



# NTU Impact Report Spring 2022



Nottingham Trent  
University

Business Engagement and  
Support in Mansfield & Ashfield

# Foreword by Professor Edward Peck



Developing our presence in two of the most deprived localities in the UK has challenged NTU to reimagine the role of universities in their local communities. Our first Impact Report described our collaboration with Vision West Nottinghamshire College which is enhancing the skills of local people. This second Impact Report describes an innovative set of partnerships which are driving business growth and thus the demand for these skills. Our third Impact Report, to be published later this year, will set out how NTU is working with schools, community groups, and local charities to ensure that all local people have the chance to acquire and use these skills.

Central to this initiative is the mobilisation of the resources and talents of the University into an integrated set of activities in support of a purpose that unites us and our partners in Mansfield and Ashfield: to deliver opportunity and prosperity to those who need them most. It is Levelling-Up in action.

**Professor Edward Peck CBE DL FAcSS PhD**  
**Vice-Chancellor**



## Providing business growth and innovation services to D2N2

NTU is a leading provider of business growth, workforce development, and innovation services in the D2N2 area, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area for Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Through business diagnostics, expert workshops and individually-tailored assistance, we support businesses in upskilling their staff, accessing graduate talent and driving innovation, all via NTU's cutting-edge research, world-class facilities and expertise. In the past three years we have been awarded:

**£18.5m** of funding to support over 1,600 businesses and over 3,200 employees across D2N2. This includes:

**£7.6m** through the European Regional Development Fund to support business innovation, growth and sustainability.

**£5m** through the European Social Fund to support high level skills.

**£5.9m** in other government funding to support local economic development.

Furthermore, NTU leads a consortium of 9 partners across D2N2 on our High Level Skills programme which has attracted a total of £11.8m of European funding – including the above £5m high level skills funding noted above – and will collectively deliver training to over **6,000 learners**.



## Engaging and supporting businesses

In recent years, European Structural Investment Funding has enabled us to build strong relationships with businesses in our region, and especially with Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs). These funding streams are complicated to navigate. At NTU, we have simplified our offer for business to enable them to access tailored and co-designed programmes of support. We know that individual businesses require different types of support depending on their size and maturity. This is why we have developed programmes that help businesses on their journey from start-up to scale-up.

These bespoke programmes are as important to our contribution to levelling up as our higher education courses. They mean we are generating the demand for skills as well as ensuring the supply of skills through the growing engagement between employers, Vision West Nottinghamshire College and NTU to agree priority areas for course development.

The development of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund offers new opportunities to reduce complexity of funding streams and create new economic programmes that support a broad range of business needs.

## Our partnerships in Mansfield and Ashfield



NTU's partnership work in Mansfield and Ashfield has made considerable progress since 2019, in particular our partnerships with Mansfield and Ashfield District Councils and Vision West Nottinghamshire College. We have joined the Mansfield Place Board and the Discover Ashfield Board, developed partnerships with the Mansfield and Ashfield 2020 business network, and held a series of events with local business leaders aligning with our priorities for the area.

We are now collaborating with the East Midlands Chamber of Commerce to establish a North Nottinghamshire Manufacturing Network to be hosted at the NTU University Centre in Mansfield.

To date, we have secured the following with our partners:



Through our **Enterprising Ashfield programme** we have attracted **£3.8m** – backed by further **£3.6m** co-invested by NTU and SMEs – of Towns Fund money to deliver a full package of support for enterprise, growth, innovation and skills. This will include training for **900 learners** and support for **300 businesses and 225 start-ups** by 2026.



NTU has partnered with Vision West Nottinghamshire College to create an **£8.3m Future Tech Skills and Knowledge Exchange Hub** as part of the Mansfield Towns Fund. The hub has received **£4.3m** of Towns Funding and is set to receive **£4m** from the Government's Further Education Capital Transformation Fund to provide a dedicated training facility to equip adults with the knowledge and skills to secure high value employment in priority sectors.



NTU has been fundamental in developing the proposal for the **Automated Distribution and Manufacturing Centre**, a national centre for skills and research translation that is the flagship capital investment of the Ashfield Towns Fund. The Government has committed **£20m** from its Towns Fund for the centre, with **£10m** of match funding. NTU has also committed **£1.6m** of match funding over six years for the centre.

## **Providing direct support to businesses in Mansfield and Ashfield**

Since 2019, NTU has delivered expert support, training and grants to over 200 businesses and employees in Mansfield and Ashfield. This has directly enabled businesses to create new products and services, acquire new skills and employ graduates.

Across the D2N2 region, over 900 NTU graduates have been employed in local businesses through part-funded placements. This provides local SMEs with access to university expertise, new ideas and technical knowhow; all vital for local businesses as they seek to develop new products, innovation and growth.

NTU has supported 99 degree apprentices from the Mansfield and Ashfield area across ten different subject areas, from Chartered Surveyor to Registered Nurse. Evidence shows that these degree apprenticeships are supporting widening participation as they attract individuals who might not have otherwise studied at university.

In 2019, Graeme Blakey, Co-Founder and Director of Realm Projects - a Mansfield-based commercial joinery company - was assisted by our apprenticeships team to recruit eighteen-year-old Sam Hickling who joined Realm Projects for his five-year apprenticeship, studying at NTU. He is now the business's newest Junior Quantity Surveyor and Estimator.



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**Graeme said:** Since joining the business, Sam has made a really positive contribution and it's now down to us both to make the most of the opportunity. It's still early days but our experience to date of working with NTU – and with Sam – has been overwhelmingly positive and in that respect, it's already been a success.

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## **Helping local businesses attract graduate talent**

One innovative feature of our economic programmes is our provision of part-funded graduate placements to SMEs in Mansfield and Ashfield, providing them with the capability and capacity to innovate and grow. Through our **Finders Keepers Programme**, we help companies design jobs that are attractive to graduates. We also support companies in becoming more attractive to graduate candidates. Crucially, the programme helps retain graduates in the local economy; this is key to levelling up.

- NTU has supported **33 companies** in Mansfield and Ashfield, providing **38 'talent grants'** to support businesses to recruit graduates into their organisation.
- NTU has promoted **154 graduate opportunities** and **35 placement opportunities** in Mansfield and Ashfield.
- There are **30 NTU students undertaking year-in-industry Sandwich Placements** in Mansfield and Ashfield.

## **NTU's High Level Skills programme**

Our High Level Skills programme (HLS) supports lifelong learning and enables local SMEs to grow their skills and talent. High Level Skills has delivered a range of micro-accredited and non-accredited courses to employees of SMEs in Mansfield and Ashfield, including Nottingham Business School's Women in Leadership course that supports women from SMEs to develop effective leadership and managerial skills. In delivering our micro- and non-accredited courses, we have taken existing content and developed shorter, more accessible courses, which can tempt businesses' employees back into learning in order to develop their skills.

We have piloted **16 micro-accredited courses** with further courses in the pipeline. These include Women in Leadership, Energy Management, Sustainability in Construction and Diverse Leadership. In January, we introduced a fifth programme to the portfolio: **Reskill and Recover**. This will continue to diversify the upskilling and reskilling opportunities available through High Level Skills and to expand the programme consortium's reach by introducing new delivery partners, including B-Global, a pioneering Black-led and BAME Business Network. Newly accredited courses include: Diverse Leadership; Digital Construction and Sustainability; and Sustainability for Food Businesses. Our high level skills programme is significantly contributing to the D2N2 LEP's COVID Response and Recovery strategy.

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**Anna Scothern, founder of Ashfield-based consultancy business Longwood Maven was a recent participant on the Women in Leadership course, saying:**  
The course was very helpful and gave me the opportunity to step out and really think about how my business best serves its clients. After such a positive experience, I'm definitely looking for more opportunities to connect with NTU in the future.

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