



DurhamLearn

Annual Accountability Statement

2023-24



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Introduction

We are pleased to introduce DurhamLearn's Annual Accountability Statement, which sets out our learning provision that we have planned for delivery during the 2023-24 academic year, highlighting how we will contribute towards local, regional and national priorities for learning and skills.

Statement of Purpose

As part of Durham County Council, DurhamLearn provides a broad range of adult education and training provision to encourage personal development, support health and well-being, as well as provide opportunities to gain skills and qualifications to aid further education and employment. DurhamLearn works in partnership with voluntary and community organisations, public health and employers to ensure it meets the needs of our local community.

Service Vision / Service Intent

We offer a high quality, positive and safe learning experience that inspires learners at whatever stage they are on their personal journey, wherever they live in County Durham, and whatever their individual circumstances are, in order to help them to achieve their goals.

Strategic Aims and Objectives

Durham County Council's strategic aims are:

- Durham has a thriving and inclusive economy with more and better jobs and fewer people suffering from the hardships of poverty and deprivation.
- Durham is a place where people will enjoy fulfilling, long and independent lives.
- Durham is a great county in which to live, with flourishing communities which are connected and supportive of each other.
- Durham County Council has a reputation for listening to its residents, being well-managed and getting things done.

DurhamLearn contributes towards the strategic aims of Durham County Council through the following objectives:

- Raise the aspirations of individuals in County Durham.
- Support learners to develop new skills, increase their confidence, and improve their health and wellbeing.
- Provide learning that supports growth in our businesses.
- Promote social inclusion and community cohesion.

Our objectives help to ensure that we are well-placed to provide high quality learning that meets the needs of individuals within our communities, supports our local businesses, helps to develop and sustain our voluntary and community sector organisations, as well as contribute towards broader national, regional and local priorities for learning and skills.

Context and Place

DurhamLearn serves the whole of County Durham, reaching around 3,000 learners. It is a large and mainly rural county, covering an area of 862 square miles, stretching from the rural area of outstanding natural beauty in the west through to the more densely populated east Durham coastline. County Durham benefits from a number of major strategic employment sites, with many of its strategic concentrated along the north to south axes of the A1 motorway and the A19 road in the east.

County Durham has a population of over 533,000, the largest of any local authority area in the North East region, concentrated within the areas of Durham City, Chester-le-Street, Newton Aycliffe, Bishop Auckland, Consett and Peterlee. These are supplemented by smaller towns and villages. Two in five residents live in rural areas.

County Durham makes a significant contribution to the North East economy, generating over £8.8bn GVA per annum, which is 16% of the North East total. County Durham is home to over 14,000 businesses, consisting of a significant proportion of micro, small and medium sized enterprises, complemented by major international companies.

Its economy has changed significantly during the previous four decades, following the demise of coal mining and steel making. However, the industrial economy remains a key strength, anchored by a large and productive manufacturing base. It is a significant source of employment. The health sector also has a large employment base in County Durham, with the highest number of jobs in life sciences and pharmaceutical manufacturing in the North East.

New subsectors are emerging, including space and satellites, fintech, as well as the green economy. County Durham is the second highest renewable energy generator in the North East region, with strengths in geothermal energy and onshore wind. Arts, entertainment and recreation is also a growing sector in the county.

Although unemployment is significantly lower than the peak numbers witnessed in previous decades, combined with an increasing employment rate, many of the communities supported by DurhamLearn are affected by high levels of economic inactivity, low household incomes, as well as health inequalities.

Almost one in four jobs in County Durham earn below the Real Living Wage and an estimated 21% percent of households live in relative poverty before housing costs. There are high levels of deprivation with 12% of neighbourhoods in the 10% most deprived in the country. High economic inactivity levels are mainly driven by long-term health conditions, as well as caring. Average healthy life expectancy is 59, which is five years lower than the UK average.

County Durham has a significantly lower proportion of residents qualified to Level 3, Level 4 and above compared to nationally. A larger proportion of individuals have no qualifications.

Further information and intelligence about County Durham is provided through the [Durham Insight](#) website. This provides access to information, data and research about what it is like to live in County Durham.

Approach to developing our Annual Accountability Statement

We have developed our priorities, which underpin DurhamLearn's Annual Accountability Statement, principally through consultation with County Durham's Adult Learning and Skills Partnership. The Partnership contains representatives from key stakeholders, including:

- Durham County Council's Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services
- County Durham Further Education Colleges
- Voluntary and Community Sector organisations
- DWP Jobcentre Plus
- County Durham Economic Partnership
- Business Durham
- Public Health
- County Durham Area Action Partnerships

Durham County Council has an excellent relationship with the North East LEP and is also engaged with the North East Automotive Alliance, who are leading the development of the North East Local Skills Improvement Plan. DurhamLearn also has excellent relationships with Local Authority providers of Adult Education in Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland, which are areas covered by the North East Skills Improvement Plan, in addition to County Durham.

In developing our priorities, we have analysed national, regional and local priorities for learning and skills, as set out in the North East LEP's Strategic Economic Plan, the North East Local Skills Improvement Plan, County Durham's Inclusive Economic Strategy, as well as Durham County Council's Plan. We have also analysed feedback from our learners, as well as performance information.

DurhamLearn Curriculum Planning

Our annual curriculum planning cycle starts in November of each year, with revisions made up to plans being agreed and finalised in March. Changes to our curriculum can be made during the academic year if there is an identified need.

As part of our process, we review our internal delivery and our commissioned provision, in order to agree the volume and value of both as part of our overall approach.

We also undertake a detailed analysis of information and data to support our decision-making process in relation to our curriculum. This takes into account various national, regional and local factors. These include:

- National - Government policy; trends in Post-16 Education.
- Regional - Labour Market Information; North East Local Enterprise Partnership; North East Combined Authority.

- Local - Durham County Council's priorities; North East Local Skills Improvement Plan; learners, parents/carers and employers; Councillors and MPs; voluntary and community sector organisations; partners including NHS, DWP Jobcentre Plus, FE colleges, training providers.

Our contribution to national, regional and local priorities for learning and skills

The following table sets out how DurhamLearn’s objectives for 2023-24, showing how we will meet them and how they will contribute to national, regional and local priorities for learning and skills.

Objective	How we will achieve our objective	Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
<p>Raise aspirations of individuals in County Durham.</p>	<p>We will deliver a range of adult education and skills courses, community learning courses, as well as apprenticeships that are distinctive and complement learning offered by further education colleges and other education providers.</p> <p>We will provide learners with high quality IAG to help them understand how our learning offer can help them to realise their personal, learning and career goals.</p>	<p>Contributes towards Government’s Skills for Life agenda.</p> <p>Contributes towards North East LEP Strategic Economic Plan’s delivery programme in relation to skills, employment, inclusion and progression.</p> <p>Supports County Durham’s Inclusive Economic Strategy’s priority to support people into education, training, jobs and to excel in businesses and their careers - particularly in relation overcoming barriers into employment, including work readiness, skills, improved careers advice and guidance, and addressing poor health.</p> <p>Contributes towards the Durham County Council Plan ambition for Durham to have a thriving and inclusive economy with more and better jobs and fewer people suffering from the hardships of poverty and deprivation. It also contributes towards the ambition for Durham to be a place with flourishing communities which are connected and supportive of each other.</p>
<p>Support learners to develop new skills, increase their confidence, and improve their health and wellbeing.</p>	<p>We will deliver programmes to support skills development in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • maths • digital skills • ESOL <p>We are planning to increase our ESOL offer by up to 50%, including offering community learning based courses, to help satisfy demand across County Durham.</p>	<p>Contributes towards North East Local Skills Improvement Plan priority sectors, as well as the Government’s priority sectors in relation to digital and technology, as well as science and maths. Providing individuals with these skills prepares them for opportunities across all national and regional priority sectors.</p> <p>Contributes towards Government’s Skills for Life agenda. Contributes towards North East LEP Strategic Economic Plan’s delivery programme in relation to skills, employment, inclusion and progression.</p>

Objective	How we will achieve our objective	Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
	<p>We will offer a range of community learning programmes covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - life skills and preparing people for work - budgeting and finance skills to manage money effectively - work related skills; promoting healthy lifestyles and positive mental health - family learning to enable parents and children to learn together. <p>Our English and maths provision will be developed across community learning, to further aim for at least a 30% increase in interest on accredited adult skills programmes.</p> <p>We will deliver skills programmes to enable individuals to adapt to changes in the labour market, as well as to run a business.</p>	<p>Supports County Durham's Inclusive Economic Strategy's priority to support people into education, training, jobs and to excel in businesses and their careers - particularly in relation to overcoming barriers into employment, including work readiness, skills, improved careers advice and guidance, and addressing poor health, as well as ensuring good health and wellbeing leads to economic inclusion.</p> <p>Contributes towards the Durham County Council Plan ambition for Durham to have a thriving and inclusive economy with more and better jobs and fewer people suffering from the hardships of poverty and deprivation. It also contributes towards the ambition for Durham to be a place with flourishing communities which are connected and supportive of each other.</p>
<p>Provide learning that supports growth in our businesses.</p>	<p>We will offer qualifications aligned to priority employment sectors.</p> <p>We will deliver skills programmes to enable individuals to adapt to changes in the labour market, as well as to run a business.</p> <p>We will offer apprenticeships in key priority sectors that underpin business and professional functions. We are planning to introduce a selection of new standards tailored to specific job roles within these areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenues and Welfare Benefits Practitioner • Library, Information and Archive Service Assistant • Public Sector Compliance Investigator and Officer <p>We will providing a range of programmes to support the recruitment and development of a skilled Health and Social Care workforce in County Durham.</p>	<p>Contributes towards North East Local Skills Improvement Plan priority sectors, as well as the Government's priority sectors in relation to health and social care, digital and technology, as well as transport and logistics.</p> <p>Contributes towards North East LEP Strategic Economic Plan's areas of strategic importance in relation to health and life sciences, technology, as well as business services. It also contributes towards North East LEP Strategic Economic Plan's delivery programme in relation to skills, employment, inclusion and progression.</p> <p>Supports County Durham's Inclusive Economic Strategy's priority to support business innovation, growth and higher levels of productivity – particularly in relation to raising skills levels directly targeted to what employers need, as well as increasing in-work progression and upskilling linked to new opportunities.</p>

Objective	How we will achieve our objective	Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
	Our family learning provision within Health and Social Care has been in high demand and we are planning to increase our offer in this area by 80%.	Contributes towards the Durham County Council Plan ambition whereby Durham has a thriving and inclusive economy with more and better jobs and fewer people suffering from the hardships of poverty and deprivation.
Promote social inclusion and community cohesion.	<p>We will utilise a range of voluntary and community sector organisations to deliver community learning programmes covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - life skills and preparing people for work - budgeting and finance skills to manage money effectively - work related skills; promoting healthy lifestyles and positive mental health - family learning to enable parents and children to learn together. <p>We will provide programmes to support individuals with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).</p> <p>We will deliver learning in a variety of appropriate community based venues across County Durham, as well as online.</p>	<p>Contributes towards Government's Skills for Life agenda.</p> <p>Contributes towards North East LEP Strategic Economic Plan's delivery programme in relation to skills, employment, inclusion and progression.</p> <p>Supports County Durham's Inclusive Economic Strategy's priority to support people into education, training, jobs and to excel in businesses and their careers – particularly in relation to overcoming barriers into employment, including work readiness, skills, improved careers advice and guidance, and addressing poor health, as well as ensuring good health and wellbeing leads to economic inclusion.</p> <p>Contributes towards the Durham County Council Plan ambition for Durham to have a thriving and inclusive economy with more and better jobs and fewer people suffering from the hardships of poverty and deprivation. It also contributes towards the ambitions for Durham to be a place where people enjoy fulfilling, long and independent lives, as well as a place with flourishing communities which are connected and supportive of each other.</p>

Corporation Statement

On behalf of DurhamLearn, it is hereby confirmed that the plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the County Durham Adult Learning and Skills Partnership at their meeting on 24th May 2023.

The plan is published on Durham County Council's website and can be accessed from the following link: [DurhamLearn Annual Accountability Statement](#).

Links to supporting documentation

[Durham County Council - Council Plan 2022-2026.pdf](#)

[County Durham Vision 2035](#)

[County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy.pdf](#)

[County Durham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2025.pdf](#)