**Working Together for You: A more inclusive North of Tyne**

Our North of Tyne vision is of a dynamic, sustainable and more inclusive economy. This is one that brings together people and opportunities to create vibrant communities and a good quality of life. We have an ambition to narrow inequalities and ensure that everyone has a stake in our region’s future.

NTCA is working hard to achieve this vision, to advocate for good employment practices and a more equitable economy. This is one where we create wealth and distribute it fairly, through local re-investment and growth.

We understand the strong link between health, wealth and the economy. We also understand that some of our communities and people are locked out of opportunities for good health, good jobs and financial security. That is why we have put actions to address inequality, poverty and poor educational attainment at the centre of our work.

Our greatest asset is the resilience of our people and places. The skills, tenacity and ambition of our residents will continue to make the North of Tyne an exciting area for businesses to invest in, partners to work in, and people to live and thrive in.

**Our ambition for the North of Tyne**

Our plan for a more inclusive North of Tyne is built on three key aims:

* Creating a more social and inclusive economy - one which promotes wellbeing across all communities by ensuring wealth is retained locally and distributed more equitably.
* Addressing inequality and poverty, enabling our residents to access opportunities at every stage of their lives.
* Driving better coordination of education, skills, employment and health activities to help more people move into good work, and progress in work.

These aims will be central to our recovery from the pandemic working in partnership with our local authorities and wider stakeholders.

**Our journey so far**

NTCA is growing and evolving in a period of unprecedented change. We are proud of our achievements, helping more people get and keep good jobs, develop better skills, and build a programme of investment which puts people at the heart of our economic strategy.

We are making a positive impact in many areas:

* We have helped more adults on the journey towards good jobs by investing in new employability and skills programmes delivered in the heart of our communities. We have worked hard to remove some of the specific barriers people face in relation to employment, education and training.
* We have reshaped the delivery of adult education provision to better equip people with the skills needed to access good work and progress in their careers. This is set out in the [NTCA Strategic Skills Plan](https://www.northoftyne-ca.gov.uk/documents/adult-education-budget-strategic-skills-plan/) ‘Opportunity for All’.
* We have supported our residents to become digitally connected and included, as well as provided people with the digital skills for new learning and work opportunities.
* We have built an effective, outcome-focussed partnership with DWP delivering against our Devolution commitment for more coordinated employment activity in the North of Tyne.
* We have encouraged the positive behaviour we want to see in local business and enterprise – through the development of shared values and our commitment to making good work the norm, driven by our Good Work Pledge.
* We have targeted spend locally, supporting organisations based in the North of Tyne and encouraging others to do the same.
* We have been serious about co-production and co-design and started work to make sure people can share their real-life experiences to build better policies and programmes.
* We have identified education priorities including school readiness and closing the disadvantage gap to make sure our children and young people are at the heart of our inclusive economy approach.

These achievements have been underpinned by substantial early investments in practical interventions for a more social and inclusive economy. This statement will continue to drive us and our partners to do more.

We are clear that a more inclusive economy is a more equal economy. This means we are clear about the employment, skills and opportunity gaps for people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, who are Deaf or experience disability, for women, parents and people who care, and our younger and older residents. We are focusing our work on closing those gaps locally and with the national average, creating a North of Tyne which is fair, equitable and inclusive.

**Our opportunity to recover, redesign and reimagine**

Our inclusive economy approach is central to our area’s recovery from Covid-19 and our ambitions for a cleaner, greener future. We will work in ways that enable us to respond to uncertainty well.

As we emerge from the pandemic we can expect our labour markets and business base to change considerably. As a community we are likely to face job losses and unemployment rates that are more significant than usual. This means we need to work harder than ever to tackle our key challenges:

* **Not all jobs are good jobs:** In 2020 22% of our workforce were earning less than the ‘real’ living wage in the North East. Zero-hour contracts, one of the key forms of insecure work, were a third higher than the UK average. At the height of the pandemic the North East had one of the highest levels of workers in shutdown sectors at 36%.
* **Not everyone has the same opportunities:** Only half of working age people in the North of Tyne who are Deaf or experience disability are in employment compared to nearly 80% of people with no disabilities. Figures are similar for our residents from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. People with no or low qualifications are twice as likely to work in low pay sectors, compared to those with a degree level qualification.[[1]](#footnote-2) We need to do much more for our residents who experience complex lives and are often furthest away from the benefits of a good job, good health and wellbeing.
* **Financial insecurity is a serious challenge:** We have high rates of child poverty and our local authorities have experienced some of the greatest increases nationally in the last five years. We also have high rates of financial insecurity locally. We face structural challenges in terms of a welfare system which can lock some people and families into poverty. We need to use our key levers – a fully-flexible revenue settlement and commitment to effective place-based work – to drive system change at a local level.

**The foundations of a new economy: Our aims**

**1. Creating a more social and inclusive economy**

We want to promote wellbeing across all our communities by ensuring wealth is retained locally and distributed more equitably. We will do this by creating a culture of shared values across the public, voluntary and community and private sector that maximises local economic benefits. We will work with our local anchor organisations – schools, college, universities, health trusts and social housing providers – to do this. Together we will support the growth of sustainable markets and businesses. This will include co-operatives and social enterprises through specialist community-led business support and tailored finance. We will invest in community assets and hubs to maximise the resilience of our communities.

We will continue to think big and be ambitious, by growing our Good Work Pledge community and exploring a wellbeing framework for the North of Tyne.

**2. Addressing inequality and poverty**

We will enable our residents to access opportunities at every stage of their lives by co-designing employment support with a strong emphasis on the needs and assets of our places and people. We have started on our journey with our return to work programme for carers and social housing tenants – applying learning from these programmes to improve outcomes. We are building on this with further programmes for people experiencing some of the most complex barriers to good work such as domestic abuse or mental ill-health.

We know children and young people’s experiences matter as part of this picture. We will work with the Department of Education and others to deliver an ambitious programme to support school improvement and improve life chances for our children and young people. This will include exemplar programmes on school readiness and child poverty, providing learning to ensure all our children have the foundations for life-long wellbeing wherever they grow-up in the North of Tyne.

We understand inclusion is not just physical, it’s also digital. We will look at the role NTCA can play in understanding and ensuring digital inclusion for all. Our support for an area-wider Poverty Truth Commission for the North of Tyne will make sure this work is informed by the experiences of the people we are here to serve.

**3. Driving better coordination of education, skills, employment and health**

Better coordination and integration of the local system of education, skills and employment support is central to our mission. Our key drivers for this change will be our Inclusive Economy Board and our joint DWP/NTCA Employment Framework bringing expertise, insight and a commitment to driving innovation for the North of Tyne. Our Youth Employment Partnerships and our health and work offer, developed alongside Government and international specialists, are central to this.

Through our devolved Adult Education Budget, and wider resources, we will support a more coherent lifelong learning journey across with the North of Tyne. This will include first-class careers advice and guidance supported by hubs and other tools to maximise apprenticeships and sector-specific vocational training.

Our Skills for Growth funding will actively support a just and inclusive transition to a zero carbon future, help address gender imbalances in key sectors, and secure a talent pipeline making sure local people benefit fully from our major investments across of the North of Tyne.

**How will we know we have been successful?**

NTCA’s published equalities priorities underpin our social and inclusive economy ambitions and measures of success. In line with our equalities priorities we will:

* **Improve access to, and take-up of, skills opportunities:** Increase participation with better outcomes for adults in education especially for under-represented groups (including those with learning disabilities/differences).
* **Increase good quality, stable employment:** Increase the number of young people aged 19-24 and those aged over 50 in employment.
* **Reduce in-work poverty:** Reduce the level of in-work poverty within the North of Tyne, with specific focus on women, workers from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds and disabled or Deaf residents. In particular, by maximising the take up of the Good Work Business pledge across the area and types of business.

To achieve this we will target our devolved Adult Education Budget, Investment Fund, our procurement activity and any additional recovery funding in these areas.

We were the first Combined Authority to have a truly inclusive Devolution Deal. This gives us an unparalleled opportunity to create an economy which works for all. We are bold, brave and ambitious. By retaining and reinvesting our wealth, and making our assets work for the benefit of everyone we will tackle inequality, improve health and wellbeing, and build stronger communities. In this way we will continue working together for a more inclusive North of Tyne.

1. NTCA Skills Plan 2021 <https://www.northoftyne-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/New-AEB-Skills-Plan-2021.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)