



# Northumberland

## County Council

### **FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SECURITY COMMITTEE**

DATE: 4 FEBRUARY 2021

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#### **Annual Report for Learning and Skills Service 2019/20**

**Report of :** Cath McEvoy-Carr, Executive Director Childrens Services

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Guy Renner-Thompson, Lead Member Children's Services

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#### **Purpose of report**

The annual report for Learning and Skills Service is provided to report the performance against the Education Inspection Framework; present the work of the Careers Guidance Team and understand the role and impact of the Employability and Skills team within the wider service. The Learning and Skills Service leads a number of specialist areas and provides training for young people age 16-19, adults and apprentices across eight campuses in Northumberland as well as training in the workplace.

#### **Recommendations**

Cabinet is recommended to:

- Review the content of the report
- Receive the report and recognise the performance given the significant challenges of the global pandemic against operating circumstances and the valuable support provided to all learners within;
  - Learning and Skills Service
  - Careers Guidance Team
  - Employability and Skills Service
- Review the key areas for improvement and the focused work programme;
  - Skills strategy required which meets Northumberland and North of Tyne priorities
  - More young people (16-18) access the right programme and support to be able to achieve well with good opportunities for employment
  - More adult learners enrol to improve their chances to gain employment through a curriculum offer which supports this approach
  - A coherent approach working with businesses, building relationships which benefit industry, skills, schools and our residents

## **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. Key issues**

1.1 The annual self assessment review has graded the Learning and Skills service as GOOD with some areas which require improvement. Areas where performance could be much better will form part of an improvement plan for routine monitoring as well as the areas where the focus and emphasis needs to change to meet strategic and economic priorities.

1.2 The Northumberland Learning and Skills portfolio is changing to meet the priorities for the North of Tyne Combined Authority whereby more residents are supported into employment, too many adults undertaking courses do not benefit from employment or in work progression.

1.3 The portfolio for young people aged 16-18 is developing to be able to be responsive to the skills needs leading to employment and underpinning the economic priorities for Northumberland. It is imperative that young people are placed on the right course with appropriate support to be able to succeed.

1.4 Engagement with businesses beyond NCC for Apprenticeship recruitment is a priority to support the skilled workforce. Not enough businesses are supported by the available skills funded training. The skills service should be aligned with the Northumberland economic priorities and be sufficiently dynamic to respond. The new Strategic Skills Plan will underpin this work.

### **2. Background**

#### **2.1 Learning and Skills Service**

2.1.1 The Learning and Skills service self assessment grades the service as GOOD, in terms of Ofsted gradings for 2019/20. The last inspection was based upon the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) and graded the service as GOOD in July 2018. The new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) was implemented September 2019 and has a change in priorities and areas of focus which determine the overall grade. There is further work to do to ensure the service is able to meet all of the

2.1.2 Adult Learning for those aged over 19 forms the largest majority of the service and remains as a GOOD performance with an achievement rate of 84%, just below the National Average. Given the challenges to ensure learners remained on

programme, engaged and making good progress throughout the pandemic this achievement rate is good.

2.1.3 There were 2442 enrolments onto programmes across eight campuses in 2019/20 for adult learners and 45 enrolments for young people aged 16-18 with the largest majority (98.8%) of enrolments being adult learning.

2.1.4 The range of courses included Diplomas in Bricklaying; Painting and Decorating and Highways Maintenance and Construction Skills. Diplomas in Early Years Practitioner, Supported Teaching & Learning and Childcare. Diplomas in Hair & Beauty and Catering. Bespoke SEND, Pre-Vocational, Skills for Independence and Work and Personal and Social Development as well as languages, English and mathematics and English for Speakers of Other Languages.

2.1.5 Overall achievement for apprenticeships All learning aims, levels and ages is at 83% which is 19% above the National Average. There were a number of Apprentices which extended their time to complete the programmes due to Covid19 and lockdown.

2.1.6. Overall achievement rate for 16-18 at 55% (based upon 45 starts) which is significantly below national average. The young people engaging with the Learning and Skills Service require wrap around support and for some the lockdown whilst continuing the support remotely did not help their ability to achieve. The importance of face to face engagement with these learners cannot be underestimated and the impact of this being significantly reduced is the achievement rate. The service continues to support these learners and they remain positive.

2.1.7 Covid-19 created some significant disruption to learning in the early weeks of the National Lockdown, the majority of staff and learners made rapid progress in developing and embracing a fully on-line learning platform. 84% of learners remained engaged and on target working and making good progress through to June and July, the end of the academic year.

2.1.5 Internal progression is Good for learners, more than 90% progress and complete another programme after their first engagement, not enough learners secured an Apprenticeship outcome.

2.1.6 The curriculum extends learning beyond the vocational elements of the course, providing the opportunity for learners to development personal, social and employability skills

2.1.7 Development of Study Skills across the Service is Good, leading to learners achieving very positive outcomes and supporting the readiness for learners to progress to the next phase of education and/or employment.

2.1.8 Virtual learning adopted quickly by both staff and learners alike. This has been embedded into normal expectations during the Pandemic period. The case studies developed reflect the learning which has accelerated for those who embraced the need to continue their studies virtually as well as highlighting the need for a blended approach for some of our most vulnerable learners where a face to face interaction in a secure environment is so important.

2.1.9 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.

2.1.10 Tutorial and Skills development sessions are effective and enable learners to develop their character including their confidence, resilience and subject specific knowledge, for those learners who are our most vulnerable greater engagement and contact will be modelled moving forward.

2.1.11 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 there is not enough business engagement to inform the programmes of study.

2.1.12 Careers advisers work with a range of external agencies to effectively source provision from a range of providers. 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. 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.

2.1.13 Effective teaching and course management enables learners to complete qualifications, providing progress into a positive destination. Where this works well the curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced towards development of knowledge and skills for future learning and employment.

2.1.14 The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Comprehensive log of any safeguarding issues is maintained. Learners are confident they know how to report and feel safe. A greater emphasis on remaining safe from extremism is required for learners of all ages and programmes.

2.1.15 Learners excel in an environment in which they feel safe because staff and learners do not accept bullying, harassment or discrimination.

2.1.16 Attendance remained strong across all curriculum areas whilst engagement posed some challenges from March 2020. Engagement was closely monitored throughout lockdown 1 with 84% of learners continuing on programme and making progress.

2.1.17 Learner behaviour is Good across the Service due to consistent expectations and challenge across the curriculum team. Consistent high expectations have supported the achievement outcomes across the whole service to all learners.

2.1.18 Learners confirm that they enjoy their programmes at Northumberland Learning and Skills. Learners are regularly encouraged to feedback on the programmes via learner voice leading to suggestions for improvement and subsequent actions. Digital approaches have been employed to support more routine and formative feedback ongoing.

## **2.2. Careers Guidance Team**

2.2.1 Local authorities have statutory responsibilities to track, report on and support young people into education employment or training. NCC's Careers Guidance Team (CGT) is responsible for the discharge of these duties.

2.2.2 Local authorities collect information to identify young people who are not participating in education employment or training (NEET), or who are at risk of not doing so, and to target their resources on those who need them most. The information collected must be in the format specified in the Client Caseload Information System (CCIS) Management Information Requirement document. This standalone system, which has a national interface with DfE, is operated and managed by the CGT.

2.2.3 Through the team's work with schools colleges and providers, arrangements are in place to confirm young people's current activity at regular intervals through exchange of information with education and training providers and other services as well as direct contact with young people. The CGT works with schools to identify those who are in need of targeted support or who are at risk of not being NEET and these young people can be referred for intensive support from the CGT and other services.

2.2.4 The CGT supports enables and assists young people aged 13-19 and to those aged 20-25 with an EHCP to participate in education employment or training. Regular tracking of young people's participation successfully is a key element of this duty.

2.2.5 The CGT leads the September Guarantee process, which underpins the delivery of these duties. This is the process by which local authorities aim to ensure that all 16-17 year olds receive an offer of a suitable place in education or training by the end of September each year. Information is recorded and reported on the number and proportion of young people in each area who:

- receive an offer under the September Guarantee;
- are participating in education or training;
- who are NEET, or
- whose current activity is not known.

2.2.6 Data is taken from the CCIS data reported to DfE and made available publicly via the DfE website on a regular basis. The team reports on a number of key data

collections throughout the academic year. The first of these in the 20/21 academic year is the September Guarantee.

2.2.7 September Guarantee 2020- The overall figure is 96.6%, lower than the previous year (2019 figure was 97.9%) but above the national average of 94.3% and regional average of 94.8%.

#### SG table

Local Authority	No. Of 16 & 17 yr olds	Offer made	Is the proportion higher than 2019?	Offer not appropriate	No offer made	Not recorded
England	1,167,930	94.3%	No	0.9%	1.1%	3.7%
North East	54,680	94.8%	No	1.0%	0.6%	3.6%
Northumberland 2020	6370	96.6%	No	0.7%	0.2%	2.5%
Northumberland 2019	6260	97.9%	No	0.5%	0.4%	1.3%

2.2.8 The CGT collects the required monthly data from schools, alternative providers and staff also telephone individuals in order to satisfy DfE reporting requirements. This has proved more challenging since the beginning of the covid pandemic as staff have been unable to work face to face in schools and with young people.

2.2.9 The CGT delivers a robust data set whereby the number of young people whose current activities in relation to education and training are unknown is low. In September every 16-18 year old is made 'not known' in the system and the team must then find and record and track their destination.

2.32.10 In November 2020 (the latest figure available) there were 60 young people (0.9% of the cohort) whose current destination was not known. Conversely, this relatively low figure does mean that the NEET figure for the county (3.9%) is higher than in some areas where the 'not known' figure is much higher.

### **2.3 Learning and Skills Service Employability Team**

2.3.1 The service has played a vital role throughout the challenges of 2019/20 academic year supporting residents through some really challenging personal phases of their lives, helping residents when any employment potential feels very hard to achieve and in particular supporting residents throughout lockdown and developing a new service to responsive to residents who became unemployed or significantly at risk in their roles through the furlough scheme.

2.3.2 The service has continued to work throughout the pandemic and the service has grown in response to residents needs. We have increased our offer of employment focussed programmes to respond directly to the expected high rise in unemployment. The team has mobilised a further 2 new programmes during the pandemic - The DWP (Dept for Work and Pensions) JETS (job entry targeted support) Programme and The NTCA (North of Tyne Combined Authority) Triage Employment Support Programme

2.3.3 The DWP Jets Programme was mobilised in October 2020 in partnership with Reed in Partnership - Referrals are from Job Centres across Northumberland and

these are residents who are newly unemployed and have been impacted by the downturn in the labour market - Support is primarily digital and 163 residents have started on the programme, 15 have already moved into employment.

2.3.4 The North of Tyne Combined Authority granted funding to create The Employment support triage Programme which commenced in June 2020. 3 staff are acting as a single point of access for all online or phone queries through the NCC Covid Communities hub, supporting employment issues faced by individuals in need and working with JCPs and local support providers. Providing 'light touch' advice and guidance, direction to online resources, and if appropriate, referral to existing Council Employability and Skills programmes. To date, 300 residents have accessed the service.

2.3.5 The service continues to deliver The DWP Work and Health Programme - Delivered in partnership with Reed in Partnership. A voluntary programme targeted at those with physical and mental health issues. Support includes general employment support, employability and skills training along with health and wellbeing support i.e. mindfulness sessions and confidence support. 813 residents have started on the programme since November 2017 and 225 have gone into employment. Whilst some participants have felt too vulnerable throughout the pandemic to continue looking for work (due to health conditions) many have gone into roles in newly emerging sectors i.e. facilities management and home working.

2.3.6 Generation North East - A regional programme of employment support led by Newcastle City Council. The programme supports people aged 18 - 29 - Since March 2019 180 people have joined the programme and 70 have gained employment.

2.3.7 As the services move forward The DWP are commissioning a package of employment support across the country including a large-scale employment programme called RESTART - This will go live in July 2021 and will support benefit claimants who have been unemployed for 12 months. The purpose of the programme is to help those impacted by the pandemic and those even further removed in the labour market, maximising employment, and reducing the impacts of rising long-term unemployment.

2.3.8 The Employability Service is working collaboratively with potential Prime Providers in the North East to deliver programme in Northumberland and NCC will potentially be a supply chain partner.

2.3.9 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.

2.3.10 Working in tandem with the skills service provides a seamless referral point from engagement and initial training into more structured training supporting

employment. All of the residents who accessed the covid triage programme will be supported by the skills service.

### **3. Conclusion**

Academic Year 2019/20 is without doubt the most challenging year for Learning and Skills. Very quickly learners and staff had to adapt very quickly to be able to continue to offer and support remote learning.

Young people, adults and apprentices all adapted, some much better than other to be able to thrive in a such a different environment. Young people fared least well in this change and the service has adapted the model of operation to be able to support learners in a much more appropriate way with a 'wrap around' support structure.

Whilst the numbers are relatively low, the service should have been better positioned to respond. The service is now much better positioned.

Adult learners fared well and although the learner enrolments significantly reduced with a full term of no new enrolments, those learners still engaged on their programme continued and achieved well with performance just marginally below the national average.

Apprentices fared well and overall their achievement rates remained high. Employees who are already committed and supported by employers are in a stronger position to be able to continue with the support of the workplace to achieve.

The service has already undergone significant change to be in a stronger position in 2020/21 academic year with a demand led approach which must be responsive and lead to greater employment.

The Employability team responded very well to a fast paced changing environment, developing the COVID triage model to support rapid redeployment into jobs with supported skills training.

The work of the Careers Guidance Team helped to maintain a relative performance of NEET statistics given the real challenges faced with not being able to engage face

to face with young people, some of the most hard to reach became very difficult to engage with and so to have a position which is strong North of Tyne is good.

Staff adapted very well, CPD continued for staff and the digital developments led by one of the teaching staff supported the staff to be able to adapt quickly and underpinned the achievement rates and performance for the service.

### Implications

<b>Policy</b>	All NCC policies apply in relation to the operational Learning and Skills service.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	ESFA grant funded service with Apprenticeship Levy funded provision from NCC Levy fund. Schools Service Level agreement for CEIAG work,
<b>Legal</b>	Annual contractual arrangement for all grant contracts
<b>Procurement</b>	na
<b>Human Resources</b>	Review of staffing requirement in relation to the curriculum plan required to deliver the grant profiles
<b>Property</b>	Eight delivery sites around the county – 7 are shared sites, one is the responsibility of the Learning and Skills Service
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) N/A X	Accessibility is good to the wide range of courses in terms of entry to the course. Access to facilities and workshops as well as resources to undertake the study is supported well
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	All staff have individual risk assessments. All sites are risk assessed. All sites are covid risk assessed and undertake reviews every week as well as spot checks on premises to ensure routines and expectations are being followed
<b>Crime Disorder &amp;</b>	Engagement with employability and projects within employability aim to support reductions in crimes and disorder within the county
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	Service plans and systems are approached from the 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 as significantly reduced the travel and carbon footprint in 2020.
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Student and staff well being is reviewed and monitored as a routine. In particular the well being of staff throughout lockdown was carefully monitored and recorded to ensure support was provided.
<b>Wards</b>	All aspects of the service supports all wards in Northumberland, the digital reach has now expanded this opportunity.

**Background papers:**

**Report sign off.**

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

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