

NELSIP
North East
Local Skills
Improvement
Plan



Progress Report.

June 2025



delivered by the
NORTH EAST

**AUTOMOTIVE
ALLIANCE**



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Section 1.

Introduction

This report provides an assessment of the progress that has been made on the actions required to address the six key skills priorities identified in the North East Local Skills Improvement Plan (NELSIP) that was published in June 2023, and provides an update on the NELSIP Progress Report published in June 2024*.

It is intended to update local stakeholders on progress towards addressing the key priorities identified through extensive consultation with those stakeholders. It recognises progress that has been made and seeks to both celebrate and learn from good practice that has been adopted across the local area following NELSIP publication, but also recognises the ongoing challenges associated with systemic issues impacting the development of the technical skills that provide residents with access to the high-value jobs that the regional economy needs, now and in the future. Importantly, the report looks forward to the opportunity presented by devolution for the broader region encompassed by the new North East Combined Authority (North East CA). This provides an opportunity for an integrated Local Growth Plan for a broader region, supported by a single consolidated LSIP.

This progress report aims to provide critical analysis which can serve as a resource to assist key stakeholders in the local area realise the potential of this opportunity. It seeks to help employers and employer bodies, education & training providers, North East CA, other local government agencies and politicians, establish a shared understanding of progress that is still required to provide employers and residents with access to the technical skills that can secure sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the local area.

*<https://nelsip.com/resources/>

Section 2. NELSIP Summary

NELSIP encompasses the local area which includes County Durham, Sunderland, Gateshead, and South Tyneside, and a combined workforce of over half a million people. NELSIP recognises that residents will move in and out of this local area to work and study, and that this mobility is important to employers accessing the skills and talent they need.

LSIP's focus on vocational technical skills requirements from Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) to Level 6 (degree-level). The NELSIP was grounded in the context of the local economy and the North East Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). It focuses on the current and future technical skills requirements of five high impact strategically important sectors outlined in the SEP. NELSIP is informed by more than 1,800 touch-points with stakeholders in the North East, including employers, education and training providers, learners, and local government agencies. The plan identified six key priorities to inform the development of skills in the local area.

The significant growth of more than 80,000 "better" jobs in the North East since 2014 (Soc Major Groups 1-3; managerial, professional, & technical jobs) reflects the emerging emphasis in the region on higher value work and the importance of developing technical skills to attract and retain investment.

The wider North East region ranks only second to London in jobs created through inward investment in recent years (CBI). Strategic drivers of sustainability, digitalisation and electrification are converging in the North East. Modern workplaces are being transformed and more of the local workforce will require digital and technical skills, and many will require these skills at a higher-level.

Providing residents in the NELSIP local area with the skills and qualifications needed to access these jobs is imperative to the success of local employers, and to enabling regional economic growth. Several systemic socio-economic issues continue to impact the local area and need to be addressed.

- Low levels of Research and Development (R&D) spend – the North East still lags other parts of the UK on "better" jobs and higher levels of qualifications.
- Workforce supply is impacted by relatively high levels of economic inactivity, social deprivation, and ill-health, and insufficient supply of higher technical skills.
- The North East has the lowest proportion of graduate employment in the country, and the lowest proportion of Level 3 qualified adults.



Technical Skills Driving Economic Prosperity and Social Inclusion in Key Sectors.

NELSIP focuses on five high impact sectors – digital, advanced manufacturing, construction, health & health science, and transport & logistics. These sectors were identified as strategically important in the NELEP SEP and are major employers in the local area, providing a focus on key strategic skills. The technical skills associated with transport & logistics were typically not specific to the

sector, and reflected common transferable skills required across the other sectors. Less focus was therefore attached to the transport & logistics sector within NELSIP, and it subsequently did not feature in the North East Local Skills Improvement Fund (NELSIF) application. NELSIP considered digital both as a cross-cutting skill and as a sector. Six priorities were identified across the key sectors.

NELSIP Six Priorities.

1. Provide essential digital skills required by all learners at the appropriate level, including upskilling & reskilling support for employers and adult learners and ensuring a work-ready supply of specialist digital skills.

2. Align 16+ technical education and training provision to ensure the key technical skills required by the key NELSIP sectors are prioritised.

3. Increase the supply of level 3+ technical skills to meet current and future requirements.

4. Collaborate to deliver key technical skills for regional growth.

5. Employer focussed – enable all employers, including SMEs to identify their technical skills requirements and access high quality technical skills development for their current and future workforce.

6. Prioritise social inclusion – align approach to enable those from under represented and disadvantaged groups to develop the skills needed and provide the support required to remove barriers to access good jobs & careers.

Section 3.

Strategic and Economic Context

Several important developments have emerged following NELSIP Publication in June 2023 which have implications for regional skills and are relevant to a future consolidated North East regional LSIP.

North East CA was formed in May 2024, with an elected Mayor that covers the local authority areas of County Durham Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland. North East CA's devolved powers provide the North East with a significant opportunity to establish an integrated local growth plan and leverage financial and workforce resources in support of inward investment, skills, and social inclusion.

Key aspects include:

- Devolution of £1.4bn through a regional investment fund that has the potential to revitalise infrastructure and regional assets, including centres of excellence, education institutions, and skills provision, to ensure inward investment in the region is sustained and serviced by skills providers.
- Devolution of power relating to skills, including the control of the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) and UK Shared Prosperity Funding for the broader North East region, as well as funding for Skills Bootcamps and Free Courses for Jobs. The devolved ASF is increased to £64m for the broader region (up from £29m previously for the North of Tyne), although the overall level of ASF available in the region is unchanged.

Alignment of NELSIP to Regional and National Policy Frameworks.

North East CA is developing a skills and employment strategy, New Deal for North East Workers, with a set of strategic objectives and priorities that are driven by their five missions in the Interim North East Local Growth Plan.

These priorities are reflected in the NELSIP and are consistent with national priorities outlined by Invest 2035 and Skills England. The priorities focus on developing the essential capabilities employers require to have a globally competitive and productive skilled workforce across key regional sectors. However, they also recognise the need to address relatively low local attainment levels in foundation skills and provide additional emphasis and support to improve access to education, training, and entry-level employment opportunities.



North East CA Five Missions – NE Local Growth Plan	New Deal for North East Workers – Emerging Strategic Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home to a growing and vibrant economy for all. • Home of the green energy revolution. • A welcoming home to global trade. • Home of real opportunity. • A North East we are proud to call home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow the economy through a bigger, more productive, skilled workforce. • Reduce labour market exclusion among residents with health conditions, disabilities and other barriers to employment. • Boost employment, skills and prosperity in local places. • Tackle in work poverty and insecurity and create rewarding work for all. • Create a simpler, efficient, stable employment and skills system. • Build a strategic regional partnership focused on achieving shared employment and skills goals.

Key Sector Skills Alignment.

Invest 2035/Skills England*	North East CA New Deal for North East Workers	NELSIP
Advanced manufacturing	Advanced manufacturing, inc. electric vehicles	Advanced manufacturing
Clean energy	Offshore wind and energy transition	North of Tyne LSIP
Creative industries	Creative industries and content	Future single North East LSIP
Defence	Defence, security and space	Advanced manufacturing
Digital & technology	Tech, digital and AI	Digital
Financial services		Future single North East LSIP
Life sciences	Life sciences, pharmaceuticals and process industries	Advanced manufacturing & health science
Professional and business services	Foundational economy (healthcare to construction)	Construction & health Future single North East LSIP
*Construction		Construction
*Health & social care		Health

The New Deal for North East Workers Will Aim To:

- Support employees to perform their jobs more efficiently and effectively.
- Support businesses to realise the benefits of investment in new technology and capital.
- Address the skill shortages in sectors where critical skills gaps are constraining growth.
- Support employment mobility and transitions between jobs and back into work.
- Improve economic resilience through improved levels of foundation & transferable skills.
- Attract and retain foreign direct investment into the North East.
- Increase individuals' earnings through employment in better jobs.
- Increase the likelihood of future employment (including high-skilled employment).
- Increase individuals' opportunities, reducing inequalities and supporting inclusive growth.

Short Term Challenges.

NELSIP emphasised four strategic sectors, all of which continue to face challenges that impact skills planning, considered below. Economic resilience requires a long-term approach to skills and employment strategy that responds to emerging trends and technologies, and benefits from regional leadership that is not unduly influenced by short term disruption but focussed on creating a flexible workforce with transferable technical skills.

Socio-economic Challenges	Implications for Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow global growth disrupting traditional global trading patterns (e.g. influx of EVs from China). • Increased protectionism and economic tariffs impacting chain sourcing decisions. • Global conflicts and geopolitics prioritising domestic defence & home security/resilience. • Uncertain timeline and roadmap to achieve Net Zero. • Main streaming of AI and machine learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced employer/government skills budgets and reduced domestic employment opportunities. • Slowing direct foreign investment – reduced short term requirement/investment in skills and employment opportunities. • Shift in sector skills requirements to defence sector and increased emphasis on skills for advanced 'digital warfare'. • Reduced pace of electrification, reduced reskilling/upskilling. • Reduced emphasis on green infrastructure, retrofit, and sustainable manufacturing skills. • Slower growth in green skills in energy sectors, re-emergence of carbon-based exploration and need for traditional skills. • Digitalisation and automation replace requirements for 'white collar' analytical skills, resulting in reduced employment levels. • Increased requirement for advanced Level 3+ digital and technical skills.

Aligning the delivery of NELSIP with the emerging strategies from North East CA, and consideration of the Interim Local Growth Plan and New Deal for North East Workers, has provided a short-term challenge. Four of the six NELSIP priorities seek to address substantial systemic challenges impacting the skills system, and it has been important to pace NELSIP deployment to avoid the risk of misaligning with these emerging strategies.

The NELSIP team have worked with North East CA to share insight and enable alignment during this transitional period.

North East Response.

Several economic development enablers have been established in the North East to provide focus and drive skills development and regional employment growth. A new North East Investment Zone focuses on advanced manufacturing and Green Industries, building on an 'Arc of Innovation' set out in the North East Devolution Deal. It will concentrate on:

- Offshore and renewable energy
- Electric vehicle, and battery manufacturing
- Low-carbon manufacturing, materials, and research

Funding of £160m over ten years is available to support infrastructure, capital investment, skills, and innovation, alongside tax incentives. Further development of the International Advanced Manufacturing (IAMP) site in Sunderland and South Tyneside, and NetPark in Durham are expected to leverage at least £3 billion investment and create more than 4,000 jobs across the North East CA region in the next 10 years.

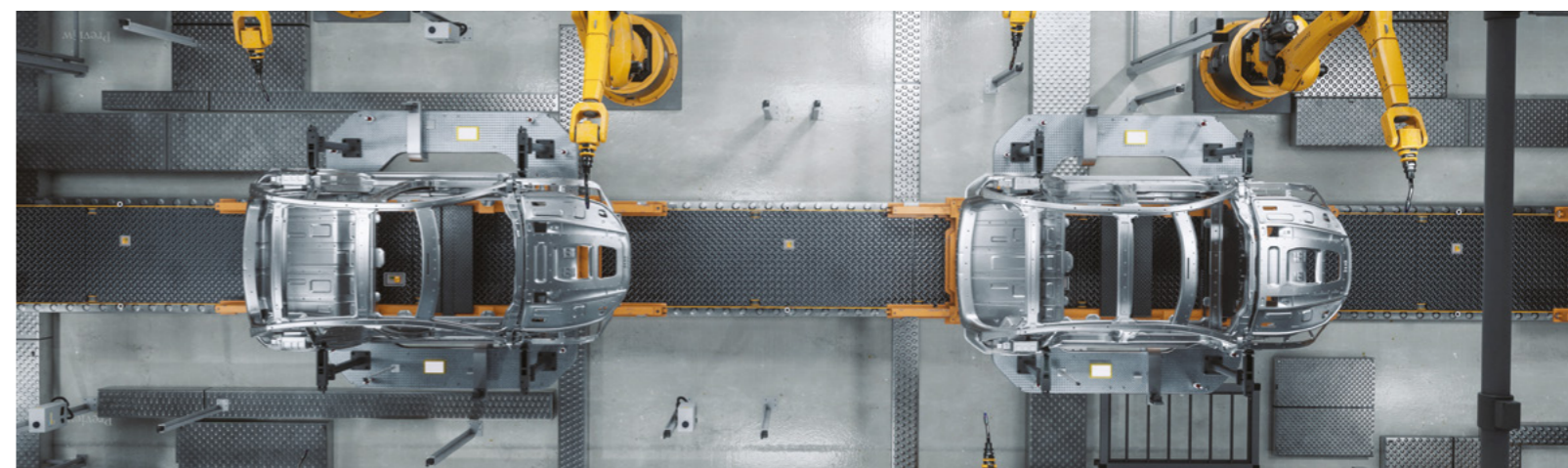
The Crown Works Studios based in Sunderland and the North East is planned to become a major destination for film and high-end TV production. £120m is committed in the devolution deal to unlock a further £450m of private investment. Crown Works is envisaged as becoming one of Europe's largest studio complexes and forecast to generate £336m GVA annually, and create 8,000 new jobs that cover a broad range of skills, some found in other sectors, such as joinery, logistics, and electrical skills, plus other sector specific skills.

The Trailblazer Devolution Deal for the North East anticipates the requirement for a supply of higher technical and digital skills required by new investors. The North East Investment Zone will include knowledge anchors (i.e. a co-located research institution), which can drive innovation and public-private partnerships, boosting investment in R&D and allowing providers to access the latest technologies and technical experts to support technical skills provision.

MADE NE (Manufacturing, Automation, Digitalisation, Electrification North East), a £14.67m project between Nissan, Education Partnership North East and other stakeholders, based on a business case built around NELSIP, has already been announced as a key part of the North East Investment Zone, and includes a £9.7 million investment from North East CA to provide open access facilities to industry for skills training and industrial innovation in the region's advanced manufacturing sector, with a focus on EV and battery manufacture.

The Government Commitment to build 1.5 million new homes over the next 5 years has important implications for the construction sector in the North East. NELSIP local authorities are required to build 5,000 new homes to support this commitment, and the broader North East CA region has a target of around 9,000. The demand for more housing is also reflected in the acute shortage of social housing in the region – with around 66,000 residents across the North East CA region currently on waiting lists. This requirement to increase house building will have significant implications for scarce construction skills locally and would benefit from an integrated response across employers and providers in the region.

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (June 2023) is consistent with NELSIP findings, and the priorities identified for health & health science. Both NELSIP and the NHS Plan highlight the need to increase participation in the vocational pathway into Nursing and Allied Health Professions, and to ensure the workforce has the digital skills needed to harness the potential of new technologies to enable preventative action and improve patient care. Securing ownership of the integrated regional deployment of this Long Term Workforce Plan presents challenges. The roles and responsibilities of the new North East and East Cumbria NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) relative to employers across the region (including NHS Trusts) are still emerging and require definition, and proposed changes to NHS England may also have implications.



Section 4.

NELSIP – What Has Been Achieved So Far?

This section summarises the progress that has been made in deployment of the six NELSIP priorities and over 50 associated deliverables. The progress on crosscutting enabling actions is considered first since these were identified as key to addressing some of the systemic challenges and changes required to deliver NELSIP.

These enabling actions cut across and underpin all the NELSIP priorities.

NELSIP Enabling Actions.

The three key enablers have been established that are critical for NELSIP success.

Strategic Enabler	What Has Been Achieved So Far?
1. Establish effective mechanisms for enabling alignment, and monitoring and measuring progress in support of NELSIP priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ NELSIP Implementation Project Board established with representatives of ERBs from key sectors and providers leading LSIF workstreams. ✓ Closely working with North East CA to ensure alignment with emerging Local Growth Plan and skills strategy. ✓ NELSIP alignment framework established for all local FE colleges, and progress reviewed through at least two focussed meetings with each college, and review of Accountability Statements.
2. Build stronger regional employer alignment and voice through Sector Skills Partnerships for the key sectors identified in NELSIP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sector Skills Partnerships established for advanced manufacturing and construction led by sector ERBs. ✓ ERBs central to in-region collaborations between employers and providers (e.g. MADE NE).
3. Securing funding for new and innovative pilot activity to address long-standing systemic issues identified in NELSIP and inform future scalable multi-sector solutions for the local area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The NELSIP Colleges secured £3.6m of LSIF funding to enable 4 workstreams aligned to key NELSIP sectors, each led by a local FE college. Enabling c. 600 additional Level 3+ starts and 1500+ learners using LSIF funded facilities pa. ✓ MADE North East (Manufacturing, Automation, Digitalisation, Electrification North East) is a new £14.67m project led by Nissan in collaboration with strategic partners from advanced manufacturing, offshore renewables, higher and further education across the region, and backed by Sunderland City Council and £9.7m investment from North East CA, which will integrate an innovation hub with education & training activity to create a new generation of local skilled workers in advanced manufacturing. ✓ £1.9m Training for Growth project co-funded by UK Shared Prosperity Funding secured for pilot activity targeting increasing Level 3 engineering apprentices in SMEs in Sunderland. Case study on p14. ✓ £1.4m Inclusive Pathway to advanced manufacturing in South Tyneside. Case study on p17. ✓ 65% of sector-related enrolments funded by £68m devolved Adult Skills Fund in the North East are in key NELSIP sectors. ✓ 68% of 2200 Wave 5 Bootcamp starts funded by £17.9m investment in the North East, are in NELSIP key sectors. 700 learners have achieved positive outcomes so far. ✓ UK Shared Prosperity Funding calls in the North East significantly influenced by NELSIP and required applicants to demonstrate alignment. ✓ UKSPF project led by Sunderland University involved partners such as EPNE and SETA who have delivered solutions in/for the key sectors identified in the NELSIP.

Progress Against Six NELSIP Priorities.

A more detailed update on progress against all the six NELSIP priorities and their supporting actions is provided in the NELSIP Roadmap in the Appendix. Highlights and examples of progress to date against the priorities include:

Provide essential digital skills required by all learners at the appropriate level. Including upskilling & reskilling support for employers and adult learners and ensuring a work-ready supply of specialist digital skills.

Note: Content for progress against Priority 1, also includes progress against digital technical skills for digital sector included in priority 2.

- ✓ Gateshead College established as LSIF lead for digital skills workstream, leading a collaboration of 9 providers. 20 curriculum modules have been created and e-learning versions produced for data analytics content for all Level 3+ programmes in key sectors.
- ✓ A clear student pathway has been established, enabling learners to progress from Level 3 digital programmes at Gateshead College through to Level 6 degree-level study at both Newcastle University and Northumbria University, supporting long-term skills development and regional talent retention.
- ✓ Gateshead College has established a new immersive digital hub providing enhanced learner experience and showcasing the potential of digital technologies to employers as part of LSIF. Other colleges, including EPNE, New College Durham, and East Durham College, have also developed immersive digital hubs which are being used with employers.
- ✓ Pilot deployment of subject matter experts from construction employers as Digital Ambassadors to deliver digital content in FE colleges.
- ✓ The Tech Talent Pro project coordinated by Sunderland Software City provides an innovative employment model to recruit, train, and provide a pathway into permanent employment for new entrants into the digital sector. First cohort of 10 worked on paid client projects in a range of digital businesses, and 8 have already found work in the sector. Second cohort has been recruited and started work experience.
- ✓ The tailored Tech Talent Engine jobs portal has enabled the resourcing of 210 new jobs across 130 local digital businesses supported by the platform, contributing annual GVA of £9.6m, including an average of £68,737 GVA for each SME supported.
- ✓ 40% of Tech Talent Ready skills bootcamps participants have been supported into new roles in the digital sector.

Case Study 1. Tech Talent Engine

- Enabled resourcing of 210 new Tech jobs in the North East
- GVA Contribution of £9.6m per annum
- GVA contribution per SME supported of £68,737

Tech Talent Engine is a collaboration sponsored by Mediaworks, Newcastle University, South Tyneside Council and other employers in the North East, which has enabled 210 new digital jobs to be resourced across the 130 Tech employers in the North East registered with it.



Saiesh's personal experience of using TechTalentEngine

Following a careers event at the Stadium of Light in Sunderland, Saiesh was keen to secure a role in the digital sector, and was introduced to the Tech Talent Engine, a platform that connects jobseekers with Tech employers and education providers in the North East. Tech Talent Engine provided Saiesh with a tailored view and information on job vacancies in the region that interested him.

“Tech Talent Engine was instrumental in landing my position as a Junior Test Engineer with Inflo, who provide a digital audit platform to accounting professionals, and who I wasn't previously aware of. As part of the Tech Talent Engine process, I attended events that broadened my network of industry professionals and received feedback on my CV and other support which was crucial in securing my new role.”

Saiesh, Junior Test Engineer Inflo.

Case Study 2. LSIF Funding – Gateshead College

Digital Up North – a dedicated digital hub designed to improve the digital capability of people living and working in the region.

The hub is designed to introduce both employers and learners to emerging technologies while supporting upskilling and reskilling across a range of sectors, through hands-on engagement, learning, and networking opportunities to explore how digital tools can drive productivity and innovation.

The hub will also serve as a base for research and development activities, encouraging cross-sector collaboration and providing access to digital solutions for SMEs. This inclusive approach ensures that small and medium-sized enterprises can benefit from technological

advancements, supporting productivity gains and regional economic development.

Alongside the physical development of the Generator, Gateshead College has designed and launched new digital training packages focused on data analytics and cybersecurity. These have been contextualised for key regional industries – construction, advanced manufacturing, and health – to ensure the training meets sector-specific needs and supports growth, as well as being embedded in existing Level 3 programmes for full time learners.



2. Align 16+ technical education and training provision to ensure the key technical skills required by the five LSIP sectors are prioritised.

Advanced manufacturing

- ✓ Advanced Manufacturing Sectors Skills Partnership established with ERB/employers engaged.
- ✓ MADE NE project launched as employer/provider collaboration to provide open access facilities to industry for skills training and industrial innovation. The Advanced Manufacturing Sector Skills Partnership will merge with the MADE NE steering group, to avoid duplication and enable alignment with emerging North East CA strategies.
- ✓ National Battery Training & Skills Academy launched by New College Durham & Newcastle University.
- ✓ Nissan Skills Academy established in partnership with Sunderland College and St Wilfred's RC School, offers 14-16 year old Level 2 in Engineering alongside other studies with a guaranteed apprenticeship interview upon successful completion.

- ✓ EPNE established as LSIF lead for advanced manufacturing workstream collaboration across eight providers.
- ✓ LSIF funded capital investment and staff CPD in colleges to support Industry 4.0 teaching & learning. Four new engineering curriculum modules produced as e-learning and two new immersive modules.
- ✓ EPNE and New College Durham have invested in Industry 4.0 advanced mechatronics training equipment enabling industrial automation, robotics and digitalisation to be integrated into the curriculum, particularly at Level 4-5.
- ✓ Full time industry professionals in place to ensure teaching capacity for health science manufacturing. Six curriculum modules developed for Level 4 Science Manufacturing and produced as eLearning modules.

Construction

- ✓ Construction Sectors Skills Partnership established with ERB/employers engaged.
- ✓ New College Durham established as LSIF lead college for construction, leading a collaboration of eight providers in the local area. Six new curriculum modules developed as e-learning modules, and two immersive modules created.
- ✓ New College Durham opened new Construction Centre of Excellence in September 2024.
- ✓ FE providers developed new facilities and provided staff CPD to support delivery of Energy Efficient Retrofit curriculum.

- ✓ EPNE will launch a new multi-provider Housing Innovation & Construction Skills Academy (HICSA) in Sunderland in 2025, in partnership with Northumbria University, Gentoo Housing, Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust and Sunderland City Council, providing a construction pathway from 14-16 through to degree apprenticeships.
- ✓ EPNE, New College Durham and Learn Plus Us are collaboratively working with the SHINE (Social Housing Innovation North East) partnership to co-create and deliver an innovative housing curriculum to professionalise the sector at Levels 4 and 5.

Health & health science

- ✓ East Durham College established as LSIF lead for health science, curriculum and eLearning modules developed for Level 4 Science Manufacturing to support Pharma Manufacturing and NHS Aseptic Pharmacy production.
- ✓ Two immersive learning suites established at East Durham College, and cameras installed in clean room to enable remote learning.

- ✓ First apprentice cohort for Level 4 Science Manufacturing apprenticeship started in September 2024, and CPD provided to 20 existing GlaxoSmithKline staff.

Case Study 3. East Durham College

LSIF supporting added-value apprenticeship provision and upskilling at GSK.

East Durham College identified an important employer need for Level 4 Science Manufacturing Apprenticeships, spanning both the strategically important Pharmaceutical Manufacturing sector in the region as well as Aseptic Pharmacy in the NHS. The first cohort of 4 apprentices were recruited in September 2024, and the Aseptic modules developed through LSIF have also provided CPD for 20 existing employees.

In parallel to using LSIF to develop curriculum modules and equip digitized clean-lab teaching facilities, the college embarked on employer engagement activity to establish demand for the new offer. GSK invited the college to tender for their apprenticeship delivery from September 2024. EDC submitted a successful proposal that included value-added content that extended beyond the Science Manufacturing Apprenticeship Standard to include modules on Lean Six Sigma, Lean Manufacturing, Continuous Improvement and Big Data. The additional modules will also support upskilling for existing apprentices.



3. Increase the supply of level 3+ technical skills to meet current and future regional requirements.

Progress

- ✓ LSIF committed to c. 600 additional Level 3+ starts and an additional 460+ Level 3+ completions.
- ✓ 42 new Level 3 technical courses developed supported by CPD and provider upskilling.
- ✓ Training for Growth pilot by EPNE & NEAA supported by Sunderland City Council UK Shared Prosperity Fund enabled 17 new Level 3 engineering technician apprentice starts with 10 local SMEs.
- ✓ Inclusive Pathway to Advanced Manufacturing (IPAM) enabled 14 additional Level 3 apprenticeship starts.

Case Study 4. Training for Growth – Sunderland

Training for Growth is an innovative model increasing employer engagement in Advanced Apprenticeships for Engineering Technicians.

Proposed by the NEAA as a direct response to NELSIP priorities relating to increasing Level 3+ qualified technicians, and engaging more SMEs in technical training, and supported by Sunderland City Council UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The pilot project provided grants to 10 SMEs (average grant value of £7,240 per apprentice) that have enabled 17 more Level 3 engineering apprentices to be recruited and trained.

- 17 extra Level 3 apprentices
- Employer led
- SME focused
- Project value £1.9m over 4 years. 12% UKSPF contribution

- ✓ Increase the supply of critical scarce Level 3 technical skills requiring 3+ years apprenticeship training.
- ✓ Anticipate and address the impact of inward investors increasing volume of skills required.
- ✓ Increase SME apprentice participation in advanced apprenticeships, by removing the short-term financial barriers and increasing support.
- ✓ Flexible provider delivery to improve accessibility and reduce time off the job.
- ✓ Successful Training for Growth pilot has resulted in an equivalent programme to recruit Level 2 apprentices into advanced manufacturing SMEs in Sunderland, led by the NEAA and supported by Sunderland City Council.



4. Collaborate to deliver key technical skills for regional growth.

Progress

- ✓ Provider collaborations in place for all NELSIF workstreams.
- ✓ New provider collaborations emerging in-region – Durham Learning Alliance, Universities for North East England, Colleges for the North East.
- ✓ New employer/HE/FE/school provider collaborations integrating vocational pathway for advanced manufacturing & construction – MADE NE, HICSA, National Battery Training & Skills Academy, & SHINE Skills Partnership.
- ✓ Collaborative support from local authorities sponsoring pilot activity through UK SPF aligned to NELSIP priorities.
- ✓ Collaborative support for emerging North East CA skills strategy.
- ✓ Maths Teaching Innovation Collaboration bringing together stakeholders to raise maths attainment in schools.

Case Study 5. MADE North East

MADE North East (Manufacturing, Automation, Digitalisation, Electrification North East) is a new £14.67m project led by Nissan in collaboration with strategic partners from advanced manufacturing, offshore renewables, higher and further education across the region, and backed by Sunderland City Council and the North East Combined Authority (North East CA), which will create a new generation of local skilled workers in advanced manufacturing.

The business case for MADE NE was informed by NELSIP and co-developed between the partners to ensure a strategic collaborative model that would leverage industrial innovation to deliver key technical skills required for growth. MADE North East is a central part of the £160 million North East Investment Zone and includes a £9.7 million investment from North East CA to provide open access facilities to industry for skills training and industrial innovation.

MADE NE will integrate an innovation hub with education and training activity that spans from STEM outreach to 40,000 children in the next 5 years through the Nissan Foundation and the Nissan Skills Academy for 14-16 year-olds, delivered by EPNE, through to apprenticeships and CPD for existing employees across manufacturing in the region.

NELSIP highlighted the importance of regional collaboration to deliver key technical skills for regional growth and highlighted the value of FE and HE providers partnering with employers to align curriculum with industrial innovation. MADE NE demonstrates this and the strategic partnership also recognises the importance of common transferable technical and digital skills across sectors key to the wider North East region, advanced manufacturing and offshore renewables.

“This investment will unlock a generation of skilled workers and create opportunities for local people and businesses.”

Kim McGuinness, Mayor of North East England



Case Study 6. EPNE – Housing Innovation & Construction Skills Academy (HICSA)

HICSA is a new £15 million construction skills academy in Sunderland opening later this year.

HICSA has been developed in partnership between Sunderland City Council and Sunderland College and provides a response to the need to train the construction workforce differently due to the twin challenges of climate change and a fragmented and under-productive traditional construction delivery model. It will focus on providing industry-standard training in housebuilding and commercial infrastructure developments, with an emphasis on sustainable technologies, digitalisation, modern construction methods and green construction techniques, such as home retrofit.

A partnership between Education Partnership North East and Northumbria University will provide a seamless pathway of progression for learners within the construction

and built environment sector. Northumbria University will also supply on-site graduate researchers and expertise in technologies and innovation, consistent with best practice identified in NELSIP where industrial innovation can enhance vocational skills development. Partnerships with Gentoo Housing, Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust and Sunderland City Council will further enhance an eco-system that can take people from the age of 14 into meaningful technical educational and industry experience, providing them with a route to an apprenticeship or higher-level study. The innovative approach enables learners to study for specialist construction qualifications alongside their GCSEs.



5. Employer focussed - Enable employers, including SMEs, to identify their technical skill requirements and access high quality technical skills development for their current and future workforce.

Progress

- ✓ Development of Sector Skills Partnerships for construction, and advanced manufacturing.
- ✓ Support for digital and NHS Skills Groups.
- ✓ UKSPF Training for Growth Level 3 pilot increasing engineering technician apprenticeships in Manufacturing SMEs.
- ✓ UKSPF Training for Growth Level 2 Pilot proposed by NEAA and approved by Sunderland City Council to support 8 Sunderland-based advanced manufacturing SMEs to recruit residents progressing from employability programmes onto Level 2 apprenticeships.
- ✓ MADE NE will facilitate all training delivery for Nissan Manufacturing UK and specialist training for the wider supply chain.

6. Prioritise Social Inclusion – aligned approach to enable under-represented and disadvantaged groups to develop the skills needed and provide the support required to remove barriers to access good jobs and careers.

Progress

- ✓ UKSPF Pilot delivered to establish an inclusive pathway into advanced manufacturing for those currently unemployed in South Tyneside. Project learning informing ongoing best practice for advanced manufacturing across the region.
- ✓ Sunderland College participating in national pilot enabling increased SEND participation in apprenticeships.
- ✓ FE Colleges provided targeted support for SEND students.
- ✓ North East CA Mayor pledged £5 million new funding to support schools to improve foundation skills in Maths & English.
- ✓ North East Ambition project is providing resources and support to improve careers guidance to young people across 200 educational institutions. Priorities are aligned to NELSIP and include amplifying work experience, apprenticeships and vocational routes, and target interventions for disadvantaged young people.

Case Study 7. Inclusive Pathway into Advanced Manufacturing – South Tyneside

The advanced manufacturing sector in the North East LSIP area anticipates needing around 16,000 more Manufacturing Operators in the next 5 years.

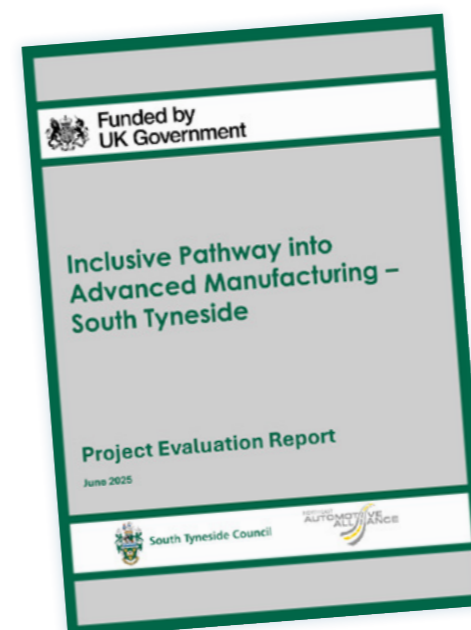
The Inclusive Pathway into Advanced Manufacturing Pathway project, sponsored by South Tyneside Council through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, prioritises social inclusion and removing barriers to accessing skills, good jobs and careers through pre-employment support, and enabling employers to access a wider pool of workforce in the local area. Unemployment and economic inactivity are acute issues in South Tyneside. The unemployment rate is the highest in the North East, and more than 40% of LSOAs in South Tyneside are in the most deprived 10% nationally for employment.

Building on NELSIP insight, the NEAA led a pilot programme which:

- ✓ Provided positive assistance to around 150 unemployed residents breaking down barriers to employment and raising awareness of career opportunities and pathways into jobs in advanced manufacturing.
- ✓ 14 new advanced manufacturing apprentices being recruited.
- ✓ Provided direct support to 10 employers to enhance their recruitment and working practices to engage and retain under-represented groups, including local unemployed residents.
- ✓ Provided 1:1 careers clinics for local residents, and a careers fair supported by 19 local organisations.

- ✓ C.150 unemployed residents supported
- ✓ Assisted pathway into jobs in advanced manufacturing
- ✓ Supporting employers to adapt recruitment and working practices to engage & retain under-represented groups

NEAA leadership of this workstream is ongoing and will result in those local residents receiving support being sign-posted to newly launched EPNE Skills Bootcamps to assist their progression into employment. The successful pilot led by the NEAA has resulted in development of a wider cross-sector programme, with the NEAA leading a collaborative bid across several growth sectors within the North East Economic Inactivity Trailblazer Programme, being sponsored by North East CA.



Section 5.

NELSIP – What Still Needs To Be Achieved?

Systemic Challenges.

The NELSIP recognised significant systemic issues within its six priorities, which aligned the technical skills priorities to the key sectors identified the NELEP strategic economic plan.

Some of these systemic issues reflect long-standing challenges impacting skills and workforce development, and it would be unrealistic for these all to be resolved by NELSIP or within the timeframe since NELSIP publication, particularly given the need to ensure any response was aligned with the Local Growth Plan and emerging skills strategies being developed by North East CA during this period. North East CA, however, does provide an opportunity to further the alignment of the regional economic and industrial strategy, with an emphasis and focus on the attainment of technical skills and access to good employment opportunities. This will require an integrated approach to skills development and planning at a regional level to address some key systemic issues, which include:

- The requirement to ensure that advanced/higher technical skills provision matches the regional requirements for future technical skills, taking into account inward investment, and the impact of increased automation, technology advancement, and advanced digitalisation.
- The need to sustain a strong sector-level employer focus on the development of the future technical skills required to support productivity improvement and profitable growth. Employer leadership is critical to an integrated sector workforce plan that effectively ensures a sufficient supply of technical skills is available to all employers from a diverse local workforce.

- Measures to ensure that funding is prioritised for technical education and skills training aligned to future technical skills priorities, including supporting the attainment of foundation qualifications, that are essential building blocks to Level 3+ attainment in technical subjects. NELSIF funding supports the programme through June 2025. There is no further LSIF funding available, so other means and prioritisation of funding will be required to support future technical skills priorities.
- Programmes to engage SMEs in skills training, including advanced/higher technical training, specifically targeted at the financial barriers to participation and resource for providers to provide tailored SME support.
- Working with employers and ERBs to encourage effective workforce planning, that anticipates and support plans to meet future technical skills requirements and provide good employment.
- Removing barriers to good employment and improve level of education and skills attainment for under-represented groups. Establishing clear and aligned regional objectives and mechanisms for monitoring educational attainment and participation levels for these groups.

Strategic Enablers.

Strategic Enabler	What Still Needs To Be Achieved?
1. Establish effective mechanisms for enabling alignment, and monitoring and measuring progress in support of NELSIP priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring alignment of LSIP priorities with North East CA Local Growth Plan, and New Deal for North East Workers as they emerge. • Ensure robust employer sector skills planning, backed by clear demand signals regarding the technical skills required. • Establishing timely regional reporting and effective monitoring of number of starts/completions on Level 2-6 technical programmes inform sector skills action planning. • Collaboration to ensure continuity of focus on technical skills in key sectors during transition to a single LSIP for the broader North East region.
2. Build stronger regional employer alignment and voice through Sector Skills Partnerships for the key sectors identified in NELSIP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger sector-level skills governance for digital capability in the North East. • Clearer accountability for regional skills governance for the health sector. • Regional ERBs developing the capability to lead sector-level skills planning and improvement activity. • Alignment with priorities in emerging North East CA New Deal for North East Workers, including Employer Led Skills for Growth.
3. Securing funding for new and innovative pilot activity to address long-standing systemic issues identified in NELSIP and inform future scalable multi-sector solutions for the local area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to identify funding streams aligned to delivering LSIP priorities that encourage provider collaboration and strengthen regional Centres of Excellence. There is no further LSIF funding available beyond June 2025, so other means and prioritisation of funding will be required to support future technical skills priorities. • Leverage emphasis on social inclusion in North East CA New Deal for North East Workers to address barriers impacting access to education, progression, and employment, and enable consistent monitoring of participation among under-represented groups.



Outstanding NELSIP Priorities.

This section summarises specific areas that still need to be achieved in delivering NELSIP priorities.

1. Provide essential digital skills required by all learners at the appropriate level. Including upskilling & reskilling support for employers and adult learners and ensuring a work-ready supply of specialist digital skills.

- Active governance of employer-led sector-wide skills strategy.
- Confirm aggregate employer demand for advanced digital skills and increase Level 4/5 vocational/apprenticeship participation in digital subjects.
- Complete embedding appropriate applied digital skills in curriculum at all levels.
- Developing a sustainable model for attracting and retaining teaching capability to deliver higher-level digital skills.

The development and application of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning is accelerating rapidly, transforming the nature of work, and placing new demands for advanced and applied digital skills.

The implications for the North East need to be anticipated – the digital sector in the local area presently has relatively few jobs involved in the development of high-end advanced digital technologies, but key-sectors in the North East, including advanced manufacturing and offshore renewables and energy distribution, are at the leading edge of the deployment of applying new technologies. Providers will need to continue to collaborate to leverage curriculum development and teaching capability across the local area to ensure appropriate applied digital skills are embedded in all programmes at all levels.

MADE NE represents an ambitious collaborative opportunity to develop a regional centre of expertise for industrial automation and digital technologies. Realising the potential of this opportunity to integrate industrial innovation and technical skills development will require focus, support during launch, bold leadership, and strong governance. For the digital sector, innovative approaches to enabling work-experience and apprenticeships at Level 4/5 will continue to be required, and will need to be scaled-up, as many small/start-up employers have difficulty accommodating and affording them.

Coordination for the digital sector has continued through Sunderland Software City (SSC) and Gateshead College who lead on LSIF digital work stream, but a regional sector-wide skills partnership, as envisaged in NELSIP, is not yet formed. Progress has been made, including through Skills Bootcamps, SME engagement, and an innovative UKSPF funded work experience programme (Tech Talent Pro). However, these interventions have, to date, resulted in relatively small numbers of local residents securing employment in the sector, and more focus will be needed to scale-up these programmes and improve diversity of participation in the digital sector.

2. Align 16+ technical education and training provision to ensure the key technical skills required by the five LSIP sectors are prioritised.

Advanced manufacturing

- Develop digital manufacturing capability through best practice learning factory in MADE NE.
- Workforce Planning analysis informed by MADE NE and NELSIP highlights demand for a further 21,000 people to be recruited and trained within the next 5 years to support growth and attrition across the automotive sector (16,000 operators, 1,500 technical, 1,000 engineers and 2,500 managerial and back office).

A best-practice digital manufacturing learning factory is not currently operational, but will be an integral part of the MADE NE campus and facilities, providing cross sector access within an 'open' centre of excellence.

Construction

- Annual review of scarce skills requirements, and skilled trade provision in the local area versus employer requirements.
- The Construction Sector Skills Partnership to identify key issues and action to be taken to address skills needs in North East associated with new Government housebuilding commitments.

NELSIP reflected employer feedback concerning training for some specialist skilled construction trades not being available in the local area, resulting in either sending learners outside of the local area or those skills being in scarce supply locally.

The construction SSP should identify any current gaps between demand and provision of skilled trade locally, and work with providers to identify opportunities to develop an economic mechanism for addressing the gap. The Construction Sector Skills Partnership are reviewing the implications of the skills needs in the North East associated with new Government housebuilding commitments, prior to identifying key issues and action to be taken.

Health & health science

- Leadership and governance of regional sector skills strategy.
- Regional response to NHS Long Term Workforce Plan.
- Increased participation in flexible vocational pathway into Nursing & Allied Health Professions.

Achieving a regional employer-led response to the NELSIP priorities for health & health science, which were largely consistent with the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan published in June 2023, has proved challenging.

The roles and responsibilities of the North East & North East Cumbria Integrated Care Board relative to the NHS Trusts and primary care providers in the region, who are the major employers, are still emerging. Providers in the local area largely have the capability to meet current employer demand for Health Care Support Workers (through FE colleges) and Nursing & Allied Health Professions (mainly through local Universities), but regional sector-wide governance will be important to ensure that the capability is available to flexibly deliver emerging skills and increased volume of vocational learners identified in the NHS Workforce Plan.

3. Increase the supply of level 3+ technical skills to meet current and future regional requirements.

- Sector-level ownership of strategic workforce plan, prioritising increased Level 3+ participation.
- Access to current data to establish baseline and enable effective monitoring of progress.

The supply of level 3+ technical skills will be key to providing local residents with access to high-value jobs and careers, and meeting employer needs as industrial automation, artificial intelligence, and digital technologies change the nature of work required. NELSIP highlighted the scarcity of these skills and relatively low levels of Level 3 attainment in the local area.

The scarcity of these skills is being compounded by the demographic bow wave of skilled retirements locally, reduced volumes of technical apprenticeships in recent years, and incremental demand from new inward investors. This therefore is a key systemic issue that represents a risk to economic growth in the North East.

LSIF prioritised new programmes to provide incremental Level 3+ starts and outcomes in specific areas targeted within the available funding. However, ongoing sector-level and regional ownership and monitoring of the supply of these advanced/higher technical skills will be important. Key sectors will need to be attractive to new employees and invest either in apprenticeships or providing CPD enabled progression into jobs requiring Level 3+ technical skills.

The absence of real-time regional data impacts the ability to monitor progress on increasing the supply of Level 3+ technical skills. The NELSIP project team have taken steps to enable access to this data, but it will need to be integrated into the ongoing governance and leadership of sector skills.

4. Collaborate to deliver key technical skills for regional growth.

- Effective codetermined regional skills strategy for key sectors which provides ongoing alignment of provider activity with clear sector-owned priorities.
- Simplification of skills governance for each sector – employers are supporting multiple advisory boards at a representative body/initiative/college level resulting in duplication and confused accountability.
- More provider innovation to address the resourcing and deployment model that establishes, retains, and leverages digital and higher technical teaching capability across the local area.

The North East CA Local Growth Plan and New Deal for North East Workers should provide clear direction and support for regional sectors, employers, and providers. There remains a significant amount of duplication and redundancy in provision and infrastructure that could be consolidated to ensure local resources and expertise are leveraged most effectively to meet employer and learner needs. However, the prevailing context makes this challenging. Initiative-based funding of skills and education training sometimes requires competition between providers and sometimes requires collaboration. The basis for collaboration therefore changes for different funding initiatives and has resulted in cooperation and allegiances that may be ad-hoc or short-term. This can make it difficult for employers and ERBs to invest time in long-term partnerships and can undermine the development of local centres of excellence.

Providers are encouraged to develop employer advisory boards, and these direct relationships are valued locally,

typically forming part of an institution's governance. However, these relationships do not necessarily support a local area perspective on the level of skills demand and provision or provide strategic insight on emerging skills. Employers are reluctant to duplicate their effort on multiple bodies, and as a consequence local ERBs need to play an important role at the sector level, but they must be actively involved in sector skills planning and be capable of delivering commitment from employers to actions at a sector level.

There have been examples of innovative practice in leveraging industry expertise to support curriculum delivery. In construction, subject matter experts from employers have delivered applied digital workshops in FE colleges through the Digital Ambassador programme, and eight employees from advanced manufacturing have been identified to support teaching delivery in colleges.

5. Employer focused – Enable employers, including SMEs, to identify their technical skill requirements, and access high quality technical skills development for their current and future workforce.

- Regional employer-led sector skills leadership and governance for digital and health sectors.
- Resourced workforce planning and skills brokerage support for employers, particularly SMEs.
- Regional response to optimise opportunities resulting from new Growth & Skills Levy.

NELSIP envisaged Sector Skills Partnerships (SSPs) as a means of aligning sector-level ERBs, employers, and providers to provide strategic regional leadership and governance of sector-specific and sector-wide workforce and skills priorities. This approach has not yet been consistently adopted across the key NELSIP sectors. SSPs have been formed, and are maturing, for advanced manufacturing and construction. Sunderland Software City continues to play a role on behalf of the digital sector, but an SSP has not been formed for digital. A different approach for health was anticipated, due to the regional accountability of the new North East and North East Cumbria Integrated Care Board, but the relationship and accountability between the ICB and employers in the region is still forming. A key consideration for the NELSIP deployment team has been that moving forward governance should align with North East CA governance, and sector-wide insight and data will be important in assisting providers anticipate future and emerging workforce requirements.

UK best practice demonstrates that high levels of SME engagement in skills and workforce planning requires dedicated resources and focus to support local SME employers.

The Training for Growth pilot, in advanced manufacturing illustrates that short-term financial barriers fundamentally restrict levels of SME participation in technical apprenticeship programmes. Additionally, FE providers struggle to absorb the costs associated with identifying, engaging and supporting large numbers of SME employees, and as a result prefer to focus on larger employers that can support larger cohorts of students on tailored programmes. Long term regional funding streams to support SME engagement in apprenticeships and training is key to changing behaviours and attitudes of local SME employers.

The New Deal for North East Workers and associated governance provides an opportunity to maximise the regions utilisation of the growth and skills levy and avoid the underspend associated with previous apprentice levy arrangements. The future single North East LSIP 2026-2029 should consider means for deeper SME engagement in the region.

6. Prioritise social inclusion – aligned approach to enable those from under-represented and disadvantaged groups to develop the skills needed and provide the support required to remove barriers to access good jobs and careers.

- A consistent set of social inclusion measures and positive assistance actions deployed across the local area to support the achievement of targets for employment and economic activity.

The North East CA draft skills and employment strategy includes an emphasis on reducing labour market exclusion among residents with health conditions, disabilities and facing other barriers to employment. Base academic attainment and ongoing access to education is key to ensuring underrepresented groups can have access to local employment opportunities.

The South Tyneside Inclusive Pathway into Advanced Manufacturing Pilot, supported by UK SPF demonstrated that those who are furthest away from employment, are typically characterised by several interrelated and complex needs that require resourcing and systemic planning, consistent with the objectives of the Government Connect to Work Policy and Get Britain Working Strategy.

The New Deal for North East Workers should include an aligned set of regional participation and completion metrics that consistently track participation levels and monitor progress and attainment levels of underrepresented group through the 16+ educational and skills pipeline and into employment. Employer commitment to recruitment from a wider talent pool will be important. Systemic barriers that prevent access or progression into education and skills training or adversely impact attainment levels and employment readiness or access to employment opportunities should be identified and targeted for additional action.



Next Steps.

- The NELSIP team will continue to work closely with North East CA and the North of Tyne LSIP as the North East transitions towards a single LSIP region post September 2025.
- The North East CA skills and employment strategy provides an opportunity to align ongoing technical skill priorities in the North East to the North East CA Local Growth Plan.

It is envisaged that:

- The skills and employment strategy will emphasise inclusive economic growth to increase participation in skills education and get more local people into work through multiple accessible pathways.
- The devolved ASF will be prioritised towards developing the basic and advanced technical skills to enable local people to access good jobs in strategically important sectors.
- Technical skills priorities will be driven by employer needs and support the growth in high value jobs.
- Sector Skills Partnerships will be supported to mature and take increased employer ownership of skills planning across the North East CA region.
- Innovative funding and delivery approaches and further new investment will accelerate through Made NE and the new Investment Zones will lead to a more integrated funding regime for local technical skills planning.

Appendix A.

Detailed NELSIP Deployment Roadmap (June 2025)

Priorities	Actions/Activity/Milestone	Partners Involved	Timescale	Method/Outcome Expected	Monitoring/Intervals	Progress – GYR (Rating justification, incl. barriers/issues/changes)
1. Provide essential digital skills required by all learners at the appropriate level. Including upskilling & reskilling support for employers and adult learners and ensuring a work-ready supply of specialist digital skills.						
1.1	Embed digital skills provision in all forms of technical provision, at all levels.					2024 NE FE Provider Self Assessment underway Completed Qtr2. Success measures & targets to be agreed with Gateshead College. Learning Curve group creating a sector by sector digital platform for all educational facilities to share. Curriculum change in most sectors Construction AM Digital - requires further evidence Health - requires evidence
1.1 a	Basic digital skills for operational devices - Embed basic digital skills in all Level 1 & 2 & 16+ education programmes - Develop basic digital upskilling programme for existing employees	All NE FE Colleges, Gateshead College LSIF Lead, Lead ERB support Governance	NE LSIF Programme, October 2023-March 2025	All FE Colleges review basic digital content for all programmes/20 digital modules (L3+ contextual) developed and deployed across 7 NE FECs through LSIF workstream.	FE Provider assessment as part of established annual accountability statement process. LSIF Governance. Monthly review of dedicated digital workstream.	Free Hartree resources. Learning Curve group created basic to level 3 digital resources, which have been shared across all LSIF colleges.
1.1 b	Applied digital skills in all technical roles - Review all Level 3+ technical programmes and embed appropriate applied digital skill development					See below 1.2
1.1 c	Data science/analytics capability - Include basic data analytics modules in all Level 3+ technical programmes - Ensure capability to deliver higher qualifications in digital analytics is available in modular form to support CPD/Boot Camp delivery					Evidence of this as a bolt on being delivered in some bootcamps. Evidence of Gateshead delivering this. However college feedback is that the demand for stand alone courses hasn't been shown by industry. To be included in existing courses.
1.2	Establish a supply of higher digital apprentices, with the right capability and experience to meet demand.	All NE FE and HE colleges	Not defined	Success measures & targets to be agreed with Gateshead College. No specific detail in LSIF on full L3+ apprenticeship numbers.		Digital SSP to monitor participation in T Levels and Apprenticeships, and facilitate programmes to provide more local residents with access to work experience placements and apprenticeships. Lack of regional approach/coordination from employers/ERB. Work with Gateshead College to support development of demand signal for higher digital apprentices for the digital sector/roles. Learning Curve group delivering L3+ courses.
1.3	Enable flexible upskilling & reskilling programmes to improve digital employment opportunities. E.g., leverage and align NE Digital Bootcamps.	All NE FE Colleges, Gateshead Lead	NE LSIF Programme, October 2024-March 2025	LSIF plan includes demonstrators, bootcamps, Emphasising - Higher digital skill/apprenticeship modules, flexible to support workforce upskilling programmes/over 250 L3+ completions.	LSIF Governance. Monthly review of dedicated digital workstream.	70+ Bootcamps being delivered within the NE region by a number of providers inc. Gateshead. Work experience programme via SSC and UKSPF ensuring that the regions digital employers offer opportunities. Pilot programmes in place but to change this to green we would like to see this rolled out further in all sectors and envisage this to be a feature of NELSIP 2026-2029.
1.4	Innovate to simulate workplace learning - using immersive technology, digital simulation, SMART learning factory, virtual reality wards/classrooms.	All LSIF Funded providers	NE LSIF Programme, October 2024-March 2025	LSIF Proposal includes strong emphasis on demonstrators and education through immersive technology and digital simulation immersive & digital simulation, virtual reality spaces and learning factories.	LSIF project includes a demonstrator facility at Gateshead. All lead providers explicitly recognise ongoing accountability /responsibility for digital approach in the four LSIF projects. Recognise collaborative opportunity of existing (NA College) learning factory and across all projects. Success measures need to be agreed.	MADE NE - Immersive suite - Digital curriculum - Regional Collaboration Smart Factory purchased by NA College through LSIF. Elements of this have been migrated to MADE NE serial production line. Immersive technologies purchased by South Tyneside college for construction. Innovative learning models being created by learning curve group. Gateshead college digital hub. HICSA digital offering. NCD National Battery training centre.

Priorities	Actions/Activity/Milestone	Partners Involved	Timescale	Method/Outcome Expected	Monitoring/Intervals	Progress – GYR (Rating justification, incl. barriers/issues/changes)
2. Align 16+ technical education and training provision to ensure the key technical skills required by the five LSIF sectors are prioritised.						
Prioritisation of technical skills required for five NELSIF sectors, mapped to existing technical occupational standards.						
2. Digital						
2.1.1	Improve diversity of digital workforce.	Employers/Sector Skills Partnership (SSP)/ERBs/All NE FE Colleges /Sunderland Software City	March 2024 -	Build on significant conclusions of SSC report regarding gender representation. Prioritise through digital SSP that may leverage existing DFE/ NEMCA funding. Measures = Gender diversity employed in digital sector and on Level3+ digital programmes.		Representation levels identified as a significant issue by SSC annual review. Some great examples of skills provider best practice, but not constant across all providers. No employer sector level skills plan. Extensive EDI work being carried out by all of the colleges across all sectors. Gateshead in particular lead on EDI in the digital sector with SSC running funded programmes to support this work.
2.1.2	Enhance higher level vocational (L4/5) offer in digital.	All NE FE Colleges/ Gateshead Lead on NELSIF	October 2023 - March 2025	L3+ Curricula module development contained within LSIF.		Level 4/5 offer in place at Gateshead and other LSIF providers. Learning curve and Universities also offer this.
2.1.3	Establish Vocational pathway to degree level (L6).	Ownership HE/NE FE Colleges	No plan	No. of digital learner completions at Level 4-6.		Recognised progression routes form FE to HE. A clear student pathway has been established, enabling learners to progress from Level 3 digital programmes at Gateshead College through to Level 6 degree-level study at both Newcastle University and Northumbria University, supporting long-term skills development and regional talent retention. Is this pathway available at all other LSIF colleges?
2.1.4	Improve employability of those new to the digital sector through work experience.	Employers/Sector Skills Partnership (SSP)/ERBs/ Sunderland Software City		Plan in place. Measure = 30 participants in Tech Talent Pro Programme.		The Dynamo NE Tech Talent Pro project recruiting, training and employing cohorts of new tech sector entrants. - 3 cohorts over 18 months to test the business concept - up to 30 people benefit from the project and move into full time employment. SSC work experience programme also offering new opportunities.
2.1.5	Maintaining sustainable digital teaching capability in the region and agile curriculum development planning.	All NE FE Colleges	Ongoing - plan in place by June 2025	LSIF proposal includes some staff upskilling/sharing across FE colleges. Coverage of qualified teaching staff for advanced/ higher digital skills for the region versus requirement.		Source of continued concern for providers however digital SSP to work with FE/HE to support access to digital expertise to supplement and sustain digital teaching capability measures in place through an over staffing model which works well. Some innovative practices emerging - e.g. Gateshead, Ad hoc not region wide.
2.2 Advanced manufacturing						
2.2.1	Address scarcity of L3+ Engineering/Maintenance Technicians relative to strong demand.	All NE FE Colleges, Sunderland College (EPNE) Lead	October 2023 - March 2025	AM LSIF workstream established to deliver/100+ incremental level 3+ starts on 10 new courses.	LSIF Governance, Monthly review of dedicated advanced manufacturing workstream.	Plan in place to meet LSIF Commitments Workforce Plan for advanced manufacturing to forecast future demand for Level 3 Engineering technicians. Training for growth providing additional apprentices into the sector - need to do this regional wide. Funding for wages are a restriction not the costs in training. Procurement to require a flow of apprentices. De-risk the investment on resource for SMEs. MADE NE to deliver L3 quals from 2025. MADE NE to create physical space to increase learning and teaching capacity.
2.2.2	Leverage deployment of Level 3 Science Manufacturing programme developed through SDF.	East Durham College	October 2023 - March 2025	Health LSIF workstream established to deliver/25 completions at Level 4.	LSIF Governance, Monthly review of dedicated health & health science workstream.	Plan in place to meet LSIF Commitments.
2.2.3	Level 4/5 Engineering provision meets requirements associated with digital and emerging technologies.	All NE FE Colleges, Sunderland College (EPNE) Lead	October 2023 - March 2025	AM LSIF workstream established to deliver/24+ incremental level 4 starts.	LSIF Governance, Monthly review of dedicated advanced manufacturing workstream.	Plan in place to meet LSIF Commitments.
2.2.4	L4/5 Collaboration between local providers to provide seamless progression pathway higher level technicians/engineers.	NE FE/HE	September 2024	Develop collaborative delivery mechanism that enables increased participation in advanced engineering qualifications from Level 4-6, leveraging FE/HE and RTO presence in the region.	Stakeholder MOU in place with operating board. Nissan Manufacturing UK City of Sunderland College Sunderland Council Newcastle University NEAA AESC	HE/FE & Employer Stakeholders in discussion. Emerging plan - as part of NE devolution, business case submitted for funding. MADE NE to address gaps already in place. Total autonomous maintenance – level 3 na college. Learning curve - Level 3 - Renewable Energy and Net Zero - Level 4 - Industry 4.0 - Level 3 - Selecting and Using Programmable Controllers - Level 3 - Applications of Computer Numerical Control in Engineering MOU with Northumbria and EPNE https://educationpartnershipne.ac.uk/news/new-partnership-set-to-unlock-skills-capacity-in-the-north-east/
2.2.5	Establish Equivalent L6 vocational pathway to Engineering roles in all disciplines.	NE FE/HE				
2.2.6	Leverage advanced engineering research/teaching capability to enrich higher technical curriculum.	HE/NE FE Colleges	Qtr. 2, 2024			See above - Pilot project in place through NEIOT for retirees moving into education. Plans to scale across NELSIF 2026-2029 in all priority sectors and all NE providers. Plan to introduce 'industrialists in residence' programme through employer promotion and provider support. Programmes starting to emerge but a distinct lack of collaboration with regards to this. DFE/ERBs identify this a key concern.
2.2.7	Develop digital manufacturing experience and capability, through best-practice learning factory.	Sunderland/NA College	October 2023 - March 2025	Develop the Smart Learning Factory to support the advanced manufacturing curriculum across the region. Sponsorship, collaborative model, and success measures need to be defined.		MADE NE Learning Factory exists. Sunderland College providing sponsorship within regional FE curriculum for advanced manufacturing is primary constraint.

Priorities	Actions/Activity/Milestone	Partners Involved	Timescale	Method/Outcome Expected	Monitoring/Intervals	Progress – GYR (Rating justification, incl. barriers/issues/changes)
2.3 Construction						
2.3.1	Accessible in-region L2/3 provision for all skilled trades.	All NE FE College/ Construction SSP	Pending	Establish Construction Sector Skills Partnership accountability.		Need to identify accountability, proposed action, and success measures. Demand for construction has increased with the 2024/5 in take. Provision in the popular courses such as Brickwork and Civils is good but niche areas such as scaffolding and tiling remains scarce as demand isn't high enough to put on a course; regional collaboration is needed.
2.3.2	Maintain supply of specialist skills typically found in SMEs (e.g. Electrical & Plumbing).					LSIF required SME engagement. Retro-fit courses have been designed and delivered by NEIOT. Not LSIF Funded but in line with recommendations. Still some gaps in traditional trades. New government £260m announcement will aim to improve that as will the new EPNE and NCD construction centres.
2.3.3	Level 4/5 Technical/Engineering provision meets requirements associated with digital and emerging technologies.	NCD/IoT members	NE IoT	Leverage existing NEIoT digital for construction workstream.		Digital workstream in place, curricula developed and being deployed. HICSA to offer this and routeways to higher education through Northumbria University.
2.3.4	Equivalent graduate vocational pathway to L6 Engineering/ Surveying roles in all disciplines.	Northumbria/ Construction SSP/ Lead FE				Need to engage with HE to establish ownership, plan, and success measures. Widely accepted that Northumbria and Teesside are the HE facilities for progression however not a recognised pathway. EPNE have a MOU with Northumbria University to offer pathways form FE to HE.
2.3.5	Resource capability required to manage Energy efficient Retrofit to meet Net Zero targets.	All NE FE College/ New College Durham LSIF Lead	October 2023 - March 2025	Construction LSIF workstream established. 15 new L3+ courses, over 160 L3+ forecast completions.	LSIF Governance, Monthly review of dedicated advanced manufacturing workstream.	Plan in place to meet LSIF Commitments. NEIOT have developed retro fit courses at L3-5. Sustainability is also a main pillar of the construction group. HICSA to offer retro fit and other digital learning.
2.3.6	Capability to meet Modern Methods of Construction skills requirements.	NCD/IoT members	Ongoing	Leverage existing NEIoT MMC workstream.	NEIoT Workstream governance in place.	Confirm NEIoT have a process to monitor emerging trends. Ongoing monitoring taking place at NEIOT construction group. HICSA (EPNE) construction centre now open and due to offer provision in MMC.
2.4 Health & health science						
Transition NELSIF priorities into NE & North Cumbria ICB Strategic Workforce Plan priorities, including leveraging activities of NE Health Skills Hub						
2.4.1	Ensure L2/3 Healthcare support worker provision is aligned to demand.	All NE FE Colleges/ICB for NE & Cumbria/NE Health Hub	TBD	ICB Workforce Plan	NE & Cumbria ICB Workforce Planning Governance	ICB Strategic workforce plan required to identify aggregated regional requirement for L2/3 healthcare skills and input into FE providers. Provision exists in the region especially at EDC. EDC; Engagement with the ICB has been limited, they shared their workforce plan which detailed and lot of what the issues were, but limited detail on the how. We have 95 FT students on Health & Social Care programmes inc. T Level. Additionally we have 50 counselling students at L2 & L3.
2.4.2	Development of healthcare science talent pipeline. Leverage deployment of Level 3 Science Manufacturing programme developed through SDF.	SDF Partners, Lead East College Durham	TBD	Meet SDF Number of Participants in health science apprenticeship.	EDC Governance for SDF Committed Outcomes	FE colleges to report on progress relative to 2021/22 SDF commitment. EDC; To date we have had 19 HCS L2 starts. We have not seen an uptake in L4 just yet, but we are yet to have any apprentices through EPA. The demand signal is low from the trusts.
2.4.3	Improve Vocational Pathway into Nursing.	Sunderland University/ Teesside University	TBD	No. of participants in higher/ degree apprenticeships for Nursing.	In NHS Workforce Plan – unclear whether NE employers have responded to this post LSIF	EDC; 31 PT adults studying Access to nursing and midwifery with a view to progressing to University. All YR2 Health & Social Care students had the option to complete an additional module in collab with university of Sunderland to gain additional UCAS points. The introduction of T Level in Health gave a new routeway into Nursing with specific occupational route of adult nursing.
3. Increase the supply of level 3+ technical skills to meet current and future regional requirements.						
Develop strategic skills plans that increase the supply of Level 3+ skills from all educational pathways, including adult learners.						
3.1	Digital	Employers/ERBs/ Gateshead	October 2023 - March 2025		No. of L3+ starts and completions in vocational qualifications for key sectors.	L3/4 bootcamps have been delivered 70+ 24/25 Engineering & manufacturing 24 Health & Social Care 119 Digital technologies 91 Construction 80
3.2	Advanced manufacturing (AM)	Employers/ERBs/ Sunderland	October 2023 - March 2025		NELSIF AM Workstream Governance Training for Growth Project Governance Inclusive Advanced Manufacturing Pathway project Governance	Training for Growth pilot funding for 21 incremental L3+ technical Apprentices. Inclusive Advanced Manufacturing Pathway - 18 - L3 apprenticeship. Made NE Targets; MADE NE has been highly informed by the NELSIF and ongoing support for the roll out of MADE NE in the AM sector and associated deliverables.
3.3	Health & health science	Employers/ERBs/ EDC	October 2023 - March 2025		NE & Cumbria ICB governance DFE NELSIF Commitments	Transition to NE & North Cumbria ICB. Low demand signals from the trusts. EDC have promoted and tried to increase starts but they are low but have had success in courses that have been developed due to an improved curricula as a direct result from NELSIF/DFE such as mortuary technician.
3.4	Construction	Employers/ERBs/ NCD	October 2023 - March 2025		Sector Skills Partnership DFE NELSIF Commitments	Plan in place to meet LSIF Commitments. SSP to manage this through the NEIOT and other providers.
3.5	Ensure approaches to T-Level deployment and associated career and progression pathways that are both attractive to learners and employers.	Employers/ERBs/ FE Colleges/ Providers		All NE FE Colleges	Recent announcements regarding potential 16+ education level policy need to be assessed - Hold pending clarity.	Providers continue to integrate T Levels. Unclear how employers are adjusting entry level and progression routes. Examples in construction (Esh, Bowmer and Kirkland, MGL) take on T Level students. In AM Unipres and Magna also have taken on T-level students but demand is still low.

Priorities	Actions/Activity/Milestone	Partners Involved	Timescale	Method/Outcome Expected	Monitoring/Intervals	Progress – GYR (Rating justification, incl. barriers/issues/changes)
4. Collaborate to deliver key technical skills for regional growth.						
4.1	Ensure NELSIF reflects NELSIF priorities through broad and inclusive regional collaboration to leverage best practice.	All NE FE Providers/East College Durham Lead	July - September 2023	NELSIF aligned and prioritised to NELSIF priorities and sector workstreams and LSIF governance in place	Delivery of NELSIF to Outcomes/ KPIs agreed with DfE	Rating reflects Alignment of NELSIF to NELSIF. Deployment of project assessed under NELSIF/DFE Governance.
4.2	Ensure 22/23 NE SDF investment and other technical skills funding and programmes are fully leveraged in support of LSIF priorities.	SDF Providers/ East College Durham Lead	September 2022 - September 2023	NELSIF/NELSIF aligned to 2020/21 SDF health & health science priorities	Alignment of Planning	Aligned governance process for LSIF/LSIP to be agreed and established to monitor and maintain alignment.
4.3	Leverage strategic partnerships and collaborative arrangements, including the NEIoT to develop key technical skills. Ensure an integrated and seamless technical educational pathways that provides an adequate supply of technical skills to meet regional requirements.	All NE FE/HE Providers/NEIoT - Lead EDC	Ongoing	Driven by ad hoc funding from multiple sources.	No regional Mechanisms	Significant level of activity, but varies by College and accountabilities of HE not defined. Collaborative arrangements are ad hoc and related to funding streams. Opportunity for North East CA. Some examples of regional collaboration; Durham Learning Alliance (inc. Durham Uni), NEIoT construction and AM work but not enough. North East CA strategy; to further support regional collaborations to ensure that the LSIF recommendations are embedded into the regional culture. North East CA strategy now published. MADE NE established and roll out to address skills gaps in AM. Uni's and colleges for the NE are now established. MOU to work together and identify skills/provision gaps to work better with industry. This remains a priority of LSIP 2026-2029 to continue this good work but needs further collaboration resulting in a more cohesive eco-system. The formation of North East CA and the new single LSIP will provide the vehicle to ensure this is successful.
4.4	Realise opportunities arising from the NE Mayoral Combined Authority to promote partnership between FE/HE providers in region and RTOs to align curriculum & delivery model for high value inward investment, emerging technologies, and Higher Technical Qualifications.	North East CA	May 2024 - onwards	Leverage Strategic Collaboration Opportunities through: Centre for SMART instrumentation (Durham Uni), Printable Electronics Centre (CPI), National Horizon Centre (Teesside Uni), DERIC/IESAM (Newcastle Uni), Knowledge Anchor (Newcastle, Northumbria) NICD (Newcastle Uni), Digital Supply Chain Hub (Northumbria Uni)		Emerging opportunity through North East CA devolution - arising from investment zones and MADE NE. Ongoing meetings with North East CA, STC etc. North East CA strategy; To strengthen and grow pathways and to ensure that the region's population inc. school leavers understand what opportunities are available and how to get them. PB sits on the skills board and MD regular contributor to North East CA skills events/workshops. NELSIF firmly aligned to the North East CA skills strategy and to a certain degree influenced it. MADE NE also aligned to the North East CA strategy.
4.5	Develop and invest in resourcing and deployment models that establishes, retains, and leverages digital and higher technical teaching capability across the region, including support from employer secondees.	Not Known	May 2024 - onwards	No. of qualified teaching staff for higher technical and digital skills being deployed and shared across multiple providers in the NELSIF region.		Limited plan in place but best practice from Gateshead college of over recruiting staff. Digital SSP to work with FE/HE to support access to digital expertise to supplement and sustain digital teaching capability NELSIF involves some small-scale sharing of teaching resource 2026-2029 LSIP to roll out best practice.
5. Employer focussed – Enable employers, including SMEs, to identify their technical skill requirements, and access high quality technical skills development for their current and future workforce.						
5.1	Leverage established employer advisory boards to provide strategic leadership on emerging and scarce technical skills across the region.	All NE FE Providers /NE IoT	Ongoing	The Established Sector Skills Partnerships need to leverage established advisory Boards to provide strategic regional leadership on emerging skills. Role of NEIoT unclear. construction, advanced manufacturing and digital CoE	Advisory Boards meeting regularly and providing strategic insight on future demand and emerging skills	SSPs in place for construction and AM and ongoing dialogue with digital and health. Employer advisory boards in place at all NELSIF colleges and evidence of employer engagement through ERBs is consistent. However more needs to be done to ensure effective workforce planning.
5.2	Resource Workforce Planning and skills brokerage support for employers, particularly SMEs, to improve workforce planning and participation in vocational apprenticeships, reskilling & upskilling.	All NE FE Providers	Ongoing	Roles and responsibilities of ERBs and FE Colleges needs to be defined, and success measures in terms of SME engagement established.	Improved levels of SME Apprenticeship Starts. Innovative practice to support SMEs	Some support activity provided through FE Business Development Teams, but SME engagement isn't robust or consistent. Best practice seen in offshore and construction but limited planning in other sectors. Advanced manufacturing Sunderland UKSPF Pilot with support for 50 SMEs for Level 2 technical apprenticeships. Barrier: Cost and lack of support for SMEs. Best practice identified in AM specifically Automotive through NEAA and MADE NE where workforce requirements (growth and attrition) have been calculated to 2030 at entry to higher level roles; Operator, skilled, Engineering, Management and support. Other best practice is EPNE and their work with North East screen.
5.3	Establish a mechanism to prioritise transfer of unspent apprenticeship levy in the region to support NELSIF priorities.	North East CA	2024/2025	Need to determine how to leverage transfer mechanisms already in place and align to LSIP, and determine additional actions required to optimise.	Estimate increase in Levy transfer across NELSIF area	Regional approach required. Position paper submitted to North East CA. Extensive research and report written by NEAA and shared with North East CA and DfE. Subsequently policy change to levy, ongoing uncertainty and formation of North East CA will determine a region wide response. Some best practice identified at South Tyneside and Sunderland councils and also out of the NE region at Lancashire where levy transfer systems are successful.
5.4	Increased number of regional opportunities for technical work experience and apprenticeships.	ERBs/Employers		Need to determine how to establish employer/ERB ownership, and monitor at a regional level. Appropriate targets needs to be determined. Need to hold employers to account.	No. of students having work experience in NELSIF sectors	Some examples of work experience – SSC in digital have a UKSPF programme supporting work experience and CITB offering funding to support work experience (nationally). More needed especially around work placements for T Levels. North East CA strategy has promoted an increase in work experience to 50 hours per student but has resulted in too much pressure on industry.
5.5	Develop guidance and establish flexible opportunities to increase upskilling, informed by NELSIF priorities, and enabled through proposed flexible Lifelong Learning Entitlement and devolved regional adult education budget.	North East CA/ DfE		Need to determine the roles and responsibilities of North East CA and Providers in this area, including drawing on lessons learned from developed AEB North of Tyne.	Paced to policy/implementation & transition to North East CA	Colleges taking preparatory action. Devolved AEB provides opportunity for more localised provision aligned to NELSIF. North East CA emerging New Deal for North East workers will set out the roles and responsibilities for the AEB for the NE region.

Priorities	Actions/Activity/Milestone	Partners Involved	Timescale	Method/Outcome Expected	Monitoring/Intervals	Progress – GYR (Rating justification, incl. barriers/issues/changes)
6. Prioritise Social Inclusion – aligned approach to enable those from under-represented and disadvantaged groups to develop the skills needed and provide the support required to remove barriers to access good jobs and careers.						
6.1	Establish & deliver appropriate Level 1 and 2 Maths & English attainment targets to improve the foundation skills for employability and increased economic activity.	North East CA	May 2024 - onwards	Requires discussion with NEMCA to understand how best to do this, and align stakeholders around agreed success measures and targets (including schools and colleges).	Attainment levels consistent with England average, including progression rates to level 3.	All LSIF colleges are monitoring this due to the changes in maths and English in apprenticeships. All local Councils recently ran UKSPF "Multiply" programmes to tackle poor maths attainment. North East CA strategy highlights maths attainment also. Newcastle leading North East Maths group.
6.2	Establish and deploy a set of consistent social inclusion measures and positive assistance actions for underrepresented groups that support achievements of NELEP targets on employment rate and economic activity and sector employment representation targets.	Local authorities/ North East CA	May 2024 - onwards	SSPs & FE Colleges adopt Social inclusion targets aligned to SEP/NEMCA plan. Develop interventions that provide opportunities for underrepresented groups to access training and progress into better jobs.	Evidence of monitoring access and progression through technical courses. Pilot programmes that result in improved access.	Evidences as part of NELSIF FE College self assessment (Qtr2, 2024) demonstrates some good local practice and positive assistance, however inconsistent across region and no agreed set of social inclusion measures that improve representation in the workforce and attract underrepresented groups into the workforce. Evidence of sector driven work in this area; construction attracting females and BAME new entrants, AM - IPAM, digital; Tech talent 2026-2029 LSIP to ensure roll out of best practice across all of the priority sectors. All LSIF project lead partners are tasked with identifying key activities and actions within their projects that will support equality advancement and will include them within their project plan, defining key actions and methods of impact assessment (aligned to DfE reporting requirements). ST Change: S Tyneside UKSPF funding focussed on Social inclusion.
6.3	Focussed approach to vocational careers, including improved and aspirational early career guidance within North East Ambition deployment of the Gatsby Framework to require all pupils to improve awareness of vocational learning options open to them. Extend provision and ongoing access to careers advice for adults.	NEFE Colleges	October 2023 - March 2025	All LSIF project activities will consider the advancement of equality of opportunities and will identify & deliver opportunities for doing so; for example, through the use of 'people like me' case studies in CEIAG resources.	Delivery of LSIF Outcomes	Awaiting evidence on outcomes and impact. Good practice examples of the schools safari in AM, ESH school engagement in construction. More evidence is required. MADE NE has high targets of school engagement and some best practice shown from Nissan and Unipres. Although best practice there is still high levels of fragmentation. More cohesive approach will deliver better results and CIAG.

Progress key.

Partners established and accept responsibilities	Clear milestones	Approach clear with defined outcomes. (Quantitative or Qualitative)	Effective governance and regular follow up.	Green - on plan to deliver commitment
Partners identified but responsibilities remain ambiguous	Timing unclear or delays	Approach clear but ill defined outcomes or unquantifiable/ unclear	Effective governance but ineffective follow up	Yellow - Off plan but actions in place to recover
Those identified have not engaged and/ or accepted responsibility for action	No timing agreed	Ad hoc approach with no measurable outcomes	No or ineffective governance	No plan/br inadequate actions to recover

NELSIP
North East
Local Skills
Improvement
Plan 



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