

Employment Plan
Good Work For All
2023 – 2026

Work
& **Thrive** Newcastle



Foreword from Cllr Alexander Hay



In March 2023 we launched our Inclusive Economic Strategy for Newcastle. This plan sets out our shared vision

for a more inclusive and green local economy, and the key actions we will take to deliver this.

It celebrates the success we have achieved to date with our key partners - our college, universities, hospitals and health trusts, our businesses, and our voluntary and community sector organisations. But it also recognises that as we continue to grow, we need to do more to ensure all our residents and businesses can prosper and thrive.

Employment and employability are at the heart of our vision for an inclusive economy. We all know of the North East's historical unemployment challenges and how there is still far too much precarious, low paid work. Newcastle faces many issues and challenges which are outlined in this plan. We need to tackle these, and better access to local work is key to that. Not just any work, but Good Work including volunteering, work that pays

fairly, brings satisfaction, and gives people from all backgrounds the chance to progress in their lives. We need to make sure that people have the skills, training, and guidance they need to be ready to contribute to and benefit from the opportunities we create. We need to tackle the barriers to employment, building better pathways such as apprenticeships for residents into a diverse range of jobs, providing opportunities that drive our changing local economy, and support home-grown opportunities for more local people.

We can't do any of this alone. The Council are committed to providing the leadership, and helping build the frameworks to deliver this ambition, but we need to work together in partnership to achieve this. That is why we have created our new Newcastle Employment Partnership – Work and Thrive Newcastle. This open and inclusive partnership brings together all those working in employment support under a shared vision, with shared commitments to act. This plan sets out what these are, and how we will work together to deliver and measure our success in collaboration.

We know there will be challenges ahead. We won't get everything right, but we will listen, adapt where necessary, and strive to do things better as a partnership. Working together we will use all our knowledge, skills, and experience to build those better opportunities to ensure all our local people and businesses work and thrive.

Our vision

To offer all Newcastle residents improved access to high quality employment support and good work opportunities by working together in an inclusive partnership.



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Our key challenges



Population

New – 298,000
NE – 2,646,800
GB – 65,121,700



Working age population

New – 67.6% (201,700)
NE – 61.8%
GB – 62.9%



Economically active

New – 70.6% (143,700)
NE – 74.0%
GB – 78.5%



Self-employment

New – 6.6% (13,400)
NE – 7.1%
GB – 9.3%



Inactive

New – 29.4% (58,700)
NE – 26.0%
GB – 21.5%



Inactive (retired)

New – 12.2% (7,200)
NE – 14.8%
GB – 13.8%



Inactive (long-term sick)

New – 24.6% (14,400)
NE – 32.0%
GB – 25.8%



Inactive (students)

New – 34.5% (20,300)
NE – 21.7%
GB – 26.3%



Inactive (wants a job)

New – 18.8% (11,000)
NE – 22.4%
GB – 18.1%



Inactive (doesn't want a job)

New – 81.2% (47,700)
NE – 77.6%
GB – 81.9%



Workless Households

New – 18.2% (18,000)
NE – 19.1%
GB – 14.0%



Claimant Count

New – 4.5% (8,995)
NE – 4.1%
GB – 3.7%

10 key facts

One

The proportion of working age population in employment in 2022 sits at 67.6%, higher than both the regional (61.8%) and national (62.9%) averages.

Two

29.4% of the working age population are economically inactive, which includes over 20,000 students but also 14,400 residents on long-term sick. Between 2005-2022 economic inactivity was consistently high compared to regional and national benchmarks.

Three

Unemployment in the city stood at 4.5% in 2022, compared to 3.7% nationally, and has been consistently above the national level for many years.

Four

35,263 residents were claiming Universal Credit in January 2023, which is 17% of the working age population.

Five

The median salary in Newcastle is 9% higher than the North East average but 3% lower than the UK average. The median Newcastle salary has grown at a quicker compound annual growth rate (2.4%) than both the North East (1.8%) and the UK (1.7%).

Six

The city's £9.1bn Gross Value Added (GVA) economy has grown more rapidly than regional and national benchmarks over the last decade, and currently equates to £30k GVA per capita.

Seven

Average life expectancy in South Gosforth is 71.5 years and the unemployment rate is 2.44%. Travel three stops on the Metro to Fawdon and the unemployment rate rises to 7.7% and average life expectancy falls to 66.1 years.

Eight

Newcastle provides employment for people across the North East: while there are 138,000 Newcastle residents in employment, the city is home to 192,000 jobs.

Nine

Public administration, education and healthcare is the largest occupational area in Newcastle, providing over a third of total employment, 10 percentage points higher than the UK average. Employment in Transport and communications has nearly doubled since 2011 and now makes up 10% of total employment.

Ten

The proportion of workers earning below the living wage is lower in Newcastle (11.7%) than the North East (14.8%) and UK (12.2%).



How our Partnership will make a difference

There is a lot of high-quality employment support in place already. Our Partnership will enhance mainstream provision from agencies such as JobCentre Plus, National Careers Service and DWP programmes, adding value, finding, and filling gaps, and bringing everything together.

Through this better co-ordinated working together we will tackle the barriers to accessing good employment, so everyone can thrive. We will engage with key partners, working closely with employers in the city to offer jobs that provide good work and conditions that

provide a decent living wage for all. This is not just about new job opportunities, but also current employment conditions, removing the insecurity of zero-hour contracts and the gig economy. We will also support those experiencing in-work poverty to find better paid employment, alleviating the uncertainty and anxiety in their lives, and supporting better mental health and wellbeing.

We know that often it is not about what employment opportunities are available, but how we make those opportunities more accessible. It's about being more flexible and innovative in the ways we reach people seeking employment and better work and being more creative in how we recruit to those vacancies. The Council and its partners can take a lead

in this area, adapting and changing the way we engage and recruit residents. We will lead by example, adopting new methods and approaches, spreading lessons learnt, and embedding good practice supporting other employers across the city to follow. In doing so, we will build a more open and inclusive economy which allows better access for all, filling more local vacancies in a timelier fashion.

We also recognise that opportunity takes many forms. Many people have creative ideas on products and services they want to develop which our communities need. These individuals may see enterprise and the development of new business ideas as their best route to success. We will work with our lead enterprise partners and the

Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) to support residents to establish new businesses and turn their ideas and products into tangible and sustainable successes.

Our Partnership is funded by North of Tyne Combined Authority, and in delivering our plan we will work closely with them and the emerging North East Mayoral Combined Authority, supporting the delivery of the North of Tyne Employability Plan, and engaging with its Strategic Employability Group. We will also work alongside Employment Partnerships in other areas of the North East, particularly our colleagues in Northumberland and North Tyneside, to share ideas and best practice, looking for opportunities to collaborate across boundaries.

Our principles

The following principles will underpin how we deliver the priorities and actions in this plan. We will:

- Put the needs of residents first and at the heart of every decision, closely followed by the needs of employers
- Share information about what services each partner provides across other partners
- Refer residents and employers to the most appropriate support route quickly and with a 'warm handover' every time
- Always work collaboratively where this adds value, including using shared spaces, joint systems, and collective events
- Co-ordinate events, employer engagement, and training provision to minimise unnecessary competition and confusion for residents and employers
- Share best practice on what works well, what doesn't work, and where there are job opportunities and skills needs across the Work and Thrive Newcastle Partnership
- Integrate employment and skills support within wider partnerships to address people's health, housing, financial, and other barriers, particularly those communities facing multiple challenges such as those with physical and mental disabilities, those who are neurodivergent, and migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers



Our achievements so far

All our partners have delivered some incredible achievements across our city in recent years, and this plan will build on this success. Some of the highlights include:

1. Since their inception in 2007, **Newcastle Futures** have supported over 8,000 Newcastle residents into employment, and since the pandemic have supported over 300 economically inactive people across the city into work
2. In 2023, **Skills Hub partnership recruitment fairs and specialist employment support events** helped over 1,200 Newcastle residents take the next steps into employment and/or training
3. On average each year, the **Skills Hub** provides over 3,000 appointments to Newcastle residents seeking work
4. As part of the North of Tyne **Working Homes** programme, **Your Homes Newcastle (YHN)** provided employability support to 342 YHN customers, 136 of whom were economically inactive
5. The **NHS Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Service** works with 1,700 people per year with Serious Mental Illness (SMI), helping approximately 40% of all those referred to attain good, paid employment
6. In the last 2 years, **PNE** has supported 1,000 Newcastle residents start a new business and stay in business
7. In 2022, **Newcastle City Council** became an accredited **Real Living Wage employer** with 800 of our lowest paid employees seeing their income increase
8. In 2023, financial advice and support offered by **Building Futures East (BFE)** generated over £14,000 for Walker families in hardship grants and benefit claims. They have also delivered 218 point of care community health checks
9. During the financial year end to March 23, **Jobs Education and Training North (JET)** engaged and supported over almost 1,600 BAME/ESOL learners
10. Since February 2021 the **Specialist Training and Employment Programme (STEP)** for refugees has supported 166 residents with all receiving initial assessment and employment support in the form of advice and guidance, job search and CV writing



Our priorities

The Work and Thrive Newcastle Partnership will deliver this plan with the following shared priorities and actions. By Good Work we include volunteering, and mean work that pays fairly, brings satisfaction, and gives people from all backgrounds the chance to progress in their lives. Whilst the Partnership is committed to adding shared value in supporting the delivery of these actions, the accountability for targets and delivery sits with the relevant funding body.

Priority 1:

Become a city where all work is Good Work

Priority 2:

Ensure all residents can access opportunities for Good Work

Priority 3:

Support residents to become economically active in Good Work

Priority 4:

Support our City of Sanctuary to provide Good Work to all

Priority One: Become a city where all work is Good Work

Our challenges

- Long-standing unemployment challenges from de-industrialisation and a dependence on precarious, low paid work persist in the region and city
- 16.8% of households in the city live in fuel poverty, and 19% of adults have problematic debt. 42.3% of children in Newcastle are living in poverty and many of these live in households that work
- As with the rest of the country, rising rents, mortgages, and the cost of food and fuel are seeing disposable incomes eroded putting pressure on those in work
- Salary increases are also failing to keep pace with acute inflation leading to reports of significant growth of in-work poverty. Local food banks are reporting a 25% increase in usage from those in-work
- Median salaries in the North East are lower than the UK average across most industries and across all occupation types, with the lowest earners (20th percentile) in Newcastle earning less than national average
- Changing employment patterns are leading to a critical and growing proportion of the lowest paid in an insecure cycle of engaging with the employment market on short-term, flexible contracts and/or zero-hour contracts

- Some sectors and occupational areas have normalised these conditions creating a churn of employment/unemployment
- Residents often hold more than one role in poor quality work and become trapped in a cycle of poverty and debt
- The need and desire to access more secure, better paid work is prevented by barriers such as childcare and travel costs
- These conditions undermine physical and mental well-being contributing to wider and more acute issues
- Traditionally, there has been a focus in employment support on getting the unemployed into work and those in more precarious situations have not been eligible or a priority for mainstream support

Strategic Context

Newcastle City Council's **Anti-Poverty Strategy** sets out the Council and its partners' vision to deliver a fair and inclusive city where everyone can lead full and happy lives free from poverty and inequality. Providing **Good Work** opportunities for all is at the heart of this vision. We will support the strategy ensuring the values and objectives are embedded in all that the Work and Thrive Partnership does to support our residents into **Good Work** or better work.

Our commitments

These are the actions the Work and Thrive Newcastle Partnership will deliver to tackle these challenges.

Actions will include:	What we hope to achieve:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Good Work Pledge and Real Living Wage accreditation are strategic priorities for Newcastle Council and key anchor institutions in Newcastle. We will work with our Living Wage City group to have Newcastle recognised as a Living Wage City and promote the Real Living Wage and Good Work Pledge through our Employer Engagement Forum and other routes. This will drive our Good Work agenda across a wider network of local employers pushing for changes in pay and conditions, including better contracts, and recruitment practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will aim to achieve Living Wage City accreditation for Newcastle by the end of 2026, with at least 500 Newcastle employers signed up to the Good Work Pledge and Real Living Wage Pledge.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YHN identify and support customers who are experiencing insecure employment, focusing on finding a job that is more financially sustainable. They provide a holistic approach to supporting residents with dedicated experts providing in-depth budgeting and benefit advice, ensuring customers are claiming a full entitlement and any in-work top ups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to target and grow this dedicated offer to YHN customers aiming to support 550 Newcastle social housing residents into better and more secure jobs by the end of 2026.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many of our Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations offer additional support for those in their communities with jobs, but who are suffering because of in-work poverty. For example, Building Futures East (BFE) run a foodbank from their centre in Walker, alongside advice on welfare, financial inclusion and money management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work with our VCS partners to support more vulnerable residents across the city and look to support at least 1,000 families by the end of 2026.

Our commitments (continued)

Actions will include:	What we hope to achieve:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcastle East – Inclusive, Healthy, Vibrant High Streets is a £2million North of Tyne Combined Authority funded project focusing on improving high streets in the East End. Led by Newcastle Council working closely with local communities and businesses the project brings empty properties back into use, provides support for local traders, and creates greener, more attractive public spaces for residents and visitors. The project is also working with local communities to develop a long-term investment plan for the area, at the heart of which will be the development of more inclusive, good jobs for residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will support this project delivering a recruitment event in Byker taking good job opportunities to residents. • We will also promote the Good Work Employer initiative and Real Living Wage Pledge to all local employers securing 30 employers in the area to commit to one or more of the pledges by the end of 2026.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising the key links between good work and good mental and physical health, Work and Thrive Newcastle are working with Newcastle City Council’s Public Health team to ensure there is greater targeted employment support in outreach centres across the most deprived wards in the city. This a key part of our commitment to supporting the successful implementation of Newcastle City Council’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will look to develop new outreach centres and models of delivery to ensure a more holistic offer in which health and employment support are mutually supportive and embedded underlying the core principles of Making Every Contact Count (MECC). • We will make better use of the Children and Young People’s Community Hubs, develop stronger relationships with local health practitioners and social prescribers, and promote a comprehensive training offer to our network of skills advisers raising awareness of specialist areas of health and supporting better referrals to health support.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North of Tyne’s Child Poverty Prevention programme is a three pillared approach to tackling poverty currently being piloted in almost 90 schools and with 30 employers across North of Tyne. The programme delivers poverty interventions in schools, provides welfare support through the school gate, and works with employers to tackle poverty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During next academic year (2023-24), we will support the expansion of the programme across Newcastle contributing to an increase in the overall North of Tyne target to support 120 schools and 45 employers in total.



Priority Two: Ensure all residents can access opportunities for Good Work

Our challenges

- A recent study by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) found the main challenges identified by small businesses in filling vacancies were finding the right person to suit their business needs (70%), finding the right technical skills and qualifications (56%) and a lack of applicants (45.6%)
- Of the 860 businesses who responded to a recent North of Tyne Business Survey, more than 12% reported staff recruitment as a key barrier to them achieving their ambitions. More than half had current vacancies, and most had vacancies proving difficult to fill. Businesses with hard-to-fill vacancies blamed a lack of applicants with the skills, qualifications, or experience (48%)
- Partners acknowledge there is a disconnect between employers and employees, often linked to applicant's expectations and perceptions of employment, and the barriers faced in traditional recruitment processes. Many partners engaging with employers are encouraging more flexibility in recruitment, both in terms of where employers look for candidates and how they go about recruiting. Partners and many employers recognise that filling vacancies requires structural change, innovation, and being open to learning from other approaches
- There are many sectors who have historically struggled to recruit, such as health and social care where ongoing recruitment challenges have resulted in serious staff shortages impacting on the viability of the sector and the level of service it can provide

- The largest and fastest growing sectors in the city are Human Health and Social Work, Education, Accommodation and Food Service, and Public Admin and Defence. All have job levels above the national average
- In terms of wages per worker, the highest industry wages are in Transportation and Storage, Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply, Information and Communication, Education, and Construction. All average more than £30K per annum

Strategic Context

Newcastle Council's **Inclusive Economic Strategy** highlights that to drive inclusive growth in the city we, as a Council need to lead with our anchor institutions, trade unions and employers across the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to increase employment rates for groups who are currently underrepresented in Newcastle's workforce. A key to this is bridging the gap between the supply of jobs and the local demand for them, making residents aware of opportunities available, and providing support to overcome the barriers to accessing those jobs. This commitment is at the core of the Work and Thrive Newcastle Partnership and a key priority of this plan. We will work with colleagues and partners supporting young people to access good work opportunities, and awareness of existing and emerging opportunities through good advice and guidance, and work experience. We will do this through our support for the delivery of our **Children and Young People's Plan**.

Our commitments

These are the actions the Work and Thrive Newcastle Partnership will deliver to tackle these challenges.

Actions will include:	What we hope to achieve:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcastle City Council's Construction Talent Pool is a proactive approach to identifying customers with an interest, or experience in, construction and to market them directly to contractors and subcontractors. The service offer includes health and safety training, PPE, work experience, an introduction to contractors/subcontractors, and notification of relevant vacancies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will develop further talent pools for other sectors where we have high levels of vacancies and strong jobseeker interest with the aim to support 200 Newcastle residents to access jobs across a range of sectors by the end of 2026.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in Newcastle Central Library, the Skills Hub is a partnership facility funded and run by Newcastle City Council (NCC). The Hub is Work and Thrive Newcastle's one-stop-shop for employment support in the city, bringing together our local partners to ensure all our residents and businesses have the dedicated support they need, and the opportunity to prosper and thrive. A key part of the Hub's offer is linking partners to local job opportunities and helping bring those that need work closer to vacancies, ensuring they are in the best possible position to secure those places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will rename the Skills Hub, Work and Thrive Central, develop a new website, and commission a feasibility study assessing the opportunities to develop further outreach locations around the city to support greater access and effectiveness of our employment support offer in local communities. • Building on our success to date, we will look to deliver over 3,000 appointments per year on average up to the end of 2026.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcastle City Council's Targeted Recruitment and Training (TRT) project uses the planning system and procurement processes to require developers and contractors to provide jobs, apprenticeships, and work experience for residents, particularly those facing barriers to employment. It includes a construction training fund. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through Targeted Recruitment and Training we will support 150 Newcastle residents into opportunities by the end of 2026.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A successful partnership between YHN and Newcastle Council delivers a recurring series of jobs fairs and community recruitment roadshows across the city. This approach helps raise the profile of both YHN and NCC as employers whilst also being successful in recruiting 'hard to fill' vacancies through more direct and flexible approaches to recruitment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on this model, the Partnership will deliver more flexible and targeted approaches to recruitment, aiming to deliver at least 10 recruitment and support events per year up to the end of 2026, supporting a total of 5,000 residents from across the city.

Our commitments (continued)

Actions will include:	What we hope to achieve:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcastle City Learning (NCL) support residents, including some of the hardest to reach within the city to access and improve employment through a wide range of alternative education and training programmes at foundation level. Programmes provide a bridge to more advanced studies and skills development, as well as supporting stepping stone pathways into apprenticeships and full-time employment. Along with more traditional in-work training programmes the City Learning offer supports upskilling and retraining, wider employability skills, builds confidence, and develops social and emotional skills. • City Learning offer apprenticeship training and provide a full-time Programme for Young (PYP) supporting learners aged 16-19 looking to make the transition from school into higher level studies, apprenticeship programmes of learning or work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over the next three academic years we will support 2,000 Newcastle residents onto foundation level programmes, supporting a 90% success rate and positive progression onto further training and employment. • We will support 50 new apprentices to a successful conclusion in the academic year 2022-2023 and support 100 young people to make a successful transition from school into further study, an apprenticeship or good work in the academic year 2022-2023.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DWP led Sector Based Work Academy Programme (SWAPs) are designed to help Job Centre Plus claimants build confidence to improve their job prospects and enhance their CV, whilst helping employers in sectors with current local vacancies to fill them more flexibly and directly. In addition, many providers offer Academy type routeways offering short courses with guaranteed interviews at the end supporting residents who are job ready into local vacancies and better linking local supply and demand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will support the SWAPs through referrals via our Skills Hub and wider partnership offer. Where gaps in local skills are identified, the Partnership will work with the SWAPs to see if new offers can be developed to meet local employer needs. • We will encourage the development of more Academy routeways through our local providers, particularly in sectors identified with high needs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills Bootcamps are available in a range of skills areas aligned to employer demand across the region. Funded through North of Tyne Combined Authority with £5 million of Department for Education funding, these are free courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to interview with local employers. Sectors supported are Construction, Culture and Events, Digital, Green Skills, Logistics, and Technical. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will support the Bootcamps, raising awareness of their offer across the Partnership, and ensuring appropriate Newcastle residents are referred to the various programmes.

Actions will include:	What we hope to achieve:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviving the Heart of the West End offer 'A Day in the Life of...' experiences designed to bust myths around key local sectors such as Care, Contact Centre, Cleaning, Retail & Hospitality. Reed in Partnership deliver a similar type of programme. The experiences bring the roles to life especially when a company is presenting giving customers a clear understanding of roles that are available in that sector. Residents can see the working environment, speak to existing employees, and challenge any negative perceptions of the work. • Working within the heart of local communities, building trusted relationships, and targeting specific local needs, employment support projects delivered by our Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations build bridges between the most vulnerable and hardest to reach in our most deprived communities and the wider network of employment support and jobs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will aim to help 500 Newcastle residents to have accessed these specialist work-based experiences by the end of 2026. • Where appropriate, we will look to expand this model across more sectors and partners providing more residents with an opportunity to this type of pre-work experience. • Building on this success, Work and Thrive Newcastle will work with the emerging Community Partnerships to ensure employment support is targeted at those with greatest need and our employment support partners are working closely with VCS and grass-roots organisations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Creative and Cultural Zone is a North of Tyne Combined Authority funded project developing the area around Clayton Street through a programme of activities and events boosting the local cultural and creative sector. A key aim is to facilitate a more diverse, inclusive, and skilled creative workforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will support this sector ensuring more job opportunities are developed, and innovative approaches adopted to match residents with new and emerging vacancies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Partnership's Newcastle Flexifund is a mechanism to help people overcome barriers to taking up opportunities. This adviser-led scheme supports the positive transition into work addressing barriers and reducing the risk of residents not being able to start work or of dropping out. The fund covers things such as travel passes, work clothes, food, and groceries during the first month of employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will aim to support 500 Newcastle residents aged sixteen and over with Flexifund grants to help remove barriers to accessing employment or training and support sustained employment by the end of 2026.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Prince's Trust Development Awards provide grants of up to £250 for young people aged 16 -30 who face financial barriers in accessing employment or training. The awards cover clothing, course fees and/or materials, travel, ID, tools/equipment and more. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will look to support 150 Newcastle young people per year access Development Awards by the end of 2026.

Priority Three: Support residents to become economically active in Good Work

Our challenges

- The employment rate in Newcastle has consistently fallen below regional and national averages, with comparatively consistent high levels of economic inactivity, however figures are skewed by our relatively high student population
- The inactivity rate in Newcastle peaked at a high point of 34% in 2013, and a low of 22% in 2021 when it aligned with the national average, then spiked from 2021 well above North East and UK rates
- The proportion of residents inactive due to sickness has increased, with a sharp rise in long-term sickness following the pandemic, however rates are still lower than regional and national averages.
- The over 50s, ESOL, carers, neurodivergent, and those with mental health issues are key areas of concern, either directly or through supporting those impacted by long-term sickness
- Those inactive due to early retirement has also increased due to the pandemic, though the retirement risk in Newcastle is relatively low as the population of over 55s (80,935) is lower than the national average for a city of Newcastle's size (106,174)

- National research suggests many economically inactive over 50s would return to the workplace for the right job, ideally with more flexible hours and working conditions, but the relatively low cost of living and high proportion of the workforce on good public sector pensions present specific challenges for the city in attracting older workers out of early retirement
- 47,700 people are economically inactive and do not want a job in Newcastle (81.2%) which is higher than the regional average (77.6%) and on a par with national figures (81.9%)
- Many over 50s who are economically inactive see age prejudice amongst employers as a major barrier to them being able to return to the workplace

Strategic Context

Economic inactivity is a key concern nationally post-pandemic, and a major policy focus area with evidence of significant spikes in numbers of people not engaged in work or looking for work. The evidence in Newcastle and across the North of Tyne sub-region is that this is a growing issue and an area we need specific focus and extra support. The **North of Tyne Combined Authority's Employability Plan** and the commissioning priorities of the **UK Shared Prosperity Funding** reflect this. The Work and Thrive Newcastle Partnership will support the delivery of this priority through this plan.

Our commitments

These are the actions the Work and Thrive Newcastle Partnership will deliver to tackle these challenges.

Actions will include:	What we hope to achieve:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wise Group Relational Mentoring programme will provide relational mentoring to economically inactive residents across the Newcastle area, targeting the most vulnerable across the city in areas of the highest deprivation such as Byker, Walker, Elswick, Benwell, and Newcastle City Centre. Specifically, it will target those facing the most significant barriers such as the over 50s, carers, ESOL, and people experiencing mental health issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will support economically inactive Newcastle residents within the target communities and groups to progress towards a positive destination, such as employment, training, or volunteering, contributing to an overall delivery target of 250 Newcastle residents by project completion.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress North East is a rolling programme of expert-led, one-to-one mentor support, targeting economically inactive people who are autistic and/or neurodivergent, with learning difficulties and disabilities, and experiencing mental ill-health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will support economically inactive Newcastle residents within this group to progress into positive outcomes, contributing to an overall delivery target of around 33 Newcastle residents by project completion.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcastle Futures provide free personalised employability advice to anyone in the city who is unemployed, economically inactive, or under-employed and looking for better work. The outreach service meets customers where they are most comfortable, delivering across the city in a range of local venues such as libraries, jobcentres, and foodbanks, also working more flexibly in a blended offer to residents with access issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through our dedicated in-house service, we will increase our engagement with economically inactive people across the city supporting 100 of these into work, volunteering, or other positive outcomes by the end of 2026. • We will commission research into the local population who are economically inactive, and our employment support offer to better understand our target group, and how best to engage with them.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) and other social housing providers such as Karbon Homes deliver dedicated 1-2-1 employability support to their tenants, many of whom are economically inactive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through this dedicated social housing offer, we will aim to support 500 economically inactive people assisting 200 of these into work, volunteering, or other positive outcomes by the end of 2026.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Development Trust (EDT) deliver the National Careers Service on behalf of the UK government working in the North East, Cumbria, Yorkshire, and the Humber and in parts of the South East of England. The service offers informed careers, employment and skills support to residents who are unemployed and economically inactive, helping bridge the gap between education, training, and employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to support interventions through the Skills Hub, maximising referrals of economically inactive Newcastle residents through this service.

Our commitments (continued)

Actions will include:	What we hope to achieve:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Newcastle Carers programme supports residents who have caring commitments and want to find work to access a range of route-ways into local jobs. Given the nature of caring, and the difficulty in accessing work, and specific barriers faced many of the people they have been supporting are economically inactive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will support economically inactive Newcastle unpaid carers of all ages into positive outcomes contributing to an overall delivery target of 400 across the North of Tyne sub-region by project completion (April 2024).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newcastle City Learning (NCL) support some of the hardest-to-reach residents within the city through several pre-employment programmes. The Dream, Discover, Do programme is funded by the North of Tyne Combined Authority and specialises in supporting those who may have been inactive for some time looking to get back into work. The programme embeds wider employability skills, building confidence and developing social and emotional skills, as well as offering volunteering opportunities as an initial step back into work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the next three academic years we will continue to support learners who have been inactive aiming to support 30 additional learners on the Dream, Discover, Do programme in the academic year 2023-24.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviving the Heart of the West End (RHWE) deliver the Routes to Work programme supporting disadvantaged people, many of whom are economically inactive. This community-based project supports local people to take steps towards feeling confident, resilient, and ready for work/self-employment. Activities are delivered through experience-based learning, workshops, 1-2-1 coaching, and peer mentoring bespoke to the client's needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will aim to support 250 economically inactive Newcastle residents in the west per year into this and other RHWE programmes with at least 75 securing positive outcomes including employment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed from the Build, Empower and Transform (BEaT) programme Building Futures East (BFE) offer a package of coaching and skills development that encompasses stress/change management, making better life choices, basic skills, financial literacy, career's advice, and vocational options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will aim to support 480 economically inactive residents in the east of the city into this programme, with 150 securing positive outcomes including employment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NHS Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Service is a community-based programme which successfully helps reduce economic inactivity, in addition to accelerating people's recovery from Severe Mental Illness (SMI) providing evidence-based, tailored support for people across the city and for their employers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will support the delivery of the new Primary Care Centre, a dedicated health and well-being hub in the city supporting more Newcastle residents with SMI, including those who are economically inactive, or at risk of becoming economically inactive to find and/or remain in employment. We will aim to support 50 referrals of economically inactive Newcastle residents with mental health needs to the Primary Care Centre by 2026.

Actions will include:	What we hope to achieve:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newcastle Council Careers and Guidance Team provides information, advice and guidance to young people aged between 13 and 19. Our specialist Careers Advisers support young people to make positive future choices with information about college courses, apprenticeships, 6th form in schools, employment and a range of other options depending on their needs and interests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to deliver this dedicated youth offer through the Skills Hub as part of our mainstream support for economically inactive young people with up to 900 appointments per year and looking to support at least 320 inactive young people make positive steps towards education, employment, and/or training.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Prince's Trust offer a range of flexible roll-on, roll-off programmes for 16-30-year-olds including Get Into, Get Started, Employability Online, Team, and Explore amongst a range of others. Each programme has its own specific flavour, pathway, and eligibility criteria offering a progression route for those young people that are NEET and furthest from being job or training ready, right through to those that are much closer to the level of positive engagement. The Trust also offer flexible support grants to help bridge the gap into positive outcomes and alleviate financial barriers to young people not sustaining positive choices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will aim to support 150 economically inactive (NEET) young people per year in Newcastle into Prince's Trust education, employment, and/or training programmes up to the end of 2026.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NU Futures is Newcastle United Foundation's targeted provision for 16-29-year-olds who are NEET. This flexible roll-on roll-off provision is delivered at NUCASTLE alongside an extensive range of community outreach programmes targeting thousands of young people across the city and wider North of Tyne region. This offer provides support for young adults furthest from the jobs market through mentoring, personal development, digital STEM learning and regular interactions with local employers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will aim to support 150 economically inactive (NEET) young people per year in the city into NU Futures employment, education, and/or training programmes up to the end of 2026.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PNE, Millin Enterprise, and RHWE's Start and Grow programmes support the economically inactive and on benefits to understand running a business can be a viable employment option. The Prince's Trust Explore Enterprise programme provides loans, grants, and support from enterprise mentors to 18-30-year-olds looking to start a business. These are part of our Business Intellectual Property Service (BIPC) providing advice and support to business start-ups and those looking to upscale or grow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through this dedicated enterprise support, we will aim to support 700 residents with 1-2-1 advice to develop their ideas into business start-ups by the end of 2026.

Priority Four: Support our City of Sanctuary to provide Good Work to all

Our challenges

- Around 11% of Newcastle’s total population are Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic (BAME). This rises to 24% among school-age children. Most live in the west end of the city
- Racial diversity is high with the number of racially diverse people at 51,182 compared with a national average of 43,138
- Over 1,700 asylum seekers are dispersed across the city many in resettlement schemes from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Ukraine. Many have refugee status accepted
- Many of our refugees are highly skilled and keen to fill vacancies, but language is often a barrier to progression to employment
- There is strong evidence of capacity issues in local ESOL provision mainly around insufficient courses, a lack of bespoke, flexible provision, particularly conversational and sector/work focused courses
- There is a need for more trained ESOL tutors
- Providers report large waiting lists with reports of over 300 people waiting to access ESOL provision. Often the same people are on multiple waiting lists keen to access whichever opportunities become available first
- Often the only chance of accessing a mainstream course is through drop-out and back-fill, or waiting until next year’s sign ups

Strategic Context

Newcastle is a **City of Sanctuary** recognising the strong partnership between individuals, grass roots organisations, the voluntary and community sector, organisations, and anchor institutions all with a shared vision to collectively welcome and support people seeking sanctuary in the city. As part of this the Council and its partners have developed a shared **City of Sanctuary Strategy** outlining their commitment and the actions they will take to continue to ensure all those who need support receive it. Securing access to dedicated refugee and asylum seekers specialist support in ESOL provision, training, and employment support are key parts of the commitment of the strategy. We will support the delivery of this strategy ensuring the values and objectives are embedded in all the Work and Thrive Partnership does to support those seeking sanctuary and employment in our city.

Our commitments

These are the actions the Work and Thrive Newcastle Partnership will deliver to help tackle these challenges.

Actions will include:	What we hope to achieve:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Partnership will develop the Newcastle ESOL Service for the city providing a central point of access, with a common screening/assessment tool, bringing together local provision into one core offer. Key priorities for the service include identifying suitable employment support, employment, and training opportunities, ensuring clients are referred to the most appropriate pathways, and where appropriate fast-tracked into available work opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will establish the ESOL Service in Autumn 2023 aiming to have supported 2,000 ESOL residents and secured over 1,000 into positive outcomes such as employment, volunteering and/or training. • We will employ an ESOL Coordinator to lead on the implementation and management of the service by the end of October 2023.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcastle College is the largest provider of mainstream provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) offering a wide range of mainstream ESOL programmes at all levels. The College aims to start over 1,400 Newcastle residents on part-time ESOL programmes in Sept 23, and of these more than 60% will start at Pre-Entry – Entry 3 level. ESOL residents will also have access to other short courses such as Maths, IT, H&SC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will aim for over 5,000 ESOL residents to have access to mainstream ESOL programmes at the College by the end of the 2026 academic year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcastle City Learning (NCL) provides a range of high-quality provision of ESOL programmes for residents. In 2022/23 the service supported more individual learners than ever before, with many learners completing multiple learning aims and progressing into further vocational training courses to further improve their employability chances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Learning will grow this offer, working with Newcastle College, the Jobs Centre, and the Newcastle ESOL Service to support residents looking for ESOL programmes. We will aim to maximise referrals of ESOL residents into City Learning provision and support full capacity each year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs Education and Training (JET) is one of our key ESOL and specialist Information, Advice and Guidance providers for second language speakers, filling the gap in local mainstream provision. They help those from the settled ethnic backgrounds in the city, or newly arrived in the UK to overcome some of the challenges they face in searching for work, suitable training, and work experience, as well as integrating into society and their local communities through a team of qualified Personal Advisors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to provide this targeted support for the ESOL community in Newcastle aiming to assist at least 1,000 ESOL residents per year, with more than 400 per year progressing into positive outcomes including employment and training by the end of 2026.

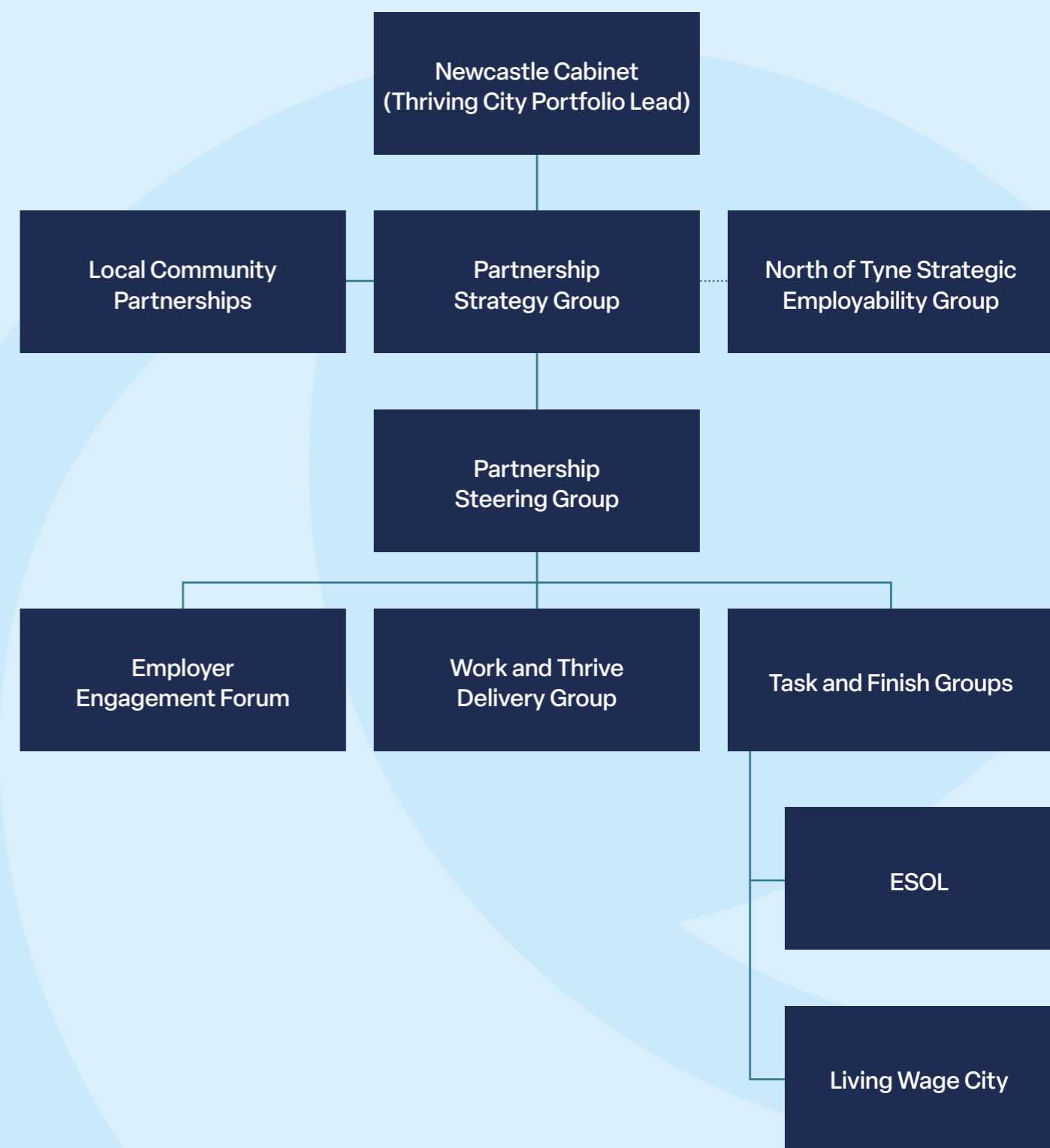
Our commitments (continued)

Actions will include:	What we hope to achieve:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STEP is a national programme Specialist Training and Employment Programme for refugees funded by the World Jewish Relief with additional resource from the Asylum and Migration Integration Fund. Locally, delivery of the programme is supported by Newcastle Council and YHN. Originally set up to help resettled Syrian refugees, STEP now supports all resettled refugees in the UK. The programme provides employability support to its beneficiaries through one-to-one support focused on helping people find employment which fits with the individual's background, experience, and ambitions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will aim to support 200 Newcastle refugees with employment support, securing employment for 80 residents, and ESOL and/or vocational training for 90 programme participants by the end of 2026.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led by REED in Partnership, the Refugee Employability Programme offers everyone a caseworker who provides one-to-one employment, English, and integration support and a learning plan to help refugees improve their language and career skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will look to maximise appropriate referrals from Newcastle to the Refugee Employability Programme through our primary routes including JET, Newcastle College, Newcastle City Learning, and the Newcastle ESOL Service.



Our governance

The Work and Thrive Newcastle Partnership will deliver this plan through the following governance arrangements:





Our commitment to share and listen

Communication is key to Work and Thrive Newcastle. We will:

- Ensure that partners, employers and jobseekers are able to shape our services
- Promote our unique and recognisable brand identity for the Partnership – Work and Thrive Newcastle, which will unify all partners and highlight the shared work we deliver
- Ensure all activity delivered by the Partnership is promoted under the same shared brand, including our main delivery centre, the Skills Hub which we will rename, Work and Thrive Central
- Communicate the vision and ambitions of the Partnership and how it will help to create a better and fairer Newcastle
- Raise awareness of what the Partnership offers through regular communications using various channels appropriate for the target audiences, in particular our Partnership newsletter will be a key vehicle of shared communication for our partners
- Encourage engagement and participation from all audiences by making the benefits of the Partnership clear in all communication
- Ensure all information is accurate, timely and accessible to all
- Review and reflect on what people tell us about our work, revising our plans where needed

Measuring our success

Our success will be measured by our achievements in the following:

1. More Newcastle residents in employment, including those previously unavailable to work due to ill health
2. Fewer residents who are economically inactive, particularly in key target groups such as the over 50s, ESOL, carers, neurodivergent, and those suffering from mental health issues
3. An increase in the number of residents accessing our Partnership employment support and enterprise offers
4. A reduction in local waiting lists for ESOL provision and an increase in ESOL residents in employment and training
5. An increase in accredited Newcastle Living Wage employers
6. More Newcastle employers awarded NTCA's Good Work Pledge
7. Fewer local unfilled vacancies, particularly in key sectors linked to our local talent pools

Next steps from Heather Lee (Inaugural Independent Chair)



Access to good employment is vital for all our residents, as well as creating a thriving city in which

everyone can better access opportunities as they emerge. These will be critical in helping us deliver a more inclusive economy, reducing poverty, and improving the health and well-being of all.

This plan is only the beginning. It is a statement of the Council's intent to provide strategic leadership for employment support across the city, and to work closely with our residents, partners, VCS organisations, Trade Unions and Newcastle businesses. Through greater partnership we will be stronger, and more able to remove barriers and create the opportunities our residents and businesses need to thrive.

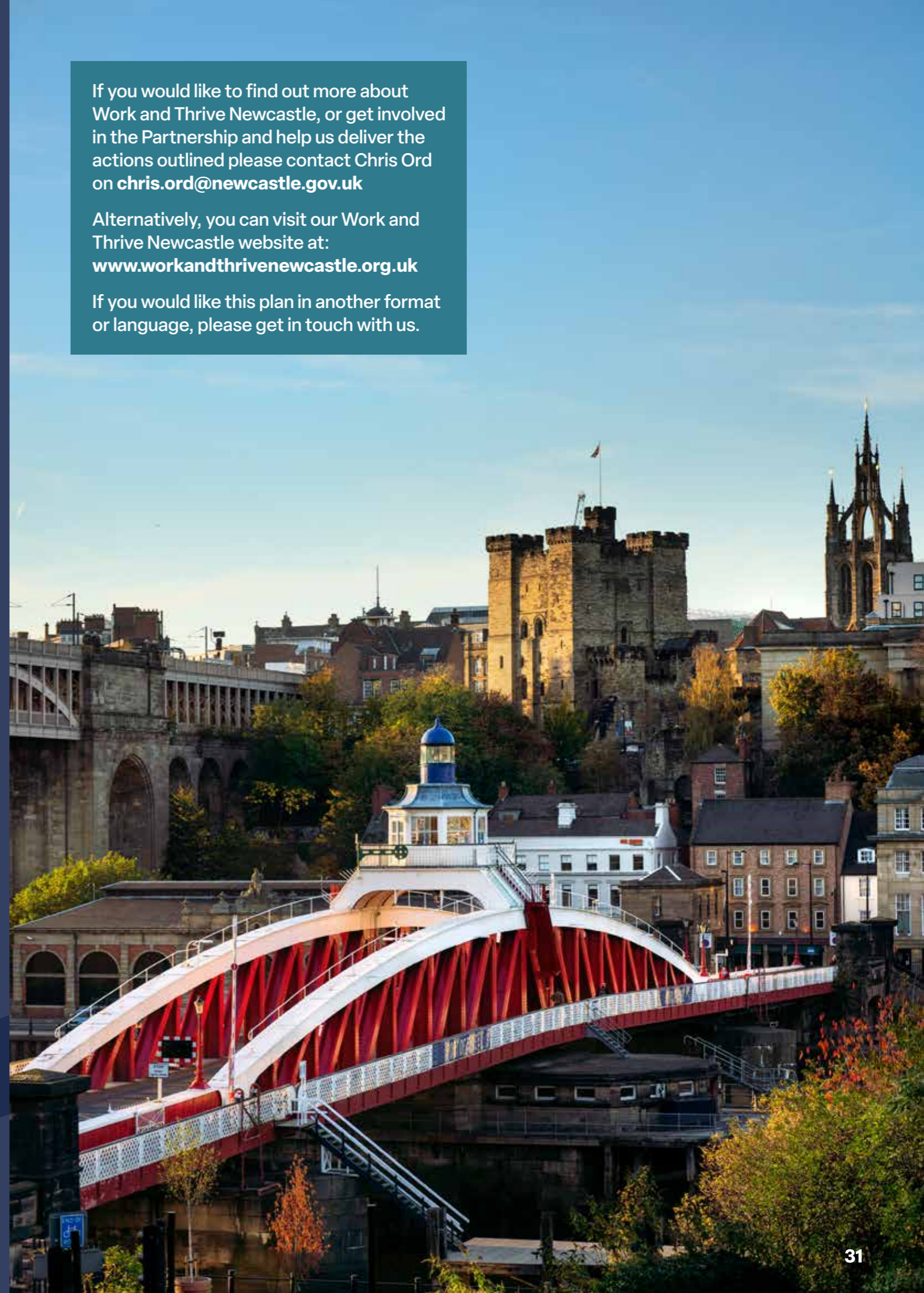
In addition to the actions in this plan, Newcastle City Council and the Work and Thrive Newcastle Partnership commits to the following:

1. As portfolio leader for a Thriving City, Councillor Alex Hay will oversee the delivery of this plan, ensuring all actions are monitored, performance challenged, and success shared
2. We will seek and respond to feedback from employers, job seekers and partners to ensure the support we offer leads to stronger outcomes for all our residents and employers
3. As well as regular meetings as part of the Work and Thrive Newcastle business cycle, the Partnership will meet for an annual review in the Spring of each year to reflect on our performance, identify successes and key issues, and outline areas for further improvement to ensure we continue to deliver against our priorities. We will also review our membership to ensure it is dynamic and inclusive, reflecting the breadth of partners we work with, and people we represent

If you would like to find out more about Work and Thrive Newcastle, or get involved in the Partnership and help us deliver the actions outlined please contact Chris Ord on chris.ord@newcastle.gov.uk

Alternatively, you can visit our Work and Thrive Newcastle website at: www.workandthrivenewcastle.org.uk

If you would like this plan in another format or language, please get in touch with us.



Work & Thrive ^{Newcastle}

The Work and Thrive Partnership is funded
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