

REPORT TO CABINET

11 DECEMBER 2025

REPORT OF SENIOR  
MANAGEMENT TEAM

## CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing – Councillor Richard Eglington

# ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GOVERNING BODY FOR THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SERVICE

## SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the work of the Learning and Skills Service in supporting residents, employers and the local community with learning opportunities during the 24/25 academic year. The report also demonstrates the ongoing success of the Governing Body as an advisory committee empowered by Cabinet to provide challenge, support and strategic oversight.

**Recommended that the report be noted.**

## DETAIL

### Governance and management of the Service

1. The Governing Body was first established in October 2016 and since that time has supported the Service by utilising its skillset, experience and knowledge across different sectors to provide challenge and insight to ensure the Service continues to meet the needs and priorities of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
2. The Service is fully funded by external grants allocated by funding bodies including Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) and the Department for Education (DfE). These grant allocations contribute to the overall Council financial position and are regularly reviewed through close governance and performance monitoring.
3. The value of the contribution from the Governing Body along with the management arrangements for the Service have been validated by independent advisors, Ofsted inspectors, and external quality standard assessors.
4. Governors play an active role in quality assurance and improvement. In order to ensure that the Governing Body continues to remain strongly positioned, its membership is regularly reviewed. The current membership of the Governing Body is as follows:

Position	Full name	Role
Chair of Governors	Councillor Richard Eglington	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing (Link Governor for Equality and Diversity)
Member	Chris Renahan	Assistant Director - Inclusive Growth and Development for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council  SBC Senior Management Team Representative
Member	Craig Taylor	Adult Learning and Skills Manager for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council  Staff Representative
Member	Julie Marsden	Economic Development Manager for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council  Economic Growth Representative (Link Governor for Safeguarding)
Member	Lucy Owens	Chief Executive for Catalyst  Voluntary and Community Sector Representative
Member	Lynsey Robinson	Director, Digital City, Teesside University  Employer Representative
Member	Andrew Cruickshank	Learner Representative

### Overview of the Learning and Skills Service

5. The Service has a broad and diverse remit to deliver learning programmes to support residents and businesses to meet their full economic potential whilst also increasing prosperity, wellbeing and cohesion in our communities.
6. Adult Skills programmes delivered are traditionally accredited programmes up to level 3 which support residents and employers to gain skills and qualifications needed in the workplace. These programmes predominantly include key skills including English, Maths, ICT and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). Various employment programmes linked to local priority sectors such as Health and Care are also delivered, for example, through the delivery of the Care Academy in partnership with the SBC Employment and Training Hub.
7. Learning for Inclusion programmes utilise funding ringfenced to local authorities to address specific needs of adults such as isolation, social exclusion, health and wellbeing, and strengthening communities. Many of these non-accredited programmes are delivered in close collaboration with partner organisations aligned to the Power Our Future Programme to enable positive outcomes within our communities.

8. Apprenticeship programmes are also delivered to support local business growth and provide work-based skills development opportunities to our residents. These apprenticeships programmes also support the SBC workforce development programme to continue to train and develop the workforce through programmes such as Customer Service, Business Administration, Care, and Librarianship.

#### Performance of the Learning and Skills Service

9. There were over 3200 enrolments on adult learning and apprenticeship programmes during the 24/25 academic year.
10. The overall achievement rate for all Adult Learning programmes was 93.1%, of which, the Adult Skills (accredited programmes) achievement rate was 90.3%. This is higher the current national benchmark by 2.9%.
11. Similarly, the achievement rate for Learning for Inclusion (non-accredited) programmes was 97.2%. This is higher than the national benchmark by 3.6% and an increase from 95.3% obtained in the previous academic year.
12. Apprenticeship programmes also continue to perform well following challenges faced in the sector since the pandemic. In a letter released in June 2022, the Secretary of State for Skills “set a stretching ambition to reach a 67% achievement rate on apprenticeship standards by 2025”. The Service apprenticeship achievement rate for 24/25 was 82.9%, meeting this government target and performing higher than the current national benchmark by 22.4%.
13. The Service is also keen to recognise not only the tangible achievements of learners such as those achieving recognised qualifications, but also the ‘softer skills’ which learners develop to support them in their wider lives. The feedback table below demonstrates that the vast majority of learners were able to improve their abilities, increase their confidence, have clearer goals and ambitions for the future, and improve their own health and well-being.

Statement	Positive Responses
I feel more confident in my own ability	96%
I have clearer goals and ambitions for the future	96%
I feel more confident to access services on-line	88%
I feel more able to take part in my own community	81%
My well-being has improved	81%

14. The impact of the Service is also demonstrated with the positive destinations attained by learners and apprentices following completion of their programmes. 84.4% of learners progress to either higher level learning or an employment outcome which is an increase of 2.4% compared to the previous academic year.
15. The Service also continues to strategically target its funding to support those in greatest need and help tackle inequalities in the borough. As a result, 47.5% of learners engage from a disadvantaged area and 14.1% of learners are identified as having no prior attainment / qualifications.

### Youth Guarantee Trailblazer Programme

16. The UK government launched the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer initiative to support young people aged 18-21 in England by providing access to education, training and employment opportunities.
17. TVCA was one of eight areas that successfully secured funding from the Department for Work and Pensions, with delivery being commissioned directly to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to support residents.
18. This support includes close collaboration with local employers to provide paid work placements for 3 to 6 months, offering people meaningful workplace experience and opportunities, often cited as a barrier to employment, whilst also supporting employers with their future workforce development.
19. Expert one-to-one support is provided by the Employment and Training Hub through a team of dedicated Recruitment Coordinators to support people throughout their journey and help remove the barriers they face to entering employment, whilst also increasing awareness of the opportunities available within Stockton-on-Tees.
20. The Learning and Skills Service is delivering bespoke training to provide people with essential employability skills to help prepare them to enter the workplace, providing new knowledge, skills and behaviours expected by employers. There is also a strong focus on developing transferable skills including communication, building confidence, raising aspirations and developing a growth mindset to support longer-term employment prospects.
21. Delivery commenced in September 2025 and the trailblazer period will officially conclude in March 2026.
22. As of November 2025, there have been over 100 people who have accessed one-to-one support, whilst 56 people have successfully completed training. As a result, 56 people have successfully progressed into a paid work placement against a target of 64 set by TVCA. These figures further demonstrate the vital role both the Learning and Skills Service and Employment and Training Hub hold in helping to address inequalities in the Borough and improving the employment prospects of our residents.

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