

Title: North East Excellence in Education Programme

Report of: Charlotte Carpenter, Director of Skills, Inclusion & Public Service Reform

Portfolio: Home of Real Opportunity

Report Summary

In March 2025, the North East Combined Authority (North East CA) Cabinet approved an indicative funding allocation of £5,000,000 from the Investment Fund for a three-year Excellence in Education Programme, subject to full business case appraisal. Authority was to the Chief Executive for implementation subject to full business case approval, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Finance and Investment Board, and to commence procurement activity through the Children and Young People Flexible Procurement Framework. The development and appraisal of the full business case has now been completed.

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for £4,998,950 of Investment Fund and the commencement of the associated procurement activity, to deliver the three-year North East Excellence in Education Programme, in line with the Cabinet agreed delegation.

Excellence in Education will build upon knowledge and insights from regional stakeholders including our seven constituent Local Authority School Improvement Teams, with the programme priorities highlighted below supported by LA Education Directors:

- 1) Inclusion
- 2) Realising Potential
- 3) Teacher Wellbeing and Development

These priorities align with, and offer opportunities to support delivery of, the Mayor's Manifesto commitment to tackle child poverty through the newly formed Child Poverty Reduction Unit, the Combined Authority's Local Growth Plan, the emerging work within the Public Service Reform Portfolio, and Skills for Business initiatives around careers and apprenticeships.

This work will invest in our youngest residents, creating an inclusive programme that creates a home of real opportunity, where all children and young people – regardless of their background – have equal opportunities to realise their potential and be part of the region's future success.

Recommendations

The Chief Executive is asked to:

1. Approve the £4,998,950 of North East CA Investment Funds for the three-year North East Excellence in Education Programme
2. Approve the commencement of procurement activity and the awarding of contracts through the Children and Young People Flexible Procurement Framework.

A. Summary of Investment Proposal (Context)

Key Project Information

Project Outline	
Funding Source	Investment Fund
Proposal Name	Excellence in Education Programme
Lead Organisation	North East Combined Authority

Delivery Areas	All
Start Date	September 2025
Financial End Date	December 2028
Practical completion date (date by which all outputs will be achieved)	December 2028
Total Project Value	£4,998,950
Grant Amount Requested	£4,998,950
Budget Implications	It is anticipated that the full budget will be utilised

- 1.1 In line with the Cabinet decision on 18 March 2025, this report seeks approval to progress with a new, exciting, evidence-led North East Excellence in Education Programme, which demonstrably delivers on the North East CA's Mission 1: Home of Real Opportunity and the Combined Authority's Local Growth Plan. This work will invest in our youngest residents, creating an inclusive programme that will help ensure all children and young people – regardless of their background - have equal opportunities to realise their potential and be part of the region's future success.
- 1.2 This new programme will utilise the strengths of our seven constituent Local Authority School Improvement Teams, to fund a range of interventions focused on three priorities that have been developed in collaboration with regional stakeholders including Local Authority Education Directors:
- 1) **Inclusion:** improving attendance levels, addressing the social, emotional mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, and supporting transitions for pupils both into school and within phases e.g. Primary to Secondary.
 - 2) **Realising Potential:** supporting skills development in literacy, oracy and mathematics for our most disadvantaged children and young people and promoting cultural and social capital.
 - 3) **Teacher Wellbeing and Development:** investing in the skills, resilience and leadership strengths of teachers and leaders, to create a sustainable culture of excellence in our schools.
- 1.3 By specifically supporting our region's most disadvantaged children and young people to access a better start in life, the Excellence in Education programme will improve life chances, unlock economic potential, and reduce pressure on public services in the long term. The three priorities above align with, complement, and support, the aims and objectives of the Mayor's Manifesto commitment to tackle child poverty through the new Child Poverty Reduction Unit, the emerging work within the Public Service Reform Portfolio, and the Skills for Business and in-school careers programmes delivered within the Education, Inclusion and Skills Portfolio.
- 1.4 Governance and oversight of the programme will be as set out in the recent North East CA Cabinet paper, approved by NECA Cabinet in March 2025. The Education, Inclusion and Skills Advisory Board will oversee programme delivery, under Cllr Dixon as portfolio holder. All funding decisions will be made in accordance with the Single Assurance Framework. The Education, Inclusion and Skills Workstream Group will, alongside focussed sub-groups (including representatives from constituent authorities) provide subject-matter expertise to support the programme delivery and the Education, Inclusion and Skills Advisory Board.
North East CA Officers will continue regular meetings with the Directors of Children's Services from each constituent authority, and with the Regional Director from the Department for Education. Similarly, officers will continue regular meetings with education leads to review programme priorities and impact.
- 1.5 In addition to local intelligence, schools will be selected to access targeted support based upon nationally recognised data, to ensure that resources are utilised within communities that need it the most. Further information on the selection process is included in section 3.6.

2. Background

- 2.1 The North East faces a set of challenges across the education landscape. We know that the region had the lowest rates of top GCSE and A-Level grades in the UK in 2024 and that the rates of disadvantage have increased significantly since 2019. By the end of Key Stage 4, students from disadvantaged backgrounds were 18.1 months behind their peers in 2019. In 2022, this had risen to 18.8 months. The gap has increased at all stages of education, with children from disadvantaged backgrounds 4.8 months behind their peers before starting school.
- 2.2 Local Authorities report increasing numbers of residents requiring support due to poverty, and the individual impact of poverty in later life is grave. Research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation finds that children growing up in poverty face significant negative impacts on their future prospects. Children who qualify for free school meals are less likely than those who do not to obtain good English and Maths GCSEs. This is likely also to impact their future job prospects, and children who grow up in poverty generally report lower earnings in adulthood and fewer hours worked. Addressing the negative impact that growing up in poverty can have on educational attainment is one of the first, crucial, steps to establishing the North East as the home of real opportunity.
- 2.3 Attendance has been a key challenge for schools this year, and while absence rates have improved on the previous year, they remain above pre-pandemic levels, with persistent absence rates (missing 10% or more of school sessions across the year) being double those of pre-pandemic years. The region has consistently had amongst the highest rates of SEN, rising from 12.6% in 2019/20 to 14.6% in 2023/24, and now the highest in England. The 2024 Child of the North report, “An evidence-based plan for improving school attendance”, found that the persistent absence rate for pupils with an Education Health Care Plan was 37.6% - substantially higher than for those without special needs (18.6%). The report argues that the reasons for children being absent from school are complex and there are often a multitude of risk factors leading to absence, including larger issues of inequality and deprivation, marginalisation, Special Educational Needs, mental health challenges, tooth decay, and family and parental factors.
- 2.4 GCSE students in the North East had the highest absence rates in the 2022/23 academic year. Pupils in Year 11 have also been more likely to regularly miss lessons than other year groups in the last academic year. Almost a third of last year's GCSE cohort missed at least 10% of lessons, double the pre-pandemic rate. In addition to raised absence levels, suspensions and permanent exclusions have grown by a third in a single year and elective home education has increased by over 20 per cent. New analysis has also found that for every child that is permanently excluded, 10 more invisibly move out of their school setting. This lost learning perpetuates cycles of disadvantage and stifles economic growth, casting a long shadow over the lives of children, families and communities.
- 2.5 Addressing low attendance rates is key to improving educational outcomes and future success for young people. A recent Department for Education report: [The link between attendance and attainment in an assessment year](#) (March 2025) highlighted the relationship between attendance during the year of assessment and the likelihood of reaching expected attainment levels:
- At both KS2 and KS4, the higher the 5% attendance band a pupil is in during the assessment year, the more likely they were to achieve a successful outcome in 2022/23.
 - At KS2, missing just 10 days of year 6 reduced the likelihood of reaching the expected standard by around 25%.
 - At KS4, missing just 10 days of year 11 reduced the likelihood of achieving grade 5 in English and Maths by around 50%.
 - At both KS2 and KS4, moving up a single attendance band by attending school 2 extra weeks a year is associated with an increased chance of achieving the expected outcome of at least 30% (KS2) and 10% (KS4).
- 2.6 This, according to the Department for Education's report [The Impact of School Absence on Lifetime Earnings](#), has a demonstrable effect on future income. Using the DfE's “GCSE and lifetime earnings” estimates, the report states:

- A one day increase in absence in Years 10 and 11 is associated with a 0.8% decrease in total yearly pay-as-you-earn (PAYE) earnings and declared self-employed earnings at age 28.
- The likelihood of being in receipt of benefits increases by 2.7 times for pupils who are classified as persistently absent (>10% absence). This rises to 4.2 times for those who are classified as severely absent (>50% absence).
- The likelihood of being in sustained employment for 12 months decreases by approximately 60% for pupils who are classified as persistently absent and approximately 75% for those who are classified as severely absent.

2.7 There is also increasing evidence to suggest a correlation between literacy levels, academic attainment, and future earnings; Pro Bono Economics' report [Reading the Future: The impact of literacy support on disadvantaged pupils' GCSE grades and beyond](#) found that a quarter of pupils start Year 7 with a reading age of below 11, and one in five primary school pupils are not meeting reading standards expected of their year groups. Children living in poverty are typically 4.5 months behind their peers in reading attainment when they start school, with this gap widening to over 19 months by the time they leave secondary school. Poor literacy levels can follow children into adulthood, with around 5.1 million adults in England being functionally illiterate i.e. they cannot read, understand information in a book, or do basic arithmetic. Such individuals typically either have low earnings or are unemployed and are therefore more reliant on welfare benefits. Illiteracy cost the UK economy approximately £80 billion in 2018, of which £24.8 billion was spent on welfare and £55.2 billion was lost through lower personal income and weaker productivity.

2.8 There are no great schools without great teachers. A key barrier to improvement in some of our secondary schools is that they struggle to recruit, retain and develop great teachers. Regional insight tells us that our existing leadership development programmes have proven strengths but could benefit from further development. We see a need to incorporate elements of training to address the current challenges of school leadership. Nationally, we know that the wider context in which Headteachers operate can create pressure that leads to excessive workload that distracts teachers from teaching. Not enough early career teachers receive the high-quality support they need to build the foundation for a successful career. For too many, a career in teaching does not adapt to their expertise and lives outside of the classroom.

2.9 The new Excellence in Education Programme is designed to tackle these issues, maximising the collective strengths and experience of the region. The North East Devolution Deal commits to enable education recovery to address COVID learning loss, addressing disparities and improving life chances for our children throughout their time in education, starting in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Furthermore, the Devolution Deal commits support and enables collaboration between all parts of our local education system.

3. The Investment Proposal

3.1 Through collaboration with regional stakeholders including Local Authority Education Directors, multi academy trusts, and school leaders, three key priorities have been identified to inform the strategic direction of the Excellence in Education Programme over the next three years, beginning in September 2025:

- 1) **Inclusion:** including improving attendance levels, addressing the social, emotional mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, and supporting transitions for pupils both into school and within phases e.g. Primary to Secondary.
- 2) **Realising Potential:** investing in projects that allow for action research and the sharing of best practice, support skills development in literacy, oracy and mathematics for our most disadvantaged children and young people, and promote cultural and social capital.
- 3) **Teacher Wellbeing and Development:** investing in the skills, resilience and leadership strengths of teachers and leaders, to create a sustainable culture of excellence in our schools, recognising that

great schools are built by empowered educators. This will include coaching and mentoring, supervision and high-quality professional development.

- 3.2 Building on learning from the current Education Improvement Programme, we will deliver an exciting new programme that will complement the work of our Local Authorities, providing innovative projects and interventions that allows pupils to build self-awareness, adaptability, empathy, agency for their own learning, a real sense of purpose, and develop analytical and critical thinking skills – all key elements to enabling **all** children and young people to be part of the region's success.
- 3.3 This programme builds upon lessons from the North East CA's previous Education Improvement Programme, as well as expertise from within our constituent authorities and other key stakeholders in the North East education landscape. The experience of the delivery team at delivering to scale also ensures that procurement and deployment of services achieve economies of scale to provide maximum value for money.
- 3.4 The strategic direction will also consider the aims of the new Child Poverty Reduction Unit to build a strategic, long-term, and collaborative approach to addressing child poverty in the region.
- 3.5 Excellence in Education will support delivery of the following long-term impacts:
- Attainment gap is closed between the North East and other regions, particularly for our most under-served young people
 - Gap is closed in higher level GCSE grades between the North East and other regions
 - More young people post-16 in sustained education, employment or apprenticeships
 - More children "ready for school" with associated improvements in early years development
 - Improved school attendance, especially for our most under-served young people
 - Reduction in mental health issues and referrals to external services
- 3.6 The programme will achieve this through:
- 3.5.1 School improvement projects which break down barriers to success for all children including mental health, attendance and transitions**
- a) Delivering a project to improve the inclusion practice of 150 schools by July 2028.
 - b) Delivering bespoke and targeted support to 100 schools to recover attendance levels to pre-pandemic levels by July 2028.
 - c) Offering interventions to support 150 schools between January 2025 and July 2028 to tackle children's mental health and wellbeing.
 - d) Delivering a range of school transition projects reaching 100 schools between January 2025 and July 2028.
 - e) Piloting an early school readiness programme directly supporting at least 1000 children before July 2026.
 - f) Convening a series of working groups of Local Authority and Multi Academy Trust representatives to look at emerging issues in education.
- 3.5.2 Projects and interventions which enable all learners to achieve their full potential through support for oracy, literacy, cultural capital and SEND**
- a) Engaging 200 senior leaders and 200 emerging leaders across 100 North East schools in a bespoke leadership development programme before July 2028.
 - b) Providing support to 180 schools around a whole school approach to oracy by July 2028.
 - c) Rolling out an early literacy programme directly supporting 500 schools, nurseries and Private, Voluntary and Independent early years settings by July 2028.
 - d) Extending a reading for pleasure/reading fluency intervention in 50 schools by July 2028 in conjunction with the Child Poverty Reduction Unit.
 - e) Delivering a cultural capital project to 72 of our most disadvantaged schools by July 2028.
 - f) Piloting a regional approach to improving mathematics skills in 70 schools by end of July 2028.
- 3.5.3 Supporting professional development and wellbeing of teachers and school leaders**
- a) Providing opportunities for professional accreditation for 100 school leaders from our most disadvantaged settings.

- b) Working with Local Authority school improvement teams to identify external and/or internal provision of bespoke supervision and wellbeing support to 140 school leaders by end of July 2028.
- c) Working with Local Authority school improvement teams to identify external and/or internal provision of mentoring, coaching and professional development support to 140 school leaders by end of July 2028.

3.5.4 Numbers given above are total numbers of engagement points; it is anticipated that many individual schools will engage in multiple activity streams.

3.6 We will work with delivery partners who are experts in their fields, contracted via call outs issued via the Children and Young People Flexible Procurement Framework, to ensure that these interventions are of high quality and reach those schools and pupils who need them the most. The criteria for selecting schools will be agreed by task and finish groups that will contain expert stakeholders including all seven Local Authority education leads. We will also operate an annual grants programme, Inspire, in partnership with the Child Poverty Reduction Programme, to enable schools to address specific areas of need within their communities, creating the opportunity for targeted support at hyperlocal level.

3.7 We will work alongside the two Teaching School Hubs in the region, who work on behalf of DfE to recruit and train teachers, to signpost existing DfE opportunities to schools but also work with regional stakeholders including our Local Authority school improvement teams and Research Schools to provide a local offer to support serving school leaders through ongoing professional development. Ongoing engagement with DfE officials ensures that this programme complements, rather than duplicates, efforts from the centre, and makes sure our region can make best use of nationally funded programmes to support our schools and address educational disadvantage, including new Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) teams.

3.8 Conversations with DfE have not yet resulted in a financial support package to extend our work but the Devolution and Deeper Devolution Deals commit the Department to work closely with us to address educational disadvantage and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision pressures. This programme of work will ensure we are well positioned for future developments and funding asks from Government.

4. Outputs and Outcomes

4.1 The profiling of outputs across the duration of the programme will be agreed alongside the establishment of a baseline in September 2025. However, the totals we will achieve by the end of the programme are currently expected to be as follows:

Outputs	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	Total
007 No of schools receiving support		150	200	200	550

4.2 Note that the outputs above refer to total number of schools rather than the total number of engagements; it is anticipated that the total number of engagement points will be much higher than this, as many schools are likely to engage with multiple activity streams.

Description of Outcomes	Timeframe for achievement	Totals
School leaders and teaching staff demonstrate increased knowledge, skills and confidence	By August 2028	N/A
More teaching staff report higher levels of motivation	By August 2028	N/A – baseline to be established Sept 2025
More children from vulnerable families show improved levels on the KS1 Phonics screening check, as well as improvements in literacy outcomes for reading and writing	By August 2028	N/A – baseline to be established Sept 2025
More SEND pupils show progression in learning	By August 2028	N/A – baseline to be established Sept 2025

More children from vulnerable families achieve higher level GCSE grades	By August 2028	N/A – baseline to be established Sept 2025
More children from vulnerable families reach a Good Level of Development across the 7 Early Learning Goals	By August 2028	N/A – baseline to be established Sept 2025
Young people demonstrate improved mental health and wellbeing, increased confidence, enhanced cultural capital and greater engagement in school and learning	By August 2028	N/A – baseline to be established Sept 2025
Fewer pupils receive fixed term suspensions and exclusions	By August 2028	N/A – baseline to be established Sept 2025
Attendance figures return to pre-pandemic levels	By August 2028	N/A – baseline to be established Sept 2025

5. Timetable for Implementation

Milestone	Forecast Date
Call off for suppliers via procurement	June 2025 (to begin delivery Sept 25)
Launch call-out for schools grants	September 25
Establish intervention baselines	September 25
Award education grants	October 25
School grants activity commences	November 25
Ongoing monitoring of providers and grant projects, steering group meetings and updates to strategic boards	January 26 and ongoing throughout programme
Programme activity and deliverables	September 2025 to July 2028
Programme ends	September 2028

6. Evaluation

- 6.1 A logic model has been developed to illustrate the expected pathway from outputs to outcomes and, ultimately, to long-term impact. This model will underpin our evaluation strategy over the next three years and will contribute to the creation of intervention baselines. We will adopt a formative approach to evaluation, regularly monitoring progress against our anticipated outputs and outcomes. This will enable us to refine delivery and ensure the programme remains adaptive and responsive. The intended impacts, outcomes, and outputs will be shared with potential delivery partners during the procurement or grant awarding process, and clearly communicated to appointed suppliers to ensure coherence across the programme.
- 6.2 An external evaluator will be appointed to work closely with delivery partners and stakeholders to capture the programme's impact throughout its duration. Individual delivery partners may also conduct their own evaluations, which will feed into the overall programme evaluation. Evaluation will follow an annual cycle, allowing us to incorporate learning from each year into the design and delivery of subsequent phases. This approach will also help us identify and share emerging examples of positive change and impact.
- 6.3 Engaging an evaluator from the outset will support a collaborative and responsive evaluation process—one that tracks change as it happens, rather than only at the end of the programme. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be captured, measuring educational outcomes alongside personal stories of impact. This is especially important given the long-term nature of many of our intended outcomes; while some results will take time to materialise, early signs of success will be evident in the experiences of our stakeholders.
- 6.4 We will communicate Excellence in Education's impact through annual evaluation reports, films, news stories, and imagery, using a range of tools to share powerful stories of positive change with diverse audiences throughout the life of the programme.

7. Appraisal

7.1 Proposal Description/Strategic fit

- 7.1.1 This programme will be delivered by the North East CA and is requesting £4,998,950 Investment Fund funding over three years from 1st September 2025.
- 7.1.2 The programme aim is to provide in-school support for teachers and pupils, particularly those who need it most, through activities to develop skills and realise potential. Three priorities have been highlighted; Inclusion, Realising Potential and Teacher Wellbeing and Development. Educational challenges that are faced in the North East have shaped the basis of the programme.
- 7.1.3 The business case represents an alignment to regional priorities and supports Mayoral pledges and objectives to address child poverty in the region. A fit with the North East CA's ambitions is well referenced along with a clear link between deprivation, lower educational attainment and longer-term aspirations.
- 7.1.4 A detailed analysis of the education landscape in the North East provides a strong case for change; headline statistics highlight the regions attainment gap.

7.2 Economic Case

- 7.2.1 The economic case presents a clear justification for the funding to address North East education priorities. Outputs are clear and in-line with the activity, while additional outcomes and impacts set out the key programme benefits.
- 7.2.2 The project Investment Fund request is £4,998,950. The expected 158,000 pupil interactions give a value for money calculation of £32 per pupil. This compares well against previous North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) interventions. The outcomes and wider impact benefits strengthen the case and provide significant added value to the investment. Benefits including closing the regional attainment gap, reduced mental health referrals and more young people in post 16 opportunities, demonstrate that the scheme should represent good value for money.

7.3 Commercial Case

- 7.3.1 Demand is demonstrated throughout the application and capacity to manage the delivery is in place. Delivery will be managed through contract/s for services, procured in line with the North East CA agreed processes. Capacity of service providers will be tested through the assessment process to ensure it adequately meets requirements to ensure successful delivery.
- 7.3.2 A clear procurement plan has been provided.

7.4 Financial Case

- 7.4.1 The finance tables reflect the full cost of the proposed activities and a quarterly breakdown is provided. The project cost is £4,998,950, this will be funded in full from the North East CA Investment Fund with no match funding included. All costs are external provider charges and grants for education settings and early years providers. Costs are relevant and in line with previous delivery charges on legacy activity.

7.5 Management Case

- 7.5.1 There are established and clear Governance and Management structures in place in the North East CA to monitor and oversee delivery. The Education Improvement Group will manage delivery and specific staff duties are outlined, giving confidence that the project will be well managed. A comprehensive delivery plan supported by a robust risk register is in place.
- 7.5.2 Grants are an element of delivery and the systems for monitoring and managing the grants is to be established. These will be developed in line with the North East CA assurance principles.
- 7.5.3 The subsidy control position is to be confirmed prior to contracting.

8. RAG Assessment

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

9. Recommended Conditions of Funding

The award of funding would be subject to the following proposed funding conditions.

No.	Condition
1	Grant scheme process to be developed in line with the North East CA assurance principles.
2	Legal team to confirm that subsidy control position.

B. Potential Impact on North East Combined Authority Objectives

The Mayor's manifesto commits to lifting children in the North East out of poverty through a long-term, structural approach; proposing potential interventions such as ensuring every investment decision has a measurable impact on child poverty; developing Sure Start-style children's services; and developing a Mayoral childcare grant. The newly identified priorities of this proposed programme are closely aligned with the child poverty reduction strategies and positively contributes to the ambitions of the Mayor and Cabinet.

This programme of work and approach aligns with and contributes to the North East CA's Local Growth Plan and commits to championing 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. The work also aligns with central Government's mission to 'break down barriers to opportunity.'

By tackling educational challenges, this work will contribute to the North East CA commitments to achieve a fairer, successful North East, helping people to thrive and reducing inequalities. Specifically, this programme contributes to Mission 1, to create a 'home of real opportunity' by investing in the foundations of the economy and removing barriers that prevent people succeeding.

C. Key risks

A summary of key risks relating to the investment proposal is included below:

Risk	Consequence	Mitigation
School engagement is less than anticipated	Poor uptake of elements of the overall programme	Ensure schools are engaged in each element of the overall programme through communications strategy and representation in working groups and partnership work through education teams in Local Authorities, Multi

		Academy Trusts and other stakeholder/influencer groups.
Duplication of local activity	Beneficiaries are confused by duplicated provision/ interventions and do not benefit as intended.	Working closely with regional stakeholders, including Local Authority education leads, Multi Academy Trust leadership, the Teaching School Hub stakeholder groups such as Schools North East. etc.
Duplication of national activity	Beneficiaries are confused by duplicated provision/ interventions and do not benefit as intended.	Close working relationship to continue with the Regional School Director's team to understand national priorities and ensure the shared work programme enhances the national offer. Continued engagement with national education influencers and stakeholders.

D. Financial and other resources implications

The financial profile for the project/programme is included in the table below. Funding is front loaded to provide capacity and assurance for procured suppliers to commence long-term project delivery and support.

Funding source	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
<i>North East CA Investment Fund (£)</i>	£3,524,928	£1,240,572	£146,800	£86,650	£4,998,950
Total (£)	£3,524,928	£1,240,572	£146,800	£86,650	£4,998,950

E. Legal implications

All North East CA financial regulations and processes will be adhered to throughout the programme, with regular liaison with the Programme Assurance Team, finance, procurement and legal teams prior to awarding contracts or grant funding. Subsidy control advice has been sought from the legal team and will be incorporated within the programme.

F. Equalities implications

The North East CA follows the Public Sector Equality duty and the work referenced in this report has due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010.

The activity outlined in this report, and Education Improvement Strategy will contribute to the North East CA equality objectives, including deepening our understanding of the inequalities faced by residents in our region and the impact of those on people's lives.

A full Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out; we will share findings and actions from this with delivery partners appointed via procurement to ensure that all elements of the programme are fully inclusive, and participating schools are targeted based on need.

G. Consultation and engagement

Consultation has taken place with Directors of Children's Services, Directors of Education and their respective teams within each Local Authority, Multi Academy Trust leaders, Teaching School Hubs, Research Schools, Higher Education establishments and education specialists.

Schools will be engaged in workstreams through partnership work with Local Authorities, Multi Academy Trusts and other stakeholder/influencer groups as well as commissioned providers.

Consultation has taken place with officers at constituent local authorities and further consultation and engagement will take place as the programme develops.

H. Appendices

None

I. Background papers

[Cabinet Paper, North East Combined Authority, Excellence in Education programme, 18 March 2025](#)

J. Contact officers

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K. Glossary

KS2 – Key Stage 2 (school years 3 to 6; pupils aged 7-11)

KS4 – Key Stage 4 (school years 10 and 11; pupils aged 14-16)

SEN – Special Educational Needs

Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) - a plan for children and young people aged up to 25 who need more support than is available through special educational needs support.

L. Consultee

Cabinet Member:	Director/Head of Service:	Director of Finance and Investment:	Monitoring Officer:
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes