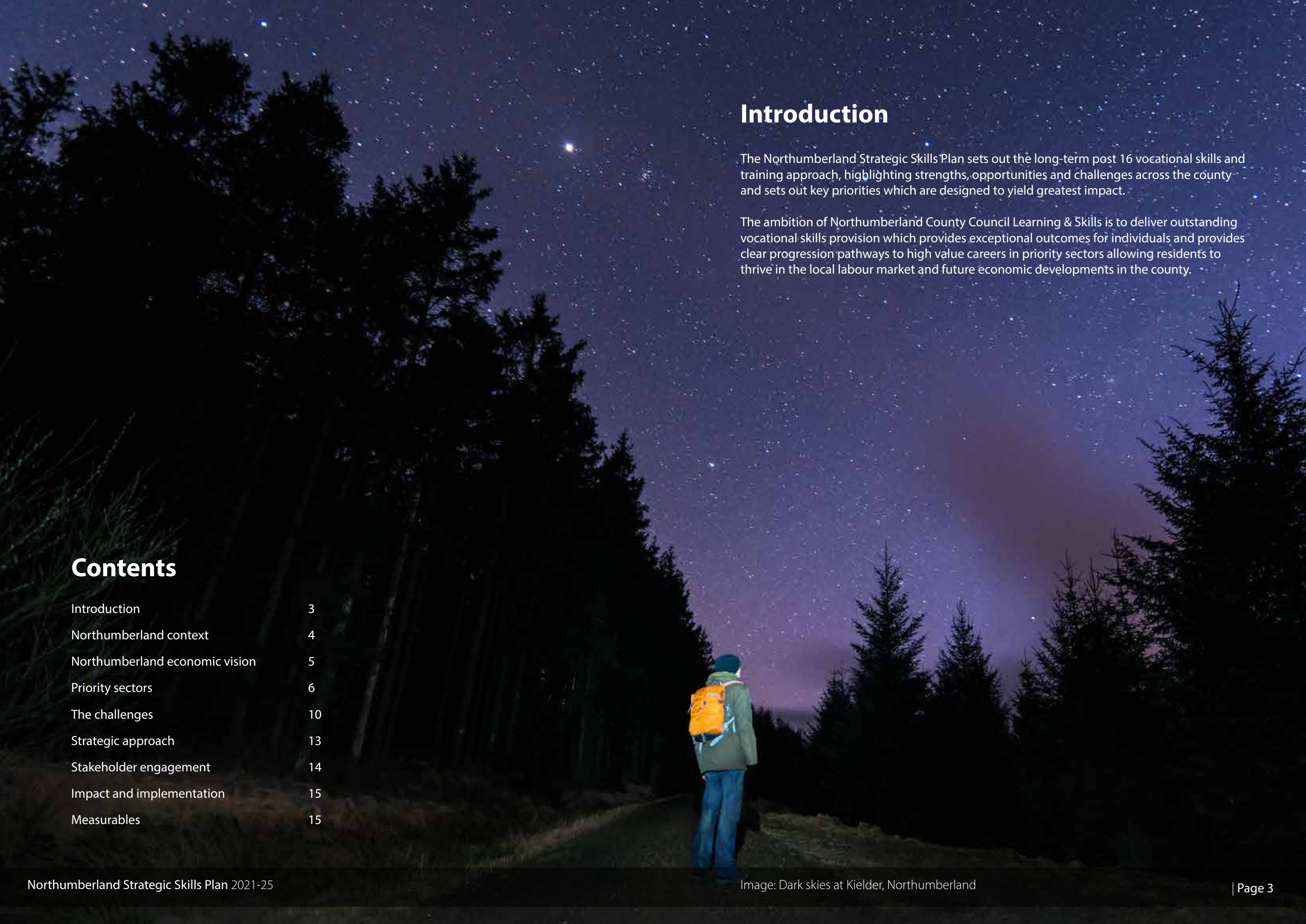




Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan | 2021-25



Introduction

The Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan sets out the long-term post 16 vocational skills and training approach, highlighting strengths, opportunities and challenges across the county and sets out key priorities which are designed to yield greatest impact.

The ambition of Northumberland County Council Learning & Skills is to deliver outstanding vocational skills provision which provides exceptional outcomes for individuals and provides clear progression pathways to high value careers in priority sectors allowing residents to thrive in the local labour market and future economic developments in the county.

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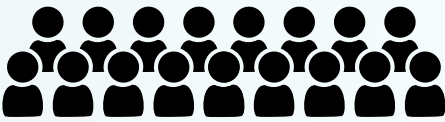
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Northumberland context

Northumberland county begins at the most northerly boundaries of Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle and North Tyneside. Cumbria lies to the west, the Scottish borders to the north and the North Sea to the east.

The county is relatively unique with its urban, rural and coastal settings.

The built-up area to the south east features the larger towns of Ashington, Blyth and Cramlington, whilst further to the north and west lie the market towns of Morpeth, Hexham and Alnwick and many rural and coastal communities.



Northumberland has a population of 319,000 who live and work in the county, 190,000 are of working age (16-64), there are 128,000 jobs and a job density of 0.67

11,300 businesses operate in Northumberland with a county GVA in excess of £5 billion.



Dominant sectors in the county include manufacturing, retail & wholesale, healthcare and accommodation & foodservice, with manufacturing particularly shaping the economic landscape of the south east of the county.



Manufacturing



Retail & wholesale



Healthcare



Accommodation & foodservice

Northumberland economic vision

It is our vision to foster an economic environment where individuals and businesses can thrive.

The skills that the Northumberland economy needs, in the sectors that the Northumberland economy needs will be available to residents and businesses, raising opportunity to gain employment and to progress in high value priority sectors.

Inward investment will be attracted to the emerging talent pool, obstacles to growth owing to skills shortages will be removed.

Aspirations of children and young people will be raised - they will have knowledge of the benefits and opportunities within the county's priority sectors and they will know how to get there. They will be better prepared and more highly motivated to achieve a vibrant and rewarding career within the county. They will be the leaders of the future sparking enterprise and innovation.

In a much-needed move to a net zero future and to support Government's legally binding targets for emission reductions, the low carbon sectors will require significant human capacity and skills development.

The four key sectors detailed below will require reskilling displaced trades, such as fossil fuel reliant industries, and development of new skills to enable growth and retention of economic value created within the county.

- 1) Natural resources generation and maintenance
- 2) Supplying and storing clean energy
- 3) Improving the fabric of our homes and communities
- 4) Moving around and through our county

As a constituent Local Authority of the North of Tyne Combined Authority and as a partner Local Authority in the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, Northumberland County Council is working in partnership to unlock the opportunities for green economic growth and skilled job creation, supporting the development of the Green Growth Skills Plan and the emerging Green New Deal.

Priority sectors



Health and life science

Northumberland is home to Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, a flag-ship trust, twice CQC rated 'Outstanding' and with an international footprint. The county is an exciting and opportunity rich location to be involved in the health sector.

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust is also one of the largest employers in the North East providing significant employment and career progression opportunity within its portfolio of major health care facilities, supporting satellite facilities and community functions.

Human Health & Social work is the largest industry in terms of employment number in the county accounting for over 20,000 employed positions against 151,000 total regional employment.

Health is the second largest industry in terms of GVA at circa £485m very close to manufacturing. Human Health & Social work activity is also indicated as a growth sector, ranked 9th, with 250 additional positions arising per annum across the county as well as significant need for workforce renewal and for development of rapidly changing skills.

Advanced manufacturing and engineering

Northumberland is home to a significant manufacturing and engineering infrastructure predominantly in the South East areas of Cramlington, Ashington and Blyth which benefit from exceptional road, air and deep-sea port transportation links. Manufacturing is the third largest industry in terms of employment number in Northumberland accounting for circa 11,500 employed positions against 151,000 total regional employment. Manufacturing is the most significant sector in regional GVA generating in the region of £500m, the sector is also exhibiting job growth. It should be noted that several industrial sites are currently in development or available for development in south east Northumberland as well as significant inward investment on the horizon providing future opportunity to continue sector growth and employment opportunity.

The supply and storage of clean energy are growth industries nationally and Northumberland is leading in aspects of these markets, including offshore wind and battery storage. Developing the skills base will ensure that the economic development created in county remains within Northumberland's borders, provide inspirational futures for the emerging workforce.

Digital technology

In the NE region, IT Infrastructure Technicians, Digital Marketing Professionals, Software Development Technicians, Data Technicians are some of the most sought-after digital skills.

- In NE England the median digital tech sector salary is 26% greater than the all-sector median
- The UK digital tech sector has exhibited 40% growth over previous two years
- Digital tech roles make up 16% of advertised roles in the North East region
- Software developers are the most in demand digital tech specialists, this demand is particularly strong in the North East region
- Some of the greatest growth areas in the digital tech sector are Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security and Cloud Computing
- New job roles emerging in the work-from-anywhere environment with tech firms posting significant opportunities as 'location: anywhere' and a new range of roles including directors and managers of 'Remote Work' to oversee teams who will never enter the office
- Globally, the UK was the third largest venture capital investor in digital tech at £11.2bn during 2020, greater than the rest of Europe combined

Digital technology will be a key enabling factor in the delivery and management of green infrastructure throughout the county. Ensuring the correct skills base is available will be critical to ensuring the success of the net zero trajectory.

Priority sectors (continued)

Retail and wholesale

Retail & Wholesale Trade is the second largest industry in terms of employment number in Northumberland, accounting for circa 16,000 employed positions against 151,000 total regional employment. Retail & Wholesale Trade is a significant factor in regional GVA generating in the region of £430m and is indicated as a growth sector, post-COVID the skills landscape in the sector is changing to keep up with new ways of engaging in retail meaning that reskilling the sector is also vital.

Accommodation, foodservice and tourism

Northumberland is home to a significant and growing tourism infrastructure built upon a rich history, the Northumberland National Park and coastal areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Accommodation & Food Service is the fourth largest industry in terms of employment number in Northumberland accounting for 11,000 employed positions against 151,000 total regional employment. The sector which experienced significant pre-COVID growth, the highest rate of growth, requires assistance in recovery as well as the capacity to re-engage the growth curve in the future. Accommodation & Food Service is a significant factor in regional GVA generating approx. £200m.

As natural resources are developed in line with net zero strategies and a transition to low carbon transport occurs, the accommodation, food service and tourism industries can grow as a low impact alternative to foreign travel.

Construction & civil engineering

Northumberland is home to a significant and buoyant construction industry predominantly in the South East areas of Cramlington, Ashington and Blyth but also in the built-up areas of Alnwick and Berwick. Construction work is also accessible to those from remote areas given the mobile site working and vehicular movement associated with the industry.

Construction is the 7th largest industry in terms of employment number in Northumberland accounting for circa 6,000 employed positions against 151,000 total regional employment, it is the 5th most significant factor in regional GVA generating in the region of £270m.

Construction is also exhibiting job growth after a period of sector standstill. In terms of job growth and industry share, it should be noted that several industrial sites, high street redevelopments and new housing projects are currently in development or available for development in south East Northumberland providing greater emerging future opportunity to continue sector growth.

To enable zero carbon targets significant infrastructure upgrades and developments will be required in the short to medium term and skills and development gaps need to be filled to support those emerging requirements.

Business and administration

Business Administration & Support Service Activities is the sixth largest industry in terms of employment number in Northumberland accounting for circa 6,000 employed positions against 151,000 total regional employment. Business Administration & Support Service Activities is a significant factor in regional GVA generating in the region of £180m and is also indicated as the third greatest jobs growth sector, growth which has been seen nationally as the demand for service sector professionals rises.

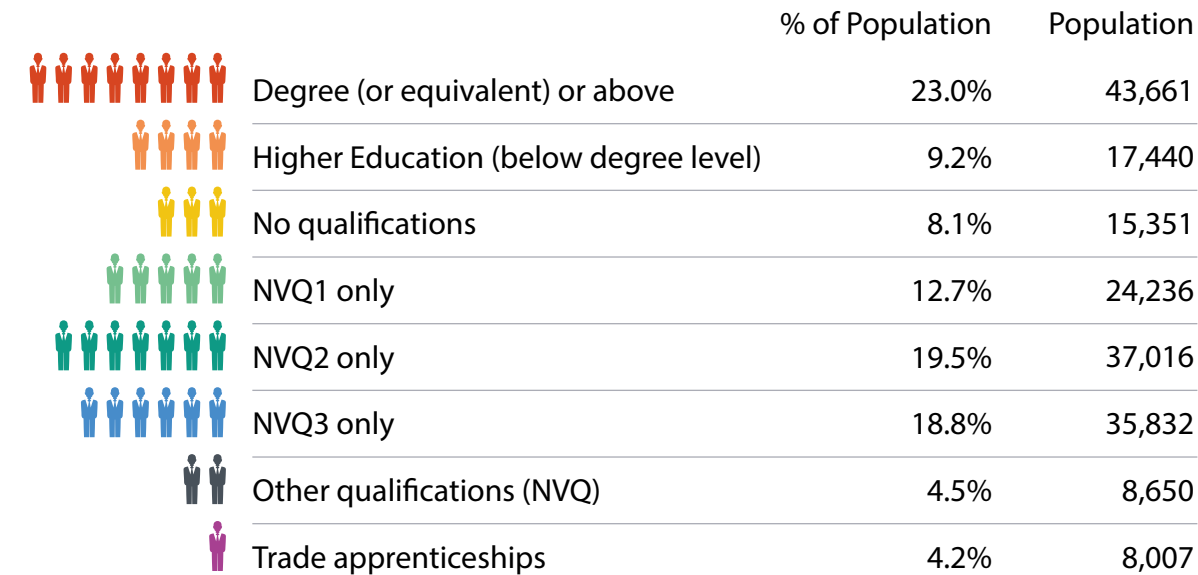


The challenges

Qualification attainment

Qualification level is low in Northumberland 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 who are unemployed.

23.0% of Northumberland residents possess a degree or equivalent and above (6.7% below national average). 9.2% hold Higher Education below degree Level (0.7% above national average).

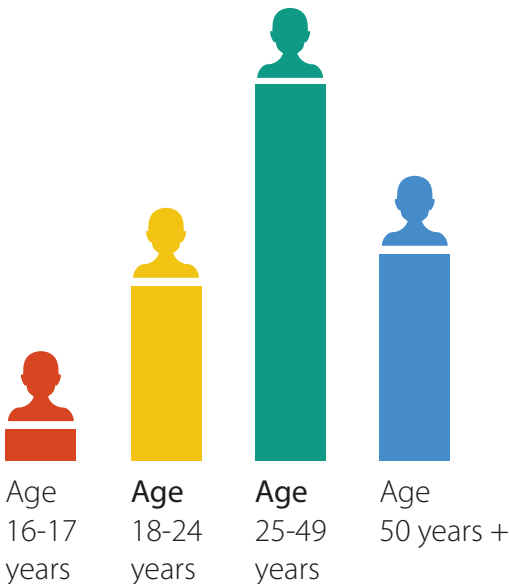


Economic participation and claimant count

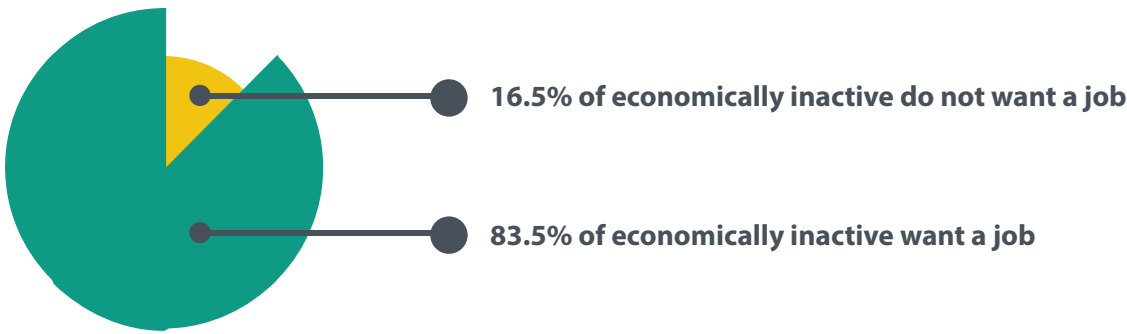
Too many residents suffer in work poverty and are in need of claiming financial support (11,075). A figure which can be reduced with the provision of more intermediate and higher-level qualifications in priority sectors.

2,415 claimants are in the 18-24 age bracket and 5,670 in 25-49 age bracket.

These residents have the opportunity to contribute to the economic success of the county when offered accessible skills and qualifications.



Northumberland claimant count by age



The vast majority of economically inactive (83.5%) want a job. The job density in Northumberland is 0.67 creating a barrier for those who want to work.

Understanding the barriers and provision of vocational skills to generate a relevant talent pool to encourage inward investment are essential in providing opportunity to combat economic inactivity.

Low pay and pay inequality

Northumberland county has 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. Women in full-time employment in Northumberland, earn an average of 23.9% less than men. The average woman earns £11.10 per hour, while men earn £13.75.

Northumberland has in excess of 15,000 residents employed in elementary occupations (10% of working population), elementary occupations are at greatest risk from automation.

The skills landscape must enhance participation of those groups previously unable to access vocational training to allow entry to high value sectors, reducing national pay gap, gender pay gap and elementary occupations.

Northumberland gross weekly pay



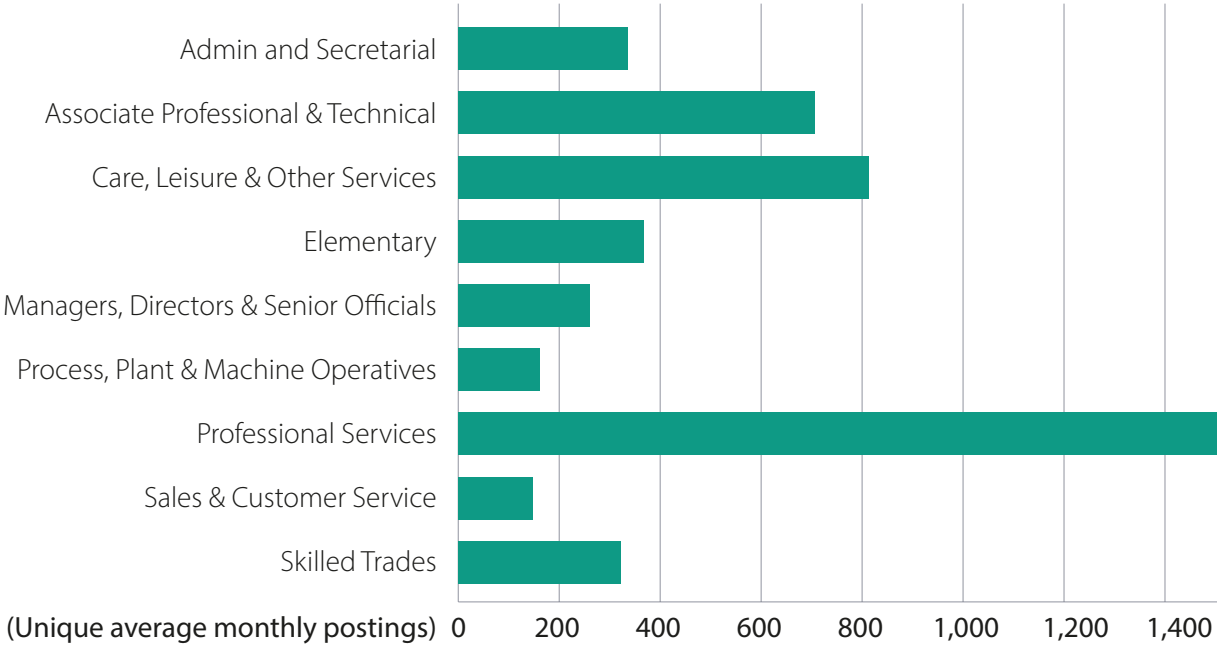
Northumberland pay by gender



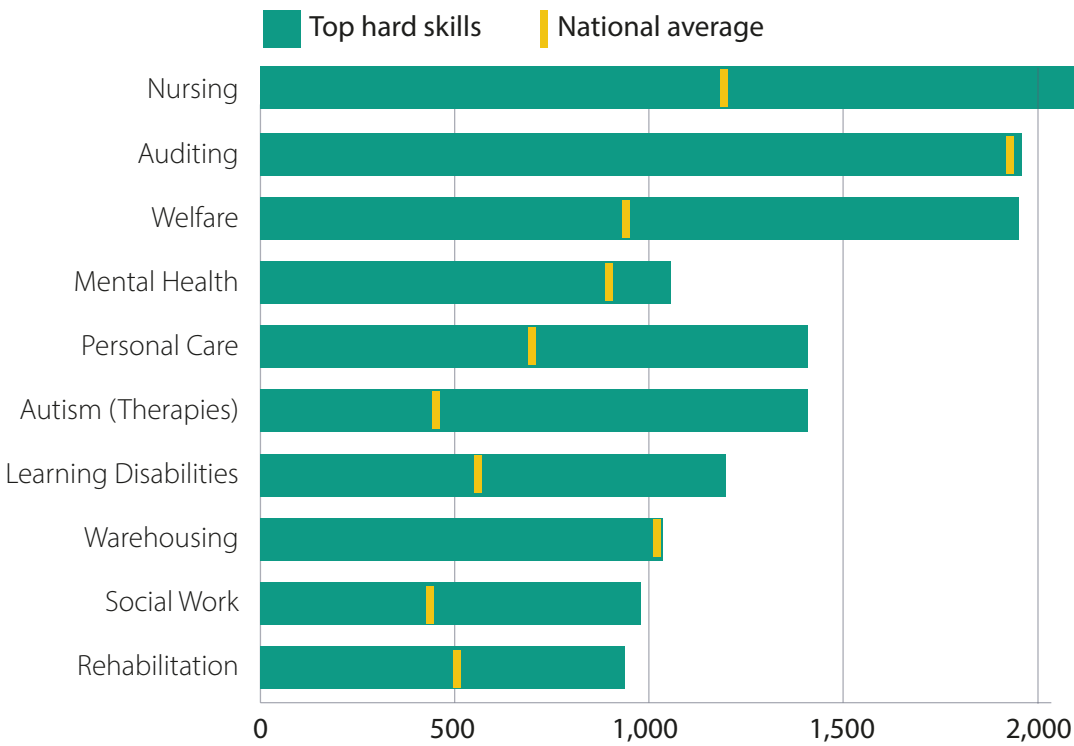
The challenges (continued)

Skills demand

Highest recruitment occupations are in professional, care and technical roles.



While hard skills most in demand are overwhelmingly biased toward human health and social care sector.



The provision of intermediate to high level skills in these occupational areas is essential to allow residents to access Good Work and to thrive in a buoyant economic environment.

Strategic approach

The guiding principle of our strategic approach is to allow those engaging in post 16 vocational training to reach the same high value career pathway as those directly entering priority sector apprenticeships and employment, to ensure that vocational training is relevant and underpins exceptional levels of progression to the sector of study.

From a young age school children will be aware of the exciting career prospects, the industries and how they can build and fulfil aspirations in priority sectors, this will underpin exceptional participation in vocational training.



Vocational training will have two key approaches:

1. Direct entry to an apprenticeship standard and employment.

This will include training to achieve the knowledge, skills and behaviour required to pass end point assessment, to thrive in the working environment and to be readied for progression to intermediate or higher-level study.

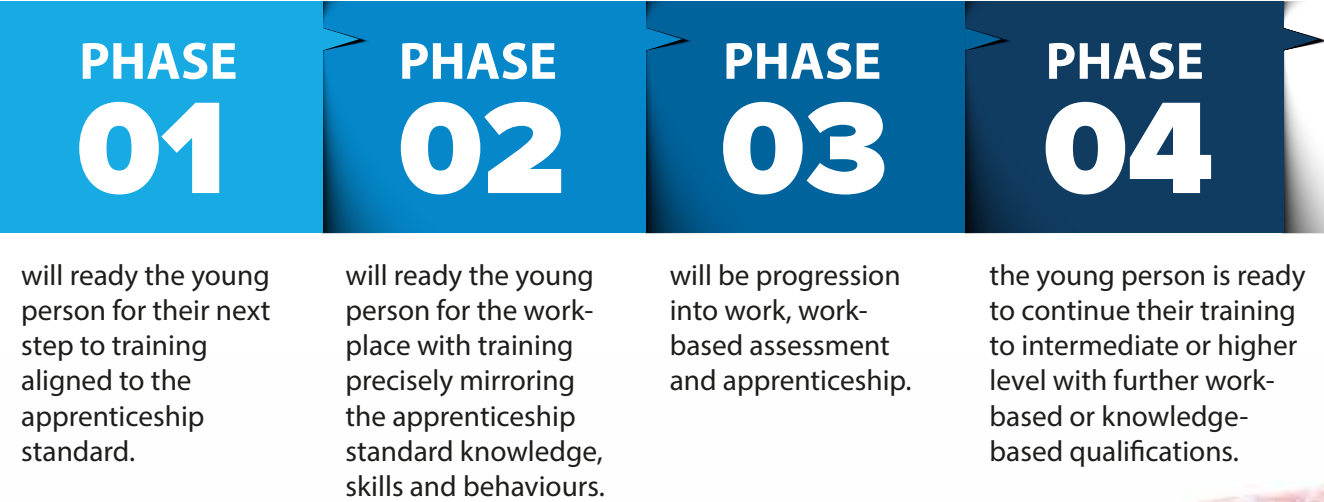
2. Training toward apprenticeship standard and employment.

For those not yet able to directly enter an apprenticeship standard with an employer, there will be a range of entry points appropriate to the individual, including maths and English.

The core aim of vocational training is to provide competency and knowledge that meets the requirements of the assessment plan seen within the relevant apprenticeship standard, thus, readying the trainee to meet the requirement of the apprenticeship standard when they achieve the opportunity for employment.

Strategic approach (continued)

The vocational training that is provided, designed to mirror the training of an apprentice, will provide a highly employable candidate with demonstrable work ready skills for progression to apprenticeship and employment, each learner having opportunity to showcase their skills in real work experience placement in their sector.



Stakeholder engagement

Employers play an important role in the design of sector specific vocational training.

Each priority sector area will engage a range of employer stakeholders to inform the skills needs for the short, medium and long term.

With these employers, we will form long term collaborative relationships, working closely to guarantee that the talent pool is relevant, sufficient and able to provide an impact in the sector.

Employers will benefit from the training of new employees and apprentices but also to upskill their existing workforce.

The result will be greater positive impact on employers, economy and residents alike.

Impact and implementation

The impact	The implementation
Raising aspirations	School age children will be made aware very early of exciting career options in priority sectors and how to realise their aspirations.
High levels of participation	Awareness of the vocational route and its earning potential will be enhanced.
Exceptional progression	The right skills for the right sectors will allow outstanding outcomes and progressing into employment and further vocational training.
Economic growth	The local skills pipeline will contribute to attracting inward investment and remove the barrier of skills shortages.
Reduced worklessness and in-work poverty	More and better high value career paths will close the gap on earnings, attainment and employment.

Measurables

- Progression rate – KS4 to vocational training/apprenticeship
- Progression rate – post 16 vocational training to apprenticeship or employment
- Attainment – Level 2 vocational qualification
- Attainment – Level 3 vocational qualification
- Attainment – higher level vocational qualification
- Economic growth – inward investment count/scale with skills collaboration
- Worklessness - % 18-24 and 24+ economically inactive
- Earnings – gross weekly pay gap and gender pay gap

