

# OPEN THE DOOR A LITTLE WIDER:

PERSPECTIVES ON BARRIERS TO GOOD  
WORK AND INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES IN  
THE NORTH OF TYNE

**NORTH  
OF TYNE**  
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## FOREWORD FROM MAYOR JAMIE DRISCOLL, MAYOR OF THE NORTH OF TYNE

“To bring about change you must not be afraid to take the first step. We will fail when we fail to try.”

Rosa Parks took her first step 69 years ago when she refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man. You probably know the story. She was arrested. African Americans boycotted buses in Montgomery, Alabama for a year. The United States Supreme Court declared segregated buses to be unconstitutional. It was a foundational event in the civil rights movement in America.

Change happens when people turn up and take part. When they don't accept that the way things are today are the way they always have to be. Making a more equal world is not a spectator sport. People need to be involved as well as committed.

In my election manifesto I pledged to hold an Equalities Assembly. A space to find solutions to problems, not a talking shop. To listen to people's lived experiences and work out how we can do better.

The stark reality is that there is much to do: 1 in 5 of the North of Tyne population are living with a disability, yet nearly half of all residents with a disability are economically inactive. Almost a third of children here live in poverty. Pupils eligible for free school meals are less likely to go to university than those who aren't. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities feel they don't count, not least because they are often not counted at all in official statistics.

We don't have all the levers of power in the North of Tyne. For example, we can't get rid of the Government's two-child benefit cap, however much I want to.

But we can listen to people. And we do. Through all of our programmes. And we can do something about employment. It doesn't solve every problem but if we get it right it can get you more money in your pocket. And in this cost-of-living crisis that really does matter.

So, we listened to residents and employers – experts in their fields and key partners for change. We wanted to know what the real barriers were to recruiting a diverse workforce and why good jobs remained out of reach for some.



We got some excellent insights. I listened to stories of discriminatory practices I didn't even know existed. One participant spoke about how he'd been advised to change his name on applications to something more "English-sounding". Another attendee had autism and dyspraxia. They'd secured a good position with decent managers at a national company. But then their manager changed – and they stopped getting the support they needed. A young single mum who'd experienced serious hardship described how she'd landed an "amazing" job. Working a few hours, each week. Limited hours meant she could afford the limited childcare. But now she's being pushed to increase her hours. If she does, she won't be able to afford childcare. If she doesn't, her benefits will be cut. I can see what participants meant when they spoke about Universal Credit and "a sense of being trapped".

We also heard from employers who'd changed the way they worked and were now challenging others to do the same. Recruitment practices, in-work training, flexible working to meet caring responsibilities – a range of ideas came to the fore.

Our challenge now is to make these changes happen. To use the tools we have at our disposal – our Good Work Pledge (currently signed by 140 employers), our skills and training budget, and the investments we make daily in hundreds of local employers, big and small.

**LET'S OPEN THE DOOR A LITTLE WIDER.**

## INTRODUCTION

In 2022 and 2023 the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) held three engagement events (2 for residents and 1 for employers), to listen to the experiences of both residents and employers, focusing on challenges and successes in gaining good work. This report presents the pivotal findings from the three events.

The NTCA is a partnership of three local authority areas: Newcastle, Northumberland and North Tyneside. One of the NTCA's aims is to build a more inclusive economy, bringing together people and opportunities to create a good quality of life for everyone.

The North of Tyne has historically seen high unemployment rates and whilst these rates have steadily decreased over the last decade, the North of Tyne currently has one of the lowest economic activity rates in the country.

Data highlights that within the North of Tyne:

- Female residents (aged 16-64) are more likely to be unemployed and less likely to be in employment than their male counterparts.
- The biggest fall in employment rates from 2021 was seen by older residents (aged 50 to 64 years).
- Long-term sickness is now the main reason behind economic inactivity in our area. In 2022, 4,800 more residents left the labour market due to long-term illness compared to pre-pandemic.
- Nearly half (47.6%) of disabled residents are economically inactive.
- Unemployment amongst minority ethnic groups (excluding white minorities) went down by nearly 10 percentage points and employment rose by over 10 percentage points since 2021-2022.
- Nearly a third (31.4%) of minority ethnic groups in our area are economically inactive, which is above the regional and national average.

\* The full NTCA report from which this data is taken is entitled 'Examining the State of our Region' and can be found on our website.

## DEVELOPING A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF RESIDENT AND EMPLOYER EXPERIENCES: OUR APPROACH

At NTCA our vision for the future includes an inclusive and sustainable economy. We passionately believe that turning this vision into a reality involves developing a deep understanding of the inequalities that some of our residents face daily and a shared commitment from those involved across the system to address this.

In November 2022, NTCA hosted its inaugural 'Equalities Assemblies', where 57 residents who had experienced challenges finding good work, shared their lived experiences and hopes for the future with the Mayor of the North of Tyne, Jamie Driscoll, and NTCA officers. There was one online event and one face to face event. The purpose of this was to gather insights which could be used for inclusive policy development and targeted interventions and to support employers to be better able to recruit and retain a diverse workforce. This was key to NTCA's aims to build better and more informed relationships with residents, and to work alongside them for a better future.

One attendee commented that they are so used to not being heard, it was like 'a dream' to be able to talk to the mayor. Many participants said that they were inspired by the **'buzz in the room'** at the face-to-face event, and others reported feeling **'empowered'** and **'listened to'** over the course of the day. Another attendee said that the face-to-face event, was the most inclusive event they had ever attended.

A similar session was also hosted for employers in the region, who were also invited to share their experiences of challenges and successes in recruiting a diverse workforce.

In recognition of the importance of conveying these stories effectively, NTCA partnered with academics from Durham University to help with a thematic approach to analysing the feedback. Professor Jo McBride and Dr Cat Spellman also advised on the methodology used.

## MEANINGFUL APPROACHES TO ENGAGEMENT

A considered and deliberate approach was taken to making sure the events were inclusive. The resident events were codesigned with Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE) and other organisations in the voluntary sector, in an attempt to ensure they were comfortable, meaningful and attended by diverse residents. The codesign events established elements such as accessibility and communication requirements and the group agreed to share all event materials with attendees in advance, in easy-read format.

19 partner organisations were involved in total, and they helped to recruit attendees from across the spectrum of protected characteristic groups, who may have faced barriers in gaining good work. This resulted in a diverse group of participants.

A total number of 39 residents attended the face-to-face event.

### What are protected characteristics?

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

These are called protected characteristics. (Equality Act, 2010).

Attendees sat in small groups on tables of 4 or 5 people, each with a designated facilitator from the NTCA. Facilitators aimed to create a safe and comfortable space for the participants and to work in a relational and respectful way with them. The discussions on each table were centred around 3 open questions which invited participants to share their experiences of barriers to employment and their hopes for a better future.

A similar format was mirrored in the online event, which followed, and was attended by 7 further residents, who also had the opportunity to talk to the mayor. The online event was identified by the co-design group as being important for inclusivity.

11 residents who were unable to attend, due to illness, anxiety or other factors, emailed their stories and experiences.

### Resident discussion questions

1. Please tell us about barriers you have experienced that have stopped you from being able to access the right job for you. These are the things which have stopped you from being able to realise your potential.
2. What might make/might have made a difference for you?
3. From your experience and perspective, is there anything else you'd like us to know?

The final event to take place was an opportunity for employers in the region to engage and provide their own experiences and perspectives on the same topics of discussion as with the residents. Another online listening event was arranged with the same format. A total number of 15 employers attended, working in mainly senior leadership or HR positions. A good range of sectors were represented including voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations, digital, law, transport, housing and skills.

Again, attendees worked in small groups of 3 to 5 people each with a facilitator who asked the questions, with another taking notes, and all of the major points were fed back to the room, after each question had been discussed. Academics from Durham University also attended these sessions. When allocating attendees to their groups, the research team tried to avoid the grouping of similar organisations or sectors to avoid competition or the fear of repercussions amongst competing businesses. Some attendees chose not to disclose their employer, in this instance employer names have been left out of the contributors at the end of this report.

### Employer discussion questions

1. Please tell us about any barrier you have experienced as an employer, in being able to recruit and retain a diverse workforce.
2. What do you feel might have made a difference to these challenges?
3. Please tell us about any successes you may have had in recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce.
4. From your experience and perspective, is there anything else you'd like us to know?

## WORKING WITH THE EVENT FINDINGS

Following the three listening events, the notes taken by the facilitators were gathered together and analysed by the research team at NTCA and Durham University. The content and form of the notes were varied, including a mix of direct quotes from the participants, more general comments and summaries, and also observations from the event.

The notes from both the residents and the employers were analysed in depth both separately and together in order to consider all perspectives and reflections from the event. Themes were then drawn out which are presented in the section that follows. Particular focus was given throughout to the real and lived experiences of the participants that were shared during the events.

## ART, POETRY AND WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS

An important part of inclusive engagement with residents and employers is to work with them in different ways, helping people communicate in their own style.

An opportunity was provided for participants to submit responses in different formats, including written responses, art, poetry or photography to represent their experiences with regards to the challenges they had experienced gaining good work and their hopes for the future.

A sample of the submissions is featured briefly below and presented in full in appendix A at the end of this report.



## THEMES

Four main dimensions were identified in the research, which were clear in both employer and resident discussions.

### 1. JOB SEEKING

- 1.1 JOB SEARCH AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS
- 1.2 QUALIFICATIONS, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

### 2. APPLICATION AND INTERVIEW PROCESSES

- 2.1 APPLICATION PROCESSES
- 2.2 INTERVIEWS

### 3. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- 3.1 PREGNANCY/MATERNITY AND CHILDCARE
- 3.2 DISABILITY, HEALTH AND NEURODIVERSITY
- 3.3 RACE AND RELIGION
- 3.4 SEXUAL ORIENTATION

### 4. IN-WORK PROCESSES, OPPORTUNITY AND CULTURE

- 4.1 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORKPLACE
- 4.2 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE
- 4.3 ROLE OF MANAGEMENT

Within each theme, both challenges and opportunities for the future were discussed with participants.

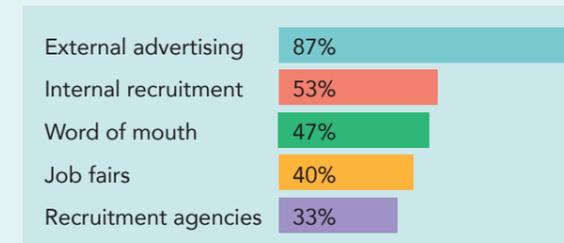
## THEME 1: JOB SEEKING

The first theme which became apparent was that of job seeking. There was much discussion among residents and employers about the challenges associated with looking for jobs, advertising jobs, and the processes associated with applying for jobs and shortlisting. Both residents and employers also focussed on qualifications and skills as part of this conversation, as well as employer expectations of candidate skills and experience.

### 1.1 JOB SEARCH AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS

**How are North East Employers carrying out their recruitment?**

Employers who attended the final event were polled to find out where they were carrying out their recruitment. The results were as follows:



### CHALLENGES

**Not knowing where to look for jobs:** On the theme of looking for work, residents commented on not always knowing where to look for jobs and feeling overwhelmed by the number of websites and other places where jobs are advertised.

**Inflexible working hours:** Several residents commented on the limited scope in terms of contracts and the issue of hours in job adverts, saying that jobs are mainly full time and/or zero hours and that there are not enough part time or flexible jobs with guaranteed hours. This presented a barrier for those with caring responsibilities or to those who were training.

**Lack of reliable information from some employers about the job and company:** It was reported by residents that there was often a lack of accurate information from employers in job descriptions and adverts around company culture, expectations and reasonable adjustments. Participants commented on wanting more transparency over company values, policies and practices, to ensure they were a good fit. One resident said *"I need to be able to find out more about an employer before I apply to go for an interview so I can decide on whether the job will be safe for me - things like travel, accessibility, LGBT policies. Does the company have values that will make me feel safe, welcome and accepted?"*

**The emotional impact of job seeking:** Many residents commented on the emotional impact of job seeking and noted having felt disappointment, stress and even despair at the regular rejections, or just hearing nothing at all. This can be quite a triggering experience, especially for those who have experienced trauma. Some noted the confidence paradox; – you need to feel good to look for work, but the more rejections you receive, the harder this is. One resident said: *"finding work is a battle and you need to feel good and strong to go into battle."*

**Confusion over whether you need to meet all the criteria:** Some younger people and those new to the job market (eg recently graduated) felt there was no point applying for a job if they couldn't meet 100% of the criteria. Even those with years of experience sometimes struggled to put together applications that they felt would be considered for the post. A North of Tyne employer also highlighted this, stating *"The shortlisting is strict, it involves meeting essential and desirable criteria and writing a personal statement and this is what is assessed on - if you haven't written an application before you might not be able to meet the criteria despite having done the job for 20 years."*

**Traditional recruitment practices don't work for everyone:** Employers noted that standard recruitment is not suitable for everyone. Some commented that the way jobs are advertised on job websites is often too prescriptive and applications are too 'hefty' and can put people off. One resident commented on inflexible and exclusionary pathways into work and said that employers should consider different approaches, saying *"people have got so much resilience and have worked so hard to get themselves ready for work. These characteristics will ensure they will succeed eventually - but we need employers and recruiters to change and work as hard from their end to change their attitudes and processes."*

**Recruitment agencies can work in a dispersed way and lack local knowledge:** Employers reported some challenges with using recruitment agencies. In the discussions it was expressed that there was a lack of specialised recruitment agencies for recruiting staff with protected characteristics in our region and that regional recruitment sites have a tendency (as with many algorithms) to attract homogenous candidates. Some also mentioned that many specialised recruitment agencies were based in London and not many applicants want to relocate.

**Some employers struggle to attract diverse candidates:** Employers reported not necessarily struggling with attracting candidates but struggling to attract candidates from different backgrounds. They also reported some disappointment around this saying *“We know we need to be doing more to attract a different range of people.”*

#### Opportunities for the future

- Thoughtful and innovative approaches to advertising jobs, rather than just doing what has always been done.
- Social connectedness in recruitment, with better links between employers and applicants and perhaps even between applicants themselves.
- Changing the narrative around people who are out of work, which can sometimes be negative—those who have faced challenges are often resilient, can solve problems and are adaptable.
- Recruitment processes which recognise the emotional impact and stress that job seeking can cause.
- Making sure that detailed company information is available in advance and gives a real flavour of what it's like to work somewhere, so a candidate can decide whether it's for them or not.
- Considering different approaches to job descriptions and person specifications, for example, being clear if 100% of the criteria does not need to be met.
- Flexibility in recruitment and an openness to different or tailored approaches.
- Non-traditional routes to employment eg apprenticeships.
- Innovation in work experience offerings eg virtual programmes.
- More support and training for employers about reasonable adjustments and how to attract diverse candidates.

*“Recruitment processes should be less competitive and more equitable, just open the door a little wider”*

North of Tyne resident.

## 1.2 QUALIFICATIONS, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

### CHALLENGES

**Prohibitive cost of training:** Multiple participants noted the prohibitive cost of training or re-training as a barrier to good work.

**Mainstream training is sometimes unsuitable:** On the suitability of mainstream training, more than one participant commented that this is often not trauma-informed\* and can therefore be unsuitable for those who have survived abuse or other traumatic events.

**A disconnect between specific qualifications and their real value in the workplace:** Residents noted feeling frustrated at seeing mandatory qualifications as part of a person specification, which were not relevant to the job role. One attendee said, *“why do employers ask for a qualification if it's not going to be used for that job?”* Another said *“Qualifications don't tell you about the person. Just because you don't have the qualification, doesn't mean you can't do it.”*

**Challenges and stigma associated with having lived or worked abroad:** Numerous participants who had relocated to the UK from other countries, commented on the problems and challenges in transferring and recognising overseas qualifications. These included not having the certificate, the cost of qualification transfer and qualifications not being recognised by UK employers. One participant said *“in my home country I was a successful Dentist with two dental clinics. I have been unsuccessful even for Dental Assistant jobs here. I have applied for a job as an interpreter and a job looking after a building but get told that I am over-qualified.”*

**English for Speaker of Other Languages (ESOL) training not suitable for everyone:** One resident who submitted their story via email, had lived overseas. She was a survivor of domestic violence with a masters in physics and a high level of English and was told she'd have to start at a basic level of ESOL, which was well below her standard of English. She was left feeling isolated, dejected and depressed. Mirroring this, another participant commented that they felt insulted by the low standard in ESOL provision, saying that many topics were irrelevant for the workplace, but felt they couldn't turn this down because it was mandated training. Employers also discussed ESOL provision and employees with English as a second language and agreed that there was often 'the wrong type of support' and that career appointments should perhaps be longer for those with English as an additional language.

**Not enough training and support for self-employment:** There were conversations around self-employment programmes/courses which were considered as not being adequately flexible, plus some residents felt that there was not enough support to go self-employed raising the issues of complicated legislation and lack of help with funding. More than one resident talked about having been forced into self-employment, as this was the only way they could really be themselves.

**Additional challenges for those in abusive relationships:** One attendee commented on the impact of a coercive relationship on her skills and qualifications: *“He discouraged me from bettering myself. There was a computer in the house, but I wasn't allowed to use it. I have a problem with numbers and paperwork but I'm really good with people.”*

**Difficulties gaining appropriate levels of experience:** Young people reported being particularly impacted by the pandemic and being unable to gain real work experience because of this. Some graduates said that employers were always looking for more experience than they had and reported difficulties gaining good work in an office environment, when the only paid work they'd done was in hospitality/entry-level roles. Some residents commented on the challenges around having too much experience and said that lots of different work experience and short term jobs on a CV can be seen as negative, but it's hard to know whether you'll want to stay somewhere.

#### \* Trauma-informed approaches

Experiencing traumatic events is very common. A trauma-informed approach is a way of providing support or services that recognise and respond to the impact of trauma. It involves creating an environment that prioritises safety, trust, choice, and collaboration, considering the unique needs of individuals who may have experienced trauma. The goal is to promote healing, prevent re-traumatisation, and foster a supportive and empowering experience for those affected by trauma.

#### Opportunities for the future

- Reviewing ESOL programmes to make them more flexible and able to support learners with varying levels of English and different degrees of experience and skills. *“We need a more holistic and tailored approach to ESOL, taking into account the intersectional challenges learners often face”* NE Employer.
- Trauma-informed approaches to skills and training.
- Funding for training and re-training including more innovative and less traditional training programmes.
- A recognition of the additional challenges that people who have moved to the UK may have faced and a reframing of this as a strength. This could be coupled with increased flexibility on the right to work skills shortage list in order to make a real difference.
- Additional training, support and funding for those who would like to become self-employed.
- A focus shift from expectations on qualifications to what could be learnt on the job.
- Some residents did comment on some positive experiences with soft skills, computer skills and financial inclusion courses including self-esteem and confidence building, suggesting that there are many good training courses already in existence. Sharing of best practice would be useful in this instance.

## THEME 2: FROM APPLICATION TO INTERVIEW

Application processes and interviewing were central to discussions among both residents and employers. Conversations focussed on application forms, preparing for interviews, attending/holding interviews and sharing feedback afterwards.

### 2.1 APPLICATION PROCESSES

#### CHALLENGES

**Application processes can be unfair and exclusionary:**

Many residents reported feeling that recruitment processes were not fair, accessible or inclusive and that application forms were often too long and complicated.

**Online applications can be problematic:** Residents commented on sometimes not having the digital skills to manage online application processes. Online applications had also proved a challenge for those who have English as an additional language or were neurodiverse. *“Jobs often ask for CVs virtually, I feel embarrassed that I can’t attach CVs through the link, this is a huge set back”* North of Tyne resident.

**Psychometric testing can be unsuitable for applicants with disabilities:** On psychometric tests, more than one resident mentioned that these can sometimes be unsuitable for disabled applicants or applicants with conditions such as bi-polar disorder. One participant mentioned being told that they were appointable but had not scored enough points on the test, so were not offered a role.

#### Opportunities for the future

- **Sharing best practice:** There are numerous examples of inclusive recruitment practices happening around the region and scope to share best practice. Both residents and employers had experiences of this and commented that it tended to be where employers had partnered with the voluntary sector to understand applicants and work relationally with them throughout the recruitment process. *“An example of recruitment done right was Kickstart, where we worked with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) who selected applicants, they went straight to interview, they were given the questions in advance, we took on 6 and all of them were offered jobs at the end.”* North of Tyne Employer.
- **Trauma informed approaches:** similarly, there are good examples of trauma-informed approaches to recruitment and some residents said that an understanding of trauma from employers as part of the recruitment process would be useful.
- **Training in digital skills and offline or alternative applications to be allowed where possible** – one employer had some success in using a video application process, for example.
- **Easy read adverts and application forms.**

### 2.2 INTERVIEWS

#### CHALLENGES

**Practical challenges in accessing interviews:**

Participants of the resident equalities assemblies mentioned problems with accessing interviews, including that it often wasn’t practical (problems with public transport/not driving) and that directions were often not given.

**Applicants are sometimes unsure how to prepare and what to expect:**

Many residents said that they weren’t sure what to expect or how to prepare. Employers mirrored this perspective, and some were beginning to think of alternative ways of carrying out interviews. Some employers said they get better results when questions are shared in advance. Other employers talked about sending over 10 questions in advance and the candidate having a choice of which ones to answer. One employer said *“Giving the questions in advance makes recruitment nicer, it helps people who would otherwise struggle with more formal recruitment processes”* and another commented *“To assess someone in half an hour on whether they can do a job, is that really the best way to do it?”*

**Traditional interview formats can be exclusionary and are a challenge for both residents and employers:**

Both residents and employers commented on the challenges associated with long and complicated interview processes and irrelevant questions. They noted that interviews didn’t always feel like the best format for assessing whether someone was a good fit for a particular role. Residents commented on the emotional impact and stress of interviews with one resident commenting *“I said to them, please give me a chance I will do a demo and then you will see, but they didn’t give me a chance to prove myself. I found the whole thing very stressful”*.

**Applicants can feel disheartened by a lack of diversity in interview panels:**

Some residents commented on the impact that a lack of diversity in recruitment panels has on them, leaving them feeling unable to view themselves within an organisation.

**Applicants are sometimes unsure how much to disclose about themselves:**

Some residents reported feeling nervous about disclosing that they were caring for someone in case it affected the decision from the employer. Employers also mentioned caring responsibilities as a challenge they had come up against but recognised that it was important to ‘unmask’ carers and to make sure they felt able to discuss openly how the organisation could support them. Other residents talked about health issues such as addiction, with one resident commenting *“Due to addiction, getting references from previous employers can be difficult... People without references can be put off from applying for things as they feel that’s a sticking point straight away.”* Some residents with previous criminal convictions commented that this had limited their job prospects and they’d found they were unable to apply for jobs in the career they would like and found employers focussing on their crime directly rather than personal skills, experience, conviction circumstances.

**Applicants can feel discouraged by a lack of feedback after interviews:**

Residents commented on the lack of meaningful feedback after interviews and also fears over challenging interview decisions. Some felt that decisions made about them were unfair and they didn’t understand them but there was nothing they could do. *“I want to have an opportunity to discuss what I am doing right or wrong with a recruiter so that I can then work on doing better. I want to discuss and learn from them, what else I need to do and what they are looking for.”* North of Tyne resident

#### Opportunities for the future

- **Building compassion into the interview process:** Both residents and employers commented on the value that considering interviews as a human process and using trauma-informed approaches would add.
- **Flexibility and thoughtfulness in interview approaches:** In terms of what might make a difference, residents suggested that informal and relaxed recruitment processes would be better, ideally face to face so you can get to know each other better (some people with English as an additional language felt face-to-face was easier too). Long, complicated and multiple interview formats should be avoided.
- **Providing as much information in advance as possible:** Employers talked about good practice such as providing photographs of their building in advance, so people knew what to expect, and on-site and virtual open days where applicants can find out about the company in an informal way. Both employers and residents felt that having questions and tasks provided in advance led to better results.
- **Funding for innovative recruitment pilots:** Employers mentioned wanting more support and funding to help them rethink recruitment processes.
- **Post-interview feedback:** Employers could provide considered feedback after interviews to help applicants in the future and think more carefully about how they could help applicants into other roles.
- **Joined up, affordable travel and/or transport costs for interviews.**
- **Creating a safe space for applicants to be human:** A recognition that people may have additional challenges in the here and now and may have faced challenges in the past. Employers could create a safe space for applicants to be human and to disclose relevant information. Employers said that ‘having the permission’ to ask about things like caring requirements would make things easier for them.

## THEME 3 – EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI)<sup>1</sup>

Residents commented widely on their experiences of what they considered to be tokenistic or misinformed EDI practices, which were not tailored or bespoke to certain organisations, industries or individuals. Employers echoed this in their experiences, commenting on the difficulties they'd had in establishing exactly what employees may need to feel supported and welcome.

### CHALLENGES:

**Some employers are struggling with conversations about race, religion and sexuality:** One employer said *"It's very hard for us to speak out about religion, race, sexuality in conversations, but now we have so many people from these groups so we can support them. We should have the conversations without the fear and be brave - if everyone has the bravery then we will get it right eventually."*

**Some organisations experience a lack of diversity within senior leadership:** Both employers and residents commented on their experiences of a lack of diversity within senior leadership or at board level. They said that representation is fundamental to help residents see themselves in a variety of roles. Some employers said they didn't know how to go about this or where to recruit people from. One employer said *"In terms of ethnicity at a senior level, we're not diverse and we know that. We're doing a lot of work because we know if you don't see yourself represented it's difficult."*

### Opportunities for the future

- **Training:** In terms of what may make a difference, residents said that they expected all staff to be trained properly in things like disability awareness, neurodivergence or LGBTQIA+ issues and that they thought this would really help. This training should be well thought out and meaningful and ideally involve meeting or working with people from different backgrounds.
- **EDI champions:** Employers discussed the importance of having a single point of contact or key person who would drive EDI agendas within an organisation.
- **Sharing best practice:** Some employers gave examples of best practice including gender recognition forums for awareness for transgender people, other internal forums discussing how to support parents or neurodivergent people for example, adding pronouns to signatures, gender neutral toilets and not organising meetings around the school run.
- **Promoting diversity at senior levels:** Employers recognised the value of diversity in senior leadership and commented that diversity within management could contribute to more lived experience at senior levels and an increased likelihood of diversity of opinion. One employer mentioned that they'd like to see a scheme where trainee board members could be taken on, to encourage progression and development for people who do not always have the opportunity to progress to this sort of role.

<sup>1</sup> EDI was naturally quite a key concept during conversations with both residents and employers. Much of this is covered in other sections of this report, however we felt it was important to draw out some of the key points with regards to EDI separately. The amount of space dedicated to each protected characteristic is reflective of how much it was discussed in resident and employer conversations. Some protected characteristics, such as age, sex, marriage and gender reassignment either did not come up in conversation explicitly, or are mentioned elsewhere in this report.

## 3.1 PREGNANCY/MATERNITY AND CHILDCARE

### CHALLENGES

#### Lack of available/flexible/affordable childcare:

Systemic issues around childcare were a key topic of conversation including a lack of affordable, flexible childcare, as well as not enough childcare places and no weekend places. Some residents noted that as only one parent was in work, they were not entitled to tax free childcare and others said that they couldn't afford to pay the childcare costs upfront and wait to be reimbursed by universal credit. Settling in/induction days with nurseries and schools were also noted as problematic as these can be for just an hour a day over several weeks which requires employers to be more flexible than may be possible for them. One resident commented that as their immigration status was still being processed, they were unable to access free childcare and therefore couldn't work. Residents said: *"Childcare costs more than our mortgage."* *"I work shifts, which childcare can't cover."* *"I just kill time all day, waiting for my children to finish school."*

#### Direct discrimination against those who are pregnant:

Several residents commented on having their jobs changed or having to leave because of pregnancy or maternity. One resident said *"I was pushed out of my job when I was pregnant. I loved my work!"* Another commented *"I had my shifts reduced because I wanted time off for my antenatal appointments."*

#### Inflexible working hours and unclear policies:

Residents noted that working hours often don't fit around the school run and/or school holidays and that it's hard to find flexible or part time work around caring for a relative or child. Some parents said they are missing out on work opportunities and promotions which were only available full-time. They had come across negative attitudes and pressure when caring for young children including inflexible and unclear policies. One resident said: *"I really want to work; I want a job but I have to work within school hours."*

### Opportunities for the future

- Flexibility and understanding from employers to support those with childcare or other caring responsibilities. Employers should consider tighter and more specific policies around childcare and working hours and should give consideration to those who are pregnant or have young children given the additional challenges that this raises. Childcare vouchers, flexible working hours and part time contracts were all raised as actions employers could take to support those with children.

## 3.2 DISABILITY, HEALTH AND NEURODIVERSITY

There are 157,900 residents with disabilities in the North of Tyne area, which is 20% of the total North of Tyne population. Nearly half of these residents are economically inactive. Disability was a key theme in the conversations around good work with many residents discussing the challenges associated with gaining good work as a disabled person and the impact this can have on confidence and motivation.

### CHALLENGES:

**Some employers unable to work with Personal Assistants:** residents living with disabilities described situations where employers had been unable to work with Personal Assistants\* (PAs), saying that they didn't understand the role of a PA and that this added to the day-to-day stress of the workplace. Residents said: *"They didn't know when to talk to my PA and when to talk to me - a PA is their own person they are not an extension of me."*

*"They were confused when I asked for a desk for my PA so she could do her own job while I was at work."*

*"There's always a bit of a panic and a worry from employers employing people with PAs - they don't know when to talk to her and when to talk to me."*

#### \* What is a personal assistant?

Personal assistants usually support individuals in their own home or to go out in the community. They are generally employed directly by an individual and can be employed by one employer or work for a number of different people.

Tasks include: organising and supporting individuals with their social and physical activities, helping with personal care such as showering and dressing (although not all PA roles involve personal care) or helping individuals to get to work.

**Some employers are willing but not ready to employ a disabled person:** Employers reported a desire to make reasonable adjustments but felt unsure of what to ask or how far to go. Residents with disabilities shared experiences of employers being willing but not ready to employ a disabled person and the impact this had on them, including sometimes having to give up good work before they had even got started. One attendee, who is a wheelchair user, gave an example of this, saying they had waited 9 months for their employer to put things in place so they could access and use the building comfortably, and then eventually left the job before starting, as it was too long to wait. They had found this *“a prolonged and frustrating process.”* Another resident, on their experience of a new workplace, said *“Just because I am disabled, they made a fuss and made everything different – I’m not different in any other way – work, performance, accountability should all be the same for me as for everyone else.”*

**Some employers are unable to provide specialist equipment:** Disabled employees also commented that they had not always been given the correct equipment to support them at work, for example one attendee who was disabled was working in a restaurant and was not provided with the technology to help them with ordering. They commented that this should have been reasonably simple and that other bars/restaurants were able to do it, but no changes were made by their employer in this instance. This was mirrored in the employer perspective where lack of funding for specialist equipment such as display screen equipment (DSE) was a real barrier for employers in terms of being able to welcome a disabled employee into the office.

**Lack of opportunities for disabled people in leadership roles:** There were also conversations about the lack of opportunities for disabled people in leadership roles. Specifically, one person said employers needed to focus on *“not aiming for the line of being normal, there is nothing stopping us from aiming for elite or high-performance standards”.*

**Lack of awareness from employers with regards to learning difference and neurodivergence:** With regards to learning disabilities and neurodivergence some residents reported issues with employers not understanding this and their behaviour just being seen as challenging or negative. Residents wanted employers to know that neurodivergence is different for each individual. On the theme of learning disabilities and neurodivergence residents said: *“I didn’t tell anyone about my learning disability, and I kept getting finished in jobs because I struggled to read or write, but I didn’t feel comfortable communicating my challenges.”*

*“There is a need to raise awareness among employers on how common it is for people to have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It’s a really common thing. Lots of people have them. And employers should know more about them, to reduce stereotypes and stigmas. And to increase awareness and acceptance.”*

*“Employers should be reading up on how to help staff better. My previous employer didn’t take any notice of the information I gave them about my dyspraxia. However, a more positive experience was when I provided an employer with clear instructions on my individual support needs and I felt listened to and things were implemented.”*

**Additional challenges for the Deaf community:** Some participants who were Deaf reported that in their experience, the ability for Deaf people to secure good work can be poor and this is partly due to failures to include Deaf children and young people fully in the mainstream education system. Their experience was that attitudes to what Deaf people can achieve can also be disappointing, the expectation of many employers is low, they assume Deaf people are not able to do many jobs and can sometimes see them as a health and safety risk.

**Stigma:** Many residents commented on the continued stigma, lack of understanding and lack of informed support around mental health in the workplace, and the barriers that poor physical and mental health can cause to gaining good work.

**Mental health:** Residents reported that some roles can be quite triggering for those with mental health concerns – such as stressful roles or customer facing roles. Others said that they found recruitment processes to be quite triggering. Some residents commented that they felt degraded, segregated and demoralised due to being labelled by their mental or physical health issue and having to declare this at various points during application and interview processes.

#### Opportunities for the future:

- **Training on neurodivergence and learning disability:** with a focus on treating everyone as an individual and building in time and space to understand their needs and be able to offer the correct support. Training should involve a shift away from the deficit model moving towards a focus on strengths and the value a diverse workforce and bring to the organisation and wider staff team.
- **Rigorous disability confident schemes to be used more widely:** Some residents suggested that disability confident schemes could be more thorough and should include training on working with PAs, or an internal audit from employers to ensure they understand reasonable adjustments and are ready to employ a disabled person.
- **Funding for specialist equipment/building alterations:** to allow employers to welcome people with different disabilities more readily.
- **Mental health first aiders:** Some residents felt that mental health first aiders made a big difference in a workplace but noted that it would be better if all staff had an understanding of mental health and the surrounding issues.
- **External support:** Employers mentioned that external support was valuable and in particular, connections with specialists who they could go to for advice.
- **Recognising the value of a diverse workforce:** One resident said: *“by not employing a diverse workforce, employers are missing out on some real gems.”* Employers echoed this sentiment stating: *“We know having diverse staff will give a diverse voice for our diverse audience”* They also talked about the importance of not fearing disability or seeing it as a barrier.

### 3.3 RACE AND RELIGION

#### CHALLENGES

**Workplace hostility:** Residents from black and minoritised ethnic communities described experiencing hostility in the workplace, not being taken seriously and coming across inappropriate dress codes (including inflexibility for Muslims).

**Living in a rural area:** One attendee felt that living in a rural area made this even worse and had to leave her home due to racism, which presented a huge barrier to her continuing to work in the job she loved. The same resident felt that rural organisations sometimes try less hard to welcome those from other cultures or backgrounds.

**Name discrimination:** Residents described feelings of being discriminated against for having *“foreign sounding names.”* One resident said *“With 8-10 years of experience in transport, I was not even interviewed. I was asked to change my name and put an ‘English’ name on my CV. After 6 years of trying, I was immediately interviewed for a driving job with my new ‘English’ name.”*

**Lack of support for those moving from asylum to refugee system:** residents felt that better support to understand where to find jobs and how to apply for them was required for those who had moved to the UK from elsewhere.

#### Opportunities for the future

- **Stronger staff-led policies and awareness from employers** about how to be allies and how to recognise and deal with racism in the workplace (such as specific anti-racism policies).
- **A recognition of additional challenges** those from black and minoritised ethnic communities may face generally but also specifically in rural areas.
- **Guidance and training** for those involved in shortlisting and interviewing to understand and recognise bias and prejudice.
- **Improved employability support and training** for those moving into the refugee system.

### 3.4 SEXUAL ORIENTATION

#### CHALLENGES

**Workplace hostility:** With regards to sexual orientation, some residents discussed experiences of having been bullied in the workplace and not having had enough support from their managers. More than one resident talked about having been forced into self-employment, as this was the only way they could really be themselves.

#### Opportunities for the future

- Stronger staff-led, fully inclusive policies and awareness from employers about how to be allies for those from the LGBTQIA+ communities and how to recognise and deal with discrimination in the workplace.

## THEME 4 – IN WORK PROCESSES AND POLICIES

With regards to staff retention, a number of residents had experiences of having gained good work only to find they were unable to stay in the position, for a variety of reasons.

### 4.1 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

#### CHALLENGES

##### Poor quality and online only workplace training:

Attendees commented on not having enough training to carry out their roles effectively and said that in their experience there wasn't enough face to face training and training was mostly done online, which they felt impacted on their ability to fully understand their role. This was mirrored in the employer perspective, with employers also commenting on the value of good training and on a lack of "meaningful" training in the workplace.

**Not enough workplace support:** Some residents commented that in their experience, in-work support was not always available and was sometimes inconsistent or ad-hoc, which made it difficult to settle in and feel comfortable. Residents said that regular opportunities to have one-to-ones with their manager would make a difference with regards to their understanding of their role.

#### Opportunities for the future:

**Strong and considered induction processes:** On workplace training and opportunities for personal development, residents commented on the importance of a 'safe space' to settle in, learn and develop.

### 4.2 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

#### CHALLENGES

**Workplace bullying and toxic cultures:** Multiple residents had experiences of workplace bullying and victimisation which had forced them to leave jobs, and commented on rigid cultures and environments in the workplace and a lack of safe spaces to talk about their personal life or any adjustments they may need. They spoke about being unable to challenge anything and feelings of not being taken seriously. One resident said: *"I was told by my manager that it has always been like this, and to put up or shut up."*

**Challenges with online working:** There was discussion among both employers and residents around online working. It was agreed that this type of working is not always preferable, and a case-by-case approach was best, to see whether online working would work for each individual. It is worth noting that some residents had been unable to take jobs because there were no options for online working.

**Challenges associated with part time hours:** Some residents commented on the challenges associated with working part time, compressed or reduced hours. Some said there was a stigma associated with this and they often felt others thought they weren't contributing as much. Some said they couldn't progress in their career as a result of working part time. Others commented on how exhausting it can be to work 5 days in 4. They found it frustrating to be considered part time when they weren't.

**Unsafe workplaces:** There were also discussions about safety in the workplace and this being a barrier to staying in a job. Some examples of risks included shift working, taxi driving, night working (access and safety) and cash in hand work.

#### Opportunities for the future

- **Improved company policies:** which are genuinely inclusive and include specific rather than broad references to different groups of people or types of issue. Company policies were mentioned by residents as something which could make a difference, and residents said they should be designed by employees and enable employees to feel safe, welcome and accepted.
- **Online working:** This should be given serious thought by employers and where possible should be an option, but not mandated. Online working and its impact (positive or negative) should be discussed and considered carefully with applicants/employees.
- **Respect for colleagues** who work part time as equals.
- **Meaningful and well thought out initial training** to support staff to understand and perform well in their role.
- **A focus on staff safety and wellbeing** as part of good work.

- **More opportunities for employers to share best practice around building inclusive workplaces:** Employers commented on the lack of case studies or examples of best practice and said they'd find it useful to be part of a local steering or best practice group with inclusive workforces as a specific focus. Some mentioned that it would be useful to see some larger or corporate organisations leading the way, as in their experience best practice was often coming from smaller organisations.
- **Creating a safe space:** Some employers reported successes in creating a safe space to work and allowing employees to be their *'authentic self.'* Some talked about the importance of *'compassionate conversations,'* being open and honest, regular check-ins with employees, internal audits and considering details such as their environment, caring responsibilities, toilets, dress code and uniform. They had often developed these approaches through reaching out and sharing knowledge with likeminded organisations.

#### Opportunities for the future

- **Compassionate and supportive managers:** Residents mentioned the crucial importance of good management and a manager who can see and accept the whole person. Good management could be developed through coaching approaches, leading by example such as modelling self-awareness and self-regulation and actively listening.

### 4.3 ROLE OF MANAGEMENT

#### CHALLENGES

**Inhumane and uninformed management approaches:** Residents reported experiences where they felt management had lacked values such as humanity and kindness, which had led them to leave good work. Some residents felt this had been compounded by the pandemic where managers became used to working transactionally and/or from a distance. Some residents also commented on a lack of knowledge and understanding from their management with regards to health conditions, and the problems with making assumptions rather than really trying to understand. *"Management should lift people up not push them down."*

## EMPLOYER CASE STUDY - DISABILITY NORTH

Disability North is a Newcastle-based charity promoting inclusion, independence and choice for disabled people and their families by providing information, advice and support on any aspect of disability. Staff from Disability North attended both the resident and employer engagement events and were keen to share why they think their organisational culture does things differently.

“Our commitment to diversity and inclusion goes beyond a mere checkbox exercise; it’s ingrained in our organisational culture. Our staff even say it’s something deeply embedded within our DNA.

Our employees appreciate being able to bring their unique perspectives and skills to the workplace, feeling truly valued and integral to the team.

Here’s what our employees said when we asked them what sets us apart:

### Efficient Onboarding and communication:

- A swift turnaround from a successful interview to starting work. This is the most important, and the simplest thing to do. Constant and transparent communication both before and after employment starts, ensures a smooth and supportive experience.

### More than just reasonable adjustments:

- A proactive approach to supporting necessary adjustments during the Access to Work process, including accommodations like height-adjustable desks and headsets.
- Free and suitable parking for wheelchair access vehicles.
- Plans to alter the structure of the physical building to accommodate toileting requirements.

### Flexibility as Standard:

- Understanding the importance of flexible working times, accommodating unique needs such as later start times.
- Recognising the productivity and flexibility benefits of working from home.
- Flexible working.

### Valuing Personal Assistants (PAs):

- Deep understanding of the PA role.

### Openness to Change and Opportunities for Growth:

- Actively embracing change and being proactive in addressing needs.
- Providing avenues for promotion and adjustments to job focus.

Disability North is an organisation that values and actively listens to the needs of disabled people.

Our commitment to diversity and inclusion isn’t just a statement; it’s a lived reality that transforms the workplace into a space where everyone, regardless of their background or needs, can thrive and contribute meaningfully.”

## KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this collaborative engagement it was evident that individuals in the North of Tyne had encountered substantial challenges in securing and sustaining meaningful employment.

Key challenges for those seeking work in the region included application and interview processes (including knowing where to look for jobs and rigid views on skills and qualifications), tokenistic or misinformed attempts at inclusion and inflexible or unwelcoming workplace cultures.

Those with protected characteristics or intersectional identities such as people from black and minoritised ethnic backgrounds, those who were pregnant or had young children, those from LGBTQIA+ communities and residents living with disabilities, felt they had faced additional challenges as a result of prejudice and discrimination.

Employers noted challenges around recruiting a diverse workforce, finding the time and resource to rethink recruitment processes and fully understanding how to welcome and support a range of employees.

Despite these hurdles, there was a palpable sense of optimism, with residents and employers expressing a wealth of ideas for positive change.

Encouragingly, there was substantial alignment in the aspirations of residents and employers, with both groups looking largely for the same things. While some of the challenges mentioned are systemic, such as childcare or the benefits system, many employers demonstrated an inclination towards innovative and creative recruitment and retention approaches, actively seeking to embed compassion and inclusion into their operational frameworks, and some were already starting to do this.

Our engagement shows that the key opportunities for change in the region centre around the following 6 points:

### 1. Rethinking application and interview processes:

Change is required to move away from traditional recruitment and interview formats, in order that these processes are accessible and inclusive. This should include building compassion and flexibility into processes, supporting applicants through application processes, understanding the emotional impact it can have on job seekers and valuing the significance of meaningful feedback for applicants.

### 2. Tailored, joined-up and trauma-informed support for job seekers:

More support and training is needed to support job seekers to find jobs, apply for them and prepare for interviews. This should involve fostering early connections with the employer from the outset, so the applicant can develop a comprehensive understanding of the roles and companies.

### 3. Championing a strengths-based approach to recruitment and retention:

While there should be a recognition that some residents have faced additional challenges and will benefit from additional support, the narrative needs to be shifted so that employers focus on the strengths of individuals rather than deficits. A strengths-based approach which focuses on skills, experience and aspirations should be firmly embedded in recruitment processes and workplace cultures. Our engagement demonstrated that facing challenges often cultivates tenacity, resilience and resourcefulness in individuals, and residents were keen that this was considered by employers as an asset.

4. **Codesigning new ways of working:** Employers and residents largely wanted the same outcomes. Those who are looking for work know what they need to make the process smoother, and more manageable and positive. There is therefore an opportunity to harness this synergy and codesign new processes directly with job seekers to make for truly inclusive and positive outcomes.

5. **Creating inclusive workplace cultures:** Inclusive workplace cultures are fundamental to equity and diversity in the workplace and flexibility is a key component of this. If a culture is genuinely and intentionally inclusive, diversity will follow, so there is value in employers spending time to develop this.

6. **Showcasing and sharing best practice:** Our engagement showed that our region is a hotbed of success stories in inclusive recruitment and inclusive workplaces. The assemblies demonstrated an appetite to share this information and learn from others, so there is an opportunity to leverage this knowledge and set up best practice groups in the region to develop better ways of working.

## NEXT STEPS

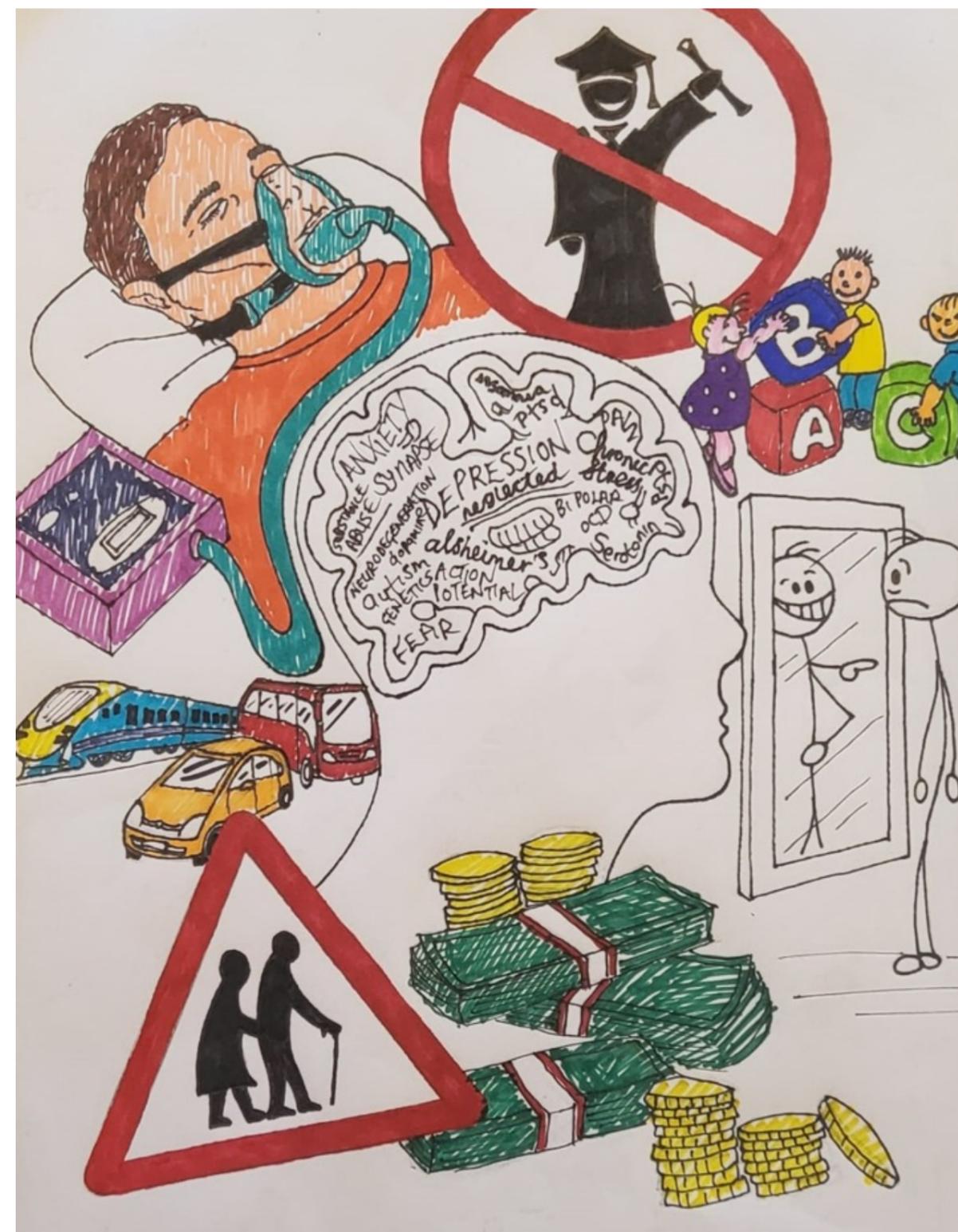
At NTCA we firmly believe in the transformative nature of good work, not just as a way of ensuring people have enough money to live, but in terms of providing opportunities for residents to feel a sense of dignity, hope, purpose and agency and we believe the opportunity to gain good work should be available to everyone. We are committed to reviewing and using this report as we continue to move towards our ambition of a more inclusive and sustainable regional economy in the context of further devolution and the new North East Mayoral Combined Authority. The shared commitment to positive change between us, residents and employers fosters a promising foundation for the advancement of more equitable and inclusive workplaces in the region.

## APPENDIX A – ART, POETRY AND WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS

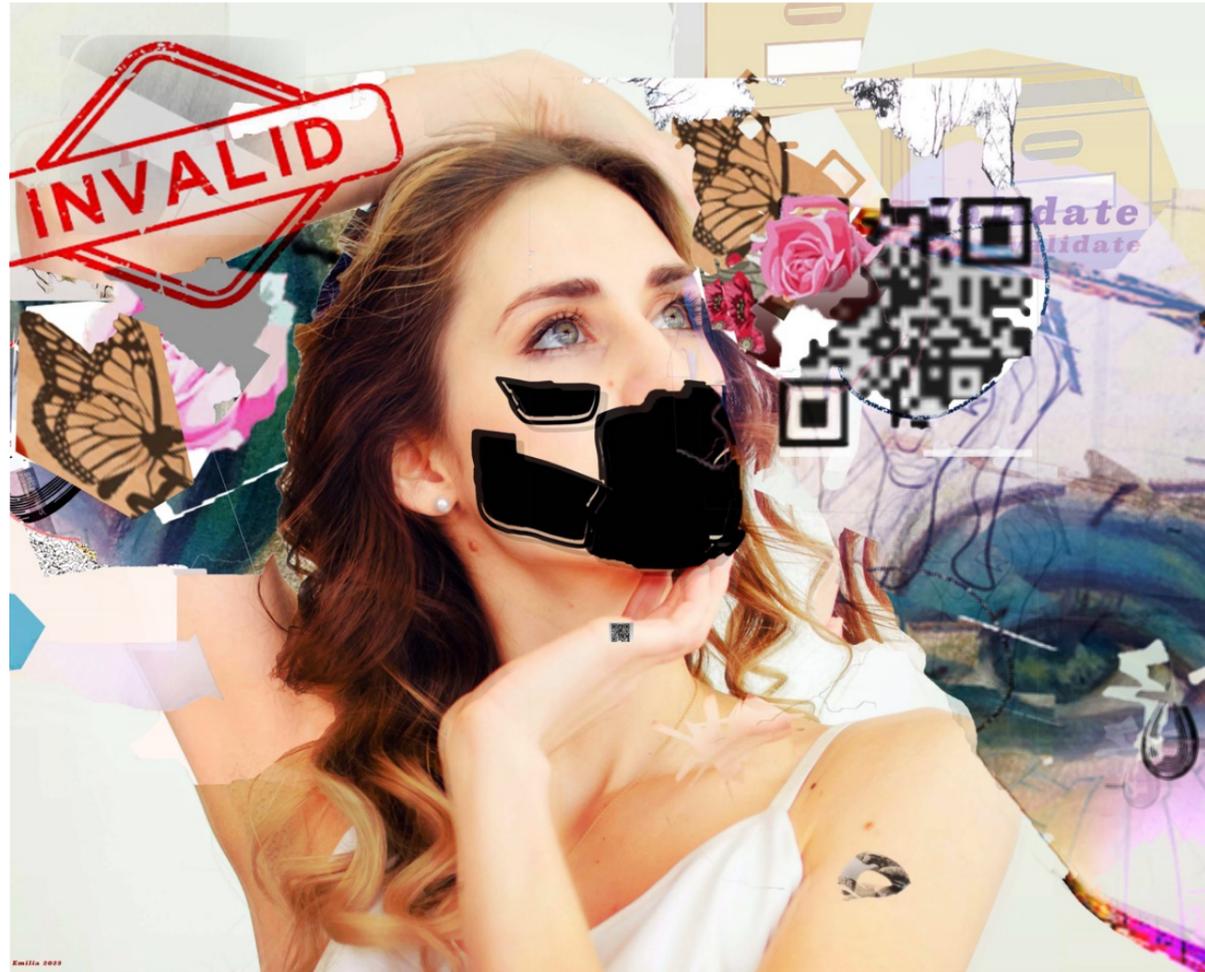
### WINGLESS BIRD

Years go by still shackled to this cage.  
No hope of freedom, time goes by as I slowly age.  
I stand stagnant in a world full of motion.  
People will look at me with a preconceived notion.  
Anxiety overwhelms still sacred of judging eyes.  
I feel myself running back counter clockwise.  
But not a tangible is there?  
People will look, see nothing, and then forget to care.  
At internal war with the mind  
All these emotions leaving me blind.  
Feeling like a failure with no goals complete  
Even with this ball and chain tied to my feet.  
Trying to yell for assistance,  
My voice is minor, it feels non-existent.  
I want to be liberated from this mental confinement,  
Progressing into self-refinement.  
Locked in a transparent barricade,  
Trying to keep up this pretence charade.  
Maybe this time? A hopeless dream,  
I take a step, but fear fills my bloodstream.  
Ears ringing, hands shaking.  
Made up confidence suddenly breaking.  
Back to my cage I slowly retreat,  
Tears leaking, flowing in defeat.  
Why am I like this? What have I done?  
Self-deprecating thoughts that I can't outrun.  
I raise my hands to surrender.  
I lost to myself, the biggest contender.  
I can't do this alone, the unfortunate reality  
But with a bit of help I might be set free.  
A struggling hand reaches out,  
Isolating thoughts filled with doubt.  
All alone, about to turn away,  
But a light bursts out from the doorway.  
I peer up, hope shining so bright.  
Maybe even a wingless bird can take flight.

North of Tyne resident (anonymous) 2022



North of Tyne resident (anonymous) 2022



Emilia Allen, 2022



Liam P, 2022

## CASE STUDY FROM ANGELOU CENTRE

Chinara (pseudonym name) is a young mother of Nigerian descent. Chinara accessed our centre first as a survivor of sex trafficking accessing our VAWG services. After escaping this abuse, she accessed advocacy support, immigration support and had access to our counselling service. Following this Chinara was supported through many imposed barriers such as homelessness, supporting a child who is a survivor also and the inability to communicate. Due to long term abuse in Chinara's life, she was never given opportunity to learn to read or write.

Chinara's recovery also included the need for access to training and wellbeing services. Chinara was unable to access mainstream training services that had trauma informed models to support survivors in education and employment access.

Chinara, upon accessing the Angelou centre training and wellbeing services, was supported to access English basic reading and writing sessions. Chinara partook in parenting training to support mothers in parenting children who are survivors of domestic violence. Chinara would not have been able to access these services without the Angelou Centre's then childcare services. Chinara is now empowered, independent and thriving.

## CASE STUDY FROM GET AHEAD

**Male, White British, 36 years old, living in Northumberland.**

I found that addiction and mental health could potentially put barriers in place with the wrong employer. Holding it down was more the issue for me. No support given with poor mental health, felt that there was too much stigma to be able to talk about it with employers. Due to addiction getting references from previous employers can be difficult.

If overqualified it can be difficult to go into a lower level of job to get a foot in the door. This can also be a detriment if in a position and have previous experience I can find it difficult to hold back if I believe something hasn't been done correctly.

Not relying on substances or self-medicating with both alcohol & drugs would have made a difference. Also, accepting and acknowledging the warning signs. Going forward I'd be more open with potential employers to access support available.

I'd like you to know, that it's important to give people the opportunity. Without possible qualifications – life experience can be much more important. People without references can be put off from applying for things as they feel that's a sticking point straight away.

## CONTRIBUTORS

As well as the residents who generously gave their time to share their experiences and Professor Jo McBride and Dr Cat Spellman from Durham University Business School who helped with our research, workshops and data analysis, we would also like to thank the following organisations for sharing their insight and experiences:

|                                               |                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Angelou Centre                                | Mental Health Concern              |
| Being Woman                                   | Mortal Fools                       |
| B2W Group                                     | North East Autism Society (NEAS)   |
| Bazaar Group                                  | North of England Refugee Service   |
| Bernicia                                      | Northumberland County Council      |
| Big River Bakery                              | NUFC Foundation                    |
| CBI                                           | Oasis Community Housing            |
| Changing Lives                                | ReCoCo                             |
| Collingwood Insurance                         | Reviving the Heart of the West End |
| Disability North                              | Support And Grow North East        |
| Difference North East                         | The Millin Charity                 |
| FSM Ltd                                       | The NTG Group                      |
| Housing Employment Network North East (HENNE) | The Spiritual Engineer             |
| Inclusion North                               | The Wise Group                     |
| Ingeus                                        | VONNE                              |
| Janine Smith Practice                         | YMCA North Tyneside                |
| JET (Jobs, Education, Training)               | Youth Focus North East             |
| Justice Prince CIC                            | Your Homes Newcastle               |