

East Cleveland Economic Growth Plan

2025







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Foreword

East Cleveland is an extraordinary place, unique within the Tees Valley. It is an area of strong, proud rural communities - where people look out for one another, and where there is a strong cultural value attached to honour, fairness, and collective responsibility. The villages' historic economic development from fishing and agriculture to ironstone mining saw communities forged with a high degree of trust and co-operation - aided by the strong strain of Methodism in the area in the 18th and 19th century, along with the subsequent development of the co-operative and trade union movements.

Our identity is complex. Officially, we are in the North East, but we are also proudly in Yorkshire, part of the historic North Riding. We have been called Cleveland and Langbaurgh, and today we are in the Tees Valley. Whatever the name, ours is an incredible place, with extraordinary landscapes from the beautiful market towns of Guisborough and Loftus, to the rolling fields of East Cleveland, to the coastline along the Cleveland Way, to the vast, wild purple of the North York Moors. On a personal level, having grown up in the area, I am deeply proud to be our constituency's first MP from these villages, and I hope to serve them well.

Today, the villages face economic challenges, with significant rural deprivation and isolation. But the area remains a beautiful place with strong communities and enormous potential. With the right policy interventions for transport, health, education and business, the area could become a thriving tourist economy with a dynamic and skilled workforce to benefit the region's priorities. The combined authority is right to align its strategic priorities with those of the key growth sectors set out in the Government's industrial strategy, and the communities of East Cleveland stand ready to contribute.

This document is designed to aid the combined authority in the development of its Growth Plan submission to Government, with initial proposals on the communities of East Cleveland specifically. For the purposes of this document, this area is defined as covering the local authority wards of Loftus, Lockwood, Brotton, Skelton East and West, and the three Guisborough wards of Belmont, Hutton and Guisborough, and is aligned with existing bodies such as the East Cleveland Primary Care Network.



Luke Myer MP

Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland

Context and Purpose

The Growth Plan has been prepared to support the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) Local Growth Plan and to set out local industrial and skills priorities for East Cleveland. It reflects the distinctive rural challenges faced by our communities and ensures that the area is not left behind as wider Tees Valley development accelerates.

Consultation with both the voluntary sector and local employers has informed this draft. Their perspectives highlight the lived realities of poverty, transport isolation and health inequalities, alongside the opportunities and barriers facing businesses in steel, mining, engineering and clean energy. Thank you to all organisations and individuals who have contributed.





Economy

East Cleveland's economy, like many areas with a history of heavy industry, is undergoing a period of transition. While facing challenges including in-work poverty, insecure work and unemployment, the area possesses considerable potential for growth with the diversification of the economy and by building on existing skills and expertise.

At recent roundtables, participants described the "benefits trap" that can leave households worse off in work, with many families struggling to meet essential costs even when employed. Employers pointed to retention pressures in local industry, with a shrinking pool of skilled labour and competition between firms.

Voluntary organisations also emphasised their role as job creators and skills providers, often undervalued despite significant contributions to local employment. They warned that volunteering costs and poor transport access leave many excluded from participation.

In-work poverty

Residents of East Cleveland face significant challenges caused by poverty, with 10.9% of households in fuel poverty¹ and 62.6% of children in relative low income families living in working families².

Redcar and Cleveland Voluntary Development Agency (VDA) research with families experiencing in-work poverty found that many remain "hidden", especially in rural areas. One parent reflected: "People who are struggling because they're earning enough to stop them getting benefits... but it's not enough for them to actually keep going."

This highlights the challenges faced by working families who are not officially recognised as being in poverty but still struggle financially.

When accessing services designed to help, stakeholders highlighted systemic inefficiencies such as poor coordination among organisations, which undermined effectiveness. **Parents** practical barriers, pointed to such inaccessible locations and limited transport. Both groups called for more localised, community-embedded services. Voluntary organisations and parents also advocated for vouchers to enhance flexibility, improved transportation schemes, and early, consistent outreach to build trust and engagement.

Access to cash

Across the UK, around five million adults say they rely on cash in their day-to-day lives³; digital or online solutions do not yet work for everyone all the time. Bank branch closures have been numerous in East Cleveland, with Guisborough the only location still retaining a high-street bank branch.

Banking Hubs and other services can make a real difference to individuals, small businesses and communities. Organisations such as Cash Access UK, the Post Office and LINK can provide creative solutions where bank branches have closed. Roundtable participants underlined that cash access is not just a financial issue but one of community viability, especially in villages where high-street services have disappeared.



Economy

Rural Infrastructure

Infrastructure in the more rural villages of East Cleveland requires urgent attention, particularly concerning water, gas and electricity. Many communities face outdated or insufficient services, with the most extreme example, Aysdalegate, lacking any access to potable water, leading to a permanent boil notice since December 2017. This poses significant health risks and highlights the immediate need for investment to secure safe drinking water for all households. Other areas also suffer from insufficient water infrastructure, with outdated pipes and blocked culverts creating flood risks.

Access to gas networks is inconsistent, leaving many villages dependent on more expensive and less sustainable heating. Census data shows that almost one in three homes in the Glebe Garden estate in Easington still rely on oil-fired central heating. Expanding the gas network or the transition to affordable supporting renewable energy sources would help address fuel poverty and improve living standards. Similarly, electricity infrastructure in rural areas must be modernised, with a particular focus on installing more EV charging points to support the shift towards sustainable transport.

Employers told roundtables that weak broadband and mobile connectivity holds back both households and businesses. While larger villages such as Loftus, Brotton and Skelton generally benefit from modern ultrafast broadband, coverage can still be inconsistent, and smaller places like Moorsholm have maximum advertised download speeds of just 42 Mbps. Existing schemes such as Project Gigabit should prioritise these hard-to-reach

areas to achieve full gigabit connectivity by 2030.

Industrial Estate Improvements

As industries elsewhere in the Tees Valley reshape the economic landscape, smaller businesses in East Cleveland are well positioned to contribute to supply chains, supporting established producers while also creating opportunities for new enterprises. Industrial estates in the area benefit from their proximity to steelmaking, mining and the emerging green sectors of hydrogen and carbon capture at the mouth of the Tees.

However, East Cleveland's industrial estates require investment to attract modern businesses. Roundtable participants highlighted outdated buildings and poor utilities as key barriers, with employers calling for smaller, flexible commercial spaces that meet modern demands. High vacancy rates at Skelton Industrial Estate demonstrate the need for mixed-use regeneration, and some participants concern about the expressed pace development at Liverton Mines. Stakeholders warned that freeports and investment zones may risk pulling businesses away from East Cleveland unless the Combined Authority invests directly in industrial estates here.

Industrial estates also have potential beyond traditional manufacturing; hospitality and leisure businesses have found success in these areas, as can be seen with Holey Molies miniature golf course in Skelton, and Talking Tides bar and brewery in nearby Marske. Stakeholders suggested that the former Texon factory in Skelton could be redeveloped as a

business centre for CICs, co-ops and small enterprises.

The Combined Authority should work alongside Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council and business leaders to secure funding for site improvements, encourage investment in flexible commercial spaces, and support new industries locating in East Cleveland's estates.

Tourism and Culture

Beyond traditional industries, East Cleveland can leverage its natural beauty and unique heritage to develop a thriving tourism sector. By investing in infrastructure alongside promoting cultural assets, the area can attract more visitors, boost the local economy and create new jobs.

East Cleveland has an internationally significant story to tell: from neolithic settlement and ironstone mining through to today's industries, it has always been home to innovation. Ironstone mining museum Land of Iron, in Skinningrove, is leading work to knit this history together, and the museum is pressing for national museum status that would attract prestige and funding. The area is also of geological and archaeological importance, in part owing to its reputation as a fossil coast, something that could be used to further drive tourism. Partnership work with Natural England on heritage recognition could help establish the area's identity as a 'Dinosaur Coast'.

East Cleveland's distinctive landmarks also require stronger promotion. Roundtable participants spoke fondly about sites ranging from England's highest coastal cliff at Boulby and the nearby First World War sound mirror, to Handale Abbey, Guisborough's historic connection to Robert I de Brus, and alongside the Loftus Saxon Princess, and legends of the Handale Serpent, and folklore linking Beowulf to the area. Further promotion knitting the area's heritage together could attract tourism; the area would benefit from joined-up heritage and culture strategy.

The coastline already attracts a share of the 350,000 annual walkers on the Cleveland Way and the King Charles III England Coast Path. Since 2017, East Cleveland has also become a cycling hub, hosting events such as the Tour de Yorkshire and the Klondike Grand Prix. There is a need to build on this with improved signage and tourist information points, and there should also be a push to encourage visitors to stay overnight in the area.

Transport is repeatedly raised as a key barrier to increased tourism. The Moorsbus plays a vital role linking East Cleveland to the National Park, but it is a volunteer-led model and requires financial support and marketing to expand. Better cross-border connectivity with North Yorkshire is essential to grow the East Cleveland tourism sector. A 'Northern Gateway' approach could be undertaken, particularly focusing on Guisborough and Loftus, which should be regarded alongside towns like Skipton for their potential as a gateway into a National Park. Improving parking is necessary to increase visitor footfall, and therefore a programme to re -purpose brownfield land, and potentially redeveloping vacant sites could increase tourist capacity without harming residents' quality of life. Further transport proposals are considered

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in the following chapter.

Roundtable participants noted a lack of cooperation between regional government and organisations in the local tourism, culture and hospitality sectors; an East Cleveland Tourism Network bringing together community groups, businesses, and public bodies should be established. This would provide the collective strategy, investment and marketing needed to raise East Cleveland's profile while ensuring that tourism benefits are spread fairly across the area's towns and villages.

High Streets

High streets across East Cleveland face challenges from changing shopping habits, online retail and economic uncertainty. While Skelton has seen successful investment, places such as Brotton and Loftus often struggle with vacant sites. Roundtable participants expressed particular frustration with long-term derelict sites such as Loftus's former Arriva bus depot and Royal Hotel, Boosbeck's former abattoir land, and brownfield land near Brotton's Kwik Fit. They argued for stronger intervention by TVCA and the local authority to unlock these sites, including engagement with landowners and use of compulsory purchase powers where necessary. New Community Right to Buy powers may aid community groups in purchasing assets coming up for sale.

Green Transition

East Cleveland is home to foundational industries, including steel at Skinningrove and mining at Boulby. These must be supported to grow. The Tees Valley also has the potential to

lead the UK's green industrial revolution, and East Cleveland must not be left behind. Investment in carbon capture and storage, hydrogen, offshore wind and sustainable aviation fuel all present major opportunities; employers at roundtables welcomed this agenda, but warned that grid capacity in rural East Cleveland and high energy costs are constraining investment. The expansion of British Industry Supercharger will help many manufacturers to remain competitive, but further interventions including infrastructure investment will be vital. SMEs in particular need direct pathways into net-zero supply chains and skills programmes to benefit from these opportunities. The Combined Authority must ensure that funding and resources reach every community, not just Freeport sites, and that East Cleveland is central to the UK's transition to net zero.

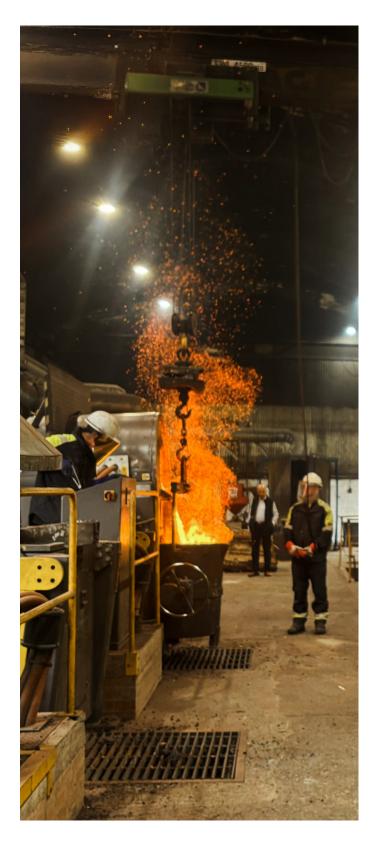
Role of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sectors

The VCSE sector are central to East Cleveland's economic and social future. Alongside small and medium enterprises, both provide value well beyond their immediate outputs, and both must be recognised as equal partners in shaping growth. Voluntary organisations not only support the most vulnerable but also act as job creators, skills providers and innovators. They build community confidence, tackle health inequalities and give residents the tools to participate fully in the local economy. Yet at roundtables they described being treated as junior partners, often dependent on short term contracts that limit their ability to plan strategically. They called for longer term

funding models, recognition of their economic contribution, and a seat at the table in Combined Authority planning.

Employers provide the jobs and investment that anchor East Cleveland's economy, from major industrial players like British Steel, Woodsmith and ICL Boulby to smaller engineering firms, green energy pioneers and SMEs such as Tees Components. In recent discussions, businesses highlighted barriers including high energy costs, grid capacity limits, skills shortages and poor connectivity. They also indicated a willingness to invest in local training and apprenticeship schemes if the right support is in place.

Both sectors made clear that they must be seen as long term partners in growth. They called for the Combined Authority to adopt social value commissioning, measuring not only cost but the wider benefits delivered by contracts. They also pressed for investment strategies that treat SMEs and voluntary organisations as part of the solution, not as an afterthought.



Economy

The Combined Authority should:

- O Work with existing and new Internet Service Providers to extend access to superfast broadband where it is economically feasible, and lobby the Government to leverage the full extent of Project Gigabit to East Cleveland;
- Alongside the Local Authority, develop a comprehensive strategy for the regeneration of East Cleveland's industrial estates;
- O Support Land of Iron in its bid to be granted national status and continue to support with grant funding;
- Create an empty unit taskforce to utilise or redevelop empty High Street locations;
- Work with the local authority to create business incubation units which foster new independent businesses;
- O Ensure that funding and resources from new green industry within the Tees Valley reaches every community, not just those closest to Freeport sites, and that East Cleveland benefits from the UK's transition to net zero, by investing in infrastructure, upgrading industrial estates, and supporting small businesses;
- O Seek improvements to the High Street through the renovation of existing buildings and, where appropriate, the redevelopment of sites;
- Lobby to bring High Street Rental Auction scheme to East Cleveland;
- Aid efforts to secure a use for prominent dormant assets such as The Royal Hotel, the former bus depot, the former Arlington Chapel and schoolhouse, the Boosbeck abattoir, and the Stanghow Lane schoolhouse site.
- Further promote East Cleveland as a tourist destination, focusing on the growing number of walkers, its heritage and natural landscapes;
- O Publish a regional heritage and culture strategy which includes East Cleveland's heritage assets;
- O Work with the North York Moors National Park and the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority to develop complementary tourism and transport strategies.



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Transport

Current challenges

Reliable, affordable and sustainable transport is critical to growth. Residents at roundtables described paying £30 taxi fares because of poor bus scheduling, while Tees Flex cancellations, including missed hospital appointments, have undermined confidence in services. These lived experiences show why investment in rural transport must be matched by reliability and proper accountability.

Employers also raised wider infrastructure concerns. As noted in the previous chapter, grid capacity and long lead times for energy upgrades are constraining expansion. Weak internet connectivity in rural areas holds back both businesses and households.

Current challenges

East Cleveland faces significant transport barriers, with limited bus services and no passenger rail connectivity beyond Saltburn. Many residents described bus provision as infrequent and unreliable, making it difficult to access jobs, healthcare and essential services. Census data⁴ shows that 27.7% of residents travel 10 to 30km for work, which is twice the national average, yet poor public transport leaves many reliant on private vehicles. This worsens social and economic exclusion for the 24.8% of households in East Cleveland without a car or van.

Improved bus links to key employment sites elsewhere in the region, as well as within the area including Boulby, Skinningrove, North Skelton and Skelton Industrial Estate, would help workers reach jobs more easily, reduce

commuting costs, and strengthen the local economy.

The Government's Buses Bill gives the Tees Valley Combined Authority powers to improve services, ensuring a more reliable, affordable and better connected network. One of the most effective ways to achieve this is through bus franchising, which would give the authority control over routes, fares and standards, ensuring buses run in the interest of communities rather than private operators. Combined Authorities elsewhere, most notably Greater Manchester. have introduced franchising to create more integrated networks. Roundtable participants argued that Tees Valley should adopt the same approach, with East Cleveland's rural isolation making the case particularly strong.

Strengthening rural bus services

Rural bus services, primarily operated by Stagecoach and Arriva, provide a crucial link for residents to work, education, healthcare and other essentials. However, connectivity with trains remains poor, limiting travel flexibility.

Securing long term funding for key routes such as Stagecoach 1 and 2 is essential, as is ensuring the route expands to cover more residents. Stakeholders raised concerns that the 1 and 2 services Brotton Bypass rather than the village itself, while roundtable participants noted that Lingdale is served by just one bus an hour, with services stopping before 7pm, leaving shift workers reliant on costly taxis. Residents also called for better integration between buses and school transport to avoid duplication and ensure value for money; some cited examples of



Transport

pupils attending Huntcliff Secondary School in Saltburn who had struggled to get to school due to transport challenges.

Demand-responsive bus service Tees Flex, introduced in 2020, remains an important service, particularly in East Cleveland. The model provides essential access to training, employment and social connections, especially in isolated areas. Roundtable participants argued that Tees Flex is best placed to have maximum impact in East Cleveland, and called for expansion of the service to more villages.

A pilot scheme based on the Liverpool City Region's Apprentice Bus Discount could also be introduced. This initiative, which offers half price bus travel for apprentices, would make training more accessible and reduce financial barriers for young people entering the workforce.

Investment needs

East Cleveland requires significant investment in transport infrastructure to improve connectivity and support economic growth. Several schemes identified within City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements Phase 1 are progressing, with a target for completion by March 2027. However, additional unfunded projects remain crucial.

There is a clear need for better walking, cycling and wheeling connections between Skelton, Brotton and North Skelton, particularly around the A174, to enable sustainable travel to Freebrough Academy and retail areas at Pheasants Field. Enhancements to National Cycle Route 1 between Saltburn and Loftus are also necessary, as the current steep route via

Saltburn Bank and Loftus Bank discourages use.

Continued support for rural bus services, many of which are not commercially viable but remain essential for connecting communities, is vital. Local authority highways allocations also need to increase, given the ageing infrastructure built 50 to 60 years ago that now requires urgent intervention. Without additional funding, essential repairs and improvements will be delayed, impacting both efficiency and safety.

Rail

Passenger rail services currently terminate at Saltburn, even though the well-used Boulby freight line continues across East Cleveland, passing through Brotton, Skelton, Carlin How and Loftus before reaching Boulby mine. Previous work by Arup in 2018 and SYSTRA in 2023, commissioned by Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, found restoring that passenger trains to the line would be feasible without substantial investment in infrastructure (requiring relatively small changes to track and signalling), and that diverting an existing Darlington-Saltburn service to Loftus would represent value for money and be a net generator of revenue to the rail network.⁶ The Combined Authority has already committed £1 million to a feasibility study into extending passenger rail, which is due to report this year.

A new service could connect East Cleveland directly to Teesworks at South Bank and the currently-closed Redcar British Steel station, as well as to Middlesbrough and to mainline services at Darlington. This would open up job opportunities and support growth in tourism.

School Transport

School transport across Tees Valley is under increasing pressure, with demand placing strain on existing services. Challenges remain particularly for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) pupils, who often have to travel long distances, including across local authority boundaries, to access appropriate education. Roundtables highlighted the burden this places on families, and the need for consistent provision. A proposal was made that the Combined Authority should take full responsibility for delivering SEND transport, creating a centralised and properly funded service across the region. This would ensure better coordination, reduce duplication, and improve outcomes for students and families. With at least 21% of NEET young people having SEND needs, improved education, training and transport solutions are essential.⁵

A similar, but related challenge exists in the children's social care system. The current care system too often struggles to provide stability for children and families, and a larger-scale and more strategic approach is needed to ensure better outcomes and long-term sustainability. A regional children's care co-op across the Tees Valley could allow councils to pool resources, strengthen placement stability and improve value for money.

- Act swiftly on the findings of the East Cleveland rail feasibility study to secure funding for a rail service extension from Saltburn to Boulby;
- Increase the size of the Tees Flex fleet specifically serving East Cleveland;
- O Utilise new powers granted under the Buses Bill to enhance bus services in East Cleveland, and undertake a feasibility study of the franchise model for the bus network
- Ensure that key East Cleveland bus routes receive multi-year funding so that providers and users can be confident in the longevity of services, and seek to expand routes into currently under-served villages
- Work with the local authority to ensure that school transport is integrated with the wider network, and assess whether the Combined Authority should take responsibility for SEND transport provision.

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Education and Skills

Current challenges

Local employers and voluntary groups consistently raised concerns about the shrinking pool of skilled labour. Rising costs, the lack of workplace mentors and weaknesses in the National Apprenticeship Service portal were identified as barriers to apprenticeships. There was strong support for a centralised Tees Valley apprenticeship portal to connect employers with young people more directly.

It was noted that while academic results locally can be strong, low aspirations among pupils remain a concern, with a need for deeper employer engagement to raise awareness of opportunities close to home. Businesses also stressed the importance of earlier careers education, greater digital and AI literacy, and clearer pathways between schools and industry.

Voluntary organisations added evidence of barriers to participation, including children arriving at school without food or proper clothing, and uniform costs restricting access. The loss of environmental education was highlighted as a long term risk to aspirations and health. Positive examples such as Dormanstown Citizens Advice hubs and RCVDA's adult literacy work show how schools and community groups can work together to tackle these challenges.

Youth unemployment

6.1% of young people in East Cleveland are classed as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).⁷ This poses a serious challenge, holding back individual potential and broader economic growth. Young people left without

opportunities face increased risks of long term unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. This places a strain on public services, weakens the local economy and can contribute to higher crime rates.

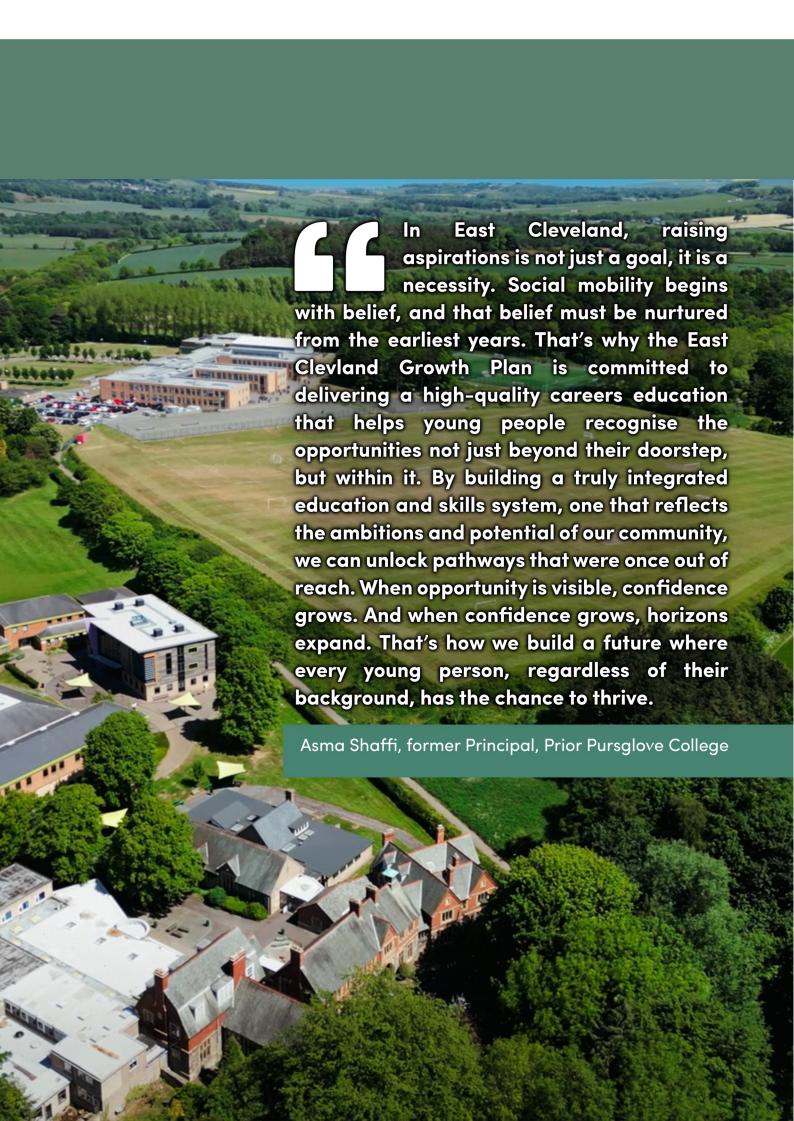
Early and targeted intervention is the most effective way of reducing the likelihood of young people becoming NEET.⁸ The Combined Authority should provide greater support to Early Help services within East Cleveland and encourage agencies to align resources. The new Government has granted £5 million to the Combined Authority for the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer, and this funding should be used to identify and support at-risk young people.

Careers education and skills programme

For young people currently in education, the Combined Authority should ensure better careers guidance. Tees Valley Careers has been delivered in East Cleveland's schools and colleges for 11–18 year olds, but provision has often focused on one off events rather than sustained programmes integrated into the curriculum.

Schools are expected to follow the Gatsby benchmarks in their planning, but the Combined Authority has a critical role to play in shaping the careers routes they focus on, based on regional skills needs. Roundtable participants agreed that schools and FE colleges require clearer priorities and better intelligence from the Combined Authority to align provision with demand in the labour market.

While the Combined Authority only has direct control over the adult skills fund and related



Education and Skills

programmes, and further devolution of post 16 education is necessary, this does not prevent it from influencing the wider system.

Adult education

Adult literacy and basic skills remain significant challenges. Over 25% of adults in the area have low literacy or numeracy skills,9 and the NECC identified in 2024 that 56% of adults are not meeting minimum levels of literacy competence for the workplace. 10 Employers also identified a lack of soft skills, such as communication and confidence. which can limit workforce participation. The participation rate community learning activities is lower than the regional average, but should be built on as a gateway to learning new skills and increasing confidence. 11 Roundtable participants emphasised that using community venues such as libraries, social clubs and village halls can help people overcome stigma and engage with adult learning. Adult education enables people to develop new skills, adapt to changing job markets, improve employment prospects and boost confidence, while also supporting mental health and wellbeing.

Training and Skills Hubs

Training and skills hubs are vital in helping local people access resources, overcome barriers and secure opportunities. Local hubs provide support such as career guidance, training and information on apprenticeships, ensuring individuals have the tools they need to succeed. The Combined Authority should build on the positive work of the Routes to Work programme. Expanding both physical and digital training hubs would create greater

opportunities for employment, support local businesses and strengthen the economy.

However, poor connectivity in parts of East Cleveland makes it essential to prioritise place based hubs where residents can receive inperson support. Roundtable participants stressed that accessible and trusted community spaces should be used, designed with local input. At the same time, investment in better broadband is necessary to ensure that virtual hubs become a viable long term option.

Apprenticeships

There are excellent providers of apprenticeships in East Cleveland, such as Tees Components, who are doing important work upskilling the local workforce. To support a strong and diverse workforce, the Combined Authority must ensure apprenticeships are accessible across a wide range of sectors, particularly where there are recruitment challenges such as health and social care, green industries, and business and professional services. Apprenticeships should be available at all levels, from entry to degree, allowing people of all ages and backgrounds to upskill or retrain. However, many sectors reliant on flexible working or short term contracts struggle to use the standard apprenticeship model. This is particularly true for construction creative industries. Flexi apprenticeships, already available in other areas, should be better utilised in East Cleveland to address skills shortages.

Expanding apprenticeship opportunities will help address gaps in the workforce, support economic growth and provide clear career pathways for local residents.

- O Convene a skills partnership to co-produce its regional skills strategy with FE providers, employers, and local authorities
- O Ensure that the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer works with schools, colleges and training providers, as well as Early Help, youth services and youth offending services, to identify vulnerable young people early
- O Collaborate with neighbouring combined authorities to share good practice on Trailblazers
- Ensure that funded functional skills programmes allow re entry for learners
- Integrate peer support approaches, building on the success of voluntary sector literacy programmes
- O Deliver training in accessible community venues to reduce stigma and increase participation
- Ensure that all documentation is readability checked and written in plain English
- O Roll out soft skills courses across East Cleveland, using NOCN and similar programmes
- O Develop short specialist courses to supplement Level 2 and 3 provision
- Expand the Loftus Employment and Skills Hub, focusing on digital skills but also including soft skills
- O Support flexible apprenticeship models that suit industries with non traditional working patterns
- O Draw up a plan to expand apprenticeship opportunities in line with labour shortages identified in the Local Skills Improvement Plan

Housing

Current challenges

Housing is a key driver of regeneration and community wellbeing. East Cleveland Youth Housing Trust (ECYHT) has shown how empty properties can be renovated to create affordable homes while also providing apprenticeships, combining housing growth with skills development.

Roundtable participants raised concerns about rogue landlords and antisocial tenants. Some argued that blanket licensing can penalise good landlords, while others suggested targeted schemes in areas of entrenched deprivation. These perspectives underline the need for housing policy to feature more explicitly in the Growth Plan, not only as social infrastructure but also as an economic enabler.

Social housing

Social housing in East Cleveland is under significant pressure, with demand exceeding supply and providers facing pressure to improve existing stock. Satisfaction levels are low, with only 68% of tenants of the largest local social landlord satisfied with the overall service, and just 67% satisfied that their home is well maintained.¹²

Roundtable feedback stressed that social housing cannot simply be measured in terms of numbers, but also in terms of quality and reliability. Poor standards contribute to health inequalities and low community confidence.

Community-led and co-operative housing initiatives were highlighted as potential solutions, with schemes such as those

pioneered by ECYHT offering a model for affordable homes and stronger neighbourhood ties.

New sites

Housing growth is under pressure across all tenures, including private ownership, affordable rent and social housing. Participants emphasised that housing should not be planned in isolation but integrated with shops, schools, GPs, transport links and leisure facilities, so that new developments are genuinely sustainable.

A shared brownfield land register should be maintained, and the Combined Authority should work with Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council to remediate land for development. Sites such as the old Empire Theatre in Loftus and Boosbeck abattoir land were cited by roundtable contributors as opportunities for community driven housing renewal.

Stakeholders also highlighted the challenge of transport links from new estates. Residents on large new housing sites often struggle to access public transport, leaving them reliant on cars. This weakens the sustainability of new developments and places further strain on rural bus services.

Retrofitting

East Cleveland's housing stock includes a high proportion of older homes that are energy inefficient, leaving many residents vulnerable to fuel poverty. A targeted retrofit strategy is needed to upgrade these homes, reduce bills, and cut carbon emissions. This would also capitalise on untapped potential for green skills and green energy in the area. By linking retrofit programmes to training and apprenticeships, East Cleveland can create new jobs in insulation, heating systems, and electric transport infrastructure, while supporting the wider growth of the clean energy sector.

- O Lobby partners to ensure that any new supply of housing includes a mix of types, including executive homes, bungalows and social housing, in line with the local authority's growth plan
- O Use its convening powers to bring social housing providers together to address poor standards and bring empty properties back into use
- O Support the development of community led and co operative housing initiatives, building on existing local schemes
- Maintain a shared brownfield land register and secure funding to remediate land for development
- Work with local housing providers and developers to ensure that land is made available for affordable rented homes
- O Ensure that active travel and public transport access are integrated into the design of new housing developments
- O Develop a targeted housing retrofit strategy to upgrade the efficiency and decency of homes



Health and Wellbeing

Current challenges

ONS data highlights significant disparities in life expectancy and common health conditions in East Cleveland. Many working age residents live with chronic health issues or poor mental health, which restricts economic participation. Male life expectancy in the area is 77 years and female life expectancy is 81.1 years, compared to the England averages of 79.1 and 83. Over a fifth of the population, 22.5%, reported having a long term illness or disability, compared to the national average of 17.4%. 7.4% of residents report being in bad or very bad health, higher than the England average of 5.2%. 15

Roundtable participants stressed that these challenges are felt daily in households and workplaces. Employers linked workforce wellbeing directly to retention and productivity, highlighting the need for joined up support that combines health and employment services. Voluntary groups spoke of parents skipping meals to feed children, people unable to access affordable gyms or healthy food, and families reliant on food banks.

Health inequalities and prevention

Voluntary and community partners emphasised the importance of green spaces, food education and community projects for improving wellbeing. They gave examples of "pasture to plate" programmes that link local food with healthier diets, and noted that rights of way, antisocial behaviour and reduced funding have limited access to these resources.

Transport barriers also affect health, with children missing out on sport and leisure

activities due to poor bus services. Stakeholders praised positive partnership working under the Community Mental Health Transformation programme but warned that short term contracts for voluntary groups undermine stability and delivery. They called for charities to be treated as long term partners in health planning.

Prevention and early intervention strategies to reduce the impact of addiction are vital, supporting existing work such as the Recovery Connections residential substance misuse service at Royce House in Brotton.

In addition, there is a need for stronger support for carers, multi-year funding for voluntary organisations, and better integration between health, care and employment services so families can access joined-up support.

Access to NHS services

Ensuring timely and equitable access to NHS services is critical. Strengthening GP provision, expanding mental health support and reducing waiting times for specialist care will improve outcomes and ease pressure on emergency departments.

Reopening the closed wing of East Cleveland Hospital is an important step. However, enhancing access must also involve a shift from hospital centric models to community based services, with more care delivered close to home. Models such as the Buurtzorg approach, which emphasise integrated, patient centred care, could be explored. This would foster stronger patient clinician relationships and improve outcomes.



Health and Wellbeing

Working well

The evidence is clear that good quality work goes hand in hand with good health. The Combined Authority should work with the Department for Work and Pensions, South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Public Health South Tees to pilot a work and health scheme for East Cleveland.

This should draw together local bodies to strengthen data sharing and intelligence on how rural health impacts the workforce. It could track service use, monitor health challenges among working people, and foster a network of place based services at community hubs, where voluntary organisations and social prescribers provide short term, personalised employment support for those in poor health.

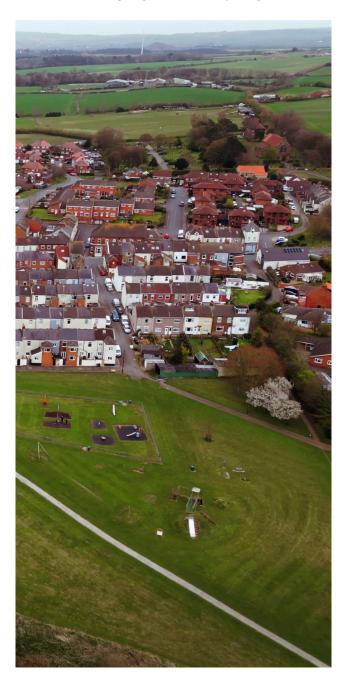
Leisure

High quality leisure facilities help promote active lifestyles and reduce health inequalities. There is reasonable access to leisure centres in Loftus and Guisborough, as well as private sector provision, but roundtable participants noted that affordability remains a barrier. They suggested that subsidised or discounted schemes should be made available to families on lower incomes.

For residents in more rural villages, poor public transport limits access to facilities, widening inequalities. Expanding transport options to leisure centres or developing more community based provision would help ensure all residents can participate in sport and fitness.

East Cleveland's moorlands, woodlands, coastal

paths and countryside trails play an important role in supporting physical and mental wellbeing. Roundtable participants highlighted the value of maintaining and improving access to these spaces, with calls for investment in path upkeep, clear signage and safe cycling routes.



- Work with the Department for Work and Pensions, South Tees Hospitals NHS
 Foundation Trust and Public Health South Tees to pilot a 'work and health' scheme
 for East Cleveland;
- O Review existing supported employment schemes in the area to understand the range of models from employers and share good practice;
- O Strengthen integration between health, care and employment services, including by fostering a network of place-based services at rural community hubs, wherein voluntary organisations and social prescribers can provide short-term, personalised employment support for those in poor health;
- O Lobby for reopening of the closed wing of the East Cleveland hospital;
- Work with councils to develop a regional children's care co-op model;
- O Provide multi-year contracts for voluntary organisations delivering care support, to reduce insecurity and improve outcomes;
- O Support carers through training, respite provision and financial recognition;
- Expand access to affordable exercise programmes in leisure centres, gyms and local facilities;
- Ensure that transport links effectively with health and leisure facilities throughout the area so that residents can keep active and well;
- O Support the relevant authorities in the maintenance and improvement of footpaths and cycleways as part of Active Travel planning.

Co-ordination

Roundtable participants raised consistent concerns that East Cleveland risks being left behind if investment and strategy are concentrated only around Freeport and city centre sites. Employers spoke of a potential talent drain, with skilled workers being pulled towards new developments elsewhere in Teesside. Voluntary sector partners stressed that local communities must be represented fairly in Combined Authority planning processes, so that regeneration reaches rural and coastal villages as well as the larger towns.

Both business and voluntary groups highlighted the challenges caused by short term funding and fragmented commissioning. Charities described the instability of one year contracts, which force them to spend resources chasing grants rather than delivering services. Employers argued that uncertainty around TVCA timelines for its Growth Plan and the new "Get Tees Valley Working" strategy undermines confidence and investment planning.

Participants called for a more joined up approach, with better communication between TVCA, local authorities, business networks and the voluntary sector. They emphasised the need for planning that spans ten to twenty years rather than being tied to short political cycles.

- O Guarantee that East Cleveland is fairly represented in regional strategies and funding allocations
- Ensure that the new "Get Tees Valley Working" strategy aligns with the Growth Plan for East Cleveland and does not draw talent away from rural communities
- Provide clarity on Combined Authority timelines so that employers and voluntary groups can plan effectively
- O Move away from short term commissioning and ensure voluntary organisations are treated as long term partners
- Create a standing forum for dialogue with East Cleveland businesses and voluntary groups to ensure their perspectives inform strategy and delivery



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