



Northumberland

County Council

Building a Sustainable and Resilient Early Years Workforce

The early years workforce and strong leadership are central to delivering the best possible outcomes for children and families. In Northumberland, we recognise that a sustainable and resilient workforce is essential to meeting the needs of children today while building capacity for the future. By valuing experience, nurturing new talent and investing in professional development, mentoring, wellbeing and leadership, we can strengthen workforce capacity, develop future leaders and support the delivery of high-quality early education and childcare.

This is fundamental to Northumberland's statutory childcare sufficiency duty, enabling providers to maintain and expand high-quality childcare places, respond to changing patterns of demand, and ensure families can access the childcare they need. In turn, this helps children achieve the best start in life, supports parents and carers to access and sustain employment, education and training opportunities, and contributes to stronger communities and a thriving local economy.



Northumberland

County Council

Team Discussion Prompts

You may wish to use these questions during staff meetings, supervision sessions or workforce planning discussions to encourage reflection, succession and future action planning.

Understanding Current Talent

- What strengths, skills and expertise already exist within our team?
- Does each team member recognise and value team members skills, and expertise?
- How do we draw upon and make the best use of the skills, knowledge, talents across generations?- such as mentoring
- What knowledge or skills would be difficult to replace if a member of staff left tomorrow?
- Do we make time within supervision to discuss each personal development plan?
- Do we incorporate recent training and CPD and the knowledge gained within supervision?



Northumberland

County Council

Growing Future Talent

- How are we identifying and nurturing potential future leaders within our setting?
- What opportunities do staff have to develop new skills, take on additional responsibilities or progress their careers?
- How do we encourage staff to share knowledge, mentor colleagues and learn from one another?
- Do we help to foster individual interests in a way that supports the resilience, retention and a sustainable team?

Attracting the Next Generation

- How attractive is our setting to apprentices, students, volunteers, school leavers or career changers?
- What opportunities do we offer for work experience, placements, volunteering or apprenticeships?
- How well do we mentor and support students on placement?



Northumberland

County Council

• How can we better promote early years as a rewarding and meaningful career?	
Building a Sustainable Workforce • What skills will our workforce need in the next 3–5 years? • Are we developing the digital, SEND, leadership and communication skills needed for the future? • How are we balancing experienced practitioners' expertise with fresh ideas and new perspectives?	
Taking Action • What is one thing we could do this year to strengthen our talent pipeline? • How can we better support staff to stay, grow and thrive within our setting? • What legacy are we creating for the next generation of practitioners and families?	



Northumberland

County Council

Reflection Challenge

"If we were designing our workforce for the future today, what would we keep, what would we need to develop, and what new talent would we need to attract to support our settings resilience?"

You may find the following Toolkit useful when assessing your current provision, future needs and delivery model.

<https://earlyyearscareers.campaign.gov.uk/-Workforce-Toolkit-Recruiting-Retaining-Supporting-your-Workforce-2.pdf>

[Northumberland Best Start in Life Plan pdf](#)

The early years shape lifelong health and opportunity, and this Best Start in Life Plan 2026–2028 sets out our shared ambition to make that foundation as strong as possible for every baby, child and family.