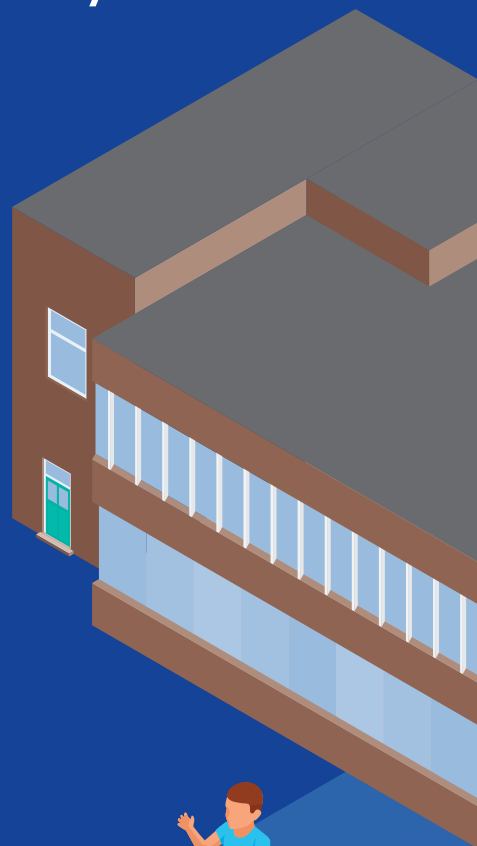
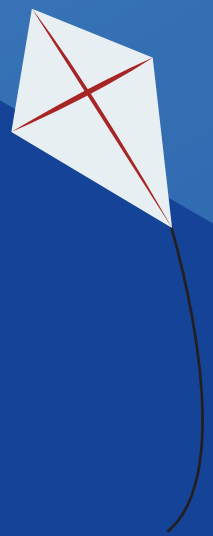


# Connecting Communities

A Strategy for Community  
Hubs and Libraries  
2023 – 2028



North  
Tyneside  
Council

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# 1. Foreword

We are delighted to introduce 'Connecting Communities – A Strategy for Community Hubs and Libraries' for North Tyneside Council.

The Our North Tyneside Plan 2021-25 sets out bold ambitions for making the Borough an even greater place to live, work and visit by 2025. Community Hubs and libraries are central to delivering those ambitions and in particular how we build a better North Tyneside, that is thriving.

This strategy will see six Community Hubs (Hubs) established across the borough, developed from existing services and buildings.

The Hubs aim to make it as easy as possible for people to find out about and access, a wide range of wellbeing services, skills and training support, and information and advice delivered by the Authority and its partners. They will build on the wealth of support and activities on offer in North Tyneside on any given day, often delivered by the community and voluntary sector and from locations like faith venues and community centres.

The six Hubs will be single locations from which multiple council and partner services can be accessed and delivered. They will create environments that enable our residents to find the right support, from those best placed to offer it by connecting with other local services ('spokes') in the wider community.

They will make it easier for residents to access services and support, by working jointly with residents and partners, as well as being responsive and flexible to local need and how it changes. Working together as a bigger network with other local spokes they will support

established services and resources like Family Hubs and Living Well North Tyneside, and tackle issues like digital exclusion with support to get online.

These inclusive and welcoming spaces, will become a focal point in each area, constantly refreshing their knowledge of local communities and strengthening their relationships with those it serves and works with. Each Hub will value their local communities as active partners and listen to and respond to their evolving needs.

We encourage everyone reading this Strategy, to consider how they become part of the North Tyneside Community Hub network.



**Cllr Carl Johnson, Deputy Mayor**



**Cllr Sandra Graham, Cabinet Member  
responsible for Environment**

## 2. Introduction

Typically, Community Hubs are physical buildings that serve as a place to bring people, communities, and commerce together under one roof. Simply put, these Hubs can offer a 'one stop shop' for finding out about or using, a wide range of services. These services are all generally focused on promoting good health and wellbeing and / or strengthening community capital and cohesion.

Whilst Hub buildings are an important feature of this strategy, the benefits and success of each Hub extends far beyond its walls. If successful, the Hubs in this strategy will become important community place shapers, connecting with other hubs, services and partners, with the following strategic aims:

- prioritise prevention by helping to shift funding towards more preventative services that tackle long-standing health disparities, improve quality of life and reduce health and care costs
- deliver proportionate universalism by being part of an offer for all residents young and old, but offering more or tailored support to those who need it most
- help those who are digitally excluded and support digital by choice
- see communities as active partners and listen to and respond to their needs and what's important to them, and
- make the best use of parks, open spaces, and community buildings to help people be physically active and connect with others

This strategy outlines the ambition for six Community Hubs in North Tyneside and it provides a plan on how these Hubs will be developed.

The approach to developing this strategy and realising its ambition, is based on a five-step framework.

### Community Hub five stage framework



Steps one to three of the framework are complete, and findings detailed in this strategy. Planning for steps four and five are underway and will be further developed and delivered, during the life of the strategy.

# 3. Vision and ambition

## 3.1. Background and Context

Community Hubs are integral to the delivery of the councils' strategic objectives and ambition for North Tyneside.

The Our North Tyneside Plan 2021-2025 sets out the council's ambitions for building a better North Tyneside, making it an even better place to live, work and visit. Community Hubs and libraries are central to delivering those ambitions and in particular, how we build a better North Tyneside that is thriving. Hubs, with libraries as part of the offer, will support a vibrant range of cultural and sporting activities to support the health and wellbeing of our residents.

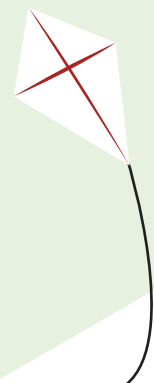
North Tyneside's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Equally Well 2021-25 is ambitious in its aims to improve the health of residents and reduce health inequalities across the borough. It commits to developing Community Hubs as a way of supporting people to access services and support, creating and developing healthy and sustainable places and communities.

On 28 May 2019 Cabinet agreed to explore the Authority's approach to Community Hubs, as part of its Customer Service Programme. The programme is focussed on understanding and learning from people's experience of the council and using that learning to shape services in the future which deliver good customer service. This strategy has been significantly shaped by learning from the Covid-19 pandemic and the Authority's response to it, as well as the impact and changes to the way people now access services and support.

The Library Strategy 2016-2021 agreed by Cabinet on 14 November 2016 set out a five-year plan to develop the library service creating flexible and welcoming public spaces and opportunities for people to meet and participate in the social and cultural life of their community. This strategy provides a refreshed plan for libraries, central to the Community Hub offer, and role within their local communities and the wider cultural, health and wellbeing services they offer.

**Community Hubs will deliver the ambition and priorities of a number of other Authority strategies, plans and partnerships.**

- The Ambition for North Tyneside regeneration plan
- Action on Climate Change plan
- North Tyneside's Digital Strategy
- The Raising Aspiration, Realising Ambition Strategy 2021-2024



Community Hubs are not a new concept for North Tyneside, but the scale and ambition of this strategy is. The foundation of Community Hubs has been built over many years in the borough, through key investment and a commitment to key services.

Our libraries will play a crucial role in Community Hubs; they have always had an important role in local communities from lending books, enabling access to computers, early year activities as well as some of the wider cultural, health and wellbeing services they offer. Libraries will be embedded into Community Hubs, fulfilling our responsibility to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service outlined by the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act.

Our role and commitment to working together with partners locally is essential to the success of Community Hubs. In particular working alongside partners in the NHS, to prioritise prevention and shift funding towards more preventative services as well as delivering a proportionate universal offer for all residents young and old, but offering more or tailored support to those who need it most.

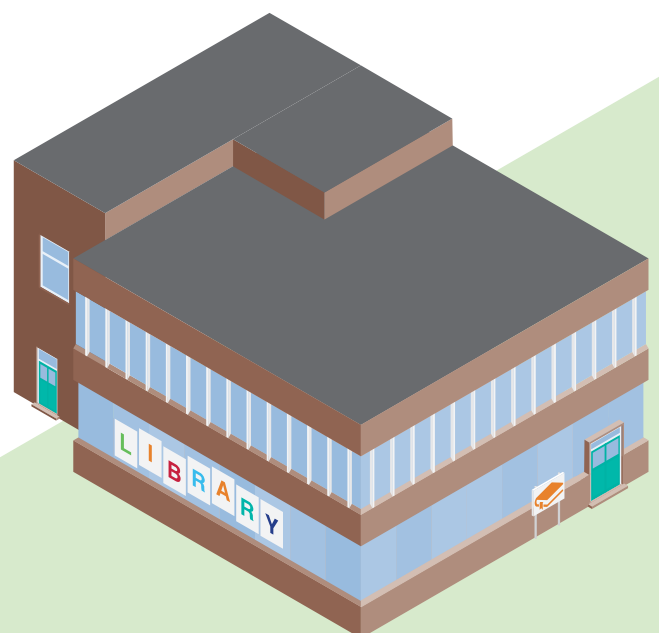
### 3.2. What we're trying to achieve

We will establish six Community Hubs across North Tyneside. Coordinating and connecting a wealth of existing Borough assets, support and activities, the Hubs will make it as easy as possible, for people to access community services.








They will host multiple council and partner services. They will also be able to direct people to countless more, across the Borough e.g. support provided by our thriving community and voluntary sector and NHS services. They will create safe and inclusive environments, that enable residents to find the right support, from those best placed to provide it.

Working with partners from the community and voluntary sector, healthcare, education, skills and employment, local residents and businesses, each Hub will become a focal point in their area building a trusted, strong support network within communities.

The needs of residents will evolve over time, and the Community Hubs will stay attuned to this and adapt to ensure they are always delivering the best for residents. They will continually look for new and better ways of working, including how they collaborate with partners and communities.



## The aims of establishing these Community Hubs are to:

-  increase individual economic prosperity
-  improve digital skills and access
-  increase reading and literacy
-  increase social networks / community activity
-  increase participation within the local community
-  promote community cohesion
-  offer visibility and consistency for customers



### 3.3. What has already been achieved?

Community Hubs have been developing in North Tyneside for over 10 years with significant investment in the development of community services, a commitment to tackling health inequalities, as well as physical changes to buildings. Community Hubs are not a new concept for North Tyneside, but the scale and ambition of this strategy is.

There is already a strong commitment to investing in our sports and leisure services, library services and green spaces and parks, many of which have already been developed and regenerated. The creation and renovation of sport and leisure buildings to support the health and wellbeing of residents has been significant.

Projects and partnerships have also been developed including the creation of the Spirit of North Tyneside wing at Wallsend Customer First Centre, offering a base for the community and voluntary sector to support each other and develop their offer to residents.

Partnerships with key services have also changed the nature of Customer First Centres with social care teams and public health services being directly delivered alongside community and voluntary services, and health and wellbeing services.

Some of our Community Centres are already developing into Hubs with a range of services and support for their local communities. The John Willie Sams Centre and The Oxford Centre are more progressed in their development offering a range of services and support around health and social care.

We also have a renewed understanding of what local need looks like currently in our communities through local health, economic, and population data. Footfall, demand and customer insight data has highlighted trends and behaviours of our residents inside and outside of our buildings and services that has change the way they access services and support.

Linking this renewed understanding of local need with the activities, services and support offered from not just our buildings but those from local community buildings, has given us an understanding of the gaps. This has shaped the development of the strategy and the approach Hubs will take in understanding and adapting to changing local need.

Engagement with residents, children and families, elected members, Trade Unions, partners, and the community to share ideas and ask for feedback has been integral to developing the Community Hub approach.

### 3.4. Learning from others

As already mentioned, Community Hubs are not new and in fact the term Hubs is being used more and more locally and nationally to describe buildings that support residents in the heart of communities.

Learning from others about what works and what doesn't has directed our approach to Hubs in North Tyneside. There are already a number of established Hubs across North Tyneside run by our vibrant community and voluntary sector. Each working in slightly different ways but with the same aim to support those living in the community.

We are also part of a National and Regional network for public Libraries who regularly share good practice and learn from each other, and there are national universal offers that demonstrate what should be provided in a good library service.





# 4. Understanding need

## 4.1. What data and intelligence do we have about local need?

We know that people and communities are using our buildings differently, impacted in part by the Covid-19 pandemic, increasing digital inclusion or government policies linked to accessing benefits, to name a few. We have seen a significant increase in people choosing to access information, advice and support online, as well as pay for goods and services, and the introduction of apps and websites to help access healthy lifestyle advice and NHS services has also increased.

Despite this shift to an increasingly digital world for many, it is not the experience of everyone; indeed, many services delivered by local authorities, the NHS and the voluntary and community sector, will never be delivered 'digitally'. Residents have told us that buildings and face to face services are sometimes still needed and are important to them.

Digital inclusion and the change in visitors to our buildings is not the only thing driving our approach to Community Hubs. Data and research shows that health, economic and social inequalities exist in North Tyneside and the long term outcomes differ for residents. Digital exclusion, long-term health conditions, and unemployment are impacting many of our residents, particularly for those living in more deprived areas of the borough (9.3% of residents).

Local need in and around our buildings differs from community to community and means that a 'one size fits all' approach is not right. In developing our approach to Hubs, we have developed a detailed understanding of these differences across communities, that's shaped how Hubs should work differently.

By using data and intelligence we have a real opportunity to meet resident need and support communities to thrive.



## 4.2. What is already in place and what already works?

**Community, commercial and council led activities;** we know that these activities and services work in our buildings. Our current offer already manages partnership work between many services and external providers.

- **Developing services that serve local communities;** considerable time and investment has already been made in developing Hubs as they are now. This is also true of other venues such as Sport and Leisure Centres and Family Hubs. We are not starting from a point of zero activity.
- **Strong partnerships;** like those developed with the voluntary sector at the Wallsend Hub with the development of the Spirit of North Tyneside wing, were made possible with considerable financial support from the Authority and the North of Tyne Combined Authority. Additionally, partnership work with health providers is particularly strong at the Longbenton hub at the Oxford Centre.
- **The commercial sector;** already plays an important role in providing local services which range from community gyms to the presence of high street banks.

**Locally delivered council services;** the Care and Connect Service and Active North Tyneside team are both already successfully embedded into communities, and our Housing team and 0-19 Public Health team deliver services and support direct to our customers from the Hubs currently.

**The North Tyneside employment and skills service** already delivers adult learning courses from our Customer First Centres and other community venues. They are piloting **Working Well North Tyneside** which is a partnership project aiming to make health, employment and skills support available to residents both more visible and accessible.

**The library service** has also adapted and evolved to continue to deliver library services as well as supporting the wider community. Click and collect services allowed customers to access the library service during the pandemic and national restrictions, and the libraries at home service supported customers with deliveries and phone calls. Use of BorrowBox, the online library service offering e-audios, e-books and e-magazines has also increased in use by residents.

- **Wider support to communities;** our libraries have also offered wider support to the community delivering a range of events online, as well as offering essential digital support to customers who were digitally excluded to claim energy rebate payments. More recently they have been offering a 'warm welcome' across all sites to support residents to not only keep warm but to meet people, take part in activities, and relax in a trusted, safe place.

### 4.3. What are our customers and partners telling us?

Listening to our customer and partners is also key to the success of Community Hubs. We wanted to make sure that their views drove the Hub approach from the start. We have spoken to over 967 residents, 260 children, young people, parents, and families, 250 partners, elected members, and colleagues to listen to their views on the development of Community Hubs.

There were common themes from the feedback across all stakeholders.

- More information about what's available, when and where, inside and outside of the Hubs. There's no lack of support or services more a lack of understanding, and people don't know where to go to find out about them
- Locality based Hubs which respond to local need. They should understand current issues and pressures faced by residents and communities and develop and flex services to meet their needs
- Working with residents and communities to get it right, through ongoing engagement and strong relationships with partners and services that support each other and ask rather than assume solutions
- Connected Hubs and spokes working together, complementing current support and services, and not competing with each other. Sharing knowledge and understanding of local communities to benefit residents
- Better signage and marketing of the offer of Hubs, so people know what they are what they offer and how they access them



# 5. A model for Community Hubs in North Tyneside

## 5.1. Proposal

In North Tyneside there will be six Community Hubs:

- North Shields Community Hub
- Whitley Bay Community Hub
- Wallsend Community Hub
- Killingworth Community Hub at The White Swan Centre
- Longbenton Community Hub at The Oxford Centre
- Dudley Community Hub at the John Willie Sams Centre



These buildings, in locations across the Borough, are at the heart of the communities they support. They have five strategic aims which will contribute:



To deliver these aims we will invest in our teams to give them the tools and training they need to transform the way they work. This will take time and will be an ongoing process with our teams as the needs and demands of the local community change and we adapt to them.

We will ensure that there are clear lines of responsibility within services and that the teams operate in line with our Customer Promise values of *we listen and we care*.

The transformation of the library service is already underway to ensure they are supporting the health and wellbeing needs of the local community; however, this strategy will take that transformation further. Libraries within Community Hubs will develop and flex in order to adapt and grow with communities, partners, and the Authority, to continue to work together and learn from one another.

## 5.2. Design principles

Community Hubs in North Tyneside will be created based on the following design principles:



Libraries are already a trusted brand locally. We will develop Community Hubs to replicate that a trusted and recognisable brand providing a consistent offer, tailored to local need and understood by residents and local services across each of the six sites. They will be inclusive and welcoming spaces, working together as a single Hub team to address inequality around digital exclusion.

They will add social value by working with spokes and the wider community to ensure the offer to residents compliments existing support and services and does not compete. Hubs and spokes will work together to provide value for money by identifying opportunities and attracting funding, and working in partnership with local services, charities, and organisations.

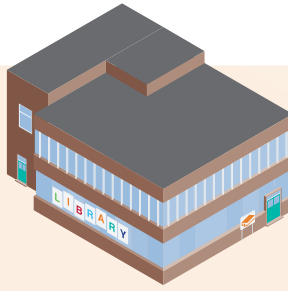
Hubs will deliver a comprehensive and efficient Library service outlined by the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act.

### 5.3. The Hub model



We recognise that Community Hubs cannot be all things to everyone, so a 'hub and spoke' operating model has been designed. The premise of this design is to form a cohesive network of support and services for residents to access.

Each of the Hubs will connect to other organisations, services and assets in the community ('the spokes'). Relationships and networks will be developed to ensure they understand how each other works and support residents, and partnership and joint working. Within each hub there will be a Library offer, access to council customer services and digital support, information, advice and signposting to other spokes locally, as well as to our excellent parks, beaches and green spaces.



## There are five spoke categories:

### 1. Branch libraries

A further eight branch libraries across North Tyneside extend the library offer to more residents in smaller communities. They offer library services across three days each week however two of these branch libraries will increase their opening hours and access at the John Willie Sams Centre Hub and the Oxford Centre Hub.



### 2. Family Hubs

Family Hubs have been developed to encourage more families to access a range of services offered through different agencies. Family Hubs mirror and complement Community Hubs offering free activities, early help and support to families and like Hubs, they reflect the need of local communities.



### 3. Other council services

Public Health 0-19 service, Adult Social Care, Housing and the Employment and Skills services are already being delivered in part from Hubs and offer residents vital information and support on a range of wellbeing issues, including improving their health, and their access to employment opportunities and good quality housing.



### 4. GP practices, community centres and groups

GP practices offer vital health advice and support to residents, working together with community, mental health, social care, pharmacy, hospital and voluntary services to offer proactive, personalised, coordinated and more integrated health and social care for people close to home. A wide range of community groups across North Tyneside offer tailored support for residents who need support most, often from locations like faith venues and community centres.



### 5. Charities and voluntary organisation

The wealth of support and activities offered by partners in the community and voluntary sector on any given day is significant. They work with some of our communities with the highest level of need, providing services that are responsive, innovative and user-led and which make a significant contribution to key priorities such as health and wellbeing, the environment, employability and tackling loneliness.





Underpinning the model, is a digital offer, which recognises the shift to and preference of some residents to access services and support digitally. The digital offer will as a minimum include:

- North Tyneside Council website
- The NHS website
- Living Well North Tyneside, an existing online directory and website which brings together activities, services and support in North Tyneside for the benefit of residents and people working in communities.
- Employment and skills website
- The People's Network, a network of free to use PCs in every library in North Tyneside.
- Free wifi

The digital offer will also include digital support from those working in the Hubs and access to devices within the Hubs for those who need more support to get online. The digital offer is also more than websites and support to get online. It will also be ambitious in supporting residents to learn new IT and digital skills to improve their employment opportunities.

## 5.4. What the six Community Hubs will offer

Each Community Hub will connect and coordinate people and places, as well as deliver services and support. Over the period of this strategy we will:

- **Connecting and coordinating – place and people**



The success of the Community Hubs will be reliant upon detailed knowledge of their local area and the resources on offer. The Hubs will continually review this information and maintain systems and processes, so they can use it to signpost and connect people to local resources, local spokes, as well as to our excellent parks, beaches and green spaces.

Each of the six Hubs, will have a single, integrated welcome point, delivered by expertise from across each Hub and designed to help people navigate and make best use of what the Hub has to offer. The welcome point will provide high quality wellbeing information, signposting, and advice, and connect people to local resources.

As part of their ongoing role in working with its local communities and having a detailed knowledge of their needs, the six Hub leads and their teams will share the intelligence they gather with NHS and local authority strategic commissioners and senior leaders, to influence decision making in future local service design and delivery.

Community Hubs will attract and host relevant authority and partner services which address the wellbeing needs of the communities they serve. Hub leads will cultivate a culture and environment of trust, true collaboration, learning and innovation between partners.

Hub leads will take a proactive role in connecting local services by working with other hubs (spokes) and services in their area. They will foster relationships between those resources, hosting events and sharing information, to promote a coordinated response to meeting community needs.

- **Delivering services and support**

Each Hub will deliver a library service. Opening hours at the Oxford Centre and John Willie Sams Centre will be increased offering an extended library services to their communities. Library services at the six Community Hubs and branch libraries will focus on:

- **Promoting reading and literacy across all ages**

Reading support and resources from birth through activities such as Bookstart, Rhymetime and the Summer Reading Challenge will inspire children to read for pleasure, as well as supporting the curriculum and local Schools.

Vibrant, diverse and inclusive reading materials for all ages will help customers connect through shared reading alongside an events programme offering creative writing competitions and workshops, supported by local writers and authors.



- **Delivering of health and wellbeing activities**

Development of the 'warm welcome' offer will encompass activities to help customers connect and improve their mental health, as well as targeted support to young people and families to combat holiday hunger. Connecting customers through shared activities and social events will be supported by a workforce that Make Every Contact Count and who promote and deliver public health information and services, particularly for the most vulnerable in the community.

Mainstreaming the Ann Cleeves Reading for Wellbeing project and building capacity for outreach, providing a library service for those who can't get to a library.



- **Providing information about local services and encouraging use and access to digital resources, skills and training**

Modernising the digital resources available to customers through digital skills and training and fast, fit for purpose technology supported by a digitally able workforce.

Welcoming and working with partners in Library spaces to maximise digital inclusion through information, advice and activities, and promotion of digital online library services like e-audios, e-books and e-magazines from "Borrowbox".

Libraries will build on their role as a trusted source of information and offer residents an effective enquiry service from a single point of contact.



- **Fostering use and value of local culture and creativity**

Celebrate local history and culture by widening access to discover resources and celebrating local history month.

Stimulate creativity with Maker technology as well as a delivering a diverse programme of events and activities for all ages.



- **Exploring how branch library buildings can be further utilised by the local community**

Extending the use of branch libraries as venues for cultural and creative activity and using knowledge of local need and provision to increase the community use of these venues.

- **Customer Services**

Each Hub will deliver the authority's Customer Services offer supporting people to find out about and apply for Authority services. This will continue to be a strong feature of the six Community Hubs and represents an increase in the customer services offer to cover all six Community Hubs.

This service will continue to offer customers:

- Face to face advice and support
- Telephone advice and support
- Online advice and support



In order to add social value, the six Hubs will provide spaces for groups and organisations to meet and deliver activities. This will always complement the wider local offer and never compete with existing resources or the local economy.

Promoting digital inclusion is one of the strategic aims of this Strategy. Every member of the Hub team will have the right equipment, knowledge and training to support all customers with digital access, skills, motivation and confidence. Each of the Hubs will provide access to digital resources that address barriers to digital inclusion.

The Hubs will provide opportunities to support health and wellbeing, developing networks and working alongside communities to understand the challenges they face. We will develop a plan to operate a team of Health and Well-being Connectors from the Hubs to help people have more control over their health and lives.

The libraries within the Customer First Centres and Community Centres will be fully integrated into the operation of the Hubs, and branch libraries will play a key role as access points within local neighbourhoods. A greater emphasis on outreach will see the library teams, as part of their role in Hubs, working out in the community to engage and connect people, to be visible and pro-active.



## 6. How we get there

Over the next few months, a full implementation plan will be developed to take forward the delivery of the vision and approach for Community Hubs as outlined in this strategy. Implementation will take place over an 18-month period and will cover the following activities:

- Workforce within the Hubs
- Physical access to Hubs
- Branding and Marketing of the offer
- Hub Network development
- Finance and investment



# 7. How we keep on track

We need to know if our approach and ambition for Community Hubs is working and making a difference. Delivery of the plan will be the responsibility of Sport, Leisure and Library officers within the Environment Directorate. This will be supported by the development of this Hubs and Spokes model through Local Hub Networks.

The Health and Wellbeing Board will have oversight of progress and will monitor implementation through its 'Places and Communities we live in and with' theme. Progress will also be monitored by the appropriate scrutiny Committee of the Authority.

A set of measures for Community Hubs will help to understand the benefits they bring. They will provide evidence of the overall impact and contribution they deliver towards the Authority's strategic objectives, the Our North Tyneside Plan. These measures will be developed as part of implementation and monitored by the Health and Wellbeing Board alongside progress in the creation of Community Hubs.

The Strategy will be reviewed in 2025 in line with the Our North Tyneside Plan.





