

Accountability Statement

2024-25

Accountability Statement: www.educationpartnershipne.ac.uk/legaldocuments

Achievements from 2023-24, Vision and Intended Objectives for 2024-25

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Purpose

Education Partnership North East (EPNE) was formed in 2019 after City of Sunderland College merged with Hartlepool Sixth Form College (2017) and Northumberland College (2019). A regional college group, Education Partnership North East is a trading name and comprises:

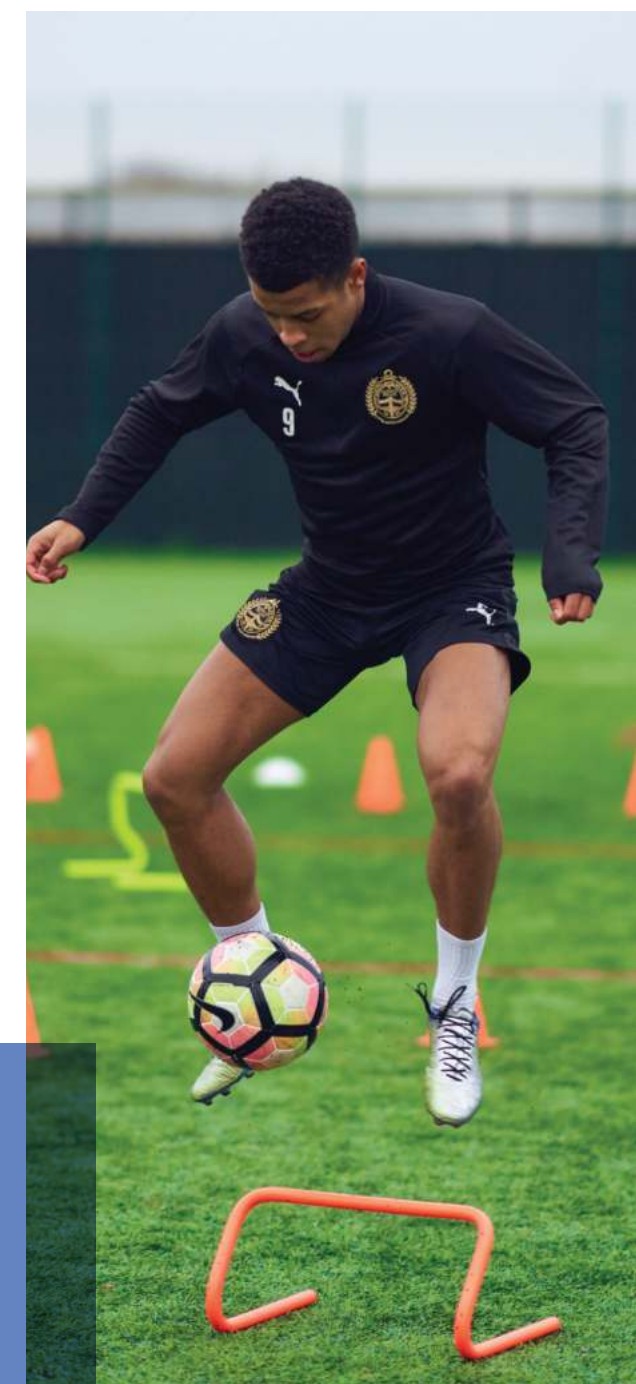
- › Northumberland College
- › Hartlepool Sixth Form College
- › Sunderland College
- › EPNE Training
- › City of Sunderland College (legal entity)

EPNE is a North East of England place focused provider and materially contributes to regional socio-economic progress. It delivers across all types of provision (within key sectoral areas) including technical education, apprenticeships, sixth form, degrees and other higher education courses. All campuses deliver 16-19 and adult provision.

The group has developed specialist delivery centres which include SEND, Animal and Land, Construction Skills (open 2024-25), Technical, and Academic.

Developed within the spirit of accountability agreements, our strategic plan sets out our vision and purpose to:

- › Ensure curriculum pathways meet the current and future demands of the regional labour market
- › Maintain an unwavering and relentless focus on developing students through outstanding teaching, learning, support and assessment
- › Build culture and develop high performing people, empowered to lead, innovate and take ownership
- › Build financial resilience and resources to ensure all stakeholders benefit from outstanding learning environments
- › Ensure we are an engaged sector leader with a strong reputation and growing partnerships



Context and Place



EPNE’s geographical footprint stretches from the Tees Valley to the Scottish Border; an area comprising Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) and the North East Combined Authority (NECA).

Economic characteristics

Pan regional sectors of strategic economic areas of importance include:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Process, chemical and energy
- Digital and creative
- Culture, tourism (including rural) and leisure
- Energy
- Health and social care, biologics and life sciences
- Education
- Business and professional services
- Transport and logistics
- Construction

LSIP priorities identified in priorities 2023 (phase 1)

Tees Valley	North East	North of Tyne
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Green Energy and Net Zero – Construction• Green Energy and Net Zero – Operational• Health and Social Care• Business and Professional Services <p>Cross-Cutting Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Digital• Professional Development and Business Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advanced Manufacturing – including Automotive, Aerospace, Semiconductors and Pharmaceutical• Construction including Advanced Sustainable Construction• Digital• Health and Health Sciences• Transport and Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Construction• Green Energy and Net Zero• Health and Social Care• Business and Professional Services• Culture, Creative, Hospitality and Tourism <p>Cross-Cutting Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Digital• Core and Professional Skills• Employability

Social and demographic characteristics

As a place focused provider, it is critical to consider three sub-regions within the geography covered by the college group.

In the area to the North of the Tyne, the population is 842,541 of which 552,546 are of working age (16-64) and 379,000 are economically active. There are 143,536 individuals economically inactive, of which 25,667 are looking for employment. There are 47,800 workless households, equating to 18.5% in the area. As of 2023 the region's population increased by 1.9% since 2018, growing by 16,086. Population is expected to increase by 1.7% between 2023 and 2028, adding 14,256. From 2018 to 2023, jobs increased by 5.5% in the North of Tyne local authority areas from 371,632 to 392,159. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 6.5% by 1.0%.

In terms of educational attainment, 31.4% of the selected regions' residents possess a Degree or Equivalent and Above (2.2% below the national average), and 7.7% of residents have no qualifications.

In the area to the South of the Tyne (formerly described as the 'North East'), the population is 1,061,962 of which 650,669 are of working age (16-64) and 474,198 are economically active. There are 176,471 individuals economically inactive, of which 23,025 are looking for employment. As of 2023 the region's population increased by 1.3% since 2018, growing by 14,058. Population is expected to increase by 1.0% between 2023 and 2028, adding 10,364. From 2018 to 2023, jobs increased by 3.1% in the local authority areas to the South of the Tyne from 360,193 to 371,431. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 6.5% by 3.4%.

In terms of educational attainment, 21.3% of the selected regions' residents possess a Degree or Equivalent and Above (12.3% below the national average), and 9.3% of residents have no qualifications.

In the Tees Valley area, the population is 679,450 of which 411,327 are of working age (16-64) and 302,595 are economically active. There are 108,731 individuals economically inactive, of which 20,534 are looking for employment. As of 2023 the region's population



increased by 0.8% since 2018, growing by 5,166. Population is expected to increase by 0.3% between 2023 and 2028, adding 1,771. From 2018 to 2023, jobs increased by 5.6% in the Tees Valley local authorities from 258,244 to 272,651. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 6.5% by 0.9%.

In terms of educational attainment, 22.1% of the selected regions' residents possess a Degree or Equivalent and Above (11.5% below the national average) and 9.2% of residents have no qualifications.

The whole area is characterised by:

- High youth unemployment and high adult worklessness
- Slow labour market recovery but remains below national average
- Underperformance in Gross Value Added (GVA) per head.
- Skills gaps in growth sectors being acute.
- Household income below UK average.

Local authorities and campuses

The main campuses of EPNE are located in the 3 local authority areas which are characteristic of aforementioned demographic and social characteristics:

- › The borough of Hartlepool: Hartlepool Sixth Form College
- › The city of Sunderland: City of Sunderland College
- › The county of Northumberland: Northumberland College

Main college campus characteristics

• Hartlepool Sixth Form College, Hartlepool

Provides mainly level 3 academic and technical provision. Travel to learn is mainly from the borough of Hartlepool and immediate surrounding area. Provision links to 9 out of 10 strategic economic areas. Pathways to higher education or apprenticeships cater for 3 out of 4 Tees Valley LSIP priority areas.

• Sunderland College City Campus, Sunderland

Provides entry to level 5 in technical further and higher education. Travel to learn is mainly from the city of Sunderland and immediate surrounding areas. Provision links to 6 out of 10 strategic economic areas. Pathways to higher education or apprenticeships cater for 4 out of 5 North East LSIP priority areas.

• Sunderland College Bede Campus, Sunderland

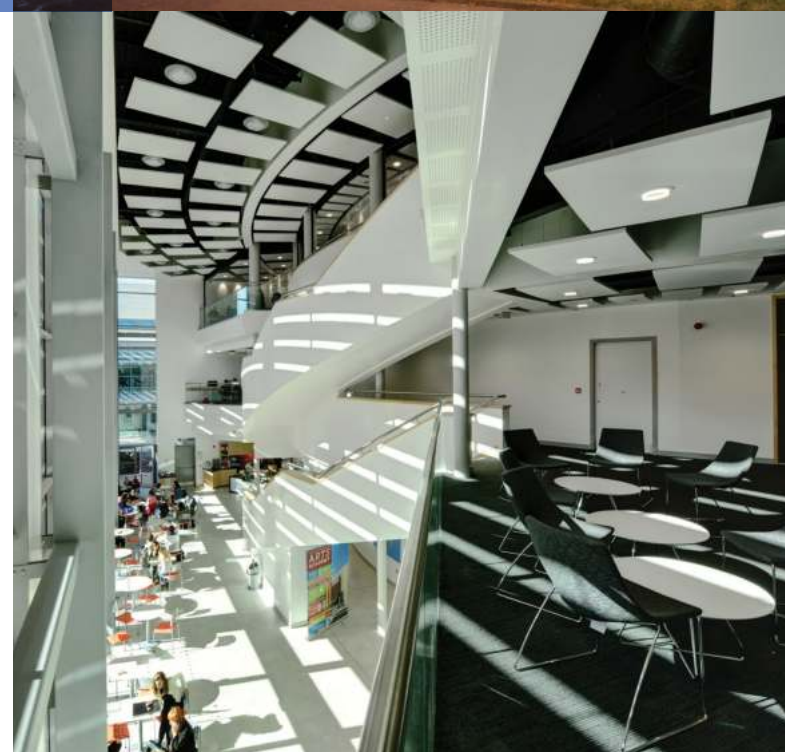
Provides entry to level 6 in academic and technical further/higher education. Travel to learn is from Sunderland City and immediate surrounding areas. Provision links to 4 out of 10 strategic economic areas. Pathways to higher education or apprenticeships cater for 2 out of 5 NE LSIP priority areas.

• Northumberland College Ashington Campus, Ashington, Northumberland

Provides entry to level 6 in technical further/higher education provision. Travel to learn is mainly from the town of Ashington and the surrounding areas in South East Northumberland. Provision links to 10 out of 10 strategic economic areas. Pathways to higher education or apprenticeships cater for 5 out of 5 North of Tyne priority areas.

• Northumberland College Kirkley Hall Campus, Ponteland, Northumberland

Provides entry level to level 6 technical further and higher education provision. Travel to learn is mainly from the south-east and north of Northumberland and immediate surrounding areas, although as a national land-based campus with residential provision, travel to learn patterns do extend beyond the local authority area. Provision links to 3 out of 10 regional strategic economic areas. Pathways to higher education or apprenticeships cater for 2 out of 5 North of Tyne LSIP priority areas. However, provision specifically links to 8 out of 12 national land-based disciplines.



Approach to developing an annual accountability statement

Key priorities within this accountability agreement are already included within the strategic plan for Education Partnership North East (EPNE). This was developed following extensive consultation with internal and external local, regional and national stakeholders. It was shaped following formalised stakeholder research led by a third party in Sunderland, Northumberland and Hartlepool, obtaining formative contributions from the North East England Chamber of Commerce, community partners, industry/employers, staff, students, governors and others.

Other contributors from the education sector were the Bishop Chadwick Trust, Northumbria University, Newcastle College Group, Tyne Coast College and Hartlepool college of Further Education.

EPNE's curriculum portfolio and delivery underpin the group's strategic plan. All curriculum is robustly planned and delivery is informed and specifically mapped to Standard Occupational Classification Codes and labour market data trends before approval. Employer advisory boards linked to specific industry/sectoral areas actively feed into the shaping of curriculum for the skills needs of today and tomorrow.

Curriculum linked to specific industry priority areas such as in Health and Social Care, have also been developed through internationalisation supported by the Education and Training Foundation, NELEP, and education partners in Ireland and the USA. These providers have supported EPNE to develop a community connected approach to curriculum intent and implementation. EPNE subsequently gained Future Learning Leader status in 2021.

Additionally, EPNE's specific priority areas have been developed through industry partnerships and provider collaborations via the Strategic Development Fund Programme, Bootcamps, and extensive engagement with local authorities, private training providers, further education colleges, charities, schools and employers. This work is specifically prevalent in the high demand and technical priority areas of Manufacturing, Engineering, Automotive and Logistics, Energy and Construction industries, including Digital Construction, Retrofit and Modern Methods.

More recently and adding a new layer to our approach and accountabilities, EPNE, together with other equally important providers have co-created purposeful strategic alliances with the breadth, expertise and capacity to shape, develop and deliver real, valuable and impacting systemic change within existing and emerging LSIP priority industry/skills areas.

For example, with respective accountability agreements in mind, following the successful partnership with the Education Training Collective, the coming year will see increased strategic collaboration and sharing of practice and innovation with partner colleges/providers of the Etc. This will ensure a regional approach develops much needed, specialist training in Construction and Modern Methods of Construction.

The aforementioned is one example of how EPNE, as a regionally focussed group, is investing in meaningful pan-regional strategy with preferred visionary partners to develop much-needed, collaborative and cohesive specialist localised training pathways. Similar approaches have been developed in other key economic areas such as within manufacturing, Engineering, Automotive/Logistics and Green Skills. For example, with the opening of a new industry-provider led Nissan Academy to focus on the required skills pipeline for the Advanced Manufacturing sector.



This accountability statement has also been developed following discussion with our lead governors for economy and place (representing Sunderland, Northumberland, and Hartlepool). It has been approved in its final form by the Board of Corporation for Education Partnership North East whose working aged members, represent the wider North East and Tees valley region.



Contribution to national, regional and local priorities

Already the annual economic contribution of Education Partnership North East to the local business community in the region is £444.5 million and the average annual return on investment to students is 16.9% in higher wages and to society is 19.6%. Contribution is delivered through our Strategic Plan 2019-2025 which prioritises a bold, coherent and employer led curriculum strategy. This is and will continue to be underpinned by our career focussed curriculum plan, which sets out 4 clear and ambitious statements defining the College's high level, broad and balanced curriculum intent.

- › **Innovative:** An innovative, quality, careers focused curriculum that supports student and college success
- › **Inclusive:** Clear progression pathways including for the most disadvantaged, to ensure all our students can succeed in life and employment
- › **Relevant:** Appropriately informed by market intelligence, responsive and relevant to the key regional and national markets
- › **Coherent:** Meticulously planned and sequenced logically to develop students' long-term knowledge and skills development





Reflecting regional and local priorities including specific areas of relevant LSIPs (included in the Strategic Plan for Education Partnership North East), the following are examples of some of our aims and targets:

1. Construction Industries (LSIP for North East and North of Tyne)		
1.1	Opening a new partnership led Housing Innovation and Construction Skills Academy (HICSA) – a skills hub for Sunderland. The creation of a new skills-based curriculum leading to an increase in the pipeline of employees trained within and beyond traditional trades.	New build opening 2025 (HICSA) Create a Housing Strategy for the North East as a lead provider of skills.
1.2	Further develop, share and deliver essential new skills focussed curriculum in partnership with a newly formed strategic alliance to meet the emerging energy/green agenda within construction and the built environment and to meet an upskilling and reskilling agenda.	Increase 16-18 Recruitment in Construction by 2%
1.3	Deliver a new future focussed model of further education and skills with a large employer to that of traditional further education approaches (in partnership with wider employers and providers).	Design and shape a regional skills strategy for Crown Works Studios in Sunderland
1.4	Soft launch a planned spoke of HICSA at Northumberland College (Ashington), to become part of a new MMC build in partnership work with the Department for Education (enabling integration of net zero principles within resources and curriculum)	Create a new skills-based curriculum for Northumberland College

Achievement 23/24

- Gained planning permission for new build at Ashington
- Launched the start of the HICSA building work
- Formed a Regional Construction Partnership with Education Training Collective

2. Engineering, Manufacturing, Chemical, Automotive and Logistics (LSIP, TVCA, North East and North of Tyne)		
2.1	The establishment of a growing employer endorsed strategic alliance capable of delivering a comprehensive skills response within the region's Engineering, Manufacturing, Chemical, Automotive and Logistics sectors.	Increase the number of girls into Engineering within in the 14-16 Academy by 25% Increase apprenticeships in the advanced manufacturing sector by 15%
2.2	Develop, share and deliver essential new skills curriculum in specialised manufacturing in partnership with an industry to meet skills needs of Advanced Manufacturing	Deliver specialised industry training to 150 learners by Jul-25 Pilot Digital Manufacturing training
2.3	Endorsed collaboration to support the skills pipeline in the Northumberland.	Open a new Academy in partnership with local employer in Northumberland 24/25

Achievement 23/24

- Opened New 14-16 Skills Academy in partnership with Nissan with the introduction of a cohort from Bishop Chadwick Trust
- Became the Lead for the North East LSIP on Advanced Manufacturing
- Gained the only North East National College for Nuclear Status
- Gained STEM Accreditation across all Campuses
- Opened a new Engineering Centre at Hartlepool
- Increased recruitment for 16-18 on Advanced Manufacturing courses by 26% across EPNE



3. Green Skills (LSIP, North East and NoT)

3.1	Support the national and regional economic and skills agenda through the lens of unitised green and sustainability skills development and curriculum delivery.	Continue to lead in the North East region on Green Skills through funded projects.	Deliver NECA Skills Bootcamp contract by Mar-25
3.2	Align, design and deliver unitised green skills curriculum relevant to LSIP priority areas	Increase delivery of green curriculum, 23/24 min 65% into employment.	Increase delivery by 3%
3.3	Work with an alliance of providers to deliver meaningful skills solutions.		Create a Strategic Alliance on Green Skills to collaborate across the region

Achievement 23/24

- Lead College for Regional Skills Bootcamps
- Launched EPNE Training for Adult Skills · Increased Adult delivery on previous year
- Delivered on Green Skillstargets
- Introduced new Curriculum related to Green Skills in Automotive Engineering and Construction
- Invested in Technical Rural facilities at Kirkley Hall
- Became the National College for Nuclear

4. Progress and enhanced approach to supporting the most vulnerable and disadvantaged

4.1	Embed a collaborative alliance specifically focussed on a comprehensive programme of engagement to support economic and social inclusion.	Work with community partners to develop flexible community based curriculum model for disengaged young people within Sunderland.	Deliver to 30 NEET learners
4.2	Establish new delivery models to drive positive change for people with SEND with the creation of an expanded scaffolded curriculum to progress those who face additional barriers in accessing education.	The overall intended impact is the expansion and delivery of a scaffolded SEND curriculum (specialist and cross college) which delivers an increase in work related destinations for students	Deliver 50% growth in the volume of Supported Internships Implement a revised and expanded specialist SEND curriculum across EPNE 100% of specialist SEND students access internal; and external; work settings as part of their study programme and journey to independence
4.3	Deepen our expertise in delivery for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged across our communities with the Introduction of additional programmes for those who are furthest away from education to enhance progression to FE	Deliver Level 1 and T Level Foundation Programmes in Health & Social Care in a Community Centre	Deliver to 20 learners at risk of becoming NEET

Achievement 23/24

- Formed a Strategic Partnership with the Foundation of Light to reduce NEETs
- Gained College of Sanctuary Pledge · Increased ESOL numbers
- Supported Northumbria Police to become an Immersive Tech violence reduction partner
- Became the Northern Social Action Lead

5. Embedding Technical Reform (LSIP, TVCA, North East and NoT)

5.1	Continue to roll out a full suite of T Levels across Sunderland, Northumberland and Hartlepool in line with economic priority areas to build on the group's progress to date and deliver a comprehensive programme of T -levels with positive destinations to employment or higher education.	Increase the number of T Level Learners by 58%
5.2	Design and implement well planned HE Pathways in partnership with preferred university and higher education providers	Introduce 4 new higher education programmes at Sunderland in Sept 2024
5.3	Work with an alliance of providers to deliver meaningful skills solutions.	Implement a new Enhanced Curriculum Model

Achievement 23/24

- Became an approved validating partner with the University of Hull
- Exceeded recruitment targets by 4% YoY.
- Introduced T Levels in; Education, Health, Digital, Land based, Business, Construction and Engineering
- Launched SEND Champions, Talent Pool and the SEND Promise
- Implemented Supported Internship programmes for young people with SEND
- Piloted the DfE maths and English Flexibilities for young Apprentices with SEND
- Winner of the 23/24 National Inclusion in FE award for SEND
- Increased Achievement Rates and improved destination into employment for learners with high needs by 23%
- Maintained high achievement rates (3rd in the Country for 16-18yr)

Local Needs Duty

The governing body regularly reviews how the college group is meeting local, regional and national skills needs through a range of quality assurance mechanisms that enable both long-term strategic planning and operational oversight.

Key processes include the annual curriculum planning cycle, which ensures alignment to priority sectors and labour market demand; the strategic plan, which takes an outward-looking approach to position the college at the forefront of changing skills needs.

This year's accountability statement focuses on addressing key LSIP priority areas, Construction, Advanced Manufacturing and significant New Builds in both Sunderland and Northumberland which will provide new state of the art innovative facilities.

Key external partnerships establish the College as a key institute across the region linking education, industry and the community. While meeting economic needs, progression and support of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people once again remain a priority in the annual Accountability Agreement and is further supported by the work to include Academic and Technical reforms to support the advancement of the curriculum now and in the future.

The Corporation continues looking outward, responding to changing local, regional and national landscapes. This approach enables the Corporation to ensure that the College leads on academic and technical education, supporting industry and regional priorities ensuring a strong contribution to meeting the local skills need.



Corporation statement

On behalf of EPNE Board of Corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the Corporation conducts reviews in line with the local needs duty, as such resulting in this plan. The annual accountability statement sets out an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the corporation at their meeting on 14 May 2024. The plan will be published on the Education Partnership North East website within three months of the start of the new academic year and can be accessed from the following link:

Accountability Statement: www.educationpartnershipne.ac.uk/legaldocuments

Supporting Documentation:

[Education Partnership North East Strategic Plan](#)

[NELEP Strategic Economic Plan](#)

[Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan](#)