

ANNUAL EQUALITIES OBJECTIVES REPORT 2022-2023



CONTENTS

- 02 OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY
- 04 OUR EQUALITIES OBJECTIVES
- 05 PROGRESS
- 05 OBJECTIVE 1: WORKFORCE DIVERSITY
- 06 OBJECTIVE 2: STAFF CONFIDENCE ON EQUALITIES
- 07 OBJECTIVE 3: EMPLOYMENT LEVELS AMONG DISADVANTAGED GROUPS
- 09 OBJECTIVE 4: IN-WORK POVERTY
- 12 OBJECTIVE 5: CO-PRODUCTION AND CO-DESIGN
- 13 CONCLUSION

OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY

At the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) we are fully committed to turning our vision of an inclusive and sustainable economy into a reality.

We aim to bring together people and opportunities to create vibrant communities and a good quality of life for everyone.

This endeavour demands a collective effort to tackle the inequalities that some of our residents face daily.

Our goal is to ensure that every individual has a fair opportunity to not only participate in our economy but also to enjoy the benefits of truly inclusive economic growth.

We recognise that in the current climate, a significant proportion of our residents are denied access to opportunities that enable them to thrive and contribute meaningfully. That's why, this year, we've embarked on three critical initiatives directly aimed at addressing inequalities in our region.

Firstly, we've meticulously examined the state of our region and its labour market in a comprehensive report. This report scrutinises disparities through the lenses of sex, age, disability, and ethnicity. Our analysis dives deep into the most pressing issues surrounding employment, education, and training participation. It also sheds light on critical trends related to child poverty and homelessness in the North of Tyne area. 'Examining the State of our Region' is available on our website.

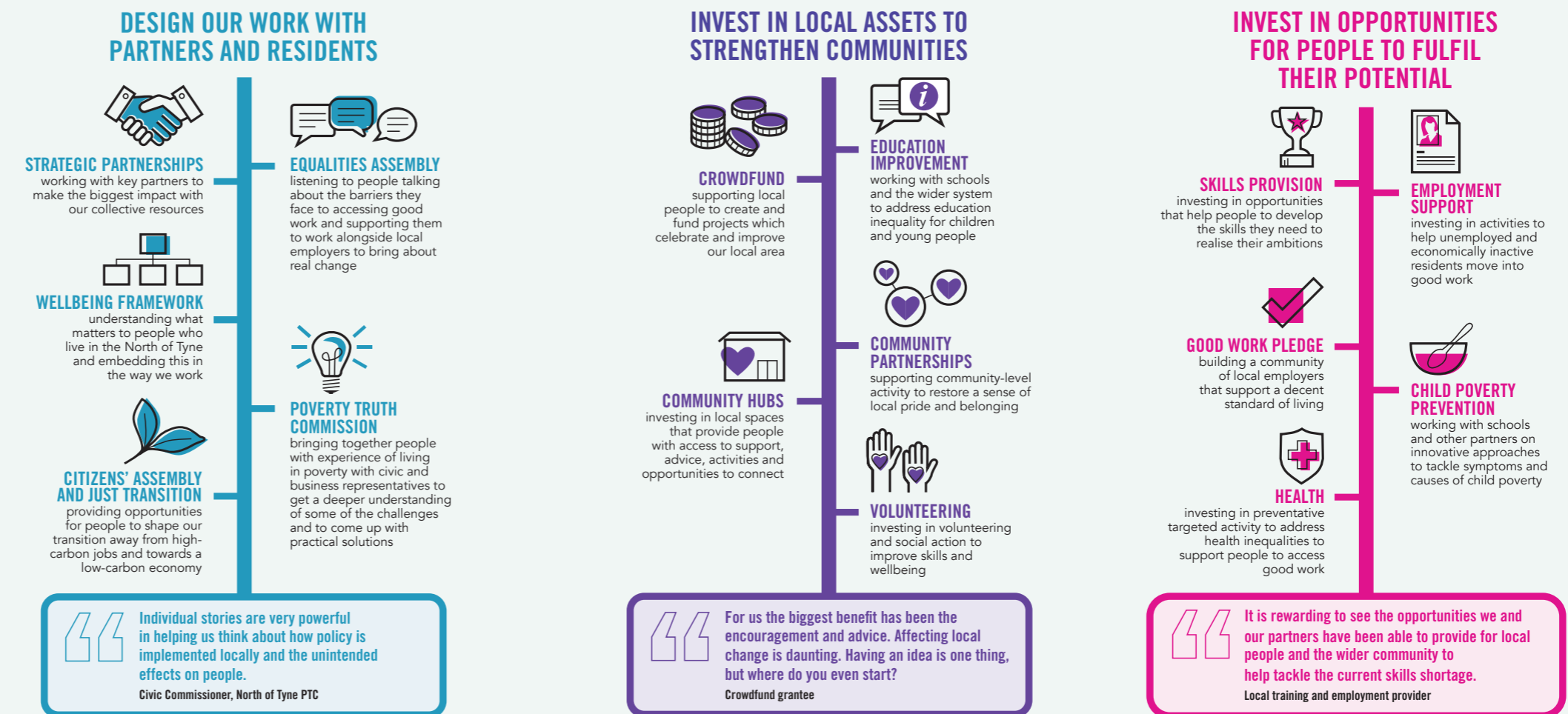
Secondly, we've hosted a series of Equalities Assemblies. These assemblies are platforms where we gather

experiences and case studies that spotlight the challenges of inequality, especially concerning 'good work' in our region. The findings so far, including opportunities for the future, are published in our second report in this series 'Open the Door a Little Wider.'

And finally, this report, our third and final Annual Equalities Objectives update before transitioning into the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (NEMCA), is a testament to our ongoing commitment to transparency and progress in the realm of equality and looks inward at how the NTCA has made progress towards our five equalities objectives during 2022-2023.

Our hope is that this work will position us well and serve as the cornerstone on which we construct our vision and strategy for a better future on the eve of further devolution and our transition to become the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (NEMCA).

An overview of key NTCA inclusive economy activity



OUR EQUALITIES OBJECTIVES



- 1 Objective 1:** Work force diversity: We have a diverse team that reflects the demography of our area, including targets for representation from groups with protected characteristics.
- 2 Objective 2:** Staff confidence: To improve the confidence of NTCA staff in relation to equalities, ensuring staff feel included and we have collective zero tolerance to all forms of discrimination.
- 3 Objective 3:** Employment levels amongst disadvantaged groups: To increase the % of women, single parents, ethnic minorities, and Disabled or Deaf residents in our jobs and skills programmes by 2% over 2 years.
- 4 Objective 4:** To reduce the prevalence of in-work poverty within the North of Tyne by 5% by June 2025, with specific focus on women, workers from people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds and Disabled or Deaf residents.
- 5 Objective 5:** Co-production and Co-design: 15% of all products and projects in NTCA to be co-designed or co-produced by June 2023.

Each year the NTCA reports on five Equalities Objectives which were approved by our Cabinet in June 2021. The Equalities Objectives align with the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires public authorities to consider the principles of the Equality Act 2010, which entail eradicating discrimination, promoting equal opportunities, and fostering positive relations among diverse groups.

NTCA worked closely with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to craft objectives that align with national best practices and local priorities. These objectives look inward, addressing both the responsibilities and expectations of our staff, as well as looking outward to our aspirations for creating a more inclusive economy in the North of Tyne.

Furthermore, NTCA formally integrated the socio-economic duty into our equalities and diversity policy, committing us to additional responsibilities concerning

poverty and inequality under Section 1 of the 2010 Equality Act. As a public authority, we recognize that low or unstable income and living in deprived areas significantly affect people’s life prospects in terms of employment, education, and health. Our equality objectives represent a public declaration of our understanding of these issues and underscore NTCA’s accountability in delivering initiatives that empower those who face the greatest barriers to participation in the North of Tyne.

This report shows progress against each objective, including performance measures and key indicators and information highlighting the activities we’ve undertaken to meet the objective.

PROGRESS: EQUALITY OBJECTIVE 1



Objective 1: Work force diversity: We have a diverse team that reflects the demography of our area, including targets for representation from groups with protected characteristics.

Performance measures and key indicators

NTCA currently employs 143 members of staff. The tables below compare the composition of the NTCA staff team with the wider North of Tyne community to identify how well we reflect everyone across our area. 2021 and 2022 figures have been included for comparison.

	NTCA 2021	NTCA 2022	NTCA 2023	NORTH OF TYNE AVERAGE (AGED 16-64)
SEX				
Male workers	39.7%	33.8%	38%	49.4%
Female workers	60.3%	66.2%	62%	50.6%
ETHNICITY				
White	89.7%	92%	87%	92.2%
Ethnic minority (excluding white minority groups)	10.3%	3.9%	2.8%	7.8%
Non declared/ prefer not to say	0	3.9%	10.2%	n/a
DISABILITY				
Disability	3.4%	1.3%	2%	17.7%
No declared disability	96.6%	92.2%	88%	82.3%
Prefer not to say	0	6.5%	10%	n/a

This data shows that there are opportunities for the NTCA to build a more diverse workforce and that our workforce may not currently be representative of the wider North of Tyne community, although this is difficult to say for sure, with 10% of staff this year choosing not to share their ethnicity or whether they have a disability. The NTCA has become more diverse in the last year, in terms of staff with disabilities, and while there appears to be under-representation of people with a declared disability within our workforce, we know these results do not present a full picture. Based on informal discussions with staff we believe we are closer in representation to the area average.

We are committed to improving the data we collect about our staff and are planning to review this in the hope that we can begin to report on a wider range of characteristics such as gender identity, so that we can better understand our people and proactively build a more inclusive work environment.

What are we doing to meet this objective?

We operate a number of guaranteed interview schemes where applicants who are disabled and meet all of the essential criteria for the role will be shortlisted for interview.

We also guarantee an interview for applicants who have just left the Armed Forces and meet all of the essential criteria for the role.

We are currently reviewing our recruitment processes including making the application stage more accessible.

We are also committed to publishing our gender pay gap on an annual basis. The gender pay gap is a measure of disparity in pay between the average earnings of men and women in the same organisation. This is separate to the issue of equal pay which refers to differences in pay between men and women for work which is defined as equal. Our gender pay gap figure will be published in May 2024.

PROGRESS: EQUALITY OBJECTIVE 2



Objective 2: Staff confidence: To improve the confidence of NTCA staff in relation to equalities, ensuring staff feel included and we have collective zero tolerance to all forms of discrimination.

Performance measures and key indicators

NTCA has recently been honoured with the 'Great Place to Work' award. 100% of staff who took part in a survey reported that they believe they are treated fairly, regardless of their gender, race, sexual orientation or socio-economic background.

Each year we carry out a staff survey which asks specifically about staff confidence with regards to equalities and how staff feel about tolerance and discrimination within the organisation. When asked how confident they are that their work (including any programmes they may manage) is equitable and inclusive, staff responded positively at an average rate of 4/5. When asked how confident are you with applying equalities in your day to day work, staff responded positively at an average rate of 4.35 out of 5. When asked are you satisfied that you can be yourself at work, and that you feel part of your team? Staff responded positively at a rate of 4.14/5. The questions asked were worded slightly differently from the previous year's survey, making a direct comparison difficult, but the results seem to be very similar to the previous year.

What are we doing to meet this objective?

Looking inward at our own processes and policies, we provide a Wellbeing and Employee Assistance Programme which provides support to employees on issues such as mental and emotional wellbeing with self-help workbooks and face to face counselling.

NTCA's Ways of Working Group provides an opportunity for staff to help shape the culture of the organisation. Members of the group facilitated two drop-in sessions inviting colleagues to share their insights, concerns and ideas. All suggestions were reported back, anonymously, to NTCA's Senior Management Team for consideration and action.

We also have comprehensive policies and guidance on our HR Intranet designed to support employees with protected characteristics such as Making Reasonable Adjustments, Medical Redeployment, Maternity policy and Supporting Trans Employees.

In terms of staff confidence around how to apply equalities in their day-to-day work, we continue to provide training and support on equality impact assessments. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) provide NTCA with an opportunity to meet our legal obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. We have recently carried out a staff survey on this process to identify opportunities to further embed promoting equality and inclusion in everything we do.



PROGRESS: EQUALITY OBJECTIVE 3



Objective 3: Employment levels amongst disadvantaged groups: To increase the % of women, single parents, ethnic minorities, and Disabled or Deaf residents in our jobs and skills programmes by 2% over 2 years.

Performance measures and key indicators

To model our original projections for this objective, we used Adult Education Budget (AEB) data. AEB provision has a clear focus on progression to employment. The table below demonstrates our progress over this time period.

	2020-1 ACADEMIC YEAR NUMBER OF ENROLMENTS AND %	2021-2 ACADEMIC YEAR NUMBER OF ENROLMENTS AND %	2022-3 ACADEMIC YEAR NUMBER OF ENROLMENTS AND %	OVERALL CHANGE SINCE 2020-1
Learning difficulty/disability	2,950 (16%)	6,545 (20%)	7,757 (22%)	+6ppts
People from minoritised ethnic backgrounds	7,705 (42%)	14,511 (45%)	16,407 (47%)	+5ppts
Female learners	10,804 (60%)	18,810 (57%)	19,728 (56%)	-4ppts

NTCA's progress against this target paints a mixed picture. Overall, the number of enrolments undertaken by each individual group of learners has seen a year-on-year increase.

The most noticeable progress over the past two years is amongst learners with learning difficulties/disabilities and those from people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds. The number of enrolments undertaken by these groups has more than doubled from 2020/21; this equates to a 6 and 5 percentage point increase respectively. The increase in the enrolments by learners from minoritised ethnic groups may be reflective of the year-on-year increase in the demand for ESOL provision.

The number of enrolments undertaken by young people and female learners has almost doubled since 2020/21. Despite the increasing enrolments, these groups make up proportionately less of the overall cohort in the 2022/23 academic year.

WHAT ARE WE DOING TO MEET THIS OBJECTIVE?

1. Inclusive employability initiatives

The North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) Employability Plan sets out our ambitions for a thriving economy which provides opportunities for all of our residents to achieve their aspirations and the top priority in our employability plan is to provide targeted employment support for those who are most

disadvantaged. This includes targeted provision for young people, for older workers, for ethnic minority groups, ex-offenders or other priority groups.

The Employability and Skills Programme is match funded by the NTCA Investment Fund and the European Social Fund (ESF), and consists of four projects that target provision towards priority resident groups, as follows:

Diversity NE, delivered by the North East Autism Society (NEAS), supports people who are neurodivergent or have a learning need, to increase their economic engagement and improve their prospects of obtaining and progressing in employment.

Get Ahead North of Tyne, delivered by Changing Lives, provides tailored support to people with multiple and complex barriers to move into job search and/or gain employment.

Northern Directions, delivered by Groundwork NE and Cumbria, supports not in employment, education or training (NEET) young people aged 16-24 to move into employment, and provides them with learning and development opportunities.

North East Skills Hub (Build NE), delivered by Gateshead College, supports long-term unemployed/economically inactive people to tackle barriers to work, concentrating on engineering & manufacturing technologies and women in construction.

CASE STUDY: MAKING CREATIVITY WORKS

In line with our objective to increase employment levels among disadvantaged groups, this year, NTCA has part funded a programme delivered by Signpost Productions and Beacon Films, two North-East production companies that work with Deaf, hearing, Disabled and non-Disabled screen creatives. Making Creativity Works is a skills training course which offers over 100 hours of free hands-on training that equips learners with the skills and knowledge they need to develop a career in film, television or video production. There's a particular call to work with people who identify as disabled or deaf, are economically inactive or unemployed or learners who are close to completing their studies.

"I found it inspiring to work alongside such a diverse range of people. I'm neurodivergent and it's been great to be able to train in a workplace where I see so many other people who are just like me."

Rebecca – Making Creativity Works student

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Go_4selTe8Y



2. Developing a deep understanding of barriers to good work

The NTCA passionately believes in the transformative nature of good work. The opportunity to gain and keep a good job helps to address not only economic inequality, but also influences social, cultural, and civic dimensions of society, ultimately helping to build more inclusive and vibrant communities. We believe that turning this vision into a reality involves developing a deep understanding of the inequalities that some of our residents face daily and a shared commitment from those involved across the system, which is why we've been running equalities assemblies for employers and residents this year. The key findings are published in our report 'Open the door a little wider.'

Our equalities assemblies have told us that the challenges surrounding inequality in the region are manifold and have encouraged us to think of equality as being wider than the legal protected characteristics.

For example, we will continue to work with those with neurodivergence, those with caring responsibilities and prison and care leavers. Our Return-to-Work Carers project has provided employability support to over 140 carers since its launch, enabling them to return to employment, education or training.

3. Skills and training for diverse learners

We passionately believe that skills and training play an important part in employment levels among disadvantaged groups. As part of our wider adult education programme, this year, the NTCA has part funded a programme delivered by the North Tyneside Adult Learning Service to provide English language support for individuals living in the borough as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, with mind to creating more opportunities for them to find and keep good work. English conversation classes offered a relaxed and friendly environment for Ukrainians to develop their English skills to help them feel more connected to the region. Initial classes proved popular, and the commitment shown by the Ukrainian learners resulted in the group winning the learning group of the year at the Adult Learning Awards in October 2022.

The initiative expanded and in 2022/2023 almost 300 people enrolled to develop speaking and listening skills including 46 learners progressing to achieve English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) qualifications.



Learning Group of the Year at our Adult Learning Awards in October 2022

Similarly, we have provided funding to JET in this year, who are a delivery partner on one of our UKSPF People and Skills Projects. JET was originally established in 2001 as part of Newcastle City Council's ESOL (English for Speakers of other Languages) service and then became a registered charity, helping those from settled ethnic backgrounds in the City or newly arrived in the UK, to overcome some of the challenges they faced in searching for work. JET are providing mentoring, employability skills training and ESOL classes.

PROGRESS: EQUALITY OBJECTIVE 4



Objective 4: To reduce the prevalence of in-work poverty within the North of Tyne by 5% by June 2025, with specific focus on women, workers from people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds and disabled or Deaf residents.

Performance measures and key indicators

In-work poverty is a challenge for our region and some groups of residents are disproportionately affected by this issue. Due to the different approaches available to measuring in-work poverty, comparing trends over time is complex.

Our 2021-22 annual report examined the changes in the levels of employee jobs with pay below the living wage to provide an understanding around in-work poverty across the North of Tyne. However, as the relevant 2023 data was not available at the time of this report's production, it was not possible to compare against last year's data. Instead, this report approaches in-work poverty mainly through the lens of in-work Universal Credit claimant trends. Additional insights collected through other NTCA programmes have also been incorporated in the analysis to provide context.

These indicators can help to understand some of the characteristics of in-work poverty; however, when used alone, they cannot provide the full picture and scale of this issue. In order to assess how in-work poverty has evolved over recent years, additional metrics should be used, for which the North of Tyne data is limited.

Over the last 18 months, the rising cost of living has outstripped wage growth creating financial pressure on working individuals and families and challenges to the NTCA Equality Objectives.

A recent survey that took place between May 2022 and July 2023, commissioned by NTCA as part of the Child Poverty Prevention Programme revealed that 20% of workers surveyed in the North of Tyne cannot afford essentials each month; 21% of respondents said that their financial situation is affecting their work. The findings are based on 1,518 respondents in the North of Tyne.

Despite the economic headwinds, there are around 1,500 fewer residents in employment and claiming Universal Credit than at this point last year (September 2022); there was a much bigger decrease amongst male claimants (down by 1,402) compared to females (down by 106).

Nonetheless, the number of North of Tyne residents who are in employment and claiming Universal Credit support to supplement their income is still high (over 29,800 people). That is 6% of the North of Tyne working age population and 8% of those in employment.

It is also much higher compared to September 2018 (by over 21,400 more claimants). Around 65% of the claimants are female. This group has also seen a bigger increase since 2018 compared to their male counterparts.

44% of people have been claiming support for 3 years and more and the number of long-term claimants has been growing over the recent years.

WHAT ARE WE DOING TO MEET THIS OBJECTIVE?

1. A focus on good work

Our Good Work Pledge (GWP) initiative aims to reduce the prevalence of in-work poverty by requiring all signatories to pay a fair and decent wage, including achievement or commitment to pay the Real Living Wage to employees and those within their supply chains. There is also a focus within the good work pledge on inclusive practice, that allows better access to work and fairness in rights and conditions for all workers. Over 40 organisations have signed up to the GWP so far this year.

2. Employer engagement through the Child Poverty Prevention Programme

Building on this, NTCA's child poverty prevention programme engages with employers to help them develop and implement poverty reduction strategies in the workplace. Employers are supported to better understand in-work poverty and in-work benefits, and organisations undergo an employee financial wellbeing survey which helps to inform their poverty reduction strategy and action plan. To date 33 employers across the North of Tyne have taken part in the employee survey and have developed or are in the process of developing their poverty reduction strategy. This has resulted in a wide breadth of responses impacting on residents working within those organisations – for example changes to the ways employee contracts are administered, changes to recruitment practices, access to showers and private spaces within the workplace, the provision of employee assistance, 1 to 1 support for staff and review of flexible working arrangements.

3. Working towards stronger and more inclusive communities

We recognise, that for those who are working and living in poverty, the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors often act as a lifeline, and we have provided £5.5million of funding to support the voluntary sector through our Community Partnerships and Volunteering and Social Action programmes.

Crowdfund North of Tyne has also provided funding to groups working to address the causes and consequences of poverty in their communities, including food poverty initiatives, community gardens (for growing food), winter wellbeing hubs, community bakeries and food parcel distribution.

The Crowdfund North of Tyne fund criteria recognises that some groups of people, such as women, people from people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds and Disabled or Deaf residents, face additional challenges and therefore has a clear focus on inclusivity and over 60 projects have successfully pitched for funding since the launch in 2019, with many of those specifically from groups facing multiple disadvantages, such as beach wheelchairs, theatre groups for deaf young people, a choir for singers with learning difficulties, a gaming group for people with neurodivergence and a community garden for people seeking sanctuary in the region.

4. Upskilling as part of the road out of in-work poverty

Skills Bootcamps are another initiative we are running to help reduce the prevalence of in work poverty. They are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks for adults aged 19 or over who are either in work, self-employed, recently unemployed or returning to work after a break. They aim to secure benefits for unemployed adults by giving them access to in-demand skills training and a guaranteed interview, and for in work adults a more sustainable, higher skilled job and higher wages over time.

During FY 2022-23 over 200 Skills Bootcamps were delivered engaging 1467 learner starts across a range of sectors. There have been 1,051 successful learner completions to date, with 54% of completers securing positive outcomes. These include entry into employment because of the Skills Bootcamp or gained promotion or new job role within a learner's current employment.

NTCA will continue to support residents to access good quality employment thanks to a second grant funding agreement secured from the DfE to support the delivery of Wave 4 Skills Bootcamps in FY 2023-24.



North East Deaf Youth Theatre



Blyth Fest



Northern Notes (LD North East)



Scotswood Garden



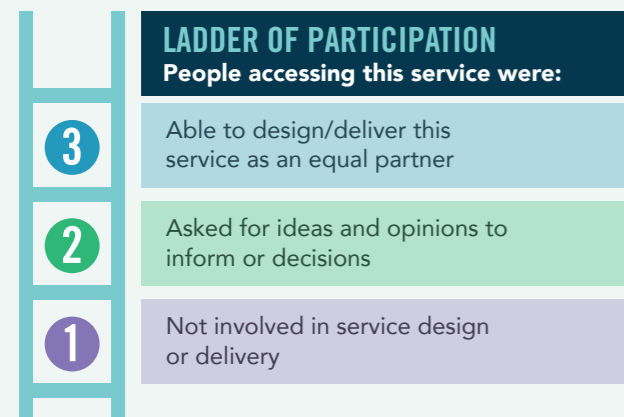
Skills bootcamp at the Cluny 2

PROGRESS: EQUALITY OBJECTIVE 5

Objective 5: Co-production and Co-design: 15% of all products and projects in NTCA to be co-designed or co-produced by June 2023.

Performance measures and key indicators (include data and summary here)

In line with good practice NTCA uses the ladder of participation to understand the role community consultation and engagement can play in different projects and activities. Projects are co-produced or co-designed in a number of different ways, including through use of online platforms such as NextDoor and Common Place.



When asked about co-design and co-production with service users at the start of 2024, 42 projects were listed by colleagues as having been co-designed (rung 2 on the ladder) or co-produced (rung 3) in the previous year. This represents 55% of the total responses and is roughly 40% of our total projects (we are currently running 107 projects).

WHAT ARE WE DOING TO MEET THIS OBJECTIVE?

Our communities have valuable knowledge, skills and connections. They are well placed to help us identify and respond to many of the challenges we face. Co-production is therefore recognised within the NTCA as a form of best practice to ensure meaningful involvement with partners and/or residents.

Our progress towards this objective is largely positive, with the vast majority of our work being designed in partnership with key stakeholders, such as local authorities, employers and the VCSE sector. As a partnership organisation we continue to work in active collaboration with our local authorities, stakeholders and delivery partners.

We've recently supported work with Newcastle City Council on a Coproduction strategy for Adult Social Care. Through this work we've been attending strategy sessions and will be facilitating co-production insight events. This insight is also intended to inform work as we transition to become NEMCA.

We have also collaborated with academics at Northumbria University to create a method connecting researchers, policymakers, and public management professionals. Inspired by the UK government's Areas of Research Interest (ARI), we developed our first ARI focused on Citizen Engagement and Connected Communities. This initiative seeks ideas from researchers, policymakers, and professionals in areas such as how to invite resident input for shaping policies and programs, and how to support community-led activities that enhance relationships and trust within and between communities.



Thoughtful approaches to community engagement



Amplifying community voices

CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS – AMPLIFYING COMMUNITY VOICES AND THE VALUE OF MEANINGFUL CO-PRODUCTION

Diving deep into community empowerment, NTCA is working with our three constituent Local Authorities to pioneer the establishment of three vibrant Community Partnerships strategically positioned in areas grappling with high deprivation, limited civic engagement, and an under-resourced voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) sector. These dynamic partnerships are not just about funding; they're about amplifying community voices and fortifying social bonds. With a focus on enhancing social capital and civic action, our Community Partnerships embody the essence of grassroots involvement. A pivotal objective is to create opportunities for residents to actively shape and influence decisions for their own neighbourhoods. Our commitment to community representation extends to having residents as decision-makers on funding panels, ensuring that the power to shape the future stays firmly in the hands of those who call these neighbourhoods home.



Celebrating success

CONCLUSION

It is with pride, that the North of Tyne Combined Authority persists in working towards a more inclusive economy and in building a more inclusive workplace for staff, amid a challenging regional landscape. Many of our programmes and initiatives during 2023 have prioritised tackling inequality, in line with our agreed Equalities Objectives.

We recognise the value of a diverse workforce and will continue our efforts to attract a more diverse range of candidates and make our workplace even more inclusive.

Our commitment extends to empowering more women, residents from people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds, and individuals with disabilities on the path toward well-paid, secure employment, consistent with our aspirations for promoting good work in the region and we are happy to note increased enrolments on our AEB programmes from these groups.

We are proud of the multitude of initiatives we are running with employers, residents and communities, which focus specifically on reducing the prevalence of in-work poverty in our region and will continue this unwavering focus on poverty and inequality in all their forms.

And finally, we believe that working directly with communities ensures that initiatives are tailored to local needs, fostering greater relevance, trust and community ownership. Meaningful co-production harnesses diverse perspectives leading to more effective and sustainable solutions and stronger, more connected communities, which is why we continue to focus on aiming for genuine and inclusive methods of coproduction, like our Equalities Assemblies.