

Press release: Drive to unleash potential of North East's youngsters stepped-up

Schools across the North East are being urged to come forward with ideas to help children fulfil their potential as they move from primary to secondary level.

The performance of young people in the North East means the region's primary schools are the highest-ranked outside of London, now the government is stepping-up efforts to ensure young people continue to reach their potential at secondary school.

To do that, the Department for Education (DfE) has today (4 June 2019) published a call for proposals to draw on the expertise of teachers, school leaders and local authorities in the region by asking them to pitch ideas to help children fulfil their untapped potential, supported by funding from the DfE's £24 million Opportunity North East programme.

Every school and local authority in the North East is invited to get involved as Schools Minister Lord Agnew seeks the views of local educators on how to maximise the talent of youngsters when they move to high school – particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The best proposals will be granted up to £1.8 million for projects to help boost the prospects of young people across the North East – schools or local authorities interested in putting forward a proposal must submit an expression of interest by 24 June 2019 and can apply [here](#).

Schools Minister Lord Agnew – chair of the Opportunity North East board – said:

Nobody knows the children and young people in the North East like the teachers in schools across the region, so it's absolutely crucial that we tap into their knowledge in a way that helps deliver long-term improvements in secondary schools.

This expertise will help build on the work already underway as part of Opportunity North East – to ensure more people leave schools in the North East with the qualifications and skills they are capable of achieving.

The Department for Education will host an event at Shotton Hall Research School, Peterlee, on Wednesday 26 June to invite suggestions from local education leaders – and applicants have until 19 July 2019 to submit proposals.

Successful applicants will help to build on the momentum of the Opportunity North East programme – launched last year by the Education Secretary Damian Hinds – which pledged up to £24 million to tackle issues holding back young people in the North East, including the fact that the region has:

- Some of the best performing primary schools in the country, but secondary school performance is below other regions; and
- One of the highest proportions of young people not in education, employment or training after year 11. Opportunity North East aims to tackle these issues by:
 - Investing £12 million in targeted approaches to improve the transition from primary to secondary school, drive up standards – particularly at secondary level – and improve outcomes for pupils post 16;
 - Working with secondary schools and colleges to encourage young people to consider university, degree apprenticeships and other high quality technical education options;
 - Partnering with local businesses to improve job prospects for young people across the region; and
 - Investing a further £12 million to boost early career training for new teachers and help improve the quality of teaching and raise standards in the region's schools, ahead of roll-out in other regions.

Today's announcement follows the news that 30 under-performing schools will be partnered with successful schools to raise standards and help boost the prospects of 25,000 young people and offer extra more support as they move from education to work or further education.

Next Wednesday (12 June) the board of the Opportunity North East programme – comprised of local school and college leaders, local authorities, businesses and higher education institutions – will meet in Darlington to continue the group's efforts to tackle the issues holding back young people in the region.