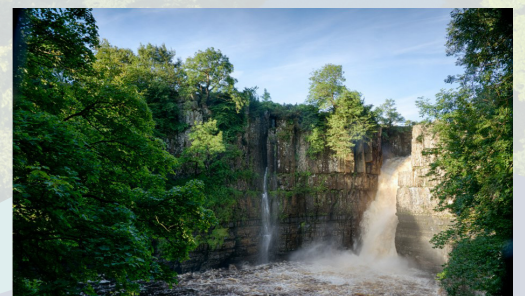


A Shared Vision:

Co-Designing an All-Age Careers Framework in County Durham

MAIN REPORT

March 2025



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dmh associates

In 2008, Dr Deirdre Hughes OBE established dmh associates to encourage collaboration and fresh thinking in careers, education and skills policy, research and practice. The outcomes from the organisation’s work are designed to inform and influence policies, research and practice in the UK, Europe and internationally.

The company is based in North Shields, England. Our expertise includes consultancy, evaluation, evidence and impact assessment, literature reviews, qualitative and quantitative research, digital and labour market intelligence (LMI). We provide a full range of activities each tailored to meet specific organisational or individual needs.

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Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to Durham County Council in collaboration with the County Durham Economic Partnership and the UKSPF Technical Funding Group for commissioning this research. In particular, we would like to take this opportunity to formally thank the Project Advisory Group including Stephen Crass (Durham County Council, Policy and Planning Manager, Children and Young People's Services), Sue Hannan (Durham County Council, Senior Project Development Officer (UKSPF) Funding and Programmes Team), Adam Richardson (Durham County Council, Performance Co-ordinator, Employability Durham), Laura Barron (Durham County Council, Area Co-ordinator, Employability Durham) and Gary Chaplin (Business Durham, Enterprise Development Manager) for their guidance and support.

Special thanks also to those school and college leaders, teachers, special education needs co-ordinators (SENCOs), careers leaders, careers advisers, Local Authority employees supporting young people and adults, including partner providers and their staff across County Durham who kindly offered to speak with us directly, set up meetings where we visited and met with individuals and groups in person or online. Thank you for all your efforts in nurturing young people and adults' hopes and dreams and encouraging employers and parents/carers to engage in the research. We thank everyone who contributed to our surveys and Call for Evidence – too many to mention individually.

We are especially grateful to the following individuals and organisations who kindly provided premises to enable us to consult with key stakeholders from across the County – Ailsa Anderson and Kay Collins (Directors of Development, Engineering and Manufacturing Network, Stuart Armstrong (Business Durham, Business Engagement Officer), Amanda Jackson (Strategic Leader for the Advance Learning Partnership, Whitworth Park Academy, Spennymoor), Helen Kelt (Durham University, Senior Business Development Manager, Research and Innovation Services) and David Allenson (Durham University, Orbit Centre Senior Manager), Jackie Lanagan (Assistant Principal, East Durham College), and Matthew Reid (Careers Leader and School Engagement Manager, East Durham College), Alison Maynard (Deputy Principal, New College Durham) and Emma Crosskey (Head of ASC and School Engagement Team, New College Durham). It was a privilege to learn more about stakeholder ideas to further strengthen education, skills, careers and employment support and what makes a difference in their local community. The contents of the proposed All-Age Careers Framework have been informed by you all – thank you!



1.0 Introduction

1.1 In May 2024, Durham County Council, in collaboration with the County Durham Economic Partnership Board and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Technical Funding Group, commissioned dmh associates to assist in developing an All-Age Careers Framework for County Durham. It was formally agreed dmh associates would carry out a research, facilitation, and planning piece of work, to prepare the ground for creating an innovative approach to support the careers support offer for people of all ages across County Durham.

1.2 This evidence-based report summarises key findings from research conducted by dmh associates between May 2024 and December 2024, including consultations and surveys with over 2,111 County Durham residents and businesses. It is also complemented by three separate supporting evidence-based technical papers: (i) *LMI Analysis: Context for County Durham's All-Age Careers Framework*; (ii) *Return on Investment (ROI): Context for County Durham's All-Age Careers Framework*; and (iii) *The Voices of Residents and Businesses in County Durham* that have informed key findings and recommendations.

1.3 We provide **evidence** to inform the co-design of a new All-Age Careers Framework for 2025-2035 in County Durham, followed by key recommendations. The ultimate goal is to prepare the county for a future where personalised, accessible, and innovative careers support enhances the livelihoods, health, happiness, and well-being of both young people and adults. We examine the **current careers ecosystem** in County Durham, including the offerings, advantages, and limitations of the existing system. We also highlight the potential benefits a future **All-Age Careers Framework** could bring to County Durham residents and businesses. Finally, we outline the essential steps needed to implement this framework.

Definitions

Terms such as 'careers education, information, advice and guidance' (CEIAG), 'career education', 'career counselling', 'career development', 'vocational counselling', 'vocational guidance', 'guidance counselling', 'educational and vocational orientation', 'employability', 'enterprise' are often used to refer to diverse activities in a broad careers eco-system landscape. This is contested territory, therefore reaching agreement on the language and definition of the all-age careers framework is essential. Following extensive dialogue with key stakeholders, it was agreed to use the term careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) throughout this report. See: Appendix 1 – Glossary of Terms.

Focus

1.4 Undertake research into current careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) offers for young people and adults both within County Durham, the UK and beyond. Facilitate discussions with key players bringing together key stakeholders and partner representatives to explore best practice throughout the wider careers ecosystem, to include:

- ▶ considering views of stakeholders such as businesses, school leaders and staff, and the myriad others with a vested interest, with the most important stakeholders being the young people and adults themselves – including 'those most at risk'
- ▶ mapping out current provision throughout County Durham to include:
 - both careers education, information, advice and guidance and labour market intelligence (LMI) services available for both young people and adults, plus access to the latest LMI showing the needs of employers in County Durham and capturing skills shortages, future trends and emerging sectors;
 - exploring "best practice" in County Durham, the UK and beyond, including careers hubs and similar initiatives;
 - capturing views and innovative methods of delivery in order to agree how an all-age careers offer across County Durham can be achieved; and
 - first hand experiences of new technologies to support individuals to access industries, e.g. the green economy, low carbon, space etc.

Out of scope

How existing careers provision in County Durham is funded, along with associated staffing and other costs.

Methodology

1.5 The project was led by Dr. Deirdre Hughes OBE (Director), with support from Dr. Chris Percy (Senior Associate), Robert Hughes (Senior Researcher), Lauren Croll (Researcher) and Peter Dickinson (Senior Researcher) from the Institute for Employment Research (IER) at Warwick University. Eamonn Davern, an international public employment services specialist, acted as 'a critical friend' to the project.

1.6 The main activities involved:

- ▶ **Rapid Assessment of Evidence:** We reviewed academic studies, government policy reports, and documents from Durham County Council, the UK, Europe, and internationally. This included a structured search of the Scopus database and our personal libraries. Key themes covered were careers, wellbeing, career education, guidance, employability, skills, enterprise, artificial intelligence (AI), large language models (LLMs), apprenticeships, technical education, and workforce development.
- ▶ **Review of Durham Insights and Economic Development Input:** We analysed labour market intelligence (LMI) with contributions from Durham County Council and the Institute for Employment Research (IER) on trends affecting County Durham and the North East region.
- ▶ **Return on Investment (ROI) Analysis:** We examined international literature on typical returns from career services at different life stages to inform the new framework. Insights were also gathered through one-on-one meetings with employers and group consultations.
- ▶ **Stakeholder Discussions:** We conducted one-on-one and group sessions, both in-person and online, to identify effective current practices and generate ideas for future all-age careers provision.
- ▶ **Formal Call for Evidence:** This combined a survey and one-to-one interviews gathered input from sectoral and professional bodies, trade unions, community organisations, and representatives from the North East Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses.
- ▶ **Online surveys:** Five targeted surveys captured the views of key stakeholders, including:
 - Students in post-primary schooling
 - Young people and adults outside formal education, including those in work and the economically inactive
 - Parents/Carers
 - Headteachers, teachers, careers leads, and careers advisers
 - Employers and training providers.
- ▶ **Consultations with Vulnerable Young People and Adults:** Five focus groups and a series of one-on-one interviews were conducted to explore their experiences and perspectives.
- ▶ **Countywide Consultation Events:** Seven invitational events—two online and five in person—were co-hosted by dmh associates with Durham County Council, the Engineering Manufacturing Network, East Durham College, New Durham College, Durham University, and Whitworth Park Academy between October and November 2024.
- ▶ **Engagement in Partnerships and Civic Forum Meetings:** Interim findings were presented at various partnership meetings, including the County Durham Economic Partnership Board, Business Durham, Durham Employment Connections, Employability Durham, DurhamEnable, DurhamWorks, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Employment Forum, the Participation in Learning Network, and County Durham Together Partnership.

1.7 By drawing attention to the voices of residents and businesses and to capture areas of concern as well as outstanding strength, this provides an opportunity for senior policymakers (top down) and practitioners (grassroots up) to find ways to strengthen the existing careers eco-system and look ahead to ‘the art of the possible’ going forward over the next decade.

Report Structure

Section 2.0 provides a brief contextual overview of County Durham and the North East socio-economic landscape including LMI provided by Warwick University that moves beyond what is already available in Durham Insight⁸ to ensure added-value.

Section 3.0 outlines the current careers support system in operation, highlighting both its key strengths and limitations to inform the design and development of an effective all-age careers support system for the period leading up to 2035, in alignment with key policy drivers.

Section 4.0 sets out key lessons learned from 2,111 residents and businesses who contributed to the research, capturing their views and experiences of strengths and limitations in the current system and with ideas on how an all-age careers offer can be achieved going forward.

Section 5.0 presents an Emerging Consensus: Collaborative Ambition, providing further evidence that there is a strong appetite among key stakeholders for careers, employability, and enterprise support services to ideally work more closely together, rather than in silos, to offer more seamless CIAG support. We also provide unique examples of ROI findings, human-centred ‘blended’ AI approaches, and encourage creativity and innovation moving forward with the new all-age careers framework.

Section 6.0 calls for a culture change across the County to harness the significant expertise, experiences and resources that currently exist alongside ideas for achieving a proposed All-Age Careers Framework 2025-2035, including seizing opportunities for future investment and innovation in all-age careers provision.

Section 7.0 based on our findings from across the county, we set out a proposed vision and key principles and seven key recommendations 2025 -2035 to inform and support developments going forward. We conclude with recommendations for sponsors of this research the County Durham Economic Partnership Board and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Technical Funding Group. We conclude that career learning from an early age and on a lifelong basis transforms people's lives, reinforcing the need for an all-age careers framework in County Durham.

2.0 Context

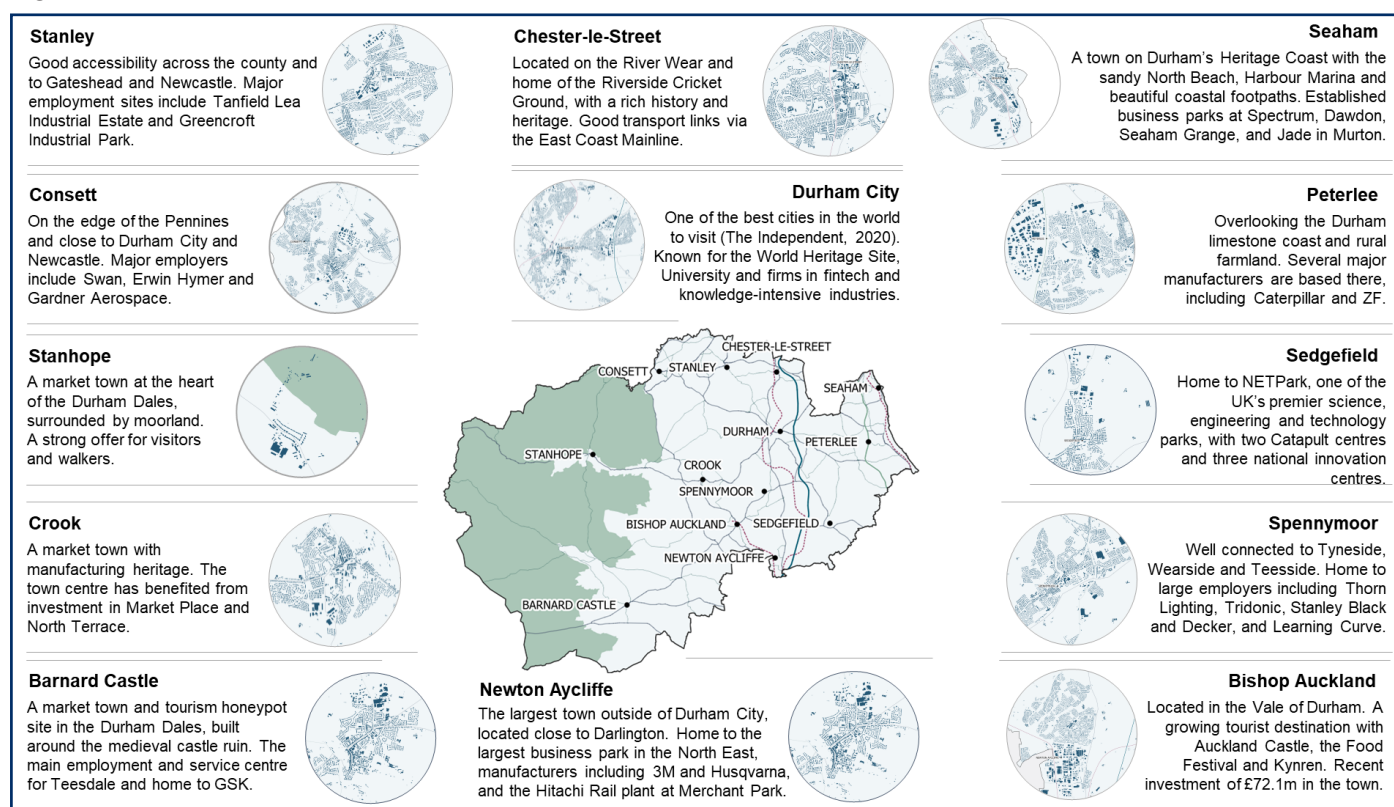
2.1 In this section, we provide a brief contextual overview of County Durham and the North East socio-economic landscape including LMI provided by Warwick University that moves beyond what is already available in Durham Insights⁹ to ensure added-value. The content also highlights the under-performance of schools and colleges in achieving the Gatsby Benchmarks and central government key drivers for change in the careers and employability landscape.

2.2 We are entering a future shaped by rapid technological advancements, evolving challenges at global, national, regional, and local levels, and transformative shifts in the way societies and economies operate. For residents and businesses in County Durham to thrive and prosper, it is essential to identify and nurture talent on a lifelong basis, ensuring every individual has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to society and the economy.

2.3 County Durham sits at the heart of the North East, with the biggest population and the strongest economic connectivity from the Tyne to the Tees. Many of its strategic employment sites are concentrated along the north to south axes of the A1(M) and A19 in the east of the county. Businesses in County Durham are part of multiple regional, national and international supply chains and they benefit from proximity to major growth centres including Teesside Freeport and the Darlington Economic Campus.

2.4 It is a large and unique rural county – the 8th largest in the country by population – Durham City and its large towns and market towns act as major centres (see below illustration), but two in five residents live in rural areas. This emphasises the need to address issues related to supporting individuals in their search for more meaningful learning and work opportunities, particularly those with poor transport and digital connectivity. The county accounts for the largest geographical area in the region (NELSIP, 2023)¹⁰.

Figure 1



2.5 The majority of businesses in the county are micro, small and medium size employers (County Durham Economic Partnership's Inclusive Economic Strategy, p. 18). Businesses contribute to multiple supply chains, regionally, nationally, and internationally. County Durham is home to NETPark, described as a "premier science park," and home to some of the UK's leading innovation institutions. It has the highest number of jobs in life sciences and pharmaceutical manufacturing in the North East.

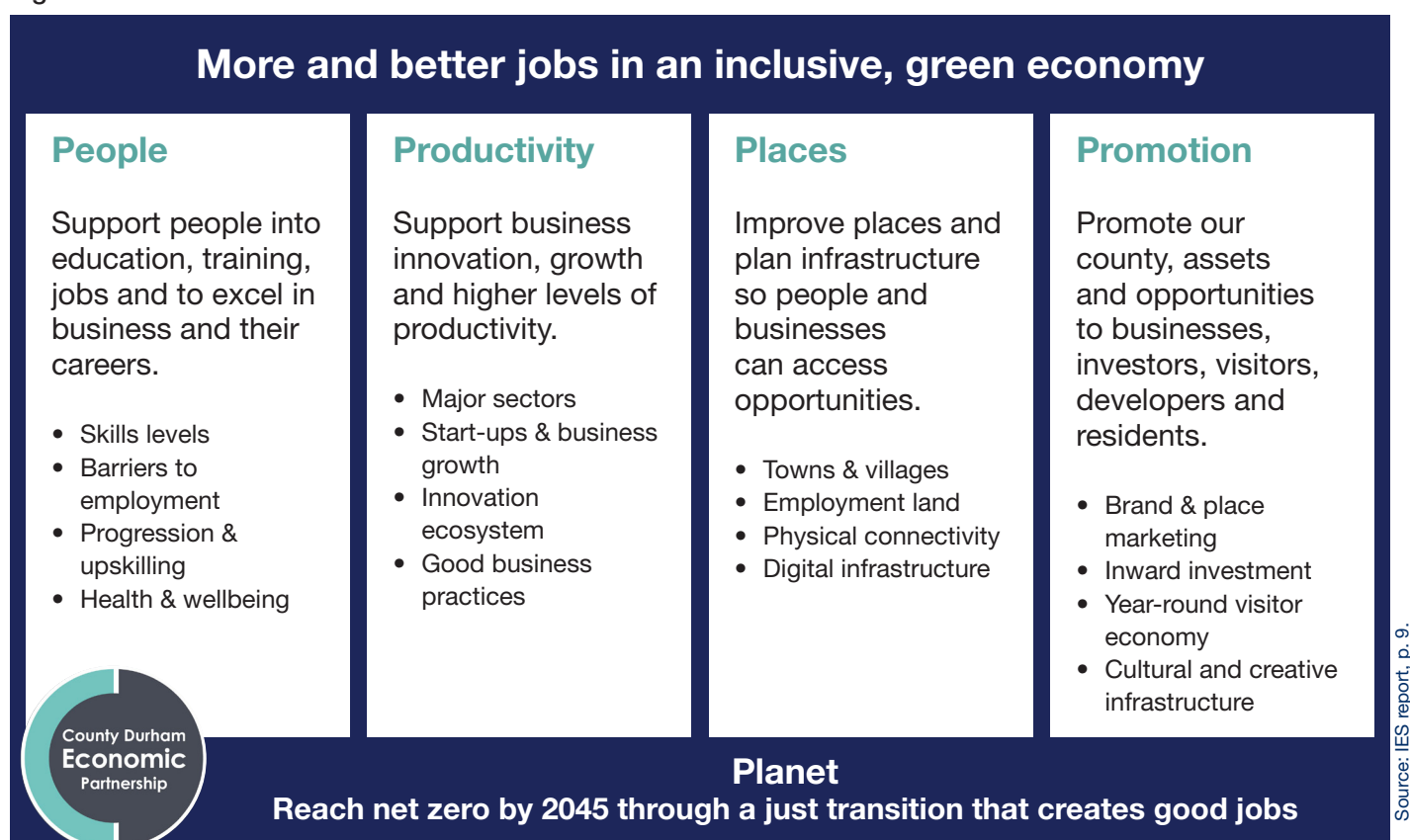
2.6 Many businesses face rising costs, skills shortages and skills under-utilisation. The talent pipeline needs to be urgently strengthened in light of an ageing workforce and changes in demographic trends (see below). In this context, all-age careers support is crucial for ensuring a skilled, adaptable workforce to meet the evolving demands of both traditional and emerging industries in the region. Historically, County Durham's economy has relied on sectors like mining and manufacturing, with ongoing significant efforts to diversify its economic landscape.

2.7 The proposed All-Age Careers Framework 2025 – 2035 is informed by *A Vision for County Durham (2019–2035)*¹¹ which provides a shared understanding of what strategic partners want County Durham to look like by 2035, for example:

- ▶ More and better jobs;
- ▶ People living long and independent lives; and
- ▶ Connected communities within an inclusive, green economy.

At the heart of the aforementioned vision for the county is a clear goal: fostering more and better jobs within an inclusive, green economy.

Figure 2



2.8 *The Durham County Council Plan (2024 – 2028)*¹² highlights the county's growth, with detailed plans for housing and employment expansion. At a strategic level, the plan includes key priorities and success measures related to careers support for both young people and adults. These include "supporting individuals into education, training, and employment, helping them progress in their careers, increasing job opportunities and employment rates, reducing unemployment and economic inactivity, and raising education and skills levels" (pp. 16–17).

2.9 *The County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES 2023–2035)*¹³, the North East Local Skills Improvement Plan (NELSIP)¹⁴, and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)¹⁵ are also critical drivers and enablers in achieving these goals.

2.10 The findings from the Institute for Employment Research (IER) at Warwick University provide insights into socio-economic trends in the county. The infographic below highlights key findings, alongside some selected examples of business growth in the County. (For more detailed information, refer to the separate complementary IER report.)



Examples of economic growth projects:

In East Durham, the Satellite Applications Centre of Excellence & Space Cluster is funded by the UK Space Agency and Satellite Applications Catapult based at the North East Technology Park (NETpark). This will be part of a network of national facilities to support specialist technology development, testing, manufacture, and in- space operations.

Amazon occupies a 2.1m sq. ft. unit at Integra 61 Bowburn provides around 1,600 jobs and supported internships for those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and/or additional needs. Integra 61 represents the largest logistics and manufacturing opportunity the North East has seen in a generation.

AEL Automation Ltd. Based at Bowburn Industrial Estate (NB previously known as Altec Engineering). This company is particularly supportive of apprenticeships.

BTS Facades & Fabrications. Based in Aycliffe Business Park, Newton Aycliffe are experts in the supply and manufacture of Rainscreen systems and Facade systems. They proactively contribute to CEAIG in schools.

Other selected examples based at NETpark include:

aXenc leaders in Optical modulators for satellite and aerospace communications

Kromek Group plc is a cutting-edge, forward-thinking company creating state of the art radiation and biological detection solutions for use in Civil Nuclear, Security & Defence, Biological Detection, Medical and Industrial & Security markets.

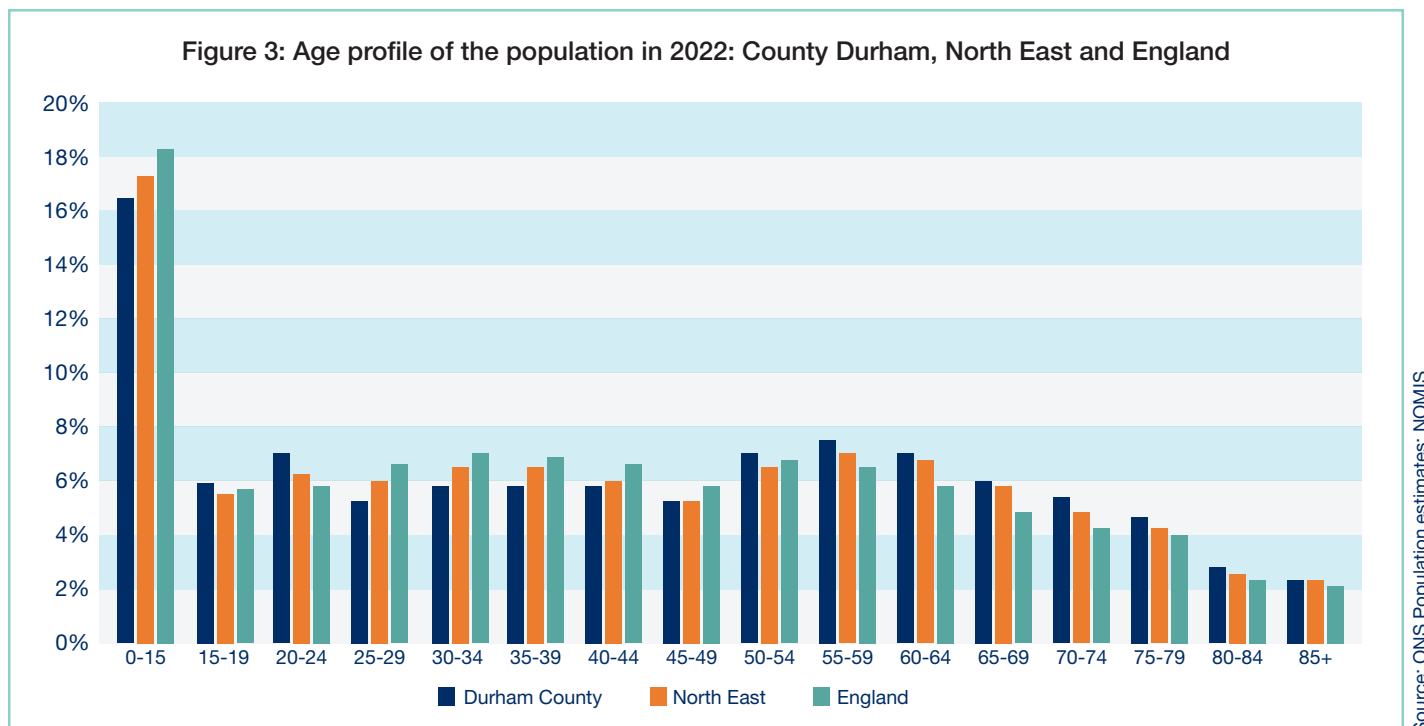
Kratos specialises in technology innovation for national security.

The Centre for Process Innovation (CPI) specialises in deep tech for agrifood, Energy, Health Tech, Materials, Pharmaceutical.

2.11 Overleaf, we highlight trends in demographic change, employment rates, and the impact of the Real Living Wage, offering insights into how these factors influence individuals' lives and the local economy. This section also examines employment distribution across sectors, employment trends, and identifies the challenges employers face in recruitment. We also provide data on how schools and colleges in County Durham are performing in relation to 'Good Career Guidance' as set out in the nationally recognised Gatsby Benchmarks¹⁶. Together, these elements underscore the need for a robust all-age careers support system that can adapt to the evolving demands of both individuals and businesses over the next decade. Such a system is essential for ensuring individuals of all ages are equipped with the skills and opportunities needed to thrive in an increasingly dynamic and diverse labour market.

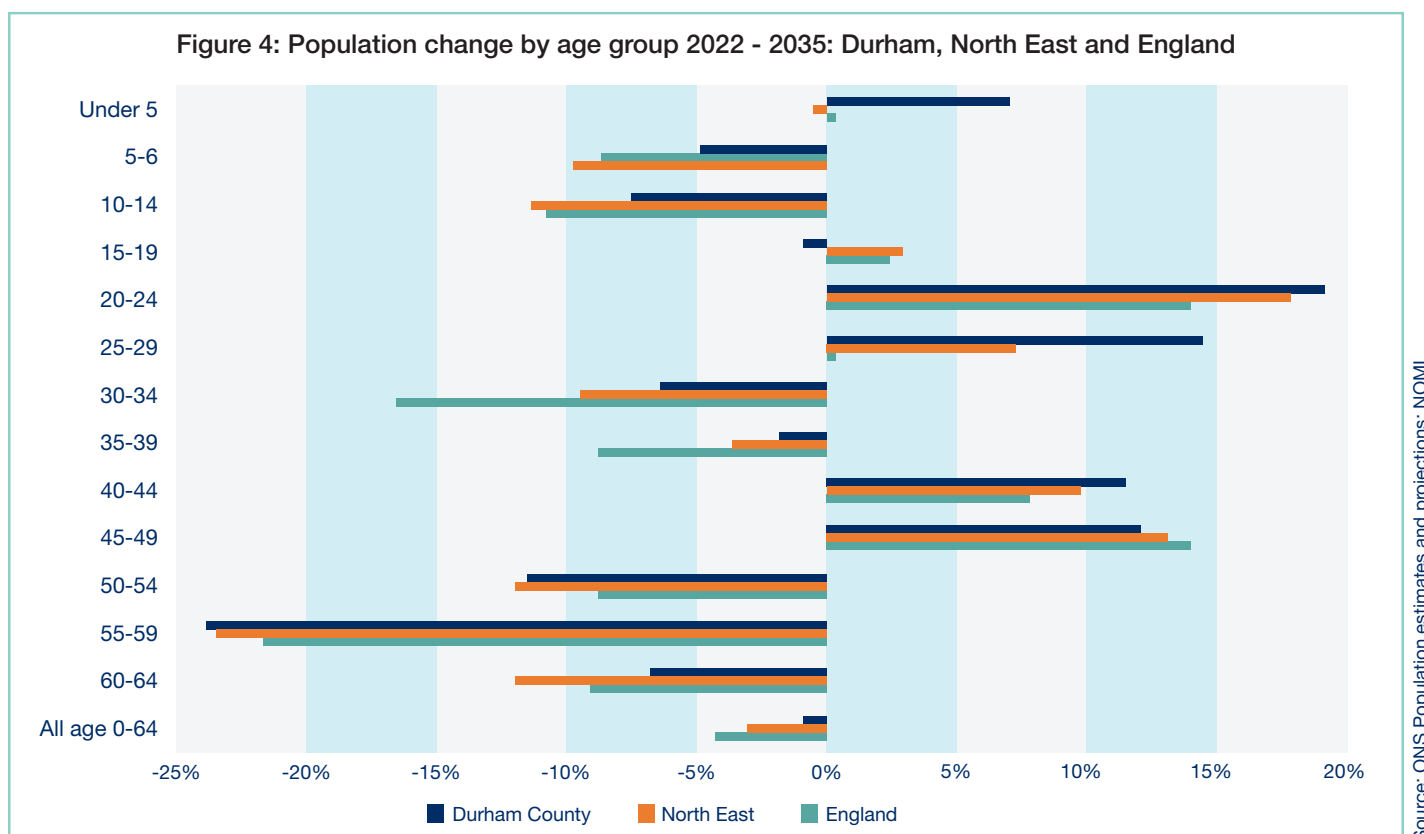
Demographic change

2.12 Figure 3 below shows the age profile of the population in 2022.



Between 2022 and 2035, the population in all three areas is forecast to grow: by 6% in County Durham, 4% in the North East, and 5% in England. This growth is primarily driven by an increase in the number of people aged 65+. Conversely, the population aged 0-64 is projected to decline in each area by -1% in County Durham, -3% in the North East, and -4% in England. In 2023, there were 32,200 people aged 65-69 and 28,900 aged 70-74.

Figure 4 below highlights an anticipated decline in the 5-19 school-age population in County Durham. A similar trend is expected in the North East and England, although in these areas, the 15-19 population is forecast to grow slightly. In the coming year(s), County Durham is likely to see fewer young people at critical decision or transition points, including Year 6 (transition to secondary school), Year 11 (post-16 choices), and Year 13 (transition to the labour market or higher education).

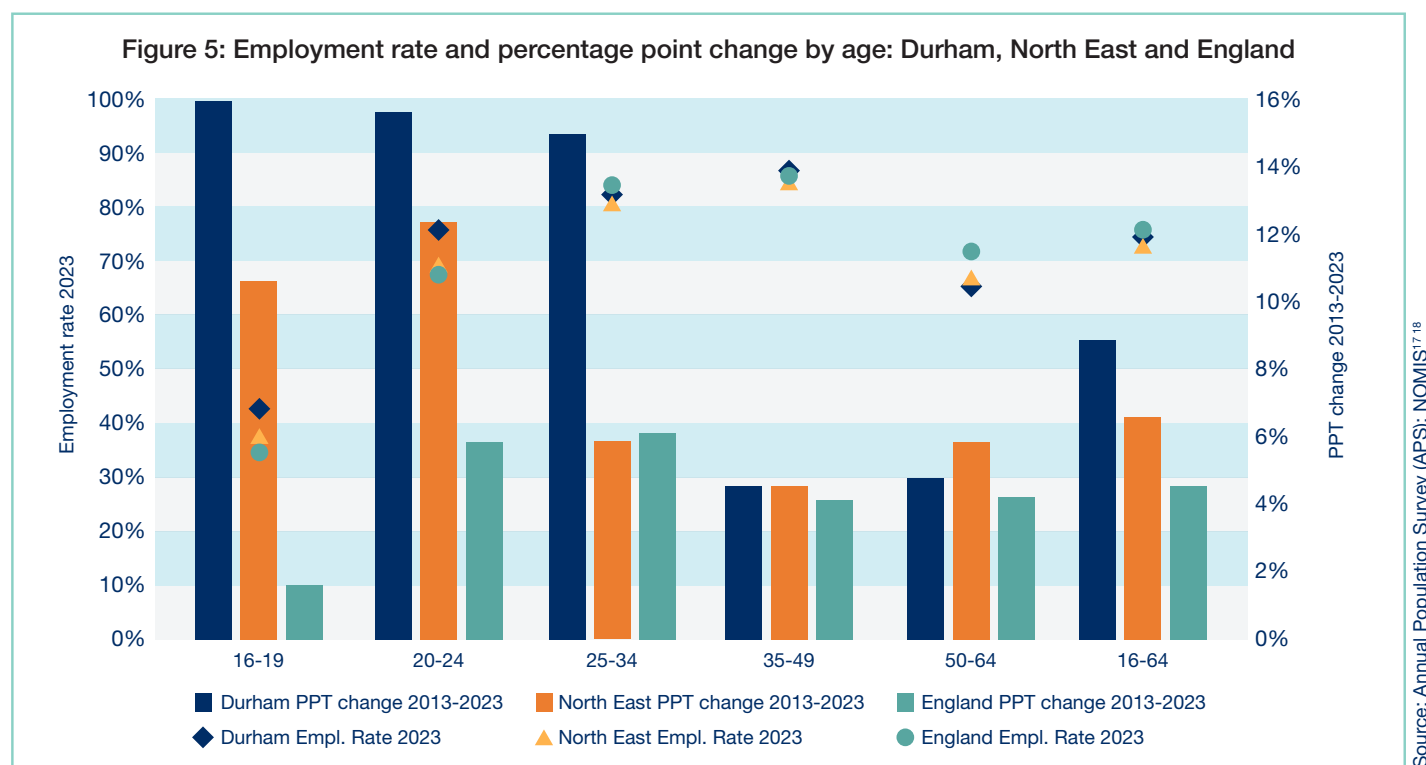


In contrast, the 20-29 and 40-49 age groups are expected to see substantial growth, while the 30-39 age group is forecast to decrease. Notably, the 20-24 age group represents a critical period when many individuals are transitioning from higher education into the labour market, requiring targeted support with their career choices. Also, many adults in work aged 40-49 may be reluctant to invest in upskilling due to the cost-of-living crisis and could benefit from having access to trustworthy careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG). The population aged 50-64 is projected to decline significantly across all three geographical areas.

Employment rates

2.13 Figure 5 below shows the overall employment rate (left axis) for the working age population (16-64) is very similar in the three areas. County Durham (75%) has a slightly lower rate than England (76%) but higher than the North East (73%). County Durham has a much higher employment rate amongst 16-19 and 20-24 year olds suggesting that more young people in County Durham choose to work rather than study. England tends to have a higher employment rate amongst the older age groups. County Durham also has a higher percentage of working age retired people compared to the region and England (20%, 14% and 13% respectively). And whilst the figure has decreased in the North East and England since 2013, it has risen in County Durham.

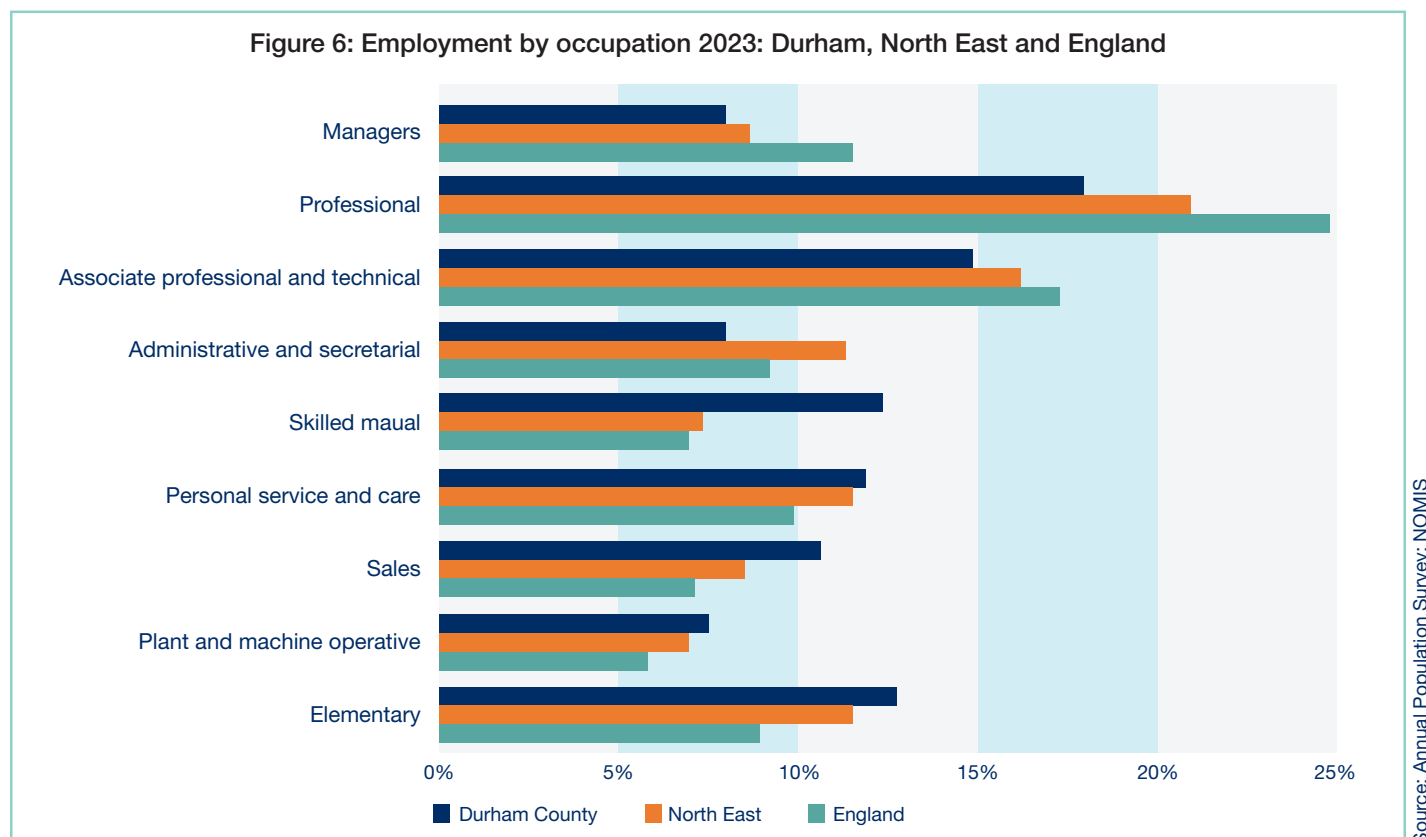
The changes in the employment rate between 2013 and 2023 (right axis) are much greater in County Durham and the North East than in England. Between 2013 and 2023 the employment rate for 16-19, 20-24 and 25-34 year olds in County Durham increased by 15-16 points, whereas the changes in England were all single digit. In the North East, 16-19 and 20-24 year olds' employment rates followed a similar trend to County Durham's though not as large.



For 16-19-year-olds, the gender gap widened significantly - by 24 ppts in County Durham, six ppts in the North East, and three ppts in England between 2013 and 2023. Most of this shift occurred between 2013 and 2018 but has continued steadily since then.

Men continue to have higher employment rates than women in all three areas, but the gender gap has narrowed overall by three percentage points. This narrowing is due to faster employment growth among women, although rates for both genders have increased.

Figure 6 below shows that in 2023 the largest occupation category of people working in County Durham is professional occupations (18%), followed by associate professional and technical occupations (15%). There are four categories each accounting for around 10% to 12% of employment: skilled manual; personal service and care; sales; and elementary occupations. Compared to the North East, there are fewer people working in higher level skilled occupations (40% compared to 45%), and England (53%); and more working in low skilled occupations (29%, 25% and 21% respectively). Between 2014 and 2023, the most significant change in County Durham was a relative fall in employment in administrative and secretarial occupations (-4 ppts) and an increase in associate professional and technical (+3 ppts) and professional (+2 ppts) occupations.

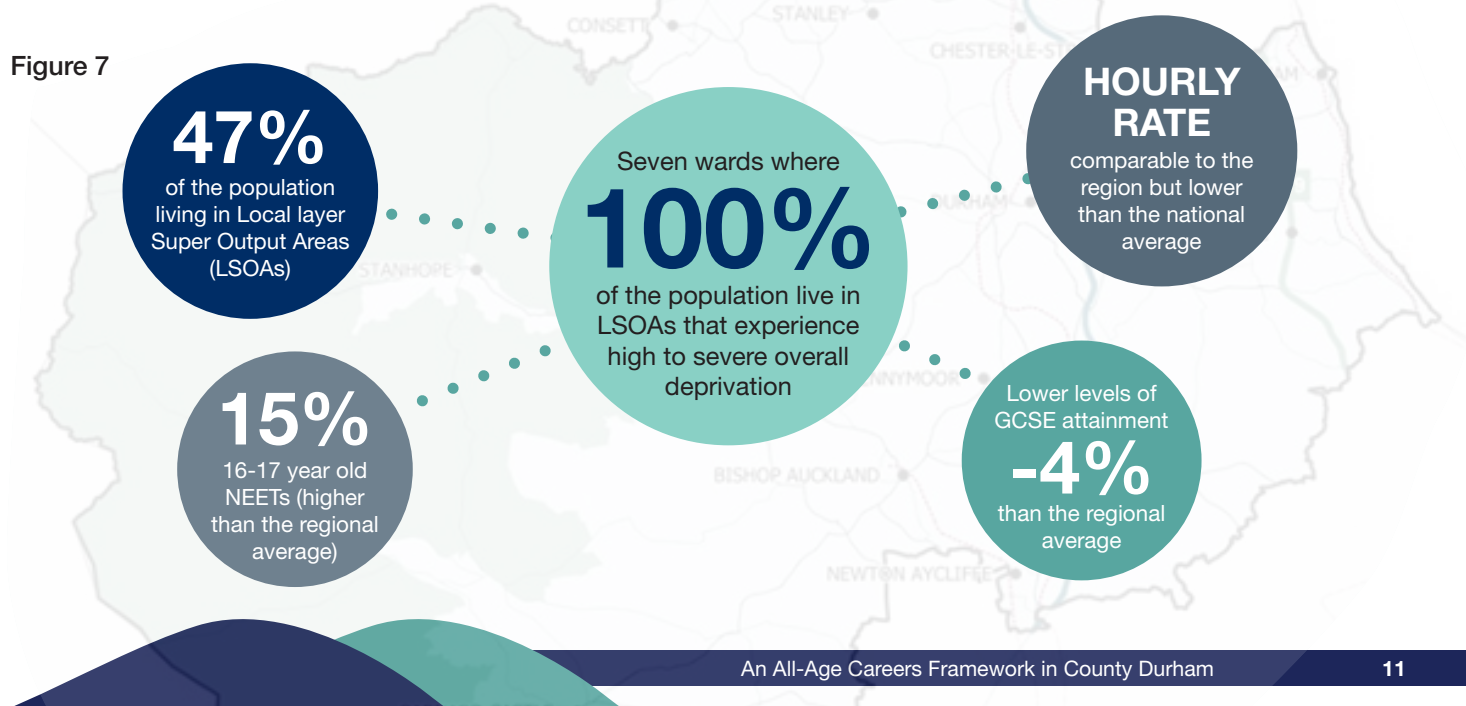


Between 2013 and 2023, self-employment rose for both men and women in County Durham, while rates fell for both in England and rose only for women in the North.

High levels of deprivation across the county

2.14 Despite a relatively advantageous economic base, other published research shows high levels of deprivation across the county and presents County Durham as one of the most deprived local authorities in England. There are high levels of deprivation with 12% of neighbourhoods in the 10% most deprived in the county. Analysis for the unique County Durham Pound Project¹⁹ found:

Figure 7

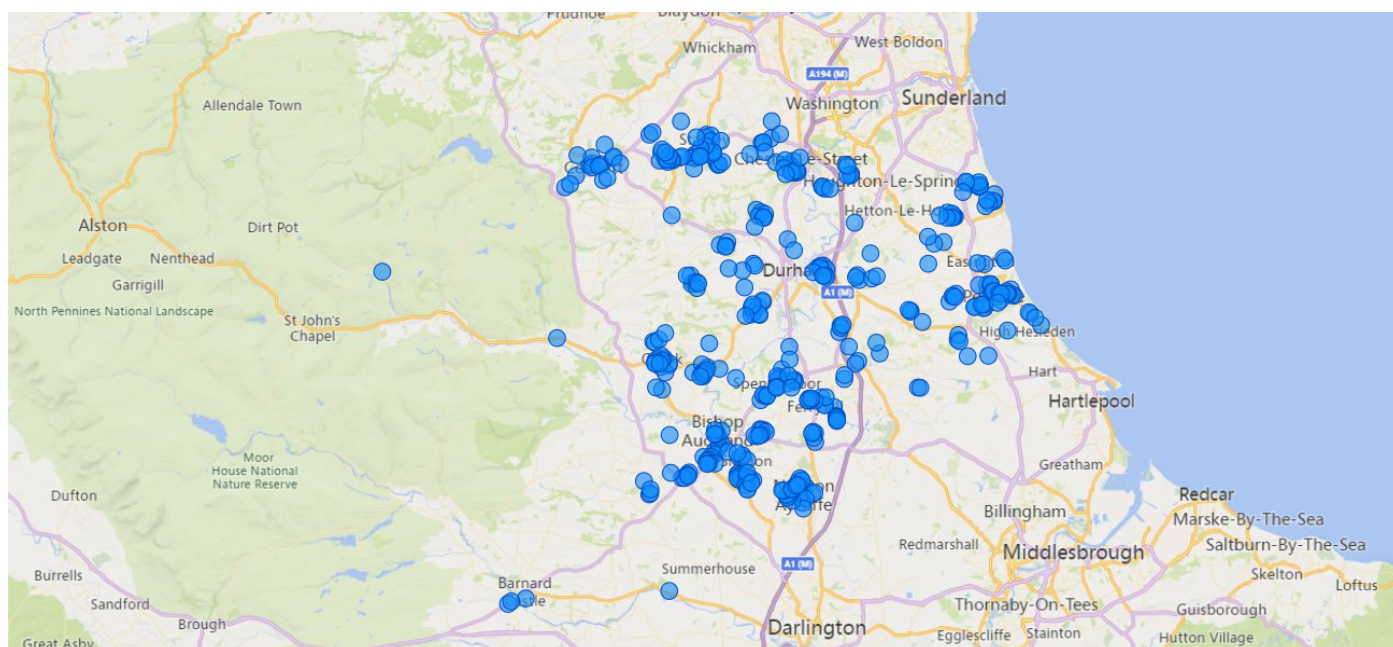


The Council's adopted Poverty Action Strategy (PAS) and Action Plan²⁰ is vital in this tough socio-economic environment, whereby practitioners are firmly anchored in multi-agency working within areas of high deprivation. The PAS vision is: To work together with communities so fewer people will be affected by poverty and deprivation in the county.

The Covid pandemic, and recent UK wide energy price increases and cost of living pressures, are presenting a real risk of drawing many of the county's residents (including those in low paid and precarious employment) into poverty thereby constraining the talent pipeline and business growth.

2.15 Compared to the North East, County Durham has higher levels of deprivation on more than half of the domains, and significantly higher levels in the health and employment domains.²¹ The wards with the highest levels of overall deprivation include: Aycliffe West, Craghead and South Moor, Peterlee East, Shildon and Dene Valley, Shotton and South Hetton, Tow Law, and Woodhouse Close. All of these wards have 100% of their population living in areas that experience high to severe overall deprivation. Countywide heatmaps below illustrate areas of high social deprivation. These areas should be a focus for high-quality CIAG either virtually or face-to-face in local communities.

Figure 8: Areas of highest levels of deprivation



Left-Behind Neighbourhoods

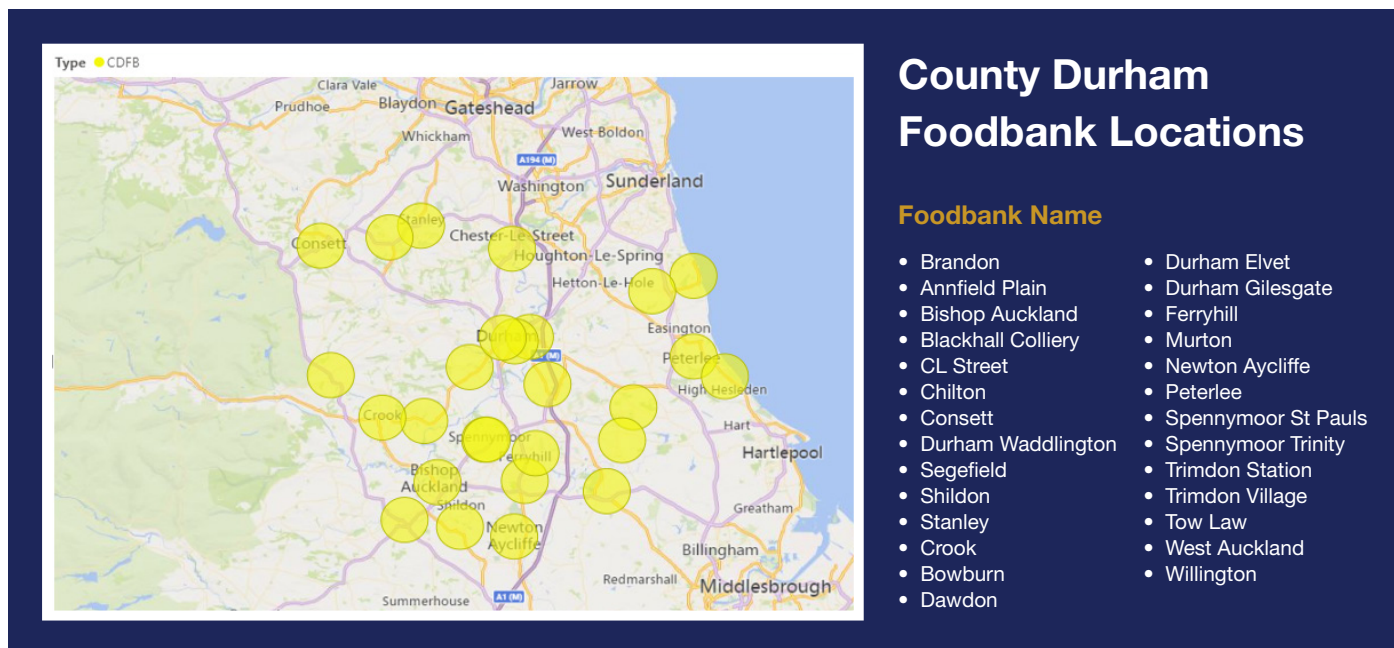
2.16 Research undertaken by OCSI and Local Trust²² has led to an alternative metric of disadvantage 'left-behind neighbourhoods'.²³ This measure is based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) but also incorporates measures of community and civic assets and infrastructure. On this measure, 16 of County Durham's wards have been included, the most of any local authority in England.

On this left-behind neighbourhoods measure: Aycliffe West, Craghead and South Moor, Peterlee East, Shildon and Dene Valley, Shotton and South Hetton, and Woodhouse Close from the previous list of wards are present, Tow Law is not. Wards on the left-behind neighbourhoods measure but not included in the previous list are: Blackhall, Coundon, Deneside, Easington, Ferryhill, Horden, Peterlee West, Stanley, and Trimdon and Thornley.

Around 17,000 used the county's network of Warm Spaces last year, with the offer being broadened to include advice services and relaunched as Welcome Spaces. The Council has issued Food and Fuel Vouchers and just over 53,500 are benefiting from the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, with more than 25,000 people receiving the maximum 100 percent discount.²⁴

The number of people in work who are claiming Universal Credit has more than doubled from 9,500 in March 2020 to 19,900 in September 2023.

Figure 9: County Durham Foodbank Locations



The Claimant Count

2.17 The Claimant Count in County Durham was 10,485 in December 2023 down from December 2022, when there were 10,915 claimants. The proportion of people aged 16 to 64 years in County Durham who were claiming unemployment-related benefits was 3.3% in December 2023, a slight decrease compared with December 2022 when it was 3.4%. Economic inactivity in County Durham is higher than across the North East and Great Britain.

The Real Living Wage

2.18 In 2024 according to the ONS, 22.1% of all employees in County Durham were paid below the Real Living Wage. This compares to 19.2% in the North East and 15.9% in England. The respective male/female rates for the 3 areas are 17.5%/26.6%; 15.0%/23.0%; and 12.6%/19.2%.

Distribution of Employment

2.19 The distribution of employment varies significantly across the different constituencies. For example, manufacturing accounts for 26% of all employment in the former Sedgefield constituency but only 3% in City of Durham. Public administration constitutes 15% of employment in City of Durham but only 2% in Sedgefield and 4% in North Durham and North West Durham. There are similarities; however, around one in ten people at least work in wholesale and retail trade, education, and human health and social work in each area. Together, these three sectors account for at least one third of employment in each area.

Between 2015 and 2022, employment rose in most areas. Employment grew by the largest amount in North Durham (14%) and City of Durham (12%). However, employment fell in Bishop Auckland (-7%) and Easington (-2%).

Around 86,800 people or 26.6% of the population aged 16 to 64 years in County Durham were “economically inactive” in the year ending September 2023. This compares with around 72,200 people (22.4%) in the year ending September.

Examples of major employers in County Durham



Durham University
8,000+ jobs supported
across the County



Durham County Council
16,000+ employees



NHS 172,000+
employed across
the North East

Durham University generated £668 million Gross Value-Added (GVA) and supported 10,790 jobs in the North East of England, of which £489 million GVA and 8,170 jobs were in County Durham in 2020/21. Recently a new memorandum of understanding (MOU) was established between four FE colleges and the university to jointly explore ways of supporting sustainable skills and study pathways that meet student and industry needs. Durham County Council and the University also have a well-established joint partnership.

Durham County Council has several key statutory responsibilities focused on serving local residents and managing resources across County Durham. As a unitary authority, it is responsible for delivering a wide range of public services, including education, health and social care, housing, transport, and waste management. The council also oversees local planning and development, as well as emergency services coordination. Its duties are defined by national legislation, and it works closely with local communities through its Area Action Partnerships (recently renamed Local Networks)²⁶ to ensure that services (including CIAG and employability support) meet local needs. Additionally, Durham County Council has a role in economic development, aiming to support business growth and improve local infrastructure e.g., Business Durham²⁵. The council's structure includes a cabinet responsible for decision-making, though it is currently unclear who is responsible for the strategic leadership of CIAG. With over 16,000 employees, the council plays a crucial part in ensuring that County Durham remains dynamic and sustainable in contributing to social mobility, economic and community development.

NHS is a major employer in the North East of England contributing significantly to the region's healthcare economy. It is estimated that the healthcare sector employs around 172,000 individuals across the North East, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, support, and administrative staff. Specific data on NHS employment numbers within County Durham isn't readily available, but the workforce plays a critical role in the area's healthcare delivery, operating hospitals and community healthcare services. The NHS's overall presence in the North East highlights its importance as a cornerstone of the region's workforce and public service infrastructure. Health Education England (HEE) in the North East and North Cumbria is one of the few foundation schools that delivers CIAG to their doctors, as part of their professionalism teaching programme through a dedicated career management programme.

Current Employer Recruitment

2.20 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has recently made available data at a local authority level of employer recruitment activity through online job adverts. Monitoring job adverts provides an up-to-date measure of employer recruitment activity, and recent trends. However, some occupations and sectors are less well represented than other methodologies because they predominantly recruit through other mechanisms, including word of mouth.

Figure 10 shows the number of monthly job adverts in County Durham between January 2017 and August 2024. Since the lifting of the COVID-19 lockdowns in May 2021, there have been an average of around 7,500 online job vacancies each month (some of which will be advertised for several months). The number of online job adverts rose to a peak of almost 11,500 in December 2021, since which the figure has fallen to around 6,500.

As a proportion of job adverts in the North East, the proportion in County Durham has fallen since March 2019 when it stood at 21%. In the first 8 months of 2024 the percentage has averaged 16% suggesting relatively reduced employer recruitment activity since pandemic lockdowns ended.

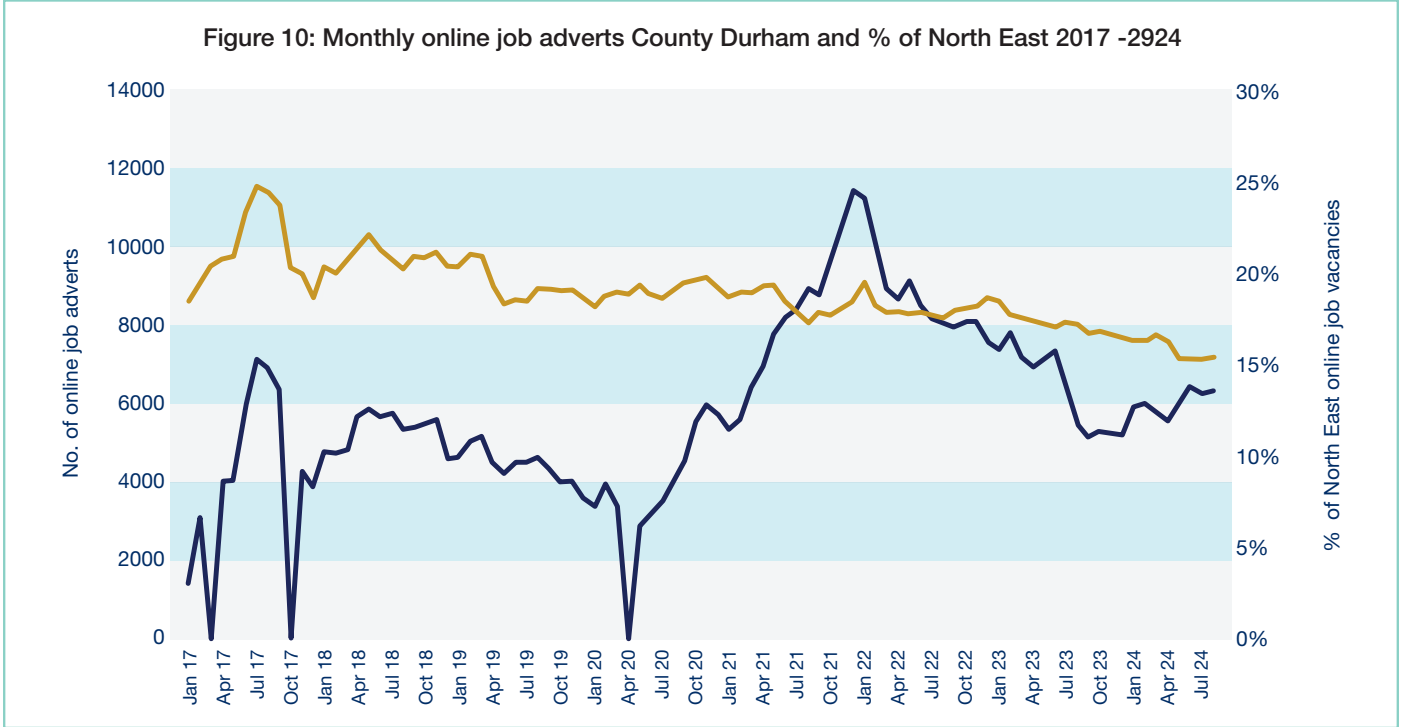


Figure 11 shows the proportion of job adverts per 100 working age residents in County Durham and the UK between January 2017 and August 2024. Over this period there have been 1.9 job adverts for 100 working age residents in County Durham and 3.3 in the UK. Since the COVID-19 pandemic in June 2021, there have been 2.3 in County Durham and 3.9 across the UK. This highlights the need to focus both on the demand for labour to support the growth of current businesses and also attract new companies to the area to generate more jobs.

Whilst there have been relatively fewer job adverts in County Durham, the trend since 2017 has been very similar to the UK.

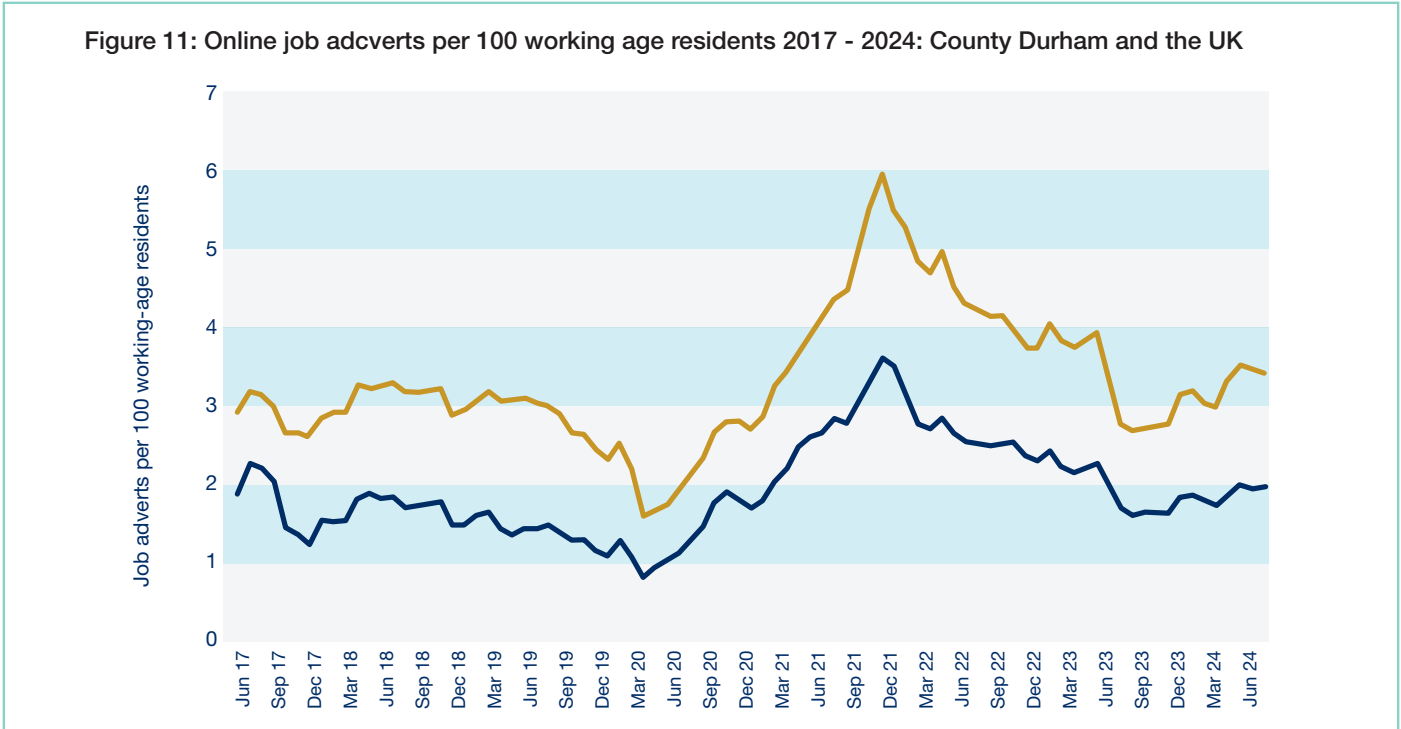
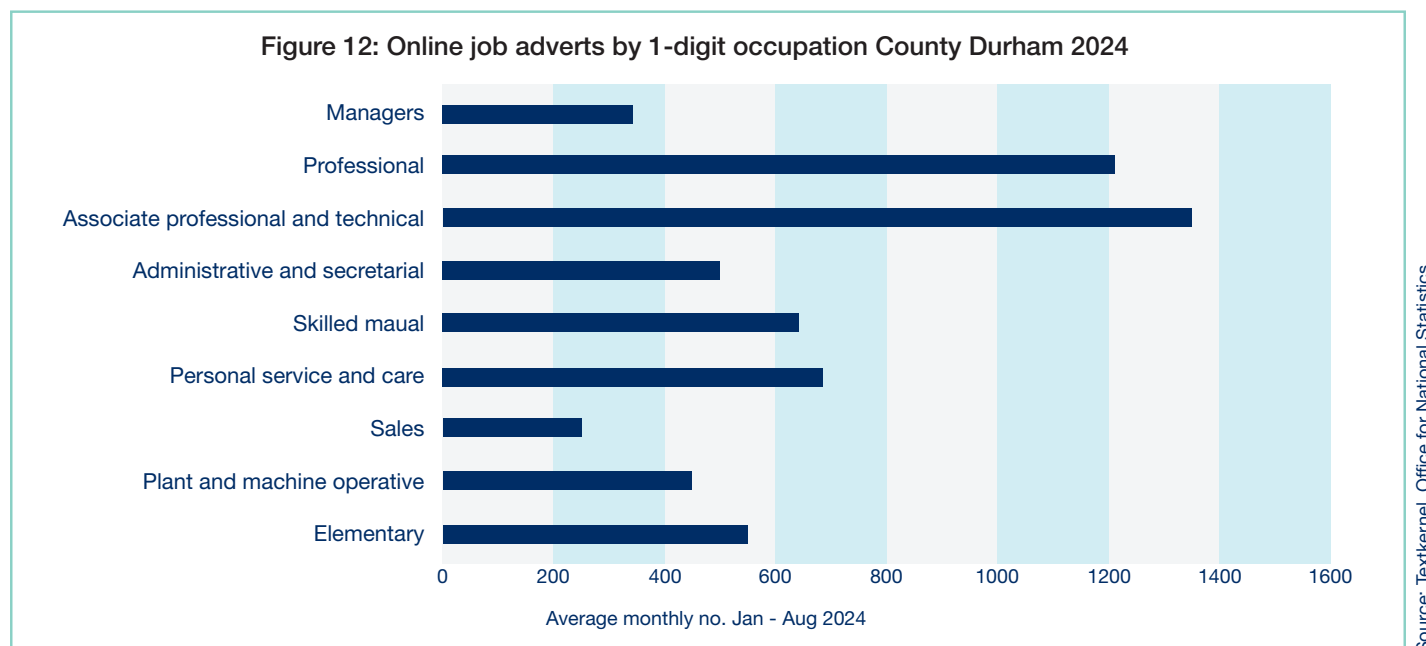


Figure 12 shows the average number of job adverts by 1-digit Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) for the first 8 months of 2024. Of the 6,000 average monthly total job adverts over this period around two in five were for associate professional and technical (1,340 or 22% of the total) or professional occupations (1,200 or 20%) Around one quarter were for personal service and care (700 or 12%) or skilled manual (650 or 11%).



If we take the same period prior to the pandemic (i.e., January-August 2019), Figure 13 shows the percentage change in the monthly average of online job adverts in County Durham by 1-digit SOC. Overall, there has been a doubling of job adverts (+111%). There have been triple digit increases in online job adverts for associate professional and technical (+332%) and professional (+277%) occupations. Some of the increases may be due to employers increasingly using online job adverts as a recruitment tool compared to other approaches. The number of online job adverts increased for all occupations.

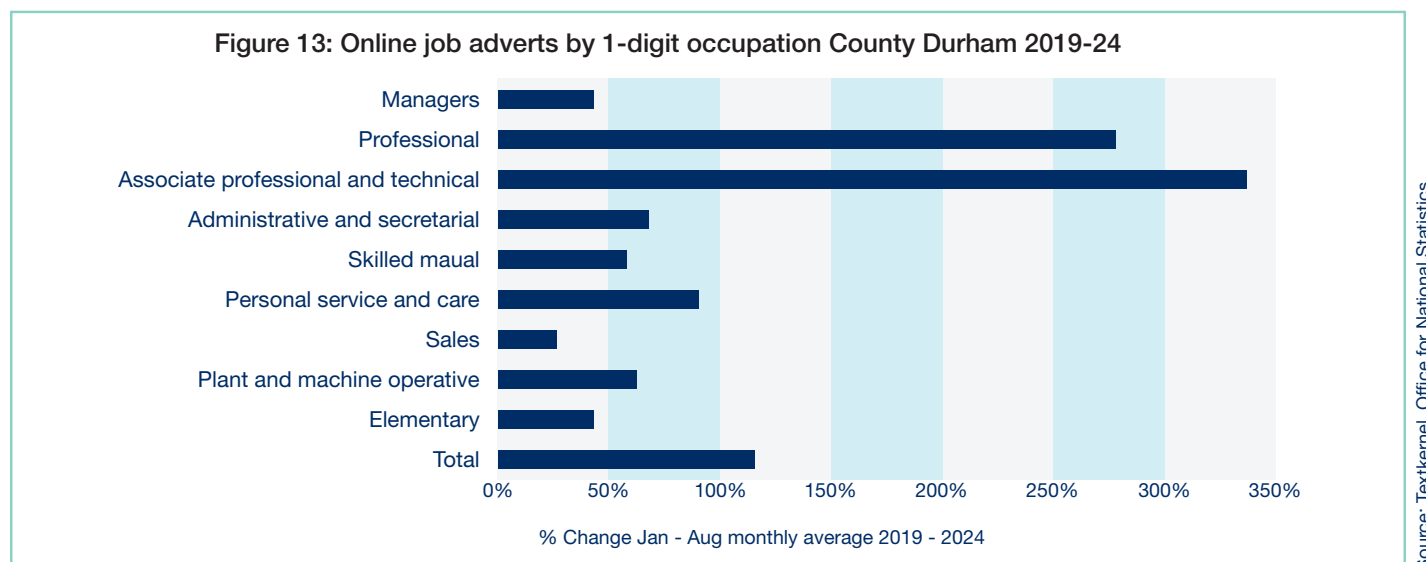
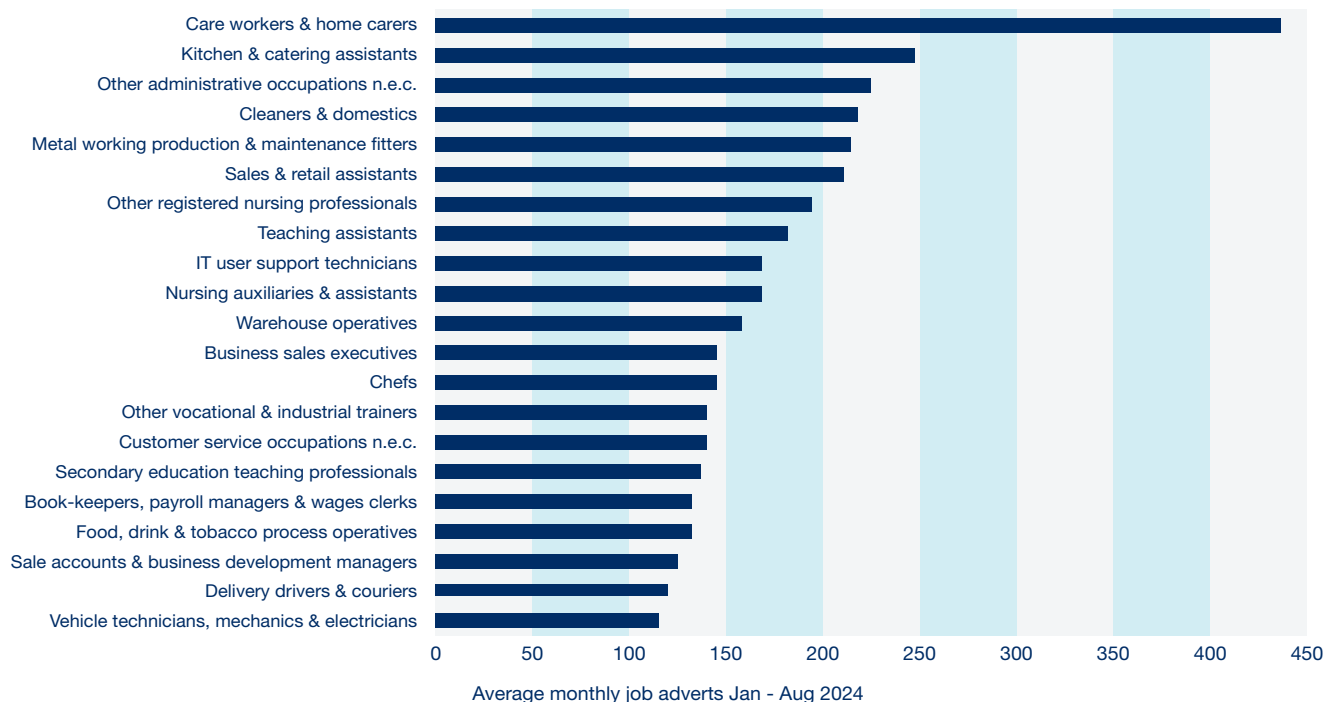


Figure 14: Top 20 4-digit occupations: Online job adverts County Durham 2024



Source: Textkernel, Office for National Statistics

Figure 14 shows the top 20 4-digit occupations for online job adverts averaged across the first 8 months of 2024. These 20 occupations account for one third of all online job adverts in 2024.

The largest category is care workers and home carers, 435 or 4% of all online job adverts were for this type of job. The next largest occupations are kitchens and catering assistants, other administrative occupations, cleaners and domestics, and metal working production and maintenance fitters (each 2%.) All of the major occupation groups are represented with the exception of managers. The findings provide a helpful reminder of the importance of trustworthy labour market intelligence/information being used to good effect by practitioners in their daily work.

Making sure those who need the most support get this

2.21 In 2023, 74,900 working age people in County Durham were economically inactive which is almost one quarter (23%) of the 16-64 population which is slightly lower than for the North East (25%) but higher than in England (21%).²⁷

There are different reasons for economic inactivity. The figure is primarily made up of four categories: students, those looking after the family or home, those who are long-term sick, and retired people (before the state pension age). Economically inactive people within these different groups are likely to require different types of information, advice, guidance and support to move them closer to or into employment.

In County Durham, 37% of economically inactive people are long-term sick. This figure is much higher than in the North East (34%) and England (26%). In 2013, the proportion of long-term sick in County Durham and the North East was also higher than in England. And whilst there has been an increase in all three areas, the gap with England has widened, especially in County Durham.

The economic inactivity rate among younger people in County Durham is significantly lower than in both the region and England. In 2023, the economic inactivity rate for 16-19 year olds in County Durham was 17 percentage points (ppt) lower than the regional average and 23 ppts lower than the national average. Similarly, 20-24 year olds in County Durham also exhibited much lower economic inactivity rates.

For individuals aged 25 and over, economic inactivity in County Durham exceeds the national average across all age groups. When compared to the North East, the economic inactivity rate is higher for 25-34 year olds but remains similar for older age groups.

The Annual Population Survey shows that the percentage of economically inactive people in County Durham who want a job is 15%, lower than the North East (19%) and England (18%). This represents an 11-percentage point (ppt) drop since 2013, when 26% of economically inactive people in the county expressed a desire for work. Over the same period, the proportion fell by 4 ppts in the North East and 6 ppts in England.

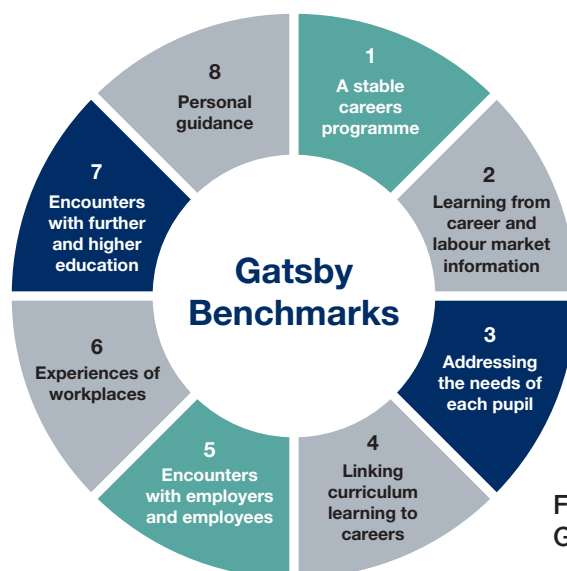


Figure 15: The Gatsby Benchmarks

Gatsby Benchmark performance in schools and colleges below the national average

2.22 Schools and colleges in County Durham have engaged with several parts of the Gatsby and Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) infrastructure around careers provision for education. This is a national requirement for all schools and colleges in England. In County Durham schools/colleges have good coverage of Compass returns (self-assessment tool for careers provision managed by the CEC), with 46 returns available as of June 2024²⁸. 33 out of 37 compatible organisations are also onboarded with Compass+, the software suite provided by the CEC to monitor and manage careers provision, with the remaining four organisations at various stages of engagement.

The North East Combined Authority (NECA) provided a snapshot of the Compass results²⁹ from those 46 schools/colleges, understanding that most returns would have been complete at some point during 2023/24. Compared to the most recently published CEC data for England³⁰, Durham County Council (DCC) schools have slightly weaker careers provision in terms of the Gatsby Benchmarks, averaging 5.24 benchmarks fully achieved, compared to 5.48 for England in the previous year. Considering typically year-on-year improvement, the England average is likely to be around 6 benchmarks fully achieved during 2023/24, so County Durham careers provision in schools and colleges is likely to be around 13% lower than the England average.

Figure 16: Number of benchmarks fully achieved among Compass returns



Source: Annual Population Survey (APS); NOMIS³¹

Examining individual benchmarks, schools and colleges in County Durham indicatively outperforms the national average on “4. Linking curriculum learning to careers” with 85% full achievement compared to 76% (9% higher, depending on progress across England in 2023/24), but lags on “5. Encounters with employers and employees” (13% lower), “1. A stable careers programme” (7% lower), and “7. Encounters with further and higher education” (6% lower). Overall and in line with the national trend, “7. Encounters with further and higher education” and “3. Addressing the needs of each pupil” are the most challenging to fully achieve in County Durham schools and colleges, with around half of reports describing full achievement of these benchmarks.

Destinations

2.23 Key findings show:

- ▶ More than four out of five young people progressed on to a sustained education destination: 81% in County Durham
- ▶ Young people in County Durham and the North East were more likely to enter an Further Education (FE) college than in England (which is most likely due to the nature of provision in an area rather than any choice factors on the part of students).
- ▶ Young people in England were less likely than their peers in County Durham and the North East to enter an apprenticeship, and not to have a sustained destination.
- ▶ In KS4 destinations in all three areas (NE, England and County Durham), there was a reduction in young people entering sustained education, and an increase in those entering work, and advanced and higher apprenticeships.
- ▶ Disadvantaged young people and those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) were +10-11 ppts more likely to have a non-sustained destination, and those identified as having Special Education Needs (SEN) were +6 ppts more likely to have a non-sustained destination.
- ▶ In County Durham, three quarters of young people at Key Stage 5 (76%) entered a sustained education, apprenticeship or employment destination. One quarter (24%) did not with 19% recorded as not having a sustained destination.
- ▶ Compared to England there are three key differences. In County Durham, young people are less likely to choose Higher Education (HE) (-6 ppts less likely than in England [all other education destinations are the same]), they are more likely to enter an apprenticeship (+3 ppts), and more likely not to have sustained destination (+ 4ppts).
- ▶ Analysis of the routes that KS4 pupils took in the five years after 2017/18 indicate the large majority of pupils progress into some form of further education but then at year 3 their routes start to diverge mostly into HE, employment and FE; until year 5 when 70% are other in work or in HE. Apprenticeship take up more than doubles between year 1 and year 3 (from 6% of students to 14%) but then reduces to 8%. Non sustained destinations almost treble between year 1 and 3 (from 7% to 20%) and stay at this level into year 5.

2.24 County Durham's public, private, and third sector organisations play a crucial and influential role in preparing individuals for both current and future opportunities. However, the challenge lies in ensuring that the services designed to meet the diverse needs of the county's residents and businesses do not result in fragmented or disjointed careers information, advice, and guidance (CIAG) provision. At present, the strategic economic development and poverty action plans are separate in the current system and given CIAG falls into both camps something needs to change going forward to ensure both agendas can be met and resources fully maximised.

Without a unified approach, there is a risk of under-utilised talent pipelines and uneven quality, with the most vulnerable communities missing out on the opportunities they need to thrive and prosper. (See also, separate Return on Investment (ROI) evidence paper - Return on Investment (ROI): Context for County Durham's All-Age Careers Framework - outlining (i) the benefits to employers in getting more involved in careers activities and (ii) the evidence from other independent reports on ROI associated with Durham County Council programmes.)

North East Combined Authority area

2.25 The North East Local Skills Improvement Plan (NELSIP)³¹ is grounded in the context of the local economy and the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) for the region including digital, advanced manufacturing, construction, health and science, transport and logistics.

A new North East Combined Authority (NECA)³² came into effect from May 2024, encompassing Durham, Sunderland, Gateshead and South Tyneside County Councils within the NELSIP region and those currently served by the North of Tyne Combined Authority. The Department for Education has confirmed that it will seek to align the NELSIP specified area to the NECA. The NECA Cabinet is made up of the Mayor and one councillor from each of the seven constituent authorities, including devolved responsibility for the Adult Skills Budget.

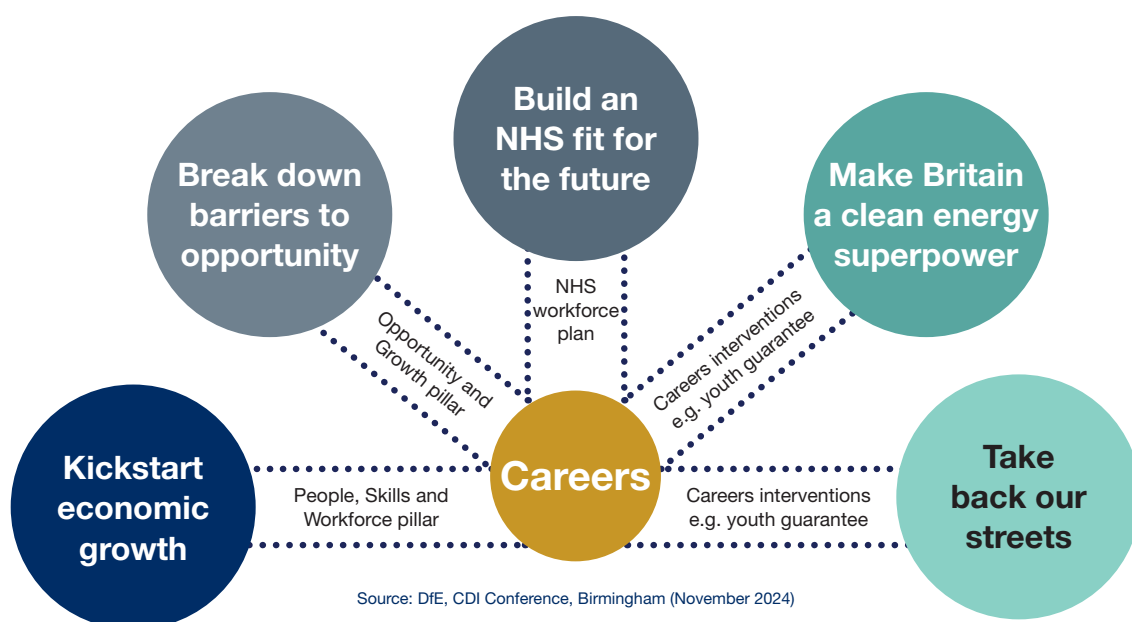
The NELSIP covering County Durham was developed through 2023 and is specifically focussed on five high impact sectors which closely align with Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES) priority sectors: (i) Digital; (ii) Advance Manufacturing; (iii) Construction, (iv) Health and Health Science; and (v) Transport and Logistics. The NELSIP report was submitted to government in May 2023 and approved in September.

Since then, the North East Automotive Alliance (NEAA)³³ has been working with businesses, along with education and training providers to implement the findings of the report and ensure regional skills needs are addressed. Additional resources have been provided to help drive implementation with East Durham College selected as the lead provider in the delivery of the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), which will implement the recommendations on the NELSIP final report.

Central government

2.26 The Government's Get Britain Working White Paper (November 2024)³⁴ underscores the urgency of addressing these opportunities and challenges, stating:

"Our country's greatest asset is its people. However, the talents of too many are being wasted due to spiralling economic inactivity." (Secretary of State, DWP)



2.27 With this new emphasis on careers, County Durham welcomes the government's commitment to tackling these issues, recognising that effective CIAG for people of all-ages is essential to unlocking potential, addressing skills gaps, and fostering economic recovery and reducing poverty and 'left-behind communities' across the county. The introduction of the DWP Universal Support programme will bring about significant changes to welfare benefits. This will impact on local residents and provide support for people who are in hidden unemployment, within priority groups, and who want to work. It will also provide support to people to retain work who are at risk of losing employment.

2.24 Some significant central government themes are emerging that will impact on County Durham: (i) for formation of a new Jobs and Careers Service within Jobcentre Plus merged with the National Careers Service; (ii) the recruitment of at least 1000 Careers Advisers at a national level over the coming year(s); (iii) the update of the Gatsby Benchmarks (November 2024); and (iv) a new two weeks' work experience requirement for young people in schools and colleges. At some point in the future, it is anticipated central government may introduce new Statutory Guidance to drive improvements in CEIAG in schools and colleges. (See Appendix 2 for an overview of CIAG related policy developments).

Given this, and the County's shifting demographic trends, evolving industries, and skills gaps, it is crucial to redouble collective efforts over the next decade to create a more holistic, cohesive system that opens up the broadest range of opportunities for everyone, regardless of their starting point.

3.0 The Countywide Careers Ecosystem

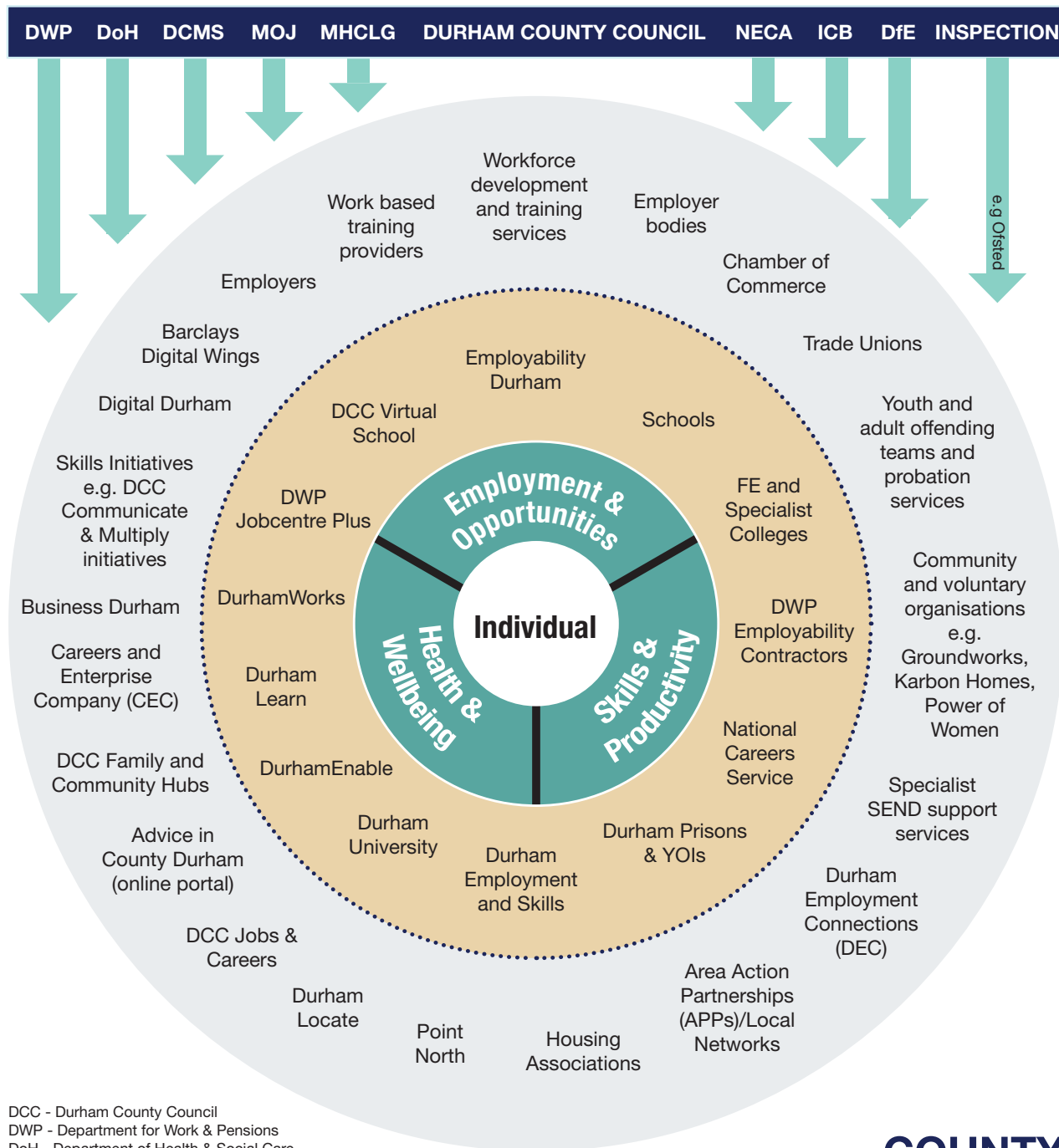
3.1 In this section, we outline the current careers support system in operation, highlighting both its key strengths and limitations. We also present key findings that reflect the views and experiences of 2,111 County Durham residents and businesses captured to inform the design and development of an effective all-age careers support system for the period leading up to 2035, in alignment with key policy drivers.

3.2 Figure 17 overleaf illustrates strategic policy drivers, including inspection, and key deliverers of different forms of careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) across the county. In this context, there are three distinct categories of CIAG providers, namely:

- ▶ Those organisations with **responsibility for CIAG strategic policy and/or inspection** within the careers and employability landscape e.g., Durham County Council, Dept for Education, Ofsted, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Department for Health and Social Care, Department for Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS), Ministry for Justice, North East Combined Authority (NECA), the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB).
- ▶ Those organisations **offering CIAG strategic support and/or delivery of provision as part of their core services to young people and/or adults** e.g. Durham County Council (multiple initiatives), the National Careers Service, Jobcentre Plus, The Careers and Enterprise Company, County Durham schools/academies (with or without 6th forms), further education (FE) colleges, Independent Training Providers (ITPs), Durham Prisons, Durham University (other Higher Education Institutions [HEI]), STEM Ambassadors, Education and Employers, Specialist SEND and Alternative Provision, BBC Bite-Size Careers, NHS Careers, World Skills, private and third sector organisations.
- ▶ Those organisations who offer some form of **CIAG delivery in a wide range of settings as complementary to their specialist services aimed at young people and/ or adults** e.g., teachers/ lecturers, employers, employer bodies and trade union representatives, Business Durham, Durham Learn, Barclays Digital Wings, community and voluntary organisations, health and wellbeing specialists, youth offending and probation services and social housing agencies.

The current careers eco-system places strong emphasis on tackling disadvantage and inequality with shared community values, and a strong commitment to improving inclusion, social mobility and economic prosperity, but strategic leadership in CIAG is in need of being strengthened.

Figure 17: Strategic policy drivers



DCC - Durham County Council
DWP - Department for Work & Pensions
DoH - Department of Health & Social Care
DCMS - Department for Culture, Media & Sports
MOJ - Ministry of Justice
MHCLG - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
NECA - North East Combined Authority
DfE - Department for Education
ICB - North East And North Cumbria Integrated Care Board

COUNTY DURHAM CIAG ECO-SYSTEM

Numerous examples of innovative and effective approaches to CIAG

3.3 While we cannot name every CIAG strategic and delivery initiative, we acknowledge the wide range of excellent work being carried out across the county. We provide quotes and vignette case studies from respondents to the surveys, Call for Evidence and participants from the consultation events, one-to-one interviews and group discussions who shared their experiences with us.

Key strengths

3.3.1 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) – These exist at a strategic level between further education (FE) colleges and Durham University (2024)³⁵. Also, between Durham University and Durham County Council (2022)³⁶; however, detail on all-age CIAG support and allied employability and enterprise support services are largely absent in this regard. There are many examples of great work taking place that could be shared more widely across institutions and agencies.

“The education and employability landscape is changing, trends show more adults need career guidance e.g. those in education and in work, as well as the unemployed. Also, parents expect more from the system than is currently offered. Senior leaders broadly support what’s happening in the eco-system now but unsure about their vision going forward.” (Provider).

3.3.2 Career-related learning (CRL) in primary schools – Durham County Council’s Children’s and Young People’s Services captures primary school children’s career aspirations, while SWDT³⁷, part of the Bishop Auckland College Group, facilitates STEM-related school visits and hands-on experiential learning. The Careers and Enterprise Company, through North East Ambitions and NECA³⁸, provides CRL resources and teacher support aligned with the Gatsby Benchmarks. Primary Futures³⁹ and North East Ambitions LinkUp⁴⁰ portals connect schools with business volunteers, and Spark offers high-quality CRL teaching materials and local industry job videos.

“Here there lots of activity going on in primary schools, but it’s largely a hidden secret because it happens on a school-by-school basis. We need to collectively celebrate and raise the profile of what’s going on across the county to inspire others to do more and to reach parents who are major influencers...We need more co-ordinated leadership to achieve this!” (Provider).

3.3.3 Civic Forums established by Whitworth Park Academy⁴¹ and Dene Academy⁴² – part of the Advance Learning Partnership (Multi-Academy Trust)– are two examples of schools that make their careers education and information, advice and guidance arrangements explicit with employers and in local communities. A standout example of good practice is the formation of ‘civic forums,’ where educationalists, employers, health and wellbeing professionals and careers specialists come together quarterly to discuss improving life chances and opportunities for students, parents/carers, with a relentless focus on meeting local community needs.

“We want to make a positive difference to people’s lives in our local community. By bringing key stakeholders together regularly we can discuss and identify careers support ideas for action within and outside of the curriculum to give more young people opportunities to flourish.” (Vice-Principal and Careers Lead, Whitworth Park Academy).

3.3.4 Durham County Council and the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB)⁴³ are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) across the county. Durham County Council commissions alternative provision (AP) for permanently excluded pupils, those identified as close to permanent exclusion and those who cannot attend school because of health needs. There is one Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) that provides support across separate sites for pupils in key stage 1 to key stage 4. Four registered alternative education providers add additional capacity for children and young people who need support away from mainstream education. A small number of children and young people who are unwell attend an education health care needs unit. Some school-age children with SEND attend places in additionally resourced mainstream settings. A recent Ofsted report highlights:

“The focus on early identification of need is a positive initiative across Durham, with several arrangements in place to provide support for families and schools to help recognise and meet SEND needs. Fifteen family hubs throughout the area host drop-in sessions run by the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information and Advice Support Service (SENDIASS) and educational psychologists. Additionally, there are courses run by the family hubs, health staff and specialist inclusion support teams, including the Durham Portage Service. They provide regular access to professional support and guidance. Each hub has sensory spaces and offers additional outreach support for families. This support is highly valued by parents and carers.” (Ofsted Report, 2024⁴⁴).

3.3.5 DurhamWorks⁴⁵ – A unique inclusive programme working with a diverse range of 16 to 25 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET). This also includes e.g. DurhamWorks Futures – supporting 18-24 year olds, with a priority on young people who have received Children’s Social Care and young people claiming benefits. DurhamWorks Programme for Schools – a dedicated project for young people aged 15-16 that are at risk of NEET or those that are identified by the school as needing additional support, including students with moderate to severe special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and students experiencing mental health problems e.g. the Workplaces Project – supporting Year 10 and 12 students who are at risk of NEET to find out more about the world of work through bespoke visits to employers. External evaluation evidence found positive results from the DurhamWorks initiatives.

“DurhamWorks are helping me find jobs in my area. They also helped me decide to go to Groundworks and Catch 22 to get my Maths and English.” (Young Person)

Independent evaluators assessing the impact of DurhamWorks have confirmed:

A social ROI of 2.8x from the support for NEET 16-24 year olds, where the most significant financial benefits were fiscal and economic benefits from workless claimants entering work.⁴⁶ In the programme for schools, 82% of those in Education, Employment, and Training (EET) said the programme had helped them be EET (and 37% said it helped “a great extent”).⁴⁷

3.3.6 DurhamEnable⁴⁸ – Is recognised as a market leader both nationally and in the North East for supported employment practice. The team which helps people with disabilities, neurodiversity, and long-term health conditions into work has been recognised as one of the highest-performing supported employment services in the UK (November 2024). The initiative is aimed at residents aged 18 or over who have a disability, autism, mental health needs, or other long term health conditions and have faced barriers getting into work. A ‘place, train and maintain’ model, following five stages of Supported Employment: customer engagement; vocational profiling; employer engagement; job matching; and in-work support and career development. Assessed by the British Association for Supported Employment (BASE), achieving an Excellent accreditation status for Supported Employment practice. Highly commended for work with employers, supported internships and intensive follow-on mentoring for individuals in the workplace and humanitarian programme. Independent evaluators assessing the impact of DurhamEnable have confirmed:

“181 clients out of 811 supported into employment, with a further 103 into education and training, contributing to an overall social ROI estimate of 2.4x.”⁴⁹

A young adult commented on the support provided as follows:

“My Job Coach was a great support for me, always telling me I could do it. She found me support groups. Support not just to get a job but support for me as a person. She’s supported me in so many ways.” (Adult)

3.3.7 Employability Durham⁵⁰ – Is aimed at adults 25+, who live in County Durham and are economically inactive or in unstable employment, for example, zero/low hours or risk of redundancy, and want to improve their circumstances. Initial support is for up to six months and consists of community based engagement, taking Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) to people in places they are already comfortable attending to encourage movement towards economic activity. Structured action planning, diagnostic tools, exploration of opportunities and empowerment of individual autonomy. Additional resource in the team delivers a specialist employability programme to resettled refugees and residents of Durham via the Homes for Ukraine scheme. All advisers are qualified to minimum level 4 award Advice & Guidance with a number having level 6 and 7 qualifications in Career Guidance & Development. There is an ongoing commitment to CPD and peer mentorship. The ROI results for this programme show:

The estimate for social benefit cost ratio (equivalent to ROI in this context) is 1.6x, with the majority of the benefit coming from productivity gains via salaries and estimated workplace productivity.⁵¹

“The support from Employability Durham is really helping. It’s 1 on 1. My coach knows info from across the board...funding, courses, everything I need. It’s like having a life coach. I’m so grateful.” (Adult)

3.3.8 Durham County Council Area Action Partnerships / Local Networks – Are supporting, funding and co-funding employability support and place-based projects. For example, Spennymoor AAP supports the Employment Discretionary Fund at Bishop Auckland College, offering grants up to £1500 for training, such as HGV and forklift certifications. Stanley AAP funds projects like the Stanley Specialist Training Fund and the Stanley Youth Consortium’s Robotics project, which took four students to the VEX Robotics Championships in Texas. Bishop Auckland AAP partners with the college for upskilling and employability initiatives, while East Durham AAP runs the Financial Wellbeing initiative, offering support on budgeting and benefits in partnership with local organisations. Other projects include Youth Focus NE’s Young Spuds work experience programme, Teesdale AAP’s UTASS welfare reform and IAG support for farmers, and Derwent Valley AAP’s Celebrate Difference and Durham Learn, promoting neuro-divergent young people’s careers and wellbeing. The East Durham BOOST project supports the economically inactive, and South Durham’s ‘Livin’ Futures delivers tailored employability pathways through libraries and community centres. Mid-Durham AAP’s Moving On Durham has supported those homeless or those at-risk of homelessness with employability and life skills. For example:

“We are co-funding local initiatives that respond to the unique needs of local communities working closely with DurhamWorks and others.” (Area Action Partnerships/Local Networks)

3.3.9 Well-established community trusted partnership working between Jobcentre Plus, the National Careers Service (NCS) and Durham County Council’s services for young people and adults – This collaboration features regular partnership meetings, referrals between and across these agencies and careers advisers working in Jobcentre Plus. Together work coaches, employability practitioners and careers advisers, communicate and support one another on work with employers and in community organisations with CIAG being delivered in a wide range of community settings e.g. libraries, health centres, community hubs, employers’ premises etc. The case study below illustrates how the Education Development Trust is making an impact.

Education Development Trust leads the delivery of the **National Careers Service** across the North East and Cumbria as a prime contractor. It offers a free and impartial service dedicated to providing high-quality careers information, advice, and guidance. The service is accessible through a variety of channels, including face-to-face one to one and group workshop sessions, telephone support, webchat, and online resources.

- ▶ All adults aged 19 and over, or 18-year-olds classified as not in education, employment or training (NEET), can benefit from personalised face-to-face or telephone guidance.
- ▶ Young people aged 13–18 can access advice via the website, webchat, or the 0800-telephone line.

Making an impact in County Durham:

The National Careers Service collaborates closely with local stakeholders to maximise referrals and access to the service. Stakeholders include DWP (with co-location in all Jobcentres), Durham County Council, FE colleges, training providers, and employers, to deliver tailored careers advice and to signpost and broker appropriate training and employment opportunities. Between October 2023 and November 2024, the service supported 7,396 customers in County Durham, with 65% progressing into further learning or sustainable employment. This collaborative and accessible approach ensures individuals receive the guidance they need to achieve their career goals and thrive in their chosen paths.

3.3.0 Jobcentre Plus: Barclays Digital Wings⁵² and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Mid-Life MOT⁵³ are two major initiatives in the county. Barclays Digital Wings is an innovative digital skills programme being rolled out with community partners across the region. The DWP Mid-Life MOT, meanwhile, provides adults in their 40s and 50s with a comprehensive review of their finances, skills, and health, helping them prepare for retirement and build financial resilience. The DWP in Durham and Tees Valley District are leading this initiative at national, regional, and local levels. Both initiatives also offer valuable opportunities for ‘test and learn’ projects, both locally and beyond.

3.3.11 Multi-Agency One-Stop Centres e.g. The McIntyre Centre⁵⁴ in Bishop Auckland is a significant new development for the Bishop Auckland College Group. Situated in the town centre, the iconic Grade II listed building will house a restaurant with a training kitchen, exhibition and retail spaces, training facilities including two digital suites, a job matching service, and workspaces for emerging businesses. The McIntyre Centre aims to serve as a central hub supporting both young people and adults in developing skills for emerging job opportunities. Also, *PACT House Stanley*⁵⁵ offers a foodbank, café, access to training and IT equipment, hygiene products, and will soon launch a recording studio and community radio. TCR The Hub (Barnard Castle)⁵⁶ is a one-stop shop for people of all ages, providing welfare support to families in need. The Derwent Trust and The HUB Consett offer Readiness for Employment programmes for neurodiverse, SEND, NEET, and long-term unemployed individuals are providing accredited courses up to level 3 across a variety of subjects to support young people into employment.

"We are very excited to be at the forefront of offering an iconic Grade II listed building that provides local people with access to learning and work opportunities. This resource is available to both young people and adults, helping them develop skills for emerging job opportunities."
(Careers Leader, Bishop Auckland College)

3.3.12 The North East Careers Hub e.g., North East Ambition via NECA are active in the County specifically focused on supporting schools and colleges to achieve the Gatsby Benchmarks. The range of activities have focused on employer engagement with primary and secondary schools/academies and colleges, the production of content-rich resources e.g., labour market intelligence (LMI), and continuous professional development (CPD) support for Careers Leaders and teachers.

"We are proactively supporting teachers and employers to strengthen their connections and offering strategic support to help drive up improvements in the Gatsby Benchmarks. We have also launched a new education and employers' matching online platform." (Regional Lead, North East Ambition).

3.3.13 Parental engagement online⁵⁷ – Durham 6th Form Centre parents' webinar twilight session has attracted 200+ parents to engage in options and career exploration activities, similar to best practice in Skills Development Scotland (SDS).

"When it comes to career decisions, parents are major influencers. Our careers twilight session was very successful and attracted lots of interest." (Durham Sixth Form Centre, Careers Lead)

3.3.14 Durham University: Careers, Employability and Enterprise Service – The university offers a fully integrated careers, employability, and enterprise service⁵⁸ that supports students throughout their academic journey and into post-graduation. The service focuses on both career guidance and entrepreneurial development, offering impartial career advice, skills workshops, and industry-specific resources, alongside opportunities for internships and work-based projects. Students can engage with initiatives like the Venture Lab⁵⁹, which fosters entrepreneurship with an emphasis on sustainability and social impact.

"Programmes such as Game Changer⁶⁰ help students innovate solutions aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting the strong link between careers and enterprise." (Deputy Head of Careers, Employability and Enterprise, Durham University)

The service also provides events like Careers for Good Week⁶¹, which focuses on sustainability, public service, and charitable careers. Their investment in high-quality career resources and staff expertise is evident in a wide range of initiatives. The university continues to support students post-graduation with networking opportunities and career transition guidance.

3.3.15 The North East Prisons Group - This Group meets regularly in County Durham to ensure careers and employability support services are in place for ex-prisoners and former youth offenders. 65% of the total cohort of individuals being supervised by probation in Durham (and Darlington) are unemployed. Nationally, 35.3% of individuals who are unemployed will reoffend – this reduces to 16.8% for those in employment.

“Strong partnership working exists between this group and the Probation Service in County Durham. Discussions are underway to potentially pilot careers chatbot technology to support those on community orders.” (Regional Employment Broker, MoJ)

3.3.16 County Durham Partnership Networks – For example, the County Durham Economic Partnership Board, The Poverty Action Group, Area Action Partnership/Local Network Partnerships, Business Durham, Durham Employment Connections, Employability Durham, DurhamEnable, DurhamWorks, the SEND Employment Forum, the Participation in Learning Network, and County Durham Together Partnership. These and other local services are successfully offering personalised and holistic support that addresses not only career progression but also individual’s health, wellbeing, skills and personal development.

“I’ve gone to jobs fairs occasionally and they’ve been useful. If I hadn’t gone to these, I wouldn’t know about the different jobs available. If the companies were more involved with the community that would help.” (Adult)

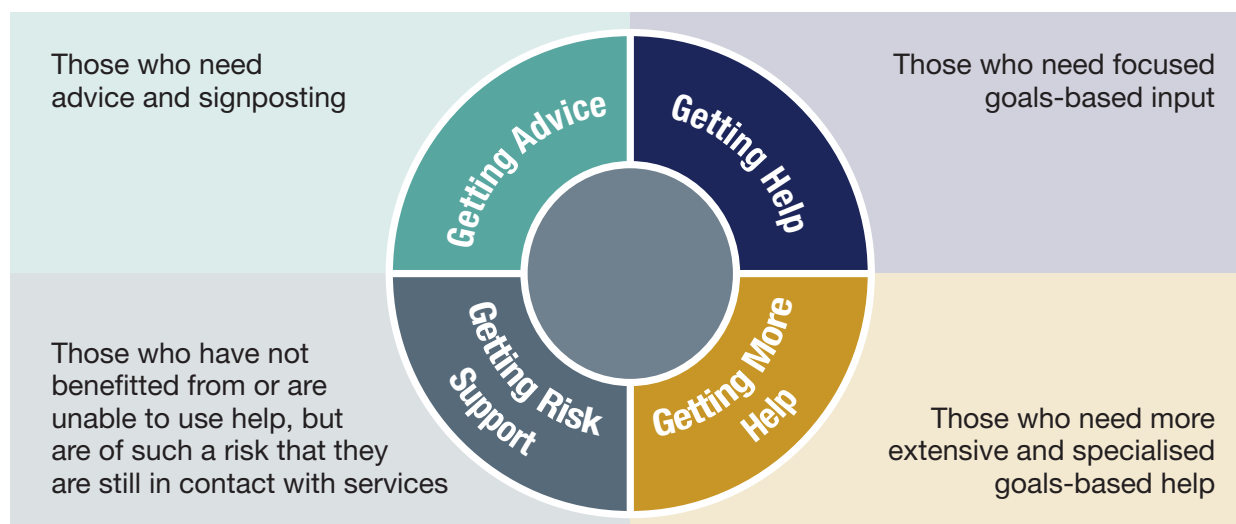
“My work coach was a great support for me, always telling me I could do it. She found me support groups. Support not just to get a job but support for me as a person.” (Adult)

“Employability Durham take a holistic approach to supporting you. Their aim is to get you on a more stable platform to enable you to get back to work... They focus on the whole person, not just on getting you into work. I thought only basic employability support was available like CV support etc. I didn’t know this type of support was available.” (Adult)

“I felt lost until I started to meet different people coming into school doing mock interviews with us. DurhamWorks helped me realise I have skills and it’s okay if I don’t know exactly what I want to do. I need to become more confident talking to people and worry less!” (Young person - Year 11).

3.3.17 Frameworks designed to guide careers support policies and practices – There are numerous frameworks currently being used across the county, within the Council, schools, colleges, universities and in wider community settings. Examples include: The Career Development Institute (CDI) Career Development Framework Handbook for Primary schools⁶², Career Development Framework Handbook (KS 3, KS 4 and post-16)⁶³, The Gatsby Benchmarks in schools and colleges⁶⁴, The Supported Employment Quality Framework⁶⁵, the matrix Standard⁶⁶, the Quality in Careers Standard⁶⁷; Durham University has developed its own Career Development Framework for its students, which integrates careers, employability, and enterprise into a holistic, support-driven model⁶⁸. Within local communities, for example, the Thrive Model below is commonly used by Durham County Council and local community and voluntary partner agencies to differentiate and respond to levels of specific need.

Figure 18: The Thrive Careers Framework Model



3.3.18 There are a number of careers information, advice and guidance training companies and in-house training with Durham County Council - Within Durham County Council, continuous professional development (CPD) is embedded in all employability support programmes. An example of a commercial company CareerWave is an independent career guidance service collaborating with 11 schools in County Durham since 2015 with a team of 35 Career Advisers and Tutors. It partners with DurhamWorks to provide career-focused Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for staff, offering accredited qualifications like the Level 3 Certificate in IAG, Level 4 Diploma in Career Information and Advice, and Level 6 Diploma in Career Guidance and Development. It also delivers training to Durham Local Authority staff on topics such as motivating disengaged young people, using career resources, and labour market information (LMI).

“Our commitment to quality is reflected in professional observations, providing constructive feedback to enhance career guidance practices.” (Call for Evidence respondent)

In conclusion, the careers support system in County Durham has a rich tapestry of dedicated and high-quality provision with a wide range of strengths that provide valuable support to residents and businesses across the county.

3.4 Investment by Durham County Council has enabled careers support to be embedded deep in local communities, although much of the work is based mainly on short-term contracts. Strong partnerships between local and national agencies, employers, training providers, educational institutions and community groups, support measures to ensure that individuals are equipped with the skills, resources, and guidance they need to succeed in the labour market. The system is designed to be seamless i.e., an initiative for nearly all categories of people with multiple webpages and varying degrees of up-to-date labour market intelligence. The majority of job or training opportunities are picked up by careers and employability workers mostly through ‘word of mouth’ cascaded within and across the Council.

3.5 However, there is a need to further coordinate and amplify these efforts, ensuring that best practices are shared and that opportunities for learning and collaboration are fully realised. Like many other areas, County Durham faces significant challenges now and in the future. These challenges will be explored further in the following section, which delves into the various stakeholder perspectives and gaps or limitations in CIAG provision identified across the region.

4.0 Voices of Residents and Businesses

4.1 In this section, we set out key lessons learned from residents and businesses who contributed to the research, capturing their views and experiences of strengths and limitations in the current system and with ideas on how an all-age careers offer can be achieved going forward.

Feedback was received from **2,111 residents and businesses** through surveys, a Call for Evidence, consultation events, one-to-one and group interviews providing a rich source of information about the current careers support for young people and adults in County Durham including strengths and limitations. A separate complementary evidence-based technical report highlights in detail individuals’ perceptions and experiences.

4.2 Online surveys were completed by:

- ▶ Students (n=1,103)⁶⁹
- ▶ Parents/carers (n= 238)⁷⁰
- ▶ Headteachers/principals, careers leads and teachers in schools and colleges (n=27 responses were received representing 9 schools)⁷¹
- ▶ Employers and training providers (n=25)
- ▶ Young people 16+ and adults (n=48).

4.3 The “Call for Evidence: have Your Say” provided 39 responses from employers, Durham University, community and voluntary groups – see Appendix 3a & 3b for the questions posed and organisations who responded.

4.4 Seven consultation events were held both in person and online with 128 participants sharing their ideas for improving the current careers eco-system. This was complemented by a series of one-to one interviews with 103 individuals from a wide range of industry, education, Durham County Council, Durham University , FE colleges, schools, careers, employability and community organisations. One-to one interviews and group discussions took place with 50 vulnerable young people and adults. Presentations were also delivered and views sought from at least 350 representatives from community organisations.

4.5 The overarching aim has been to identify areas of careers provision within County Durham that are working well, where good and innovative practices can be shared, and where improvements can be made. It was important to determine which aspects of CIAG should be included in the co-design framework, what successful practices should be maintained, and which new ideas should be considered for future development.

4.6 We start by presenting the findings from the seven consultation events and the Call for Evidence, alongside some selected quotes from others who shared their personal experiences.

4.6.1 There is a wealth of experience, expertise, and initiatives (as shown earlier in Figure 17) that can support the co-development of a new all-age careers framework. Employers expressed enthusiasm and a strong willingness to back a new all-age careers framework. They used the term “strategy”. Additionally, there is a shared belief within the careers ecosystem that improvements to careers provision can benefit both residents and businesses. Established local networks and county partnerships provide a strong foundation for collaboration. With significant central government policy changes on the horizon—such as the introduction of a National Jobs and Careers Service, plans to train more Careers Advisers, and updated statutory guidance and Ofsted requirements for schools and colleges, alongside the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), NECA and other emerging developments present new opportunities to foster closer communication, cooperation, and collaboration between and across agencies.

4.6.2 Examples of good CAIG practices to overcome barriers were cited as:

- ▶ Community housing, finance support and employability projects
- ▶ Wellbeing support addressing health, poverty, and social exclusion (e.g., family hubs)
- ▶ Wheels2Work scheme offering transport for individuals with workplace access issues
- ▶ Durham University’s Careers, Employability and Enterprise Service combining all three elements for graduate support
- ▶ DurhamLearn integrating careers advice into curriculum planning and offering supported internships for those with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
- ▶ National Careers Service (NCS) providing tailored support for schools and colleges, including sessions for refugees and those over 50
- ▶ DurhamWorks supporting NEETs (16-24) with careers guidance and work-related learning, including employer engagement
- ▶ DurhamEnable offering tailored support for individuals with disabilities, neurodiversity, and long-term health conditions
- ▶ Employability Durham offering career guidance to those most in need, including career changers.
- ▶ NHS Foundation Trust providing mandatory career sessions and one-to-one guidance for foundation doctors
- ▶ Apprenticeship support funded through the apprenticeship levy to provide career and upskilling opportunities
- ▶ Spark⁷² embedding local workplace videos from industrial estates to help embed careers into the primary school curriculum
- ▶ Primary Futures⁷³ offering free online resources and an online matching facility to make it easy for primary schools to connect with volunteers from industry
- ▶ NECA recently launched a new LinkUp portal⁷⁴ for primary and secondary schools to connect with volunteers from industry.
- ▶ The DICE project providing internship and enterprise funding in County Durham

Additional good practice identified included a reverse job fair for autistic adults and adults with learning disabilities, flexible services such as meeting clients in convenient locations, extended appointments, and telephone updates. Collaboration between organisations and local services, like community centres and food banks, helps overcome employment barriers such as finance, health, and social isolation.

4.6.2 Barriers identified as getting in the way of individuals gaining access to CIAG:

Rurality and Transport Issues



- Limited public transport in rural areas, creating barriers to accessing learning and work opportunities.
- Courses and job opportunities are concentrated in larger towns and cities, restricting access for rural residents.

Short-Term Funding and Strategic Gaps



- Over-reliance on short-term funding for CIAG initiatives.
- Absence of a long-term vision or comprehensive plan to improve CIAG services sustainably.

Insufficient CIAG Provision for All Ages and Abilities



- Gaps in tailored careers provision for all age groups, particularly post-primary students, adults aged 21+, and individuals with SEND.
- Limited CIAG visibility of ongoing work in primary schools, with opportunities to better understand and nurture children's early career aspirations and 'can do' skills transferred successfully into post-primary schooling.
- Inequitable access to CIAG in schools, with insufficient career exploration opportunities
- Pressure on recruitment of qualified teachers and careers professionals (Level 6/7) to meet demand.
- Adults reflect on historical gaps in CIAG during their schooling, highlighting a lasting impact on career development and wellbeing.

Employment and Wellbeing Support



- Challenges include workplace unfamiliarity, lack of employer investment in training, and the need for agility, resilience and mental health wellbeing to enable progression.

Broadband, Digital Resources, and Digital Literacy



- Barriers to accessing online CIAG resources due to limited broadband in rural areas and low digital skills, particularly among older adults.
- Lack of a clear, centralised, and trustworthy 24/7 digital CIAG resource.
- Reliance on word-of-mouth opportunities and inconsistent sharing of labour market intelligence/information (LMI) among agencies.

Navigational and Financial Barriers to Learning and Work



- Difficulty navigating multiple platforms for course and opportunity information.
- Affordability and funding challenges, especially for groups such as care leavers, NEET individuals, women returners, and those underemployed relative to their qualifications.
- Insufficient tailored CIAG for individuals with SEND, despite some exceptions like DurhamEnable, DEC Network support and Durham University.

Accessibility and Availability of CIAG Resources



- Confusion over where and how to access CIAG, with limited out-of-hours support for young people and adults.
- Missed opportunities to leverage innovative technologies like AI, chatbots, virtual reality, virtual centres of excellence in sector specific areas, and digital engagement tools to enhance accessibility and increase levels of engagement.

Rurality and Transport: The unreliable transport system, particularly in rural areas, makes it challenging to access education, training, and employment opportunities, exacerbating geographic disparities. Also, *“Transport is a major problem. Why can’t industrial parks and the Council club together to provide free transport to help get people to work and reduce the stress of buses not turning up when they’re supposed to?”* (Adult)

“The bus service where I live is really unreliable. There are only one or two buses an hour, and they often don’t show up. Public transport needs to be more reliable because missing a bus can really affect my mental health when I’m trying to get somewhere important.” (Adult)

Short term funding and strategic gap: Short-term or reduced funding for social mobility programmes, including SEND support, has led to overstretched services, limiting access to career and employability initiatives across communities. This was a dominant and recurring theme in most meetings.

“We are accustomed to change and adapting in our roles, but short-term funding creates constant uncertainty, causing effective, evidence-based practices to vanish too quickly. This not only wastes valuable talent but also squanders CIAG critical resources!” (Project worker)

Insufficient CIAG provision for all ages and abilities: Limited access to CIAG in local communities. Also, a lack of specialists and resources in educational institutions, hinders career exploration and decision-making, particularly in younger year groups (Year 7–9) – refer to students views below. There are concerns from employers about talent leaving the region and a shortage of jobs, particularly in rural areas.

“My school didn’t provide detailed explanations about careers and different fields the person can go into or the help needed to find field-specific work experience.” (Student)

Employment and Wellbeing Support: Tailored support is needed for specific groups, including SEND, care leavers, those in alternative provision, and others facing disadvantages, to help them integrate into education and employment pathways. Addressing mental health issues like isolation, low self-esteem, and lack of confidence is crucial for motivating engagement. Barriers such as limited job opportunities, intergenerational unemployment, and skill mismatches also hinder career progression.

“Trying to get back into employment feels like a major hurdle right now. My ability to handle stress at work is low, and I need to address this first.” (Adult)

Navigational and Financial Barriers to Learning and Work: Lack of funding for travel, training and equipment needed to successfully complete courses or work further limits access to education, employment and training opportunities. It was reported participants faced multiple challenges related to accessing and navigating courses, including inaccurate information, confusing online resources, a lack of direct guidance, and financial barriers. Many people found that the courses they had taken were not what they needed, leading to wasted time and money. For example,

“The information about courses isn’t clear. What’s online is confusing. I completed two courses, passed with distinction, and later found out they weren’t actually what I needed. They cost me £2,000, and now I have to start over. The Level 3 course I need is hard to find—only two colleges near me offer it—but I can’t speak to anyone directly; it’s all emails and online forms, and no one responds.” (Adult)

“I’m ready and willing and have a lot of qualifications but I’m now finding that I haven’t done things exactly the way I should have. Because my qualifications cover half the diploma content – I’m not eligible for funding for the full diploma I need. Where do I go from here? (Adult)

Broadband, Digital Resources and Digital Literacy: There is a strong appetite for more ‘blended hybrid’ and integrated CIAG that includes careers, employability, enterprise, health and wellbeing, housing, probation, and SEND services. These should ideally work together, rather than in silos, to provide seamless support throughout a person’s journey, ensuring they are not only prepared for but also supported in sustaining employment.

“Online information is often limited and not always accurate. There are so many fake websites and training providers with hidden fees. I still haven’t received my certificate for a course I completed, only to find out later it wasn’t City and Guilds accredited. We need a trusted platform for County Durham where all course information is verified and accurate.” (Adult)

“Being out of the job market for so long I’ve let my digital skills slip. My children help me but I struggle.” (Adult)

Appendix 4 sets out concrete examples of how digital advancements, including artificial intelligence (AI) and Large Language New models can potentially be harnessed. See also, *Careers 2035: The future of AI and Careers Provision* (Hughes & Percy, 2024)⁷⁵.

Extending practices, such as offering digital skills support, mentorship programmes for vulnerable individuals transitioning into work, can help them adapt successfully to the demands of the workplace, fostering long-term success and wellbeing. This vision of seamless support can be further enhanced by embracing ‘blended hybrid’ approaches that combines the strengths of human-led services with innovative digital advancements, creating a more adaptable and accessible CIAG system for all.

Accessibility and Availability of CIAG Resources: Multiple agencies across County Durham, from the public, private, and third sectors, have significant expertise and community experience in providing careers, employability, and enterprise support. Some have received national and local awards for their outstanding work. However, the accessibility and availability of CIAG resources remain largely hidden from the public, with many individuals unaware of where to seek essential careers support.

Participants shared a variety of suggestions for enhancing careers and employability support to better meet their needs. Key themes included the importance of a holistic approach, improved communication, earlier intervention, and greater visibility and accessibility to tailored support and meaningful opportunities. Labour market intelligence (LMI) was reported to be shared mostly by ‘word of mouth’ based on local or county-wide knowledge. A significant barrier is that LMI data is not easily accessible from a central resource, which limits its broader use. There were differing opinions on whether combining careers, employability, and enterprise services would work better than the existing arrangements. The exception to this is Durham University’s careers, employability, and enterprise service where key lessons learned could be shared with others.

“I need help with getting into college because of my offences. Coming into a secure unit that has given me the incentive to get a job/career. I just need to get a place in college and then I can do the rest myself” (Young Person being supported by County Durham Youth Justice Service)

We also identified from discussions:

- ▶ **Underutilised Talents:** It’s not just the lack of qualifications—many individuals’ talents remain underutilised, leading to missed opportunities for both personal economic growth and broader societal well-being.
- ▶ **Insufficient Numbers of Employers Engaged in Careers Activities:** This presents a significant barrier, with a shortage of employers reported as being willing to participate in initiatives for students, young people, and adults. This includes a lack of real-world industry placements for teachers, limited opportunities for students to engage in work experience, industry-related projects or work placements, which diminishes their understanding of the evolving world of work. The latter part of this issue is especially important, as it highlights the critical need for hands-on experience and industry involvement to better prepare individuals for the world of work.

“Employers often complain that schools are failing them, but we struggle to get employers to participate in careers activities despite our best efforts. We’re often drawing on a small pool of willing employers, often big companies.” (Teacher)

In the Call for Evidence, some solutions were suggested by respondents to improve all-age carers provision and communication between departments and organisations, e.g.

- ▶ Strengthen the link between funders and quality assurance bodies e.g. greater use of the matrix Standard across DWP contracts to ensure quality assurance.
- ▶ Delivery of sessions in foodbanks across County Durham.
- ▶ Flexible part-time roles, internships, and placements for pipeline talent into entry-level jobs at the Local Authority.
- ▶ Enhanced focus on safeguarding and collaborative service design and delivery.

School and College views

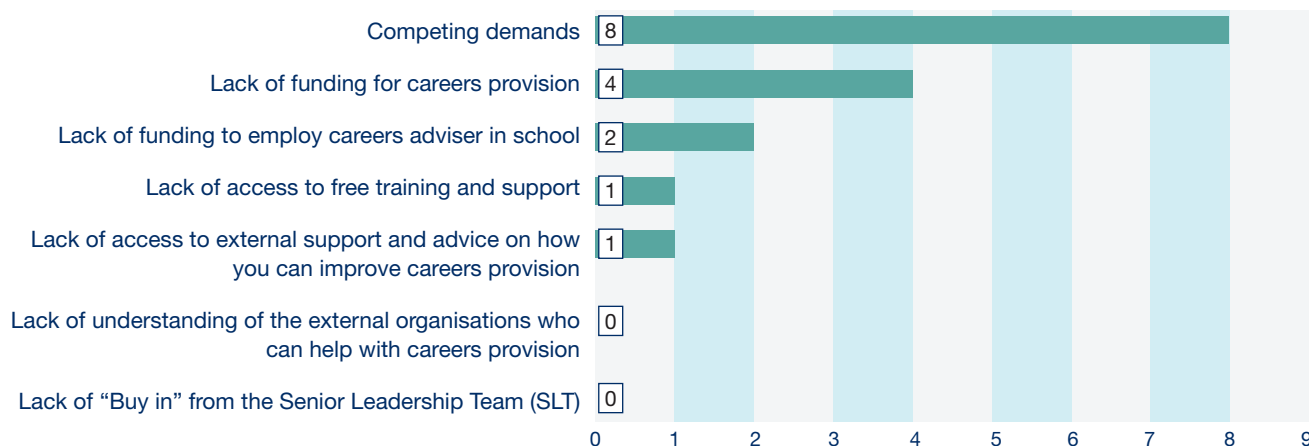
4.7.1 To achieve consistent and equitable careers support across all schools and colleges in County Durham, *“It is crucial to secure buy-in from Senior Leadership Teams”* (Headteacher) also demonstrated in responses from the majority of schools and colleges in the survey. Participation rate in surveys from schools and colleges was low (17%), with responses mainly from education institutions prioritising CIAG, commonly referred to as ‘careers education (CEIAG)’ or ‘careers support’. This suggests that while CIAG is recognised, its prioritisation varies significantly across institutions. Work experience, employer visits, and careers talks were reported as the main careers support activities delivered. These activities highlight that employer engagement and exposure to the world of work are considered essential by participating schools and colleges.

4.7.2 Some school and college leaders clearly recognise the importance of CIAG to improve student outcomes. There is strong evidence that demonstrates the added-value benefits, particularly for businesses who engage in school and college careers support activities – Refer to the Return on Investment Analysis (ROI) separate complementary technical report.

4.7.3 A key challenge is securing adequate resource to ensure that this essential provision is available across all education institutions. Addressing ‘winning the hearts and minds’ of senior leadership teams and finding solutions to barriers is key to ensuring that every student, regardless of their school or college, has equal access to high-quality careers support.

4.7.4 When asked the question *“If your school or college has struggled to make the progress you think is needed for young people’s careers support what are the main reasons for this?”* The reasons indicated are shown in Figure 19 below.

Figure 19: Reason why schools/colleges struggle to make the progress they think is needed for young people’s careers support



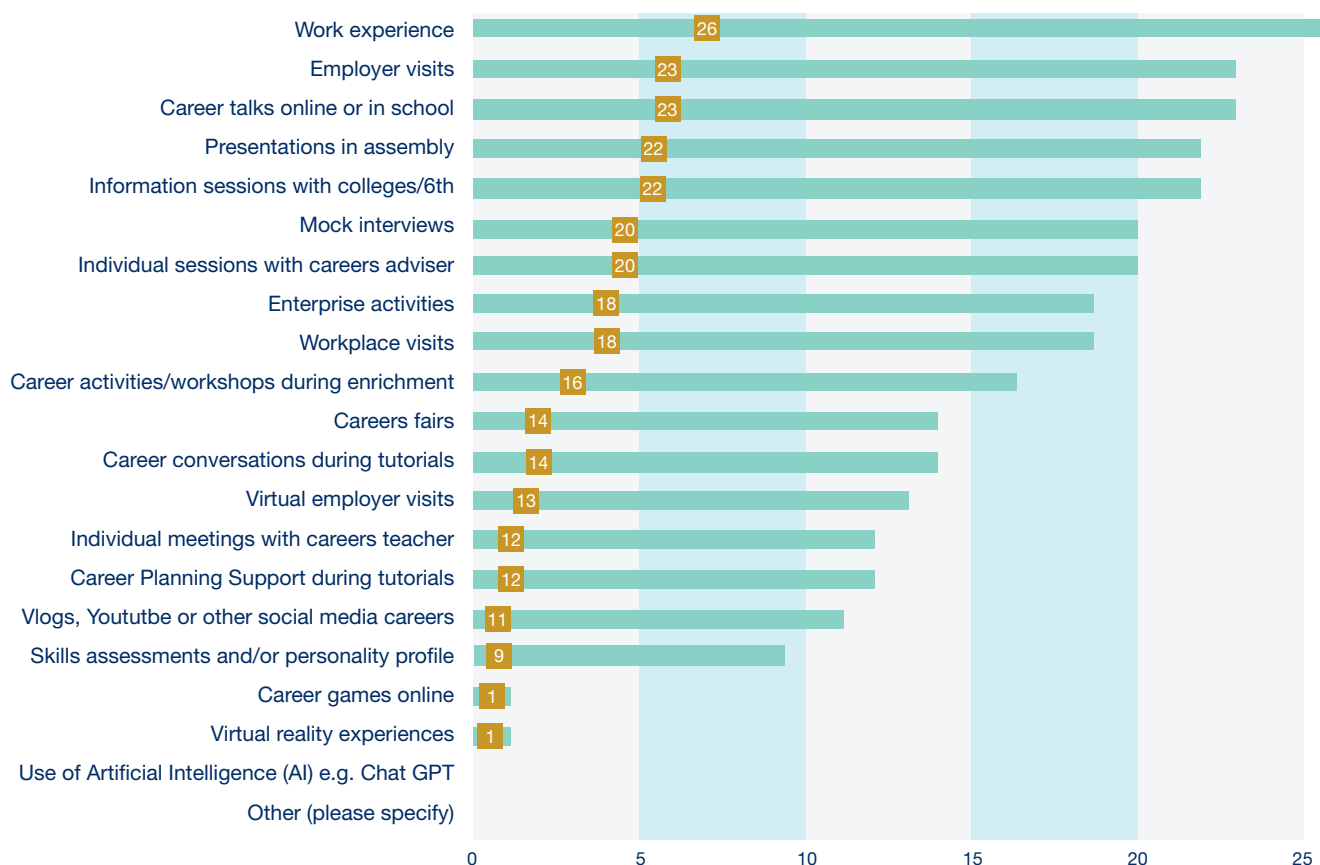
Limited resources result in prioritising CEIAG mainly for older students, for whom career decisions are most pressing, while tailoring the types of support for younger students based on available limited resources. Any future delivery programme must ensure that all students have access to CEIAG. Although resources are limited, solutions must be found to overcome this challenge.

- ▶ In 6 of 9 schools and colleges, the careers leader is allocated **1 hour per week** for this role, while in 2 others the careers leader is allocated between **2 to 5 hours** and in 1 college the careers leader works between **31-40 hours** in the role.
- ▶ 7 of the 9 schools/colleges employs or contracts a **professionally qualified careers adviser** to come into the school to provide independent careers guidance. One does not because they have a full-time careers leader already in the school/college. Another does not because of insufficient funding.
- ▶ Of the 7 schools and colleges who do employ/contract a professional external careers adviser the hours these work varies:
 - For 1 school this is **1-2 hours**
 - For 3 schools this is **6 – 8 hours**
 - For 2 schools this is **9-16 hours**
 - For 1 college they contract a careers adviser for **25-40 hours**.

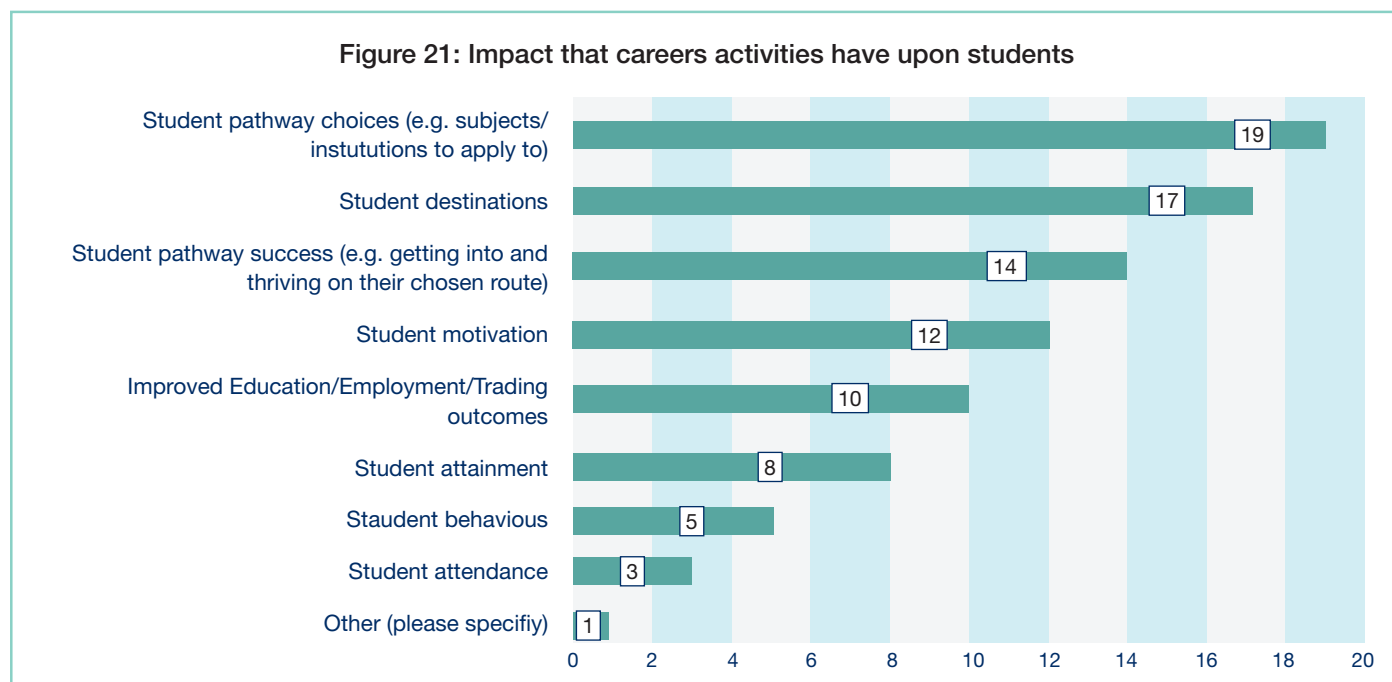
Budgetary constraints were cited as the main reason for the limited CEIAG resources. Consequently, careers support for older students are prioritised over the younger year groups in Key Stage 3.

4.7.5 Headteachers/principals, careers leaders, and teachers identified the main CEIAG activities delivered in their school/college. Employer engagement and exposure to the world of work are considered important by the schools/colleges that participated in the survey. These findings are shown in Figure 20 below.

Figure 20: Types of CEIAG activities delivered in schools and colleges



4.7.6 The reported impact of these activities on students is shown below, with the main impacts identified as student pathway choices, student destinations, and student pathway successes, as illustrated in Figure 21 below.



Students in schools and colleges

4.8 We summarise below the views and experiences of students in schools and colleges.

4.8.1 The majority of students turn to parents and family for career advice (64%), with limited access to professionally trained careers advisers. This may be due to time and budget constraints limiting education institutions to offer this service. Only 35% of students agreed that careers support in school had helped them. This may reflect the volume of support offered to older students compared to younger students, or the differing activities available.

65% of students reported being more aware of different careers due to the support received. This indicates that CIAG at school helped students become more aware of different careers.

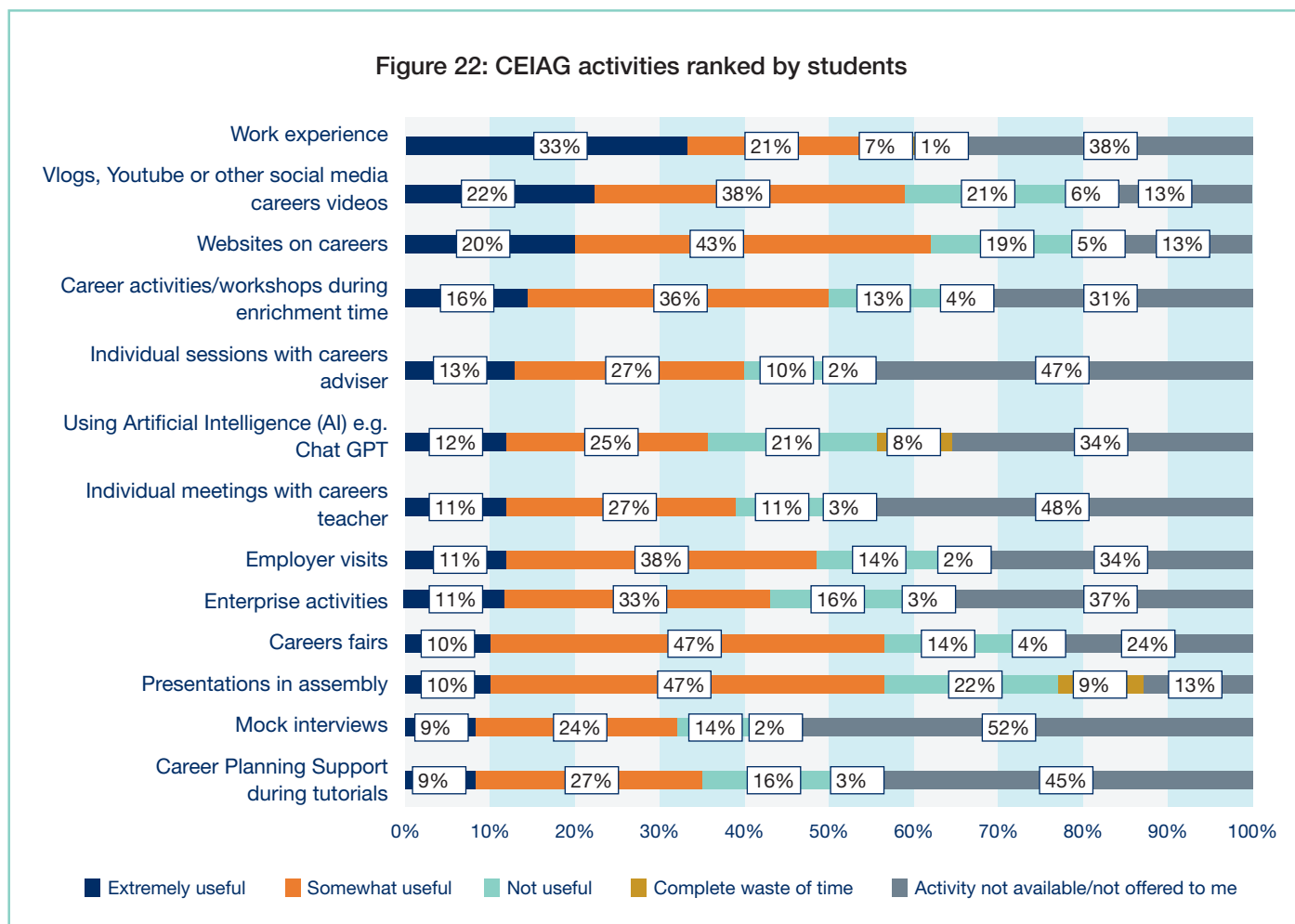
Access to CIAG varies significantly between institutions and year groups. Limited resources are often prioritised for older year groups, while younger year groups receive limited provision.

4.8.2 Students want more engagement with the world of work and CIAG, including employer visits, work experience, and one-on-one discussions about pathways and opportunities. They feel schools and colleges prioritise academic achievement over careers support, apprenticeships, technical education, and employability skills, which are essential for their decision-making.

4.8.3 Respondents were asked to rank the most useful careers activities. Figure 22 shows that work experience was the most valued, with one-third (33%, n=342) of students rating it as “extremely useful.” This was followed by vlogs, YouTube, or other social media careers videos, chosen by 22% (n=223). This highlights the potential for careers support services to better utilise innovative digital technology to expose younger students to career exploration. The high value students place on work experience aligns with feedback from teachers and careers advisers who facilitate these activities. Additionally, the popularity of social media suggests these platforms could play a key role in enhancing careers provision, potentially through employer-produced videos and vlogs in an all-age careers framework.

4.8.4 Students were asked to rank which careers activities have been most useful to them so far. Figure 22 below illustrates that the most useful activity, selected by one-third (33%, n=342) of the students, is work experience, rated as “extremely useful.” This is followed by vlogs, YouTube, or other social media careers videos, selected by 22% (n=223) of respondents. There is significant potential for careers support services to harness digital technology more creatively to increase younger students’ exposure to and experiences of the world of work for career exploration.

The fact that work experience or exposure to the world of work is highly valued by students reflects the responses provided by their teachers and careers advisers, who arrange these activities within their schools. Furthermore, the recognition of vlogs and social media as a valuable source of information suggests that these platforms could be leveraged to enhance careers provision, with employer-produced videos and vlogs potentially integrated into a future framework.



4.8.5 The above question was further analysed to investigate possible differences by Year Group.

- ▶ 49% (n=149) of the older year groups (Years 10 and above) identified work experience as the most useful.
- ▶ 22% (n=75) of the older year groups identified websites on careers as the second most useful, followed by 21% (n=68) who found individual sessions with a careers adviser most useful.
- ▶ This compares with responses from Years 7 to 9:
- ▶ 26% (n=177) found work experience to be most useful. It should be noted that for 46% (n=316), this activity was not offered to them.
- ▶ 25% (n=170) reported vlogs, YouTube, or other social media careers videos as being the second most useful to them.
- ▶ Individual sessions with a careers adviser and mock interviews were the activities not made available to over 57% (n=395) of this age group, and consequently, these were recorded as being least useful.

4.8.6 When asked the question, “Do you agree that careers support in school has helped you?”

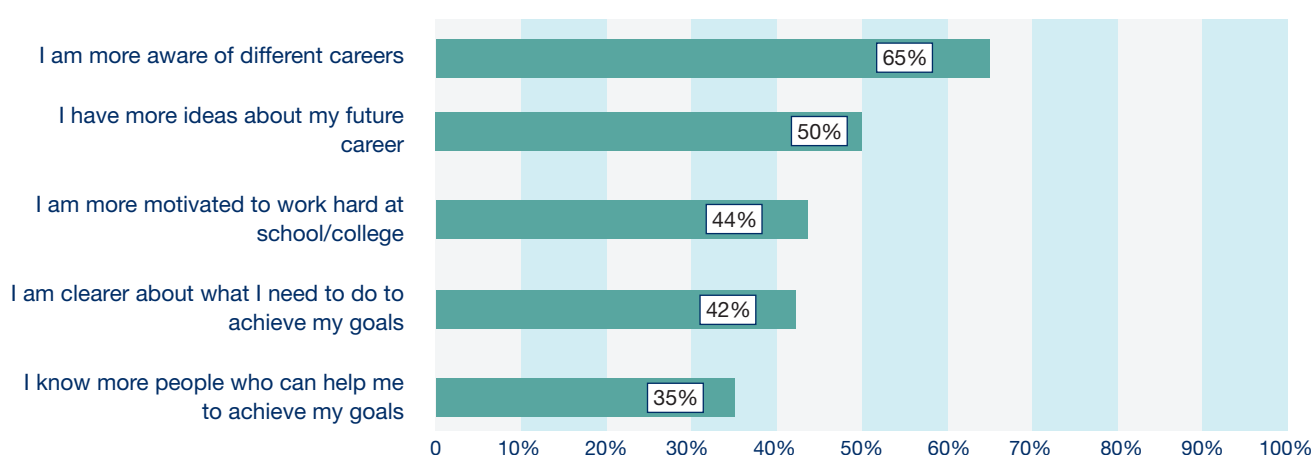
- ▶ 35% (n=382) agreed that the careers support they received in school had helped them.

The responses varied between the older year groups and their younger counterparts:

- ▶ 41% (n=142) of Years 10 and above compared with 33% (n=234) of Years 7 to 9 agreed with the statement.
- ▶ This may reflect the volume of support offered to older students compared to their younger peers. It could also be a result of the differing activities available to the two groups, with mock interviews, work experience, and individual sessions being more accessible to the older students.

4.8.7 The ways in which students felt they were best helped by the careers advice they received at school are summarised in the Figure 23 below. A total of 768 students responded to the question, with the majority—65% (n=501)—stating that they are now more aware of different careers. Additionally, 50% (n=387) reported having more ideas about their future career, and 44% (n=340) felt more motivated to work hard at school or college.

Figure 23: How students were helped by the CEIAG activities at school/college



4.8.8 The sources of CEIAG students access, the role of careers leaders, and the varying levels of resources available across schools and colleges.

- ▶ 64% (n=690) of students turn to parents and family to discuss their careers options while only 7% (n=74) seek advice from a careers adviser and 9% (n=99) speak with a careers teacher. It is noticeable that for years 7 to 9 only 3% (n=25) state they get some CEIAG activities.
- ▶ Some students reported having received no help from schools and colleges. While others indicated the type of help they received:

“I struggled with my attendance in Year 9, and my school held a Future Steps evening. I got to talk to universities and colleges to see what I need to do and where I can go to become a paramedic. This made me want to keep my attendance up and do well in school.” (Year 9 student)

“The best thing has been the careers fairs because it allowed me to actually talk to people and find out what it’s like to have that job, etc.” (Year 8 student)

“Given me motivation to succeed and better myself in both knowledge and more.” (Year 11 student).

4.8.9 When asked how careers provision in their school/college could be improved, 10% (n=93) of respondents identified a desire for more engagement with the world of work, either through visits or work experience:

"I would like to have employer visits to speak to someone in the field of work I want to go into to gain a better understanding."

"More chances at helping us gain work experience."

10% (n=90) stated they would like more careers advice or at least someone to talk to about their careers:

"If there was a career guidance person in school who could help me explore my options for future careers as I get older."

"One-on-one conversations to discuss future careers."

"I think it would be much better if we could get extra support with careers because the school doesn't really tell us about how to support ourselves after school finishes."

Younger students raised the issue of insufficient support for their year groups (7, 8, and 9):

"Input for practical careers from year 7."

"If career advisers came into all year groups, not just 11-13."

"I get nothing (I'm in year 8)."

Employer views

4.9 We examined employers views through the Call for Evidence, survey and face-to-face and online meetings with employers and employer bodies such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses. Many highlighted exciting opportunities in sector growth areas and new developments taking place across the County and in the North East. There is a strong desire to strengthen the talent pipeline and attract skilled individuals for economic and social prosperity. Findings show:

4.9.1 Most employers recruited school or college leavers as apprentices in the last 3 years. Some employers have amended their recruitment strategies to favour apprentices.

Employers seek employability skills such as behaviour, teamwork, and time management over qualifications. Qualities such as communication, work ethic, willingness to learn, and personal resilience were also highlighted.

Employers value work experience. Many employers feel that school leavers have little to no understanding of their business sector and what skills are needed to succeed in it.

4.9.2 Employers reported they recognised the value of individuals having work experience:

- ▶ 72% (n=18) of employers who participated in this survey believe that having work experience is at least quite important or very important
- ▶ 72% (n=19) of employers feel that school leavers have little or no understanding of their business sector well enough to know what skills are needed to succeed in it
- ▶ 69% (n=16) feel that sixth form and college leavers have little or no understanding of their sector well enough to know what skills are needed to succeed in it
- ▶ 30% (n=9) of employers feel that university leavers in their early 20's have little or no understanding of their sector well enough to know what skills are needed to succeed in it.

4.9.3 County Durham employers offered advice for job seekers, encouraging them not to feel embarrassed about being inexperienced in applying or interviewing for jobs. They reported digital platforms are working well for advertising job vacancies e.g. Indeed and other sites, and the exposure online platforms offer to businesses and individuals in the North East should not be under-estimated.

"More courses that help people match skills to sectors including completing forms and navigating systems."
(Employer)

4.9.4 The highest levels of satisfaction were reported with the work readiness of college leavers, with 64% (n=14) stating they were satisfied. The second-highest levels of satisfaction were reported by 59% (n=13) for the work readiness of university graduates. The lowest levels of satisfaction were recorded for school leavers, with 36% (n=8) of respondents expressing dissatisfaction with their work readiness. This result may be expected, as school leavers are generally younger and less mature than their college and university counterparts. There were various reasons provided for the lower satisfaction levels e.g. *"School leavers seem to be unable to stay focused the whole day, and often lack communication, such as informing us when they are late or have doctor's appointments. We find it hard to keep them for longer than a month."*

"Time management, work ethic, and managing conflicting priorities in the world of work are missing due to lack of work experience previously." (Employer)

4.9.5 Some employers suggested that job seekers, especially those on Universal Credit, would benefit from more tailored, one-on-one support to address their individual needs. Respondents highlighted several areas where the current careers and employability system is not working well. There was a desire for reform:

"Jobcentre provision not working. Jobcentre managers don't understand manufacturing and engineering requirements. Jobcentre has an administrative approach to activity rather than a skills and requirements approach. The job seekers who use the jobcentre support have attitude and willingness to work issues. They tick a box to attend an interview but often don't turn up or are not interested which is a great shame."
(Employer)

"A lack of understanding of corporate opportunities beyond what's on offer in the Council." (Employer)

Several challenges related to training and support were identified, including poor attendance at employment-related workshops and a general lack of understanding of the opportunities available. There was a call for wider training courses and more funding for individuals aged 19+ who wish to pursue full-time education. These and other factors were reported as leading to poor engagement and missed opportunities.

"Poor attendance to employment related workshops/engagements - not fully understanding the opportunity."
(Employer)

4.9.6 Participants also highlighted the *inadequate strategic investment in CIAG*, along with a need for **greater flexibility from employers** to accommodate individuals facing barriers to entering the workforce.

4.9.7 Employers and training providers were asked, “*In terms of careers and employability provision, what do you think is working well and what is not working well in the current system?*” The feedback from employers and training providers reveals a mixed picture of the current careers and employability provision. Support services, such as employability teams were mentioned as effective resources. Some respondents highlighted the importance of combining employability support with *housing and financial inclusion advice and wellbeing* to address broader needs. For example:

“Employability Teams Support/Care Academy.” (Employer)

“In depth employability support backed up with Housing support needs and Financial Inclusion advice.” (Employer)

The Table below provides further insights from employer and training provider perspectives:

Table 1

What is working well?	What is not working well?
"Acknowledgement that there are young people at risk of becoming NEET, who need extra support." (Employer)	"Not enough guidance on alternative options in education." (Employer)
"One-on-one support." (Training provider)	"Not enough apprenticeship opportunities." (Training provider)
"Mixed picture – some schools offer more than others." (Employer)	"Apprenticeships are not promoted as a positive outcome. Some teachers are not interested in learning about apprenticeships." (Employer)
"Careers information and online resources." (Employer)	"Poor information, advice and guidance in schools." (Employer)
"Relationships with local schools, work experience." (Training provider)	"Too few well-informed CEIAG professionals." (Employer)
"Volunteering and paid work placements." (Employer)	"Lack of work experience opportunities." (Employer)
"Educational engagement – DurhamWorks Programme." (Employer)	"More work experience opportunities needed." (Employer)
"Employability Durham"(Training provider)	"Lack of work experience while in school." (Employer)
"Increased employer engagement." (Employer)	"Need to be more educated practically from an earlier educational level." (Employer)
Engineering T-Levels, apprenticeships, STEM visits, factory visits for young people." (Employer)	"Lack of competence in employability-related knowledge and behaviours." (Employer)
"Apprenticeships and T Levels are great." (Training provider)	"Basic training for site work." (Employer)
"ASK apprenticeship support in schools and colleges." (Employer)	"Understanding of the world of work." (Employer)

Some of the contradictions in the responses to these two questions highlight the variation in careers provision across the county. In some cases, employers expressed positive perceptions of careers provision, while others had the opposite view.

4.9.8 Some Employer and training provider perceptions were that in many schools there is encouragement for students to go to university rather than pursue an apprenticeship. Employers and some parents were united in this perception with the belief that apprenticeships and T-Levels were very much undervalued or not fully promoted.

“Not enough apprenticeship opportunities. Apprenticeships not promoted as a positive outcome. Some teachers not interested to find out about apprenticeships!” Employer

4.9.9 Further education was also noted as a positive offering to help adults improve their qualifications and career prospects. Also, Level 7 apprenticeships and courses that match skills to sectors were reported as being highly valued. Employers indicated there is a lack of understanding and training within some local services on what their business has to offer. This was reported as leading to poor engagement and missed opportunities.

Parent views

4.10 Our survey of parents revealed the following:

4.10.1 When questioned about what they know of careers provision in their child(ren)’s school or college, parents were divided in their responses:

- ▶ 87% (n=99) of parents/carers do not know who the careers leader is in their child(ren)’s school.
- ▶ 41% (n=91) of parents/carers agree or strongly agree that their child(ren) are receiving CEIAG while at school or college.
- ▶ 17% (n=39) disagree that their child(ren) are receiving CEIAG while at school or college.
- ▶ 42% (n=95) don’t know if their child(ren) are receiving CEIAG while at school or college.

These responses may be due to a lack of communication from their child(ren) and/or school or college. Some examples of comments:

“They have received none.” (Parent)

“Given job roles to research across different subject areas on a regular basis as homework. Also, regular emails and sessions regarding careers. My daughter went on a residential trip to Oxford University to find out more about studying there. The school is outstanding, and this shows in all they do.” (Parent)

“Support from a careers adviser is essential.” (Parent)

“The school is providing basic careers guidance, but it does not cover all pupils. I believe they only have capacity for a small number of pupils as it’s an external organisation.” (Parent)

4.10.2 A total of 59% (n=139) of parents reported their children have some ideas about their future career aspirations.

- ▶ 39% (n=90) agree that their child(ren)’s school supports them well in linking subjects to future careers.
- ▶ 20% (n=44) disagree that the school supports their child(ren) in linking subjects to future careers, while 41% (n=94) don’t know either way.
- ▶ 25% (n=58) agree that the school brings employers/employees from the world of work into the classroom, while 53% (n=121) don’t know, and a further 21% (n=49) disagree.

“Organised visits to employers’ premises to discuss careers and links to relevant subjects at school.”

These responses are further clarified by comments from parents/carers. Some noted that education institutions focus more on exams and students moving on to university, often at the expense of other options: *“The school is very focused on children passing exams and talk about going to university, but this is not linked to careers. There has been little or no focus on children who may not be academic and would like to access vocational routes, including apprenticeships.”*

This highlights the significant variation in careers provision across schools and colleges. Additionally, parental engagement is notably inconsistent, with involvement levels in careers conversations varying widely. There was a desire for greater exposure to the world of work.

These responses align with the feedback above, indicating that, although schools and colleges generally recognise the importance of CEIAG, limited resources require some form of triage by the careers leader working closely with a careers adviser. There is also evidence suggesting that this issue is more pronounced in rural communities.

“My daughter’s current school seems to assume most children will go into Higher Education before work so is perhaps less focused on careers than good grades at GCSE and A-level. In contrast, another school we have visited was more focused on encouraging children to consider their pathway from GCSEs to a career.”

“Not for rural careers no employer connections!”

“I think it would be helpful if staff in all subject areas within schools and FE colleges had direct links with their respective industry sectors, as many teachers have not worked outside the education sector. Schools and colleges should actively seek out partnerships with local companies in each sector that allow for demonstrations, site visits, and insights into the types of jobs available within those industries.”

Young people aged 16+ and adults’ views

4.11 We surveyed young people 16+ and adults, met in person with vulnerable groups and encouraged support workers working with vulnerable individuals to send us their views.

4.11.1 Young people and adults were asked about the importance of career guidance:

- ▶ 33% (n= 16) of respondents reported that careers guidance for them is “essential” while 13 (27%) said it is “very important” and a further 15 (31%) believe it is “important”. Only 4 respondents said it is not important at all.
- ▶ Just over half of respondents (n=25) said they are receiving enough careers guidance and support to help make the most of their talents and skills while those remaining believed the opposite. It was noted that those who claimed to be satisfied with the support they were receiving had been in contact with an organisation or had spoken to someone about their careers while the unsatisfied group had not and had relied mainly on the internet or online services for help.
- ▶ 62% (n= 29) of the respondents had in the last 3 years talked to someone from a careers or employability service in County Durham to explore career options. A total of 11 had spoken with representatives from Employability Durham; 6 had spoken with DurhamEnable; 2 had contacted DurhamWorks. Others had spoken with the National Careers Service, Durham County Council Careers Service or their social worker.

4.11.2 When asked where they would go to get CIAG, most (34%, n=16) said the internet or online, while 11% (n=5) identified the Jobcentre and 9% (n=4) opted for the National Careers Service. Three respondents mentioned DurhamEnable, and another three referred to Employability Durham, while two mentioned DurhamWorks. Ten percent (n=4) of respondents said they did not know where to go.

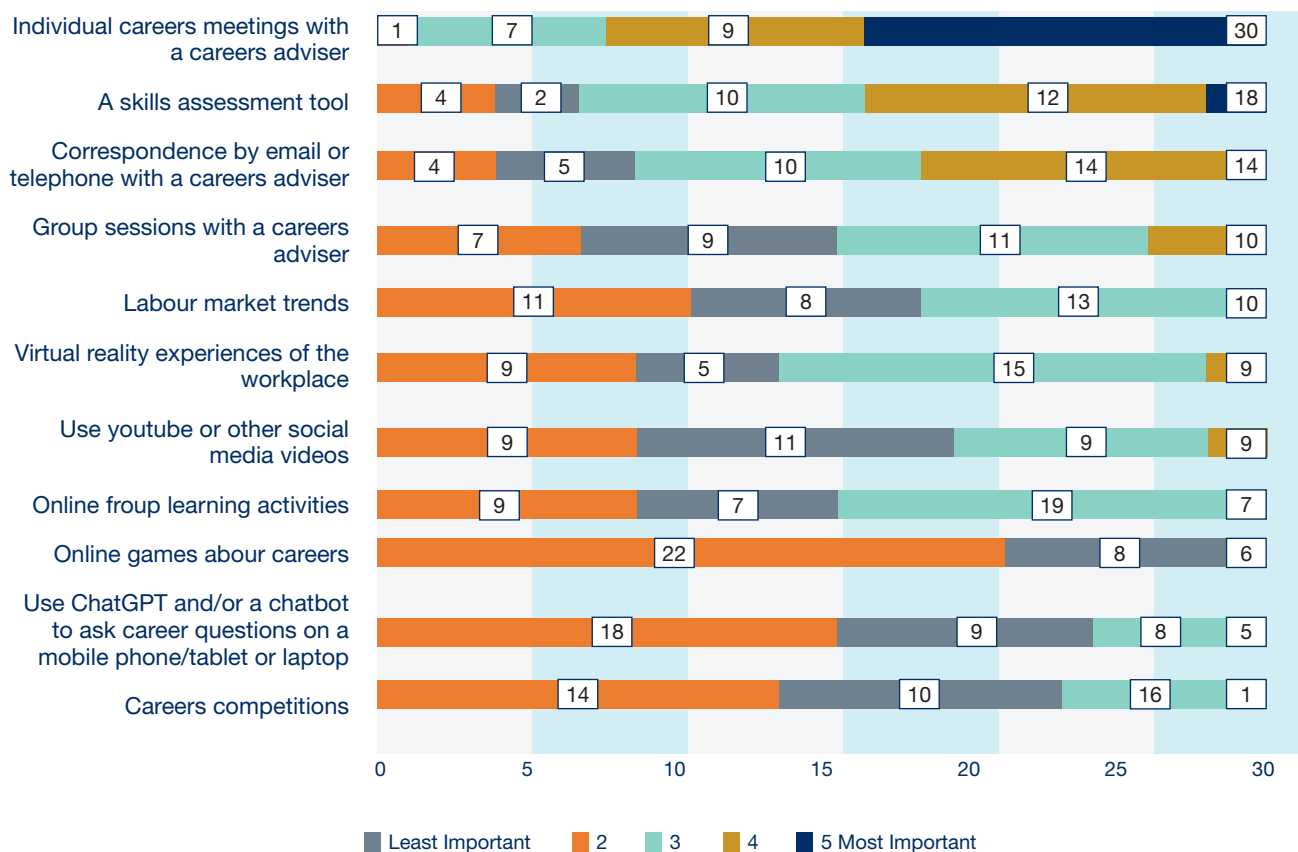
“If it weren’t for the Job Centre referring me to Employability Durham, I might not have sought help on my own, given how bad my mental health was at the time.” (Adult)

4.11.3 Figure 24 overleaf shows how respondents would prefer to learn about careers and work options, highlighting what young people and adults consider most valuable and important. The dark blue bars clearly indicate that for most (64%, n=30), the most important activity is individual careers meetings with a careers adviser, with 38% (n=18) identifying a skills assessment tool as important.

The importance of having a careers adviser was emphasised, with participants noting that contact by email or telephone was also considered important, as were group sessions with a careers adviser, highlighted by 30% (n=14) and 21% (n=10), respectively.

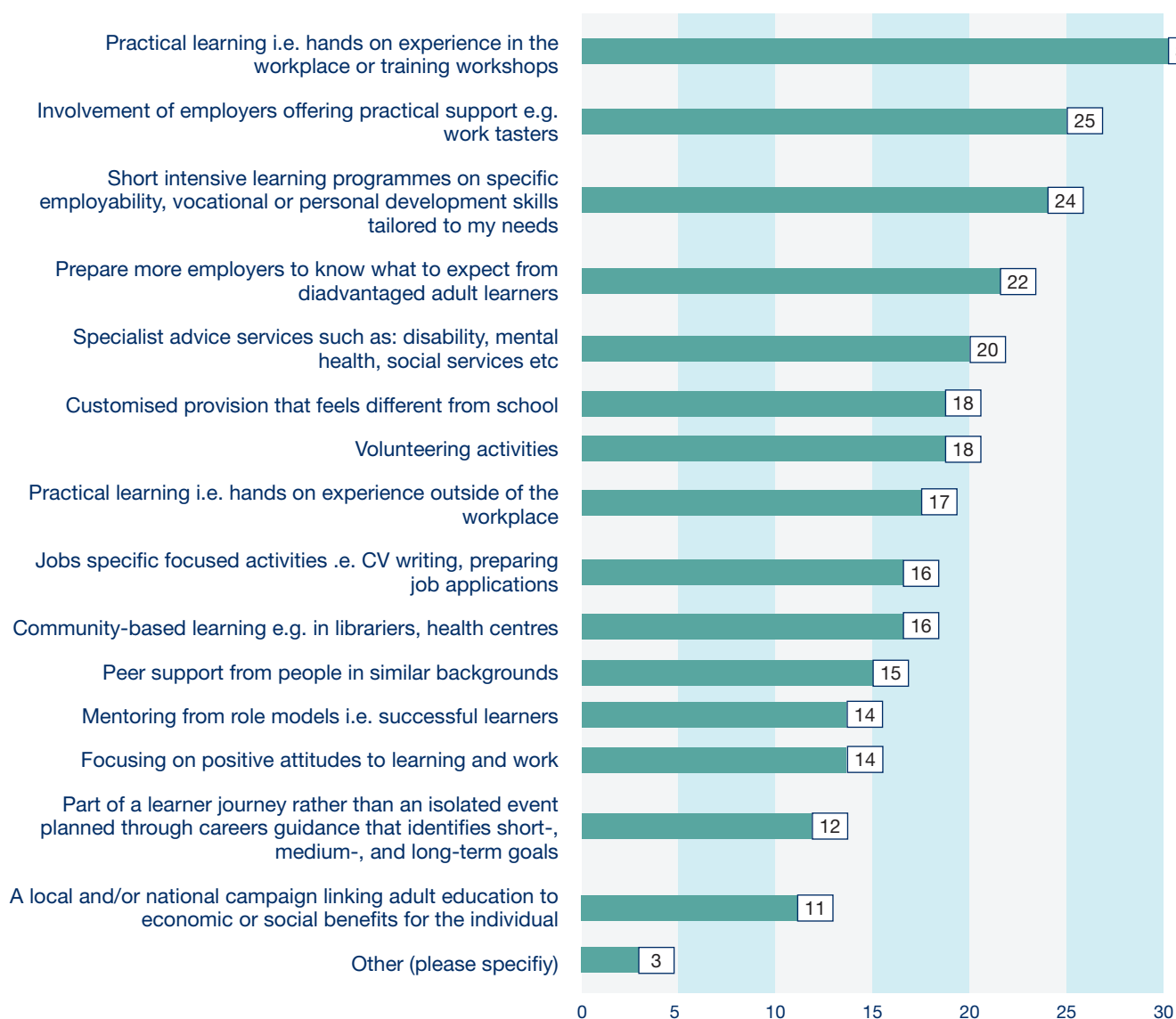
Online resources and the use of ChatGPT ranked lowest in terms of importance to the respondents. This may be due to limited access to the internet or a lack of exposure to these resources, especially among older adults. It was notable that more older adults (35+) opted for the skills assessment tool compared to their younger counterparts (under 24), for whom their second preference was virtual reality experiences of the workplace. This is unsurprising, as older adults are more likely to have already gained workplace experience and skills.

Figure 24: How young people 16+ and adults want to learn about work and careers options



4.11.4 Figure 25 overleaf indicates the types of activities that respondents identified as most beneficial to them. The activity selected by 67% (n=32) was practical learning, i.e., hands-on experience in the workplace or training workshops, followed by 52% (n=25) opting for involvement of employers offering practical support, e.g., work tasters, and 50% (n=24) choosing short intensive learning programmes on specific employability, vocational, or personal development skills tailored to my needs.

Figure 25: Activities that young people 16+ and adults see as most beneficial to them



4.11.5 Young people 16+ and adults were asked how they would like to see careers provision in County Durham improve. Respondents emphasised the need to improve accessibility to careers support for all ages, with a focus on both face-to-face and online services that are easy to find and open to everyone.

4.11.6 There was a strong desire for a bespoke, progressive offer that spans from primary school through to later life, addressing the needs of diverse groups, including older adults who feel overlooked due to age or educational background. For example:

“Bespoke offer that ranges from primary through to later life but offers progression.” (Adult)

“More accessible for adults. It is not easy to find the information. I would feel they were not interested due to my age and educational background.” (Adult)

“Face to face and online presence that is easy to locate and accessible to all.” (Young person)

4.11.7 For rural communities, access to CIAG should be enhanced by offering services at local venues, such as libraries or community centres, to reduce travel costs. There was also interest in increasing the use of technology, including artificial intelligence (AI) to provide personalised and tailored support for individuals with specific needs.

“Careers guidance in local library or community centre, to save travel costs.” (Adult)

“Increase automation/AI to allow for greater guidance to special cases.” (Adult)

4.11.8 Respondents highlighted the need for more support for career changers, especially those who feel they lack the skills to transition to new roles. Many expressed frustration at not knowing what help is available, particularly for those already employed in unsuitable, low-paid jobs. There is a demand for greater transparency and proactive encouragement for lifelong learning and career development. For example:

“Be more transparent to people that are employed and feel like they have not enough skills to change their careers. Most of them do not know what support is available.” (Adult)

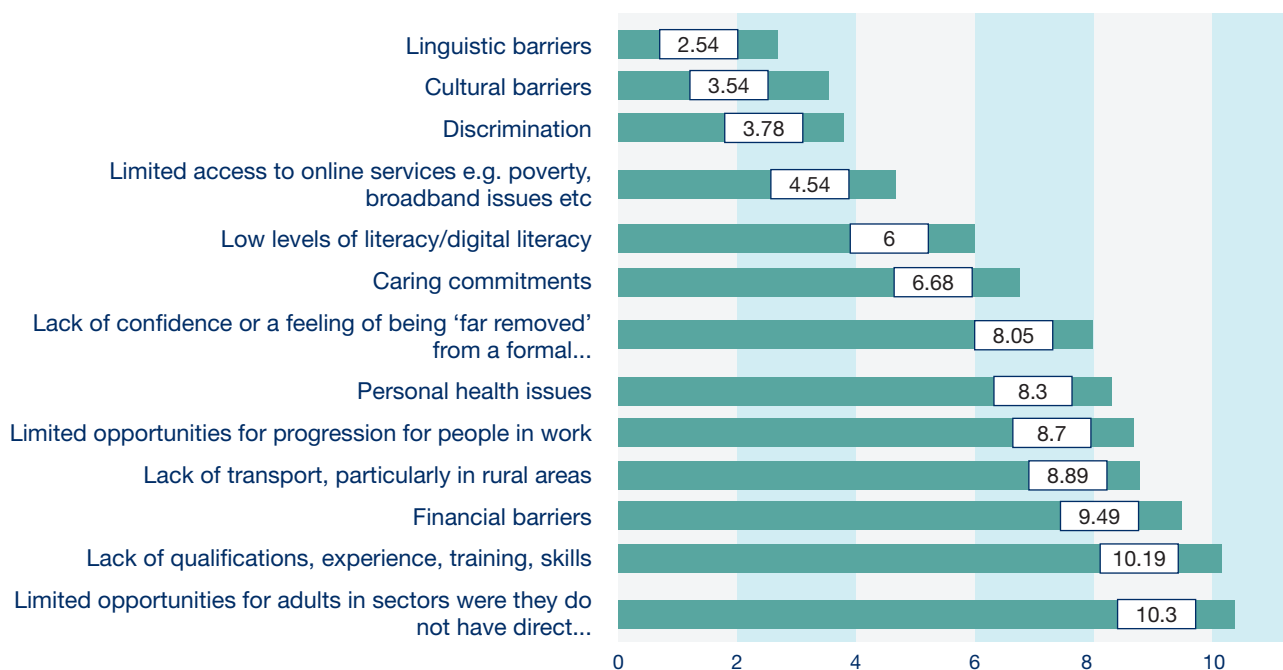
“Be more active encourage learning at any age and that people need to adapt and keep learning new skills.” (Young person)

4.11.9 Young people 16+ and adults want flexible support that meets their needs, such as meeting in convenient locations, longer appointments when necessary, and phone calls or text messages for quick updates. They also value collaboration between organisations with shared goals, connecting with local services like community centres and foodbanks. Additionally, they seek help in overcoming barriers to employment, including financial challenges, health issues, and social isolation

4.11.10 In Figure 26 below, the top seven barriers (i.e., those scoring 8 or above) identified below were all considered as important by the respondents. They suggest that addressing these barriers requires a multi-faceted approach that focuses on tackling these barriers in a coordinated and more joined-up manner, County Durham can create a more effective and equitable CIAG system that empowers individuals to achieve their full potential.

Figure 26: Barriers considered as getting in the way of engagement in careers guidance for young people 16+ and adults

Which of the following barriers or difficulties do you consider are getting in the way of adults, particularly disadvantaged adults, engaging in careers guidance?



4.11.11 Careers support for disadvantaged groups was a key theme, with calls for more services tailored to SEND and neurodiverse individuals, improved transportation, and stronger employer partnerships for vulnerable workers. DurhamEnable was mentioned as good practice. Participants emphasised the need for better support to help those in low-paid jobs advance their careers without harming their health or well-being. For example, one respondent highlighted the importance of disability-focused support and promoting the skills of disabled individuals. Additionally, there were calls for increased funding for services like DurhamEnable and a more collaborative, multi-agency approach involving charities and the voluntary sector to provide realistic solutions for those facing employment barriers.

The CIAG eco-system is struggling...

While there are pockets of effective collaboration among career services in County Durham, a more consistent, coordinated, and integrated approach is needed to improve overall service effectiveness and better support individuals in their career journeys. Policies and practices are needed to ensure the right model of delivery and timing for careers support, focusing on young people and adults who need guidance the most. Greater priority should be given to capturing the views of young people and adults, enabling them to contribute to the co-design of an innovative and impactful all-age careers offer in County Durham.

5.0 An Emerging Consensus: Collaborative Ambition

5.1 In this section, we present further evidence that there is a strong appetite amongst key stakeholders for careers, employability and enterprise support services that ideally work more closely together rather than in silos to provide more seamless CIAG support. We provide some examples of return on investment (ROI) findings, human-centred 'blended' AI approaches and encourage creativity and innovation going forward within a new all-age careers framework.

5.2 CIAG plays a crucial role in helping young people and adults explore available opportunities and identify those that align with their needs. In this section, we set out what makes for high quality career information, advice and guidance to become better understood across the county. It supports young people and adults to understand what opportunities are available and find prospects that meet their needs. It helps people to make sense of the world of work and wider opportunities for personal development and how make it work best for them. It supports them to make better decisions about the education, training and experience needed to find learning and work opportunities, to change jobs and build successful livelihoods and wellbeing.

Our research shows almost everyone who participated in the research activities unequivocally stated a desired need for an all-age careers framework or strategy - inclusive of people of all abilities starting from an early age, including those most disadvantaged, those vulnerable to being not in education, employment and/or training (NEET), those with SEND and participating in some form of alternative provision, and those in work and outside of work.

5.3 Experience, as much as careers information and advice, is enriched by plentiful of first-hand exposure to the world of work. **Young people and adults are not gaining sufficient access to employers and the world of work.** Career guidance and employability support is delivered by impartial and well-trained professionals, drawing on reliable and trusted labour market information in a wide variety of settings. Good careers work challenges expectations and assumptions that can sometimes be narrow, stereotypical and unrealistic. It broadens aspirations and especially targets those facing the greatest ultimate challenges in finding decent work.

5.4 Education leaders, employers, careers, employability and enterprise specialists are united in acknowledging this is a moment of change - where a unified, holistic approach to CIAG co-design and delivery is essential for ensuring that no one is left behind in communities, the evolving workforce and the economy.

There is compelling ROI evidence to justify greater alignment and investment in CIAG across the county.

5.5 The added-value benefits of CIAG are significant, offering individual, employer and collective returns on investment (ROI). We uniquely explored the returns on investment linked to County Durham's employers being more active and further contributing to CIAG support activities. County Durham has a track record of supporting and evaluating careers and employability projects, identifying a range of positive results in line with the evidence from other settings discussed above. While those projects rarely have the comparison group or counterfactual research techniques used in the projects cited above, the reported outcomes and positive feedback point to successful projects.

County Durham should feel confident that financial and volunteer investment in projects makes a meaningful difference. Four examples are summarised below:

5.5.1 The DurhamEnable programme, with an evaluation published December 2023⁷⁶:

- ▶ DurhamEnable helped disabled people (primarily mental health and learning disabilities) make progress towards, enter, and sustain meaningful employment with vocational profiling, support from job coaches, action planning, employer matching, and work trials/experience in a strengths-based framework.
- ▶ The programme was delivered between January 2021 and December 2023 by Durham County Council and funded by the council and the European Social Fund (ESF).
- ▶ 811 clients began the programme, with 181 supported into employment (87 already confirmed as sustained for 6+ months) and 103 into education or training, with strong positive feedback from clients and from employers (e.g. more confidence employing disabled people and help filling priority vacancies)
- ▶ The estimated social ROI is 2.4x, based on costs of £3.7m (adjusted for inflation). Monetised benefits include increased income, skills levels, and confidence; reduced benefits payments, healthcare costs, temporary housing, and isolation. No comparison group data are available but optimism bias adjustments of up to -40% are used to increase confidence the benefits are appropriately quantified.

5.5.2 The Durham Advance programme, with an evaluation published August 2021⁷⁷:

- ▶ The programme delivered specialist and integrated employment and health support, with a primary focus on activities to support unemployed and inactive residents aged 25+ (and especially 50+) years old with a health condition.
- ▶ It was funded in July 2018 with a £1.5m grant from ESIF and DWP, with £1m funding from Durham County Council to complete delivery on April 30, 2021.
- ▶ Activities were mostly one-to-one and highly flexible, enabling a personalised approach with each participant.
- ▶ The evaluators rely on survey data to estimate how much the project contributed to participants finding work and third party estimates for potential displacement and multiplier effects. The resulting estimate for social benefit cost ratio (equivalent to ROI in this context) is 1.6x, with the majority of the benefit coming from productivity gains via salaries and estimated workplace productivity.

5.5.3 The DurhamWorks Programme for Schools, with an evaluation published March 2024⁷⁸:

- ▶ The main aim was preventative work in mainstream and special schools to reduce the number of young people leaving Year 11 NEET, running from September 2020 to December 2023.
- ▶ Young people typically requested to join the programme, which included a range of group activities, motivational activities and activities focused around work and enterprise, as well as one-to-one mentoring.
- ▶ In total 3808 students registered on the programme and 3216 remained EET after Year 11, exceeding targets by 10% and 58% respectively, attracting very positive feedback from participants. For instance, 82% of those in EET said the programme had helped them be EET (and 37% said it helped "a great extent").
- ▶ The programme lacks a counterfactual, but the evaluators identified three plausible scenarios based on a lifetime cost of £83k of an individual NEET youth and either 1%, 2%, or 3% of participants prevented from NEET due to the programme. At a cost of £4m, the implied ROI rates are 0.7x (i.e. loss making, if only that benefit were achieved), 1.4x, and 2.1x.

5.5.4 The DurhamWorks Phase 2 project, evaluated in March 2022⁷⁹:

- ▶ The programme helped NEET 15–24-year-olds resident in County Durham into employment, education or training, with phase 2 running August 2018 to December 2021. The programme is led by Durham County Council in partnership with eight external Delivery Partners.
- ▶ Participants access intensive and long-term support and activities to develop motivation, work-related skills and work experience and increased employment opportunities.
- ▶ In total, the programme had 8,750 participants, 8,028 completers, and 6,297 progressing to EET, gaining a qualification or securing an EET offer. 86% of those finding work said that they attribute securing their job to DurhamWorks to a ‘great extent’ or ‘some extent’.
- ▶ The evaluators estimate a social ROI of 2.8x on £27m invested from Jan 2016 to Dec 2021 (the point of analysis), mostly funded by the EU’s ESF Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) initiative. The most significant financial benefits are fiscal and economic benefits from workless claimants entering work, with minor contributions quantified for qualification gains, volunteering, reductions in crime and substance abuse, and support with homelessness, among others. Assumptions are included to adjust for deadweight, attribution, and drop-off.

The enthusiasm of County Durham’s employers, education providers, and community organisations to work together in delivering careers and employability services speaks to the powerful benefits quantified above, which are often visible in small-scale first-hand experience working with young people.

Figure 27: Careers provision done right - Return on Investment

Field	Number of estimates (number of papers)	Median ROI	Interquartile range
Secondary school career guidance	10 (15)	2.5x	1.2x → 4.1x
Support for unemployed adults (major role for IAG)	16 (12)	3.2x	1.9x → 6.7x
Widening participation in higher education	5 (4)	4.2x	2.4x → 5.7x

Source: Percy, C., & Hooley, T. (2023). Lessons for career guidance from return-on-investment analyses in complex education-related fields. *British Journal Of Guidance & Counselling*

Meta-analyses of comparison group trials have revealed statistically significant benefits from careers provision compared to no-treatment control groups, with one-to-one provision over multiple sessions having the highest effect size in terms of changing career attitudes, confidence, motivation and plans.⁸⁰

Improvements in careers-related attitudes, behaviours and planning can in turn be related to longitudinal dataset analysis that has shown increased earnings and reduced NEET rates among 16 year olds who are able to name a job they are interested in and able to choose an educational pathway that is aligned with their occupational ambitions.⁸¹

Estimated full value of NEET prevention: One prevented NEET at age 16-17 has been related to major lifetime benefits, accounting for £57k value to the Exchequer for a reference year of 2009 and about twice that for society.⁸²

5.5.5 The evidence review for the new careers framework explored recent international literature on the typical returns on investment from careers provision at different life stages. Our review identifies three well-evidenced key messages which underpin the value of collaborative efforts to enhance careers provision across County Durham:

- ▶ **Careers and employability provision works:** When providers, employers, government, and communities come together, people's career journeys typically see tangible benefits in terms of employment, productivity, and wellbeing.
- ▶ **Taxpayer investments typically pay off:** The vast majority of ROI analyses identify a positive fiscal return from taxpayer investments in careers provision, with evidence mainly for secondary education students and unemployed adults.
- ▶ **County Durham has much to gain:** Career impact occurs locally, affecting individuals and employers in their own communities. While benefits may have been primarily measured elsewhere, there is strong potential for similar results through widespread community collaboration in County Durham.

The financial value-add of employers contributing to careers provision

5.5.6 The international evidence typically focuses on quantifying the financial value for recipients of careers support and subsequent value for the taxpayer. There is relatively little quantitative evidence on the financial value to employers of contributing to careers provision, such as through talks, visits, and work experience for young people in education, as well as mentoring, advice, and diverse types of placement for adults.

5.5.7 Many potential reasons for employer benefits have been identified, such as greater awareness of their organisation/sector, finding high quality recruits more easily, improved community relations and networks, and motivation and skills gains for staff volunteering, as well as social value evidence for public relations and procurement requirements. Nonetheless, the likely monetary value of these routes has typically not been estimated in the context of the costs of contributing to careers provision. This may not be surprising as the primary motivation for many employers is philanthropic: to give back to the community and support people to have fulfilling careers whatever they end up doing.

5.5.8 Without conceding the importance of philanthropic motivations, this review also undertook scenario-based analysis to help address this gap in the evidence on employer benefits. Our initial estimates for financial benefit have focused on better access to good quality hires (e.g., 10% higher productivity than the alternative hire). These estimates have been sense-checked in consultation with a small group of local employers. From this, it is highly likely that the potential for higher quality hires alone leads to a positive average ROI for employers supporting these types of careers activities.

Employers are highly likely to have a positive financial return on investment:

- ▶ **If good hires result from 0.05 or more out of every 100 pre-GCSE students engaged via careers talks** – even with no other benefits considered
- ▶ **If good hires result from 2 out of every 100 work experience students** – even with no other benefits considered
- ▶ **If good hires result from 3 out of every 100 work placements for students aged 16+ in technical or vocational courses** – even with no other benefits considered
- ▶ **If good hires result from 6 out of every 100 work placements for unemployed adults** – even with no other benefits being considered

These financial breakeven thresholds are likely to be conservative. Evidence from the Employer Skills Survey 2022 suggests that hiring rates from placements are typically well above twice these thresholds. A sense-check of likely engagement/impact rates in example careers activities also meets these thresholds comfortably. A more detailed breakdown analysis is provided within a separate ROI analysis report - Return on Investment (ROI): Context for County Durham's All-Age Careers Framework. There is an opportunity for leaders and manager to spell out more clearly the added-value returns for employers in getting more involved in careers support activities for people of all ages and abilities.

5.6 CIAG plays a crucial role in equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and guidance to make informed decisions, leading to improved employment outcomes, higher wages, and greater job satisfaction. For individuals, access to high-quality CIAG can help reduce unemployment rates, increase job retention, and ensure better alignment between skills and available job opportunities, which contributes to overall economic stability.

5.7 From a broader societal perspective, CIAG fosters a more productive and engaged workforce, driving economic growth and social mobility. When individuals are provided with clear pathways to training and employment, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, it can help break cycles of poverty and reduce inequality. Ultimately, the long-term social and economic benefits of CIAG contribute to the creation of a more equitable, skilled, and productive society.

“I can’t fault Employability Durham. Their approach and balance is right. They’ve referred me to the right kind of support. More support like this is needed. More support that’s more widely available and well promoted so people can find it.” (Adult)

A new phenomenon – Artificial Intelligence (AI)

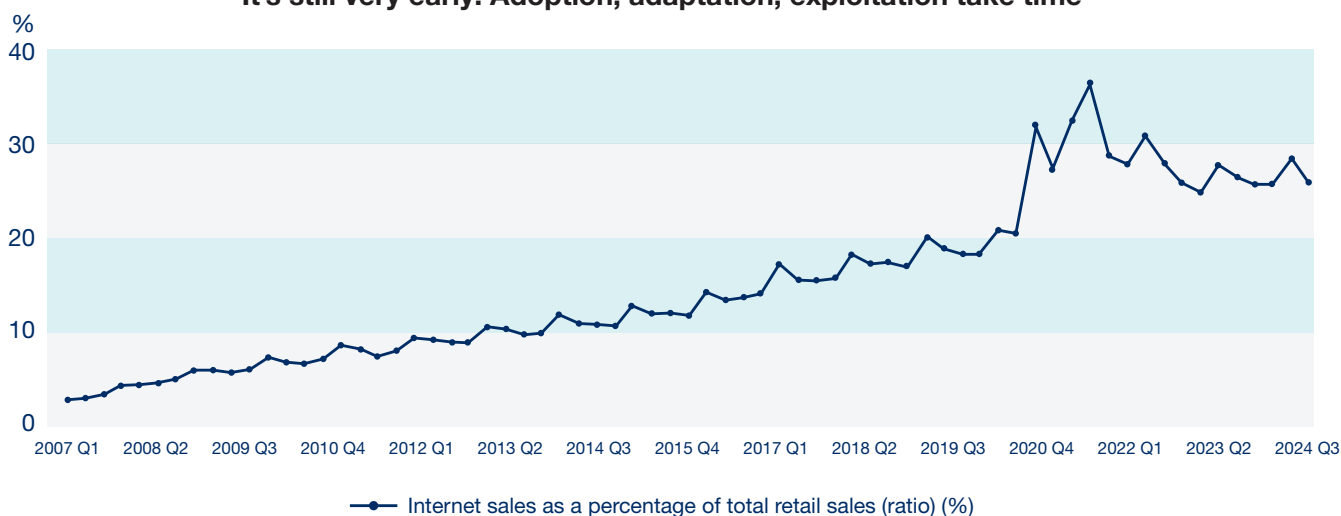
5.8 As the County considers the implications of AI and Generative Pre-Trained Transformers (GPTs) for the workforce, it is crucial to explore how this can be integrated into education, CIAG and employability related services to enhance, rather than replace, human expertise. Careers support, as a human-centred and personalised process, can facilitate effective career exploration when complemented by AI tools and an understanding of their limitations.

5.9 A new AI phenomenon is here, therefore, any plans to re-shape CIAG now and in the future must consider the potential role of AI and GPTs. AI and human support are intersecting offering an exciting opportunity to reimagine how to support teachers, careers advisers, employability and enterprise professionals, as well as other community specialists, and the young people and adults they serve.

With AI, “it is still very early”, as the application of frontier technologies to specific use cases and widespread adoption typically unfolds over years, not months

This pattern mirrors earlier trends seen with the internet, where the transformative impact took time to fully materialise. The impacts are ‘spiky’ across sectors and highly dependent upon specific leadership approaches.

Figure 28: Internet sales as a percentage of total retail sales
It’s still very early: Adoption, adaptation, exploitation take time



Foresight Future AI and Career Guidance Scenarios

5.10 The scenarios illustrated within *Careers 2035: The future of AI and Career Guidance* report (November 2024) could assist County Durham to anticipate the potential challenges and opportunities by considering various social, economic, technological, and environmental trends. This context takes into account other allied factors such as major demographic issues (e.g. falling birth rate, ageing population); productivity risks amid growing economic inactivity; concerns with mental health and wellbeing; cost of living crises; digitisation / remote work / overseas competition / wage pressure on knowledge jobs; growing student expectations on tech, immersion, “engaging-ness”, and personalisation; expectations that online information and services are free/cheap, with more self-paced, asynchronous learning; ongoing speed-up of societal and jobs disruption; and more diverse routes into jobs with fewer “obvious paths” for people to follow - all exacerbating the need for ongoing reskilling/sector transitions.

5.11 Various generative AI tools include:

- ▶ **Chatbots and virtual assistants** e.g., ChatGPT and versions tailored to careers provision created by the report authors: CiCi the curated careers chatbot⁸³ and Huxby⁸⁴ including psychometric testing, careers information and advice, with an inbuilt handover to a human careers adviser.
- ▶ **Content generation** text and email writing tools e.g., Jasper and Writesonic that create blog posts, marketing content, and social media posts based on user input
- ▶ **Image and video generation** e.g., DALL·E generates images from text descriptions
- ▶ **Data and analytics generation** e.g., Tableau’s “Explain Data”: provides AI-generated insights and explanations of data visualisations
- ▶ **Game content and story generation** e.g., Minecraft interactive text-based game where the AI generates unique, evolving storylines based on player input
- ▶ **Personalised learning and education** e.g., Squirrel AI generates personalised learning paths and content based
- ▶ **Visual design and marketing** e.g., Canva’s AI designed tools used to generate design elements such as templates, layouts, and graphics for marketing materials.

There are exciting opportunities for shared learning and more collaborative work between and across industry, education, local and combined authority, employability and enterprise agencies.

6.0 Finding Solutions

6.1 In this section, there is a call for a **culture change across the County** to harness the significant CIAG expertise, experiences and resources that currently exist, alongside opportunities for new ‘blended hybrid’ approaches where human-centred services remain a priority, complemented by digital advancements. This involves:

- ▶ **A shift from ‘silos’ to ‘simplicity’**, moving towards greater alignment of initiatives and sustainability of CIAG policies and practices that demonstrate tangible impact. There are numerous multi-layers of variable quality CIAG in County Durham (including some excellent practices and resources) and some children, young people and adults are missing out, particularly those most vulnerable in local communities, including those in work.
- ▶ **An entitlement for everyone in County Durham to have high aspirations**, to be supported to make informed choices and decisions towards finding possibilities to differentiate themselves on their way to sustaining a livelihood and wellbeing.
- ▶ **A mechanism(s) for smoothing transitions**, alongside an urgent need to better understand new qualifications such as ‘T Levels’ and foundation apprenticeships, entry level pathways at all levels, particularly levels 1 & 2 for those not ready to progress onto level 3+, as well as supporting those level 3 and above to better utilise their talents and skills.
- ▶ **An explicit well-publicised County Durham careers and employability offer** for everyone that includes an entitlement and access to CIAG to address serious inequity that exists in the current arrangements. To achieve this agencies must come together, supported by strong leadership, working towards a commonly agreed quality standard within a more unified system.
- ▶ **To improve employer engagement in CIAG activities, several strategies can be implemented.** These approaches focus on facilitating communication, enhancing collaboration, and building long-term relationships between employers, educational institutions, and local authorities. Ideas for action were presented separately with recommendations to the UKSPF Technical Funding Group.

6.2 These strategies should be supported by passionate, dedicated individuals who can drive engagement and raise awareness. While goodwill and volunteer efforts can contribute, meaningful engagement at scale will require budgetary support to implement effectively. By integrating these approaches, strategic and grass-roots partners can:

- ▶ improve employer engagement;
- ▶ enhance CIAG; and
- ▶ ultimately support the education and workforce development and community needs of both young people and adults and employers.

6.3 A strengthened County Durham CIAG eco-system, through a more co-ordinated and collaborative multi-agency partnership approach, will draw together significant experience and expertise from across the whole system to maximise the impact of its collective resources to develop and deliver an impactful local delivery model. In countries such as Wales, Scotland, Finland, Estonia and Belgium (Flanders) this approach works well.

The call for a CIAG Framework to guide 2025 – 2035 developments to foster collaboration across sectors to create a flexible and integrated infrastructure is a fundamental, and an essential enabler to facilitate a flexible and integrated infrastructure connecting all elements of the careers, employability, and enterprise system placing CIAG at its core.

6.4 The disparity in access to CIAG for young people and adults across County Durham must be addressed to ensure equitable opportunities for all. A unified and strong pan-sector leadership approach, combined with effective and strengthened partnerships, will support individuals throughout their career exploration and lifelong journeys. A more cohesive and collaborative ecosystem will emerge, driven by shared learning, resources, and best practices.

7.0 A Proposed Way Forward

7.1 In this section, based on our findings from across the county, we set out a proposed vision and key principles and seven key recommendations 2025 -2035 to inform and support developments going forward. We conclude with recommendations for sponsors of this research the Durham County Economic Development Board and the UKSPF Technical Funding Group.

Proposed Vision for County Durham

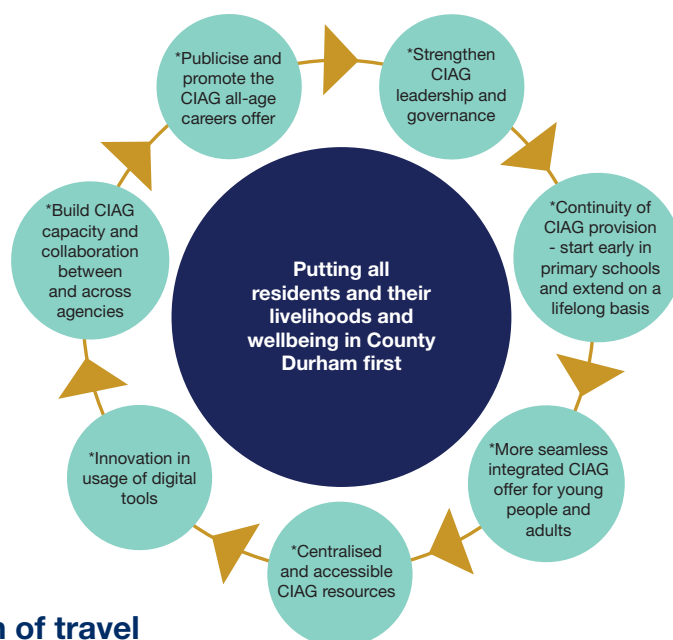
Careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) will be a vital, embedded element of personal development, enhancing wellbeing and providing more equitable career and employability support opportunities for all residents in every community, across all stages of life.

Key Principles - Having access to good learning experiences and to decent work are an essential prerequisite to leading a prosperous life. Experiences in work and learning also have a profound impact on individuals' health and mental well-being⁸⁵. CIAG spans multiple elements of careers, employability, enterprise, health and skills. All CIAG support services have a role in enabling people to access economically sustainable lifestyles, which offer healthy long-term engagement lifelong learning and wellbeing.

- ▶ For local educationalists, community agencies, businesses and individuals, this involves the ability to work with uncertainty and ambiguity across organisational boundaries. These skills include the ability to inspire others into whole-system thinking and recognition of shared problems (Ramsden, 2019).⁸⁶

“By analysing the interconnectedness and interdependence of various components and processes, systems thinking helps us understand complex issues from a person-centred holistic perspective.”

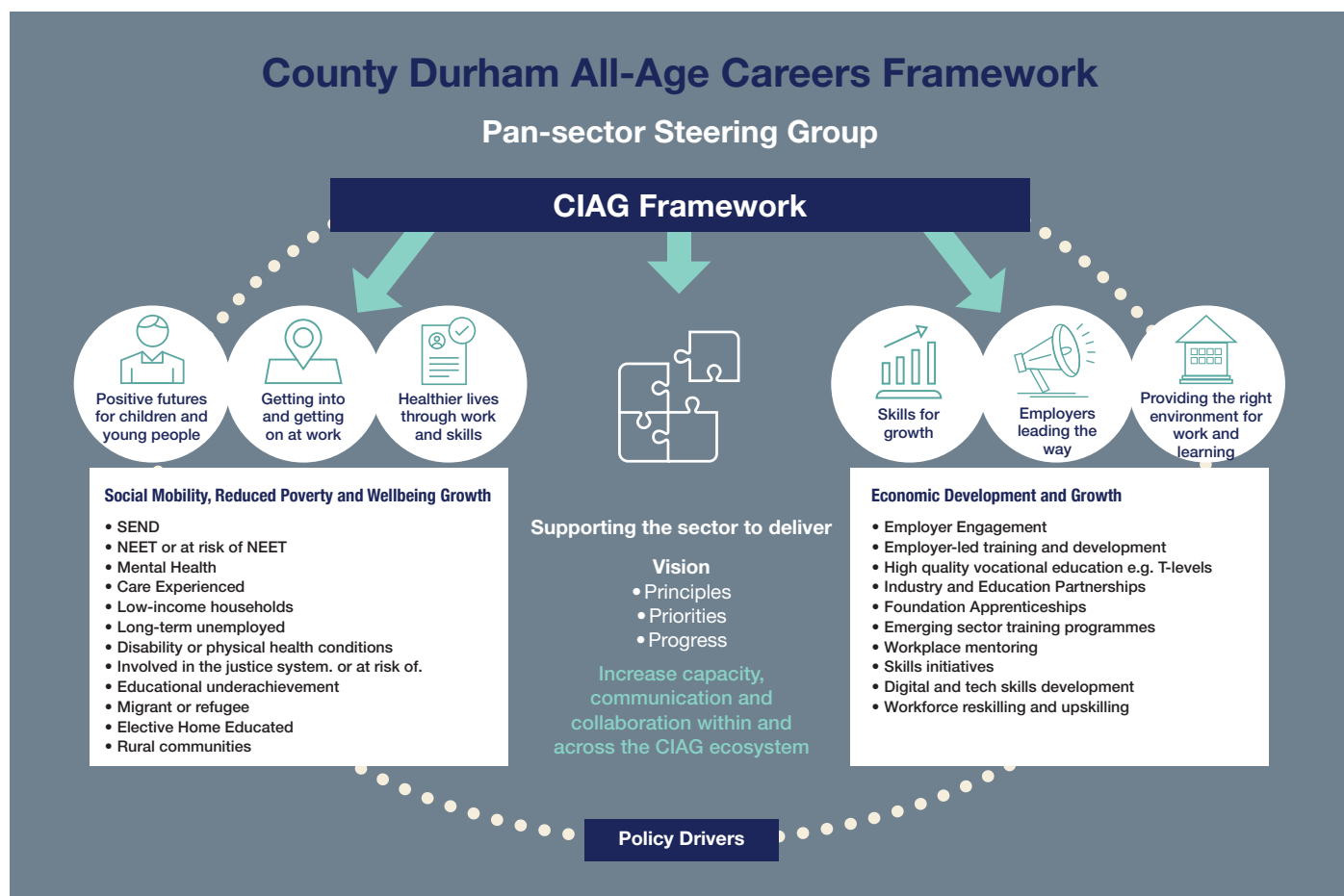
In today's fast-paced and ever-changing world, this approach is more relevant than ever. With the objective of achieving greater alignment of CIAG support services for children, young people and adults, we have paid particular regard to the scope for practical improvements in the way that various players within the careers, employability and enterprise eco-system interact with one another. This approach will minimise fragmented efforts, enabling a more efficient and coordinated use of resources to achieve greater collective impact. The Glossary of Terms commonly used within institutions and agencies is provided in Appendix 1 and this can be added to going forward.



Achieving this direction of travel

7.2.1 To assist going forward, we set out a proposed vision, principles, seven key features and recommendations that emerged from the research to help drive forward strategic and practical arrangements from 2025 -2035. Over the next ten years, County Durham, along with a newly formed pan-sector Steering Group can work more collaboratively to co-design, co-produce, communicate and deliver improved CIAG services. The focus will be on strengthening the talent pipeline and inclusivity, ensuring that services are accessible to everyone in the county, with particular attention to those most in need of support, ultimately delivering a more impactful hybrid CIAG delivery model.

7.2.2 We propose a County Durham All-Age Careers Framework, as outlined below to drive forward the vision, key principles, priorities and progress measures.



The primary focus should be on developing a more flexible, integrated infrastructure that connects all components of the careers, employability, and enterprise system, with CIAG at its core. This approach must move beyond isolated strategies and practices, which are currently addressed separately, to foster stronger connections between social mobility, poverty reduction, wellbeing, and economic development.

7.2.3 It is essential to recognise that the system must evolve continuously to meet changing needs, opportunities, and challenges. By fostering collaboration across agencies, this strategy can avoid fragmented efforts, ensuring a more efficient and impactful use of CIAG resources that benefit residents and businesses.

7.2.4 By having CIAG more within integrated careers, employment, enterprise, health, finance and social support services, the framework can create a dynamic, agile ecosystem that effectively responds to the diverse and evolving needs of individuals, employers, and communities for people of all ages and stages in life, enhancing both personal growth and economic development.

Seven Key Recommendations and Actions 2025 -2035

Theme	Key Recommendations	Key Actions
Leadership and Governance	<p>Key Recommendation 1</p> <p>The implementation of the All-Age Careers Framework should be led by a newly formed pan-sector Steering Group that comprises careers, employability, social mobility, poverty action, wellbeing, industry and economic development. The group will agree on annual CIAG priorities, including key performance indicators (KPIs) and measures to monitor progress within a strengthened, better co-ordinated and communicated ‘blended hybrid’ CIAG system. Senior leaders should be actively engaged to inform strategic direction, ensuring alignment with broader county-wide objectives. This should ensure accountability, transparency and effective oversight of CIAG across the county.</p>	<p>1a. Establishment of a Pan-Sector Steering Group. To drive forward and monitor the All-Age Careers Framework for children, young people, and adults across the county, a CIAG Steering Group should be formally established. This team will define its role within the broader leadership system of the county, including the reporting mechanisms and its influence over the direction of CIAG services.</p> <p>1b. Improving Communication, Collaboration, and Resource Sharing. A formal system needs to be established to improve communication and collaboration across the careers, employability, and enterprise sectors – a multi-agency approach. By leveraging existing mechanisms in economic development and existing careers, employability and enterprise networks, including social mobility and poverty action groups, build upon what’s already in place, ensuring a balance between working together and avoiding competition. This system can become more efficient sharing resources, continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities, and the co-production of high-quality CIAG services.</p>
Continuity of CIAG provision	<p>Key Recommendation 2</p> <p>Ensure high-quality CIAG serves as a ‘golden thread’ that is consistently available to children, young people, and adults, providing seamless support as they transition through key educational stages—from primary to secondary education, into post-16 pathways, and beyond on a lifelong basis.</p>	<p>2a. Establish a more seamless system of careers support in the education system and local communities for children, young people and adults. This should focus on capturing aspirations, skills, exposure to and experiences of the world of work. This will ensure that all individuals, regardless of age or background, are equipped with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities to thrive now and in the future in the evolving workforce, aligning with the national objective to increase access to high-quality CIAG for all and support for their transition into successful careers.</p> <p>2b. Start Early in Primary Schools. Encourage early career-related learning (CRL) for all children in County Durham to engage in activities that nurture and capture career aspirations, skills development, and broad understanding of potential sectors and occupations. This will empower children to see beyond their immediate surroundings and build confidence in their future, contributing to higher achievements and lower dropout rates. The continuity of this learning from primary through secondary education is vital for long-term success. An annual celebratory event could take place to share findings across the County given various activities are already underway. Also, skills children learn in primary could be shared more widely with secondary schools beyond the transfer of SATS results.</p> <p>2c. Promote the integration of career leadership and impartial career guidance into the curriculum, supported by industry engagement at all levels. To make certain that young people are adequately prepared for the future, it is essential that career leadership and impartial career guidance are integrated into the curriculum at all educational levels, supported by meaningful engagement with industry. While the national system sets statutory requirements, there is limited local control in Durham, and it is important that careers leads feel empowered to collaborate rather than disengage. Currently, the post-primary education system faces challenges in fairness, consistency, and equity, with many institutions not meeting the national Gatsby Benchmarks for good career guidance. This gap in provision limits young people’s confidence and ability to make informed career decisions, contributing to disparities in career outcomes. By embedding career leadership and fostering stronger industry connections across the curriculum, we can create a more cohesive, equitable, and effective CIAG system that supports individuals’ career-related learning from primary schooling and beyond.</p>

Theme	Key Recommendations	Key Actions
More Seamless Integrated CIAG Offer	<p>Key Recommendation 3</p> <p>County Durham residents should have opportunities to build and reinforce their skills through integrated careers and employability services offering access to trustworthy CIAG, engaging learning projects, meaningful activities, and experiential opportunities at the point at which they need them. This is an entitlement that needs to be explicit in all CIAG plans, activities and promotions.</p>	<p>3a. County Durham's inclusive careers offer must be both universal and targeted with specialist support for those most in need, including early interventions, preventions and recovery work. Develop and communicate a County Durham-wide CIAG entitlement that is promoted to all young people and adults to have access to high-quality CIAG at key transition points, from education to employment. This entitlement should be clearly embedded in all major County Durham partnerships, including careers, employability, enterprise, skills, health and financial support networks.</p> <p>3b. Set up an independent peer review system across the county to provide feedback to individual institutions, share best practice CIAG examples and provide support. This system already exists in The Careers and Enterprise (CEC) portfolio of activities, in SEND schools and in Durham University with other universities. Take steps to build upon and extend this approach further.</p> <p>3c. Build and strengthen partnerships with local and national industries to provide young people and adults with access to real-world insights, mentorship, and work-based and other experiential learning opportunities. Improve the co-ordination and communication of employer-led workshops, career fairs, industry talks, and mentorship programmes to explore various career options and the skills required. Additionally, explore more effective ways of co-hosting and sharing these CIAG events through civic community engagement, leveraging local networks and funding/sponsorship opportunities, partnerships, and employers to ensure broader access and inclusivity for all students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This collaborative approach will foster stronger connections between educational institutions, local communities, and industry, enriching students' career exploration and preparation.</p>
Centralised and Accessible CIAG Resources	<p>Key Recommendation 4</p> <p>High-quality CIAG resources, both online and offline, will be readily accessible and tailored to the individual needs of individuals, including students, parents/carers, teachers, careers and employability advisers, work coaches, community workers, employers, sectoral and professional bodies and trade unions.</p>	<p>4a. Assess the Feasibility of a County-wide Centralised CIAG Resources Online Platform. Review the accessibility and content of existing platforms and webpages, within and beyond Durham County Council, offering high-quality CIAG resources for young people and adults tailored to specific needs. Identify good practice features, specific sections or tools for different user groups (e.g., students, parents, careers advisers, work coaches, employers), and personalised CIAG based on age, career stage, and aspirations. Encourage education institutions, employers, and other key stakeholders to contribute to and more readily share career resources, templates, case studies, career insights and digital innovations.</p> <p>4b. Distribute Physical Resources to Hard-to-Reach Areas. Work with local libraries, community centres, health and finance sectors, foodbanks and educational institutions to distribute offline resources in areas with limited broadband access, ensuring no one is excluded from accessing CIAG support.</p> <p>4c. Accelerate the production and dissemination of labour market intelligence (LMI) until NECA and Skills England is more fully established. The DfE 'LMI for All' initiative is no longer funded which creates 'a temporary void' in access to latest LMI trends. Therefore, review existing arrangements beyond a reliance on Durham Insights which many practitioners seldom use in their work with clients. Take steps to assess and prioritise the production of high-quality LMI for young people and adults. There is potential to learn from successful models in other parts of the UK, including e.g. London, Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Norway.</p>

Theme	Key Recommendations	Key Actions
Innovation in Usage of Digital Tools	<p>Key Recommendation 5</p> <p>Pilot cutting-edge digital advancements, such as gaming, virtual reality, virtual centres of excellence in specific growth sectors, chatbot technology, and other digital support tools, can provide access to trustworthy labour market intelligence (LMI), to enhance CIAG delivery. These technologies can provide engaging, accessible, and personalised support, where appropriate, to users of all ages.</p>	<p>5a Pilot Advanced Digital Tools: Learn from other digital tools that engage young people and adults effectively in career exploration and decision-making available 24:7 (e.g. Huxby and CiCi AI chatbots using large language models). Undertake a feasibility study on the potential to connect transport timetables to career opportunities using AI.</p> <p>5b. Co-Create Virtual Centres of Excellence: Develop virtual centres for specific growth sectors (e.g., technology, green energy, healthcare) to provide users with sector-specific resources, training opportunities, and insights on emerging careers. Learn from successful examples, such as New Brunswick, Canada, and other innovative Centres of Excellence within and outside the county.</p> <p>5C. Leverage Digital Tools for Enhanced CIAG. Integrate more fully interactive features on websites and webpages, allowing users to explore career journeys, job market trends, course information and personalised information based on their interests and location. Educational institutions, careers, employability, and enterprise services can benefit greatly from sharing best practices and collaborating on innovative solutions, making it easier for both young people and adults to engage in career exploration and decision-making. Monitor progress, showcase innovations and work collaboratively to attract investment.</p>
Build Capacity and Collaboration Between and Across Agencies	<p>Key Recommendation 6</p> <p>Core CIAG agencies alongside allied community organisations should achieve their CIAG-related development goals through a comprehensive range of shared training, professional development activities, and co-designed resources.</p>	<p>6a. Establish Collaborative Professional Development and Training. Harness county-wide and local networks with a cross-agency focus and explore options for professional development activities for careers advisers, teachers, health, finance and community workers focusing on skills development, knowledge sharing, and best practices in CIAG. Build on career guidance best practice, coaching, employability support, and mentoring e.g. Estonia's Public Employment Service has successfully co-developed professional development sessions within a multi-agency approach.</p> <p>6b. Recruit and attract more career guidance professionals to the county. Invest in increasing capacity and support collaborative skills training and the development of high-quality CIAG resources. Co-design resources and communities of practice. Facilitate collaborative workshops with stakeholders to co-design CIAG resources that are tailored to the needs of various groups and sectors, ensuring accessibility and relevance for all users.</p> <p>6c. Promote Collaborative Research and Networking. Support collaborative research initiatives between education institutions, businesses, and community groups to gather data on student outcomes and labour market trends, informing CIAG services. Host regular cross-agency networking events or conferences to allow professionals from various sectors to exchange ideas and collaborate on shared CIAG goals and initiatives.</p>
Publicise and Promote the CIAG Offer	<p>Key Recommendation 7</p> <p>All young people, parents, adults, employers, and community workers will have a clear understanding of the entitlement to good-quality CIAG and how to access it effectively. Initiatives should focus on enhancing the visibility and accessibility of CIAG services supported by the development of clear, consistent and recognisable branding at a county and local level.</p>	<p>7a. Moving towards the integration of Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service, these and other careers support agencies, should take joint action to publicise CIAG support. This will help ensure that all young people, parents, adults (in and those of work), clearly understand their entitlement to high-quality CIAG and how to access it effectively.</p> <p>7b. Connect with marketing and branding specialists within County Durham. Explore the status of existing brands where CIAG promotional piggy-back activities could potentially be achieved e.g. Durham County Council and others to reduce brain drain and increase brain gain in the county.</p> <p>7c. Use social media platforms and other County Durham campaigns to reach out to young people, vulnerable groups, and adults in the workplace, encouraging them to make the most of available CIAG resources. This includes promoting inspirational role models, freely available resources, including mid-life reviews, to support individuals in making informed choices and decisions about their careers and futures.</p>

7.2.5 These recommendations provide a foundation that can be reviewed and expanded to achieve the ambitions of the County Durham all-age careers framework guided by strong senior leadership and governance. To support efforts in attracting further investment into County Durham as a beacon of excellence and innovation in CIAG for both young people and adults, we offered practical ideas for action presented to the UKSPF Technical Funding Group.

7.2.6 These strategies and recommendations should be supported by passionate, dedicated individuals who can drive engagement and raise awareness. While goodwill and volunteer efforts can contribute, meaningful engagement at scale will require budgetary support to implement effectively. We conclude by reinforcing the need for a career learning from an early age and on a lifelong basis transforms people's lives.

7.2.7 This is also important for a cohesive and just society, and for a productive County Durham economy. Durham County Council and partners are committed to ensuring that children, young people, and adults from all backgrounds in the county have the opportunity to benefit from high quality careers information, advice and guidance. This should become an entitlement going forward. We have set out a bold new approach to supporting inclusion, equality, diversity, social mobility, economic development growth and prosperity for all.

We conclude by reinforcing the need for career exploration and lifelong guidance to help transform people's lives.



Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

AI	Artificial Intelligence
Career	A lifestyle concept that involves the sequence of occupations (paid and unpaid) in which one engages throughout a lifetime, including work, learning and leisure activities.
CD	Career development is the lifelong process of managing learning, work, leisure, and transitions in order to move toward a personally determined and evolving preferred future.
CE	Career education is the curricula and programmes that provide information and experiences that help young people make meaningful career and education decisions
CEIAG	Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (a term commonly used within education institutions)
CI	Careers information,” “occupational information,” and “labour market information” overlap. Broadly defined, these terms encompass the full range of information about labour market conditions and trends, including employment and unemployment, industry and occupational employment and wages, labour market information and projections, individual workers or jobseekers, and providers of education and training.
CIAG	Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (a term commonly used within and outside education and employability organisations)
CG	Careers guidance consists of services and highly trained professionals that help people successfully manage their career development. It is an inclusive term that has been used to describe a range of interventions including career education and counselling. Career guidance can incorporate career information, advice, career education and career counselling.
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
DWP	Department for Work & Pensions
EET	Education, Employment and Training
ELGPN	European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network
EMP	Employability
ENT	Enterprise

ESF	European Social Fund
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
ICCDPP	International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy
IER	Institute for Employment Research
IES	Inclusive Economic Strategy
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
ITF	Inspiring the Future and Primary Futures
LLMs	Large Language Models
LLG	Lifelong Guidance
LMI	Labour Market Intelligence / Information
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NECA	North East Combined Authority
NELSIP	North East Local Skills Improvement Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAS	Poverty Action Strategy
PES	Public Employment Service
ROI	Return on Investment
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SOC	Standard Occupational Classification
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UKSPF	UK Shared Prosperity Fund
VET	Vocational Education and Training
YOI	Young Offenders Institution

Appendix 2:

Related national policies

Examples of new national policies introduced by government that link with current and future CIAG provision in County Durham (and beyond) include:

- ▶ **Invest 2035: the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy**⁸⁸ – CIAG acts as a key enabler in the smooth transition of talent into high-growth sectors, aligning with the objectives of the UK's 'Invest 2035' strategy to ensure the workforce is equipped with the skills and guidance necessary to drive long-term economic growth.
- ▶ **AI Opportunities Action Plan**⁸⁹ – This is designed turbocharge every mission in this government's Plan for Change. And the potential for further innovation is significant in a CIAG context.
- ▶ **Skills England**⁹⁰ – CIAG is essential in supporting Skills England's mission by helping individuals identify labour market growth opportunities and navigate skills gaps. This new arms-length body will bring together key partners to identify and respond to skills needs of the next decade.
- ▶ **Growth and Skills Levy**⁹¹ – CIAG is necessary in ensuring that young people and adults (especially parents/carers) understand and can navigate the changes brought by the new Levy, providing clear guidance on available opportunities and pathways. The new Levy will replace the existing apprenticeship levy and include new foundation apprenticeships, alongside technical education developments that need to be better understood.
- ▶ **Get Britain Working Again White Paper**⁹² – Transforming a department for welfare into a genuine department for work through a new national jobs and careers service, focused on people's skills and careers not only monitoring and managing benefit claims. Also, mobilising Mayors and councils to join up local work, health and skills support in ways that meet the needs of their area and building a Youth Guarantee, so every young person has a real chance of either earning or learning.
- ▶ **New National Jobs and Career Service**⁹³ – CIAG policies and new workforce development practices are crucial for the smooth integration of the National Careers Service with over 600 Jobcentre Plus offices, ensuring individuals receive the support needed to access better-paid work and navigate meaningful opportunities.
- ▶ **Changes to Universal Credit (UC) and new Work, Health, and Skills Plans for the Economically Inactive, led by Mayors and Local Areas**⁹⁴ – CIAG will become more integral to the changes underway. The Labour manifesto commits to reviewing UC to make work pay and reduce poverty, while reforming employment and wellbeing support. County Durham has a strong track record with established multi-agency partner networks helping to shape these initiatives.
- ▶ **Prisoners' Early Release and Probation Services**⁹⁵ – CIAG will play a crucial role in supporting the successful reintegration of individuals released under a new law by offering tailored career advice, skills development, and employability support to help them transition effectively into the community and secure sustainable work opportunities.
- ▶ **A Curriculum and Assessment Review**⁹⁶ – CIAG is vital in addressing resource constraints in the education system by ensuring that both educators, careers and employability advisers working in schools and colleges are equipped with the right resources, training and support. Many students need and want trustworthy CIAG to make informed decisions about their future pathways.
- ▶ **Institutes of Technology (IoTs)**⁹⁷ – CIAG plays a key role in supporting IoTs which work in close partnerships to deliver world-class technical education and training in STEM occupations. The IoT partnership model enables clear pathways from 16-18 education to higher technical qualifications (HTQs), apprenticeships, degrees, and employment, helping to shape individuals future career prospects.
- ▶ **Updated Gatsby Benchmarks**⁹⁸ – for work in schools, colleges and Independent Training Providers (ITPs) – CIAG is described as 'good career guidance' with refinements made to an earlier version launched in 2014 and delivery supported through The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) working collaboratively with local and combined authorities. The Secretary for Education has endorsed this approach
- ▶ **Youth Guarantee for 18–21-year-olds**⁹⁹, **Youth Future Hubs**¹⁰⁰ and **a New National Youth Strategy**¹⁰¹ – CIAG is vital to supporting these twin goals, helping young people access relevant education, training and employment opportunities while navigating barriers to future success. With youth unemployment at 13.3%, the highest in three years, CIAG plays a key role in addressing the challenges posed by global economic trends, rising real wage stagnation, and a cloudy employment outlook. Among 18-24-year-olds, the percentage out of work in the three months to July 2024 had last been as high in January 2021, amid Covid lockdowns.

Appendix 3a:

List of respondents to Call for Evidence – Have Your Say

Responses received from:	Total
NHS England	Durham Area Action Partnership
DurhamLearn	Stockton Borough Council
Bridge Creative	North Easington PCN
Karbon Homes	Stockton Borough Council, Careers
DWP	St Bede's Catholic School & 6th Form College- Lanchester
Wheels2Work County Durham	Durham County Council
Spark	Employability Durham
Education and Employers Charity	Stanley Community Centre, The Venue
Education Development Trust	Durham Employment & Skills
Durham University	WBFL
Durham University (Careers and Enterprise)	Northern Learning Trust
Learning Abilities CIC	National Careers Service
Groundwork NE & Cumbria	Robin Todd Centre
Durham Trinity School and Sports College	DurhamWorks Programme for Schools
Durham Christian Partnership	The Growth Company - matrix Standard

Appendix 3b

List of main questions asked in the Call for Evidence – Have your Say

1. What is working well with regards to careers and employability support services for young people and adults in County Durham?
2. Can you provide a brief example(s) of good/interesting careers and employability support policies and practices in County Durham?
3. What is not working well and what are the main reasons for this?
4. What are the barriers or difficulties you consider are getting in the way of young people, particularly those most disadvantaged?
5. What policies and practices are needed to ensure the right model of delivery and timing for careers support for young people and/or adults, who need careers guidance most?
6. How can greater priority be given to young people and adults' views that can feed into the future co-design of an innovative and impactful all-age careers offer in County Durham?

Appendix 4:

Human-centred and AI ‘blended hybrid’ approach

This additional information is provided to spark discussion in County Durham (and beyond) about potential future scenarios for CIAG support services. It focuses on exploring the potential of harnessing career-technology innovation through a human-centred, AI-enhanced ‘hybrid’ approach. As AI becomes increasingly integral to our daily lives and work environments, it presents both opportunities and challenges in reimagining CIAG and adopting more career-tech solutions. As mentioned earlier, while some innovative tools, like webchats and virtual reality (VR) headsets, are being utilised in certain areas of the county, these resources are not yet widespread.

As we consider the implications of Generative Pre-Trained Transformers (GPTs) for the workforce, it is crucial to explore how AI can be integrated into education, career guidance and employability services to enhance, rather than replace, human expertise. Careers support, as a human-centred and personalised process, can facilitate effective career exploration when complemented by AI tools and an understanding of their limitations.

Research from Demos suggests 9.7m people in the UK lack access to essential career guidance.¹⁰² In schools, colleges and universities, the current ratio of students to suitably qualified careers advisers makes it impossible to provide a meaningful experience to every young person who needs it, which sees many left behind. More than one in 10 haven’t had an interview with a qualified adviser by the end of Year 11 and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds in particular, engage less consistently in career development.

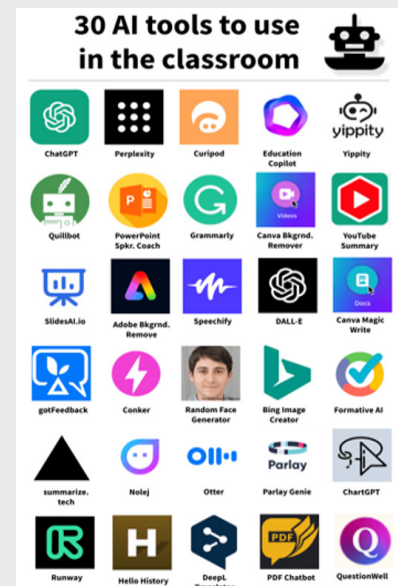
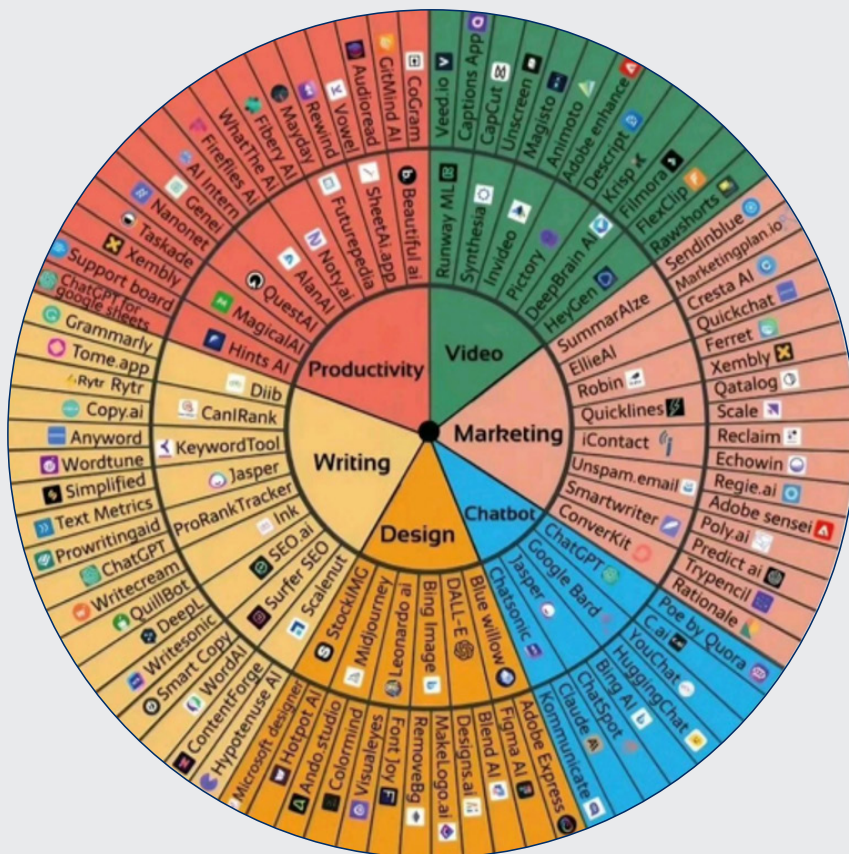
In six of the nine schools/colleges who responded to the online survey, the careers leader is allocated just one hour per week for this role, while two schools provide between 2 to 5 hours, and one college offers 31-40 hours. Seven of the nine employ or contract a professionally qualified careers adviser to provide independent careers guidance. One school does not because the full-time careers leader fulfils this role, while another lacks sufficient funding to hire an adviser.

The hours worked by external careers advisers vary: one school has 1-2 hours, another has 6-8 hours, two schools have 9-16 hours, and one college contracts an adviser for 25-40 hours. Budgetary constraints are cited as a key reason for limited resources, with career support for older students being prioritised over younger year groups.

From matching job seekers with opportunities that align with their skills and aspirations to suggesting training programmes to fill skills gaps, or forecasting emerging career development trends based on real-time labour market data, greater usage of artificial intelligence (AI) within human-centred services could help more individuals make more informed decisions about their education and employment options, travel to work plans, and potentially close the “delivery gap”.

Technology is transforming our ability to use labour market intelligence and information (LMI) to help inform CIAG choices and decisions. Web-scraping and AI technologies enable near real-time insights from thousands of job adverts (ONS, 2024). There are new data collection systems and more user-friendly ways to collate and analyse findings, through Application Programme Interfaces (APIs).

Achieving the successful integration of artificial intelligence and large language models into CIAG



Source: Marie Laffey, Galway University, Ireland in Careers 2035: The Future of AI and Career Guidance, November 2024.¹⁰³

It is widely acknowledged there are major challenges including:

1. Ethical Concerns: Issues such as data privacy, bias, and the transparency of AI systems need careful management to prevent adverse impacts, particularly on vulnerable populations.
2. Human-AI Collaboration: AI should enhance, not replace, the human touch in career guidance. The synergy between AI and human advisers is crucial for providing comprehensive and empathetic support.
3. Regulatory and Practical Barriers: The public sector's cautious approach to AI adoption contrasts with the rapid advancements in the private sector, necessitating collaboration to optimise AI career-tech products and services.

AI and large language models (LLMs) are being increasingly used by students rather than teachers (Hughes et al, 2024)¹⁰⁴, making it essential to prioritise workforce training in the effective and responsible use of AI within education, careers, and employability settings. Additionally, developing critical thinking and 'future readiness' skills (Zarief, 2014)¹⁰⁵ is crucial to ensure that both students and educators can navigate and leverage these technologies effectively in a rapidly evolving landscape.

There are encouraging signs via key policymakers in all four home nations coming together to jointly consider AI advancements and ethical implications in the context of careers and employability services. The Get Britain Working (2024) paper specifically refers to greater use of AI in the forthcoming new Jobs and Careers Advice Service (para. 167, p.50)¹⁰⁶.

Appendix 5:

Lessons can be learned from good/interesting CIAG policies and practices within and outside of County Durham

Some selected examples include:

- ▶ **Wales** (e.g. highly successful collaborative work, including MOUs well established between Jobcentres, the National Careers Service, Local Authorities, FE Colleges and Universities).
- ▶ **Scotland** (e.g. Partners across Scotland have come together to deliver the most comprehensive review of Scotland's career services. The Career Review has engaged practitioners, partners and those entitled to services to co-design and create a set of recommendations on how services are delivered. The final report of the Career Review describes how this redesign will be delivered to ensure people of all-ages can access the skills and experiences to grow and succeed in a rapidly changing world. The Changemaker Co-design Report (2023) provides further detail on the Career Development model and an outline approach to experiential career learning. A strategic Career Collaborative guides the operating model i.e. a high-level overview of how services should be organised to deliver on the career review recommendations. It expresses a set of outcomes that the system needs to deliver and describes a set of principles that future services can be built upon and to which they must align).
- ▶ **New Zealand and Ireland** each have Lifelong Guidance Strategic Frameworks published in 2023. The Youth Guarantee Employability Skills Framework identifies the soft skills or capabilities most desired in young people by New Zealand employers.
- ▶ **Parts of England, Iceland, New Zealand, and Sweden:** Are prioritising awareness raising, horizon broadening, and world of work inspiration activities including running events in primary schools with employer volunteers. Each of the above-mentioned countries has customised a Primary Futures platform. The NECA LinkUp platform has recently been launched by the CEC in County Durham and across the North East. The CEC's Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ), managed by Careers Hubs leads in schools and colleges, should be able to provide county-wide data on key findings. Durham County Council already has collated data in this regard. Derby City has experimented with a skills log transfer from primary to secondary schooling that informs teachers of young people's aspirations from an early age.
- ▶ **Careers Wales and Skills Development Scotland** (SDS) have adopted a distinctive approach to designing their own customised version of Microsoft Minecraft, including immersive career education games and resources for teachers.
- ▶ **Parts of England e.g. South London Careers Hub:** Is becoming more inclusive in building local communities of careers and employability practice moving beyond simply working with schools, colleges and employers.
- ▶ **Switzerland:** The viamia initiative provides mid-life career reviews for adults. Also, in the Canton of Bern, "BIZ bi de Lüt" - the mobile information desk, in the form of a vintage minibus, reminds people of the importance of being proactive and the careers support available to them. Large parts of the population are not aware that the BIS also supports adults. This is implemented as part of a roadshow at ten locations – in busy squares, in front of shopping centre or at train stations. The project was accompanied by a media campaign. Further examples include: "Strategies for re-entry after a burnout". More and more adults who are registered as unemployed are suffering from burnout, which can make professional reintegration more difficult. The career advice centres of the Valais Romand offer a group course of six half days on behalf of the RAV regional employment centres. (Canton of Valais).
- ▶ **Estonia:** Public employment service provision has invested in an open and self-exploratory space for career development, The interactive Career Centre was opened in Tallinn. The Centre has a variety of interactive tools that help a person discover and analyse skills, strengths and preferences and learn about study and employment opportunities in a fun, engaging way. There are exciting expos, including job interview simulator, virtual reality devices to introduce different jobs, hands-on tools to test skills, animations, tests, etc. Through the use of interactive solutions, AI, virtual reality and gamification, it is possible to find suitable career opportunities.
- ▶ **Belgium (Flanders):** Public Employment Services (VDAB) approach for integrating NEETs. It has a well-established voucher system implemented by the Public Employment Service, and the outreach to NEETs by the Brussels Region PES (Actiris) is considered to be one of the best NEET outreach programmes in Europe.
- ▶ **Northern Ireland:** Formal partnership working arrangements are in place with Youth Justice Agency, Health & Social Care Trusts, Training Providers and FE colleges. Careers Advisers have representation on all District Council Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs) and work collaboratively with LMP stakeholders on various local labour market initiatives and projects that are aimed towards meeting the employability needs of their local citizens, including Job Fairs, Careers Conventions and Women Returner Programmes. Careers Advisers also network extensively with a broad range of statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations to provide careers support to young people and adults.

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- 2 County Durham Poverty Strategy and Action Plan 2022 – 2026 –<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s153930/Poverty%20Action%20Strategy%20and%20Plan%20-%20Cabinet%20-%20April%202022.pdf>
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- 15 UK Shared Prosperity Fund Technical Note 2025 -2026 – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-2025-26-technical-note>
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- 17 https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/home/release_group.asp?g=16#:~:text=The%20Annual%20Population%20Survey%20is%20the%20largest%20ongoing,labour%20market%20status%2C%20work%20characteristics%2C%20education%20and%20health.
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- 21 As measured by the % of the population living in areas of high to severe deprivation (the top 30% most deprived areas LSOAs).
- 22 Left behind Neighbourhoods - <https://ocsi.uk/2022/07/19/list-of-left-behind-neighbourhoods/>
- 23 This is based on the Community Needs Index <https://ocsi.uk/2019/10/21/community-needs-index-measuring-social-and-cultural-factors/>
- 24 Durham County Council's Food and Fuel Vouchers, Warm Spaces and Council Tax Support - <https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/30978/-Huge-and-ongoing-effort-to-tackle-poverty-set-to-go-before-County-Durham-councillors>
- 25 Business Durham – <https://www.businessdurham.co.uk/>
- 26 Area Action Partnerships / Local Networks – <https://www.durham.gov.uk/AAPs>
- 27 Concerns have been raised about the validity of the Annual Population Survey/Labour Force Survey because of a reduction in sample sizes which occurred after the pandemic. This is likely to have a greater impact on local level data because these are based on a smaller number of respondents. The concerns have particularly focused on the employment rate (the largest component of economic activity) which is lower than the rate implied by other sources of data. Similar concerns have not been raised about levels of economic inactivity.
- 28 For reference, the January 2024 schools census identifies 49 schools with pupils in Key Stages 3-5 in DCC, of whom 40 are non-independent schools. In addition to organisations outside the pupil census (most notably FE colleges), 46 returns represents very good coverage of eligible organisations.
- 29 Compass Plus results - <https://auth.careersandenterprise.co.uk/compassplus>
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- 31 North East Local Skills Improvement Plan - <https://nelsip.com/>
- 32 North East Combined Authority (NECA) - <https://www.northeast-ca.gov.uk/>
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- 53 DWP Midlife MOT - <https://jobhelp.campaign.gov.uk/midlifemot/home-page/>
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- 56 TCR Hub Barnard Castle - <https://www.tcrhub.co.uk/>

- 57 Durham Sixth Form Centre - <https://www.durhamsixthformcentre.org.uk/information-for-parents-and-carers/>
- 58 Durham University: Careers, Employability and Enterprise - <https://www.durham.ac.uk/study/careers-employability-enterprise/>
- 59 Durham University Venture Lab - <https://www.businessdurham.co.uk/post/venture-lab-team-celebrates-five-years-of-nurturing-innovation>
- 60 Durham University Game Changer initiative - <https://www.durham.ac.uk/study/careers-employability-enterprise/our-services/start-new-ventures/create-new-ideas-and-develop-innovation-skills/game-changer/>
- 61 Durham University 'Explore More, Careers Week' - <https://www.durham.ac.uk/study/careers-employability-enterprise/information-for-employers/careers-weeks/explore-more-careers-week/>
- 62 Primary Futures online platform - https://primaryplatform.careersandenterprise.co.uk/sites/default/files/2024-04/CDI_124-Framework-Handbook_for_schools-v5.pdf
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- 65 The Supported Employment Quality Framework - https://www.base-uk.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/SEQF%20Model%20Fidelity%20Assessment%20Guide_final_0.pdf
- 66 Matrix Standard owned by the Department for Education and managed by The Growth Company - <https://matrixstandard.com/>
- 67 Quality in Careers Standard (QiCS) - <https://www.qualityincareers.org.uk/>
- 68 Durham University and the AGCAS Quality Standard - <https://www.qualityincareers.org.uk/>
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- 70 146 of whom had children attend one of the 55 schools or colleges in the County 146 of whom had children attend one of the 55 schools or colleges in the County. Parkview school and Whitworth Academy were the main institutions who gathered parental feedback. The remaining parents had children who attended 18 other schools or colleges in much lower numbers.
- 71 Of which 2 were maintained secondary schools. 3 are secondary schools, 1 is a sixth form college, 2 are FE colleges and 1 a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). 6 of the respondents are senior leaders, 7 are careers leads and 15 are subject teachers and one was a careers adviser.
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- 88 The UK's modern Industrial Strategy - <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/invest-2035-the-uks-modern-industrial-strategy>
- 89 AI Opportunities Action Plan - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-opportunities-action-plan-government-response/ai-opportunities-action-plan-government-response>
- 90 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/skills-england-to-transform-opportunities-and-drive-growth>
- 91 Growth and Skills Levy - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-overhauls-apprenticeships-to-support-opportunity>
- 92 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-britain-working-white-paper>
- 93 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/back-to-work-plan-will-help-drive-economic-growth-in-every-region>
- 94 Ibid - Kendall launches blueprint for fundamental reform to change the DWP from a 'Department of Welfare to a Department for Work' - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/kendall-launches-blueprint-for-fundamental-reform-to-change-the-dwp-from-a-department-of-welfare-to-a-department-for-work>
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