



A TRANSFORMATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Would you like to drive forward community-led regeneration across Newcastle's neighbourhoods?



'We have a concept, we have access to funding, we now just need the right person to drive this forward' – Vicky McDermott, director of housing and communities

CREATING A BLUEPRINT FOR LONG-TERM PROSPERITY

Newcastle is looking for someone to guide the regeneration of communities across the city. With an innovative new approach taking shape and multimillion pound investment in the pipeline, it promises to be a career-defining opportunity

It's telling that Newcastle City Council's housing strategy is entitled Building Communities, Not Homes.

While the city is undergoing something of a housing revolution – including major investment in social homes – the emphasis is very much on building resilient communities to deliver lasting improvement of neighbourhoods.

The goal is to use housing investment as a catalyst to engage local people and enable them to imagine a better future for their communities and play a key role in making that happen.

Last year the council took back management of its housing stock with the closure of Your Homes Newcastle. It saw almost 1,000 staff join the council to oversee the management of 24,000 homes across the city, making it one of the largest housing authorities in the country.

Dramatic improvements continue to be made in the management of that stock while resident engagement has been placed at the heart of the housing strategy.

It's all part of the council's innovative neighbourhood model approach to community regeneration led by Vicky McDermott (pictured right), who in 2024 joined the council from the Regulator of Social Housing to become director of housing and communities.

She aims to regenerate what are some of the most deprived communities in the UK while ensuring residents are empowered to make the decisions that shape their neighbourhood.

The council's approach is already capturing the interest of Government with millions of pounds earmarked for the city. That includes up to £20m each for both Walker in the south east of the city and Elswick to the west through Pride in Place, which is aiming to 'build stronger communities, create thriving places and empower local people' across the UK (see page 4).

Alongside the regeneration in neighbourhoods,

the city's urban core is also the focus of major investment, including the £120m Forth Yards scheme, which will transform a 21-acre brownfield site that has been derelict for decades into Quayside West, a sustainable mixed-use neighbourhood in the heart of the city centre with 5,000 homes.

It's all building on Newcastle's fast-growing reputation among investors with hundreds of millions of pounds coming to Tyneside in recent years. The city is at the heart of a multi-billion pound devolution deal and The Great North collaboration, a new partnership unveiled by north of England mayors – including Mayor of the North East, Kim McGuinness – 'to unlock a new era of jobs, opportunity and prosperity for the north'.

All of this combined means the city will see large-scale investment in housing and communities that will help to drive economic growth, create jobs and support residents.

A city of opportunity

Now the council is searching for an assistant director for strategy and community regeneration to help take forward this ambitious programme of work for Newcastle.

From supporting masterplanning and place-shaping of neighbourhoods, to driving engagement with communities that empower them to lead the transformation, it is a hugely exciting opportunity, says Vicky.

'I joined the council just over a year ago and I have been blown away with how much opportunity there is the city. There is so much going on in Newcastle, whether that be international investment, huge cultural events or the growth of new industries.'

She believes the return of housing management to the council has been pivotal.

'It has provided us with lots of opportunities to

review how we support communities. We are looking at innovative new models that bring together council teams, partner organisations but also our communities.

'Following the transfer of housing, we launched a series of Getting to Know You visits where we knock on the door of every tenant in the city. It has given us some valuable insight and led to us thinking differently around how we approach community regeneration.

'We have the interest of Government, we have millions of pounds worth of funding to do things differently, and we want residents to be at the heart of that.'

The ideal person will have a blend of regeneration and community experience and the ability to 'straddle' both, she explains.

'We are on the search for someone who understands housing and new developments, but we also want someone with a track record of engaging with our communities. Some of those communities crying out for development are among

the most well-connected in the city. They are tight-knit communities who support one another.

'But they also know their neighbourhood better than anyone else and we want to work with them to make their areas a better and more inclusive place to call home.'

Vicky says the council recognises how investment in housing can have significant wider benefits, enabling people to live healthy, happy lives, build strong inclusive communities and drive inclusive growth that benefits all residents.

She believes the new assistant director role can be 'transformational' for both the successful candidate and the city of Newcastle.

'This is such an exciting role and whoever is successful will have a blank canvas to work with the community to drive forward regeneration,' Vicky explains. 'This will be transformational for the city of Newcastle. It is a new way of thinking and can be a blueprint for cities across the country.'

'It is a career-defining opportunity that ultimately will improve the lives of residents in some of the most deprived areas of the country. We have a concept, we have access to funding, we now just need the right person to drive this forward! ●

• Find out more about the assistant director for strategy and community regeneration role in this week's MJ Jobs section on page XX



THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS

Geordies will tell you Newcastle ranks as one of the best cities in the world. Bursting with culture, opportunity and passionate people, it's easy to see why

With great connectivity, a stunning natural environment, affordable house prices and a city packed with culture and sport – who wouldn't want to call Newcastle home?

Newcastle is a city of innovation. A city of opportunity. A city of growth. It is easy to reach and globally connected. It is a city where cultures are celebrated, diversity embraced and potential unlocked.

While the city also sits at the heart of the east coast main line. You can travel to Edinburgh in just 30 minutes or find yourself in London in less than three hours.

Newcastle is home to two top universities and the centre for world class healthcare and research.

The city has a proud sporting tradition, from football to the Great North Run. The thriving hospitality sector offers food and drink to satisfy any palate.

And the city is rich in culture attracting Broadway shows and exceptional art galleries and museums. With Northumberland National Park, Yorkshire, the Lake District and Scotland on its doorstep, Newcastle really is a dynamic city.

It is perfect mix of rural and urban that offers a fantastic quality of life. The best of all worlds. City, countryside and coast all within a stone throw of one another. ●



Our ambition is for Newcastle to be a fair and inclusive city where everyone is free to live healthy, happy lives.



TRAILBLAZING TOWARDS A BETTER FUTURE

Community-led regeneration in two of Newcastle's neighbourhoods will be key to shaping the council's wider approach

Two of Newcastle's most deprived areas will spearhead the council's new approach to community regeneration.

For both Walker, which is situated in the east of the city close to the River Tyne, and Elswick – located just west of the city centre – it offers the chance to break generational cycles of poverty.

Together they will become the blueprint for how the council, its partners and communities approach regeneration across every neighbourhood in the city.

Walker and Elswick are both well-connected and enjoy strong community bonds – assets that are at the heart of the fresh approach, says Vicky McDermott, director of housing and communities.

'It's about giving agency back to communities. Our role is as convener, operating in a way that's going to work for the community.'

Both have secured up to £20m from the Government through its Pride in Place strategy.

Walker has a highly active group of grassroots organisations that will guide the future shape of the neighbourhood. It takes in the council's largest estate with 3,000 homes. This long-term initiative will be key to ensuring the council's investment in housing – and its efforts to ensure Walker has a wider range of tenures – help to drive social and economic regeneration.

Elswick's proximity to the West End of Newcastle, one of the city's biggest regeneration areas, offers huge opportunities to kick-start improvements in the area, says Vicky.

Architects have been appointed by the council to work with residents on how the neighbourhood could look and feel in the future.

'We've worked hard to build up trust within the community,' says Vicky. 'This is about looking at imaginative ways to engage residents in the process.'

For both projects, they offer the new assistant director for strategy and community regeneration a rare opportunity to be involved in something that could have far-reaching impact across the city, she says.

'Walker and Elswick will provide the blueprint for us to work through every neighbourhood in the city, getting people involved in imagining what their area will look like. We have the major projects going on in the urban core and this programme of work is vital because it's about demonstrating equity and fairness and making sure people feel things are also happening in their neighbourhoods. Fundamentally, it's about creating resilient communities, whatever that means for each place.'



A new dawn for housing management

Since taking back control of social housing just over a year ago, the council has embarked on a major improvement programme.

Key achievements to date include:

- **Investing £50m in home improvements**, plus £33.3m for the repairs service – this equates to £1.6m a week invested council housing stock.
- **Commissioning a full stock condition survey** to ensure every home meets the Decent Homes Standard and to help prioritise long-term investment in repairs and upgrades. Over 6,000 surveys have already been completed.
- **Getting to Know You visits** to all 24,000 council and leasehold properties to better understand housing conditions and residents' support needs.
- **Reducing the number of overdue repairs.** In September 2024, 63% of repairs were taking longer than targeted timescales. As of June 2025, 89.3% of non-emergency jobs and 87.4% of emergency jobs reported were completed on target.
- **Carrying out electrical safety tests** in over 98% of communal blocks, including 100% of high-rise buildings, ensuring safer homes across the city.