



# Northumberland

## County Council

### **FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE / CABINET**

**2<sup>ND</sup> MARCH 2023 / 14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023**

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#### **Annual Education Report 2021/2022**

Report of Cabinet Member: Guy Renner Thompson, Lead Member for Children's Services  
Joint Interim Director of Children's Services, Audrey Kingham

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#### **Purpose of Report**

The annual report for Members details the Education and Skills performance for Northumberland in the 2021/22 academic year and informs Members of the detailed work supporting Schools and Skills undertaken by the Education and Skills team along with wider services.

#### **Recommendations**

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) Note the education achievements of our children, young people and residents across Northumberland in 2021/22 and the ongoing challenges as a legacy from the pandemic.
- 2) Agree that Members provide scrutiny and challenge to the service responses and developments detailed in the report as appropriate.
- 3) Agree that Members receive and review the [digital annual report](#) and recognise the performance given the continued challenges of the global pandemic and the valuable support provided to all learners within:
  - Early Years Settings and Schools
  - Special Education Needs support and service
  - Virtual School
  - Learning and Skills Service including Careers Guidance Team and Employability and Skills Service
  - School Organisation and Resources
  - Performance monitoring Team and wider supporting services

## Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the corporate objectives, and specifically the “Living, Learning” and “Thriving” priorities of the Corporate Plan 2021-24.

The key priorities of tackling inequalities, growth and value for money also focus on different aspects of the annual report and contribute to the work of Northumberland County Councils Inequalities Action Plan.

## Key Issues

1. The annual report for Education and Skills is presented to the committee as a written report and is supported by an additional digitally optimised report which provides viewers with a visual overview of the performance in the 2021/22 academic year and considers the impact of the work undertaken for our children, young people and residents.
2. In 2022 external assessments and examinations returned and whilst a direct comparison to previous years should not be taken, national averages have been compared to 2019 to re establish a base line. We are counting 2022 as year zero for performance reporting.
3. Partnership working with schools continues to improve. The support and guidance from the wider Education and Skills team and support partners (Public Health, Health and Safety (H&S) and HR for Schools) is widely valued. It is worth noting that is not just relative to Covid support, 2021/2022 in terms of wider support was much more business as usual – not least with Storm Arwen and damage and closure of 48 schools in the immediate time after the storm
4. The embraced digital world has continued to provide the support for children who are absent from school and more than often now children will access more work remotely when absent but also including school messaging, homework and reporting. Access to high quality broadband as well as the kit to develop skills has continued to be supported to narrow inequalities in 2021/22.
5. The approach by the Inclusive Education service and the School Organisation Team has become even more focused and an important priority to be able to work across services supporting children in our schools. The challenges faced by some children and families are still evolving as a result of the pandemic legacy and wider services including health and care are continually adapting their work with education to support needs.
6. In March 2022 Ofsted undertook a pilot test and learn inspection in Northumberland. As a result of the work identified in the previous inspection and the distance travelled, the approach was agreed and Northumberland made a significant contribution to the shaping of the new Area SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities) Inspection Framework.
7. The Northumberland Skills portfolio continues to evolve to meet the priorities for the North of Tyne Combined Authority and the economic priorities and sectors in Northumberland whereby more residents are supported into employment and greater in work progression. In 2021/22 the development of provision to support those pupils at risk of becoming Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET) became ever more pressing. Education development works hand in hand to identify the opportunities and partnerships to extend the breadth of offer. Northumberland

Skills provides a wider wrap around pastoral programme to support young people with their transition to support successful outcomes and to prepare them to access Further Education and succeed well.

8. In addition to school routines in 2022 the war in Ukraine and the impact upon children and families led to many families relocating to Northumberland and accessing school places and provision. 221 applications were received and all processed within the expected 15 days.
9. The priorities for Education and Skills across Northumberland were clearly set out for September 2020. The sector led Education Strategy Board has worked on the key themes and contributes significantly to the performance reported in this annual report for all to review. The summer term of 2022 academic year produced a new set of priorities focusing on the areas that are a foci for the county across the next two academic years.

## **Background**

1. The Annual Report 2021/2022 shares with you the significant levels of resilience that our children and young people as well as our workforce have shown throughout the year. Our schools, skills and college have adapted learning environments to be able to support many of our children and young people's needs as we live and work within the shadow and legacy of the pandemic years.
2. The impact of the pandemic on children and their families has proved to be significant. Adaptations have been necessary not just because many pupils have missed out on learning, but also because many have missed out socially, got out of the routine of coming to school or are struggling with their mental health, very simply, more of our young people are struggling in education.
3. We know that many children find a school environment challenging and the work in schools supported by Northumberland Education and Skills team is significant to support continuing the education journey. Whilst many children are enjoying their journey and progress very well, the extent of the work to close gaps is still a challenge, especially for disadvantaged pupils who continue to attain below their peers.
4. The work of the School Improvement Team across Northumberland schools will continue to target school-specific areas in each school, and disadvantaged pupils specifically. They will work with Headteachers, all staff in school, and governors to achieve this and raise the levels of attainment and progress at each key stage even further.
5. It is important to remember that in 2021/2022 academic year the county like the nation was still living with Covid 19 and disruption certainly in the first half of the year was as likely as previous years. In Skills new variants of Covid 19 impacted upon particular student groups, more at risk than their peers and this interrupted learning in the first academic term.
6. The year has certainly focused on living with covid 19 in Education and Skills and has really shown the capabilities and adaptabilities of the workforce who have managed to maintain a whole system approach with another year of examination changes and supported our children and young people for assessments and examinations and positioned them to transition to the next stage of learning, university or employment with more of our young people moving to Universities of their first choice and to Russell group Universities.
7. Working with our schools and partners to support the ambition, transition and development of all of our children, young people and residents to their next stage of education, employment and life with all of the challenges that cross their paths is a privileged role that is embraced and celebrated by the whole workforce. The resilience of this workforce has again been tested. Northumberland is not alone with challenges faced, as a legacy of Covid 19, when recruiting to any management and leadership roles across the whole infrastructure for Education and Skills.

## **Academic Year 2021/22**

### **8. Early Years and Key Stages**

- 8.1 The quality of early years provision in Northumberland is excellent. 98% of early years providers were rated Good or Outstanding at Summer 2022.
- 8.2 Early Years settings value the support of the Early Years Team to maintain high quality early years provision with 81% of Private, Voluntary or Independent (PVI) group settings subscribing to Service Level Agreement (SLA) services to access training and consultancy support.
- 8.3 The take up of 2-year-old provision is outstanding. 93% of all eligible 2 year olds took up their statutory entitlement to early education in the summer term 2022. Such impressive levels of take up were seen across the 2021/22 year and were consistently better than the National Average of 72%.
- 8.4 The take up of funded entitlements for 3 and 4 year olds is exceptional with 100% of 3 and 4 year old's taking up their early education entitlements and on top of that Northumberland has supported children from out of the county. This compares with 92% nationally in the year 2021-2022. .
- 8.5 The percentage of children with SEND in Northumberland achieving a Good Level of Development in Summer 2022 was 20.3% compared to 18.8% nationally.
- 8.6 The number of early years providers delivering funded entitlements remained stable in 2021-22 despite well reported challenges around staffing, recruitment and retention following the COVID pandemic. As such, we continue to have no gaps in sufficiency.
- 8.7 Early Years Foundation Stage - Outcomes for children at the end of their EYFS are positive, with 67.5% achieving a Good Level of Development, compared with 65.2% nationally in Summer 2022.
- 8.8 Key Stage 2 Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) returned in 2022, after the cancellation of the 2020 and 2021 tests due to coronavirus. Given the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on different students and schools, this data should be treated with caution. Comparisons with previous years are somewhat futile, but historic data has been used to try and provide some benchmarks.
- 8.9 Nationally results fell to the lowest levels since 2016. This trend was replicated in Northumberland.
- 8.10 54.2% of Northumberland pupils achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and maths, 5% below the national average.
- 8.11 Reading fell by 2.4% compared to 2019 (1.3% increase nationally), but writing fell by 12.8% (10.3% decrease nationally) and maths by 11.8% (7.3% decrease nationally)
- 8.12 Key Stage 4: External examinations returned in 2022 for the first time since 2019. Teacher and centre assessed grades were used during the pandemic. Nationally, it was determined that grades would, overall, fall roughly halfway between 2019 and 2021. Given the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on different students and schools, this data should be treated with caution.

8.13 Attainment 8: Pre-pandemic Attainment 8 scores in Northumberland were improving more quickly than nationally. That rate of improvement has slowed; Northumberland achieved 46.6 (2.3 behind the national average)

8.14 Progress 8:

- The Northumberland average score is - 0.23
- The North East region average score is - 0.27
- The England average score is - 0.03
- Only 1 region nationally achieved a positive score (London)

8.15 English and Maths:

- English and Maths at 4+ (4+ is deemed to be a standard pass) and 5+ (which is a strong pass) were above the national average in 2019. Outcomes have continued to improve in 2022 but sit slightly behind the national average in 2022.
- English & Maths 4+ 66.3% (2.7% below the national average)
- English & Maths 5+ 45.7% (2.2% below the national average)

8.16 Key Stage 5:

External examinations returned in 2022 for the first time since 2019. Teacher and centre assessed grades were used during the pandemic. Nationally, it was determined that grades would, overall, fall roughly halfway between 2019 and 2021. Given the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on different students and schools, this data should be treated with caution.

8.17 Over 1200 pupils sat A levels, achieving an average grade of B, an improvement on 2019.

8.18 415 pupils sat Applied General Qualifications, achieving an average grade of a Distinction, an improvement on 2019.

8.19 Over 65% (600 pupils) secured a place at their first-choice university, including around 400 going to Russell Group universities, again an improvement on 2019.

## **9. Inspection Outcomes**

9.1 Ofsted inspections returned to normal from May 2021. Between May 2021 and July 2022:

- Six schools that are Inadequate/Requires Improvement were judged to be “Taking Effective Action”
- Two schools moved from Inadequate to Requires Improvement
- Five Requires Improvement schools moved to Good
- One Good school moved to Requires Improvement (but was judged to be Taking Effective Action in July 2022)
- Thirteen Good schools retained their Good rating
- Five schools that had not been inspected since academisation were judged to be Good
- Two Good schools moved to Outstanding
- Two Outstanding schools were judged to be Good
- One Outstanding school retained its Outstanding rating

9.2 The hard work of school leaders, supported by the Local Authority School Improvement Team, means that inspection outcomes were at the highest they had ever been in July 2022.

## **10. Northumberland Inclusive Education Services**

10.1 The Northumberland Inclusive Education Service (NIES) continued the delivery of a full face to face offer in September 2021, enhanced by the new ways of working developed during the COVID pandemic.

10.2 The Service has expanded and adapted in many ways. Some areas have seen staff increases, with new staff having been quickly and successfully inducted and have added both capacity and a wealth of experience to their new teams.

10.3 Our teams have remained well connected with colleagues on a regional and national basis over the past year to ensure that we have opportunities to share best practice and keep abreast of new developments in the different specialist fields.

10.4 This service demand has exceeded capacity in some teams as the year has progressed leading to some longer than optimal waiting times for support. To provide immediate guidance a consultation line was opened in June 2022 for schools seeking support.

10.5 427 new Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP) for children and young people with special educational needs were completed in the 2021/22 school year compared to 288 in the previous school year. 68% were completed in time scale

compared to 92% in the previous period. This compares to a national average of 58%.





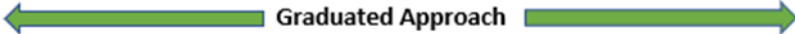
10.6 Joint working with parents, carers and colleagues in all settings has supported the development and launch of the Northumberland Ordinarily Available Provision Guidance document in September 2022. The document promotes Northumberland's vision that learners with SEND have the best start in life and are supported, through highly effective and inclusive educational provision, to attend settings as close to home as possible.

10.7 Actions and Impact:

- There has been a 44.6% increase in referrals for support for individual learners and an increase in the complexity of the challenges faced by them.
- 76% of the younger pupils and 97% of older pupils indicated that the support that they had received from the High Incidence Needs Team (HINT) staff had helped them.
- 99% of the parent/carers completing a service evaluation indicated that the support that their child had received from the Low Incidence Needs Team (LINT) staff had made a significant difference at home, particularly during the lockdown periods.
- The teams have delivered an extensive training programme. In 92 schools, 126 courses have been delivered and 1677 delegates reached.
- The Whole Education Project on school self-evaluation and improvement from a SEND perspective now has 69 schools working in partnership across the County.
- Additionally, the teams have seen an increase of 98% in the requests for advice to contribute towards statutory assessments.
- Over 150 delegates attended the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) Conference 2022, held at Linden Hall Hotel on 1st July. The focus for the event was on Preparing for Adulthood, with keynotes and workshops running throughout the day.

10.8 The diagram below shows how we expect to provide the right service for the right families, following the principle that the further to the right, the greater the likelihood that families will also need the support of health and social care services, in addition to those received from schools and the local authority education department.



			Highly personalised support	EHCP
		Personalised support	Personalised support	SEN Support
	Targeted support	Targeted support	Targeted support	
Universal support	Universal support	Universal support	Universal support	Ordinarily available provision
				
<u>All</u> children and young people	<u>Some</u> children and young people	<u>A few</u> children and young people	<u>Very few</u> children and young people	
 Graduated Approach				

## 11. School Organisation and Resources

11.1 £37.9m has been invested and finalised in 2021 in new build schools for Hexham Middle and Queen Elizabeth High Schools which was a combination of refurbishment of a grade 2 listed building together with new building teaching blocks and enhanced sporting facilities which included a 3G pitch, an all weather hockey pitch, and 6 court sports.

11.2 The excellent work of the team that delivered the project has also been recognised nationally with the project voted as education project of the year for 2022. This has been a significant achievement for everyone involved as the whole project was delivered during the pandemic.

11.3 Atkinson House SEN School relocated into the former Richard Coates Primary School Site, Thornhill Road, Ponteland. The project created a 100 place 11-18 co-educational SEND school with a primary designation of SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health). The works included refurbishment of the internal fabric of the building and some internal remodelling to create the required range of teaching and ancillary spaces to service the needs of the pupils and staff – including an upgrade to some aspects of the mechanical and electrical (M&E) services. The main car park was remodelled to facilitate the safe access and egress of the pupils and provide the required amount of staff car parking. In addition, there were works to the site boundaries to ensure appropriate levels of safeguarding were put in place along with landscaping works to provide external play and social spaces for the pupils. The school was renamed the Emily Wilding Davison SEN School.



11.4 The School Capital Improvement Programme has continued through the year and between September 2021 and September 2022 has seen 13 projects completed on site, with a combined value of approximately £1.3 million. Geographically, these projects have ranged from Berwick in the North, to Slaley in the West and to Holywell in the South East, and have undertaken a range of works including replacing and upgrading roofs, upgrading heating systems and replacing existing lighting with new energy saving light-emitting diode (LED) systems. As well as maintaining the school estate, these projects seek to reduce operating costs for the schools and help the Council in achieving its climate change objectives.

11.5 The Outline Business Case (OBC) for Astley High/Whytrig Middle School was approved by Cabinet and a large amount of work was undertaken to develop the designs in readiness of a Planning application with detailed design and construction to follow soon after. Work also began to develop the OBC for James Calvert Spence College to explore the options for refurbishment or a complete rebuild of the school.



Astley High/Whytrig Middle Schools 1

- 11.6 Children and young people at risk of exclusion and those with SEMH needs require consistency, positive relationships with adults, structure and boundaries. Whilst now in place more consistently, there remains some lasting impact of COVID measures on young people in Northumberland
- 11.7 Data released by the government in July 2022 for the academic year 2020-21 demonstrates that, nationally, children and young people identified as receiving SEN support are five times more likely to be permanently excluded or suspended. Those with EHC plans were twice as likely to be suspended or excluded.
- 11.8 A disproportionate number of children with SEMH needs come from challenging home environments where the pressures of the pandemic would have been exacerbated e.g., financial worries, cramped living conditions, domestic violence etc. This would contribute to an escalation in stress/anxiety often manifesting in poor behaviour.
- 11.9 For several months, external professionals were unable to visit schools/homes. Young people/families often rely on this intervention to support them in making better choices.
- 11.10 Due to the regulations re: self-isolation, schools were required to rely heavily on supply teachers/cover supervisors. All children, but particularly those with SEMH, respond better to staff they have developed relationships with. It is widely acknowledged that supply teachers experience more challenging behaviour in lessons leading to more serious incidents that escalate to fixed term exclusions (FTEs) or Suspensions.
- 11.11 FTE's rose sharply in the last half of the 2021/22 academic year; this could be attributed to increased child anxiety linked to their needs and to continued challenges to staff resilience within schools. Everyone has been affected by the pandemic and it has been an extremely challenging period for schools, ensuring that they follow regulations in order to keep everyone safe.

11.12 Table of fixed term and permanent exclusions 2021/22 (from 2014/15)

	Permanent Exclusions			Fixed Term Exclusions		
	Total	EHCP	SEN Support	Total	EHCP	SEN Support
<b>2014/15</b>	44	4	16	1599	143	355
<b>2015/16</b>	41	0	26	1270	221	704
<b>2016/17</b>	75	3	39	1967	133	767
<b>2017/18</b>	115	6	53	4514	291	1347
<b>2018/19</b>	83	4	23	3490	180	769
<b>2019/20</b>	50	0	12	1696	112	391
<b>2020/21</b>	44	0	11	2144	172	642
<b>2021/22</b>	94	1	56	4027	372	1100

11.13 Since Jan 2021-July 2022, the team have worked with 249 children at risk of permanent exclusion. Only 29 of those pupils actually went on to be excluded meaning that 88% of those referred have remained in mainstream education.

11.14 Previously only an average of 1 in 5 managed moves were successful but this year, of the 29 completed moves, 19 have been successful and 10 have been unsuccessful; the success rate has more than tripled from 20% to 65%.

11.15 The Inclusion Panel launched in Sept 2022-this panel considers all referrals into the PRU, Alternative Provision (AP) and Primary Support Bases.

- 85% of the 2021/22 Year 11 Permanent Exclusion (PEX) cohort achieved a qualification in English
- 79% of the 2021/22 Year 11 PEX cohort achieved a qualification in Maths
- 83% of the 2021/22 Year 11 PEX are currently in EET (education, employment, training)
- Number of PEX learners in AP Sept 2021=70
- Number of PEX learners in AP Sept 2022=112

#### 11.16 School admissions:

- Primary=97.3% of children were allocated their first choice Primary school, 5% better than the national average.
- Secondary=97.2% of children were allocated their first choice Secondary school, 14% better than the national average.
- 2172 'in year' applications were processed within 2021/22
- Between Apr 2022 and Aug 2022 the team have processed 221 applications for Ukrainian children, all of which were allocated within 15 school days.
- The portal trial was successfully rolled out enabling other Admission Authorities to access their applications and carry out their ranking electronically

11.17 The School Organisation team continue to support families across the county through the HUGGG voucher scheme for school holidays. From December 2020 to May 2022, 97,143 vouchers were issued valuing £4.3m+ and with a redemption rate of 95%. The vouchers have been used to provide uniforms and food during school holiday periods.

11.18 School Funding and the National Funding Formula –Rural Schools within Northumberland received a £700,000 boost to their budgets with sparsity funding being increased by Department for Education. This increase has previously been strongly supported by Northumberland's Schools' Forum.

11.19 Progress towards the implementation of the National Funding Formula (NFF) for schools continued with the Council classified as a local authority which "mirrors the NFF in most factors". Only the Mobility Factor, newly introduced into Northumberland's formula for 2022/23 is different to the national factors. Despite the many financial pressures faced by Schools and Services alike, Schools' Forum was informed in July 2022 that the previous high needs deficit had now been eliminated, and of an overall balanced Dedicated Schools Grant position.

11.20 The Services to Schools SLA portal was responsible for agreeing over £6 million of services to support Schools across the whole Council, from premises to various other professional services including a range of services from Education and Skills.

11.21 Homes for Ukraine Funding distribution to Schools - To support schools receiving students from the Ukraine, payments of £147,000 were made of DfE funds

specifically targeted to families arriving under the Home for Ukraine visa scheme. Further payments will be made for the Autumn 2022 and Spring 2023 terms.

## **12. Northumberland Skills and Employability**

- 12.1 There were 1097 enrolments onto programmes across eight campuses in 2021-22 for adult learners and 120 enrolments for young people aged 16-18 with the largest majority (89.1%) of enrolments being adult learning.
- 12.2 Overall achievement rates across the whole Service [exc Apprenticeships] for 2021-22 were 91.9%.
- 12.3 Apprenticeship recruitment continues to remain a challenge in 2021-22, with vacancies in many advertised apprenticeships not being filled from the local & regional labour markets. Northumberland skills continues to provide training models through apprenticeships in various vocational sectors and have availability in various roles across the county to work directly with internal (NCC) and external employer (Northeast employers)
- 12.4 2021-22, another year of disruption and change and without a return to a more typical training and skills environment. Northumberland Skills self-assessment grade the service as GOOD, in terms of Ofsted gradings for 2021-22.
- 12.5 The achievement rate excluding English and mathematics is 94.6% which is an increase of 1.6% from 2020/21 and is above the National Rate of 93.6%. Pass rates for learners with an EHCP is outstanding at 100% (learning continued on site throughout various restrictions and therefore experienced less disruption)
- 12.6 Adult Learning for those aged over 19 years forms the largest majority of the service and remains as a GOOD performance with an achievement rate overall of 94.1% which is an increase of 10.1% from 2020/21.
- 12.7 Achievement stabilised in 2021-22, showing a small decline against standard National Rates. Covid19 is still showing an historical impact on withdrawal numbers, in particular this can be attributed to learners who were disproportionately affected by new Covid 19 variants and with risk assessment undertook much more remote learning. As English as a second language is really challenging without face to face engagement, building trust. Some learners left the programme in the first term of the academic year.
- 12.8 Given the legacy challenges to ensure learners remained on programme, engaged and making good progress throughout the Omicron phase of the pandemic the achievement rate is reassuring.
- 12.9 Apprenticeship End Point Assessment achievement remains positive with a high number of apprenticeships achieving Distinction grades at the end of their programme of training.
- 12.10 Learner Voice surveys - (Student feedback) demonstrate positive examples of good practice and positive outcome data.
- 12.11 Learner's attitudes to their education are positive and have been shown to have improved over time. Behaviour and attitudes of learners is good, with learners

demonstrating effective behaviours for learning supporting what we know to be the expectations of employers.

- 12.12 The Employability and Skills Service has continued to work throughout the pandemic restrictions and challenges and the service has grown in response to resident's needs. There is an increased offer of employment-focused programmes to respond directly to the expected high rise in unemployment.
- 12.13 The team delivered 4 employment programmes supporting approximately 750 residents across the various programmes – The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) JETS Programme (job entry targeted support), DWP Restart Scheme and DWP Building Better Opportunities, along with a new programme funded by NCC's Refugee and Asylum Seeker Unit. All DWP programmes continue to perform well regionally, and many residents have been supported into training and sustainable employment, along with support for health and wellbeing, financial inclusion etc.
- 12.14 The new Refugee and Asylum Seeker support programme helped 51 people in its first year and 25 residents have already gone into meaningful employment helping to maintain the skills of the individuals, and in turn helping them to integrate into their host community. An Employment Adviser works in partnership with the Refugee and Asylum Seeker support team, Northumberland Skills English as a Second Language (ESOL) team and internal colleagues to ensure that the groups needs are met by helping them to access help and services to gain English qualifications, improve their confidence to help them to navigate the UK jobs market and into employment that can sustain them and enable them to thrive
- 12.15 The DWP Jets (Job entry targeted support) Programme continued, delivered with Reed in Partnership, as a remote digital employment support programme, that was started at the height of the pandemic. Referrals are from Job Centres across Northumberland and participants are newly unemployed. The programme will cease in March 2023. The speed with which DWP awarded the JETS contracts to established employability providers allowed for a rapid response to an emerging situation. As a result, participants received fast and much needed support at an unprecedented and uncertain time. Delivery of services to existing participants will continue until April next year, when the statistics of the JETS legacy will no doubt speak for themselves.
- 12.16 Learners excel in an environment in which they feel safe because staff and learners do not accept bullying, harassment or discrimination. Attendance remained strong across all curriculum areas whilst engagement posed some challenges during restrictions. Engagement was closely monitored throughout restrictions and all campuses remained well managed to be COVID-19 safe learning environments.
- 12.17 The Service continues to be well positioned to respond particularly to North of Tyne Inclusive Growth projects where the prime aims are to support residents into gaps,

reduce inequality and disadvantage gaps and to support progression into employment as well as in work progression through training.

12.18 An independent survey carried out by J2research in August 2022 focused on all learners from 2021-22 cohort returned the following:

- 92.4% of former learners stated that it helped them achieve their principal reason or motivation for attending the course
- 100% of former learners achieved their motivations of:
  - Becoming more active in the community
  - Progressing onto another course afterwards
  - 96.2% of former learners achieved their motivation of hobby and interest
  - 95.8% of former learners achieved their motivation of upskilling for their current or future career
- Former learners were asked questions in relation to the impact of the course and the time they spent learning:
  - 90.1% agreed that their course helped keep themselves physically and mentally well
  - 86.1% agreed that their course helped them pursue their goals and ambitions
  - 82.6% agreed that their course helped them socialise, work and communicate with others

12.19 Learners receive good links to industry throughout all curriculum areas, leading to the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours required to progress into high-quality destinations. The links are provided by staff and with business engagement being strengthened this year but with a recognition that even more engagement will benefit more of the study programme development.

12.20 At July 2022 NEET (including unknown) was 5.0% in Northumberland compared to the all-England figure of 5.2 %, a continuing focus for future improvement.

12.21 At July 2022 SEND NEET (including unknown) was 16.4% in Northumberland compared to the all-England figure of 9.4%.

12.22 The Careers Guidance team performs the Council's statutory duties to encourage, enable and assist young people over statutory school age but under 19 (or 25 with an EHCP) to participate in education and training.

12.23 Careers advisers work with a range of external agencies to effectively source post 16 education and training from a range of providers.

12.24 The team is also responsible for the statutory duty to track, record, report and support Northumberland residents in this cohort in relation to their post 16 education



and training and works with Northumberland schools to support pupils with an EHCP at key transition points in order to better prepare them for adulthood.

### **13. Education Development**

- 13.1 Blyth Welding & Fabrication Training Centre - Work to fit out Northumberland Skills recently acquired industrial premises within the Port of Blyth industrial cluster is underway. By March 2023 the building will be developed into Blyth Welding & Fabrication Training Centre. This flagship technical skills delivery facility is a unique approach for NCC to answer the workforce challenges of employers locally and regionally in a niche sector, to fast-track young people and adults into technical and high value careers, and to reduce productivity and growth obstacles related to this niche skill area, predominantly supporting manufacturing, engineering, construction, marine and energy sectors.
- 13.2 Northumberland Model for Preparation for Adulthood - During 2022 NCC has finalised the model, guiding principles and brand which will create a community of like-minded education providers within the SEND education provider community, working toward the shared objective of more children and young people (C&YP) with SEND achieving sustainable careers with 3 special schools on board as part of a pilot programme.
- 13.3 JDR Cables Section 106 Agreement - During 2022 NCC Education Directorate influenced the planning application of major inward investing employer JDR Cables. The £130m JDR Cables facility in Cambois is planned to be operational by Q1 2024 at which time JDR Cables will provide NCC with a Training & Skills Plan and an Employment Plan. NCC will collaborate with JDR Cables in the delivery of the plans aiming to maximise opportunities locally within Northumberland.
- 13.4 Project Choice Supported Internships in Northumberland County Council - Northumberland County Council's Education Directorate supported Health Education England's Project Choice team to develop Supported Internship Provision within Northumbria Health Care Trust settings during the academic year 21-22. Academic year 22-23 sees the continuation of provision within NHCT but also commencement of placements within Northumberland County Council, it is recognised that more volunteering departments are required to host interns, however, so this work continues.
- 13.5 Globalbridge - Northumberland County Council's Education Directorate continue to work with the team behind the Globalbridge opportunity platform with over 8000 pupils across 18 Northumberland schools now having access to build their profiles. The data around pupil aspirations that is now fed back from Globalbridge is also insightful and is informing which education development projects to pursue and where to target them for greatest impact. Developments are also underway for SEND specific opportunity showcase events to close the inequality gap on this community of young people.
- 13.6 Rural Investment Plan & Borderlands Place Programme - Northumberland County Council's Education Directorate continue to work closely with Regeneration Colleagues in ensuring that the skills agenda is firmly represented as part of the ongoing Rural Investment Plan & Borderland Place Programme in order to seek

targeted investment toward skills for those beyond the more densely populated areas of the county.

- 13.7 Northumberland Line economic corridor -Northumberland County Council's Education Directorate have worked closely with Advance Northumberland and Planning & Economy colleagues to form plans to support the need for more skilled people which will be an effect of opportunities arising from the opening of the Northumberland Line. Work continues to have Northumberland Skills positioned to support business growth around the line via the provision of related apprenticeships and other emerging training requirements.
- 13.8 Home to School Transport Review - From January 2022 Northumberland County Council's Education Directorate has led on the system wide Home to School Transport Review, working closely with colleagues in local services, with committee approval for thirty eight strategic recommendations underway.
- 13.9 Morpeth Group Riding for the Disabled Association- Northumberland County Council's Education Directorate have collaborated with Morpeth Group Riding for the Disabled Association and Northumberland College to deliver the transition of the group from their previous location at Tranwell to a more sustainable future with potential to grow at Kirkley Hall campus. Weekly sessions have since commenced at Kirkley Hall for over 125 riders travelling from all over the county to attend riding lessons which encourage co-ordination, develop muscle strength, and build self-confidence. Meanwhile NCC continue to roll out plans to upgrade the riding facilities to allow greater participation of children and young people with disabilities.

#### **14. Virtual School**

- 14.1 Being in care has a positive impact on education outcomes for Northumberland's children in care and care leavers because:
- there is better stability in school placements
  - more pupils are back on track and working within their age-related curriculum
  - more care leavers are staying in further and higher education
  - there is momentum behind our aspiration for all Northumberland schools to be attachment aware and trauma informed
  - our whole council approach is driving better corporate parenting.
- 14.2 The education achievement of Northumberland's looked after children improves when they become looked after, despite more pupils entering care during Year 11 and an increase in the number of school age children moving in and out of care. Consequently, since the last national tests and exams were taken in 2019, education outcomes for our pupils are much improved in several measures, notably at Key Stage 1 in the combined reading/writing/maths measure, and at GCSE. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in Early Years and attainment at Key Stage 2 are both a focus for future improvement.
- 14.3 Excellent transition work took place for the 92 pupils starting new schools in September, involving 43 phase changes and 49 Year 11s progressing into education, employment and training. To improve school placement stability, the

Virtual School was a lead partner of a multi-agency group of schools and other professionals to implement a new framework called STAN (Supporting Transitions across Northumberland). The work was developed with partners from education, children's social care and mental health and was influenced by the voices of children, young people and their families.

- 14.4 There has been an improvement in the number of pupils following their age-related curriculum in every year group, attributed to the intensive focus on getting pupils back on track and by using additional grant funding effectively. The Virtual School was able to use a new one-off Recovery Premium and a School Led Tutoring Grant (SLTG) to make sure that pupils who needed it received extra tuition and support in the classroom.
- 14.5 For the 14th consecutive year there has been no permanent exclusion of a care-experienced child.
- 14.6 Our track record of successfully raising the aspirations of children in care and care leavers continues. 87% of our Year 11 school leavers had a destination in education, employment or training for September 2022, and despite the disruption to some pathways caused by the pandemic the retention rate of Year 12 and 13 learners in Further Education has improved to 70%.
- 14.7 100% of our learners completing Level 3 courses have achieved well and are now progressing into Higher Education and employment.
- 14.8 100% of our care leavers in Higher Education completed their university degrees and are progressing into employment and postgraduate courses.
- 14.9 For further details about the education of looked after children see the Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report 2022  
[https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Child-Families/Looked%20after%20children/Virtual-School\\_Headteacher-s-Annual-Report\\_AY-2021-22\\_Approved\\_Print-quality\\_Single-pages.pdf](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Child-Families/Looked%20after%20children/Virtual-School_Headteacher-s-Annual-Report_AY-2021-22_Approved_Print-quality_Single-pages.pdf)
- 14.10 School attendance in Northumberland is moving in the right direction and reflects the national picture, but is not yet back to pre-pandemic levels (2018-19).
- 14.11 Covid is having a lingering impact on school attendance and it is challenging for schools and the local authority to reduce persistent absence (PA) which is high in all phases. A new attendance strategy for 2022-23 will specifically target this issue.
- 14.12 Safeguarding arrangements for identifying children at risk of missing education (CME) have grown from strength to strength. Membership of the monthly CME

tracking panel has widened to include the Children and Young People's Service (CYPS), Early Help and social care.

- 290 children were referred to the CME tracking panel and by July 257 had returned to school full time.
- 220 of those children are no longer CME following the tracking panel.
- 290 children were discussed at the CME tracking panel this year compared to 83 last year.
- Being in alternative provision and part time timetables are the most common reasons for CME.
- There has been a reduction in the number of children on a Child Protection Plan recorded as CME, from 56 in 2019-20 to 22 in 2021-22

14.13 Relationships with families that electively home educate (EHE) their children are good and there has been a rise in the number of families agreeing to annual visits from Education Welfare Officers which is encouraging.

14.14 The number of children being electively home educated in Northumberland is 357, which is a reduction since earlier in the academic year. 221 children became EHE from September 2021 to July 2022, and 63 returned to school places.

- 88 EHE children have returned to school this year
- Additional capacity in the team has helped ensure that annual reviews from parents who EHE are completed within timescales
- There has been a reduction from 35 students with an EHCP being EHE in 2020/21 to 28 in 2021/22.
- All year 11 EHE students had contact with Education Welfare and were signposting to post 16 options was provided.

14.15 School engagement with the Northumberland Children's and Adult's Safeguarding Partnership (NCASP) is good:

- of all school inspections during the year, safeguarding has been judged to be at least Good
- recommendations from 3 learning reviews were implemented in education settings
- schools completed the NSPCC's audit exploring sexual violence and sexual harassment in schools
- training for Designated Safeguarding Leads has been well attended and the programme has responded to contextual safeguarding needs in Northumberland
- school completion of the Section 175 audit has provided re-assurance to the NCASP about safeguarding standards in our schools

14.16 Pupils with health and medical needs who attend Northumberland's Education other than at School (EOTAS) provision enjoyed a better teaching and learning experience this year.

- Pupils with attendance over 80% achieved the highest grades at GCSE.
- Even though their attendance at school before joining EOTAS was very low, almost half the Year 11 cohort achieved at least a grade 4 in English, maths and combined science GCSEs. 19 pupils achieved Level 7 in English and 7 more achieved Level 8!
- A hybrid of online and face to face lessons for every pupil improved engagement and attendance.
- A new curriculum with new resources was introduced for PSHE and for primary age pupils.
- Support for pupils was co-ordinated by a new Team Around the Pupil process, which meant we could listen to what our pupils were saying about their experience of education.

## **15. Education and Skills Key Priorities for 23/24**

15.1 This report presents a self evaluation of where we are now and also seeks to demonstrate our aspirations for the future. As a result it is fitting for the last words to be our 'Key Priorities' for further improvement. These priorities have been developed by the sector led Education Strategy Board, our lead member and multiple officers. They represent the views, aims and aspirations for many

Northumberland residents and are therefore the main driver for the actions of the Education and Skills teams for 2023 and 2024.

1. Know the strengths and weaknesses of our schools and other educational providers and report their performance to the Council and the community.
2. Challenge and support improvement in the performance of our schools and settings so that all children and young people, including disadvantaged and SEND learners, achieve the best educational outcomes:
  - We will support across the early years sector to ensure all children are school ready and that the schools are ready for every child
  - We will support all first, primary and middle schools to ensure their pupils have the skills and knowledge required to access the secondary curriculum
  - We will support improved transition, progress and performance for Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 to promote access for all learners to their first-choice destination
3. Improve the lived experience and outcomes for learners with SEND:
  - We will work in partnership with all stakeholders, including championing the voice of children, young people and their families, jointly working with Health and Social Care, to fully implement the Local Area 0-25 SEND Strategy
  - We will lead on the development of a fully inclusive education system
4. Develop the vocational education offer to provide clear pathways into apprenticeships, further education, higher education, and employment for all our young people and adults:
  - We will develop a curriculum and facilities which both supports the ambition of learners and links to the workforce requirements for Northumberland
  - We will build on key relationships between education & industry
  - We will produce clear guidance for schools and settings on what good careers advice looks like to ensure all young people are supported to achieve their aspirations.
5. Develop appropriate high quality educational provision that meets the needs of all children and young people as close to their home communities as possible:
  - We will strive to deliver the right number of places to meet all learner needs in the right place at the right time
6. Ensure the Education and Skills Service fulfils its statutory duties within the legislative framework (including the School Admissions Code, Exclusions,

Attendance, Virtual School, School Organisational Regulations, Early Years Sufficiency and those relating to SEND):

- We will meet our own statutory duties
- We will further develop relationships with the Regional Director and Academy Trusts to ensure they adhere to their statutory duties whilst ensuring equality of access to education
- The Local Authority will work closely with children, young people, their families, schools, settings and all other partners to deliver on these priorities.

Each of these priority workstreams 'package' will be monitored and evaluated and by the sector led Education Strategy Board with an annual report update.

## Implications

<b>Policy</b>	<p>The actions set out in this report support the vision and values of the Council's Corporate Plan.</p> <p>All Department for Education (DFE) / Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) policies and guidance are reviewed, interpreted and shared.</p>
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	All budgets and decisions conform to expected DFE / ESFA funding requirements
<b>Legal</b>	<p>Northumberland County Council has statutory responsibilities with schools and academies as well as colleges and post 16 providers. The statutory responsibilities are clearly defined within policy and priorities for Education and Skills; within specific officer roles and also within the Board structures that engage with schools and academies and wider stakeholders to engage and to assure that all statutory duties are met. Formal reporting routines are embedded across the corporate calendar to ensure oversight and decision making is clear.</p> <p>The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions reserved to Full Council.</p>
<b>Procurement</b>	none
<b>Human Resources</b>	none
<b>Property</b>	Eight delivery sites around the county – 7 are shared sites, one is the responsibility of the Learning and Skills Service. Schools have delegated responsibility for buildings.
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	All schools and staff have individual risk assessments. All sites are risk assessed. All Schools and Skills sites are covid/ HS risk assessed. Skills sites undertake reviews routinely as well as spot checks on premises to ensure routines and expectations are being followed.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	The report has considered Section 1 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	Service plans and systems are approached from the pupil/family/customer perspective. All learner facing



	approaches include the learner/ customer journey to improve satisfaction
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	The increase in digital and remote learning as well as digital meeting spaces has significantly reduced the travel and carbon footprint in 2021/22.
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Staff well-being is of high importance. Systems such as Kooth and Qwell are in place to support pupils and staff as well as bespoke arrangements to meet the needs of particular circumstances.
<b>Wards</b>	All aspects of the service support all wards in Northumberland, the digital reach has now expanded this opportunity.

### **Report Sign Off**

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Audrey Kingham
Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson

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## GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

<b>AP</b>	Alternative Provision
<b>CME</b>	Children Missing Education
<b>C&amp;YP</b>	Children and Young People
<b>CYPS</b>	Children and Young People Service
<b>DfE</b>	Department for Education
<b>DWP</b>	Department for Work and Pensions
<b>EET</b>	Education, Employment and Training
<b>EHC</b>	Education Health Care
<b>EHCP</b>	Education Health Care Plan
<b>EHE</b>	Elective Home Education
<b>EYFS</b>	Early Years Foundation Stage
<b>EOTAS</b>	Education Other than at School
<b>ESFA</b>	Education and Skills Funding Agency
<b>ESOL</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>FTE</b>	Fixed Term Exclusions or Suspensions
<b>H&amp;S</b>	Health and Safety
<b>HINT</b>	High Incidence Needs Team
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>JETS</b>	Job Entry Targeted Support
<b>LINT</b>	Low Incidence Needs Team
<b>NCC</b>	Northumberland County Council
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Mechanical and Electrical
<b>NCASP</b>	Northumberland Children's and Adult's Safeguarding Partnership
<b>NEET</b>	Not in Employment, Education or Training
<b>NFF</b>	National Funding Formula
<b>NHCT</b>	Northumbria Health Care Trust
<b>NIES</b>	Northumberland Inclusive Education Service
<b>NSPCC</b>	National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children
<b>OBC</b>	Outline Business Case
<b>PA</b>	Persistent Absence
<b>PEX</b>	Permanent Exclusion
<b>PRU</b>	Pupil Referral Unit
<b>PSHE</b>	Personal, social, health and economic
<b>PVI</b>	Private, Voluntary or Independent
<b>SATs</b>	Standard Assessment Tests
<b>SEMH</b>	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
<b>SENCo</b>	Special Education Needs Coordinator
<b>SEN</b>	Special Education Needs
<b>SEND</b>	Special Education Needs and Disabilities
<b>SLA</b>	Service Level Agreement
<b>SLTG</b>	School Led Tutoring Grant
<b>STAN</b>	Supporting Transitions Across Northumberland