



NU Futures Programme

Final Evaluation Executive Summary

Delivered by Centrifuge Consulting on behalf of the North East Combined Authority

December 2025



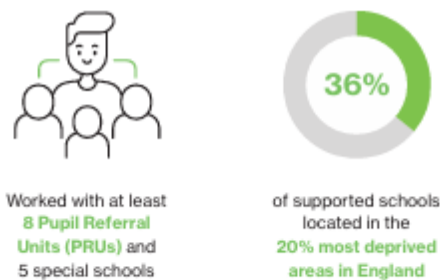
NU Futures Programme Evaluation: Key Stats

NU Careers (11-16)

Reach & Coverage



Inclusive Growth / Targeted Settings



Participant Outcomes (2021/22-2024/25)



Understanding Gains



Practical Preparedness

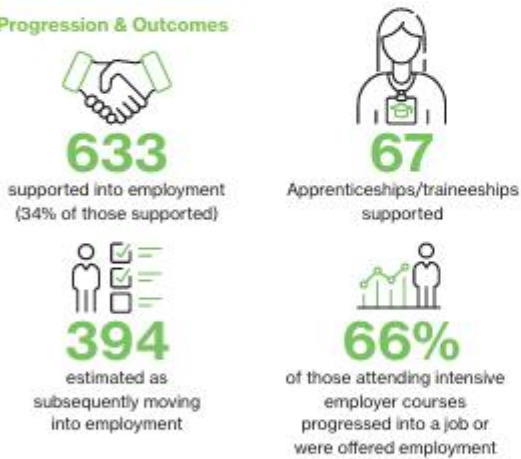


NU Futures Employability (16–25)

Reach & Engagement



Progression & Outcomes



Soft Outcomes (Interviewed participants)



Inclusive Growth

Participant profile (support):



lived in **10% most deprived areas**



lived in the **20% most deprived areas**

Those supported into work:



lived in the **20% most deprived areas**



lived in the **40% most deprived**



lived in the **20% most deprived for employment**

NUCASTLE – Capital Development



NU Futures

Employer Engagement (Programme wide)



283
individual employers engaged
in NU Futures activity

1,200
employees
involved

756
employer
engagements

5,300+
staff hours
contributed

Social and Economic Impact

£5.7m

annual GVA contribution
from 413.3 net additional
employees

£9.65m

estimated social
value gain from the
capital development

£7.8m

estimated total social
value gain

£3.3m

gained through improved
mental health and wellbeing

£113,000

worth of employer time contributed

These figures may be subject to refinement following clarification from Newcastle United Foundation.



NU Futures Programme Evaluation

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- NU Futures Programme is delivered by Newcastle United Foundation with £2.7m of funding from the North East Combined Authority Investment Fund, which was originally granted by the former North of Tyne Combined Authority. The programme aimed to raise young people’s aspirations, improve employability, and create pathways into education, training, and work for communities across Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle.
- The programme involved the following three strands of activity:
 - **NU Careers** – school-based careers education for 11–16-year-olds.
 - **NU Futures Employability** – support for out of work 16–25-year-olds to support their personal development and progression into employment.
 - **NUCASTLE** – capital development of a new education, training and community facility.
- Evaluation conducted by Centrifuge Consulting with evidence compiled through extensive surveys, interviews, workshops with delivery partners, individual beneficiaries, schools and employers.

2. NU Careers – Support for 11–16-Year-Olds

- **Reach:** 24,675 pupils and 198 schools engaged; 29,000+ total interactions¹.
- **Impact:** 85–97% of students reported improved confidence, career awareness, and motivation.
- **Key Features:** Flexible, Gatsby-aligned workshops; employer involvement; early

'I'd say it's life-changing for the young people here... sometimes it's just that different person, different environment, and they've clicked...we've got students didn't have a clue what they wanted to do... who've gone on to secure opportunities for good well-paid work.'

Benfield School

'It's not just a free service or tag-on... it's a meaningful experience because it's been planned, resourced and delivered to a very high standard.'

St Cuthberts Catholic High School

'It's a proper programme that's been well developed and mapped out with a range of different workshops and options for each year group with progression available across year groups.'

Dukes Academy

'It's a massively important part of our careers education...they're helping us meet a number of Gatsby benchmarks that we wouldn't be able to meet without them.'

Jesmond Park Academy

¹ This includes those accessing in-school support and/or attending a large scale event for pupils from schools across the eligible area.

intervention from Year 7; targeted support for vulnerable learners.

- **What Worked:** Employer encounters, practical skills sessions, and the Newcastle United brand boosted engagement.

3. NU Futures Employability – Support for 16–25-Year-Olds

- **Engagement:** 1,845 young people received employability support; 484 attended intensive employer-led courses.
- **Outcomes:** 633 supported into employment (101% of target); 67 into apprenticeships/traineeships. Estimates suggest a further 394 moved into employment after their involvement with the programme².
- **Soft Outcomes:** 90%+ reported improved confidence, motivation, and mental health.
- **Success Factors:** Employer involvement and direct access to employment opportunities and guaranteed interviews, site visits, and one-to-one mentoring.

'This is the best thing I've ever done! Getting my confidence back up... had brilliant support with job interview and this led to a job offer and employment... This was a complete change of lifestyle...saw this as a gateway to self-improvement. NU Futures was the spark that initiated change.'

'Massive for my personal development, job search and interview skills, social interaction all helped me towards my chosen career. This was an Apprenticeship with a large company. I could not have wished for more!'

'There has been a major improvement to my life – I would do it all again. Went from long term unemployment into work, they gave advice and worked on boosting my confidence... they did everything for me. They are like a family - I never wanted to leave... They moved you along - I feel so much better, much more confident. I have come so far.'

16–25-year-old participants

4. Employer Engagement

- **Scale:** 280+ employers actively involved in delivering NU Futures activity; 5,300+ staff hours; 756 engagements.
- **Benefits:** Recruitment pipelines, social mobility, and staff development.
- **Key Partners:** Nissan, PGL, Maldron Hotel, Newcastle Building Society.

5. NUCASTLE – Capital Investment

- £12.8m flagship facility opened in 2022; hosted 6,530 sessions and 56,000+ visitors in 2024/25.

² It should be noted that 84% of interviewees that were supported into work were still in employment at the time of their evaluation interview. It should be noted that analysis of data provided to us by Newcastle United Foundation suggests that the average amount of time between moving into employment and their evaluation interview was around 12 months with all having been interviewed at least 3 months since they were supported into work.

- Created 27 direct jobs; contributed to 30% reduction in city-centre anti-social behaviour.
- Provides STEM labs, digital suites, and sports facilities for education and community engagement.

6. Performance and Impact

- Exceeded targets for intensive support and employment outcomes; slightly underperformed on qualifications.
- Pivot from volume to value ensured deeper impact despite COVID-19 disruptions.
- Strong evidence of additionality, with positive economic impact.
- Estimated net additional impact of 431.3 full time equivalent jobs, £8.4m annual income and £5.7m annual GVA.
- Estimated social value gain of £9.65m from the capital development.
- Estimated social value gain of £7.8m through programme delivery, with £3.3m gained through improved mental health and wellbeing of participants
- Estimated £112,000 of employer time contributed

7. Strategic Added Value

- Strong alignment with regional priorities: workforce readiness, social mobility, and employer engagement.
- Mobilised 280+ employers and supported disadvantaged communities.

8. Key Learning & Recommendations

- **Start early, sustain progression** across school years and beyond.
- **Embed employer-led pathways** and scale mentoring.
- **Deepen local contextualisation** for rural and disadvantaged areas.
- **Standardise data collection** and track long-term outcomes.

'NU Futures have really exceeded expectations... in the last cohort 11 of the 13 they supported were offered a job and 10 of the 11 are still working here.

'They just make my job easier... They make sure the young people are fully prepared and they make sure people get here.'

Nissan

'I work with lots of different organisations... but I always use them as the benchmark...'

PGL