

Title: Expansion of the 2024/25 Education Improvement and Child Poverty Prevention Programmes to the wider North East Combined Authority area.

Report of: Andrew Garrad, Senior Programme Manager, Education Improvement and Joanna Unthank, Senior Programme Manager, Child Poverty Prevention

Portfolio: Education, Inclusion and Skills

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to approve the expansion of the Education Improvement (EIP) and Child Poverty Prevention (CPPP) programmes to benefit schools, families, children and young people across all North East Combined Authority (North East CA) constituent authorities for the academic year 2024/25.

On 12 March 2024, the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) Cabinet approved funding to continue the delivery of the EIP and CPPP into the 2024/25 academic year within the NTCA constituent authorities. In June 2024, the North East CA Cabinet approved additional funding to extend the programme to all North East CA constituent authorities for the 2024/25 academic year. Cabinet authorised the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Inclusion, to approve the final business cases and associated funding to enable roll-out across the full North East CA area. Appendices A and B give further detail of the proposed programme extensions.

Approval is sought, via delegation in line with the North East CA Single Assurance Framework, to award £1,043,500 revenue funding to enable expansion of the Education Improvement Programme and £1,356,500 to enable expansion of the Child Poverty Prevention Programme, totalling £2.4m, as agreed by Cabinet on 11 June 2024.

There remains a significant educational achievement gap in our area, with pupils in the North East likely to underperform in comparison to their peers elsewhere in the country. This issue is exacerbated for children and young people from a disadvantaged background and has a long-term impact. Children have also been affected by continued education disruption following the COVID-19 pandemic.

An important barrier to the North East CA's ambition of an inclusive economy for all is the high rates of child poverty in our area; reports show that more than a third (35%) of babies, children and young people are growing up in poverty in the North East. Our region has experienced the country's steepest increase in child poverty over much of the last decade. 67% of those affected are living in working households.

The expansion of the Education Improvement Programme will support more young residents, schools and teachers through three priority areas: school improvement; professional development of teachers and school leaders; and responding to local priorities. The expansion of the Child Poverty Prevention Programme will broaden the reach of four pillars of work: poverty interventions in schools; welfare support through the school gate; working with employers; and the critical 1,001 days.

Recommendations

The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Mayor and relevant Cabinet Member and in accordance with the scheme of delegation and Single Assurance Framework, is recommended to approve the following funding allocations, and authorise entry into required agreements to facilitate approvals, as set out in this report:

1. Allocate funding of £1,043,500 from the North East CA Investment Fund for the expanded delivery of the Education Improvement Programme as set out in Appendix A
2. Allocate funding of £1,356,500 from the North East CA Investment Fund for the expanded delivery of the Child Poverty Prevention Programme as set out at in Appendix B
3. Authorise next steps including bringing forward business cases for grant funded activity and reopening of the North East CA Children and Young People's Procurement Framework to procure contracted providers. Funding awards as a result of these next steps are subject to further decisions in line with the Single Assurance Framework.

A. Context

1. Education Improvement Programme

- 1.1 The Education Improvement Programme (EIP) was developed to address the historic educational inequity faced by school pupils in our region, delivering the priorities outlined in the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) Joint School Improvement Strategy, which was written in partnership with local authority education leads and built on engagement with schools, teaching unions and sector professionals. Programme delivery began in April 2022 and has so far directly supported 267 schools, 1,500 teachers and school leaders, and ultimately over 52,000 pupils.
- 1.2 Initially the programme focused on five objectives: support education recovery of pupils most affected by COVID-19; support development of teachers and school leaders; improve transition into and between schools; better support schools in challenging contexts; and improve career pathways for pupils. In 2023, based on the experience of the first year, and following further consultation, these were refined to three objectives: school improvement; professional development; and responding to local priorities.
- 1.3 Performance continues to be strong, with interventions launched to support literacy, teacher development, cultural capital, mental health, transition across all phases, careers pathways, climate change education, and the largest whole-school oracy project in England. A successful and innovative grants programme has also enabled schools to address needs within their own school community. The EIP has generated positive attention beyond our region and cited as best practice by educational professionals.

2. Child Poverty Prevention Programme

- 2.1 The Child Poverty Prevention Programme (CPPP) expansion mobilises the North East devolution deal commitment to 'the continuation and expansion of the NTCA's Child Poverty Prevention pilot, based on interventions to support poverty prevention in school, workplace and family settings'. It aims to take a targeted approach to supporting schools, families and children, to address the symptoms and causes of child poverty. The CPPP emerged from the recommendations of the 2020 IPPR North report which published research into child poverty in the North East with a specific focus on devolution. A series of stakeholder engagement activities informed the programme design and delivery began in April 2022. The programme has been cited as best practice and generated positive attention beyond the region.
- 2.2 The programme is successfully delivering a range of activities under four pillars: poverty interventions in schools; welfare support through the school gate; working with employers to tackle child poverty; and the critical 1,001 days, introduced in 2024 with a focus on babies and children from conception to school age. The programme is currently funding afterschool enrichment, family learning, poverty audits, welfare advice, support for employers to develop anti-poverty strategies in the workplace and Baby Boxes for vulnerable new families.

- 2.3 To date the CPPP has provided access to poverty interventions in 120 schools, access to welfare and benefits advice in 48 schools (resulting in over £2m benefit gains for over 677 families), support for 40 employers and over 26,000 employees, and baby boxes to over 350 families.

3. Expansion of the two programmes across the North East CA

The Education, Inclusion and Skills portfolio plan outlines next steps for these two programmes of work beyond academic year 2024/25. From September 2024, Directors of Childrens Services will work with their teams and officers at North East CA to write a refreshed strategy, which will be presented to Cabinet for consideration. This strategy will build on learning from the 2024/25 programmes and align with wider CA ambitions around the child poverty agenda. A proposed three-year strategy will be presented to Cabinet in good time for mobilisation at the start of academic year 2025/26.

B. Impact on North East Combined Authority Objectives

The North East CA is committed to building a fairer North East, improving quality of life for everyone and reducing inequalities. Our vision is of a dynamic, sustainable and inclusive economy, and we have an ambition to ensure everyone has a stake in our region's future. The EIP and CPPP work hand in hand, with a shared vision of an inclusive economy where all children and young people have equal opportunities to realise their potential and be part of the region's future success.

The EIP will address critical barriers early to reduce achievement gaps and support more of our young people to thrive in our school system and be better prepared for a successful life beyond it. The CPPP will tackle inequality and develop a better understanding of interventions which can benefit poorer families and children, supporting residents towards more productive futures. These interventions will ultimately enable more young people to move into the good jobs our wider Education, Inclusion and Skills portfolio will provide.

C. Key risks

Care has been taken to ensure that the investments outlined in this paper do not duplicate existing provision, at national and local level. The programme interventions have been developed from a comprehensive understanding of existing and planned provision. As with the prior phases, and like the 24/25 programme approved by NTCA Cabinet for the NTCA footprint, the programmes will remain agile and adaptable to respond to any changes in central or local government support to maximise the impact of provision in every school and community.

School engagement remains essential to the success of these programmes. We have seen excellent progress in the development of strong relationships with school leaders and stakeholder groups across the region, continued focus from NTCA officers on relationship-building and active participation in school networks, as well as continued co-design of the work. These areas will continue to mitigate the risk posed by any lack of school engagement in this work.

The risks associated with delivery are actively managed at several levels, including by the Senior Programme Managers for each programme and as a part of the regular claims and monitoring activity undertaken by the Programme Management Office.

If the decision to approve is not taken at this point in time, it will not be possible to put the contractual arrangements in place to roll out the programmes across the wider North East CA footprint for the start of the 2024/25 academic year.

D. Financial and other resources implications

North East CA Cabinet have allocated £2.4m from Investment Fund to deliver across the two programmes and the table below indicates the overall financial implications. Within each allocation, the business case outlines a requirement for limited additional staffing to allow capacity to mobilise the expanded programme. The full cost including on-costs of this staffing has been included below.

Programme	24/25	25/26	Total
Education Improvement	£997,878	£45,622	£1,043,500
Child Poverty Prevention	£678,250	£678,250	£1,356,500
Total	£1,676,128	£723,872	£2,400,000

E. Legal implications

The comments of the Monitoring Officer have been included in this report.

F. Equalities implications

The North East CA follows the Public Sector Equality duty and this report has due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010. In June 2024 the North East CA adopted equality objectives to reflect the different roles of the Combined Authority as an employer, a commissioner and deliverer of services, and a civic leader.

For the EIP and CPPP expansions in this proposal, we have considered the Combined Authority's obligations and we do not anticipate any negative impact on groups with protected characteristics. Equalities Impact Assessments have been undertaken and the implications of these will be considered in the project mobilisation and delivery stage.

The programmes will have specific positive impacts for groups with protected characteristics. Child poverty is a characteristic of socio-economic disadvantage and is highly correlated with single parent status, for example. Given the relationship between child poverty and in-work poverty, the CPPP will specifically deliver the aims of the 2010 Equality Act: to advance equality of opportunity for all, especially for residents experiencing low pay/socio-economic disadvantage.

G. Consultation and engagement

In the development of the NTCA pilot phases of the EIP and CPPP, consultation took place with the constituent local authorities, alongside education, poverty and inclusion specialists and academics. This included the North East Child Poverty Commission, Child Poverty Action Group, Children North East and LocalEd. Steering groups were used to consult on specific policy areas, working with local and national experts and stakeholders including teachers, school leaders, VCSE representatives and local authority representatives.

Since, and in anticipation of, the transition to the North East CA, officers have engaged with local authority representatives from the wider Combined Authority area, to inform plans for the expansion of the existing programmes to include all seven constituent authorities, and ensure project mobilisation across the region from the start of the next academic year.

Through 2024/25 further consultation and engagement will take place with the seven constituent local authorities and key stakeholders to inform the development of future work. Through evaluation of earlier phases of these programmes, engagement with schools, pupils, parents and carers will provide further insight and learning to inform future plans.

H. Appendices

- A. Education Improvement Programme Expansion
- B. Child Poverty Prevention Programme Expansion

I. Background papers

- NTCA Cabinet, 12 March 2024, Item 10 (NTCA Investment Fund Update and Funding Approvals)
- North East CA Cabinet, 11 June 2024, Item 7 (Early Funding Decisions and Investments)

J. Contact officers

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K. Glossary

CPPP – Child Poverty Prevention Programme
EIP – Education Improvement Programme
North East CA – North East Combined Authority
NTCA – North of Tyne Combined Authority

L. Sign-off

1) Cabinet Member Yes	2) Director/Head of Service Yes	3) Director of Finance and Investment Yes	4) Monitoring Officer Yes
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Appendix A: Education Improvement Programme Expansion

1. Project Outline

Proposal Name	Expansion of the Education Improvement Programme for the 2024/25 academic year
Lead Organisation	North East Combined Authority
Delivery Areas	Durham, Gateshead, South Tyneside, Sunderland (rolling out provision previously approved by NTCA Cabinet for delivery in Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland).
Timescales	1 September 2024 – 31 August 2025
Project Value	£1,043,500
Amount requested	£1,043,500

2. Funding Profile

Source	24/25	25/26	Total
Investment Fund	£997,878	£45,622	£1,043,500
Other	£0	£0	£0
Total	£997,878	£45,622	£1,043,500

3. Activities

Project / activity	Outline cost
Priority 1 – School Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional accreditation for those who provide advice and guidance to schools, including school leaders, Multi Academy Trust Leaders and Local Authority School Improvement Officers. • Linking Leaders Programme, providing professional development for school leaders and an evidence-based approach to curriculum design. 	£120,000
Priority 2 – Professional Development for Teachers and School Leaders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole school approach to oracy, offered to 100 schools (300 teachers) • Support for early literacy skill development to 130 schools, nurseries and Private, Voluntary and Independent settings (PVI's). 	£305,000
Priority 3 – Responding to Local Need <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-informed innovative Inspire grants programme. • Piloting a School Readiness Passport to support early years transition. • Cultural capital and literacy projects to support our most disadvantaged pupils. • School mental health award and creative approach to mental health project. • 40 senior school leaders taking part in an inclusive leadership course to reduce unnecessary exclusions. • Primary to Secondary transition programme • Climate change and sustainability school engagement programme. • Reading for Pleasure for primary schools and Reading Fluency programme for Year 7 pupils. 	£526,000
Other programme costs including salaries and evaluation	£92,500

Total	£1,043,500
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4. Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs	
Number of pupils engaged	37,700
Number of teachers engaged	1,212
Number of individual schools engaged	250
Total number of school engagements	700
Outcomes	
More children from vulnerable families are reaching a Good Level of Development across the 7 Early Learning Goals and are therefore 'ready for school'	
Fewer pupils receiving fixed term suspensions and exclusions	
Closing of the gap in higher level GCSE grades between the North East and other regions	
Attendance levels returning to pre-pandemic levels	
More children from vulnerable families showing improved levels on the KS 1 Phonics screening check, as well as improvements in literacy outcomes for reading and writing	

5. Milestones

Project milestone	Delivery date
Cabinet decision	11 June 2024
Open call and onboarding of suppliers to Children and Young People Procurement Framework	July 2024
Call off for contracts for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Advisor Accreditation • Oracy programme • Cultural Capital Programme • Inclusive Leadership Programme • Reading for Pleasure Programme • Climate Change • Transition 	July 2024 for delivery from September 2024
Launch call out for education grants	September 2024
Award education grants	October 2024
School grants activity commences	November 2024
Ongoing monitoring of providers and grant projects, steering group meetings and updates to strategic boards	Sept 24 – Aug 25
Programme ends	August 2025

6. Appraisal

6.1 Appraisal Summary

Project Description/Strategic fit

The Education Improvement Programme is an application for a 12 month delivery of activities to address educational underperformance across County Durham, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland. Rationale is to remain consistent with existing delivery across the North of Tyne. The delivery has been well considered and this is detailed in the breakdown of five key themes, which are improving transition, supporting schools in challenging contexts, recruitment and development, careers pathways and COVID-19 recovery.

Economic Case

The project will deliver 37,700 pupil support engagements as well as a number of school improvement and teacher development activities. Teachers will have development opportunities that will enable them to deliver additional support and interventions across a range of subjects. This will enable the applicant to address historical educational underperformance, which will have a wider longer-term impact on the individual and economic priorities.

Figures have been calculated based on the North of Tyne delivery.

The project does appear to offer value for money.

The application outlines an opportunity and a need for the activity. It demonstrates that it fills a gap in current delivery and highlights the need to expand the current North of Tyne delivery across the North East CA footprint.

Commercial Case

The application provides a case that the demand exists for the proposed activities and that there is delivery capacity within external organisations to deliver within the proposed timescales. The basis for this includes testing across the first phases and identification of gaps in provision of teacher development.

The application would benefit from confirmation of schools that are engaged and expected to participate. Applicant confirmed that school engagement is still ongoing and there is commitment from Local Authority education teams to ensure a strong cohort of schools are signed up to participate.

Financial Case

The financial case and finance tables provide an overview of spend across the programme. The costs are based on actual costs for delivery on the North of Tyne phases. This includes procured activity, salaries, FRIC, marketing and promotion, evaluation.

Most costs are paid to procured suppliers. Evaluation budget is high and is being queried, however existing budgets are being managed well and the current projects are performing well financially giving confidence that the project will continue to be well managed within the next phase.

Management Case

The applicant has set out a clear governance and management structure for the project. The delivery team are experienced and duties and responsibilities are appropriate and are detailed in the business case. Appropriate processes are in place to monitor performance, budget and claims monitoring and an approval structure is in place.

Application provides a no subsidy position based on benefits being passed down to residents. There is no economic activity being undertaken and so the project does not meet the subsidy test.

The project is recommended for approval.

6.2 RAG Assessment

The assessment follows the **HM Treasury Five Case model**.

Overall RAG assessment		
Risk Rating	Strategic case	
	Commercial case	
	Economic case	
	Financial case	
	Management case	
	Overall rating	

6.3 Recommended conditions of funding

There are no formal conditions to be included in the Funding Agreement.

7. Next steps

Funding agreements will be put in place and the project will commence expanded delivery.

Appendix B: Child Poverty Prevention Programme Expansion

1. Project Outline

Proposal Name	Expansion of the Child Poverty Prevention Programme for the 2024/25 academic year
Lead Organisation	North East Combined Authority
Delivery Areas	Durham, Gateshead, South Tyneside, Sunderland (rolling out provision already approved by NTCA Cabinet for delivery in North of Tyne).
Timescales	1 September 2024 – 31 August 2025
Project Value	£1,356,500
Amount requested	£1,356,500

2. Funding Profile

Source	24/25	25/26	Total
Investment Fund	£678,250	£678,250	£1,356,500
Other	£0	£0	£0
Total	£678,250	£678,250	£1,356,500

3. Activities

Project / activity	Outline cost
Pillar 1: Suite of poverty interventions in schools to support and help raise educational attainment of disadvantaged pupils	£500,000
Pillar 2: Provide access to welfare guidance in schools	£360,000
Pillar 3: Working with employers to tackle child poverty through development of poverty reduction action plans	£200,000
Pillar 4: Support for vulnerable families with children under 5	£215,550
Other programme costs including events and evaluation	£80,950
Total	£1,356,500

4. Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs	
Number of schools supported	100
Children positively impacted by poverty interventions (indirect)	1500
Families receiving welfare rights advice	400
Employees benefitting from employer poverty reduction strategies	2000
Wider family benefitting from support to reduce the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on pre-school age children through the Baby Box campaign	700
Outcomes	
More children from vulnerable families achieving milestones at 2-year-old check	
Improved parental/maternal mental health compared to vulnerable families without intervention	
Improved proportionate representation across school life	
Improved pupil measures (attendance, behaviour, SEMH needs, attainment) for those supported through P1 poverty interventions	

Benefit maximisation for families
More employers becoming 'good work' accredited
Improved staff satisfaction and retention for employers (stability and progression for employees)

5. Milestones

Project milestone	Delivery date
Cabinet decision	11 June 2024
Finance and Investment Board decision	July 2024
Procurement and grant funding processes begin	July 2024
Recruitment approval and recruitment process begins for N9 post	August 2024
Launch call-out for education/school-based grants	September 2024
Completion of all procurement and non-school grant funding agreements	September 2024
Delivery of interventions commences	September 2024
Award education/school-based grants	October 2024
School grants activity commences	November 2024
Ongoing monitoring of providers and grant projects, advisory group meetings and updates to strategic boards	September 2024 – August 2025
Programme delivery complete	August 2025
Financial completion	December 2025

6. Appraisal

6.1 Appraisal Summary

Project Description/Strategic fit

The Child Poverty Prevention Programme (South) aims to take a targeted approach to supporting schools, families, children, and young people, to address some of the causes associated to child poverty. Activity will be delivered via the four pillars approach and the project will seek to incorporate social and economic factors which lead to long-term disparities for children and young people in local communities.

The four pillars of activity are an established delivery mechanism which has been piloted in the North of Tyne authority areas and will deliver support locally to build on the efforts of local authorities, schools, and voluntary and community organisations within Durham, Gateshead, Sunderland, and South Tyneside.

The approach aligns with, and contributes to, the North East CA's commitment to champion the full potential of the region, collaborating with partners and local authorities to create a better way of life by connecting communities, giving people the skills to succeed, and improving wellbeing for all.

Economic Case

The proposed outputs align with the activity but don't necessarily reflect the full impact the project will achieve. The full impact of the proposed activity will be achieved through the multiple indirect outputs/benefits identified.

The calculations are estimated based on the pilot phase which was delivered across the North of Tyne area. However, outputs associated to this project have been calculated with caution to account for

differences in delivery mechanisms and to reflect time it may take to develop new relationships and an understanding of recipient schools.

Strategic consultation has taken place prior to and following the establishment of the North East CA with Directors of Children's Services from across the region, and officers responsible for social inclusion, poverty reduction and public health priorities. Best practice, strategic priorities, existing action plans and challenges from each authority, have been considered in the development of this proposal alongside the localised demand for provision to tackle this agenda.

There is also the opportunity for interventions through this project to complement project I0206 Education Improvement Programme (South).

Commercial Case

Similar provision is being delivered in the North of Tyne Local Authority areas which has shaped this proposal. It is anticipated that if this proposal is supported it will enable activity to be delivered across the full North East region which will take a targeted approach to supporting schools, families, children, and young people, to address some of the causes associated to child poverty.

Lessons learned from the North of Tyne programme have informed the initial scale of this project. Existing relationships with multi-academy trusts and local authorities have allowed officers to establish the likely take-up from schools, and existing work with employers indicates a growing appetite for support from businesses and organisations in the South region.

Provision to be delivered under each pillar of activity will be subject to procurement being undertaken. The North East CA CYP procurement framework will be utilised and indicates that there is market capability to deliver on the interventions and priorities set out in the business case.

Financial Case

The funding requested at £1,356,500 is the total project cost therefore, no match funding is included within the project.

The financial request stated within the business case and financial tables aligns with the budget approved for the project at Cabinet (11 June) and TOG (1 July).

Costs have been flat profiled across the relevant quarters. Prior to contracting, the financial profiling must be amended to present a more realistic delivery profile. Project dates must also be reviewed to ensure delivery dates including project milestones and defrayal of expenditure align.

Majority of costs will be procured to deliver different elements of activity described within the pillars.

The proposed activity consists of revenue activity and therefore should present a low risk. The applicant has a track record for similar delivery and the business case demonstrates that they have robust financial and monitoring systems in place.

Management Case

The business case demonstrates a clear governance and management structure is in place for the project including comprehensive and appropriate approaches to monitoring and performance management.

Existing members of staff and have led child poverty prevention initiatives, facilitated strong working relationships across the region and have a strong track record for leading the delivery of this type of work at a regional and national level. This demonstrates competency levels, and that the applicant along with procured support has the capability to deliver the project.

Project timescales need to be reviewed to ensure delivery, milestone, financial and output achievement dates align.

A subsidy control position has been provided by legal colleagues. The majority of activity will be delivered to benefit children and schools therefore risk of subsidy is low. The project has committed to liaising with legal colleagues in circumstances where activity is passing grant funding on to schools or Local Authorities to ensure there are no commercial elements associated with the activity.

It is recommended that this proposal should be approved with minor actions regarding funding profiles and delivery dates to be addressed prior to contracting.

6.2 RAG Assessment

The assessment follows the **HM Treasury Five Case model**.

Overall RAG assessment		
Risk Rating	Strategic case	
	Commercial case	
	Economic case	
	Financial case	
	Management case	
	Overall rating	

6.3 Recommended conditions of funding

There are no formal conditions to be included in the Funding Agreement.

7. Next steps

Funding agreements will be put in place and the project will commence expanded delivery.