



The Holiday Activities and Food programme in action - just one example of Northumbria's commitment to driving social mobility

Nov 24, 2025 13:03 GMT

University partnerships key to driving social mobility, says Lords report

Northumbria University has welcomed a major House of Lords report which champions the role of universities in driving social mobility through local partnerships.

The [Social Mobility: Local Roots, Lasting Change](#) report calls for collaboration between universities, further education colleges, schools, employers and local authorities to remove barriers to opportunity and tackle the "shocking" rise in young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

A year-long inquiry by the cross-party Social Mobility Policy Committee examined how educational and work opportunities can be better integrated to improve social mobility.

Social mobility is a key focus for Northumbria University, with around 40% of Northumbria students coming from underrepresented backgrounds. Many students are the first in their family to attend university or have experience of the care system.

Professor Andy Long, Northumbria's Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, contributed [oral evidence](#) on the University's leading work in this area to the inquiry.

The report specifically highlights the success of initiatives including **Into**University centres and the North East Raising Aspiration Partnership (NERAP) as exemplars of partnership working.

NERAP, a collaboration between the region's five universities which supports young people to think about their futures and how higher education can help them reach their goals. Established for over a decade, the initiative supports over 30,000 young people annually, raising aspirations and improving access to education and employment across the region.

IntoUniversity is the UK's largest university access charity which runs learning centres across England and Scotland. A centre in Newcastle delivered in partnership with Northumbria and Newcastle universities has helped more than 2,500 young people facing disadvantage to progress into higher education and other career pathways since its opening in 2021. [A new centre in Gateshead has been officially launched](#) by the three organisations this week.

Professor Long said: "This report underscores what we have long understood – that universities must be active partners in their communities, working collaboratively to create pathways to opportunity for all young people.

"The North East faces particular challenges as a post-industrial region with a diverse geography spanning coastal, rural and urban communities. Initiatives such as the North East Raising Aspiration Partnership and **Into**University Centres highlighted in the report demonstrate how universities can act as

anchor institutions, convening schools, colleges, employers and local authorities to develop solutions tailored to our region's specific needs.

"We strongly support the Committee's call for local partnerships to lead social mobility efforts. Through our work across the North East and beyond, we are committed to ensuring that background does not determine future success, and that every talented young person has the support and opportunities they need to thrive."

The report makes key recommendations to Government, calling for educational reform, devolution of powers to local authorities, and increased support for local partnerships to create job opportunities and remove barriers to advancement.

The committee also calls for an increase in the household income threshold at which a student can get the maximum maintenance loan during their time at university, in line with inflationary rises.

Northumbria University has lobbied for the maintenance loan to be reviewed for some time. Professor Long is quoted in the report emphasising that the current threshold "means that next year, a family where one parent is earning just above the national minimum wage is expected to subsidise their children when they are at university, and that is obviously absurd."

Professor Long added: "The Government's Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper includes welcome measures, particularly inflation-linked increases to tuition fees and maintenance loans, and the reintroduction of maintenance grants, which are essential for social mobility.

"However, universities are concerned about the proposed route to fund these grants via a levy on international student fees which could have unintended consequences. We are talking with government and hope that together we can reach a solution which works for UK and international students and for universities."

CASE STUDIES: Northumbria's wider social mobility commitment

In addition to outreach partnerships such as NERAP and **Into**University, Northumbria has embedded social mobility at the heart of its mission through

scholarship opportunities, research that tackles social disadvantage and workforce planning in collaboration with local and regional government. Examples of leading initiatives include:

Scholarships and support:

The University's [Higher Education Without Barriers](#) fund provides a range of financial support, mental health and wellbeing services and community projects. Supported by Northumbria alumni, businesses and charitable partners, the fund has raised over £5.5 million and supported over 3,500 students since it launched in 2022.

Research:

[Northumbria-led research](#) outlining the critical importance of the national Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme has been instrumental in the government's decision to commit £600 million to funding the programme for the next three years. The team's findings confirmed the widespread positive impacts of the HAF programme on children's health, social and educational wellbeing – from improving school attendance, motivation and educational attainment, to supporting social relationships, quality of life, and upward social mobility.

Workforce planning:

Northumbria's partnership with Bede Academy in Blyth to develop a new two-year [T-Level course in health](#), is offering an alternative pathway to A-Levels and apprenticeships for young people with aspirations of working in the NHS or health and social care.

For more on Northumbria's ambitions around social mobility visit the [University website](#).

Find out more about the key report recommendations on [UK Parliament's Social Mobility Policy Committee webpages](#).

ENDS

For media enquiries, please contact:
media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk

Notes to Editors

About Northumbria University

Northumbria University is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally.

Two thirds of Northumbria's undergraduate students come from the North East region and go into employment in the region when they graduate, demonstrating Northumbria's a significant contribution to social mobility and levelling up in the North East of England.

About the report

1. The House of Lords Social Mobility Policy Committee report Social Mobility: Local Roots, Lasting Change (HL Paper 201) is available at: committees.parliament.uk
 2. The special inquiry committee was appointed to consider how educational and work opportunities could be better integrated to improve social mobility in the UK. The committee focussed in particular on; the importance of place, those not in education, training or employment (NEETs), Education and training opportunities for 16-18 year olds and data.
 3. The report identifies the North East as a geographically large and diverse region facing particular challenges related to its post-industrial heritage, requiring tailored local solutions.
 4. Professor Andy Long, Vice-Chancellor of Northumbria University, provided oral evidence to the Committee alongside representatives from Durham and Sunderland universities during the Committee's evidence sessions.
 5. Find out more about the [North East Raising Aspiration Partnership](#) which is soon to be known as Access UNEE, where "UNEE" is "Universities for North East England". UNEE is a collaboration between the Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside Universities, working alongside the Tees Valley and North East Combined Authorities. Speaking in a unified, place-informed voice to make higher education accessible for study, business, innovation, and investment and offering regional insight to help inform national Higher Education policy.
 6. Find out more about [IntoUniversity Centre Newcastle East](#) and [IntoUniversity Centre Gateshead](#).
-

UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2022 (Times Higher Education Awards)

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally.

Two thirds of Northumbria's undergraduate students come from the North East region and go into employment in the region when they graduate, demonstrating Northumbria's significant contribution to social mobility and levelling up in the North East of England.

Find out more about us at www.northumbria.ac.uk

--- Please contact media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk with any media enquiries or interview requests ---

Contacts



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

Head of Corporate Communications (interim)

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Ruth Lognonne

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

ruth.lognonne@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk