

# Post-16 Strategy



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# Foreword

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Gateshead is a borough of contrast and opportunity, where the ambition for everyone to thrive is at the heart of our collective mission. This Post-16 Strategy sets out a bold and inclusive vision for education, recognising the vital role that lifelong learning plays in helping residents live fulfilled, safe, happy and healthy lives. Shaping futures, strengthening communities, and driving economic growth.

In a rapidly evolving landscape, this strategy provides a clear framework to address challenges and seize opportunities. It reflects our commitment to collaboration to ensure that every resident can access meaningful learning pathways that lead to good skills, employment, and wellbeing.

Together, we will build a Gateshead where education empowers, employment uplifts, and wellbeing is woven into every opportunity.



# Where are we now?

Gateshead is a contrasting and constantly changing borough. The Council has a commitment to make Gateshead a place where everyone thrives, which provides a framework for collaboration with a wide range of local and regional partners, communities, and citizens.

Education is placed at the heart of this commitment and post-16 education plays a significant part in helping residents to improve their life chances, wellbeing, and their communities.

However, the post-16 landscape is complex with changing local, regional and national policy and funding priorities. Navigating this can be difficult for residents, employers and providers.

# Where are we now? Gateshead Council

## What are we doing well:

- Supporting families to thrive through family learning programmes
- Improving mental and physical wellbeing through a wide community learning offer
- Developing the workforce of the future through employment skills and apprenticeships
- Understanding the aspirations and motivations of residents in post-16 education and what prevents engagement
- Supporting residents who have the most need with their education, training and future employment
- Safeguarding and supporting vulnerable learners
- Providing good careers information, advice and guidance
- Understanding and responding to employer need

## What should we work on:

- Providing a joined-up curriculum across the sector that meets the needs of residents and employers
- Working collaboratively to understand and fill skills gaps
- Ensuring our most in-need residents can access the support they need to enter work
- Developing more high-quality all-age information, advice and guidance
- Supporting employers to recruit and train staff
- Influencing and informing a Gateshead Curriculum through collaboration
- Ensure all young people have the right support to access to post-16 education

# Challenges and Opportunities

## Challenges:

- Post-Covid landscape with many young people finding the transition from full-time education to employment difficult
- Mis-match between employer demand and future workforce expectations
- Sector-based workforce, financial and accommodation pressures
- Changes to government mandate on post-16 education funding and priorities
- Confusing and complex post-16 system that can be hard to navigate
- Ensuring local infrastructure and systems support access to education

## Opportunities:

- Devolved funding offers opportunities for local and regional collaboration
- Develop programmes to bridge the gap between school and work
- Develop new ways to engage with employers to embed demand-led elements in provision
- Establish innovative working practices and use of technology such as AI
- A chance to influence any changes to the education landscape

# Purpose of our Post-16 Strategy

Gateshead's Post-16 Education Strategy will drive a place-based approach to post-16 education in Gateshead to collaborate, innovate and align activity to deliver positive outcomes for communities and residents, improve health and wellbeing, and increase employment.

The strategy will provide a dynamic overview and increase awareness of provision to identify current and emerging gaps and drive impactful action for change.

## Who is the strategy for?

This strategy is Gateshead-wide and is for:

- Young people and adults, especially those who may need additional support to make decisions about their next steps
- Post-16 education providers situated in Gateshead or where a proportion of their delivery is to Gateshead residents.
- Employers in Gateshead who can influence and support the post-16 curriculum in Gateshead.

This strategy recognises the uniqueness of the borough and the current and historical demographics and factors that make it such a good place to live and work. This strategy supports the ambition for Gateshead. This strategy will be used to help equip Gateshead Council to drive education-based changes.

# Purpose of our Post-16 Strategy

To address the challenges outlined above, and meet the vision for all residents to Thrive in Gateshead, post-16 education must:

- Ensure residents have access to good careers information, advice and guidance to help them make informed decisions about their futures.
- Consider the demographics of residents when planning a borough-wide curriculum so all residents have access to learning at the level they need when they need it.
- Promote lifelong learning as a route to good work and health
- Provide a tailored approach to education that benefits residents with the most need and encouraging them to have a say in the development of this.
- Work collaboratively with employers to prepare residents for work and make the best use of the skills of their current workforce through training and development.
- Recognise workforce challenges within post-16 education providers and plan collectively to address these.
- Capitalise on local, regional and national funding opportunities to compliment the post-16 offer.
- Support schools to provide young people with the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to enter good work, training, and further and higher education.
- Work with statutory and non-statutory services to understand how education impacts, or could complement, the delivery of their services.

# Link to Other Policies and Strategies

**The integration of education, skills, employment, and health and wellbeing to create the best opportunities for residents. The Post-16 Strategy closely aligns with the following policies and strategies:**

- **Gateshead Council**
  - SEND Strategy
  - Children and Young People's Partnership Strategy
  - Care Leavers Strategy
  - Health and Wellbeing Strategy
  - Gateshead Council Corporate Plan
  - Economic Development Strategy
- **North East Combined Authority**
  - New Deal for North East Workers
  - Local Growth Plan
  - Excellence in Education Programme
  - North East Ambition Careers Hub
- **UK Government:**
  - Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper
  - Get Britain Working White Paper

# Our Vision

All Gateshead residents will have access to a diverse and inclusive post-16 education offer that benefits their lives



# Our Priorities

The strength of Gateshead is the people, so to make it a place where everyone thrives, investment in post-16 education should deliver better outcomes for Gateshead's residents, employers, and communities.

The strategy is based around 3 main themes:

- Community- learning that will develop stronger communities
- Economy- learning that will lead to meaningful and sustained employment
- Wellbeing- learning that will improve health and wellbeing

We will achieve this through our four strategic priorities.

1. Increase participation in lifelong learning, creating an ambitious culture within education, reducing barriers to participation to ensure all residents have access to high-quality learning opportunities.
2. Create better opportunities for employment and volunteering with a joined-up education offer, through collaborative working with partners.
3. Engage residents in learning activities that improves their physical and mental wellbeing, reduces social isolation, and encourages participation.
4. Provide local and regional insight into educational needs and trends through the evaluation of education outcomes for young people and adults.

# Priority 1

**Increase participation in lifelong learning, creating an ambitious culture within education, reducing barriers to participation to ensure all residents have access to high-quality learning opportunities**

## Key actions are:



- Improve outcomes for residents who may need more support to access education, employment or training.
- Review and make improvements to the statutory and non-statutory careers information, advice and guidance to support next steps.
- Build on the high-quality post-16 education already provided in Gateshead to ensure it is fully inclusive.
- Support schools, colleges and independent training providers to communicate the post-16 offer to young people and adults to ensure they make good, informed decisions about their next steps.

# When we get this right, it looks like:

## **For young people and adults**

- Young people and adults have the right support to access and be successful in their learning
- Residents have the skills to enter and maintain good work
- Residents will access education as a way to become engaged with their community and develop and maintain good mental wellbeing

## **For system partnership**

- Supportive network of schools and post-16 providers that share best practice and champion inclusive education

## **For business**

- Employers have confidence that their future employees will have the skills needed to enter and sustain work, and be able to respond to regulatory, technological and industrial changes
- Employees feel valued and invested in the work they do

# Priority 2

**Create better opportunities for employment and volunteering with a joined-up education offer, through collaborative working with partners.**

## Key actions are:



- Ensure young people and adults are prepared for the world of work through creating clear pathways from education programmes to employment.
- When designing new education programmes in response to employers, ensure there is consideration given to entry-level pathways.
- Develop inclusive workplace opportunities and incentives for young people and adults to experience the world of work
- Use learner voice and lived experience to design and improve education programmes.

# When we get this right, it looks like:

## **For young people and adults**

- Young people and adults are well-prepared for the world of work through a borough-wide inclusive employability curriculum offer, supported by good careers information, advice and guidance
- Young people and adults have the support to enter inclusive employment opportunities available to them
- Young people and adults can make informed decisions on their next steps

## **For system partnership**

- There is a collaborative approach to curriculum design between post-16 providers and employers
- Providers routinely seek the views of young people and adults when designing the curriculum
- Professionals understand the post-16 offer and how to refer into it

## **For business**

- Employers work closely with providers to create good pathways to employment opportunities
- Employers will benefit from a regional talent pool with the skills business needs to thrive

# Priority 3

**Engage residents in learning activities that improves their physical and mental wellbeing, reduces social isolation, and encourages participation**

## Key actions are:



- Ensure residents have access to a range of learning programmes that helps improve mental and physical well-being.
- Ensure commissioning of post-16 education enhances the offer to residents.
- Develop targeted provision for particular groups who may need more support to access education.
- Work with partners to develop wrap around support for residents who need help to access learning and employment.

# When we get this right, it looks like:

## **For young people and adults**

- Residents have access to a wide range of learning programmes that enables them to develop personal resilience, confidence, and good mental well-being, with opportunities to progress to more formal learning
- Residents enjoy learning and recognise the benefit to their wellbeing

## **For system partnership**

- Good partnership working across post-16 providers and the voluntary and community sector to provide wrap around support into learning and employment

## **For business**

- There are opportunities to support employees in learning that promotes positive physical and mental wellbeing

# Priority 4

**Provide local and regional insight into educational needs and trends through the evaluation of education outcomes for young people and adults.**

## Key actions are:



- Analyse and enhance the Gateshead curriculum offer, working together to identify and meet skills gaps, and develop opportunities for collaboration.
- Increase the awareness of the post-16 education offer with professionals who may need to make referrals into education.
- Expand on the information and data already available to inform future programme delivery.
- Work collaboratively with and commission appropriate partners to ensure there is fair access to post-16 education.

# When we get this right, it looks like:

## **For young people and adults**

- There is a clear, joined-up curriculum across the borough that is accessible to all residents

## **For system partnership**

- Strong partnership working results in residents with the most need accessing education
- Data and intelligence is used to plan delivery that benefits residents
- The curriculum offer across Gateshead is clearly understood by employers, partners and stakeholders

## **For business**

- Employers have a say in curriculum development across Gateshead which is aligned to industry and business goals

# Who have we consulted with?

- Employers of all sizes
- Residents
- Post-16 providers
- Schools
- The voluntary and community sector
- Teams and services within Gateshead Council

