



Northumberland

County Council

COMMITTEE: FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 1ST April 2021

EDUCATION AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMY PORTFOLIO NORTH OF TYNE COMBINED AUTHORITY

Report of: Cath McEvoy-Carr, Executive Director Children's Services

Cabinet Member: Cllr Richard Dodd, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Secretary

Purpose of report

To provide the Families and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny committee with an overview of the ongoing projects and work in the Inclusive Economy portfolio within the North of Tyne Combined Authority.

Recommendations

Committee is recommended to:

- Review the key themes and workstreams in the Inclusive Economy portfolio and the progress to date
- Review the plan for the Joint School Improvement Strategy
- Consider the work of the Northumberland Officers Group developing projects for submission to meet the needs of Northumberland.
- Identify any areas for further scrutiny

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the following priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- We want you to have access to the things you need; 'connecting'
- We want you to achieve and realise your potential; 'learning'
- We want you to attract more and better jobs; 'thriving'

1.0 Key issues

1.1 The Ambition:

The North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) is focused on developing an inclusive and dynamic economy, for us this means becoming the home of ambition and opportunity for all.

The Combined Authority believes in opportunity for all, removing the barriers which make it difficult for people to take up employment and training opportunities. We want to empower our people with the skills and resources they need to take ownership of their futures and secure good jobs with fair living wages.

We will be the home of ambition, where every resident owns their economic future and all young people to have high aspirations, with support to enable them to make good choices.

We will work to increase the earnings, qualifications levels and progression routes accessible to local residents so that every resident has the tools and confidence to access the higher skilled jobs in future.

1.2 What success will look like

We are focused on narrowing the gap both between the area and the national average (outside London) and within the area to reduce inequality; this includes:

- Closing the gap on average earnings: Increasing the earnings, qualifications levels and progression routes for local residents will be an important issue as an inclusive economy to ensure residents have access to new higher skilled jobs in future
- Closing the unemployment gap: Remove the barriers which make it difficult for people to take up employment and training opportunities
- Closing the skills and education gap: Through good schools and colleges, make sure our young people have the skills, experience and qualifications to take up quality training and jobs
- Closing the aspiration and ambition gap: So that local people own their own economic future and all young people to have high aspirations and confidence, with support to enable them to make good choices

2.0 Inclusive Economy Board

2.1 The NTCA Inclusive Economy Board (IE Board) was launched in March 2020 and advises the NTCA Cabinet on inclusive economy interventions across the North of Tyne area, championing the NTCA Vision and supporting the area to become a national exemplar in inclusive growth.

2.2 Independently chaired by the Right Reverend Christine Hardman, Bishop of Newcastle and including membership at senior level from business, local government, central government, civil society and experts in inclusive and economic growth, the IE Board provides robust governance for a strategic approach to better integrate and strengthen education, skills and employment interventions in order to improve local education and employment outcomes for North of Tyne residents.

2.3 The IE Board provides oversight of the jointly developed Employment Framework Agreement between NTCA and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Approved in October 2020, the Framework will make a significant contribution to creating an inclusive economy, focussed on coordinating employment, skills and health services to move more people into good work.

“In March, I was made chair of the North of Tyne Inclusive Economy board. It’s a role I was proud to adopt. The North of Tyne Combined Authority created the Inclusive Economy Board to find new ways to raise opportunity through work and training for people in Newcastle, Northumberland, and North Tyneside, whatever their circumstances. By doing this, and by working together across the public, private and voluntary sectors, we will help create the more fair – and green – economy that we want to see flourish in our region. Crucially, the board is about doing not discussing: it’s about driving forward real change to move us further, faster towards our goal of creating a fairer and more inclusive economy here.”

The Right Reverend Christine Hardman, Bishop of Newcastle and independent chair of The North of Tyne Inclusive Economy Board

3.0 Good Work Pledge

NTCA has co-developed the Good Work Pledge, which enables employers to understand the key elements of Good Work, what they can do to achieve this for their employees and what support is available to help them get there. It is not a formal accreditation or award, but instead represents a set of five pledges that businesses can work towards, support and receive recognition for.



A Good Work Pledge launch event took place in November 2020 with 97 participants. A number of applications are either approved or in development. Here is a video of some early adopters

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2ZRMQHZESg>

“We want people who work for us to have the opportunity to reach their potential, so signing up to an initiative which recognises this was a step in the right direction,” .. Unisus.

Good Work Pledge Early Adopters

GOOD WORK PLEDGE LAUNCH

These are just some of the organisations joining us so far...



4.0 Adult Education Budget devolution

- 4.1 A significant contribution to the Inclusive Economy ambition has been in the successful devolution of the Adult Education Budget which went live in August 2020. This has allowed us to ensure that over £23million every year is being invested in the skills development of our residents to move them closer to, into and progress in work, matching skills to the jobs in our area. We have developed the North of Tyne AEB Skills Plan to provide the area with a strategic approach to skills development, and we are also maximising the benefits of a devolved fund, responding swiftly to the COVID-19 crisis.
- 4.2 Providers are working in extremely challenging circumstances and we are providing stability and flexibilities where possible to ensure that delivery is maintained throughout and beyond the current crisis.
- 4.3 Providers have implemented innovative plans to ensure delivery of the devolved AEB continues during the COVID-19 crisis. This has included transferring provision on-line, supporting vulnerable learners through one to one video calls and where classrooms have been able to open, delivering to groups of learners with effective safety measures in place.
- 4.4 Up to the beginning of November 2020, AEB has supported 8545 enrolment opportunities undertaken by North of Tyne residents aged 19 and above. We have already received much feedback on how this funding is making a positive impact to people's lives and we have case studies from a number of residents providing us with 'their story' on how the courses they are taking are building their confidence and skills, and supporting them on their next steps.

5.0 Inclusive Economy Innovation Fund

In April 2019 Cabinet agreed that up to £12 million could be allocated from the NTCA Investment Fund to prioritise innovative inclusive economy investment activities. In October 2019 Cabinet approved the Inclusive Economy Innovation Fund (IEIF) priorities for investment, as part of suite of measures to support the delivery of an inclusive economy.

5.1 This included prioritising people and groups which traditionally experience social disadvantage and economic exclusion, primarily:

- residents who are out of employment;
- in-work, low-earning individuals;
- individuals with low skills;
- young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

5.2 The £12 million allocation approved by Cabinet will be used to attract co-investment with an ambition of achieving a ratio of 3:1 leverage on the NTCA commitment. The principles of the Fund are agreed as

- impact at scale: creating a Fund which can go further, faster
- innovation: in both structure and delivery
- citizen engagement: co-developing the fund with our residents and their representative groups
- business engagement: creating a natural place for conversations about new economic and investment models to take place.

5.3 NTCA has already signalled its intent with early investments in, and support for a number of projects, which are already making a positive impact to the lives of our residents and act as demonstrators to how the NTCA inclusive economy ambitions will be realised over time.

6.0 Return to Work - Carers

NTCA is working in partnership with 3 charities - Newcastle Carers, Carers Northumberland and North Tyneside Carers Centre - to support 450 carers in their journey to paid employment over the course of a 2-and-a-half-year 'Return to Work – Carers' pilot. This innovative pilot launched in April 2020 just as the COVID-19 pandemic began to take hold across the UK.

6.1 Early days of project delivery included developing virtual methods of communication and establishing the project against the backdrop of extreme changes in the economy and in the lives of carers.

6.2 To date this programme has supported 43 residents with current or recent experience of unpaid caring responsibilities with 9 moving into employment and a further 5 securing a place in education or training.

6.3 Although engagement with residents has been slower than anticipated due to the impacts of COVID-19 such as lockdowns and social distancing, the project is already making a positive difference to those individuals involved.

- 6.4 In December 2020, North Tyneside Carers Centre held a focus group to hear feedback on project experiences to date. Whilst the remote support was felt to be strange at first there were reports that the lack of travel for appointments was good, it saved time and stress. Although it was also recognised that face to face support is important for people who can feel isolated. What carers really appreciate about the project was the non-judgemental and flexible approach.

“We can take as much or as little as we want from the project and it is great that there is no pressure.”

Participant on the NTCA Return to Work – Carers pilot

- 6.5 The focus group identified that carers have a lot to bring to the workplace from their experience of caring, including resilience. However, it was also recognised that many employers would benefit from information about the challenges carers face and how best to support them in the workplace. The carers highlighted that before practical support and skills building can be useful or effective there is a need to help people rediscover their confidence and self-esteem which can be eroded by the multiple demands of being a carer.

“The project has given me the support to access online education and I’m now doing English and IAG qualifications. It is free and my adviser helped me get a grant for the laptop. My confidence has really improved and it is good to know the adviser is always there and regularly checking in with me. Just knowing people are there makes all the difference. I’ve come such a long way and benefited from having this time for myself.”

Participant on the NTCA Return to Work – Carers pilot

7.0 North of Tyne Digital Inclusion Scheme

The Digital Inclusion scheme is designed to prioritise support for residents who are deemed most in need of support, because of the impacts of COVID-19. The pandemic has significantly disrupted face-to-face delivery services. Residents without access to a suitable device and internet connection are locked out and facing further disadvantage.

- 7.1 The scheme aims to support 4 specific cohorts:

- school children, initially from school years 6 and 9, to enable them to continue their education;
- adults in education funded by the NTCA devolved Adult Education Budget;
- unemployed adults who were previously accessing employability provision but are now unable to access the services and;
- care homes, to enable their residents to connect with family and services and to maintain their mental wellbeing. Staff in care homes can also benefit from this connectivity while at work, supporting their residents and keeping their own digital skills up to date.

Delivered through our three constituent local authorities, the North of Tyne Digital Inclusion Scheme aims to support 2675 residents by the time of its conclusion in June 2021.

- 7.2 Feedback from wider stakeholders has confirmed this Scheme is a valuable intervention as the issue of digital exclusion continues to be exacerbated by the impacts of COVID-19.

“We are thrilled to be giving our young participants the tools they need to stay connected and engaged at a time when jobs fairs, training opportunities and job applications are hosted online.”

Dawn Barber, Newcastle United Foundation’s Business Network Manager

8.0 North of Tyne Working Homes

Using an innovative partnership between housing providers, housing associations, learning providers and local authorities, and part funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), this large-scale employment support pilot programme will help 1650 residents move closer to work.

- 8.1 The North of Tyne Working Homes project integrates employment coaches and other support workers as part of housing management teams to help residents find work, build their resilience and gain the skills they need to maintain successful tenancies.
- 8.2 Launched in April 2019, the programme has already supported 847 residents. Many of the residents supported face additional barriers to employment, including 370 residents with a disability, 207 aged over 50, and 121 of an ethnic minority. Despite the challenging economic conditions due to COVID-19 and having to suspend face-to-face support, the programme has, to date, enabled 194 residents to progress into education, employment or training.
- 8.3 Case studies of the impact the North of Tyne Working Homes programme has had on residents are available through the NTCA website and provided below are quotes from two residents accessing support from the programme.

“With my adviser’s knowledge of the local business support on offer, I learned all about self-employment and how to set up and market my business and how to attract customers.”

Working Homes programme participant

“The adviser has supported me lots with accessing food, medication, citizens advice, bills and lots more. This support made a huge difference in our lives because I’m self-isolating which means I can’t go out, so it really helps me and I am so grateful and feel happy and cared for.”

Working Homes programme participant

“I would like to thank ‘North of Tyne Working Homes’ for their encouragement and belief in me. After redundancy I was put forward for several IT courses. I didn’t know the first thing about IT and at 62 years old was a little worried! However, I felt really encouraged when I completed them and received certificates – something I never believed I was capable of.”

Working Homes programme participant

“By running through a mock interview on Zoom with Evie I felt prepared and more confident for the real interview. I am over the moon I was offered the job!! I would recommend anyone in my position speaking to Working Homes. I would not have been able to do it without her. Thank you.”

Working Homes programme participant

9.0 Survey work with young people

The activity mentioned throughout this report, and the ongoing evaluation and feedback we are gathering from participants, partners and stakeholders enables us to learn what’s working well and acknowledge what isn’t working so well and why. We are using this learning and insight to continue to co-create with residents, doing with and not doing to. Creating new opportunities to support and to ensure everyone has a stake in our region’s future. The NTCA COVID-19 recovery plan is bold, building on the strong foundations we already have in place, and maximising our potential for growth.

9.1 In Summer/Autumn 2020 NTCA published a survey to seek the views of our young people (aged 16-25) in relation to the impact of COVID-19 on their current learning and work, and on their future aspirations.

A common thread across the survey results is a clear loss of confidence and increased anxiety caused by the economic instability.

- Those who aspired to enter apprenticeships or work this autumn revised their expectations to either return to education or to continue job-searching
- Respondents identified a range of different interventions they felt would help them move towards a positive destination
- The most frequently requested interventions were help with CVs and selection processes, and access to work experience

“You need to help us. This GCSE mess isn’t fair. It’s not OK, I’m so worried about my future, feel like I’ve wasted 3 years of my life”.

Comment from NTCA Young People Survey

“Please be careful. Futures are balanced, including mine”.

Comment from NTCA Young People Survey

9.2 NTCA are taking this valuable insight to inform the programmes we are putting in place to support our young people through this crisis and into recovery. Targeted support such as an Apprenticeship Hub, Youth Employment Partnership and acting as a Gateway for the Kickstart programme will all be launched in 2021, in addition to the targeted skills interventions ongoing from the Adult Education Budget.

9.3 We are committed to ensuring our residents have a voice in our future plans and will launch a Poverty Truth Commission in 2021. The North of Tyne Poverty Truth Commission will bring together community, civic and business representatives with people with experience of living in poverty. It will aim to better understand the specific effects of the COVID-19 pandemic for people living in Newcastle, North Tyneside, and Northumberland and come up with practical solutions.

The impact of the coronavirus crisis on people already struggling and the steps needed for economic recovery will be a central theme of the Commission's work.

"We want to better understand all the impacts of this crisis on people experiencing poverty so that our recovery as a region is for everyone"

Cllr Joyce McCarty, Deputy Leader Newcastle City Council and
NTCA Cabinet member for Employability and Inclusion

"Understanding the truth about the barriers and difficulties people face helps us develop lasting solutions. It's about fixing the causes of poverty in the long-term."

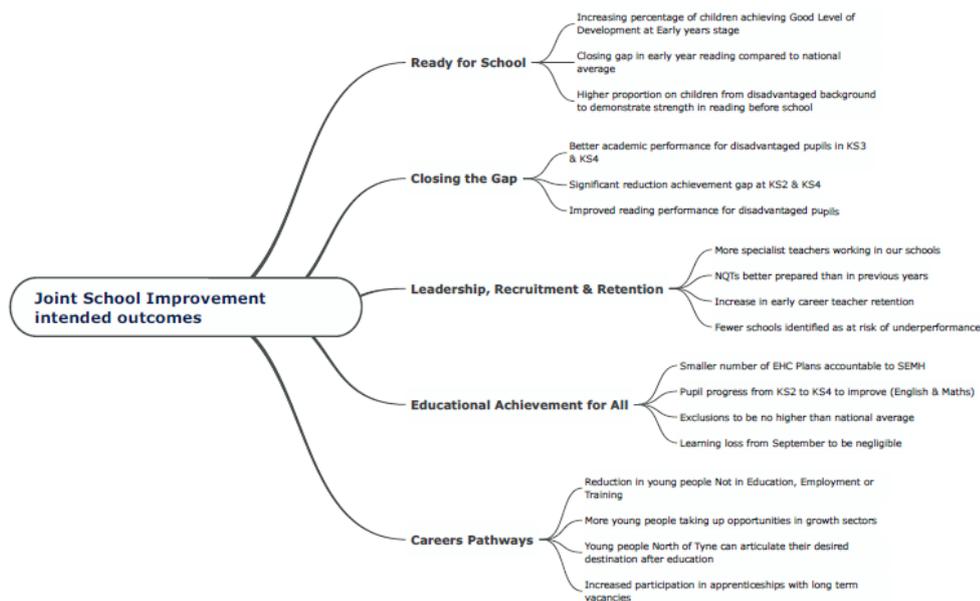
Jamie Driscoll, Mayor of the North of Tyne Combined Authority

10.0 Joint School Improvement Strategy

The Joint School Improvement Strategy represents a unified approach to school improvement across the constituent North of Tyne authorities. It identifies how our education teams will collaborate to add value, contributing to improved performance against five key priorities, considering national and local best practice. Our collective impact will raise the standard of education and improve life chances for the young people we serve.

- 10.1 What are we trying to improve? Evidence suggests that not enough of our children enter the North of Tyne education system ready for school, with early reading highlighted as one of our biggest areas of concern. This contributes to a long-term negative impact on academic outcomes, particularly for white British boys from disadvantaged backgrounds. We are also concerned about the mental health of our pupils, highlighted by a rising number of Education, Health and Care Plans accountable to Social, Emotional & Mental Health issues. We expect this situation to have been exacerbated by the impacts of Covid-19.
- 10.2 Progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 has historically been and continues to be a significant challenge. At the end of Key Stage 4, 4000 of our young people do not achieve a 'strong' 9-5 pass in English and Maths GCSEs. Our exclusions North of Tyne are higher than the national average, both for fixed-term and permanent exclusions.
- 10.3 The achievement gap (the difference in attainment between pupils from disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged backgrounds) is one of the biggest challenges in the North of Tyne education system. Evidence suggests this problem will be compounded due to Covid-19 school disruption. In the North of Tyne secondary phase, pupils receiving the Pupil Premium for deprivation are more likely to receive a Fixed Term Exclusion than their peers. Similarly, pupils from the 20% and 40% most deprived areas are more likely to receive a Fixed Term Exclusion than pupils from other areas.
- 10.4 On leaving school, too many of our young people are Not in Education, Employment or Training. We expect this to get worse owing to the impact of Covid-19 – we have already seen a sharp decline in apprenticeship uptake among our 16-18-year olds. We also face an employability skills gap across the North of Tyne, which needs to be addressed before our young people leave school.

- 10.5 Evidence tells us that quality teaching has the most positive impact on pupil outcomes, particularly for those from a disadvantaged background. It is therefore of concern that we have a notable gap in Physics, Maths and Computing specialist teachers, and a problem retaining new entrants to the profession. At the moment, 92% of our Primary schools and only 68% of our Secondary schools are graded as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. Our leadership development training needs to better reflect the current challenges of school leadership (including how to lead through a crisis), in order to raising existing standards and prepare a strong pipeline of tomorrow's school leaders.
- 10.6 Our approach - We intend to add value to the efforts of our three constituent authorities by collaborating to raise standards against our five shared priorities. We will share best practice across North of Tyne schools, academies, colleges and specialist provision. We will build on the strong partnerships that already exist and will share our learning with the wider sector. We will use rigorous evaluation processes to ensure that our research, learning and impact are robustly tested.
- 10.7 This strategy outlines what the system needs, some approaches are about identifying opportunities to share current best practice and extend successful interventions, some will require extra funding and is a companion to an ambitious North of Tyne Education Challenge. The Challenge will impact positively upon all priorities outlined here, supporting the work with additional, related interventions.
- 10.8 The practical inputs we intend to focus on:



10.9 What will success look like?

If we have succeeded, most children will arrive into our school system ready for school. Pupils in the Early Years will show confidence and competence in reading, regardless of their background. Pupils in our schools will demonstrate strong mental health, with a reducing number of EHCPs stating SEMH as a contributory factor.

10.10 We will have addressed the historical issue of transition and pupils will progress between Key Stages, particularly Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4, with increased

success. Our fixed and long-term exclusions will show a long-term downward trend, demonstrating a truly inclusive education system.

10.11 The difference in attainment between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers will have reduced at Key Stage 4. Our work in Early Years and at transition points will have contributed towards a long-term reduction in the attainment gap. Our young people will demonstrably understand the skills and qualifications they need for a successful life after school. The very large majority of our young people will be in education, employment or training.

10.12 We will have a thriving community of specialist teachers and school leaders ready to successfully teach our children, to develop our school workforce and to lead our schools. The number of schools graded as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted will have increased and be higher than that seen nationally. Where a school is not yet Good or Outstanding, the local authority will be confident that the leadership of the school is bringing about rapid improvement. Our strategies and research will be nationally recognised and reflect the outstanding education practice that exists across our region

Northumberland engagement with North of Tyne Combined Authority

There are a number of officers engaged directly with the workstreams; the Inclusive Economy and Joint School Improvement portfolio is well represented.

10.13 Northumberland is well placed in the work stream activities to shape and define the needs of the county, ensuring that the particular needs and priorities of Northumberland are considered in the planning and subsequent proposals. The voices championing our industrial heritage, innovation, opportunity, rurality, sparsity as well as our coastal and town challenges are heard within the projects and proposals.

10.14 The Inclusive Economy Board is attended by The Deputy Leader and Chief Executive Officer supported by officers.

10.15 The Young People workstream reporting to the Inclusive Economy Board encompasses the work with Apprenticeships, Kick Start, Youth Employment and links directly with DWP. Northumberland has directly led on some of the Apprenticeship work approaches and provided some innovative solutions (Global Bridge Platform) to developing the Apprentice Hub as well as successfully engaging and building relationships with employers to support the kickstart placements.

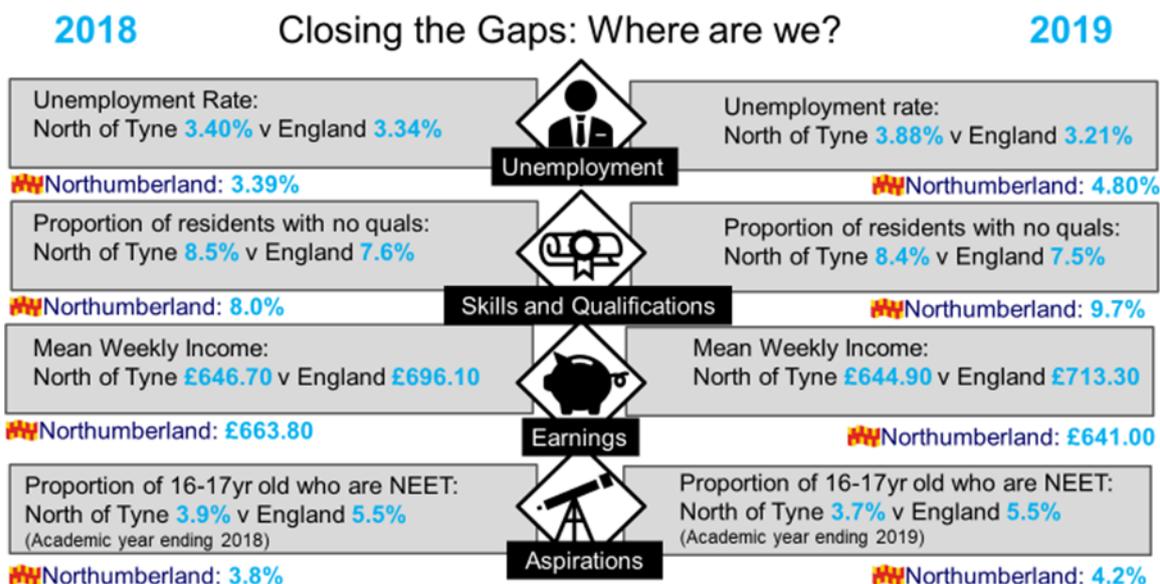
10.16 Northumberland Officers meet every four weeks and have developed an ideas bank leading the development of the ideas into project proposals pipeline in preparation for the North of Tyne planning group. The projects are all focused on the needs of Northumberland.

11.0 Conclusion

Northumberland is engaged and active within the North of Tyne Inclusive Economy and Education portfolios. Officers have been involved in developing and shaping each of the projects detailed in the report. Northumberland has been able to support

residents in two significant pieces of work through digital inclusion and also the triage employability team throughout Covid global pandemic.

North of Tyne team developed an impact image to show the 4 key areas of the Inclusive Economy portfolio and the work completed to date with the impact. The image has been used to further refine the impact for Northumberland. Comparative data shows the Northumberland performance against all NOT partners and against the England rate.



The Joint School Improvement Strategy (JSIS) and plan is being further developed to ensure this also considers carefully the recovery phase and underpin the journey to recovering learning and progress in education. Nationally there are a number of proposals to recover and support education and the team will work to ensure the JSIS complements and adds value to the central system.

One of the most important tasks to undertake is to continue the development work and ensure there is a responsive and dynamic narrative to identify where we can access additional funding support to deliver the needs of Northumberland. Officers work across areas of the council to be able to take ideas and create a framework that delivers the ambition of Northumberland County Council.

Implications

Policy	The actions set out in this report support the vision and values of the Councils Corporate Plan.
Finance and value for money	All budgets and decisions conform to expected NOTCA funding requirements.
Legal	None
Procurement	None
Human Resources	None
Property	The existing delivery sites for skills and corporate projects relate to the projects at North of Tyne CA.
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment	In relation to projects, all staff have individual risk assessments. All sites are risk assessed and covid risk assessed.
Crime & Disorder	The report has considered Section 1 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.
Customer Consideration	Service plans and systems are approached from the pupil/family/customer perspective. All learner facing approaches include the learner/ customer journey to improve satisfaction.
Carbon reduction	The increase in digital and remote learning as well as digital meeting spaces as significantly reduced the travel and carbon footprint in 2020.
Health and Wellbeing	Staff well-being is of high importance with bespoke arrangements in place to meet individual needs.
Wards	All aspects of the service supports all wards in Northumberland, the digital reach has now expanded this opportunity.

Background papers:

None.

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

Audrey Kingham	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Helen Lancaster
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Cath McEvoy- Carr
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Richard Dodd

Author and Contact Details

This report has been prepared on behalf of Cath McEvoy-Carr, Executive Director, Children's Services by Audrey Kingham, Interim Director of Education and Skills, Audrey.kingham@northumberland.gov.uk