Looking forward	47
Areas of opportunity	11	2021 and beyond	47
Inclusive digital skills	14	Investment in skills	49
North East LEP Skills assets - resources and specialist provision	20	References	50
Further Education	20		
Higher Education	20		
Provision that meets skills needs	21		
Specialist technical provision	21		

Section 1: Foreword



Ellen Thinesen

Chair, North East Skills Advisory Panel
Chief Executive, Education Partnership North East.

I'm delighted to contribute to this interim Local Skills Report, as Chair of the Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) for the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (North East LEP) and as the representative for Further Education on the North East LEP Board.

I am passionate about putting investment in skills at the heart of the economic plan for the North East. This is a key driver for the work of the SAP as we continue to develop and strengthen our evidence base. Additionally, the SAP has been critical in providing evidenced challenge and positive feedback to regional plans and national skills policy on behalf of the North East.

Overview of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership

The North East LEP provides strategic economic leadership for the region, working with partners and facilitating the delivery of the North East Strategic Economic Plan. The Strategic Economic Plan provides a strategy for economic growth for the period 2014 – 2024.

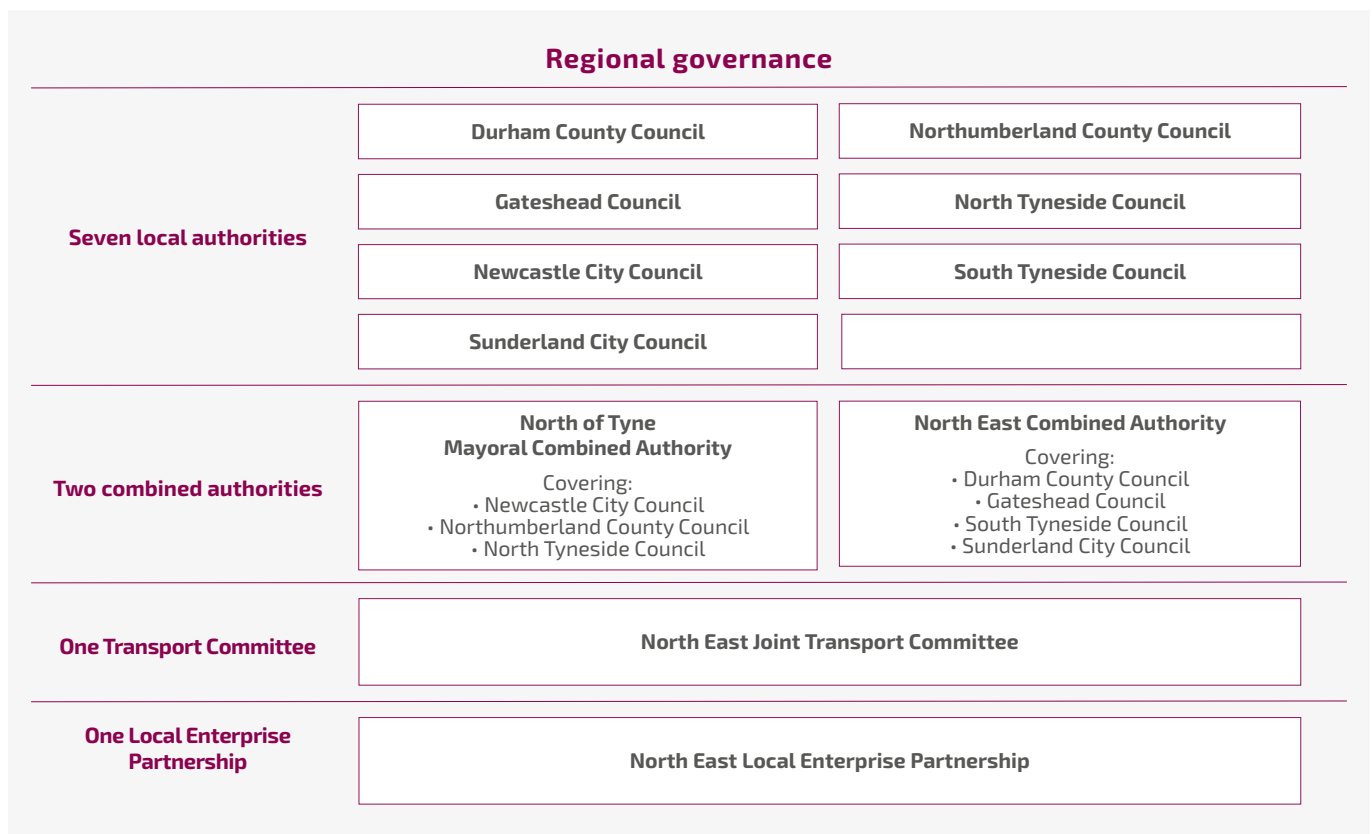


Figure 1 - North East Local Enterprise Partnership Regional Governance Structure - 2020¹

¹ North East LEP, (2020). The North East Strategic Economic Plan – January 2019. Available at: <https://www.nelep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/nel404-sep-refresh-2018-web-new-final.pdf>

Our aim is to create 100,000 more jobs for the North East economy and to ensure that 70% of these jobs are better jobs – a better job is defined as being in managerial, professional and technical roles.

The North East LEP is leading on the delivery of a strategy for employability and skills which will strengthen the North East LEP area's position as a globally competitive region through ensuring the supply of skilled people meets demand from a growing and prosperous business base. It will do this by shifting the skills market in the North East LEP area towards higher level skills and building greater demand for higher skills, be it in response to existing employer needs, projected shortages or new skillsets for emerging opportunities. The aim is to create a landscape where companies (and individuals) realise the benefits of training and see the returns on their investment. A skilled workforce is central to private sector-led growth and the North East LEP area's workforce has a strong reputation for responding to the opportunities presented by a growing and changing economy. By investing public resources and stimulating employer investment in skills, a better functioning labour market can be created that delivers the human capital for our growing economy.

What is our ambition for 2024?

Our long-term ambition for the North East LEP area is that demand for skills and the quality of jobs continue to improve, leading to higher productivity. To deliver this, the North East must be a place where:

- **Individuals**, regardless of age or employment status, have a good understanding of the employment opportunities available in the North East and the pathways to access them
- **Employers** have strong links with education and training providers leading to responsive provision that meets local needs
- **All partners** understand the importance of skills in improving productivity and living standards, with commitment to delivering good working environments for residents.

This is an ambitious vision that will require substantial changes to deliver. By 2024, our ambition is that these principles are understood across the region and that there has been significant progress made towards their achievement, providing a strong base to build on in future years.

- The proportion of the North East LEP area population that is of working age is slightly above the national equivalent but this is driven by an especially large percentage of 55 to 64 year-olds, who are less likely than younger adults to be economically active
- The latest North East LEP area rates of economic activity and employment are higher than in 2014, but still much lower than the England rates. Both rates have decreased since the onset of COVID
- In the past two years, North East employment has particularly decreased among 50 to 64 year olds and among full-time male workers and part-time female workers of all ages. Economic inactivity has recently increased among most age groups with inactivity due to ill health particularly rising
- The number of North East vacancies is more than one and a half times higher than in the pre-COVID year of 2019, with the percentage increase being higher than across England
- In the latest available LEP area data, prior to COVID, fewer North East employers reported skills shortage vacancies than across England. However, in regional survey data from early 2022, a higher percentage than nationally stated that vacancies were more difficult to fill than usual for the time of year
- The working age population of the North East has a lower qualifications profile than England as a whole, however the North East LEP area has made progress on this since 2014, with the percentage with higher level qualifications increasing and the percentage with none decreasing.

Skills, Employment, Inclusion and Progression is one of five inter-related priorities outlined in the North East Strategic Economic Plan. To address the impact of COVID-19, whilst maintaining the drive to create 100,000 more and better jobs, the Skills Advisory Panel has an important function in understanding the North East LEP area labour market, the provision of skills and training and articulating key priorities.

Section 2: Skills Advisory Panels – Introduction

Skills Advisory Panels: the national context

Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) bring together employers, skills providers and key local stakeholders to better understand and resolve skills mismatches at a local level. There are 36 SAPs across England as part of Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships.

The Department for Education (DfE) supports SAPs with grant funding primarily to produce high quality analysis of local labour markets and [Local Skills Reports](#)². The reports set out the local strengths and skills needs and how the SAP proposes its area addresses its key priorities.

North East Skills Advisory Panel (SAP)

The North East Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) is the skills advisory body to the main North East LEP Board. The SAP has oversight of the delivery of regional skills, employment, inclusion and progression programmes and projects, it reports into government and the National Skills and Productivity boards. Along with the North East LEP's executive, it led the 'people' strand of the COVID-19 Economic Response.

The Skills Advisory Panel brings together members to pool knowledge on skills and labour market needs, and to work together to understand and address key local challenges. These include both immediate needs and challenges and looking at what is required to help the North East LEP area adapt to future labour market changes and to grasp future opportunities. It supports colleges, universities and other providers deliver the skills required by employers, now and in the future. Furthermore, this allows us to generate analysis of our local skills and labour markets to understand the local position, to discuss and agree local skills needs priorities in the short-term and long-term, and consider how these will be met through local provision over time.

The role of the SAP also includes:

- Development and oversight of evidence-based regional economic strategies and plans for skills
- Economic leadership, co-ordination and influence – in and for the North East LEP area
- Acting through a programme of delivery
- Where appropriate securing and prioritising investment.

The North East SAP includes representatives from the North East LEP, the North East Combined Authority, North of Tyne Combined Authority, universities, colleges, skills providers and local businesses, illustrated below.

² Department for Education, (2020). Guidance: Skills Advisory Panels. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-advisory-panels>

Table 1 – North East Skills Advisory Panel Members - 2022

Sector / Organisation / Department or Institution	Member name	Title and organisation
Member of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership Board and Chair of Skills Advisory Panel/Employment & Skills Board	Ellen Thinnesen	Chief Executive Education Partnership North East
Portfolio holder for North of Tyne Combined Authority	Councillor Karen Kilgour	Newcastle City Council
Portfolio holder for North East Combined Authority	Councillor Amanda Hopgood	Durham County Council
LEP Executive Team, Skills Director	Michelle Rainbow	North East LEP
LEP Executive Team, Chief Executive	Helen Golightly	North East LEP
Health & Life Sciences Sector	Emma Banks	RA Marketing
Digital Creative & Software Sector	Karen Marshall	Accenture
Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Sector	Sam Harrison	Sterling Pharma Solutions
Subsea and Offshore	TBA	
Advanced Manufacturing	John Barnett	
HE Organisation	Sir David Bell	Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sunderland
FE organisation	Ellen Thinnesen (Chair)	Chief Executive Education Partnership North East
Representatives of key organisations and partnerships supporting the theme	Sandra Brydon	Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
	Paul Butler	North East Automotive Alliance
	TBA	BEIS, Cities and Local Growth
	John Taylor	Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
	Chris Zarraga	Schools North East
	TBA	Trade Union Congress (TUC)
	Karen Routledge	North East Learning Providers
	TBA	North East Chamber of Commerce (NECC)
	Sarah Glendinning	Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
	Carol Botten	VONNE
	Jill Cassells	NHS
	TBA	Department for Education (DfE)
	Reshma Begum	Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)

Skills Advisory Panel Update 2021/22

Since March 2021, the Skills Advisory Panel has continue to provide a single point of coordination between government bodies, regional agencies, education organisations and local authorities for the North East COVID-19 Skills recovery response. Through its membership, which includes organisations such as the CBI, North East England Chamber of Commerce (NEECC), representatives from schools, further and higher education providers and independent providers, small and larger employers, the NHS and government, it has continued to inform and be informed on local, regional and national policy, initiatives and programmes. In addition to its coordination role, the SAP has been developing and leading an evidence based strategy for a long term recovery from Covid-19 in the North East.

Since 2020 the SAP has focused on supporting COVID-19 recovery in the North East.

The SAP has focused on:

- building a robust evidence base, including commissioning research into key growth sectors in the North East
- building and strengthening skills support in key sectors in the North East
- providing young people access to high quality careers guidance
- improving destinations for all young people
- raising skill levels across our workforce, for sustainable employment schemes
- enabling opportunities for lifelong learning
- improving digital skills and access to digital connectivity for every age group
- Exploring and appraising intervention to improve equality and diversity in the workforce.

To support this work, the SAP has undertaken the following actions throughout the year:

- collated and collected monthly data and intelligence
- updated baseline data evidence on:
 - skills supply and demand
 - current and future requirements investment priorities
- commissioned deep dive research, mapping skills supply and demand in key sectors including green energy and health and life sciences
- commissioned research into key priorities of the economic inclusion agenda including digital exclusion in the North East
- provided detailed responses to government regarding the efficacy of interventions especially during the early stages of development
- developed a series of evidence-based inputs into national working groups including the House of Lords Select Committee Youth Unemployment and the Education Select Committee report on Careers Advice and Guidance
- supported the roll out of phase two and three of skills bootcamps
- supported and reported on the roll out of government job recovery programmes including DWP's Restart programme.

The SAP and the North East LEP Skills team are continuing to work with our regional and local partners to ensure that businesses, communities and individuals are aware of and can access employment support and interventions. Schemes including Job Entry Targeted Support and Kickstart, and offers of support through Job Centre Plus and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) including the rapid response team, the National Careers Service and the Skills Toolkit are being promoted through partners, the North East Growth Hub and through a sustained and effective social media campaign to support our businesses and residents.

The focus of future SAP meetings will be forward planning activities to meet Strategic Economic Plan priorities, alongside reviewing and readjusting the North East LEP's skills strategy.

Section 3: Skills strengths and needs

Overview of the North East LEP area

The North East LEP area is the most northerly LEP area in England, located between Scotland, Cumbria, Tees Valley, North Yorkshire and the North Sea. At just over 3,000 square miles, we are the sixth largest LEP area in England by geographic size. The North East LEP area hosts a mix of urban, suburban and rural areas that span our seven local authority areas of County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland. This variety of places and setting provides an excellent living and working environment with high quality of life and includes:

- Three cities:
 - Newcastle that has science, education, culture, digital and service sectors and acts as our transport gateway
 - Durham that is a leading university, science and tourism centre at the hub of a largely rural county
 - Sunderland, home of Nissan's UK-leading automotive manufacturing, has education, culture and a well-established digital software sector.
- Key industrial sites, business parks and innovation hubs, including Cobalt Business Park, Infinity Park, NETPark, Newcastle Helix, Integra 61, Quorum Business Park, the International Advanced Manufacturing Park and 21 Enterprise Zone sites.

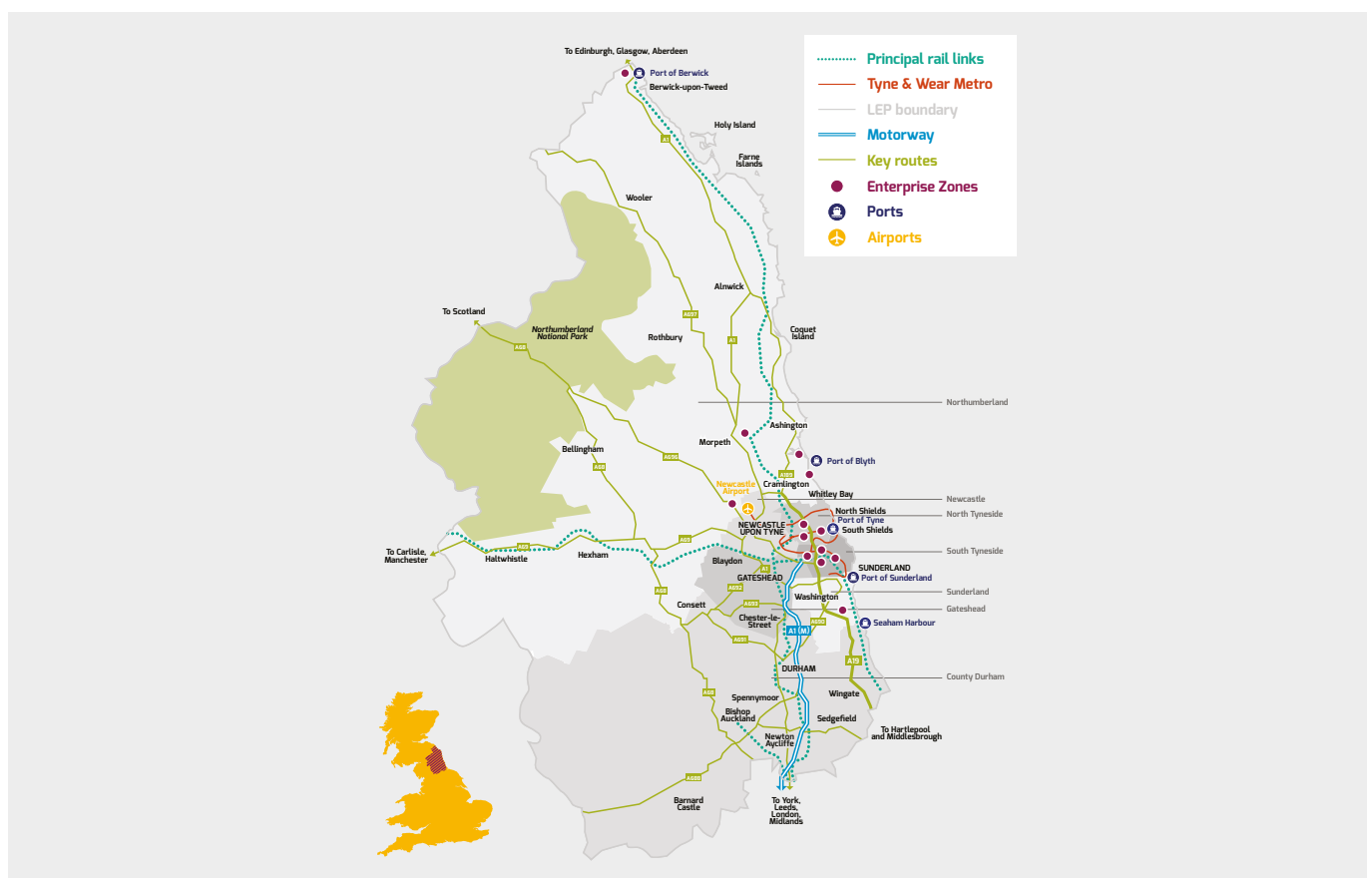


Figure 2 - Key links across the North East LEP area³

³ North East LEP, (2020). The North East Strategic Economic Plan – January 2019. Available at: <https://www.nelep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/nel404-sep-refresh-2018-web-new-final.pdf>

The North East LEP area's communities and economic activities are heavily concentrated around the coast, the area's rivers and major transport routes. Reflecting this, the North East LEP area's five ports (Port of Berwick, Port of Blyth, Port of Sunderland, Port of Tyne and Seaham Harbour) are key assets, alongside Newcastle International Airport. Within the region, we have strong connectivity through public transport, roads, infrastructure and a UK-leading digital infrastructure.

The North East LEP area has a population of just over two million people, the ninth largest LEP area by population; 1.25 million are aged 16 to 64, with 35% of this age group having a degree or equivalent qualification. Our people are friendly, welcoming, collaborative and proud of their history. They have a strong and distinctive sense of place, a capacity for resilience, ingenuity, and a deep and shared passion for our landscapes, cities and culture.

Demographics

In the North East LEP area there is a subtle difference to national trends. Whilst the area exhibits the same ageing trends as the national population, it is growing more slowly, partially driven by lower levels of in-migration and partially by lower life expectancies. In fact, the home population net of migrants falls in more years than it grows, and it also remains less diverse. Whilst this presents some longer-term challenges for the productive capacity of the economy, it does provide a strong rationale for action in the region and means that the population is relatively stable and homogenous, creating a suitable location for testing and pilots.

Overall, these trends create opportunities and challenges for ensuring that older age is healthy and productive, with success in that respect likely to be driven by a combination of social and medical interventions. This therefore provides a key context for health and life sciences sectors in the region.

According to the latest (mid-2020) estimates, the proportion of the population that are of working age (age 16-64) in the North East LEP area was slightly higher than that of England and about one percentage point higher than that of England excluding London. However, the North East LEP area had an older age structure than the comparators, with larger proportions of the population in the 50-64 and 65+ age bands and smaller proportions in the 0-15 and 25-49 age bands. In addition, projected population growth is forecast to be the lowest of the core city LEPs in the next few years. Combining these trends means that there will be 10,300 fewer individuals of working age in the North East LEP area in 2028 than 10 years earlier.

Qualifications

Working-age people in the North East LEP area have a lower qualifications profile than England excluding London, with a higher proportion with no or low qualifications (NVQ Level 1 and 2) qualifications, a lower proportion with high (NVQ Level 4+) qualifications, equivalent to degree level or above. Among the eight core city LEPs, the North East LEP has the lowest percentage of 16-64 year-olds qualified to level four and above and the highest percentage with low or no qualifications.

On a positive note, the qualifications profile of the North East LEP area is beginning to change.

Since 2014 the proportion of 16-64 year-olds qualified to level four and above has increased by 6.4 percentage points. In addition, younger people have a higher qualifications profile than older age groups, with, for example, 46% of 25 to 29 year-olds and 43% of 30 to 39 year-olds in the North East LEP area having level four+ qualifications compared to 31% of 50-64 year-olds. Between 2014 and 2020 the North East had a higher percentage increase than England in the proportion of those aged 16-24, 25-29 and 30-39 qualified to this level.

Skills strengths

Overview

The North East LEP area has seen rapid economic changes over recent decades; new industries have emerged, historic capabilities have been transformed and the North East's communities have continued to evolve.

Capabilities in engineering, marine and sub-sea technologies have been at the heart of its transition to become a global hub for energy and environmental technologies and a leading focus for growth in the renewables sector, with the capabilities to make a significant contribution to the global challenge of decarbonisation.

The region's passion and capacity for making high quality products has attracted global investment, in turn establishing the region as an advanced manufacturing hub for automotive, pharmaceuticals and other sectors and their supply chains.

The North East LEP area is globally focused, with strong export performance in goods and growing service exports. With the right interventions to protect and extend the North East LEP area's trading relationships with Japan, the US, Europe and India, the North East LEP area can build a wider international profile.

The regional area has quickly developed into a recognised hub for the creative industries, with fast growing digital industries and a prominent arts and culture scene.

The share of North East employment is high in public administration, manufacturing, accommodation and food services when compared to the share in England as a whole. In each case, the North East proportion was more than two percentage points higher

The regional area has seen a growing presence in business services, with a significant footprint across financial, professional and business services, international quality consultancy services and emerging new strengths, as technology and digital businesses find new business applications across the economy.

Public services are an underpinning strength to the economy. High quality public health care and education services have provided support to its people, providing ladders of opportunity, skills, and good quality jobs. Together they offer a crucible for ideas, with the deployment of university science creating new opportunities for innovation and translation of health and life sciences, with the potential for ongoing service improvement and new industrial development.

Health and social care, whilst not an 'opportunity area' is an important and large employment sector in the North East. The future workforce demand for health and social care across the UK is startling and the North East LEP area is no exception. Nationally, the NHS employs 1.5 million people. It is the largest UK employer and one of the largest globally. Health is the largest sector of employment in the North East LEP area with 128,000 people employed in 2020 - almost 16% of total employment.

Areas of opportunity

Within the North East Strategic Economic Plan we describe four areas of strategic importance: digital, advanced manufacturing, health and life sciences, and energy. These areas are where we can build a stronger North East economy; one that reinforces our position as a contributor to regional, national and global economic growth.

We also highlight four service sectors: education, financial, professional and business services, transport and logistics and construction. These sectors support the wider economy and offer significant opportunity for 'more and better jobs' in the North East.

Energy

The North East LEP area has significant capabilities in offshore energy and subsea technologies, with these having the potential to contribute to delivering clean growth. Particular areas of expertise include subsea engineering, robotics, planning and development and the design and fabrication of components including pipelines, umbilicals and wind turbine foundations. These are supported by over 7km of deep-water quayside across the Ports of Blyth, Sunderland and Tyne, over 400 hectares of development land, with much of this having Enterprise Zone status, and test and demonstration facilities including the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult's hub at Blyth, which includes the world's largest open-access facilities for testing wind turbines and power, and the only UK centre for testing offshore cables. The North East LEP has developed the *North East Energy for Growth strategy*⁴. This sets out how we can drive growth in the energy sector in the North East while meeting national energy objectives.

The North East LEP's location makes us well-placed to access key offshore wind development sites including Dogger Bank, Firth of Forth and Hornsea. Strengthening deployment in UK markets will create opportunities for the North East to export to global markets for offshore energy and other subsea sectors as they develop.

Deep dive: the green economy

To support our energy strategy The North East LEP is working closely with the Tees Valley Combined Authority, industry and this wider network through [Energi Coast](#) on a joint cluster strategy as one of the key clusters identified in the Offshore Wind Sector Deal.

In a review of the future skills needs of the sector the cluster found:

- Universities should look at offering offshore-specific geoscience, geotechnical, geophysical and civil engineering courses
- Training should focus on the current in-demand skills, such as project management
- Specialist courses are needed to train staff in areas such as fibre optics and cable testing.

Three of the universities in the North East LEP area - Durham, Newcastle and Northumbria - have globally recognised research assets in this sector and host collaborative test facilities such as Tyne Subsea, a collaboration between Newcastle University and BEL Valves, offering leading commercial hyperbaric test facilities.

To support the North East's transition to net zero. The North East LEP commissioned a [rapid review](#) into the green economy.

This rapid review focused on future demand in the green economy, which we defined as those jobs and industries directly contributing to the transition to a low/no carbon economy. The literature reviewed broadly identifies three key segments for future growth in this economy, around:

⁴ North East LEP, (2019). North East Energy for Growth. Available at: <https://www.nelep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/full-strategy-energy-for-growth-strategy.pdf>

- Energy generation – where the review has a particular focus on offshore wind, due to the North East's comparative advantage and specialism in this sector (BEIS, 2019)
- Buildings – including energy efficiency and green construction
- Surface transport – in particular electric vehicles and batteries/storage.

In addition to these, smaller but important growth potential is also identified in a range of other areas including heat networks, hydrogen power (particularly for high-use industries), carbon capture and storage, and green services (like finance, consulting and IT).

Recent estimates by the ONS suggest that around 225,000 people were directly employed in low carbon and renewable energy in 2018, and that this was growing by between 5,000 and 10,000 jobs a year. This is equivalent to around 0.7% of all employment. The ONS estimated that just over 150,000 of these jobs (more than two thirds) were in energy efficiency and monitoring, with around one in six jobs in energy (of which 7,000 were in offshore wind) and around one in 16 in low emission vehicles.

Focusing in on skills demand and supply in the North East specifically, as noted the North East has a specific existing competitive advantage on offshore wind and is identified in the Offshore Wind Sector Deal as a key industrial cluster (BEIS, 2019). Previous research for the North East LEP suggests that, based on current and planned offshore wind projects, direct and supply chain employment in offshore wind in the North East would peak at 4,600 jobs in 2025, with potentially a further 2,500 indirect jobs created in supporting services (Cambridge Econometrics, 2020).

This would equate to a little under 1% of total employment (0.6%) but a higher share of employment growth over the next two decades. However looking beyond offshore wind, the analysis by Ecuity – using Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) data and SIC mapping to estimate jobs demand by English region – estimates that the entire low carbon economy will add 84,000 jobs in the North East. This equates to 7% of all low carbon jobs, which suggests that the North East stands to disproportionately benefit from the green economy (as it accounts for 4% of all employment in England) (Ecuity, 2020).

This jobs growth and associated skills demand reflects the fact that the areas with highest growth potential – buildings, heating and energy efficiency – do not have the same regional biases that industries like manufacturing, power generation and the service sector have. It may also reflect that the North East is one of the regions with the highest per capita energy efficiency needs in the UK (BEIS, 2020). In addition, analysis for the North East LEP emphasises key strengths (i.e. skills supply and demand) in innovation, infrastructure, supply chains and its existing skills base (Cambridge Econometrics, 2020), driven in particular by specialisms in North East universities and industrial research and development facilities (NELEP, 2020).

Advanced manufacturing

Manufacturing accounts for 16% of the North East's GVA, with specialisms in automotive and other vehicle manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and chemicals. The North East LEP area's manufacturing industries are key contributors to regional GVA, employment and productivity and the region has managed to retain a higher proportion of the regional economy in manufacturing than might have been expected relative to other comparator areas. Further sectoral and supply chain growth focused on those businesses in the region and through strengthened trade and investment will continue to add value.

The regional area is also seeking to strengthen innovation performance in manufacturing through a number of programmes and initiatives which focus on the economic sustainability of manufacturing, the shift to greener processes and products, and through a focus on digitisation. This drive to make North East LEP area manufacturing smarter and greener and to sustain and grow trade and inward investment will make important contributions to the future of mobility, clean growth and ageing society Grand Challenges and will

be affected by the innovative technologies that are driving the AI and Data Grand Challenge. North East LEP area sectors are also able to contribute prominently to key Sector Deals, in particular, the Automotive Sector Deal, Chemicals and Life Sciences. Key assets include:

In automotive, Nissan in Sunderland is the largest car plant in the UK, representing 30% of UK production capacity and 20% of Europe's electric vehicle construction. It is supported by over 240 businesses, including 28 tier one suppliers and Europe's largest battery factor. Other vehicle manufacturers in the region include Komatsu, Caterpillar, Cummins (heavy construction and off-road equipment) and Hitachi (rail).

There are 14 pharmaceutical manufacturers in the regional area, including the large multinationals GSK and MSD and contract development and manufacturing organisations including Arcinova, Aesica, High Force Research, Sterling Pharma Solutions and Piramal. The region has particular expertise in high potency and continuous manufacturing. Key chemicals businesses in the region include AkzoNobel, Procter and Gamble, Thomas Swan and Kilfrost.

Deep dive: skills challenges posed by electrification in the automotive sector

The arrival of commercial lithium ion batteries some 10 years ago put in motion a transition away from the internal combustion engine to electric vehicles (EVs). This is creating a disruptive transformation in the UK automotive industry. Transition and growth of industry could result in skills shortages at all levels; conversely, downturns can provide opportunities.

The critical factor in the effective transition is the setting and control of equipment which will require a level of explicit knowledge supported by the transfer of tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge can be codified and passed on through apprenticeships and courses. Tacit knowledge can only be gained through time either at a plant or gained through hands-on learning. Creating an environment to deliver off-the-job explicit training and allowing a degree of tacit knowledge to be developed in an individual is costly. Therefore, the transition to EVs could be disrupted by skills shortages.

The UK has a robust and established skill delivery ecosystem, in both the public and private sectors. As a result, the current UK workforce has, and is currently being trained to, a level which for most with 'top up' training would allow a transition to a new technology (battery) workplace. The current trend of automation, and codifying a process to minimise operator tacit knowledge or the division of labour, has created an industry methodology of 'up skilling' with explicit knowledge. This requires an entry 'ticket' of knowledge (implicit), followed by training in the key attributes of the specific process.

To quantify the problem the industry needs to establish: the volume of new workers needed to enter the workforce, the type and number of current workers who may need reskilling/up skilling, and an identification of parallel industries from which we might draw talent. There is the possibility, as other process industries become more automated (accelerated post COVID-19) job poaching could be significant.

The North East LEP has commissioned research to evaluate the supply needs of skilled staff, together with a review of the current UK education system in the UK and in the North East region. The objective of the research is to investigate the education system's suitability to support an emerging UK battery manufacturing ecosystem. The education focus is on content from both Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE), with a consideration of private and in-house training provision, a key point being that the FE sector is the principal supplier of the skills required for a production facility, and not a university. The research also reports on the skills sector operation/delivery and its robustness.

Summary of findings

Currently there are no formal battery specific training courses aimed at manufacturing/production, and the current training provision is delivered on economic return and not national need. Access to skills is very

much dependant on the potential learner's location and the funding streams available, not for the person but to make the training offer worthwhile for a provider. Interviews suggest that if localised demand is not of a profitable level then training will not be provided.

Recruitment: The conclusion from recruitment specialists is that there is no large-scale skill shortage of people with the base skills, but a shortage of people with the required skills. The main grade where there is a potential shortage to a level where factories may not be able to operate effectively is maintenance/process technicians. People with the correct level of skills can be and are trained to operate manufacturing processes, however, the jobs market has a self-regulating mechanism and any short-term demand for specific people profiles will result, in simple terms, in poaching of staff from similar industry almost certainly in the same locality. Battery/supplier companies, we suggest, will only outsource skills which are generic.

Recommendations:

- The UK has an existing talent pool of technicians with the capability to transfer to battery technology. These implicit skills, which can be transferred from one technical sector to another, are already in existence in the UK.
- Currently there are no national formal battery/materials specific training courses aimed at manufacturing/production staff, and the current FE training provision is delivered on economic return and not national need.
- Any curriculum needs to provide a series of short modules covering all aspects of battery technologies, and be offered as a top-up course to existing technicians. The availability of such modules within the UK will reduce some of the need for training at a mother-plant, many of which are overseas, creating cost efficiencies and reducing the time to production commencing. The modules should cover topics such as handling, safety, quality, measurement and integrity of the product. These should be delivered through classroom or e-learning, ensuring accessibility of the material and training, accredited and developed to a consistent and agreed standard.
- Management training is also required including higher level courses on the overall topic of EV manufacturing and incorporating relevant CPD courses.
- The development of the curriculum should begin now in order to ensure training is available to complement any new battery/process manufacturing activity in the UK.
- Dedicated funding is required to support the development of the curriculum where a market currently does not exist, or is in its infancy of development.

Health and Life Sciences

*Our strategy for regional growth and national change in health, life sciences and medicines manufacturing*⁵

Working with and through the North East Health and Life Sciences Steering Group, the North East LEP has co-ordinated the development of the Health and Life Sciences Growth Strategy. It sets out how the region can deliver a strong contribution to the aims of the Strategic Economic Plan through a focus on its established pharmaceutical manufacturing cluster, its range of health and life sciences capabilities in business and research, and its excellent public health services and supporting ecosystem. Together, these assets provide a compelling opportunity and competitive advantage for the region, with the potential to contribute to transformation of the productivity and structure of employment in the region, in turn inducing a wider set of economic benefits.

⁵ North East LEP, (2021). Our strategy for regional growth and national change in health, life sciences and medicines manufacturing. Available at: <https://www.northeastlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/hlsciences-full-strategy-final-1.pdf>

The North East has extensive life sciences, health research and innovation expertise, UK leading NHS trusts for both the quality of their health services and their research engagement, and a significant cluster of innovative life sciences businesses and pharmaceuticals manufacturers, supported by Catapult facilities.

There are about 1,500 people in the North East LEP area working in around 85 enterprises undertaking health and life science innovation. There are also about 4,000 working in advanced pharmaceutical manufacturing. More broadly, about 125,000 people are employed in human health and social work activities and there are almost 70,000 health professionals and associate professionals.

Deep dive: digital skills in health and life sciences

The future workforce demand for health and social care across the UK is startling and the North East is no exception.

Nationally, the NHS employs 1.5 million people. It is the largest UK employer and one of the largest globally ([Nuffield Trust, 2020](#)). According to a recent (currently draft) report by Ortus Economic Research, the health and social care sector in the North East employs 125,000 people, accounting for 15% of total employment (above the national average).

Although NHS staff shortages have been reported for several years, the trend continues and (with an ageing population and workforce) the situation is likely to deteriorate further. In 2018, the reported national shortfall of NHS staff was already over 100,000 and the projected shortfall to 2030 was 250,000 ([The Health Foundation, 2018](#)). The North East is identified as a relatively stable region in terms of staff, i.e. it has the highest rates of staff who stay in the NHS (this is a different measure than staff turnover, which focuses on those who leave). This has however, as with all regions, decreased slightly since 2010/11 (from around 91% to 89%). That is, 89% of staff employed at the beginning of the year remained in their role at the end of the year. This still means that one in 10 staff do not ([The Health Foundation, 2019](#)).

In 2019, there were 122,000 national vacancies in social care ([The King's Fund, 2020](#)) and projections suggest that 320,000 more social care staff will be required by 2029/30 ([The Health Foundation, The King's Fund and Nuffield Trust, 2018](#)). Recent North East specific research gave a 'base case' projection of 22,500 new social care jobs being needed by 2035 ([Skills for Care, 2020](#)).

Future skills needs

Technology is transforming the health and social care sector. Although there has been high-profile failure to digitise secondary care ([National Audit Office, 2020](#)), with the sector often characterised as a technological laggard, change is happening and will happen.

The English GP sector began digitising in the 1980s and, by the mid-2000s, was almost fully digital ([Robert M. Wachter, 2016](#)). The NHS has committed to giving every patient the right to online GP consultations within the next five years. The NHS app will create a standard online way for people to access NHS services ([NHS, 2019](#)). The NHS has also promised, over the next decade, to have 'redesigned' hospital support to reduce outpatient appointments and to ensure that all clinicians have access to patient records (with decision support and AI), wherever they are ([NHS, 2019](#)).

Over the next two decades, it is anticipated that 90% of all jobs in the NHS will require digital skills ([Health Education England, 2019](#)). It is, therefore, critical that this element of their role is addressed in early training and at every stage of their professional development ([Robert M. Wachter, 2016](#)).

Technologies predicted to be widely utilised within the sector include genomics, enabling the prediction of health conditions and the targeting of specialist preventative and treatment strategies ([Health Education England NHS, 2019](#)). This is something that will pervade all roles involved in the delivery of patient care and most clinical staff will need to be able to understand and share genomic findings digitally ([The Health Foundation, The King's Fund and the Nuffield Trust, 2019](#)).

A 'digital readiness indicator for health and social care' has been developed in the Building a Digital Ready Workforce Programme, a cross-organisational programme between Health Education England and NHS Digital, that is part of the Government's Digital Transformation Portfolio. This includes being digitally willing (individual attitudes and organisational drivers) and digitally able (skills and technology) ([Warwick Institute for Employment Research, June 2018](#)).

In practice however, while formal training is required for high-level jobs, on the job and peer-to-peer learning may be more successful ways of ensuring that the wider workforce has the specific digital skills that it needs ([Warwick Institute for Employment Research, June 2018](#)). Indeed, some literature suggests that clinicians already have the digital skills they need ([The King's Fund, 2016](#)). It is important that the focus is on creating a high level of intuitive usability in the technology applications. Training should not be used as a short-cut to achieving this end goal ([Robert M. Wachter, 2016](#)).

Crucially, without the recruitment of individuals with a blend of informatics and clinical skills into leadership teams, the digitisation of the sector will continue to be slow and troublesome. A major barrier to the roll out of the NPfIT programme to digitise secondary care was the absence of workforce with experience of both large-scale IT implementation and the health service. As well as the education of front-line providers, there will be a need for training of clinician and non-clinician informaticians and an investment in leadership skills ([Robert M. Wachter, 2016](#)).

Supporting sustained transformation

A recent research report on North East employers in the health and care sector found that 18% of survey respondents from the sector reported a digital skills gap, however this dropped to just 5% post COVID-19. Indeed, around a third of employers reported that their staff were fully proficient, with over 30% of health care respondents and around 17% of social care respondents not anticipating any increase in the need for digital skills. Although this supports the argument that digital proficiency may be latent among the workforce, it perhaps masks a bigger issue.

Although COVID-19 will have acted as a catalyst for the rapid adoption of digitisation in how staff communicate with one another and those that they care for, the sector remains at the early stages of realising the transformation that will come with the full adoption of technology. It could be argued that the most important aspect of the technological advancement of the sector is not the digital skills of the general workforce, but the provision of the infrastructure that will support them to make iterative improvements happen over a sustained period ([The King's Fund, 2020](#)).

Digital

Digital for Growth Strategy⁶

There are about 2,200 digital businesses in the North East LEP area. This number has increased by 18% since 2015; bigger than the 14% increase nationally. North East LEP area digital businesses are more likely to have 10 or more employees than nationally (6%, compared to 5%). Most North East LEP area digital businesses (59%) undertake 'computer consultancy activities', but this is a lower percentage than nationally (63%). 19% of North East LEP area digital businesses are involved in business and domestic software development, compared to 17% nationally.

There are 24,000 people in the North East LEP area employed in digital industries. This is 2.9% of the total in employment, the same percentage as nationally, but higher than the North of England as a whole (2.4%). The North East LEP area percentage is the third highest among the eight core city LEP areas with only the West of England (3.8%) and Leeds City Region (3.0%) having larger proportions of workers within these industries. The number employed in these industries in the North East LEP area increased by 9% between 2015 and 2018, a larger percentage change than nationally (6%).

⁶ North East LEP, (2019). Digital for Growth The North East's Digital Strategy. Available at: <https://www.northeastlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/digital-for-growth-strategy.pdf>

Deep dive: digital exclusion in the North East

In March 2021 the North East LEP and its SAP commissioned [research](#) into the nature and extent of digital exclusion in the North East, focusing primarily on the economic and skills-related impacts of digital exclusion.

Indicator	North East	England Average
Proportion of people offline	8%	5%
Proportion with low levels of digital engagement	32%	28%
Confidence in using the internet	83%	86%
Digital skills improvement during Covid	23%	29%
Passive and uncommitted internet users	32%	20%

It is difficult to quantify the extent of digital exclusion in the North East because there is limited data available at a regional and sub-regional level. Nevertheless, available data indicates that the region is one of the worst affected in the UK. Office of National Statistics data for 2020 indicates that in the North East there were approximately 61,000 lapsed users (those who last used the internet more than three months ago) and 176,000 adults who had never used the internet. The number of lapsed users was at its highest since 2015 but the number of non-users had fallen in each year since the start of the data in 2014. Feedback gathered during the research also indicates that digital exclusion impacts learners across the North East, particularly in settings with a higher proportion of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. The key barriers they face are lack of access to devices, broadband connectivity and lack of parental support.

Attitudes towards digital exclusion

Reasons for not using the internet

Research undertaken for the Broadband Stakeholder Group⁷ prior to the COVID-19 pandemic showed that, generally speaking, adults who don't use the internet don't feel that they are missing out by not being online. The research showed that, of those who are non-users of the internet, 60% (asked openly) and 70% (prompted) said they were not online because they were uninterested in using the internet or uncertain of its benefits. In addition:

- 75% did not feel that they are missing out
- 79% believed they were unlikely to use the internet in the future
- 51% felt proud that they did not use the internet
- 71% of those aged 65+, compared with 58% of those aged 45–64, were uninterested in using the internet
- 73% of female non-users were uninterested compared with 65% of males
- 95% of those aged 65+ say they are unlikely to use the internet in the future, compared with 78% of those aged 45–64.

The reasons for not using the internet were multifaceted, however. As well as a lack of interest or uncertainty about its benefits, when prompted non-users also identified other reasons for not being online:

- Concerns about internet safety, security or privacy (76% of non-users)
- Not knowing how to use the internet, or not having the skills to do so (70%)
- Concerns about accidentally accessing harmful or illegal content (54%)
- Cost/value for money (48%)
- It being too late to learn (46%).

⁷ ComRes, Digital Exclusion Research, 2019, <http://www.broadbanduk.org/2019/02/19/bsg-looks-into-why-the-offline-are-offline/> (Survey of 1,000 recent users and non-users of the internet)

The research suggests that some of these issues are mutually reinforcing. For example, non-users worried that they would be at even greater risk of being a victim of hacking or online crime because of their lack of understanding of how the internet works. A lack of confidence or lack of digital skills reinforced a perception that it would be easier to continue to do things without the internet.

Wider impacts of digital exclusion

Digital exclusion is having an impact on educational attainment and employment outcomes.

- It is creating challenges and widening the achievement gap in education, particularly for learners from more disadvantaged backgrounds
- As well as impacting on academic performance and results, it impacts on progression into employment and access to good quality jobs
- It increases the gap for those who are already furthest from the job market
- Many employment support clients lack the devices, skills and confidence to search and apply for jobs online and complete online interviews
- Lack of digital skills presents a major barrier to clients being able to secure work, even in low skilled and entry level jobs
- The move up the career ladder from low-skill to high-skill jobs comes with increased demand for specific digital skills.

92% Businesses who say digital skills are important for their employees

82% Current online vacancies that require digital skills

28% North East employers with skills gaps who say basic digital skills need improving

23% Businesses who say their employees lack basic digital skills

Source: WorldSkills UK, Learning and Work Institute and Enginuity; DCMS, No Longer Optional: Employer Demand for Digital Skills; and DfE, Employer Skills Survey

The digital skills gap

According to the 2019 Employer Skills Survey, 20% of North East employers with a skills shortage vacancy said they found computer literacy or basic IT skills difficult to obtain from applicants. 26% said they found advanced or specialist IT skills difficult to obtain.

Top 4 IT skills that need to be improved (North East employers with an IT skills gap)

33% Basic Microsoft Office skills

18% Specialist software or hardware / internal systems

18% Foundation digital skills

17% Advanced Microsoft Office skills

Source: Department for Education, Employer skills survey 2019

Despite the importance of digital skills in the workplace, research indicates that employer investment in training in the UK is low compared to other advanced economies and has declined in recent years. Data from Make it Click (2020) shows:

- Fewer than 40% of UK business leaders think employers bear most responsibility for keeping employees' digital skills up to date
- 38% say employees are responsible and 5% say government is responsible
- 20% say they do not have funds to train employees on the job.

Research shows that many individuals recognise the need to improve their IT and digital skills in order to improve their employability and job prospects.

88%	Young people who say digital skills will be essential for their future career
62%	Young people confident they have the basic digital skills employers require
18%	Young people confident they have the advanced digital skills employers require
59%	UK employers who say improving digital skills is important to employability post-pandemic
57%	Furloughed workers who want to improve their digital and IT skills

Source: WorldSkills UK, Learning and Work Institute and Enginuity; Microsoft research; Make it Click

Summary of key research themes

- People from disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionately affected by the digital divide
- There is a lack of co-ordinated activity and no structured approach at a regional or national level and tackling the problem requires ownership
- There has been a loss of learning for students during the pandemic, particularly for disadvantaged and less able pupils, which has further widened the disadvantage gap
- More widely, digital exclusion has negative impacts on engagement with learning, access to resources, quality of work, educational outcomes and progress into employment
- Early intervention and consistent approaches to digital skills development are needed to close the digital divide
- Digital skills are increasingly essential for most jobs, even at entry level. However, there is a lack of clarity about basic digital skills and no common framework to assess and develop these skills
- There is a need for more short, focused interventions to develop practical digital skills for work or life, delivered in informal community settings.

North East LEP area skills assets - resources and specialist provision

The North East LEP area has the full range of educational settings and provision. Across the constituent seven local authorities there are 807 primary schools and 225 secondary schools (DfE). These are made up from:

- Academies - government funded but run by an academy trust rather than a local authority
- Colleges - providing full-time study at key stage four
- Independent schools - privately funded
- Maintained schools - government funded and run by a local authority
- Special schools - schools that specialise in educating pupils with special educational needs.

Within the North East LEP area there are two University Technical Colleges, one with a specialism of engineering and the other with a specialism of digital and health and life sciences.

The percentage of all North East LEP area pupils achieving the expected level in reading writing and maths at the end of key stage two has been above the England average since 2015. However, outcomes at key stage four are significantly lower than in other regional areas and the progress made at secondary school is below the national level. It is worth noting that contextual factors do not feature as part of these performance indicators. The proportion of secondary schools judged as good or outstanding is also below the national average (2019) while the proportion of primary schools in those categories is above the England average.

Further education

In the North East LEP area, further education (FE) is delivered across a range of nine FE colleges, independent learning providers (ILPs), other publicly funded organisations, higher education institutions (HEIs), schools and sixth forms. We know that colleges are strategic leaders in their locality to ensure an effective skills system that responds to the needs of local communities and businesses.

Colleges and independent learning providers are also key partners for translating the North East LEP's economic vision of 'more and better jobs' into a reality.

- A recent survey of FE colleges recorded a strength in engineering and manufacturing technology, indicating that the North East has a well-developed strength in education in this sector subject area
- The majority of skills facilities were built or have undergone major refurbishment in the last 15 years and are generally well equipped for modern teaching, enabling them to quickly respond to a virtual mode of teaching in line with COVID-19 restrictions
- There are 358 independent learning providers delivering FE level training to residents in the North East LEP area, as well as schools/sixth forms, HEIs and other public sector organisations delivering FE level learning and training⁸.

Higher education

The higher education institutions in the North East LEP area play a vital role helping to build a strong regional economy, from their contribution to innovation, social mobility and workplace productivity, to the role they play in bringing skills and investment to the North East's economy.

Higher education is delivered by four universities:

- Newcastle University
- The University of Sunderland
- Durham University
- Northumbria University.

⁸ Department for Education, (2020). Statistical data set: Further education and skills data. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-further-education-and-skills>

Provision that meets skills needs

Across the education and skills sector, there have been a number of developments to ensure the offer is economically relevant and developing to meet emerging skills needs:

- **Northumberland College STEM Hub** – state-of-the-art facilities in healthcare (Health Hub), a digital academy and a STEM hub (engineering, advanced manufacturing, renewables, network engineering, health science and pharmaceutical)
- **Mathematics School 2022** – Durham University in partnership with Durham Sixth Centre will open a new flagship mathematics schools to help raise attainment in mathematics and other STEM subject areas
- **Eagles Community Arena** – a community venue for sports participation, vocation training, health and wellbeing provision and events
- **Beacon of Light** – a strategic regeneration and skills capital project focusing on education, health and wellbeing, sport and play and the world of work (providing employability skills), delivered in partnership with the Stadium of Light Foundation
- **East Durham College, Rural Skills** – a major redevelopment and refurbishment of Houghall Campus including construction of a consolidated building for students with high educational needs and an extended offer in land-based, wildlife management, agriculture, small animal care, vet nursing and equine training
- **South Tyneside College Marine School** – refurbishment of marine and offshore technology facilities to increase capacity for students
- **Blyth Education and Community Hub** – a training centre for offshore and wind energy technologies, in partnership with Newcastle University
- **Bishop Auckland College** – structural investment in South West Durham Training building which dates back to the 1960s
- **TyneMet College STEM & Innovation Centre facilities** – providing STEM vocational training to support engineering and manufacturing local industries
- **South Shields Metro Training Maintenance Skills Centre** – improved maintenance facilities supporting more comprehensive training, apprenticeships and skills opportunities for Nexus and Metro staff
- **The Common Room** – providing modern facilities including training workshops and lectures, bringing local engineering businesses and learners together to halt the outflow of engineering skills from the region and to encourage study in the field of engineering
- **Sunderland College** – transformation of Bede Campus to include a 360-degree immersive visualisation dome that will allow students to train in several virtual reality environments
- **Tyne Coast College** – relocation to modern facilities in South Shields town centre.
- **Derwentside College** – expansion of construction workshops

Specialist technical provision

North East Institute of Technology

The North East Institute of Technology (IoT), led by New College Durham, is delivered through a partnership of Sunderland College, East Durham College, Middlesbrough College, Tyne Coast College and NA College Trust, working alongside strategic partners, Nissan, EshGroup and Newcastle University, to deliver quality higher-level technical training in subjects such as digital, advanced manufacturing and engineering. The IoT aims to help close skills gaps in STEM areas and focus on the specific technical skills required to provide employers with the skilled workforce they need, using professional grade equipment to help produce work- ready employees.

Section 4. Skills strategy

Enhancing our region's skills base is essential to improving our economic performance. Investment in skills helps individuals access available employment opportunities, establish businesses and build careers. At an economy-wide level, it helps drive productivity growth and social mobility.

This investment will be most effective if it reflects the skills needed by employers, ensuring alignment between labour demand and supply. This is particularly important at the current time, as the region's economy, pre COVID-19 pandemic, was going through a period of transition.

Compared to the national position, the North East LEP area has fewer employment opportunities per head, resulting in a lower employment rate. The North East LEP area also has a lower qualifications profile with a larger proportion of individuals having no qualifications and a smaller proportion with high level qualifications (degree level or above) than nationally. The North East also has lower earnings, with median weekly full-time employee pay only 87% of the England equivalent. Whilst full-time employee pay increased by 12% between 2014 and 2021, this was the lowest rate of growth among the five core city LEP areas where comparative data is available, and the gap with England has increased. The North East has lower levels of in-migration, from both the rest of the UK and internationally. In particular, most graduates employed in the North East grew up here and/or studied here – with the region not attracting those from other regions.

However, the North East LEP area's labour market is undergoing a significant shift, although some trends have been slowed or reversed due to the impact of COVID. In the six years after the publication of the North East Strategic Economic Plan⁹ in 2014, employment grew by almost 70,000, with this increase being driven by growth in managerial, professional and technical roles. During that six year period unemployment and economic inactivity had also decreased, with particularly strong improvements for women. Since early 2020 employment has decreased, while unemployment and economic inactivity have increased, although the changes have not been large enough to completely wipe out the improvements in the pre-COVID period.

We had seen increasing qualification levels, with the proportion of those in the North East LEP area with high level qualifications increasing and the proportion with no qualifications decreasing. There have been particularly strong increases in the proportion of young people (aged 20-24) qualified to degree level and above.

Whilst each of these trends are to be welcomed, any period of change in the labour market tends to lead to issues of mismatch. For example, businesses in the North East are more likely to report difficulties in recruiting professional and skilled trade workers than the national average. This suggests that the supply of workers with these skills has not kept up with the increasing demand. Similarly, increasing demand for digital skills is leading to mismatches.

Other significant challenges include:

- Whilst primary school performance is amongst the best in the UK, the North East has poorer outcomes at secondary level and significant variation across schools
- Fewer North East school leavers going on to attend the top performing UK universities
- Employers are under-investing in the training and workforce development with this being particularly acute in some sectors.

⁹ North East LEP, (2020). The North East Strategic Economic Plan – January 2019. Available at: <https://www.nelep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/ne1404-sep-refresh-2018-web-new-final.pdf>

Looking forward, the North East has several strengths that it can draw on to deliver excellent quality employment opportunities and earning potential for residents including:

- The region performs well in relation to the number of students (at school, college and university-level) studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. However, increasing demand will mean that further take-up is required
- There is a high quality of technical education in the region. Apprenticeships have historically been an important part of North East skills provision and uptake of higher and degree apprenticeships is higher than the national average
- The North East has a strong and diverse university sector, with over 85,000 students studying at four universities. The sector is outward-focused, with over 17,000 international students and campuses in Malaysia and Singapore (Newcastle University) and Hong Kong (University of Sunderland)
- The North East's schools, colleges and universities are rated highly. 21% of North East schools are rated as outstanding by Ofsted, with a further 61% rated as good. Primary school performance is amongst the best in the UK

Key inclusion challenges include:

- A number of communities that were severely affected by previous periods of economic change and have not yet recovered
- Lower levels of social mobility and progression within the North East had historically been exacerbated by a lack of good quality careers guidance and understanding of progression opportunities
- It is envisaged that the EU transition will create challenges for several sectors that draw heavily from a migrant workforce and/or are labour intensive. These include agriculture, construction, contact and customer services centres, health and social care, hospitality and retail
- Some groups are more likely to be out of work than others, including those with health issues and disabilities
- There is growing evidence of in-work poverty across the UK and we need to ensure that the North East focus is on creating opportunities that offer good wages, hours and working conditions to provide opportunities to move out of poverty.

Strategic Skills Priorities

In response to the skills needs outlined in section three, we have identified the following strategic skills priorities, aligned to the Strategic Economic Plan priority of skills, employment, inclusion, and progression.

Table 3 – Strategic skills priorities

Deliver North East Ambition	Build on the success of the Gatsby Good Career Guidance Benchmark pilot with schools, colleges and employers, delivering outstanding careers guidance from primary education to employment.
Deliver Education Challenge	Work with partners to support school leaders, teachers and governors to reduce the gap between our best and lowest performing schools and to ambitiously aim that all students have the opportunity to be educated in good or outstanding schools.
Improve skills progression	Improve skills progression by encouraging the provision of high-quality opportunities to learn through further and higher education (FE/HE) and other providers.
Increase youth employment	Increase youth employment by creating and building pathways for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people into education, training and employment and helping young people understand why skills development is beneficial.
Improve labour market activation	Encourage the commission of holistic approaches that include employers and the integration of services so people facing health barriers are fit for work, have a clearer path to career progression, and that organisational culture prioritises wellbeing to reduce excessive workload and stress.
Ensure connected communities	Increase social mobility and economic activity by working with partners to increase access to digital skills.
Help deliver Fuller Working Lives	Reduce inactivity levels in our older workforce and help older employees develop new skills, encourage flexible employment and offer specific support to those out of the labour market.

Table 4 – Priority and supporting rationale

Priorities and supporting rationale
Skills priority category: Cross-cutting skills priorities (far-reaching, cross-sector)
<p>Ensuring skills provision meets current demand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SAP is in place to facilitate discussions and action to address mismatches between skills supply and employer demand more effectively • A strong emphasis is placed on linking engagement with employers, workplace experiences and curriculum learning to labour market information, and the North East's employment sectors through the Education Challenge • The North East LEP is developing robust labour market information through the North East's SAP and has commissioned work to look at future skills needs within key sectors to inform this priority • Employers have access to a network of education and training providers (colleges, schools, independent learning providers and higher education) that offer a demand-led, flexible provision, meeting current and future economy skills needs.

Good Career Guidance – all ages

- Ensure that all people in the North East LEP region have access to and understand labour market information and have access to good career guidance
- Intensive support is in place through the North East Ambition programme to support schools, colleges, universities and independent learning providers, including SEND providers, to deliver outstanding careers guidance
- The world of work is changing and will continue to do so at a rapid pace – it is not enough to only provide careers guidance to people in formal education.

Apprenticeships

- The North East LEP is actively promoting the importance and benefits of apprenticeships as a means of plugging technical skills gaps
- The North East LEP is leading the North East LEP Apprenticeships Provider Group, working in partnership with Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education and the Apprenticeship Ambassador network to facilitate collaboration between education and learning providers to ensure the apprenticeship offer in the region meets current and future skills needs
- We are supporting career practitioners to embed apprenticeships in their careers practice and are working with DfE and Gatsby to provide support to providers
- As the English region that consistently has the lowest number of apprenticeship starts, through North East Ambition we use our North East Ambition portal to encourage the take up of apprenticeships.

Higher and technical education

- The North East LEP is supportive of T-Levels and is working with teams in government and institutions (including the North East Institute of Technology) in the North East which are currently piloting T-Levels to develop best practice for employers and learners
- Supporting education and skills partners to implement good quality T-Levels and specialist technical education.:

T-Level stakeholder group

A national stakeholder group to capture the collective offers from government, sector representatives (including the Association of Colleges (AOC) and awarding organisations) and highlight challenges in delivery. The group is working to:

- attract and engage with employers, given the complex skills system
- ensure all the support available to providers and employers reaches them
- fulfil future industrial placement requirements when T-Levels are scaled up
- understand progression routes.
- employer representation from, for example, membership organisations (North East England Chamber of Commerce (NEECC), CBI, The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)) and sector representatives such as the construction Industry Training Board, Catapults and key employer partners.

T-Level provider group

The provider group includes early adopters: four colleges, one sixth form centre, three schools and providers with an interest in future delivery. The group is working to:

- understand the T-Level offer in the North East LEP area
- support collaboration between providers and employers in the design and delivery of T-Levels
- identify challenges for making T-Levels a success in the North East LEP area and, where appropriate, using the SAP and/or the T-level stakeholder group as a vehicle to support and drive change
- raise the profile of the T-Level offer in the North East LEP area across a variety of audiences such as Career Leads and teams within schools, colleges and ILPs, employers, learners and parents
- raise awareness amongst T-Level providers of the progression routes available for learners across the North East LEP area e.g. higher technical qualifications, apprenticeships etc
- champion success at a regional and national level.

T-Level route groups

A group encouraging collaboration at a route/pathway level to share good practice and lessons learnt, maximise workforce development opportunities and adopt a coherent approach to maximising employer engagement. We facilitate four route groups bringing together:

- the teacher leads and industrial placement co-ordinators
- local awarding body leads
- the regional facilitator from Education Training Foundation (ETF)
- employer representation from, for example, membership organisations (North East England Chamber of Commerce (NEECC), CBI, The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)) and sector representatives such as the construction Industry Training Board, Catapults and key employer partners.

The group works to:

- ensure that the North East's approach to productivity is inclusive, with a particular focus on supporting people who are out of the labour market or cycling in and out of low paid roles into sustained, good quality employment, with progression opportunities. The North East needs to:
 - improve adult basic skills, including digital
 - support people with disabilities and health conditions
 - support progression from low pay to address in-work poverty
 - ensure those that are currently out of the labour market also receive careers guidance.
- Work with business, education and learning partner to improve the take up of traineeships as a progression pathway to apprenticeships and other employment opportunities
- North East LEP is an approved Kickstart Gateway organisation and is working with business to increase engagement with Kickstart and other initiatives, and government grants for employers.

Skills priority category: Supporting investment in skills

Continue to work with partners to:

- design and implement a new developed governance deal for the region that places skills investment at its heart
- build the economy of the future – maximising the potential of our existing assets and exploring opportunities to enter new markets and supply chains – powered by innovation
- support businesses – working with our specialist sector teams – to develop bespoke sector specific skills strategies
- create resilient places and strong communities as they adapt to living with COVID-19, as well as other challenges and opportunities, and supporting the cultural recovery
- build infrastructure to lead transformation and encourage future investment
- implement targeted packages of support to businesses, developing the ability to respond to economic shocks within the workforce
- access post-European funding streams, both revenue and capital, to provide SMEs with detailed skills audits, tailored skills action plans and support to navigate the skills provision
- support employers to offer work experience, work placements and industrial placements, taking account of COVID-19 workplace restrictions. Pilot and test resources to enable employers to deliver virtual work experience, work challenges, and industrial placements
- further support the North East's ambition to ensure that outstanding careers provision is available to each and every person in and out of the labour market within the North East LEP region
- through North East Ambition, maximise the impact of government initiatives such as Skills Bootcamps, RESTART and employer grants for apprenticeships and traineeships.

Skills priority category: STEM sector priorities (or occupational priorities)

Fusion skills

- Gain buy-in from partners to scope and deliver fusion skills pilot.
- Be the first in the UK to deliver a pilot that demonstrates how fusion skills (STEM and arts and design skills) are imperative for success in an AI workplace. The pilot will consider the blending of human and machine talents within a business process, with a view to create better outcomes than when each works independently.

Technical education

- Address the North East's current and future skills gap. The North East's evidence tells us that these will largely be in technical level occupations and STEM focused growth sectors.
- The North East LEP know that the region's growth sectors are primarily STEM focused and need a strong skills pipeline if they are to reach their full potential. Support around skills and promoting T-Levels is embedded within the sector and cluster development plans.
- Through good careers guidance from primary age, secondary education, and into further education, highlight the opportunities and future roles associated with STEM, arts and design skills, routes and pathways into good jobs through T levels, apprenticeships or academic routes.
- Our sector strategies will allow us to develop STEM-related skills interventions to try to ensure a pipeline of appropriately skilled individuals who understand the opportunities to stay and grow their career in the North East LEP region.
- Continue to support the development and growth of the North East Institute of Technology, the region's two UTCs, and STEM provision across primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Inclusive digital skills

- The North East LEP want to empower individuals to take action to future proof their career by having the opportunity to develop skills and access training in line with labour market demand, for example, the opportunity to develop digital skills.
- Ensure that everyone in the North East is able to develop their digital skills, regardless of age, career stage, background, or sector. This reflects the critical importance of a digitally enabled workforce for a productive economy

Section 5: Skills action plan

Using the Skills Advisory Panel's evidence base and wider consultation with our stakeholders and partners, we have developed a skills action plan. The skills action plan identifies specific activity and programmes against the Strategic Economic Plan priorities for skills, employment, inclusion and progression.

Recommendations from the evidence base:

- ensuring provision to support young people to develop their skills is aligned to current and future skills needs
- the profile of skills shortage vacancies should be used to help shape the focus of future employer engagement activities and provision.
- improving understanding of the training and development needs of the existing workforce and how these can be met.
- the SAP strengthens its evidence base on destinations
- a need to review skills provision to establish whether changes are required to support men to access available employment opportunities. Changes may be needed in relation to subject areas, mode of delivery and/or how courses are promoted to these target groups
- ensuring that the North East can maintain and build on its good labour market performance amongst women. It will be important to ensure that women are able to reskill given that evidence suggests women's roles are at greater risk of automation than men's over the next 10 years
- developing skills provision that will help those that are currently not in work to access and progress in employment.
- ensure that skills provision reflects not just the needs of the region, but also the needs of specific communities within the North East.

Skills action plan - Delivering our ambition:

Strategic skills priorities: Deliver North East Ambition

Strategic objective:

Deliver outstanding careers guidance from primary education to employment.

Action:

Excellence in careers guidance.

Examine how North East Ambition can learn lessons from its successes in schools and colleges and extend support to those already in employment.

Widen the scope of North East Ambition to VSOs, the third sector, and independent learning providers.

Continue to deliver training and development to support partners to collect, analyse and share destination data.

2022/23 Deliverables:

Support the region's schools and colleges to enable them to make continued progress against the eight Good Career Guidance benchmarks by:

- expanding the number of schools and colleges engaged to include all benchmarks by 2024, with an increase of 20 schools this year.

Based on the evaluation of a Primary Pilot, review and further develop the primary programme by:

- expanding the network of schools by a further 25%
- increasing the average benchmark percentage performance for each individual benchmark from the 2021/22 baseline across all schools
- increasing the overall average benchmark score from a baseline across all schools
- sharing the outcomes and impact of the primary programme to influence national policy makers regarding CRL at primary level.

Strategic skills priorities: Deliver Education Challenge

Strategic objective:

Reduce the gap between our best and lowest performing schools, and ambitiously aim that all students be educated in good or outstanding schools.

Action:

Opportunity North East

Expand the support offered to One Vision schools, aiming to improve the destination outcomes of a selected cohort through targeted and personalised careers advice and interventions over three academic years.

School Governance

Develop a strategy for the North East LEP to capitalise on its position as the only LEP to be a School Governor Champion and to encourage LEPs to recruit businesses, particularly from SMEs, to be school governors.

2022/23 Deliverables:

- Complete delivery of the Opportunity North East two-year Careers and Business engagement pilot. Share the outcomes and impact with regional and national policy makers.
- Develop and implement an effective and streamlined employer engagement strategy to maximise meaningful engagement across all skills programmes.
- In-line with best practice, support careers professionals and educators continued professional development, including co-design and delivery of the curriculum.
- Support schools to work effectively with independent learning providers to support student progression into appropriate pathways.
- Support regional and national partners to recruit school and college governors or trustees. Support boards to appoint and provide development opportunities for careers link governors.

Strategic skills priorities: Improve skills progression

Strategic objective:

Improve skills progression by encouraging the provision of high-quality opportunities to learn through further and higher education (FE/HE) and other providers.

Action:

Building an evidence base

Analyse data to establish if there is evidence of barriers in entry to apprenticeships and develop a strategy to address any gap in provision of traineeships.

Developing pilot projects

Look for opportunities to pilot an employability or fusion skills framework so individuals can demonstrate core competencies, aiding access to employment and progression opportunities.

To create an inclusive and agile workforce with the skillset to keep pace with the challenge of change in demand for skills, and to make the most of the opportunities that advanced robotics, autonomous transport, AI and advanced materials will bring to the North East.

Maximise support for revenue and capital funding for skills in the region

Access to apprenticeships

Examine ways to encourage SMEs to participate in apprenticeships, including facilitating levy transfers and innovative ways to reduce apprenticeship levy underspend.

Technical Education

Develop and implement a coherent approach to planning for the delivery of higher technical education by building upon the model adopted for T-Levels, focusing upon STEM subjects.

2022/23 Deliverables:

- Maximise support for revenue and capital funding for skills in the region.
- Continue to facilitate the route network model for early T-Level adopters and expand it to include new providers to support the design and delivery of T-Levels. Sustain current eight providers and expand to include 15 new institutions.
- Develop and implement a coherent approach to planning for the delivery of higher technical education by building upon the model adopted for T-Levels, focusing upon STEM subjects.
- Develop and implement a strategy for promoting essential skills required for the fourth industrial revolution, which transcends from primary through to higher education.

Strategic skills priorities: Increase youth employment

Strategic objective:

Increase youth employment by creating and building pathways for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people into education, training, and employment.

Action:

Developing future programming

Provide specialist intensive support for those most distant from the labour market because of disadvantage, poverty and poor physical and mental health, by developing calls through the remaining European Social Fund (ESF) programmes to tackle the most acute challenges in targeted and holistic support. Examine how learnings can feed into replacement investment post-European funding.

Look at innovative ways to help young people who can develop their digital skills.

Access to apprenticeships

Grow the number of apprenticeships by developing access courses in consultation with local employers and training providers.

Building an evidence base

Formalise learning from the highly successful Durham Works Programme and develop future models to prevent youth unemployment.

2022/23 Deliverables:

- Reduce unfilled apprenticeship vacancies through the development and implementation of a youth focused task and finish group to inform future recruitment and selection processes of employers.
- Establish an employer task force focused upon identifying measures of support for the recruitment and retention of 16–18-year-olds.
- Continue to support the Apprenticeship Provider Group, using this as a vehicle to effect change nationally and raise awareness of local apprenticeship opportunities and challenges.
- Continue to support regional partners programmes including Durham Works and Durham Enable.
- Build on the success of Durham Works to develop future models to prevent youth unemployment, by developing programmes of career guidance and education and skills support for young people aged 16–24.

Strategic skills priorities: Improve labour market activation

Strategic objective:

Encourage the commission of holistic approaches that include employers and the integration of services so people facing health barriers are fit for work, and have a clearer path to career progression.

Action:

Building an evidence base

Analyse data from successful programmes such as Mental Health Trailblazer and Working Links, and link national level evidence from organisation such as the Learning and Work Institute.

Developing future programming

Use the evidence base to develop a strategy to inform future funding and investment post- European structural funds.

2022/23 Deliverables:

Support the rollout of phase three skills bootcamps:
Highlight at least two national campaigns, including National Apprenticeship Week and Skills Bootcamp rollout.

Strategic skills priorities: Ensure connected communities

Strategic objective:

Increase social mobility and economic activity by working with partners to increase access to digital skills.

Action:

Develop new programming

Scope out projects that provide targeted support for communities and individuals, focusing on those with multiple barriers or protected characteristics, and ensure this is a strategic funding priority.

Working with government departments, combined authorities, local authorities, local communities, the voluntary sector, and businesses to prioritise digital skills.

Work to secure funding and other resources to ensure that all North East residents can develop their digital skills regardless of their age, location, or economic status.

Identify key barriers and challenges (e.g. geographical and access to training) in order to use an evidenced based approach to deploying resource.

2022/23 Deliverables:

- Develop and publish a regional digital inclusion strategy.
- Bring together working group to explore ways to promote and deliver the strategy.
- Work with the third sector to ensure digital inclusion is a critical part of the digital for growth workforce strategy.
- Develop a draft business case to address the digital inclusion strategy.
- Support at least one regional funding proposal addressing digital exclusion in the North East.

Strategic skills priorities: Help deliver an inclusive agenda for employment

Strategic objective:

Reduce inactivity levels in our workforce by ensuring that everyone in the North East has the opportunity to enter and stay in the labour market.

Action:

Continue to support DWP's fuller working lives initiative

Work with key stakeholders and partners to maximise opportunities for funding and support for strategic regional programmes aimed at supporting disadvantaged groups into employment.

2022/23 Deliverables:

50+ Choices

Work with Education Development Trust to support skills facilitators to engage with SMEs to understand the importance and productivity benefits of a mixed age workforce, and access various targeted schemes that can help the upskilling and retention of the key 50+ workforce.

Section 6: Assessment of progress

Key deliverables - What we will deliver between April 2021 and March 2022:

Activity: Deliver North East Ambition

Key deliverable 1: Support and demonstrate progress and impact as we work with 145 schools and colleges to achieve the eight Good Career Guidance benchmarks.

Progress:

We have supported over 160 schools and colleges and have improved benchmark performance during the year across 7 of the 8 Good Career Guidance Benchmarks, ranging from 2.0% to 15.2%. The 8th benchmark (personal guidance), was maintained at 66.7%.

Working through the disruption caused by covid-19: maintaining the network supporting our careers leaders, creating a hybrid model to support schools and colleges to continue to make progress against the benchmarks:

We developed new resources including:

- Work experience framework. This has generated 1,421 pageviews to the Work Experience Framework homepage since being published in February 2021, 504 pageviews to the Modules and 425 pageviews to the Work Experience Tours.
- Supporting Labour Market Information such as the Energy Sector Toolkit. The sector toolkits have generated 184 pageviews since launch to the Toolkit homepage, with a further 135 pageviews to the three sub-sector toolkits.
- Hybrid model for emerging sectors through the industry insight sessions. The industry insights sessions have generated 147 views across the four recorded sessions with an average of 55 attendees on each virtual session.

This has led to:

- Improved understanding of regional LMI within schools and colleges including key sectors
- Increased employment engagement
- Increased [career readiness](#) of young people:
- National Careers Service now adopting the industry insight session model as part of their LMI CPD model for schools and college engagement.

Key deliverable 2: Use the experiences and results of an independent evaluation of the two-year Career Benchmarks: Primary Pilot to expand the number of schools using the adapted set of benchmarks as a framework for delivering effective careers-related learning in primary settings to over 100.

Progress:

There are now 72 NE primary schools in the network. With a further 31 schools due to join the network in March 2022.

An end of the Pilot a team of researchers independently evaluated the Pilot. Key achievements include:

- The Pilot average for Fully Achieved Characteristics at the end of Year 2 was 65%, up from 40% in the Year 1 audit and 13% at the Baseline audit.
- The average number of Fully Achieved Benchmarks was 2.3 at the end of Year 2, up from 0.6 at the end of Year 1, and 0.0 at the Baseline audit.
- Over the course of the Pilot, CRL has become embedded within the general curriculum with 88% of Careers Leaders saying that they are spending more time on careers compared to before starting on the Pilot.
- 92% of Careers Leaders said they found the framework of Benchmarks to be very useful or useful and the biggest positive impact on Career Leaders overall related to how the Pilot has helped to increase Careers Leaders' knowledge, skills and understanding.

- We fully achieved all 3 aims and 3 of the 4 objectives of the pilot. The 4th objective, linked to scalability, was the most impacted by the pandemic and was still partially achieved
- Five of the pilot schools successfully achieved Career Mark Primary, an external accreditation to demonstrate a school is providing high quality careers and work-related learning experience to their pupils.

This has:

- Created the role of Career Leader within primary settings
- Increased time being spent on CRL within pilot schools and ensured it has broadened out to include EYFS to KS2
- The knowledge, skills and understanding of Career Leaders has improved as a result of their involvement in the Pilot:
- Strong positive impact on pupils' knowledge, abilities and access to careers information
- Over the course of the Pilot, careers-related learning has become embedded within the general curriculum or other subjects and treated less as an extra-curricular activity

The pilot was referenced in the House of Lords Youth Unemployment Committee's '[Skills for every young person](#)' report and UCAS's '[Where Next?](#)' report.

Key deliverable 3: Continue to facilitate the partnerships between businesses and educators to reduce the gap between skills supply and skills demand, through the Enterprise Advisor Network, by engaging with 40 new employers

Progress:

Enterprise Advisor Network has signed up 36 new employers.

Positive change to the Enterprise Advisor Network profile

- Now 60% of the network are SME's
- Increase in Digital and Advanced Manufacturing businesses aligning with our growth sectors
- Increase in male EA's to narrow the gender gap

FE Enterpriser Advisor Network established

Employers have expressed a genuine desire to share their knowledge across colleges which has led to;

- FE EAN collective group created to utilise expertise of EA's working with colleges to share experiences and support across the full college network
- Diverse models of how our EAs engage and support FE institutions
- Meet bi-monthly

A specialist team of EAs supporting the FE sector:

- The Business Education Engagement Partnerships (BEEP) pilot will cultivate relationships between employers and schools and embed technical education pathways into school career strategies; all of which will hopefully result in:
- an increase in the schools matched with Enterprise Advisers and more meaningful engagement with existing employers known to the school
- enhanced understanding and knowledge of the local post 16 and technical education pathways – including opportunities for bringing these to life be that through employers showcasing apprenticeships in their existing workforce etc

- resources to support embedding technical education for example – a VR film for schools to use which showcase the local tech offer – keen to explore this via stakeholder partners as could be a great vehicle to engage SEND schools, together with resources to support the collaboration between schools and the EA career planning
- Of 15 school/college in Gateshead area, 13 involved in pilot, 9 matched with an EA, 2 school looking to be matched shortly, 2 SEND schools to engage and then look at matching
- Despite the significant challenges that both employers and education have faced throughout the pandemic we are delighted that numbers of Enterprise Advisors have been sustained throughout the pandemic, even more encouragingly we now are seeing active growth in the network. This demonstrates that employers really value the opportunities to link with education and the support that the LEP provide to drive meaningful engagement across the region.

Key deliverable 3: Continue to act as an advocate of the eight Good Career Guidance benchmarks and offer strategic leadership regionally and nationally by delivering 15 regional events to educators and businesses.

Progress:

We have held 41 regional events, despite the challenges within schools and colleges. This clearly demonstrates the value that educators see in our work. These events include the following:

- 3 Regional Careers Leader Network Meetings (attended by on average 80 career leaders)
- 3 College hub meetings
- 3 SEND hub meetings
- 3 Full Network Primary Pilot meetings including an end of Pilot celebratory event
- 3 EA meetings
- 6 Industry Insight sessions
- 6 Apprenticeship Group meetings
- 12 route network meetings supporting the early adopters of T-levels and connecting them with employers to support with the co-design and delivery of T-levels
- 1 Business Benefits for T-levels for the Construction Industry event
- 1 x launch of the Gateshead Building Education & Enterprise Partnership Project, followed by first meeting.

Through these events we have increased LMI knowledge of career leaders, increased ability to support schools and colleges with benchmark progress, secured T-Level placements and the National Careers Services has adopted our Industry Insight model for future delivery

Key deliverable 4: Participate in a number of key working groups and steering groups.

Progress:

We are delighted to represent the LEP and the LEP network in 16 regional and national working groups that influence policy, strategy and delivery.

- DfE' Strategic Development Network representing the National LEP network on employer support for T-levels
- Gatsby Charitable Foundation's 'Visualising Progression Pathways' working group
- North East Ambition Advisory group.
- DfE Opportunity North East Board

- Ford Next Generation Learning Leadership Council
- Edge Future Learning International Partners Group
- Careers & Enterprise Company's FE & Skills Group
- Careers & Enterprise Company's SEND CoP
- Seven individual LA CEIAG groups
- CEIAG Network Chair's Group
- Professional Practice Group
- North East LEP Apprenticeship Provider Group
- North East LEP T-level Stakeholder Group
- North East LEP T-level Training Provider Group
- North East Institution of Technology Operational Board
- North East LEP Cornerstone Employer Group

We have used these group to share best practice and champion the North East's achievement. The CEIAG Network Chairs' group have shared examples of best practice e.g. data sharing agreements regarding the collecting of destinations data. We have featured in 3 of the 4 National Careers & Enterprise Company's FE Connect termly publications as case studies for our whole college approach to careers, providing a strategic vehicle for supporting college recovery plans during covid 19, and a place-based approach to connecting education with business.

Key deliverable 5: Work with 156 businesses and employers to enable them to make effective investments in their workforce. We will support them to navigate the skills ecosystem to access apprenticeships, traineeships, Kickstart, technical education pathways, in-work training, provision of placement and work experience opportunities.

Progress:

170 SMEs supported to navigate the skills ecosystem to access apprenticeships, traineeships, Kickstart, technical education pathways, in-work training, provision of placement and work experience opportunities.

We have ran several very successful engagement events:

- SME drop-in sessions working alongside South Tyneside Council and The North East Fund, About to start a similar drop-in service for tenants of the Business Innovation Centre.
- attended the North East Expo at the Kingston Park stadium. The event is a regular showcase for SMEs across the region but due to the pandemic this was the first face to face event for almost two years. It was great to connect with businesses face to face to promote the North East Ambition offer
- COP26 Regional Roadshow a North East Ambition stand at the event which was organised by Construction Excellence North East. The conference was designed to highlight the challenges faced in the construction industry to meet the targets on climate change. A key highlight was hearing several of the larger businesses speak about how they are changing their tendering process to sub-contract applications. In future tendering businesses will need to show proof of sustainability and demonstrate how they invest in the next generation of talent into the industry. This message has been shared across the team and in turn will be given to all our current and future SMEs
- The support offered to SMEs meeting goals of business to produce progression pathways. SMEs were were successfully encouraged to take up government offers and scheme to promote a recovery after the covid-19 pandemic. Thereby, supporting both the indivual goals of the business and supporting the recovery of the region.

Activity: Deliver Education Challenge

Key deliverable 1: Continue the support offered to One Vision schools, aiming to improve the destination outcomes of a selected cohort through targeted and personalised careers advice and interventions.

Progress:

Despite the obvious and real challenges presented by COVID restricting face to face employer engagement and access to students we are delighted to report the programme has met all delivery milestones throughout 2021-2022. 480 students across 16 schools have accessed up to 5 hours of advice and guidance with 2 more sessions to take place before August 2022. A wide range of targeted careers related activities and interventions have been offered both virtually and face to face. There has been an average 89% increase in the assessment levels of students across 12 themes of knowledge and understanding of options, progression pathways and careers.

The proportion of students who are unsure about their post-16 plans has decreased from 25% to 6% at the last data collection Jan 2022.

Key deliverable 2: Further develop processes and partnerships with a focus on the strategic use of data to improve progression and career pathways for young people.

Progress:

Data from ONE vision is used by the project to develop bespoke intervention with employers, the data driven approach has been received positively by employers. Despite the challenges presented by COVID we are delighted that all stakeholders have embraced new approaches including, virtual careers advice and guidance, as restrictions lift, we are beginning to facilitate employer engagement to specifically target those remaining students and ensure local employers are can directly discuss September 2022 apprenticeship opportunities with the right young people. We have provided regional cuts of data to partners who have used the evidence to shape their own delivery programmes and become more targeted in their approaches to careers activity. On a strategic level, data is analysed and is used to report progress to the Opportunity North East board and DfE to ensure the project delivers against milestones and results in impact against project objectives, ultimately to improve destinations. Further use and development of data has been applied to other projects such as the Effective Transition Fund.

Key deliverable 3: Develop a strategy for the North East LEP to capitalise on our position as the only LEP to be a School Governor Champion. The strategy will encourage other LEPs to recruit business people, particularly from SMEs, to be school governors.

Progress:

In addition to meeting the 5 step charter within our organisation we actively promote school and college governance across our networks, this has been achieved through development of our business facing website and through face to face engagement. We have facilitated partnership building between Inspiring Governance and regional and national employers that have incorporated volunteering into the social responsibilities and values programmes. We have worked with National Governance Association to extract regional specific data from the annual national governance report to ensure future work aligns to priorities.

Key deliverable 4: Support national organisations, including Inspiring Governance, to achieve their KPIs specific to the region including diversity of governing bodies.

Progress:

We have delivered awareness sessions and offer further support relating to volunteering as a governor in education. The number of employees within the organisation volunteering as school or college governors has increased from 2 to 11. We have supported Inspiring Governance to produce several case studies including a focus on the benefits of young governors to both boards and individuals, these have been shared nationally and amplified regionally.

Key deliverable 5: Support the expansion of the Ford Next Generation Learning pilot, to work with Further Education colleges to embed employer-led learning partnerships to provide high quality learning opportunities

Partnership work with Ford Next Generation Learning and FE college continued throughout 2021, the first cohort of learners completed a full academic year in which they benefited from curriculum delivery, engagement with employers that had been shaped through the partnership. The impact was increased achievement, retention and progression of learners. The partnership work expanded to other faculty areas and a further college with new employer groups being formed to co-develop and shape curriculum delivery in Health and Care pathways from Sept 2022.

Key deliverable 6: Develop a partnership approach to continued professional development for both schools and businesses that encourages and highlights the benefits of closer engagement between business and education. The offer will include curriculum engagement, support to develop meaningful work experience and support for Initial Teacher Trainees to develop understanding of careers learning in subject areas.

We have delivered a range of CPD sessions across the network including,

- Gatsby Benchmark 4 subject specific training for vocational subject teachers.
- Curriculum-project planning and development training.
- Support to businesses who have been partnered to co-develop curriculum projects.
- Support sessions to organise teacher externships

In addition we have supported partners by:

- Matching schools to offer peer support
- Signposting external teacher CPD e.g. PBL Goes to University (Newcastle University programme)

The impact is improved understanding of effective employer – education engagement.

Activity: Improve skills progression

Key deliverable 1: Promote the concept of fusion skills regionally.

Progress:

Desk research to understand the concept of fusion is completed. This has led to strategic discussions with NCFE who have a shared interest in 'essential skills for the fourth industrial revolution'. Proposals for the promotion of essential skills across the education system, from Primary through to Higher Education, are being co-developed with implementation planned for next year.

Key deliverable 2: Deliver a pilot that demonstrates how fusion skills (STEM and arts and design skills) are critical for success in an A.I. workplace.

Progress:

In progress: We have completed a scoping exercise and established a project remit for a pilot. We are exploring options with a potential funder, who will also act as a strategic partner.

Key deliverable 3: Support eight early adopters to deliver good quality T-levels and specialist technical education

Progress:

Supported 8 early adopters to deliver T-levels. We have supported our partners by:

- Commissioned and delivered training for Provider staff for effective employer engagement aimed at achieving consistent messaging on T-levels across the business community
- Established and implemented a strategic model to support two –way communications between local T-level providers, regional and national T-level stakeholders to support the design and implementation of T-levels locally
- Established 4 sector 'routes ready' T-level networks, meeting termly to facilitate collaboration between early adopters of T-level and non-T-level Colleges to support with good practice sharing and identifying challenges.
- Engaged with Awarding bodies and connected sector representatives, such as the DfE contracted Education Training Foundation to the Provider base to promote external funding and support available showcase national good practice regionally and vice a versa.
- Developed resources including videos and lesson plans to support awareness raising of T-levels across the secondary school science teaching community, which includes related occupational pathways to sectors such as advanced manufacturing across the pharma industry.
- Delivered a range of awareness events to employers through bespoke Business Benefits of T-levels to Construction Industry which engaged 17 businesses, resulting in 5 new employers connecting with providers to support placements; through to sessions aimed at Business brokerage organisations such as the regional CBI Employer Skills Forum and Education Development Trust's SME Facilitators.

The strategic approach to T-levels has resulted in the LEP being recognised as instrumental in supporting T-levels and in the consolidation of partnerships with key, national stakeholders engaged in the technical education agenda resulting in:

- Appearances on National FE News podcast sharing experiences of industry placements;
- The LEP being asked to represent to the National LEP Network on the DfE's T-level Employer Support group.
- Secured the engagement of two Universities to publicly recognise T-levels for entry into undergraduate courses, with University of Sunderland being one of the first in the country and Newcastle University quickly following.
- Gatsby commissioning LEP to review their local area T-level programme which involved interviewing 5 combined authorities/LEPs and the publication of a joint report highlighting good practice with key findings being jointly presented by LEP and Gatsby across national forums
- Following external presentation to the regional Integrated Care Systems group secured their buy in resulting in the creation of an NHS Employer group to support engagement with Providers across all Foundation Trusts in the region, 5 colleges in region had not had any engagement with their Trusts up to this group being established.
- The Stakeholder T-level Stakeholder Group now benefits from the engagement of a University Professor who has been commissioned to work with 4 Colleges outside of region but who is now, given the profile of T-levels in region, seeking opportunities to expand work to include NE T-level Providers
- 65% of the industry placements secured by early adopter T-levels was as a direct result of the LEP and the Route Network groups

- We have connected T-level Providers delivering the Health Route with University of Sunderland and University of Northumbria and the related NHS Trusts which has resulted in the development of the T-level being linked as a route into the NHS Nursing cadet scheme.
- The NHS Employer group have developed a slide deck outlining the benefits of health organisations engaging in the delivery of T-levels – this is being used throughout the region and has been adopted by other Trusts outside of region

Key deliverable 4: Work with partners to analyse data relating to FE to HE transitions, graduate retention trends, post-graduate employment opportunities and degree apprenticeship provision. Use this intelligence to prepare a plan to promote the North East as a location for graduates and skilled workers to stay and thrive

Progress:

- The skills data analysis team has analysed ESFA 19/20 localities to level of apprenticeship delivery across FE and HE.
- We have expanded support around labour market information to Higher Education. Newcastle University is now represented on the LMI working group.
- We have worked with Newcastle Business school on a strategy to retain business school graduates in the region.
- Finally, we have supported SME engagement with HE. SMEs from our North East Ambition network now offer live problems to students at Northumberland Business Clinic.
- Both University of Sunderland and Newcastle University publicly have recognised T-levels as a pathway into Higher education. We have shared data with the team at Invest North East has been used to promote the North East as a region with excellent in skills and training.

Key deliverable 5: Develop an approach to support the Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance community to embed broader technical education in their practise to support progression pathways.

Progress:

- Developed an approach and website, launched in February 2022, to promote technical education to the CEIAG community. The website was developed with career leads to understand the best approach and response configured the website to meet their needs. Developing a series of CPD training targeted at careers leads in partnership with the Education Training Foundation.

Activity: Increase youth employment

Key deliverable 1: Build on the success of Generation North East and Durham Works to develop future models to prevent youth unemployment, by developing programmes of career guidance, education and skills support for young people ages 16-24

Progress:

The skills programme has been highly proactive in developing and promoting models to prevent youth unemployment. Learnings from the reason were shared as evidence to the youth and employment select committee and were heavily featured in the resulting report. We have also worked to include We have also worked to include young people's voices in developing models, we worked with CBI to develop a young person's charter.

On delivery, the programme has worked closely with colleagues at Durham CC on build on the success of their model to prevent youth unemployment. Durham works has supported 8761 unemployed 16-24 year olds since 2016. 8,027 (92%) have completed the programme and of those 6241(78%) have progressed into employment, education or training or gained a qualification. The programme has expanded to include a specialised arm for young people with barriers to progression into employment including SEND, care leavers and young offenders. Additionally, Durham Enable is a new specialised programme supporting people with disabilities into work, currently the programme is supporting 69 people into sustained employment and has successfully places 21 into placements.

Our One Vision programme is running the Durham Pathways to a Good Career event, 300 Year 11 students due to complete GCSE's summer 2022 transitioning to post-16 education, employment or training.

We have also supported programmes to support young people into work after the covid-19 pandemic. We have delivered Kickstarter activity and worked closely with partners in DWP to rollout Restart and JETS.

Key deliverable 2: Analyse data to establish if there are barriers to entry to apprenticeships and develop a strategy to address any gap in provision in response to this research to share with partners and providers.

Progress:

Analysed data from the 21/22 ESFA data cube create a regional pictures of apprenticeship uptake and delivery. Conducted a survey via the Apprenticeship Provider group's members' trusted employer partners on their engagement/ appetite for engaging with 16-18 apprenticeships which will inform next year's apprenticeship activities.

The data and intelligence from this group has:

- Informed the LEP's response to the House of Lords Youth Unemployment Select Committee. It resulted in an invitation to provide oral evidence. The North East's recommendations featured in the final [report](#).
- Facilitated two regional DfE Apprenticeship consultation events to provide feedback on incentives and challenges faced with onboarding and the digital account service which have informed policy development
- Developed and implemented a collaborative workplan to support with raising awareness of Apprenticeships as a progression pathway for post 16 learners

Activity: Ensure connected communities

Key deliverable 1: Commission a research project to understand the impact of digital exclusion in our communities and understand the changing nature of jobs due to automation and digitalisation.

Progress:

Research commissioned and published on the evidence hub here: [Digital Exclusion in the North East LEP Area Executive Summary](#)

The report was presented the Skills Advisory Panel, the LEP Board, NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee, NECA Leadership Board and NoCTA Inclusive Economy Board. It will provide further evidence for the local skills report and other commissioned work on our [evidence hub](#). The evidence provides a basis for the needs assessment of digital bootcamps and other strategic training and reskilling programmes

Key deliverable 2: Work with government, local and combined authorities, the voluntary sector, and businesses to secure funding and resources to ensure that all North- East residents can develop their digital skills regardless of their age, location, or economic status.

Progress:

The North East LEP has been awarded £80,000 funding by the Local Growth Fund's Accelerator Fund to produce a business case for a regional digital inclusion programme. This business case will be used by the North East LEP and partners to bid for future funding opportunities, including the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Section 7: Case studies

Case study one: Building a successful college business partnership

Over the last four years, AkzoNobel has built a close relationship with Northumberland College at their campus in Ashington. The partnership aims to enhance careers education and develop a pathway to careers in local employment.

AkzoNobel is a global manufacturer of paints and coatings, and four years ago it started production at its new site in Ashington. "Right from the start," says HSE and Sustainability Manager Alex Wardle, "the company recognised the need for support from the college to train our future workforce."

As a North East LEP Enterprise Adviser, Alex went into Northumberland College to provide strategic and operational support to careers education. She currently works with the Director of Student Services, Ruth Magnus, and the Curriculum Director, Robert Stewart, to integrate "industry-focused" knowledge and skills into the curriculum. A main objective throughout is to encourage students to start thinking early about their career progression and understand the behaviours and attributes employers are looking for.

To this end, the college is piloting a Reward and Recognition Scheme to emphasise employability skills. Over the year, AkzoNobel will run three masterclasses for engineering and construction students. The college will award students with a certificate, based on their attendance and progression, as well as volunteering in the community. This certificate will be recognised by AkzoNobel and guarantee them an interview, demonstrating their readiness for the world of work.

Alex expects it to expand into other curriculum areas, and Ruth would like to see it replicated across the Education Partnership North East, building similar relationships between Sunderland College and Hartlepool Sixth Form with local employers.

Beyond this scheme, AkzoNobel supports the college with workshops, one-to-one sessions and mock interviews, as well as site visits and work experience placements. Northumberland College also held a successful career fair for National Careers Week, where students learned more about opportunities with AkzoNobel and other local employers.

AkzoNobel now has former college students working at its Ashington site and sees more leavers applying. The partnership has also been rewarding for the current workforce at AkzoNobel. Ruth says the college has seen a significant improvement in soft skills, including attendance. In addition, students have a more positive attitude on campus and are more engaged with their studies. This strong performance has followed through into work experience, with fewer placements breaking down due to attendance or attitude. Employer feedback is also showing greater satisfaction with students.

"Education feeds industry", says Alex, and "it's absolutely the right thing for business to support the college. Over the last few years, we have let that relationship drift apart."

Ruth agrees: "Our courses need scrutiny from business to keep them relevant and up-to-date." This engagement is essential to ensure students have the values and skills for a successful career.

"It is necessary," says Alex, "if businesses want a long-term future sustainable workforce. It is the only answer."

Case study two: One Vision – evidence based intervention

Our Opportunity North East (ONE) careers pilot targets 480 pupils across 16 schools providing enhanced careers advice and bespoke interventions to support their post 16 choices. Despite the obvious and real challenges presented by COVID-19 restricting face-to-face employer engagement and access to students, the programme has met all delivery milestones throughout 2021-2022. Through targeted careers advice, guidance, and interventions between September 2020 and March 2022, students involved in the ONE Vision careers pilot have shown a 114% increase in the assessment of their understanding and knowledge across 12 areas related to progression, pathways and careers. This has contributed to the proportion of students who are unsure about their post-16 plan falling from 25% to 2%.

The impact was validated by an Oxford University study. The study found that the pupils on the ONE programme, delivered by the region's Local Enterprise Partnership, had significantly higher levels of career planning and engagement than those not on the programme – more than any other factor such as gender, parental graduate status or ethnicity, which have traditionally been shown to be the most significant influences on the career aspirations of children. The study has shown that pupils are more likely to be actively engaging in their career plan the more industry and careers knowledge they have. It demonstrated that participants have benefited significantly in this area from the programme.

Data from ONE vision is used to develop bespoke interventions with employers. This data driven approach has been positively received by employers. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, all stakeholders have embraced new approaches, including virtual careers advice and guidance. As restrictions lift, we are beginning to facilitate employer engagement to specifically target those remaining students and ensure local employers can directly discuss September 2022 apprenticeship start opportunities with the right young people. We have provided regional cuts of data to partners who have used the evidence to shape their own delivery programmes and become more targeted in their approaches to careers activity. On a strategic level, data is analysed and is used to report progress to the Opportunity North East board and DfE, to ensure the project delivers against milestones and results in impact against project objectives - ultimately to improve destinations. Further use and development of data has been applied to other projects, such as the Effective Transition Fund which will focus on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds with SEND.

Case study three: Digital exclusion – building a strategy

In March 2021, the North East LEP and its Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) commissioned research into the nature and extent of digital exclusion in the North East, to examine:

- the extent to which digital exclusion or the 'digital divide' is being experienced in the North East LEP area
- the extent to which digital skills impact on the 'digital divide' and the barriers people are experiencing in relation to developing digital skills
- how digital exclusion is impacting on engagement and outcomes in the education and skills system (schools, colleges, training and employment support).
- The research focused primarily on the economic and skills-related impacts of digital exclusion, including:
- Digital skills - how lack of digital skills impacts on digital exclusion across a range of contexts and the barriers people face to acquiring the digital skills they need.
- Education and skills - the nature and extent of digital exclusion within the region's education and skills system, and how this impacts on the ability of various groups of people to engage and achieve in education and learning.
- Employment and employment support -the impact of digital exclusion on access to employment support services and progression into jobs.

Concurrently to this work, a separate piece of research into digital exclusion was commissioned by the strategic partners of Millfield House Foundation (VONNE, Citizens Advice Newcastle, Regional Refugee Forum, NE Child Poverty Commission). This research, undertaken by IPPR North¹⁰, is focused primarily on the social impacts of digital exclusion in the region, including health and wellbeing, financial hardship, social exclusion, and lack of access to a whole range of services. These two pieces of research deliver a rounded evidence base to support a regional digital inclusion strategy.

The key findings of the research were:

- the current approach to tackling digital exclusion is fragmented, with initiatives at national, regional and local level, targeting different groups or challenges
- it includes UK Government interventions as well as those delivered by the private sector, the education sector and VCSE organisations
- it is complex and there is little coordination, with some initiatives overlapping and some gaps in provision
- there is a lack of evidence or data to inform and shape the range of initiatives
- there is a broad range of fully-funded digital skills provision, ranging from short basic courses to full-time accredited courses
- much of the current provision is not fit for purpose as it is quickly out of date, and people want short, practical courses delivered in an informal setting
- research suggests a lack of awareness about the provision available and a lack of understanding about individual digital skills needs
- some initiatives are short-term in response to the pandemic, but there is a longer-term need for a more co-ordinated and systematic approach to addressing digital exclusion.

In response, the Skills Advisory Panel have commissioned a draft regional and business case to respond to the recommendation produced by this research. This is scheduled to be delivered in September 2022.

¹⁰ Addressing Digital Exclusion in the North East, Marcus Johns and Erica Roscoe, IPPR North, August 2021

Section 8: Looking forward

2022 and beyond

As the region moves beyond COVID-19, the North East LEP has set out a strategy to work with regional partners to ensure that investment in skills lies at the heart of region's economic plan. Continued good governance is important if we are to provide an evidence-led approach to skills and training provision across the North East, to respond to economic challenges, and to deliver the agreed strategic priorities for the region. In particular, we need to track and respond to the current and future skills needs of our labour market and ensure we have an alignment between skills supply and skills demand over the next five to ten years. The Skills Advisory Panel is best-placed to provide that advisory function on behalf of the North East LEP board with key representation from our business base, our sectors, our education institutions, the voluntary sector, unions and government colleagues.

Simultaneously, we need to ensure that the region continues to deliver the employment, inclusion and progression elements of the Strategic Economic Plan. Data and intelligence collected throughout the pandemic suggest our young people, and those over the age of 50, are particularly vulnerable to future economic shocks. We need to ensure that we continue to monitor data and intelligence across all sectors to be able to influence resources and interventions as appropriate, either through direct delivery or working across our wide range of partners and stakeholders in education, the voluntary sector, government programmes and support, remaining European programmes, and regional investment.

We continue to align our work with the vision set out by government in the Skills White Paper and the Levelling Up White Paper.

Our shorter-term priorities are:

- To ensure that the North East capitalises on the opportunities within the Skills for Jobs and Levelling up white papers. We will align this with the North East strategic priority of driving a growth in high quality technical education, with T-Levels, technical qualifications and higher technical qualifications.
- Reduce unfilled apprenticeship vacancies through the development and implementation of a youth focused task and finish group to inform future recruitment and selection processes of employers.
- Establish an employer task force focused upon identifying measures of support for the recruitment and retention of 16–18-year-olds in apprenticeships.
- Develop a published strategy for addressing digital exclusion in the North East.
- Support the rollout of government programming in the North East, such as skills bootcamps.
- We also need to work closely with our colleagues across Business and Sector Growth to encourage and nurture early-stage businesses, entrepreneurs and individuals taking the self-employment route. Our FE colleges and universities are working with students to explore opportunities for self-employment and early-stage business start-up. This work has intensified post COVID-19, as opportunities for graduate employment has decreased in the region.

In the slightly more medium to long term:

- We will continue to provide data and robust labour market information and intelligence through the North East Evidence Hub and the development of a North East Skills portal. The North East Evidence Hub provides up-to-date data, research and commentary on the North East economy, and through the use of APIs we are continuing to open up new datasets and expand the platform. We will also provide regular commentary pieces on our labour market, specifically targeted for the education and skills sector.
- We will continue to roll out Phase 2 of North East Ambition to engage SMEs not previously engaged with skills provision, bridging the gap with education.

- We will utilise our networks and the Skills Advisory Panel to provide early-stage intelligence, alongside data, to consider whether existing provision is suitable for a post-COVID-19 economy, and how curriculum delivery may be supported by employers and businesses to provide real opportunities for learners to 'learn through the lens' of an industry or sector.
- We will continue to have a rolling programme of research and analytical projects in order to further explore key areas of interest agreed by the SAP. Our current work programme has focussed on understanding future skills needs within the North East economy, and activity has included:
 - generating a detailed evidence base in relation to three key sectors including offshore wind; health and social care, and tourism sectors.
 - extensive surveying and consultation of employers in the offshore wind; health and social care, and tourism sectors
 - an in-depth research project exploring the current and future skills needs within two key sectors, health and social care and the green economy. This work has included a detailed literature review produced by the Institute of Employment Studies and uses an innovative approach to understanding future skills needs, including scenario planning and learning from leading-edge employers. This work will include a reflective piece so we can continue to learn and adapt our approach with the intention of rolling this research approach to other sectors in the future
 - understanding the extent of digital divide and digital inclusion within the North East; the impact it has on people's engagement in learning, job seeking and accessing services, and how the global pandemic has exacerbated digital exclusion challenges.

We will address Sectoral Skills needs, for example in health and life sciences. Our strategy describes ¹¹:

Developing skills to support health and life sciences growth: in response to identified skills needs, the Skills Advisory Panel (SAP), facilitated by the North East LEP, will aim to respond to ongoing skills needs.

The sector has identified several key trends in the development of expertise and education within the region which require support which will be facilitated through the SAP:

- senior-level leadership and strategic-level employees are often sought outside the North East region from other regions within the UK and abroad. While companies have generally been able to recruit successfully into these roles, more needs to be done to develop the future supply of skills in the region to fulfil more of these roles as part of the SEP's 'more and better jobs' goal.
- Within research areas, high quality scientific analysts and formulation scientists are more difficult to recruit, whereas technicians and manufacturing operator positions have typically shorter recruitment cycles, and are largely sourced within the region.
- Graduate-level employees are attracted to the region or can be recruited locally, assisted by our four universities in Newcastle, Durham, Northumbria and Sunderland. These provide a research base and level of specialist expertise that is crucial to growing the health and life sciences sector in the region. Over one-quarter of students at our universities study life sciences subjects, the highest number of life sciences students in England relative to the size of the workforce.
- More needs to be done to encourage businesses to utilise Apprenticeship Levy funds. This is a major benefit for businesses to retrain, upskill, and retain staff.

¹¹ North East LEP, (2021). Our strategy for regional growth and national change in health, life sciences and medicines manufacturing. Available at: <https://www.northeastlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/hlsciences-full-strategy-final-1.pdf>

Investment in skills

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will support individuals to gain the skills they need to seize new opportunities and ensure their local communities are prosperous and productive. This includes equipping people with the skills they need to capitalise on the opportunities and needs of their local area and meet the needs of an increasingly green and digital economy.

- Work-based training – addressing specific local need from local employers for on-the-job training to support local growth, such as taking on trainee builders for a new infrastructure project.
- Retraining, upskilling or reskilling members of the workforce – helping organisations to identify and understand skills gaps or provide access to financial support for relevant training where the local workforce may require new skills to meet the needs of a local employer or sector and support local economic transitions.
- Promoting the advancement of digital skills and inclusion – supporting the development of digital skills for digitally excluded individuals, especially where digital exclusion presents a barrier to employment, building confidence in application of basic and advanced digital skills, and promoting safety and awareness online.

A skilled workforce is central to private sector-led growth and the region's workforce has to be able to respond to the opportunities presented by a growing and changing economy, particularly in light of COVID-19 and the changes this will bring to the labour market.

The North East LEP's Skills team, agency partners, local authority and combined authority colleagues - as well as employers, businesses and business representative organisations - are working together to bring the strategy to life and to ensure the key aims are delivered.

We are happy to engage with the widest network possible and would be happy to receive feedback, input, perspective and challenge from communities across the North East.

Please feel free to get in touch with the Michelle Rainbow, Skills Director at the North East Local Enterprise Partnership.



Michelle Rainbow

Skills Director, North East Local Enterprise Partnership

Email: michelle.rainbow@nelep.co.uk

References

- Department for Education, (2020). Correspondence: Skills and Productivity Board remit letter 2020. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-and-productivity-board-remit-letter-2020>
- Department for Education, (2020). Guidance: Skills Advisory Panels. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-advisory-panels>
- Department for Education, (2020). Statistical data set: Further education and skills data. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-further-education-and-skills>
- Department for Education, (2021). White Paper: Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-for-jobs-lifelong-learning-for-opportunity-and-growth>
- Lloyds Bank UK, (2019). Consumer Digital Index 2019 (regional data only). Available at: https://www.lloydsbank.com/assets/media/pdfs/banking_with_us/whats-happening/lb-consumer-digital-index-2019-report.pdf
- National Audit Office, (2020). Digital transformation in the NHS. Available at: <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Digital-transformation-in-the-NHS.pdf>
- North East LEP, (2019). Digital for Growth The North East's Digital Strategy. Available at: <https://www.northeastlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/digital-for-growth-strategy.pdf>
- North East LEP, (2019). North East Energy for Growth. Available at: <https://www.nelep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/full-strategy-energy-for-growth-strategy.pdf>
- North East LEP, (2020). North East COVID-19 Economic Response: Our work so far and next steps – June 2020. Available at: <https://www.northeastlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/economic-response-summary-report-final-1.pdf>
- North East LEP, (2020). Recovery and Renewal Deal for the North East– September 2020. Available at: <https://www.northeastlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/north-east-recovery-and-renewal-deal-for-publication.pdf>
- North East LEP, (2020). The North East Strategic Economic Plan – January 2019. Available at: <https://www.nelep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/nel404-sep-refresh-2018-web-new-final.pdf>
- North East LEP, (2021). Our strategy for regional growth and national change in health, life sciences and medicines manufacturing. Available at: <https://www.northeastlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/hlsciences-full-strategy-final-1.pdf>
- Office for National Statistics, (2017). Employer Skills Survey 2017.
- Office for National Statistics, (2019). Annual Population Survey unpublished three-year analysis 2016-2018 (using the DCMS definition of digital occupations).
- Ortus Economic Research, (2021). Executive Summary: employment and skills needs of the offshore wind, tourism, and health and social care sectors in the North East LEP area.
- WorldSkills UK, Learning & Work Institute and Enginuity, (2021). Disconnected: Exploring the digital skills gap. Available at: <https://www.worldskillsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Disconnected-Report.pdf>