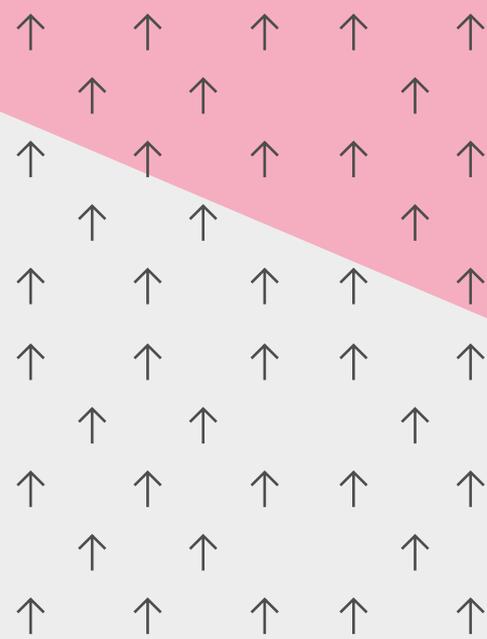




# Be Bold in planning for the Technical Skills of the Future Industries





# CONTENTS

<b>4</b>	<b>Statement of Purpose</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Context &amp; Place</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>Context &amp; Regional Contribution</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>Meeting Local, Regional and National Skills</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>Approach to developing the Annual Accountability Statement</b>
<b>30</b>	<b>Annual Objectives</b>
<b>35</b>	<b>Corporation Statement</b>
<b>35</b>	<b>Supporting Documents</b>
<b>36</b>	<b>Progress since the last Accountability Agreement 2024-2025</b>

# SECTION 1

## Statement of purpose

New College Durham is committed to delivering high-quality education, fostering inclusivity, and driving economic growth across County Durham and beyond. This Accountability Agreement for 2025/2026 outlines our strategic priorities, ensuring that our institution continues to meet the evolving needs of learners, employers, and the wider community.

New College Durham launched its five-year strategic plan in September 2021.

Our Mission and Vision statements have evolved to more clearly articulate our strategic direction and purpose.

Our five overarching strategic aims ([see Appendix A New College Durham Strategic Plan 2021-2026](#)) have been developed in response to the current context and our overall vision. In addition, the framework identifies exceptional and sustainable resources (facilities and personnel) and sustained growth to allow the college to realise its success.

The delivery of inspirational teaching, learning and assessment remains our core priority. We will continue to inspire all our learners to achieve their full potential, through delivering a high-quality inspirational experience. As an anchor organisation embedded in our community, we commit to working in partnership with all our stakeholders to deliver our vision.

The expectations of our communities, employers, and partners, along with the economy, sit at the heart of all we do. We have forged valuable partnerships and a shared vision with like-minded organisations, employers and individuals, creating a network of opportunities and excellence.

Our highly skilled staff are committed to raising and supporting aspirations, providing social mobility and an essential talent pool for the local, regional and national economy.



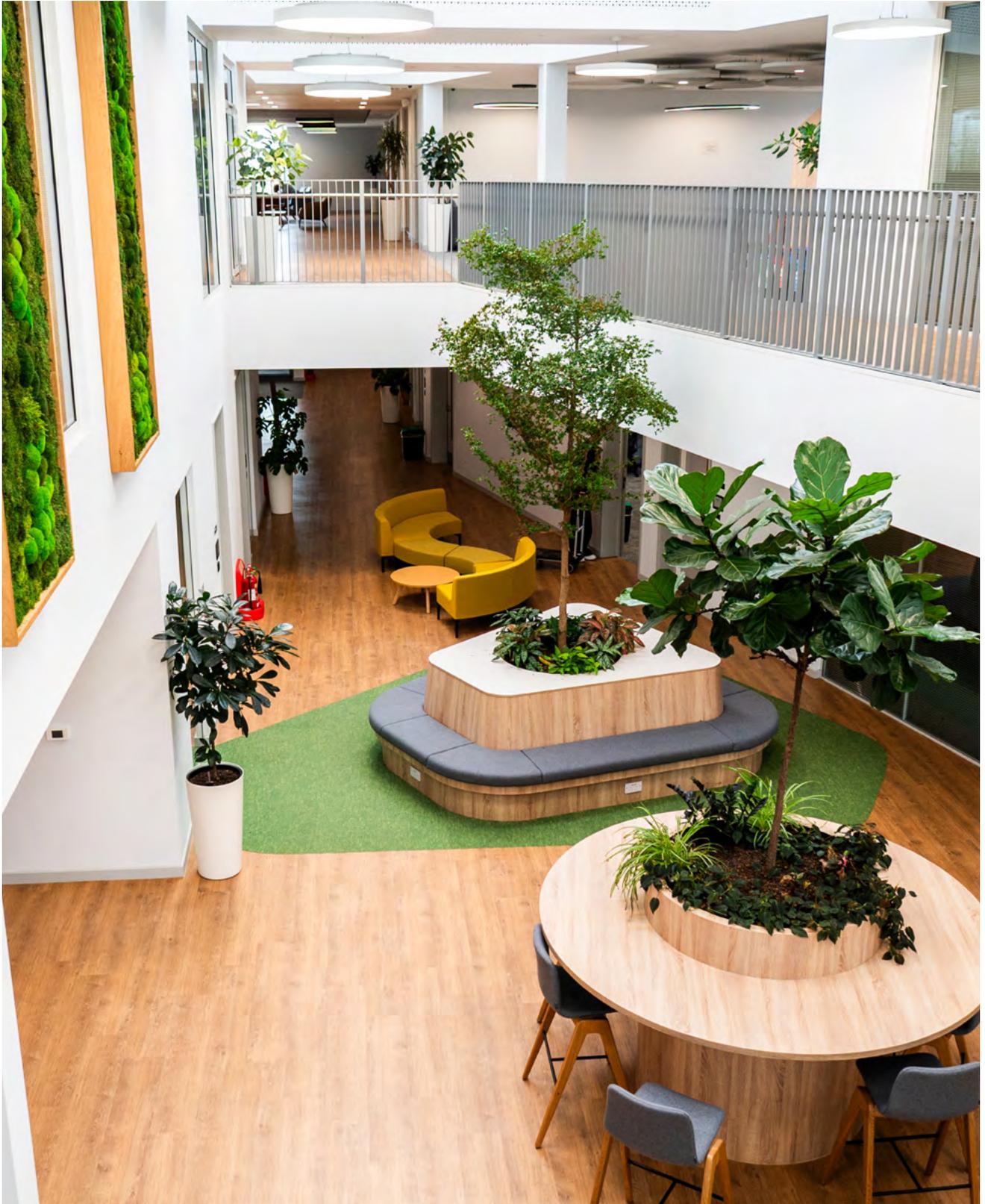
# SECTION 1

## Introduction

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**New College Durham is committed to empowering individuals through high-quality education, ensuring that learners, employers, and the broader North East community benefit from skills development that aligns with regional and national employment strategies.**

This Accountability Agreement for 2025/2026 outlines our strategic priorities, in alignment with the Interim North East Employment and Skills Strategy (January 2025), North East Local Skills Improvement Plan 2025 and the Industry Strategy in the UK, to meet the evolving needs of our learners and employers in a rapidly changing economic landscape.



# SECTION 1

## Mission and Vision

**Our Mission:** At New College Durham, we are catalysts for positive change, driving social, economic, and environmental transformation. We inspire individuals of all abilities to unlock their full potential, igniting their careers and enriching our communities. Our commitment to delivering high quality professional, technical and lifelong education empowers people to shape a better, brighter future.

**Our Vision:** New College Durham strives to be a trailblazer in both further and higher education, celebrated for its exceptional skills training and academic excellence. We aim to be a beacon of innovation and quality, recognised not just in the North East Combined Authority (NECA) region, but throughout the UK and across the globe.

**Our values:** Our organisation is built on a core set of values which define how we approach life. They tell us to be focused on our vision and contribution while encouraging creativity, respecting our people and enabling them to ASPIRE and realise their potential. Our values are our DNA shaping our behaviours and organisational culture.

As an employer and learning organisation, we will conduct our business by following the values of ASPIRE:

**A – Accountability**

**S – Safeguarding**

**P – Partnerships**

**I – Inclusion**

**R – Respect**

**E – Excellence**

As a leading provider of further and higher education, we remain dedicated to enhancing learner outcomes, widening participation, and strengthening industry partnerships. Through targeted investment in skills development, digital innovation, and sustainability, we will support learners in gaining the knowledge and experience needed to thrive in an ever-changing job market.

This agreement reflects our commitment to accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement, aligning with national education policies and local economic strategies. By focusing on accessibility, excellence, and progression, New College Durham will continue to empower individuals and contribute to the prosperity of our region.

**A** **ACCOUNTABILITY**

**S** **SAFEGUARDING**

**P** **PARTNERSHIPS**

**I** **INCLUSION**

**R** **RESPECT**

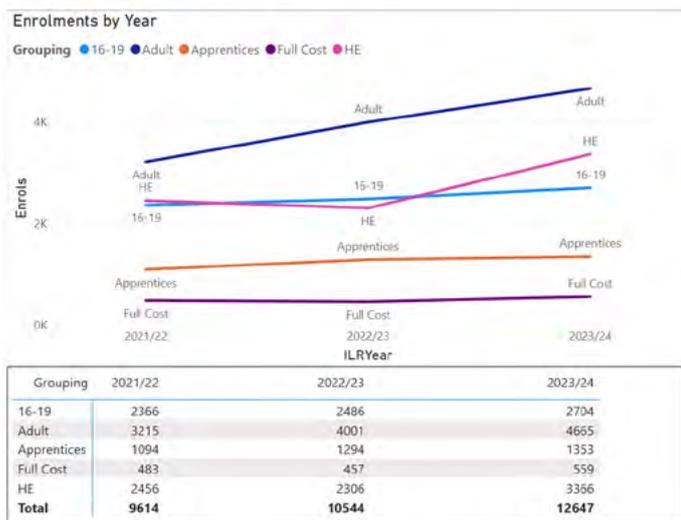
**E** **EXCELLENCE**

# SECTION 2

## Context & Place

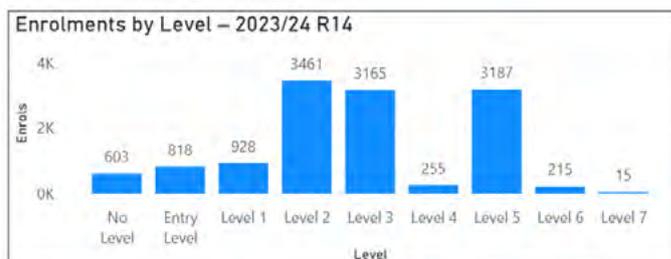
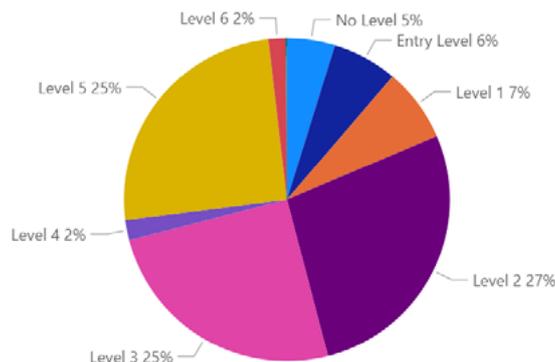
**New College Durham stands as a beacon of educational excellence in County Durham, a region characterised by its rich demographics and evolving economic landscape.**

New College Durham is a large mixed-economy college providing education, skills, and training to over 12,000 enrolments across all provision types in 2023-2024. The college has been continuously rated as financial outstanding for over 15 years and is in the top 250 (ranked 182) of North East businesses based on turnover. The college covers all funding streams from entry level to degree provision. As shown below the college has maintained consistent growth over the last three years following the pandemic.



The college offers high-quality courses in 14 subject sector areas, designed to engage and develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours from Pre-Entry to Post Graduate level.

Enrolments by Level – 2023/24 R14



Levels by Enrolments – If a learner is on multiple levels they will be counted on each level. 16-19 and Apprentices are counted at the programme level only.

The above illustrates the diverse nature of the New College Durham provision.

The college's 16-18 year old provision continues to grow at a rate higher than the expected demographic across the county. Although this increase in learners is across the majority of curriculum provision, it is worth noting that the growth in key areas of employer demand, namely construction, engineering and health care increases.

As a trailblazer provider of T-Levels since 2020, New College Durham continues to grow and strengthen the position of the previous government's flagship qualification. As numbers and pathways increase our young people are benefiting from high-quality experience, strong industry links and positive progression into careers and higher education.

The volume of learners engaged in adult learning (adult skills funding) activity totalled over 4,500 learners, including active community learning. In addition, the provision meets local industry skills needs through bespoke packages, supporting key local infrastructure projects and regional businesses. This includes working with new technology such as battery production for the electrification sector in addressing skills development and enhancement in the North East.

A significant proportion of adults on learning programmes gain the skills, qualifications and confidence to move successfully into further learning or into employment. Adults on community

learning programmes, those furthest from the labour market, re-engage with learning, develop new skills and gain 'first rung' qualifications so they are better prepared to move into work. For example, when on sector-based pre-employment courses, all learners have direct access to vacancies and a significant proportion receive job offers.

The college is committed to delivering high-quality education tailored to the cultural and religious needs of the Black and Minority Ethnic community. Our approach extends beyond traditional classrooms, by integrating learning into mosques and religious events to enhance accessibility and engagement. By fostering an inclusive environment that respects cultural values, we support both academic and personal growth. This innovative, community-driven model has been recognised with a "Highly Commended" status in the Association of Colleges Beacon Awards, highlighting our exemplary provision.



# SECTION 2

## Overview of New College Durham’s Skill Bootcamps

**New College Durham is a nationally recognised leader in the delivery of Skills Bootcamps—intensive, employer-led training programmes focussed on meeting current and emerging labour market needs. As a key prime deliverer, New College Durham has successfully secured substantial funding of over £9million from multiple sources both nationally and regionally in 2024/2025.**

This funding supported delivery throughout 2024/2025, bringing the total value of contracts to £9.8 million this year, supporting over 4,000 learners and significantly expanding the college’s regional and national impact.

### Sector Coverage

Training is delivered across nine high-demand sectors, including:

1. Engineering & Advanced Manufacturing
2. Green Power
3. Green Transport
4. Construction
5. Green construction
6. Digital & IT
7. Creative and Design
8. Project Management
9. Leadership and People Management

### Proven Track Record (since September 2022)

- £16 million in Skills Bootcamp contracts successfully delivered
- 60+ Bootcamps co-designed with employers across nine key sectors
- 15 specialist training partners involved in targeted delivery
- 5,200+ learners engaged, supported, and progressed

New College Durham consistently exceeds key performance indicators, surpassing the minimum benchmarks set by funding bodies.

- Milestone 1 (Enrolment & Start) – 100%
- Milestone 2 (Mid-point Progress) – 92%
- Milestone 3 (Completion & Outcome) – 89%

### Regional Impact

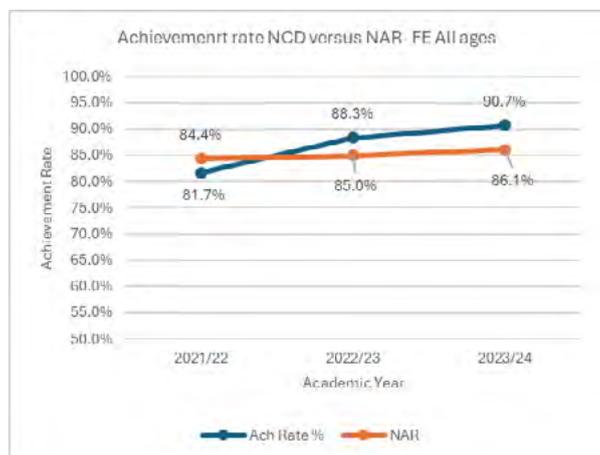
New College Durham is addressing critical skills gaps in the North East and beyond by aligning training directly with skills shortage vacancies. This ensures learners are work-ready and businesses can recruit talent with confidence—boosting both productivity and economic growth in the region.

New College Durham has already secured funding to continue Skills Bootcamps in 2025/2026 and is actively pursuing opportunities to further grow the provision. And have submitted applications to North East Combined Authority and Department for Education (DfE) construction Skills Bootcamps.

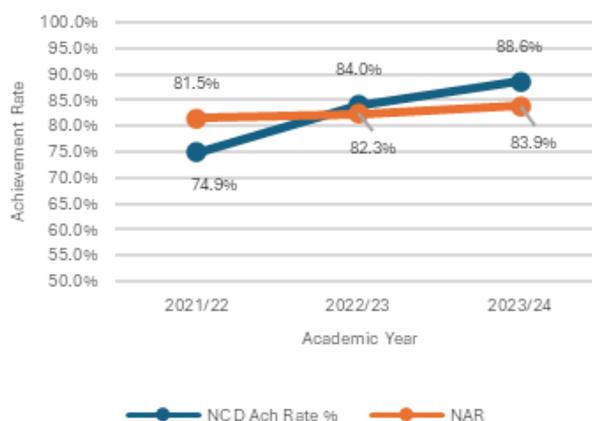
## Outstanding outcomes

The published achievement rates for New College Durham for academic year 2023/2024 place the college in the top 10% of general further education colleges nationally for both further education and apprenticeships provision. The college is one of only two colleges nationally to achieve this and the only North East college to achieve this. These results make New College Durham the highest performing college in the North East of England for 2023/2024.

**Further education** - The achievement rate of New College Durham for its FE provision in 2023/2024 was 90.7%, exceeding the national achievement rate (NAR) of 86.1% by 4.6%. The college has seen a three-year continued improvement in its FE provision from 2021/2022 where performance was 81.7% and below the NAR of 84.4%. Since then, leaders and managers have initiated a series of strong and rapid interventions across curriculum and quality that have seen year on year improvements, taking the college to a position above NAR in 2022/2023 and continued the implementation of these into 2023/2024 to position the college in the top 10% nationally.



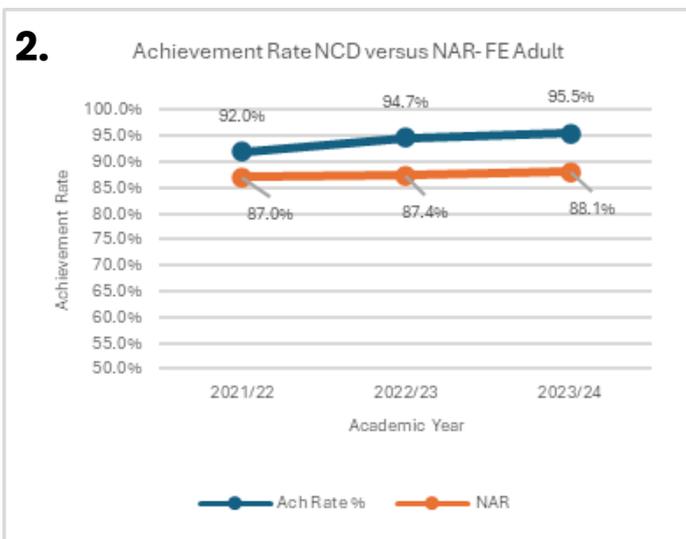
1. Achievement rate NCD versus NAR - FE Under 19



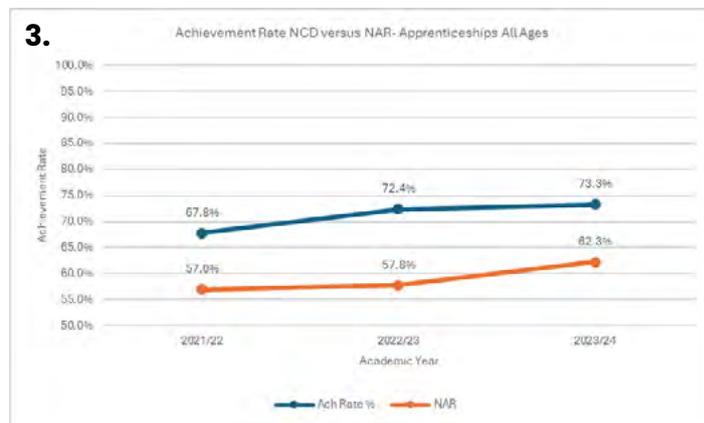
1. At the heart of this improvement has been significant increases in the achievement rates of learners aged under 19 studying on FE provision. In 2021/2022, the achievement rate was 74.9% and below NAR. Across the three-year trend, curriculum and quality initiatives including a focus on Teaching Learning and Assessment (TLA) and maths and English have secured improvements resulting in an achievement rate of 88.6%, exceeding NAR and placing the college in the top 10% nationally.

# SECTION 2

## Outstanding outcomes (Continued)



**2.** Over 30% of the college’s FE provision is composed of adult delivery. The performance of this provision is exemplary with 95.5% of learners achieving their qualifications. The performance of adult learners has been consistently high and well above NAR for the three-year period. The college continues to strive for the highest levels of performance and has secured year on year improvements from 92% in 2021/22 to the current position of 95.5%. This places New College Durham in the top 5% of colleges nationally and the third highest performing college.



**3. Apprenticeships** - The achievement rates of apprentices studying at New College Durham are exemplary. The college consistently performs in the top 10% of GFECs national and achievement rates exceed national achievement rates by over 15% for the last three years. New College Durham ensures that it consistently maintains its performance year on year. Even with these high levels of achievement, the college has secured on year improvements from 67.8% in 2021/2022 to 73.3% in 2023/2024. This is a significant achievement, considering that New College Durham has increased its apprenticeship volumes from 370 completions in 2021/2022 to 550 in 2023/2024.

## Let's shout about New College Durham

New College Durham has had another year of successful awards and external recognition including including:

 The North East Chamber of Commerce Larger Business of the Year award

 Highly commended Association of Colleges (AoC) Beacon Status in ESOL provision

 Highly commended AoC Beacon Status for Widening Participation

 Continuing Excellence, Better Health at Work Award

 AA College Rosette Restaurant award

 Medium Training Provider of the Year - Accounting Technicians (AAT)

 Finalist Educate North Award College of the Year

 Finalist Educate North Award Widening Participation

 Finalist Business IQ North East award for Widening Participation

 Finalist Business IQ award for Staff Health and Well Being

 Three staff members achieving Pearson National Teaching Awards

 One member of staff finalist at NCFE Support Staff of the year (winner to be announced in July 2025)

County Durham is one of the largest counties in England, spanning approximately 2,232 square kilometers (862 square miles), with much of its



landscape dominated by rolling countryside, rural villages, and historic market towns. While Durham City serves as

the county's economic and educational hub, many residents live in more remote areas such as the Durham Dales and the North Pennines, one of the least densely populated regions in the country. This rural nature presents significant challenges for learners to access post-16 education, as many must travel considerable distances to attend colleges like New College Durham. Limited public transport links in some areas mean that reliable travel schemes and college-supported transport options are essential in ensuring equal access to education for all learners, particularly those from isolated communities.



County Durham is also the largest county within the North East Combined Authority (NECA), both in terms of geographic area and population. As a key component of the NECA, it plays a crucial role in the region's economic development, infrastructure, and public services. With a diverse mix of urban centres, market towns, and rural communities, County Durham contributes significantly to the overall strategic planning and investment priorities of the combined authority. Its size and influence ensure that it remains at the forefront of regional initiatives, such as transport improvements, skills development, and economic regeneration, helping to drive growth across the wider North East region.

# SECTION 2

## Demographics and Educational Landscape

County Durham is home to approximately 532,200 residents, with an average age of about 43 years. The region boasts a robust educational infrastructure, comprising 412 schools that cater to over 124,000 pupils. This includes 318 primary schools and 84 secondary schools, reflecting the county's commitment to nurturing young minds. New College Durham recruits its learners from a wide section of the North East and has learners recruited from over 80 schools in the region. New College Durham serves as a central educational hub, attracting learners from across County Durham and beyond. The college's strategic location and comprehensive course offerings make it a preferred choice for many.

## Travel-to-Learn Patterns

Learners at New College Durham commute from a wide geographic area, spanning both urban centres such as Durham City (1.8 miles) and more rural locations including Bishop Auckland (12.4 miles) and Wolsingham (16.1 miles). While the college is technically accessible via public transport, the reality of travelling across County Durham presents significant logistical challenges, particularly for young people. Public transport provision in the county has been a long-standing concern, with issues such as infrequent service, limited route coverage, and extended journey

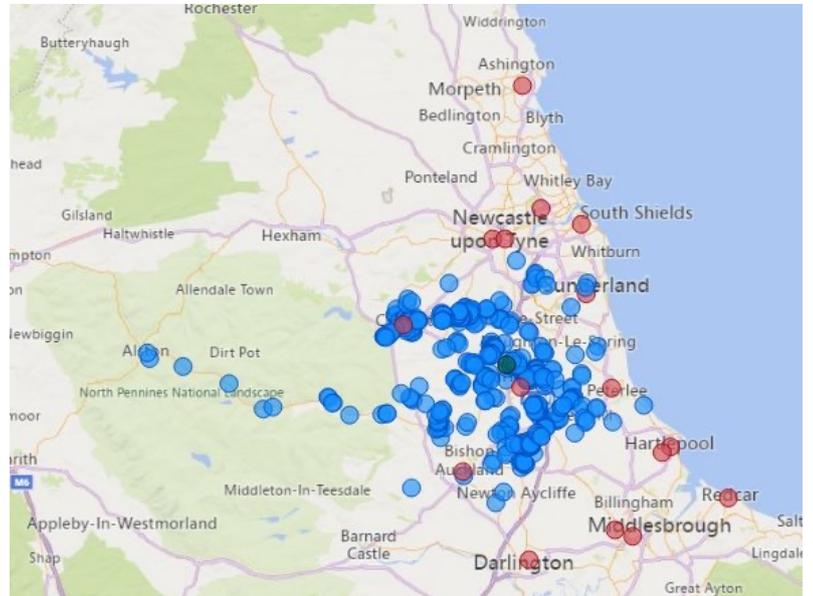
times affecting learners' ability to attend consistently and punctually.

The college provides a free bus pass for any young person that lives 3 miles from the college to aid the rurality aspects of living across County Durham and further afield. This resource costs the college more than £1.3million per year.

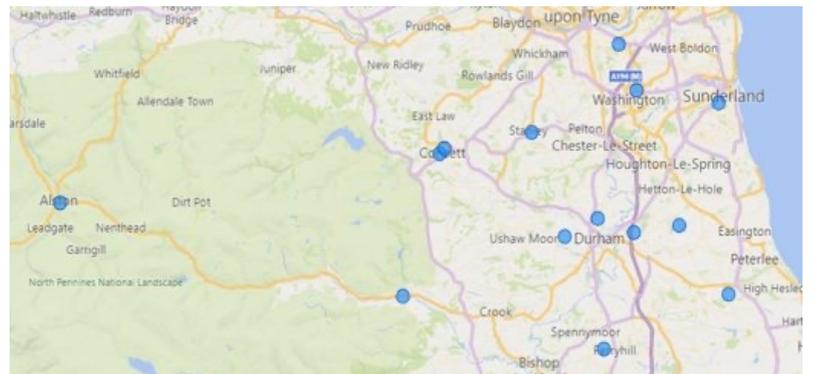
The travel patterns of these young people are worth noting as a high proportion of them make the decision to enrol at New College Durham for its reputation, high quality resources and learning facilities and outstanding support and will travel up to 80 minutes each way.

Data collected through the college's attendance pilot and internal research highlights the extent of this issue: with a substantial proportion of learners travel between 36 and 80 minutes each way, with some journeys taking up to 140 minutes. The map on page 17 illustrates the travel to learn distances for college learners.

Many of our learners are required to change buses at least once, further complicating their daily commute. Such long and fragmented journeys can contribute to fatigue, lateness, and increased disengagement from learning, particularly for those with additional responsibilities or health challenges. The map illustrates the 14 feeder schools involved in attendance pilot and their geographical spread across County Durham.



While the college has established partnerships with local authorities to offer subsidised travel schemes, which help to reduce the financial burden on learners travelling longer distances, these initiatives do not fully mitigate the underlying structural issues with the county's transport network. The college's inclusive approach is reflected in its diverse learner population, which includes pupils from 89 secondary schools across the region. However, disparities in transport accessibility continue to present a significant barrier to equitable participation in education across County Durham.



# SECTION 2

## **Economic Profile**

The county's economy is diverse and resilient. As of 2023, the average salary stands at £29,537, with a notable annual growth rate of 6.77%. The employment rate is a commendable 74.5% among individuals aged 16 to 64, surpassing the broader North East average. Key sectors contributing to employment include distribution, hotels, and restaurants (20.1%), manufacturing (14.8%), and construction (6%).

## **Future Growth & Development**

Looking further ahead, New College Durham is committed to further expanding its influence and resources. Plans are underway to introduce additional T-level courses in emerging fields like digital technologies and green energy, aligning with regional economic development strategies. The college also aims to enhance its apprenticeship programs, fostering even stronger collaborations with local industries to provide learners with practical experience and direct pathways to employment.

Infrastructure development is a key focus, with proposals for new facilities dedicated to emerging themes and innovation. These initiatives are designed to accommodate a growing learner population and to stay ahead of educational trends, ensuring that New College Durham remains at the forefront of academic and technical educational excellence in the region.

Through these strategic efforts, New College Durham not only addresses current educational demands but also proactively contributes to the future economic and social prosperity of County Durham.

The college will continue to be a lead provider for Skills Bootcamp delivery focusing on the priorities of the area and address the skills required for gaining employment.

New College Durham provides outstanding provision built upon the vision statement. The ethos of the college is reflected and embodied through the quality of partnerships, skills development, and position of the college as a springboard for high quality destinations and development of the learner community.

Following the recent County Durham local needs review, there is strong provision in Engineering, Construction, Health and Care, Sport, Uniform Services along with the creative industries however digital provision requires a review which will form part of the collaboration work being conducted by Durham Learning Alliance as we progress through the academic year.

The college is the lead licensee for the well-established and nationally recognised North East Institute of Technology (NEIOT) and is preparing for relicensing alongside expanding the reach of the NEIOT through additional North East colleges (an additional three FE colleges within the North East). The strategic direction of the NEIOT is to develop, grow and support industries in level 4 and 5 technical skills. The Director of the NEIOT is Vice Chair of the National IOT Network and plays a significant role in the development of the growth in this collaborative concept of delivering skills jointly across the region working in partnership with Gatsby Foundation.

At New College Durham our ambition is to create progression to Level 4 and above technical education in key LSIP and NECA priority sectors enabling more adults and young people to access Level 4/5 technical occupations. The college serves local communities across the North East, and through our Indefinite Foundation Awarding Powers, nationally through franchise partners delivering New College Durham provision, attracts a large proportion of adults from the most disadvantaged quintiles 1 and 2.

New College Durham is a driver of social mobility in the region and wider field it serves. The colleges alignment through the Employment and Skills Strategy is evident through the emerging priority themes as set out below.

- Getting into and getting on at work
- Positive futures for young people
- Employer led skills for growth
- Healthier lives through work and skills
- Employer leading the way
- Providing the right environment to work and learn
- Supporting the employment and skills sectors to deliver



# SECTION 3

## Context & Regional Contribution

As a key partner in the North East Combined Authority (NECA), New College Durham actively contributes to the region’s employment and skills agenda by:

- **Working closely with employers, partners and stakeholders**, we develop and deliver a high-quality and innovative curriculum focused on delivering against the skills priorities identified at national level and in the North East and Improvement Plan (LSIP) – to meet the needs and ambitions of the learners, communities and businesses we serve.
- **Continuing to strengthen partnerships** with employers, universities, and training providers to create integrated pathways and curricula to support accelerated growth in the key sectors
- **Addressing barriers to employment**, particularly for economically inactive individuals.
- **Supporting sustainable, high-quality jobs** in key sectors including green energy, digital, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and construction.
- **Extensive collaboration and partnership work** with a wide range of educational leaders across the North East
- **Remaining a significant driving force within the Durham Learning Alliance** of four colleges and one university.
- **Continuing to contribute to the County Durham Economic and Inclusive Strategy**
- **Providing extensive support to the skills of the North East through representation** on several boards including the Economic and Inclusive Board and Visit County Durham.





Durham Learning Alliance



National Battery Training & Skills Academy



Kim McGuinness, North East Mayor



Professor Richard Scothon



Visit County Durham



The Wind Academy

# SECTION 4

## Meeting Local, Regional & National Skills

Our extensive curriculum offer is designed in collaboration with industry and employers. It provides a clear path for our learners to progress from FE at New College Durham to HE at our dedicated University Centre and further into employment.

The college's strategic priorities and purpose have been informed by the growth ambitions shared by the North East Combined Authority and the Industry Strategy along with the ERBs Improvement Plans.

**Invest 2035:** The industrial strategy will focus on the sectors which offer the highest growth opportunity for the economy and business. Eight growth-driving sectors have been identified:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Clean Energy Industries
- Creative Industries
- Defence
- Digital & Technologies
- Financial Services
- Life Sciences
- Professional & Business Services

**Skills England:** will focus upon the above sectors identified in the Industrial Strategy Green Paper and on construction and health and social care, which are essential to the government's mission.

**Regional Context:** The Interim North East Local Growth Plan (January 2025) identifies six sector areas where the region has unique economic assets and opportunities, or can play a critical role in national development:

- Advanced Manufacturing, including Electric Vehicles
- Creative Industries and Content
- Life Sciences, Pharmaceuticals and Process Industries
- Tech, Digital and AI
- Offshore Wind and Energy Transition
- Defence, Security and Space

Additionally, the Knowledge Intensive Professional Services sector is acknowledged as vital for fostering a dynamic economy. The foundational economy—which includes industries like hospitality and health & social care—is seen as crucial for establishing a place of genuine opportunity. Infrastructure is highlighted as essential for making our region an attractive hub for global trade. From this, we can infer the importance of warehousing and logistics, airport and port operations, security, and related services.

### Key economic features and challenges for the North East include:

New Combined Authority already delivering and innovating

Second largest Mayor Combined Authority by area

Low productivity, overall, but significant diversity across the North East geography and rising levels of health-related inactivity.

Outperforming the national average for attracting new inward investment

An economy punching below its weight with skills, productivity and DVA behind national averages

Four universities and nine Further education colleges

A mixture of qualifications and education capacity

Three deep water ports

Excellent connectivity to rest of UK

Distinctive cultural and visitor economy offer

Collaborative and proactive North East Institute of Technology

### Key Opportunities and further development for New College Durham through working with strategic partners and sector areas in:

**Offshore Wind and energy transition** – currently working in collaboration and partnership with The Wind Academy

**Advanced Manufacturing including electric vehicles** – New College Durham has the first UK National Battery Training and Skills Academy on site working with Automotive Energy Supply Corporation (AESC) (largest NE Battery manufacturing plant) and Newcastle University. The Engineering Department hosts Tridonic Academy and Dyer Engineering Academy. Early-stage scoping of workforce strategy and curriculum mapping with other green transportation sectors.

**Creative Industries and content** – delivering extensive bootcamps across the region for creative industries

**Life Sciences, Pharmaceuticals and process industries**

**Tech, digital and AI** – currently reviewing and further embedding digital as a cross-cutting theme to industry needs

**Defence, security and space** – working in partnerships on space communication

**Construction** – working with Esh Construction, East Durham College and Karbon Homes on Seaham Garden Village for training on a functional building site of significant regional investment

# SECTION 4

## Overview of key curriculum provision linked to skills priorities.

### Industry Collaboration: **Engineering**

New College Durham is addressing the skills gap in engineering and manufacturing through strategic partnerships with industry leaders. A key example is the ongoing collaboration with Tridonic, a major electrical manufacturing company based in County Durham, which led to the establishment of the Tridonic Academy. This initiative exemplifies how education and industry can align to equip learners with essential knowledge, skills, and practical experience.

In the 2024/25 academic year, learners enrolled in the Level 2 Diploma in Engineering Operations (Electrical) receive comprehensive instruction in core engineering principles. The curriculum includes modules such as Engineering Mathematics and Science, Engineering Manufacturing Techniques, Electrical and Electronic Principles, and Electronic Systems and Devices. Tridonic has played an active role in developing module content, assessments, practical tasks, and soft skills training.

A distinguishing feature of this programme is its co-delivery model. Tridonic professionals are directly involved in delivering instruction, contributing expertise in areas such as surface-mount soldering and placement machine

operation. This ensures industry's relevance is embedded throughout the programme.

Learners benefit from a range of enrichment activities, including:

- Educational visits to Tridonic's Spennymoor facility for firsthand exposure to professional engineering and manufacturing environments.
- Guest lectures by Tridonic staff, offering insights into current industry practices and career pathways.
- Specialist masterclasses focused on practical industry skills.
- Work placements that provide real-world experience, enhancing both technical competencies and employability.

This partnership supports the development of a skilled workforce and underscores Tridonic's commitment to regional talent development. Learners of New College Durham gain the practical experience and confidence required to succeed in the electrical engineering and manufacturing sectors.

Looking ahead to 2025/26, the college plans to expand this co-delivery model across all Electrical and Electronic programmes.

## Industry Collaboration: The National Battery Training and Skills Academy (NB TSA)

The National Battery Training and Skills Academy (NB TSA) was formally opened on 21 February 2024 by Kim McGuinness, Mayor of the NECA. As one of the first academies of its kind in the United Kingdom, NB TSA offers specialist training facilities designed to prepare the future workforce of the rapidly growing battery manufacturing sector.



The establishment of the academy was made possible through funding from the Faraday Battery Challenge, an initiative focused on developing a high-tech, high-value, and high-skill battery industry in the UK. A principal partner in this initiative is AESC, a leading battery manufacturer based in Washington and a key supplier to companies including Nissan, BMW, Mercedes, and Renault. AESC has already delivered battery systems for more than 950,000 electric vehicles globally and is preparing for significant workforce expansion, with over 800 new roles expected to be created within the next three years.

### Training and Workforce Development at NB TSA

Since its inception in January 2024, the NB TSA has developed and implemented a structured training programme in close collaboration with AESC. This initial phase has focused on upskilling existing AESC employees, equipping them to mentor and support future entrants to the organisation. Commencing in May 2025, AESC, in partnership with New College Durham, will launch a comprehensive New Entrants Programme aimed at onboarding and training approximately 800 individuals for positions at its advanced giga plant facility. This significant initiative underscores AESC's commitment to workforce development and to enhancing the UK's capabilities in battery manufacturing.

The programme will be delivered in structured two-week training blocks, with each cohort consisting of 20 learners. A total of 39 cohorts will engage in this intensive training pathway. The curriculum integrates theoretical instruction with hands-on practical training to provide comprehensive and applied learning experience. Safety training will be delivered using the immersive Igloo learning environment, ensuring critical safety practices are communicated in an engaging and effective manner suitable for high-technology manufacturing contexts.

# SECTION 4

## **Industry Collaboration: Seaham Garden Village: Skills and Economic Growth through Construction**

Seaham Garden Village (SGV) is a flagship development within the NECA region and one of the most ambitious construction projects in the North of England. The 1,500-home scheme includes 750 net zero affordable homes, supported by district heating, solar PV, and battery storage. The development also features a primary school, retail precinct, innovation centre, extensive green space, and 750 homes for private sale.

A consortium comprising Esh Construction, Karbon Homes, New College Durham, East Durham College, and the North Institute of Technology is advancing a proposal to establish an onsite Construction Training Hub. Located within the development boundary, the hub will operate throughout the seven-year build phase, offering high-quality training, upskilling, and employment pathways aligned with large-scale infrastructure delivery. This initiative supports NECA's Local Growth Plan by driving economic growth, advancing the transition to net zero, and addressing long-term economic inactivity and child poverty in one of the UK's most disadvantaged areas.

## **Community-Based Learning: Partnership with Nur Ladies Fitness Centre**

Nur Ladies Fitness Centre in Middlesbrough serves as a culturally sensitive, women-only space that fosters wellbeing, personal development, and social connection, particularly among women from minority and underrepresented communities.

For over two years, New College Durham has partnered with Nur to deliver accessible, community-based training aligned with the college's commitment to extending education beyond traditional settings. By embedding programmes within the Centre, the partnership effectively addresses barriers such as transport, childcare, and cultural constraints, enabling greater participation in education.

Training focuses on sectors relevant to the community primarily Health and Social Care and Education empowering women to gain skills that support both personal advancement and career progression.



## Industry Collaboration: Inclusive Education: Partnership with Sunderland Bangladesh International Centre (SBIC)

New College Durham's collaboration with Sunderland Bangladesh International Centre (SBIC) exemplifies how community-based delivery can make education more accessible and inclusive. Purpose-built to serve the local population, SBIC is a trusted hub for cultural engagement and lifelong learning, supporting both BAME and wider Sunderland communities.

In response to barriers faced by many women such as cultural expectations, family responsibilities, and lack of confidence SBIC partnered with the college to deliver courses within its centre. This approach provides a familiar, supportive environment that encourages participation and reduces anxiety around formal education.

The initiative has significantly increased learner engagement, particularly among women who previously felt excluded from traditional academic settings. By embedding education in the community, the partnership promotes inclusion, builds confidence, and supports lifelong learning.



Celebration lunch with partners from Nur Fitness, SBIC and Handcrafted

## Industry Collaboration: The T-Level Health programme

The T-Level Health programme has continued to strengthen the partnership with County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT), which recently offered five learners' rotational placements across departments such as rehabilitation, diabetes, surgery, radiology, and outpatient services. These placements spanned multiple hospitals University Hospital of North Durham, Chester-le-Street, Bishop Auckland, and Darlington Memorial providing learners with diverse, hands-on healthcare experience. This model has significantly enhanced their practical skills and academic performance.

Additionally, the programme participated in a Midwifery Pilot Scheme for learners specialising in Supporting the Midwifery Team. Supported initially by Directors of Midwifery, five learners gained experience in both hospital and community settings, covering antenatal and postnatal care. A highlight was the tailored study day, "What it is like to be a midwife," delivered by a Midwifery Educator. Due to its success, this event will now run annually.

## SECTION 5

# Approach to Developing the Plan and Stakeholders

At the heart of this agreement there is a strong approach to strategic planning underpinned by robust mechanisms for monitoring and high expectations.

Our board of governors has continued to strengthen with the introduction of new members to the board, from key strategic positions from our stakeholders, securing the diverse skills base, experience and links to local business and community. The composition of board members has continued to evolve and incorporate the skills and experience required across a broad range of disciplines to further enhance a highly effective board with an excellent mix of skills and experience.

The governors take the lead in setting a clear strategic vision, which is articulated through a robust annual strategic planning process, involving consultation with teams across the college. The governing body chair plays an active role in the Association of Colleges Governance as an external board reviewer due to his extensive experience as a Company Director and a well-established board-member and chair.

As a participant in the North East Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), and as the lead for the Construction strand, the college has actively

supported and facilitated a collaborative effort to create new programs tailored to the needs of the local and regional economy.

The college is working in close collaboration with several college teams to inform them about the future Learning Skills and Improvement Plans. These are built on a firm foundation of a collaborative and strategic partnership through local and regional skills improvement plans. The college works in with local schools and teachers to understand and plan the curriculum to enable all young people to succeed. This extends to strategic planning, transition work, provision for KS3 and extensive and high-quality careers support.

By working closely with Durham County Council to align strategic priorities to support the county and its skills needs within and beyond our schools. Our work with school stakeholders underpins the core purpose and success of the tertiary system in our local area.

New College Durham sits on numerous high level-boards and actively engages with a range of local and national networks. The college is also a committed participant in several local, regional, and national forums. These platforms not only help shape the college's strategic priorities but also enable it to contribute meaningfully to the

development and influence of wider education and skills policy. These include:

 AoC Board member
 Director for AOC Services
 County Durham Economic Partnership
 Visit County Durham (VCD)
 Durham Learning Alliance
 Durham LGPS Committee
 Higher education Mixed Economy Group <sup>(MEG)</sup>
 Colleges of the North East
 AoC National Finance Director Group
 AoC Governors Group
 Made NE Strategic Board
 Made NE Operational Board
 National Executive Board of Institutes of Technology
 North East Combined Authority Investment Zone Advisory Board
 North East Combined Authority Culture, Creative, Tourism and Sport Advisory Board – NE FE College Rep

Close collaboration with universities, both regionally and nationally, ensures the planned curriculum provision is enabled to respond to higher level skills needs, for example in engineering, construction and digital higher technical qualifications.

Extensive links to employers through a variety of activities have resulted in a highly bespoke curriculum which enables businesses to respond and grow. These relationships underpin the strategic and curriculum plan. For example, the college has maintained successful relationships with many employers including AESC, Nissan, Vantec, Durham and Darlington NHS Trust, Beamish Museum, Radisson hotel, Newcastle United Foundation, Foundation of Light, Lomax Gas Services, Karbon Homes, Esh Construction, REVAMP, Fire Services across the North East to name a few. In addition, the college works successfully with a high volume of SMEs to ensure their workforce needs are successfully met.

### Duty review

Through the establishment of the Durham Learning Alliance the four colleges within County Durham have engaged in reviewing their college curriculum offer to ensure full coverage of the skills priorities set out for the region and to be able to identify any skills and qualification gaps. The colleges provision has been mapped against the LSIP report, NECA employment and skills growth plan and County Durham Economic Strategy with overview LMI numbers, future requirements and provision gaps.

We continue to support our governing body to effectively discharge its duty to review provision in the local area. Through colleges of the North East, New College Durham will contribute to the collective understanding of how well college provision meets local needs and develop a shared evidence base to assist in identifying strengths and specialisms within the North East.

# SECTION 6

## Annual Objectives

Our contribution to meeting the National, Regional & Local needs.

One	
Accountability Strategic Objectives	Actions
Continue to increase numbers of level 3 learners	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to review and introduce new T-Levels in Creative, Legal and Engineering</li> <li>2. Increasing number of learners achieving high grades</li> <li>3. Increase the number of 16-18 choosing to study at New College Durham</li> <li>4. Liaise with Durham County Council regarding the continued growth in 16-18 year old numbers and to review the funding assigned to the college for High Need learners.</li> <li>5. Further develop the Level 2 offer to enable learners to progress to higher levels of study especially in Engineering, Health, Construction, Business</li> <li>6. Continue to improve maths and English outcomes</li> <li>7. Increase the number of learners progressing through levels</li> <li>8. Grow our higher education offer to enable positive progression within Durham, supporting raising low HE participation rates- increase applications to HE.</li> </ol>
Link to Strategic Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in and grow our high-quality academic programmes including A-Levels and T-Levels.</li> <li>• Engage with our school partners to ensure learners and our community can realise the full benefit of technical education</li> <li>• Ensure all learners have access to a digital device to support and energise learning.</li> <li>• Delivering high quality support and personal development to develop life skills and resilience.</li> <li>• Work with Durham County Council to address the needs and support for learners with high needs and Educational Health Care Plans (EHCPs)</li> <li>• Provide career advice to promote and support progression onto apprenticeships and higher education.</li> </ul>
<b>IMPACT</b>	Allows learners to have the best possible outcomes to gain sustainable and progressive employment or progression into further FE or HE education.

Two	
Accountability Strategic Objectives	Actions
Monitor learner recruitment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure curriculum planning is continuously reviewed against 16-18 year old agreed funding allocation</li> <li>2. Inform ELT and Governors of any potential unfunded growth and impact to college finances</li> <li>3. Continue to discuss with Durham County Council and Department for Education the increase in learner enrolments and impact for college (finances, accommodation and staffing needs)</li> <li>4. Ensure curriculum offer is responding to region skills needs</li> <li>5. Review any waiting lists of applications and work with local FE Providers and other partners</li> <li>6. Ensure learners have adequate CEIAG to make informed choices for career pathways.</li> </ol>
Link to Strategic Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographics continue to rise across County Durham and applications continue to increase across the curriculum areas.</li> </ul>
IMPACT	Learners unable to access college courses.

Three	
Accountability Strategic Objectives	Actions
Following curriculum mapping review to deep dive into low recruitment across Digital sector	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review of Digital curriculum area</li> <li>2. Assess need for data analytics, software development, cybersecurity and IT infrastructure</li> <li>3. Consider use of terms – digital, IT, Computer Technology</li> <li>4. Understand our intent</li> <li>5. Work with colleagues from other three Durham colleges to determine any similarities</li> <li>6. Consider collaborative offer.</li> <li>7. Review of curriculum offer and way of delivery</li> <li>8. Consider digital being a cross cutting them in all curriculum areas.</li> </ol>
Link to Strategic Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the Local needs duty review across Durham and in NCD for reasons for low digital recruitment.</li> </ul>
IMPACT	To realign the curriculum sector to the needs of the North East and Durham area and grow accordingly.

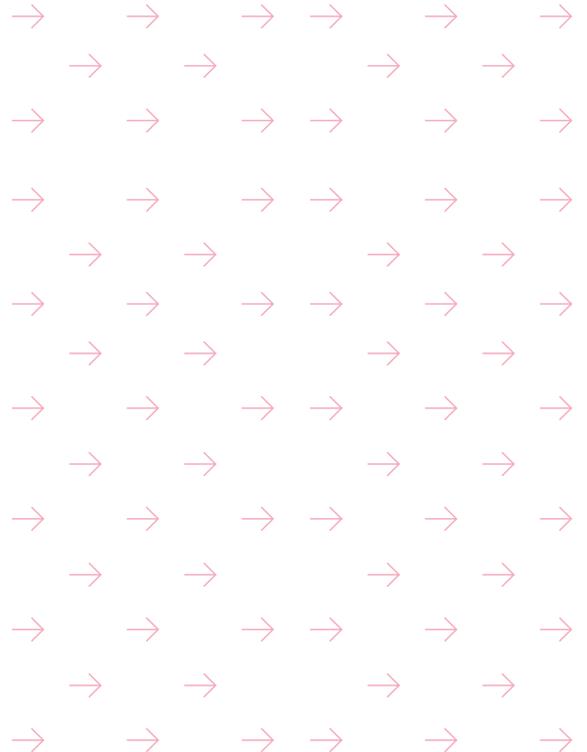
Four	
Accountability Strategic Objectives	Actions
Ensure curriculum intent is fully informed by stakeholder feedback to shape and deliver key strategic skills for regional growth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review the findings of the Duty review of local needs to ensure coverage of skills within County Durham</li> <li>2. Ensure curriculum offer reflects demand and needs across the region.</li> <li>3. Maximise the investment in priority skills areas through accessing grant and capital funding to invest in high quality facilities. Engage with Durham Council and NECA to ensure that the college's role as an anchor institution within the locality is reflected in opportunities</li> <li>4. Ensure curriculum models incorporate real life working projects to prepare learners for the world of work.</li> <li>5. Ensure the college liaises with employers through advisory boards and alternative engagement to provide employer led co design</li> </ol>
Link to Strategic Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be a committed strategic partner in all LSIP activity pertaining to national skills priorities. Work collaboratively with the Advisory boards, ERBs, Combined Authority and Durham County Council to ensure the curriculum offer meets regional and national needs, refining LSIP data to ensure the college is meeting needs local to Durham</li> <li>• Learners studying on all technical programmes will undertake project-based learning experiences designed and delivered in collaboration with relevant sector-based employers/stakeholders.</li> <li>• Develop clear pathways into, and the opportunity to grow, the 16-18 offer across strategic priority areas in line with capacity across the college estate. Develop the Level 4/5 curriculum in priority areas to aid progression working with the University Centre New College Durham and local HEIs</li> </ul>
<b>IMPACT</b>	The college contributes strongly to engagement with employers across the college curriculum in meeting the needs of the region.

Five	
Accountability Strategic Objectives	Actions
Continue to lead on the NEIOT to deliver key strategic higher skills for regional growth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review and update a strategic direction to address the needs of the region in relation to key high impact sectors such as Advanced Manufacturing, Construction and Green Skills over the next 3years</li> <li>2. Keep watching briefs on developments for Construction Technical College Continue to seek innovative and dynamic opportunities to develop high level skills training</li> <li>3. Ensuring NEIOT is at the forefront of emerging technologies and sustainability for higher level technical skills and to be seeking additional funding to support employers in delivering such</li> <li>4. Be flexible in design and deliver to meet needs of working learners</li> <li>5. Investigate appropriate immersive technology to use across all partners for sharing resources both staffing and content.</li> </ol>
Link to Strategic Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote partnership approach between FE/HE providers in the region to align curriculum and delivery models for high value emerging technologies and Higher Technical Qualifications.</li> </ul>
<b>IMPACT</b>	The college contributes strongly to engagement with employers across the college curriculum in meeting the needs of the region.

Six	
Accountability Strategic Objectives	Actions
Build on the Durham Learning Alliance collaboration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be an active voice in the collaboration between the educational institutions within Durham.</li> <li>2. Look to collaborate on initiatives for the benefit of learners and of sharing good practice</li> <li>3. Consider in the use of immersive technology to bridge any gaps in resources in delivering a high-quality educational offer across all organisations.</li> </ol>
Link to Strategic Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the college continues to be instrumental as the County's anchor in enriching the local industries and community for the benefit of its people</li> </ul>
IMPACT	Enhanced curriculum offer and learner outcomes through shared resources, joint initiatives, and coordinated employer engagement across the four Durham FE colleges.

Seven	
Accountability Strategic Objectives	Actions
Develop a workforce with the skills required to deliver high quality learning across identified skills priority areas.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to recruit high calibre, industry-experienced staff with skills and knowledge in regional skills shortage areas (Building Services, Construction, Engineering &amp; Manufacturing, Health Science and Digital).</li> <li>2. Achieve a high retention rate of high-performing and industry-relevant staff advancing a set of retention initiatives to maintain staffing levels and promote a five-year average tenure.</li> <li>3. Deliver structured upskilling programmes aligned with Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs)</li> <li>4. Continuing to develop a culture which promotes equality, diversity and inclusivity within the current workforce and enables the recruitment of a diverse future workforce reflective of our community</li> <li>5. Roll out the 2025/26 New College Durham Staff Wellbeing Programme</li> <li>6. Continue to strengthen staff voice through structured feedback and engagement activities</li> </ol>
Link to Strategic Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the college recruits the best staff in the region.</li> </ul>
IMPACT	To recruit the right people for the right roles and achieve a flexible and responsive workforce in a high performing environment.

Eight	
Accountability Strategic Objectives	Actions
Continue to assess and develop the Estates Strategy for high quality, appropriate facilities and resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assess the curriculum plan against the college's accommodation</li> <li>2. Seek additional facilities both on and off site to accommodate growth for both staff and learners</li> <li>3. The current estate will continue to be adapted to respond to curriculum requirements</li> <li>4. The expansion of the college estate will be underpinned by an ambitious modernisation programme which ensures that all learners will have the best learning experience in the most appropriate buildings</li> <li>5. Continue to invest in teaching and learning facilities including up to date technology of the future which will further enhance the pedagogy of teaching to encompass metaverse and innovative delivery methods</li> <li>6. Respond proactively to environmental and sustainability challenges.</li> </ol>
Link to Strategic Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In response to a predicted growth of learners for the next five years continue to invest in the college estate to ensure the curriculum responds to demand in high quality facilities with high end equipment</li> </ul>
<b>IMPACT</b>	To provide high quality learning facilities and resources to meet the demand of the classroom and teaching of the future and allow innovation for teaching staff and learners.



# Corporate Statement

## Governance & Accountability

This agreement is endorsed by the New College Durham Governing Body and aligns with the accountability framework established by the Department for Education and NECA. We commit to delivering measurable outcomes through robust monitoring, stakeholder collaboration, and continuous improvement.

## Confirmation of Governance Sign-off

Approved by the Governing Body of New College Durham on 22nd May 2025



**ANDY  
BROADBENT**

Principal/Chief Executive  
and Accounting Officer

22 May 2025



**STEPHEN  
KING**

Chair of Governors

22 May 2025

## Supporting Documents

- [1. New College Durham Strategic Plan 2021-2026](#)
- [2. North East Combined Authority Employment and Skills Strategy \(2025/26 – 2029/30\)](#)
- [3. North East Automotive Alliance Local Skills Improvement Plans \(LSIPs\)](#)

## SECTION 8

# Progress made against the last Accountability Agreement

- **Allows learners to have the best possible outcomes to gain sustainable and progressive employment or progression into further FE or HE education.** College achieved 90.7% achievement rates for all ages in FE which placed them in top 10% nationally and 74.3% for Apprenticeships again in top 10% nationally.
- **Ensure tomorrow's workforce –are equipped with the vocational technical and digital skills required by employers.** Top performing college and recently achieved various regional and national awards for engaging with employers.
- **Promote partnership approach between FE/HE providers in the region to align curriculum and delivery models for high value emerging technologies and Higher Technical Qualifications.** The Strategic Board of the NEIOT continues to thrive and expand with new FE and HEIs joining this proactive and nationally recognised IOT.
- **Provide all learners in the local region with the opportunity of academic (A-Level), technical (T-Level) and apprenticeships provision to meet the local skills needs.** Achievement rates are currently in excess of NART requirements.
- **All pupils and college learners are aware of the options available to them to ensure appropriate Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance to allow for employment or Further and higher education to reach sustainable employment.** Enrolment over the previous two years has exceeded target numbers by 20% which demonstrates accurate advice and guidance.
- **All areas of curriculum offer establishes and retains digital and higher technical teaching capability across the region.** Embedding digital skills is part of the curriculum area across the college.
- **To be a high-quality provider of apprenticeships and lead the way on reskilling, upskilling and retraining employees.** Apprenticeship provision at college is 3rd in the NE and 4th in the UK. The area remains to have robust and rigorous systems to ensure high quality provision.
- **To recruit the right people for the right roles and achieve a flexible and responsive workforce in a high performing environment.** Implementation of a well-resourced induction programme for new staff into college with teaching and learning support and coaching along with a reduced teaching load during induction. Pilot of Working in Education implemented during the year to attract retirees into teaching.
- **To provide high quality learning facilities and resources to meet the demand of the classroom and teaching of the future and allow innovation for teaching staff and learners.** Due to an increase in enrolments and new curriculum content, the college has made significant investment in facilities and technology to enable the best possible learning experience.





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