



Northumberland

County Council

Families and Children Overview and Scrutiny

2nd December 2021

Title of Report: Northumberland Skills Pathfinder - Curriculum Research.

Executive Director: Cath McEvoy-Carr - Executive Director of Adults and Children's Services.

Cabinet Member: Guy Renner Thompson - Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

Purpose of report

To share with Cabinet & FACS a sample of content and findings from a suite of reports resulting from a range of internal and externally commissioned skills and employment based research activities conducted on the subject of curriculum development priorities within Northumberland County. The content and findings underpin *Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan 2021-25* which is designed to inform skills planning and the approach in designing impactful vocational skills provision.

Recommendations

FACS is recommended to:

1. Review *Northumberland Skills Pathfinder Curriculum Research*, its content and general approach.
 2. Provide feedback on any aspects requiring adjustment or inclusion.
 3. Subject to approval, authorise use of the document with internal NCC stakeholder groups.
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Link to Corporate Plans

Links to NCC Corporate Plan 2020-21

a. How

Exploring how to provide greater impact of vocational training, raising opportunity to enter higher value career choices and supporting industrial growth in priority sectors.

b. Living

Exploring how to provide more impactful education will support financial health, social mobility and affordability of homes in the county.

c. Enjoying

Exploring how to provide more impactful education, valuable careers and financial health to raise participation in cultural and community functions.

d. Connecting

Exploring how to bring the vocational skills community closer to industry, more accessible to communities and how to enhance levels of inclusion and progression to valuable careers.

e. Learning

Defining how to deliver in demand vocational skills and readiness for apprenticeship/employment for the county as well as increasing accessibility to skills development for young people and adults as well as sector professionals.

f. Thriving

Defining how to support the priority for more and better jobs for residents.

Links to Northumberland Economic Strategy 2019-24

a. Grow the business base

Defining the vocational education approach which will contribute to the provision of work ready young people and adults and provision of priority industry specific training, removing growth obstacles and attracting inward investment.

b. Support inclusive employment

Defining the vocational education approach will contribute to the creation of a talent pool, accessible to all, that will allow direct progression to employment and apprenticeship opportunities in priority sectors.

c. Deliver productive places

Defining the approach to developing local vocational skills delivery and raising attainment which support priority sectors will contribute to productivity, economic growth and inward investment.

Key issues

Insufficient intelligence is available related to which are the priority sectors for skills development in the county, the scale of opportunity in the priority sectors, the geography of these opportunities and the challenges that can be overcome by developing a more fit for purpose vocational skills ecosystem.

Vocational education in Northumberland does not yet offer an accessible, joined-up progression pathway from school or alternative provision, through Further Education, into apprenticeships, employment, H.E. and undergraduate education (including higher level apprenticeships) in our most economically important sectors.

Attainment level in Northumberland is low with too many holding low level or no qualifications and too few holding higher level qualifications compared to national levels, there is a clear link between qualification level and economic participation and success and a strong link between those who hold no qualifications and worklessness. More well defined, relevant and accessible educational pathways must be created to raise attainment.

Too many residents suffer in work poverty and are in need of claiming financial support, a figure which can be reduced with the provision of more intermediate and higher-level qualifications in priority sectors to enhance progression opportunity and entry to higher value careers.

Northumberland county has median gross weekly pay below the north east region average and significantly below the national average. Northumberland also has a gender pay gap significantly greater than the north east region average and national average. Targeted raising of participation in skills and education which represent higher value sectors, particularly with underrepresented groups and wards with greatest socio-economic challenges, will contribute to reducing inequalities.

Northumberland has in excess of 15,000 residents employed in elementary occupations, elementary occupations are also at greatest risk from automation, enhancing attainment levels can contribute to reducing elementary occupation uptake.

Aspiration levels are low with some of the county's flagship employers reporting that they are offering rewarding opportunities with little uptake from local residents. A well-defined network of educational pathways into employment must be defined to reduce the perceived obstacles to employment that currently exist.

Background

Throughout Q3 and Q4 2020 into Q1 2021 a range of vocational skills-based research activities were conducted via both internal and externally commissioned methods.

The research initially took an overview of Northumberland County Council Learning & Skills Service, the subject sectors it delivered and mapped locations in which it delivered them to both school leavers and adults.

ONS data was studied to establish where geographic concentrations of specific industry occupations were being accessed by residents which allowed an assessment of whether the correct skills were being delivered in the geographic locations that require the skills, and if not, targeted intervention could be taken to address this.

A deep dive activity on STEM based industry was undertaken given the evidence which supported these industries (Manufacturing, engineering, Health, Pharmaceutical) being such a significant contributor to the economy of the county and provider of higher value career paths. This focused on STEM-rich locations, mapped STEM industry and the specific sectors of STEM based employers and also identified other features of STEM significance.

A suite of priority industry reports were completed and finally a conclusive proposal of how priority vocational education could be distributed throughout Northumberland to yield most significant impact to residents, industry and economy.

It is intended to periodically update the suite of reports to keep education, training and employment planning current and dynamic with a second wave refresh proposed upon the Office for National Statistics releasing the 2021 census data during 2022.

It is intended to use the suite of reports as internal reference only owing to some key data being supplied by Emsi for which NCC do not currently hold a contract allowing public or commercial use of the data.

Implications

Policy	Research completed on Northumberland Skills Pathfinder Curriculum Research is in strong accordance with the <i>NCC Corporate Strategy 2018-21</i> and <i>Northumberland Economic Strategy 2019-24</i> , details of which are defined above.
Finance and value for money	There are no direct financial impacts positive or negative associated with the skills research however the information presented underpins approaches to deliver long range financial impacts to the economy within the county by overcoming talent-based growth obstacles.
Legal	None
Procurement	None
Human Resources	None
Property	None
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Equalities impact assessment not applicable as Northumberland Skills Pathfinder Curriculum Research does not impact individuals.
Risk Assessment	None in relation to Northumberland Skills Pathfinder Curriculum Research. Any projects arising as a result of the research will have a comprehensive risk assessment carried out as part of the outline business case.
Crime & Disorder	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.
Customer Consideration	Intent of the research is based upon the vision to act in the best educational interests of current and future young people, adults, businesses and employees in Northumberland.

Carbon reduction	The research will not have any positive or negative impact on carbon reduction however projects arising as a result of the research may have a carbon reduction impact which will be assessed on a per-project basis as part of outline business cases.
Health and Wellbeing	None
Wards	Applicable to residents in all wards who engage in vocational education.

Background papers:

Appendix 01 - 1.1 - Curriculum and Opportunity Mapping Study



1.1 - Curriculum and Opportunity Mapping

Appendix 02 – 1.2 - Master Northumberland County - NOMIS local area report



1.2 - Master Northumberland County

Appendix 03 – 2.1 - Advanced Manufacturing Engineering



2.1 - Advanced Manufacturing Engineering

Appendix 04 – 2.2 - Construction & Civils



2.2 - Construction & Civils.pdf

Appendix 05 – 2.3 - Health & Life Science



2.3 - Health & Life Science.pdf

Appendix 06 – 2.4 - Digital Skills



2.4 - Digital Skills.pdf

Appendix 07 – 2.5 - Accommodation & Foodservice



2.5 - Accommodation & Foodservice.pdf

Appendix 08 – 2.6 – Retail



2.6 - Retail.pdf

Appendix 09 – 2.7 - Business & Admin



2.7 - Business & Admin.pdf

Appendix 10 – 2.8 - Agri - Forest – Fishing



2.8 - Agri - Forest - Fishing.pdf

Appendix 11 – 3.1 - Curriculum Development Location Proposals



3.1 - Curriculum Development Location

Report sign off.

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

	Full Name of Officer
Relevant Service Director	Audrey Kingham
Relevant Executive Director	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Guy Renner-Thompson
Legal	Jan Willis
Financial	Suzanne Dent

Author and Contact Details

Neil Dorward

Senior Manager - Education Development & Collaborative Projects

Mob: 07811 020 806

email: neil.dorward@northumberland.gov.uk