

# Tech, Digital and AI

## Annex A: Detailed Information on Skills Needs Assessment



# Tech, Digital and AI

## National Picture

The United Kingdom is currently executing a coordinated, long-term strategic shift to consolidate its position as a global leader in the next generation of technological innovation. This ambition is formally articulated through the Modern Industrial Strategy, which envisions the UK becoming a "trillion-dollar technology economy" by the year 2035. This ten-year plan, built upon the foundations of the "Invest 2035" framework, prioritises eight growth-driving sectors, with a particular emphasis on frontier technologies that serve as the engines for national productivity and security. The strategic focus is distilled into six core areas: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Quantum Technologies, Cyber Security, Engineering Biology, Future Telecommunications (including 5G and 6G), and Semiconductors.

The national strategy recognises that AI is not merely a standalone sector, but a cross-sector capability needed to support business growth. To support the distribution of AI-enabled products and services, the government has published plans for an "AI Growth Lab", designed to help firms navigate regulatory hurdles that currently hinder adoption. Furthermore, the UK is prioritising "Sovereign AI" capabilities, exemplified by agreements with leading firms like OpenAI to facilitate the safe and secure adoption of AI tools by British businesses. This is complemented by the National Quantum Strategy, which aims to lead the next wave of the technological revolution by investing in applied research, mobilising high-risk capital, and creating early demand through government procurement contracts. Projections suggest that quantum adoption could deliver a 7% productivity gain across the UK by 2045, contributing significantly to the long-term economic outlook.

To facilitate this, the government is promoting the establishment of critical infrastructure, such as data centres, and introducing the "Growth and Skills Levy" to allow for more flexible, modular training that can keep pace with the rapid development of digital skills, especially those related to AI adoption.

**Table: UK Modern Industrial Strategy - Core Technology Targets and Funding Allocations**

Strategic Area	Targeted Economic Impact/Objective	Primary Funding/Mechanism
Artificial Intelligence	Establish the UK as an AI Powerhouse and distribute AI across all sectors	£4bn for Digital & Tech; AI Growth Lab Sandbox
Quantum Technologies	7% productivity gain by 2045; 126,100 new jobs	£670m commitment in Invest 2035
Engineering Biology	Accelerate development in bioinformatics, omics, and computational AI	UKRI Technology Missions Fund
Cyber Security	Protect critical national infrastructure and sovereign data	Part of the IS-8 Frontier Industry focus
Telecommunications	Global leadership in 5G/6G and future wireless infrastructure	UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy
Semiconductors	Ensure supply chain resilience for critical computing hardware	National Semiconductor Strategy

## The Specific Sector in the North East

The Tech, Digital & AI sector acts as the "cross-cutting enabler" for the entire North East economy. It is shifting from a vertical industry to a horizontal layer that powers everything from automotive factories to offshore wind, clinical healthcare and hospital wards. The region is positioning itself as the UK's primary "AI Powerhouse," a claim supported by the fact that the North East experienced the largest proportional growth in Digital Sector Gross Value Added (GVA) of any UK region between 2010 and 2022, estimated at an inflation-adjusted 387.4%.

The sector employs 33,808 people across 1,679 employers. The landscape is dominated by micro-enterprises, which make up 65.5% of the sector. With an annual growth forecast of 6.4%, the sector is forecasting to reach 42,897 employees by 2030 (currently 33,808).

The sector's demographics show a 28.5% female workforce, 20.1% is from minority groups, and a relatively low part-time rate of 10.5%. The North East digital workforce is significantly younger than traditional industrial sectors. Approximately 25.5% of the workforce is under the age of 30 (5.5% aged 16-21 and 20% aged 22-29), with the largest age bracket being those between 30-39 years old at 23%. Only 10.5% of the workforce is over the age of 60, contrasting sharply with the aging profile of the Advanced Manufacturing sector.

While the workforce itself is young, the "age" of technical expertise is a critical challenge. The life of digital skills is now less than five years, meaning that even a young professional's knowledge can become obsolete rapidly without constant intervention. The training infrastructure must work at an unprecedented pace to keep their competencies current with the transition from Generative AI to Agentic AI.

Key regional assets include the Stellium Data Centre, a major UK Interconnection Hub with low latency to the US and Europe, which acts as a magnet for fintech and data-intensive firms. The National Innovation Centre for Data (NICD) and immersive technology facilities like PROTO provide essential research and development (R&D) support to the region's businesses, while four regional universities ensure a steady stream of

STEM graduates.

Sector definition - Priority SIC Codes: Manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products (26), Software publishing (58.2), Telecommunications (61), Computer programming, consultancy and related activities (62), Information service activities (Data hosting, etc.) (63), Management consultancy activities (Digital Transformation) (70.2)

RTIC: 0001 AdTech, 006502 Advanced manufacturing - Artificial Intelligence, 006503 Advanced manufacturing - Augmented and virtual reality, 006505 Advanced manufacturing - Computer aided manufacturing, 006507 Advanced manufacturing - Data services, 006508 Advanced manufacturing - Digital design, 006509 Advanced manufacturing - Digital twins, 006515 Advanced manufacturing - Robotics and automation, 0101 Advanced screens, 0003 Agritech, 0095 Artificial intelligence ecosystem, 0004 Artificial intelligence technologies and applications, 0047 Cleantech, 0089 Cloud computing, 0005 Computer hardware, 0061 Cryptocurrency economy, 0006 Cyber, 0007 Data infrastructure, 0059 Design and modelling technologies, 0064 Digital creative industries, 0074 Ecommerce, 0010 Edtech, 0012 Energy management, 008603 Engineering biology - Computational AI, Bioinformatics, Omics, Software, 008604 Engineering biology - Computational Robotics, 008605 Engineering biology - Computational Supercomputing, 0093 Fem Tech, 0052 FinTech, 0057 Food Tech, 0094 Future Telecoms supply chain, 0016 Gaming, 0008 Geospatial economy, 0018 Immersive technologies, 0020 Internet of things, 008402 Marine and maritime - Autonomy and robotics, 0058 Medtech, 005501 Agritech, 005502 Building technologies, 0090 Neurotechnology, 006202 Pharma - Artificial intelligence and blockchain, 006203 Pharma - Automation, 006204 Pharma - Research and data analytics, 002705 Photonics - Quantum tech, 002706 Photonics - Smart sensors, 002707 Photonics - Telecommunications, 0103 PropTech, 0051 Quantum economy, 0087 Quantum technology, 0091 Robotics and autonomous systems, 0030 Sensors, 0029 SaaS, 0079 Software development, 009822 Space economy - Communications & connectivity, 009832 Space economy - Computer vision software, 009818 Space economy - Data infrastructure, 009820 Space economy - Geospatial analytics, 009819 Space economy - Geospatial platforms, 009831Space economy - in-space hardware, 009829 Space economy - in-space robotics, 009817 Space economy - Security software and services, 009805 Space economy - Space hardware, 009802 Space economy - Space software, 0060 Streaming economy, 0031 Supply chain logistics, 0056 Telecommunications, 0033 Wearables and quantified self.

Priority Occupations (SOC 2020):

<b>SOC20 unit code</b>	<b>SOC2020 – Priority Occupation unit label</b>	<b>2021-2025 monthly average actual job posting</b>	<b>average monthly job posting forecast by 2029</b>	<b>Forecasted change by 2029 in monthly job postings</b>	<b>Forecasted % change by 2029 in average monthly job postings</b>
1137	Information technology directors	33.7	29	-4.7	-13.95%
2113	Biochemists and biomedical scientists	3.4	2.6	-0.8	-23.53%
2114	Physical scientists	28.9	82	53.1	183.74%
2123	Electrical engineers	93.4	165	71.6	76.66%
2124	Electronics engineers	8.1	7.9	-0.2	-2.47%
2125	Production and process engineers	95.6	109.9	14.3	14.96%
2129	Engineering professionals n.e.c.	76.4	205	128.6	168.32%
2131	IT project managers	24.4	10.2	-14.2	-58.20%
2132	IT managers	70.2	38	-32.2	-45.87%
2133	IT business analysts, architects and systems designers	330.3	130.1	-200.2	-60.61%
2134	Programmers and software development professionals	171.5	381.8	1.4	122.62%
2135	Cyber security professionals	95.2	55.2	-40	-42.02%
2136	IT quality and testing professionals	34.7	20	-14.7	-42.36%
2139	Information technology professionals n.e.c.	1	2.4	1.4	140.00%
2161	R&D Managers	8.3	7.1	-1.2	-14.46%
2433	Actuaries, economists and statisticians	15.9	15.8	-0.1	-0.63%
2439	Business, research and administrative profess. n.e.c.	109.8	58.8	-51	-46.45%
2481	Quality control and planning engineers	26.3	23.5	-2.8	-10.65%
2482	Quality assurance and regulatory professionals	19.6	19.2	-0.4	-2.04%
3111	Laboratory technicians	8	6.6	-1.4	-17.50%

3112	Electrical and electronics technicians	9.2	9	-0.2	-2.17%
3113	Engineering technicians	75.4	76.3	0.9	1.19%
3116	Planning, process and production technicians	2.5	2.3	-0.2	-8.00%
3119	Science, engineering and production technicians n.e.c.	19.1	17.7	-1.4	-7.33%
3132	IT user support technicians	84.6	44.8	-39.8	-47.04%
3544	Data analysts	115.6	57.2	-58.4	-50.52%
5242	Telecoms and related network installers and repairers	19.2	21.7	2.5	13.02%
5244	Computer system and equipment installers and servicers	6.8	5.6	-1.2	-17.65%
5249	Electrical and electronic trades not elsewhere classified	1.3	1.9	0.6	46.15%

### Strategic Comparison ONS vs. Lightcast data -Modelled Projections vs. Empirical Realities for Tech, Digital, AI sector

A critical aspect of the current strategic review is the triangulation of labour demand estimates via an extensive ERB validation process. In this process, ERB reported significant differences between modelled projections (such as those from Lightcast) and empirical observations of actual hiring behaviour derived from ONS Textkernel data. The ONS Textkernel dataset provides monthly counts of newly advertised job postings by occupation and region, providing a direct empirical measure of observed labour demand, independent of modelled occupational inference or sector classification.

The validation process with sector ERB revealed that Lightcast anticipates stronger structural growth in analytical and data-related occupations than is implied by the extrapolation of observed hiring behaviour using ONS data. Specifically, Lightcast was identified as significantly overestimating demand for Programmers, IT specialist managers, Data analysts, and Database professionals relative to the ONS baseline. Conversely, across core software and technical delivery occupations, particularly programmers and software development professionals (SOC 2134), IT operations technicians (SOC 3132), and IT user support technicians (SOC 3132), ONS Textkernel data indicates higher baseline levels of demand than Lightcast estimates.

This suggests that Lightcast may understate the scale of current regional hiring intensity in certain implementation-focused technical roles in the North East. The largest relative Lightcast underestimations were observed in engineering technician roles and scientific and broadcast engineering roles. For example, in engineering technicians (SOC 3113), the ONS baseline average (78.9) exceeds the Lightcast average (75.4), a discrepancy that could have implications for regional technician training pipelines.

The triangulation confirms that Lightcast provides a broadly credible directional signal of occupational demand, particularly in identifying the relative importance of different occupational categories but underscores the importance of validating modelled projections against independent empirical data sources. The table below provide a comparative Analysis of Labour Demand for Digital Occupations in the North East.

SOC 2020	Occupation Title	ONS Baseline Avg (21-25)	ONS 2029 Linear Projection	Lightcast Avg Baseline (21-25)	Lightcast 2029 Projection	Difference (LC-ONS Baseline)
2134	Programmers & Software Devs	160.6	98.2	171.5	381.8	+10.9
2133	IT Specialist Managers	87.5	72.1	330.3	130.1	+242.8
3544	Data Analysts	52.8	48.3	115.6	57.2	+62.8
2123	Database Professionals	38.4	62.7	93.4	165.0	+55.0
2135	IT Business Analysts & Architects	42.6	38.9	95.2	55.2	+52.6
3132	IT Operations Technicians	53.7	49.2	84.6	44.8	+30.9
2132	IT User Support Technicians	41.4	36.1	70.2	38.0	+28.8
2129	IT Professionals n.e.c.	31.9	44.8	76.4	205.0	+44.5
5242	Telecommunications Engineers	13.6	14.8	19.2	21.7	+5.6
3113	Engineering Technicians	78.9	81.2	75.4	76.3	-3.5

The use of Lightcast and ONS Textkernel data provides two different but necessary perspectives on the regional labour market. Lightcast forward-looking modelling is essential for anticipating structural shifts driven by national policy and technological breakthroughs, such as the emergence of the "Swiss army knife" technologist. However, the ONS Textkernel dataset provides the empirical "ground truth" of what firms are doing today. The overestimation of certain roles by Lightcast, such as Business Analyst (Difference: +52.6) and IT Specialist Managers (+242.8), may reflect a "structural optimism" within the model that anticipates a faster pace of digital transformation than regional firms are currently achieving. Conversely, the higher ONS baseline for IT Operations Technicians and IT User Support Technicians highlights the persistent demand for the "technical doers" who keep the current economy running. The Lightcast provides a directional signal, identifying which occupations are growing in relative importance. However, for short-term workforce planning the ONS empirical baseline serves as a more reliable anchor. This balanced approach allows the region to build a "resilient and responsive" supply of skills that addresses both current vacancies and future growth opportunities.

Area of Analysis	Lightcast Projection Strength	ONS Empirical Baseline Strength
Emerging Roles	High (Captures structural shifts)	Low (Lagging indicator for new roles)
Core Delivery Roles	Moderate (May overstate growth)	High (Captures current hiring intensity)
Technician Roles	Low (Often understates demand)	High (Captures physical-digital needs)
Analytical Roles	High (Assumes rapid AI adoption)	Moderate (Reflects current adoption levels)

### Real-World Challenges for the specific sector

- **Technician Scarcity:** There is a shortage of infrastructure technicians capable of handling both software and hardware to maintain the growing data centre infrastructure. This "hybrid" skill required to maintain modern data centres is difficult to recruit. Employers report and the adoption of the ONS empirical baseline highlights that the region's most immediate need is for these "technical doers" who can implement and maintain physical-digital infrastructure.
- **Implementation Gap:** 70% of AI projects in small businesses fail to reach production due to costs (20-70% over budget) and the complexity of data preparation. SMEs struggle to adopt these technologies profitably.
- **Workplace readiness:** Employers across all sectors observe reduced "workplace readiness" among younger recruits and post-COVID cohorts, specifically in applied technical practice, version control, agile workflows, understanding freelance/self-employment models and communication and professional behaviours.
  - Small digital product studios struggle to recruit entry level staff because hires must add value immediately.
  - Large employers can generally source core technical skills but face challenges recruiting hybrid leadership roles that combine hands on engineering depth with architectural vision, mentoring capability and comfort with ambiguity.
- **Regular on-site presence requirement:** employers' requirements in conjunction to transport barrier also constrain recruitment, reducing the feasible talent pool.
- **Hybrid skills:** Across the sector, employers emphasise that technical capability alone is no longer sufficient, hybrid digital, commercial and communication skills are becoming essential.
- **Fast – Pace Skills development:** The life of digital skills is now less than five years, necessitating a culture of constant upskilling which the current training infrastructure struggles to support. Employers note that FE/HE curriculum cycles are too slow for fast moving technologies, and codesign processes are often too burdensome for SMEs. Providers must shorten update cycles and embed live production practice to remain relevant.
- **Power Demand:** The significant energy requirements of AI data centres are placing increasing pressure on the regional grid, closely linking sector growth to the wider energy transition. Forecasts indicate that continued AI and digital adoption will drive further increases in energy demand, potentially contributing to delays in infrastructure investment.

### Skill needs, current provision and demand

Employers consistently highlight gaps in both technical and transferable skills. Critical technical gaps include real-time 3D workflows, full-stack engineering fundamentals, cloud native development, data architecture and secure AI-enabled development.

Across all subsectors, soft skills are a major differentiator: communication, problem solving, cross disciplinary collaboration, commercial awareness and the ability to work in agile, fast-moving environments.

Within creative employers, portfolio-ready experience is important, with employers emphasising the need for production like project work rather than theoretical learning. AI is reshaping expectations: developers must be AI competent, able to use tools productively, while still understanding core engineering principles. The sector anticipates rising demand for "Swiss army knife" technologists who blend technical, product and communication skills.

Training models differ significantly across the sector. Games and real time studios deliver intensive in-house training through live codebases, mentoring and production aligned Skills Bootcamps. These close both skills and experience gaps and provide direct recruitment pipelines.

Digital product studios rely on project led learning, monthly self-directed development days and internal knowledge sharing.

Large employers invest heavily in internal mobility, succession planning and structured early talent programmes, though AI upskilling is now a

priority across all functions.

Engagement with Education and Talent Pipelines is strong but uneven. Employers often maintain close partnerships with colleges and universities, offering placements, summer camps and outreach. Engagement is happening also through guest lectures and work experience opportunities, though capacity constraints limit placement numbers. Large employers maintain strong university partnerships and participate in regional skills initiatives, though school engagement is sometimes restricted by compliance requirements. Employers consistently highlight the need for FE/HE to embed freelance readiness, agile team practice, production-level technical skills and AI augmented workflows.

#### Education Pathway

- IT Managers, Programmers, and Data Analysts (L3–L6+).
- Training must prioritise computing and ICT practitioners at all levels, with a specific focus on level 6 and above.
- Pathway integration at level 3+ for engineering and business is needed to support the digitisation of the foundational economy. The Growth and Skills Levy is essential here to allow for constant, modular upskilling in response to AI shifts.

Sector insights reveal a continuous Learning and upskilling preference, heavily delivered through adult short courses and bootcamps to keep pace with new technologies and digital solutions.

Current provision –apprenticeship starts by Level and standard/framework: In the academic year 24/25 it had been recorded 950 starts in the Digital Technology area, 57% Higher apprenticeship (490), followed by 43% of Advanced apprenticeship (380) while the overall achievements had been 540 (63%). More details in the table below:

Standard/framework	ST Code	Level	NE Starts
Data Technician	ST0795	3	220
Information Communications Technician	ST0973	3	130
Digital Support Technician	ST0120	3	20
IT Technical Salesperson	ST0115	3	10
Software Development Technician	ST0128	3	10
Data Analyst	ST0163	4	170
Business Analyst	ST0117	4	70
Cyber Security Technologist (2021)	ST0124	4	30
Network Engineer	ST0127	4	30
Software Developer	ST0116	4	30
DevOps Engineer	ST0825	4	10
Digital Product Manager	ST1318	4	10
Data Engineer	ST0774	5	20
Digital Learning Designer	ST0969	5	10
Digital and Technology Solutions Professional	ST0119	6	90
Data Scientist (Integrated Degree)	ST0585	6	10
Digital & Tech Solutions Specialist (Integrated Degree)	ST0482	7	60
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Data Specialist	ST0763	7	20
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>950</b>

Medium term skills demand will centre on real time 3D development, AI enabled engineering, cloud native architectures, secure data environments and hybrid roles that blend technical and product capability.

Software and product studios anticipate rising need for full stack developers, UX/UI designers with technical literacy, and roles combining coordination, product thinking and engineering comprehension.

Large employers expect growth in data architecture, event driven engineering and AI enabled development, with AI accelerating platform consolidation and reducing manual roles.

Across the sector, the ability to adapt to rapid toolchain change with flexible, integrated, and automated systems that allow teams to adopt new technologies without disrupting workflows, will be a defining capability.

## What's currently happening in the region

- The Digital Up North initiative at Gateshead College serves as a regional benchmark for digital skills by embedding employer needs directly into curriculum. The program utilises state-of-the-art facilities like the Digital Hub and Incubator Lab to provide immersive learning in AI, machine learning, and data analytics. A key success is the progression pathway that allows learners to advance from Level 3 digital programs at the college through to degree-level study at Newcastle and Northumbria Universities.
- TechFirst: is a national government skills programme designed to strengthen the UK's digital and technology talent pipeline. Its strands — TechYouth, TechGrad, TechExpert and TechLocal — support progression from school engagement into higher-level technical study, advanced research, and locally delivered innovation and skills activity through partnerships with employers and regional or local delivery organisations. In LSIP terms, the programme can help strengthen progression routes, improve alignment between employer demand and talent development, and support the growth of local digital skills ecosystems.
- AI Growth Zone (founded 2025): The region founded an AI Growth Zone which has attracted significant investment intent and aims to unlock 5,000 jobs and attract £30 billion in private investment positioning the North East as a key player for data security. The region won a 2025 "Place-Based Impact Award" for its world-class 5G infrastructure rollout.
- AI Skills Development Fund: A confirmed £5 million investment boost has been allocated to the North East to support AI skills development. While specific spending details are currently being finalised in coordination with regional stakeholders, this fund is designated to bridge the "workplace readiness" gap and support the upskilling of the regional workforce for the AI Growth Zone.
- QTS Cambois Campus: A £10 billion data centre project in Northumberland that will be one of the largest in Europe.
- Stargate UK: A partnership with OpenAI and NVIDIA at Cobalt Park to create a "sovereign" AI platform where UK firms can safely test AI solutions.
- Strategic Research Hubs: Assets such as the National Innovation Centre for Data (NICD) and immersive facilities like PROTO that provide essential R&D sandboxes for SMEs.
- Interconnection Infrastructure: The Stellium Data Centre's role as a major UK Interconnection Hub with low-latency links to the US and Europe, attracting fintech and data-intensive firms.
- Growth and Skills Levy Reforms: Training must pivot to the Growth and Skills Levy model launching in April 2026, which allows employers to use up to 50% of their levy for "Apprenticeship Units", short, intensive modules (30-140 hours) focused on AI strategy, cybersecurity, and cloud fundamentals, triggering more proactive training planning.
- LSIF Digital Workstream: A collaboration of nine regional providers led by Gateshead College, embedding 20 new curriculum modules into Level 3+ programs across the foundational economy.
- The Tech Talent Pro model is an industry-leading employment initiative led by Sunderland Software City (SSC) supported by Sunderland City Council through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). This framework is recognised for successfully bridging the digital "experience gap" for junior software engineers and web developers. The model places candidates on six-month full-time paid contracts to work on live internal and external client projects under the direct oversight of senior engineers, support skills development where gaps are identified and transitioning them directly into permanent employment. Since 2021 the initiative supported over 2,500 tech businesses and over 100 non-tech organisations supporting hundreds of people to progress into tech roles.

## What needs to be retained

- To ensure long-term success, the region must protect its existing assets while proactively addressing systemic weaknesses. The adopted employer strategy dictates a shift from theoretical training to "production-level" technical practice. Universal digital literacy must be embedded into every training programme, and "freelance readiness" must be integrated into curricula for sectors like the Creative Industries.
- Immersive Hubs: Facilities like the immersive digital hub at Gateshead College provide essential hands-on access to technology for learners and SMEs and must be sustained.
- NICD Partnership: The strategic link between the National Innovation Centre for Data and regional businesses is a unique asset that drives productivity and must be protected.

## What changes are needed

- The Tech Talent Pro model is an industry-leading employment initiative led by Sunderland Software City (SSC) supported by Sunderland City Council through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). This framework is recognised for successfully bridging the digital "experience gap" for junior software engineers and web developers. The model places candidates on six-month full-time paid contracts to work on live internal and external client projects under the direct oversight of senior engineers, support skills development where gaps are identified and transitioning them directly into permanent employment. Since 2021 the initiative supported over 2,500 tech businesses and over 100 non-tech organisations supporting hundreds of people to progress into tech roles.
- Agentic AI Upskilling: Shift digital training from Generative AI to Agentic Forecasts suggest that the regional tech workforce will need to grow to 45,000 strong to support the AI Growth Zone. This requires a dual focus: maintaining the ONS-identified implementation core while simultaneously building the high-skilled capacity in data engineering and AI safety needed to support the 5,000 new roles in the growth zone.
- Gender Gap: With women representing only 28.5% of the tech workforce, initiatives like "Girl Tech" need to be significantly scaled to tap into the full talent pool.
- Wage Parity: High-tech apprenticeships must offer competitive wages compared to low-skilled alternatives to build "ambition" in the local new generation and attract top talent.
- AI Apprenticeship, Data engineers, responsible AI and AI safety to support the AI Growth Zone, forecasted 5,000 new high-skilled roles.

**Potential benefit**

The transition to the Growth and Skills Levy in 2026 offers a unique opportunity to deliver flexible, modular training. By aligning these reforms with ambitious infrastructure projects like Stargate UK and the QTS Cambois Campus, the North East can build an "AI-competent" workforce capable of driving productivity across all sectors. Success will depend on fostering a culture of continuous learning, bridging the workplace readiness gap, and ensuring that training pathways prepare learners for the practical, commercial, and technical realities of the modern economy. A thriving digital sector will not only create 5,000+ high-skilled jobs but will uplift the productivity of every other sector in the region building resilience in the North East business.