

Involving key stakeholders



Strong partnerships underpin every aspect of the Hub's success. This section highlights how employers, VCSE groups, training providers, community organisations and council teams work together to shape delivery, remove barriers and create a co-ordinated, joined up system that meets the needs of people and the local labour market.

Understanding stakeholder needs

A clear understanding of stakeholder needs comes from continuous, two way communication with employers, learners, tutors, transformation leads and community partners. The Hub and Hub on Tour shape their services around this intelligence.

- **Listening to employer requirements** – employers regularly share specific attributes they need (such as drivers, gender specific staffing requests or Positive Behaviour Support model knowledge), which directly influence programme content and matching processes.
- **Tracking employer sector trends** – ongoing conversations with care providers highlight changing demand, retention patterns and recruitment pressures, ensuring the Hub remains relevant to local workforce needs.
- **Using feedback to refine support** – structured feedback from each Care Academy cohort and from employers shapes updates to the curriculum, assessment approach and interview preparation methods.
- **Using workforce and demand insight to guide provider decisions** – the Hub team helped new and expanding care providers understand whether the local labour market could sustain their plans, offering advice on capacity, likely demand and potential over saturation to avoid clustering of similar services in unsuitable areas.

“Sometimes providers come in with the same idea at the same time, and the demand just doesn't match. If we know early, we can give better advice. We're not saying don't come – but we help them make informed decisions.”

Kevin Sedgwick, Business Relationship Manager,
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Engaging with employers

“When our Chief Executive is meeting new businesses, the Hub is a great toolkit. He can say: ‘You can use our offices, we can help you recruit, we can show you what skills we have here.’ It’s part of our offer to attract investment.”

Julie Marsden, Economic Development Manager
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Engaging with employers is built on responsiveness, trust, and informal communication, allowing the Hub and Hub on Tour to work closely with care providers and other sectors to meet real recruitment needs quickly and effectively.

- **Fast, direct communication** – short messages and emails allow vacancies to be picked up and progressed quickly.
- **Proactive sourcing of providers** – staff contact employers advertising locally, widening the range of available roles.
- **Flexible vacancy handling** – support is offered for roles across all levels, from entry-level care posts to more senior or specialist positions.
- **Skills-first matching** – matrices and pre-briefs help align candidates to employer needs more accurately, improving quality of matches.
- **Support for phased starts** – co-ordinators help arrange gradual introductions or quiet first visits for candidates needing confidence-building before starting work.
- **Rapid redundancy response** – the team quickly mobilises during local redundancy events to help people transition into new roles.

“We use the Hub for interviews, training sessions and regional meetings. The facilities are excellent – really pleasant to use – and because the location is central, it’s easier for people to get to. We’re in the Hub a lot because it makes everything smoother.”

Ged Devine, Operations Manager, Milewood, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Building on these relationships

Strong stakeholder relationships deepen over time through consistency, trust, responsiveness, and shared problem solving. The Hub and Hub on Tour sustain these relationships by working collaboratively, communicating openly and ensuring partners feel valued and involved.

- **Shifting naturally from formal to informal communication** – as relationships strengthen, partners move from structured meetings to quick, friendly check-ins that make collaboration faster and more efficient.
- **Creating familiarity through repeated contact** – employers attend multiple Care Academy intakes, job fairs and recruitment events, building a rhythm of partnership that enhances trust and reliability.
- **Collaborating during operational challenges** – partners work together through issues such as bad weather, last minute dropouts or learner confidence barriers, demonstrating resilience and mutual support.
- **Maintaining transparent, ongoing dialogue** – the Hub uses informal channels like Teams group chats to ensure rapid information exchange between tutors, co-ordinators and employers, avoiding delays and misunderstandings.
- **Nurturing professional friendships** – over time, genuine rapport forms between Hub staff, employers, Care Academy and other partners, making communication easier, reducing friction and creating a shared commitment to positive outcomes.

“We collaborate closely with DWP. We’ve even got a Jobcentre member of staff colocated with us in the Hub. They still have their own caseload, but they’re based with us because the outcomes into employment are higher from being based here than from being based in the Jobcentre.”

Fallon Dunleavy, Employment and Training Hub Manager
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council



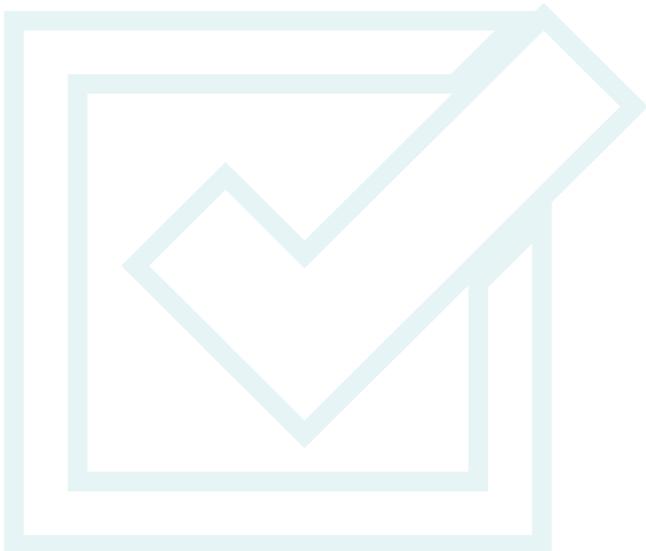
Key decisions

- Outreach locations were selected based on transport barriers and local community patterns, ensuring the Hub on Tour reached people least able or willing to travel to the central Hub.
- A structured skills matching matrix was implemented to streamline employer interview days, reduce time spent on unsuitable applicants and improve the likelihood of successful job matches for both candidates and providers.

Key learning

Key learning reflects the practical insights gained through close collaboration with employers, learners, tutors and community partners, showing what makes stakeholder involvement effective, sustainable and high impact.

- **Informal communication builds trust and speeds up action** – short, friendly exchanges help resolve issues quickly and keep employers engaged without unnecessary formality.
- **Acting quickly on feedback strengthens relationships** – whether adjusting course content, updating matching processes or refining interview preparation, fast responses make partners feel heard and valued.
- **Cross team flexibility improves support** – working within the same local authority directorate allows staff to cross professional boundaries, enabling education, training and employment teams to collaborate seamlessly.
- **Local contextual knowledge is essential** – understanding community dynamics, transport barriers and neighbourhood habits helps tailor outreach so it reaches people who may never approach a central service.





“We’ve built a real partnership with the Employment and Training Hub. We work very much together as one team, supporting local employers and building relationships with them, while also taking feedback from the learners.”

Marie Carney, Tutor, Care Academy, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

“Building partnerships takes time. When I started, the Hub didn’t exist and there hadn’t been much work done with businesses for older age groups, so we built everything from the ground up. We were a very small team at first, and it took a lot of intensive work with employers to earn their trust and make those connections.”

Sophie Proud, Recruitment Co-ordinator, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council