

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



THE  
**BUSINESS  
RESILIENCE  
CENTRE**

FOR THE NORTH EAST

YORKSHIRE  
THE HUMBER







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**BUSINESS  
RESILIENCE  
CENTRE**



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THE HUMBER



## INTRODUCTION



From Chair of the Advisory Board,  
Simon Newton  
ITPS

I am delighted to share our fifth annual report, which details another fantastic year for the award-winning North East Business Resilience Centre (NEBRC) and outlines the priorities for 2025.

It is my second year as Chair and I'm delighted to continue to support the centre as it seeks to meet new challenges in the year ahead.

I would like to thank our existing Advisory Board and look forward to working with our newest members, Scott Manson from CISCO and Deb Cairns from Net-Defence. I'm confident we have a good mix of expertise to continue to help the NEBRC through its next phase. From an ITPS perspective, we are involved with the centre as we see the value for larger companies in securing their supply chains and also as part of our bid to help the communities we live and work in.

It's been a productive year for the centre with almost 4000 members now and with over 300 signed up at the National Cyber Security Show in only 3 days. With the campaigns supported by the National Ambassadors, Aviva and Sir Robert McAlpine, the centre is hoping for significant member growth over the next year.

This year the Board have had one formal meeting and two workshops where we discussed processes and the adoption of technology. In addition to this, feedback was sought on the new model proposed by the NPCC, along with skills. Both workshops were really helpful for the Board to understand the relationship with policing and the potential of the centre to do much more. I'd like to thank the Board for continuing to give up their time to provide expert guidance to the centre on its work and strategy.

I'd like to thank Costas Moraitis for his role as Vice Chair. Costas has extensive experience as the IT Director for Gleesons and was key this year as the NEBRC tested its business continuity plan, along with colleagues from Waterstons and my own company, ITPS.

Many thanks also to Chris Tait from Layer 7 for sponsoring the highlight event of the year in York, it's a really fabulous event with opportunities not only celebrate what the centre has achieved over the last year but a great chance to network as a region of tech enthusiasts.

I'd also like to highlight Rebecca and the teams hard work in securing several large funding streams this year, which has elevated the student services to new heights as they assess adult social care and deliver against Innovate programmes. Congratulations also to Rebecca for passing the Chartered Information Security Manager (CISM) exam and continuing to run the award-winning centre for the 5<sup>th</sup> year. This stability of leadership and team is no doubt the reason for its success and growth.

## WELCOME

From Chief Executive Officer  
/ Director of the NEBRC,  
Rebecca Chapman



Welcome to the 5<sup>th</sup>, yes 5<sup>th</sup>, annual report from the NEBRC!

As I reflect over the last 5 years, it's quite incredible how far we have come and how integrated we are in the local cyber eco-system. We have gone from 0 to nearly 4000 members in 5 years and increased the revenue by 350% from day 1. This is due to the hard work of our very special team who have continued to grow again in the last year with Sam Cattell joining us for the NHSE contract and Lydia Stone, a Criminology graduate and Masters student working as our part-time Business Assistant.

The contract for digital marketing held with Wildcat Digital until November this year, produced some amazing results with Google snippet status being achieved for the first time and an incredible PR coverage and conversion rate from the website. Chantelle's transformation of the newsletter has led to a better than industry click through rate and the website is undergoing a Chantelle and Joe overhaul ready for the new year.

We have delivered no less than 59 student services this year using 138 student days. This is up 34% on last year and we have delivered a staggering 117 services and 312 student days since we were established. This is incredible real life work experience for the students and 24 of them have now left and gone into fantastic jobs, ranging from Rolls Royce, Celerity, Evalian, Pentest People and more. This year, our superstar Jack Gooday won not only The Cyber Emerging Talent Award 2024 at the National Cyber Awards but Rising Star 2024 at the Dynamites awards in the North East. He has now gone to work as a Penetration Tester for Evalian.

We are recruiting new students to replace those that are leaving, growing our alumni year on year with the expert help and guidance of Sheffield Hallam and Northumbria Universities. We have now also expanded to Newcastle, Sunderland, Teesside, Durham, Coventry (Scarborough) and Leeds Beckett Universities to allow others to take advantage of the unique programme we started back in 2019. We continue to recruit and run our own Student Services but take extra training and senior technical supervision from CyberPath, the equivalent service provided by NCRCC.

Martin Wilson continues to study for his PhD (it's getting near to completion now) and has had a paper published again. Martin will continue sharing insights from his SME research, focusing on how User-Centred Design (UCD) can enhance SME cybersecurity engagement which is now in big demand in private sector. Lizzie Buckler has passed her Level 5 CMI Operations and Departmental Management qualification with Distinction and we can't wait to see what else she will achieve next year!

## WELCOME

From Chief Executive Officer  
/ Director of the NEBRC,  
Rebecca Chapman

Chantelle has passed her Level 5 CMI Operations and Departmental Management Diploma and will finish her portfolio to complete the apprenticeship shortly. Chantelle has now fully taken over digital marketing and supervises Lydia. Lydia passed her Criminology degree with a First Class Honours in the summer and is now studying for an International Business and Marketing Masters to aid her work at the centre. Steve and myself completed the CISM course this year, and I managed to take the exam at the end of the course and passed which was not easy! Steve will be taking the exam in the new year, good luck to him! Joe passed his Cyber Scheme Team Member (CSTM) exam in June which was a great achievement and he will be sitting his OSCP exam in December.



I would like to welcome our newest Cyber Experts and Cyber Essentials Partners (previously known as Trusted Partners) to the fold, Andrew Mason from Pentest People, Niall Quinn from HTG, Chris Monk from Jupiter, Paul Jenkins from North IT, and Paul Leybourne from Citation Cyber.

The Cyber Experts continue to be our local information source and an important referral partner for our members.

We should also celebrate our successes... making the final for the National Cyber Awards again as part of the network, nominated for both Not for Profit and cyber awareness was a great honour.

As we head into 2025 we face a number of challenges, such as scaling up to 2% of the North East SME market to significantly grow the members to 12,000. This will be a huge mountain to climb, even with the assistance of the National Ambassador campaigns so we continue to rely on our attendance at SME events across the region and the support of our larger partners with their supply chains. Student services growth is mostly done via larger contracts now and it is the hope that increased Home Office funding and support from the NCSC will assist in this endeavour.

In the face of economic adversity for many and supporting our ever-busy Police colleagues as budgets become tighter, is a challenge for any business, especially one that a good portion of the SME market do not know they need. We remain optimistic about our plan for engagement next year as we strive for the 12,000 member Home Office target set for 2026. Our team are poised for the challenge and bursting with new ideas to take us to the next level as a Police led, unique nexus between corporate business, academia and law enforcement which is now part of a network covering England and Wales.

## WELCOME

From Chief Executive Officer  
/ Director of the NEBRC,  
Rebecca Chapman

We will continue to work with our talented and supportive advisory board and our close partners at the Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Cyber Clusters and with the Mayoral and PCC offices across the region to provide support to the community and increase our reach.

Thanks for all your magnificent support in 2024 and here's to a very Happy and Prosperous New Year in 2025, whatever it may hold. It has been my absolute pleasure to found and lead the centre for the last 5 years, and work alongside a fantastic team and amazing set of partners and clients.



## THANKS TO.. THE NEBRC ADVISORY BOARD

Our thanks goes to Simon Newton from ITPS who has been a most effective Chair, providing experience and enthusiasm for this area of business, especially growth and business acumen.

Also to DCC David Marshall for his continued support, and picking up the strategic leadership from Paul Anderson.

Welcome to our new Board members Debra Cairns from Net-Defence and Scott Manson from Cisco, It's been great to have them on board this year.

Finally, thanks to the whole Board for their continued commitment and contribution, which has allowed us to trade and implement the vision set in 2021 and the seed of an idea back in 2018!



**itps**  
INTEGRATED TRADING PARTNERSHIP SERVICES



**gleeson**.pc



**LLOYDS BANK**



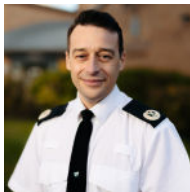
**SPRINGS**



**WATERLOO**



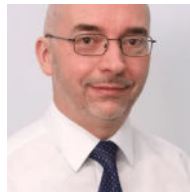
**ND | NET-DEFENCE**



**BRITISH AIRWAYS**



**CENTRIC**



**THALES**

Building a future we can all trust



**Acronis**



**fsb**  
Bank of Montreal



**CGI**



**M&S**



**cisco**



## THANKS TO.. CYBER EXPERTS AND CYBER ESSENTIALS PARTNERS

Thanks to our Cyber Experts Panel and Cyber Essentials Partner Network (previously known as Trusted Partners), many of whom have been invaluable to the ongoing operational development of the centre.

Our special thanks goes to Chris Tait from Layer 7 who is kindly sponsoring our 2024 End of Year Reception.

We must also mention Martin Hart from Cyber Shelter who guided us through our Cyber Essentials Certifications. We now hold IASME Cyber Assurance Level 2.



# LAYER 7



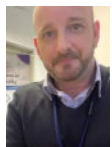
 cyber shelter



 DATACONNECT



 aspire



 Commstec IT  
Delivering IT Business



 SAPPHIRE

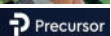


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 Precursor



 Baseel



 NGS  
NEXT GENERATION SECURITY



 InfoSec  
GOVERNANCE LTD



 Bondgate IT



 TecSec



 Waterstones  
We're with you



 bleam  
ENTER SECURITY

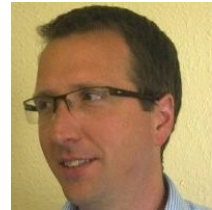
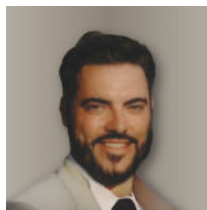
## THANKS TO.. OUR NEW CYBER EXPERTS AND CYBER ESSENTIALS PARTNERS

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## THANKS TO.. MARKETPLACE VENDORS

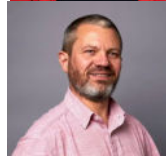
We must mention our Marketplace Vendors, Simon Hall from APIMS, Chris Hannett from Cymplify and Edwin Bartlett from Hicomply. Our vendors continue to offer a range of appropriate and useful services for the small business community. Thank you for working with us!



## THANKS TO.. ACADEMIC PARTNERS

Huge thanks to the lecturers and course leaders for their continued commitment to developing our service offerings and supporting the recruitment process.

Biju Issac, Phil Anderson, Shahrzad Zargari and Myles Dempsey from Northumbria and Sheffield Hallam respectively, have been a great help and a special thanks goes out to them for their support in the centre. Northumbria University have also won The Daily Mails award for Research and as Modern University of the Year-congratulations to them. Sheffield Hallam won awards for both the 'International Collaboration of the Year', and for 'Marketing/Communications Team of the Year' at the prestigious Times awards shortly after our end of year reception last year also.



Thanks to Babak Akhgar, Saskia Bayerl and the team at CENTRIC who continue to allow us unique access and involvement in their many research projects in both AI and online safety providing a research funding stream for the centre.

AIPAS and 3PO are both producing unique and innovative tools which, when released, will serve both law enforcement and the community.

Finally, we'd like to mention our new academic partners that have enabled us to offer work opportunities to their own university students. This includes Newcastle, Sunderland, Durham, Teesside, Coventry (Scarborough) and Leeds Beckett Universities.



## STUDENT SERVICES

This year marks a significant milestone in our Student Services delivery. Not only has the student team provided more technical services to micro and small businesses than ever before, but they have also expanded their efforts to include hosting events and delivering CPD Certified cybersecurity awareness training.

These developments are crucial for several reasons. Firstly, CPD certification adds value to the training, enabling attendees to claim credits for their professional development. Secondly, these events create opportunities for small business communities to engage directly with our students, harnessing their enthusiasm and expertise firsthand. Most importantly, addressing a critical gap highlighted by industry surveys and thought leadership, the NEBRC has invested in specialised training for all current students and alumni. Delivered by the human centric experts at Leading Cyber, this training focuses on developing essential soft skills - a vital skill often underrepresented in the cybersecurity domain. We hope this initiative not only supports our students' career development but also serves as a token of our appreciation for their dedication and hard work.

Beyond these achievements, several of our students have secured roles in industry and government. A great example is Jack Gooday, who has earned two prestigious accolades this year: the Cyber Emerging Talent Award 2024 and the North East Dynamites Rising Star 2024. These honours celebrate Jack's exceptional contributions to SMEs and demonstrate his potential as a future leading cybersecurity professional. Well done, Jack!



## ALUMNI

Without doubt this is one of the best parts of the NEBRC. We get to see students come in as year 1 with no work experience and leave to fabulous jobs in year 4 or post Masters. We have accredited 4 students this year as trainers of CPD products and have seen some fantastic work capturing real vulnerabilities before they became an issue for our clients.



A special mention goes to Jack Gooday, one of our Alumni students, who has won multiple awards this year including Cyber Emerging Talent Award at the National Cyber Awards and also Rising Star at the recent Dynamites Awards.

As an extension of our support of young people into cyber we have also welcomed 2 work experience students- Lawrence Riddle and Kate Leach. Lawrence has since been successful at securing a place on the BAE systems apprenticeship programme for 2025.



## CYBER CAREERS LABS

As part of our approach to be inclusive to all students in our region, we have held 2 more Cyber Careers Labs in Sheffield and Newcastle where we bring industry experts in to talk to students about a career in cyber security.

They have been incredibly successful and we must thank our partners, Ray Stone from Data Connect and Alex Mortimer from ISC2, as well as our alumni students, Matt Chambers from Pulsant and Greg Cooper from Pentest People for speaking at these events.



## PROGRESS

### Marketing

In the last year marketing has been managed by Chantelle and our Digital Media partner Wildcat and I'm pleased to report that we have had further uplift in media, social media and newsletter reach. Since being taken back in house, our newsletter has achieved an average 27% open rate with 26% click through rate.

27%

Average Open Rate

26%

Average Click Through Rate

We now have nearly 4000 members compared to 2500 this time last year and 1300 the year before. Our webinars have reached audiences of over 1000 people across specialist areas such as hacking, passwords, phishing, and internal fraud. Additionally, based on publication reach our potential international audience is estimated to be over 40million!

Our social media reach has developed considerably, particularly on LinkedIn where we are targeting businesses and individuals from across the region, in the last year we have had over 198,000 impressions on Linked – a huge increase from the year prior and our followers have grown to an impressive 2732 and counting.



Even our Twitter followers have now increased to over 1158 and impressions have increased to over 23,470. We have also reached over 26,000 visits on Facebook.

The team have had a huge reach and been invited to present and attend more and more events with 93 delivered with a reach of 4675 in total.



## ACHIEVEMENTS

### Digital Marketing

Throughout this year, we have continued to work hard on creating an improved website for our audience, with plans for a complete website revamp for 2025. Our priority was to make sure our blog posts were newsworthy to attract organic visits. We are pleased to say this strategy is working, as our highest performing landing pages are blogs posts as you can see below, with the best one attracting over 2500 active users that began sessions on our website from "What Techniques Do Hackers Use to Steal Information?"

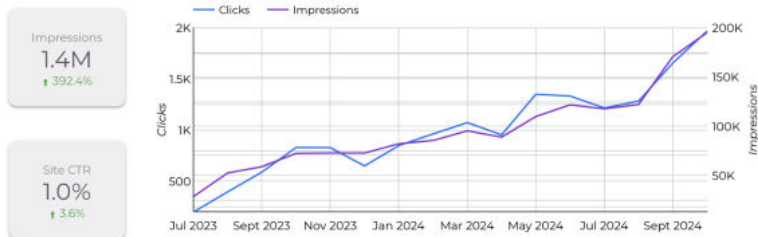
#### SESSION START PAGES The pages on which users most commonly started sessions

Page path	Active users *	% Δ	Engagement rate	% Δ
/what-techniques-do-hackers-use-to-steal-information/	2,597	315.5% ↑	92.69%	2.8% ↑
/	1,093	-25.7% ↓	90.99%	5.9% ↑
/can-you-spot-a-delivery-scam-text/	739	-	94.66%	-
/watch-out-bt-email-fraud/	411	-42.0% ↓	96.01%	6.9% ↑
/what-are-the-most-common-methods-used-for-malware-attacks/	399	418.2% ↑	91.16%	2.7% ↑
/meet-the-team/	193	-27.4% ↓	76.64%	-0.9% ↓
/watchout-social-media-hacking-on-the-rise/	162	-	94.09%	-
/watchout-fake-giveaway-and-competition-scams/	147	-	95.57%	-
/what-is-the-most-common-form-of-cyber-attack/	130	1,081.8% ↑	89.68%	6.0% ↑

We have achieved a whopping 1.4million impressions on Google which has improved by nearly 400% on last year, aided by our presence on Google Business Profile and through 5\* reviews on there.

#### GOOGLE VISIBILITY & TRAFFIC

Your key visibility and click-through metrics on Google Search Console & YoY comparison





## ACHIEVEMENTS

### Case Study - Framwellgate School

A large secondary Academy in Durham was referred to the NEBRC by their external IT support team following information from policing that they may have suffered a data breach. At this time, the circumstances of that breach were unclear, and Framwellgate School Durham chose to work with the NEBRC to understand if they had any weaknesses in their network, that could be exploited to steal data.

To this end, the NEBRC team selected two Offensive Security Certified Professional (OSCP) ethical hackers from Northumbria University to work alongside industry professionals to assess their network's vulnerability. This assessment looks at the perimeter of a network (the point at which the network meets the internet) and inside the network to identify weaknesses. If found, the team will categorise weaknesses based on severity and likelihood, explaining the risk in layman's terms. The beauty of these assessments is they can be completed quickly, and remotely, meaning no NEBRC staff need to be on-premises. The team quickly identified weaknesses in the external infrastructure and worked collaboratively with the school's IT team and technology provider to identify routes to mitigation.

As this mitigation work was taking place, the school received an email extortion demand, from hackers claiming to have stolen 40GB of their sensitive data. The email had an attachment that contained a sample of the school's data, verifying that the school had suffered a significant data breach. At this point, the vulnerability assessment was paused, and the NEBRC linked the school to a local company, Waterston's, who undertook an incident response to understand how the breach had occurred.

The Waterstons team that undertook the response included an NEBRC alumni student who had worked with the NEBRC and, upon graduation, armed with his NEBRC experience, secured work in the private sector. Waterstons established that cybercriminals had compromised the network for some time, and they worked with the school to secure the network, and quickly get the school back up and running in a time of crisis. The compromise had occurred via weaknesses the NEBRC student ethical hackers identified, during their vulnerability assessment.

The NEBRC continued their assessment work post-incident, writing a report on their findings and presenting their work to the school's IT and leadership team, receiving great feedback.

"Their response, from initial email to undertaking work, was within a day which helped us to secure the network through targeting priorities in order. Working with NEBRC was a thoroughly supportive experience, from the initial Teams call and subsequent phone calls to post-crisis communications. The team was non-judgemental, was supportive, and made us understand quickly that it is known vulnerabilities that are attacked, not the school.

The NEBRC worked closely with other support stakeholders, including the police, Waterstons, Durham's PCC, the IT support team and an external IT support company to coordinate work and share critical information. The support and advice given by NEBRC and the exceptional work of the ethical hackers was something I never expected to have to experience, but with their support the school was scaffolded quickly and is in a much better place due to their expertise, compassion and guidance through a very difficult time".

**Wendy Pattison Framwellgate School Business Director.**

# ACHIEVEMENTS

## Awards

2024 has been another great year for awards. The NEBRC were a finalist in the 2024 Cyber Outstanding Security Performance Awards. This was for the 'Outstanding Police/Law Enforcement Initiative', to recognise the match funding work that we conducted with Durham PCC.

In addition to this, the Centre network was a finalist in the 2024 National Cyber Awards, up for the 'Not for Profit Cyber Award'.



Below is a summary of the recent awards nominated for!

CRC Network

**Not for Profit  
Cyber Award - Finalist**

Jack Gooday

**Cyber Emerging  
Talent Award -  
Winner!**

Jack Gooday

**Rising Star -  
Winner!**

Match Funding with Durham  
PCC

**Outstanding Police/Law  
Enforcement Initiative -  
Finalist**

Cosmin Bianu & Jack  
Gooday

**Outstanding Young Cyber  
Security Professional -  
Finalists**



## ACHIEVEMENTS

### Testimonials

This year saw the delivery across the suite of Student Services for the 5<sup>th</sup> year running. This meant working in partnership with Cyber PATH. The result has been some very happy clients and thrilled students.

"The Centre really fills the gap in missing expertise for so many organisations like us. I worked with Joe to make our emails and domain more secure with some real technical stuff. Joe was brilliant and made it all look so easy (it wasn't!) Half of the battle is finding reputable organisations to help with really complex IT issues without making yourself vulnerable to shady organisations. Nice to see a non profit working closely with the police and the NHS. Yes this is a safe one! Long may it continue"

**Darren Nixon**



"Tindles had the privilege of hosting Martin from NEBRC at the Tees Valley General Practitioners Group of which our Senior Partner, Rob Tindle, is the Chair. The insights into the current landscape of cybersecurity threats were eye-opening and thought provoking. Martin effectively communicated practical strategies and best practices for safeguarding businesses. Attendees at the event benefited greatly from his expertise. Thank you for an informative and engaging presentation!"

**Molly Woodruff**



"Framwellgate School Durham recently commissioned the services of NEBRC on the back of a serious cyber incident. The team undertook an external vulnerability check of our network and subsequently were able to very quickly identify known vulnerabilities which could immediately be addressed. Their response, from initial email to undertaking work, was within a day which helped us to secure the network through targeting priorities in order. Working with NEBRC was a thoroughly supportive experience, from the initial Teams call and subsequent phone calls through to post crisis communications. Martin was non-judgemental, was supportive and made us understand quickly that it is known vulnerabilities which are attacked, and not the school. Martin worked closely with other support stakeholders including the police, Waterstons, the IT support team and external IT support company to coordinate work and share critical information. The support and advice given by Martin and the exceptional work of the ethical hackers was something I never expected to have to experience, but with their support the school was scaffolded quickly and is in a much better place due to their expertise, compassion and guidance through a very difficult time. If I could wind the clock back, I would have insisted on doing annual vulnerability checks and this is something I would urge schools to do, given the relative low cost and the high risk of failure in the current climate."

**Wendy Pattison**



## ACHIEVEMENTS

### Team

Reflecting on team achievements over the past year, Becky and Steve completed the CISM course this year. Becky obtained a pass in the exam and Steve intends to follow this in the new year.

Martin continues to study for his PhD which is getting close to completion and has been published again. He will continue to share insights from his SME research, focusing on how User-Centred Design (UCD) can enhance SME cybersecurity engagement which is now in big demand in private sector.

Lizzie has passed her Level 5 CMI with distinction and we can't wait to see what else she can achieve this year!

Chantelle has passed her Level 5 CMI Diploma and will finish her dissertation to complete the apprenticeship shortly. She has also fully taken over digital marketing and supervises Lydia.

Lydia passed her Criminology degree with a first class honours in the summer and is now studying for a marketing Masters to aid her work at the centre.

Joe passed his Cyber Scheme Team Member (CSTM) exam in June, which was a great achievement and he will be sitting his OSCP exam in December.



## 2023-26 BUSINESS PLAN

### MISSION

*“By 2025 our mission is to have helped 12,000 small, medium and third sector businesses in the North East of England become more resilient from cyber and online crime”*

#### **“Growing the membership of the NEBRC to a measured percentage of all SMEs in the NE”**

We will strive to achieve a percentage of SMEs registered for our free and affordable support. By taking our current annual costs and, giving consideration to the annual cost of a cyber-attack to an SME, we will seek to have provided 11,360 SMEs and third sector organisations with guidance to make themselves more resilient to a cyberattack. In doing this we will also be providing valuable work experience to students in the NE. It is our intention to introduce a growth programme where we aim to support 2% of all SMEs in The NE (11,360) over the following three years. Therefore, the estimated crime reduction value in financial losses on the economy would be in excess of £38.5 million pounds for the North East (based on DCMS stating 65% attacked and average loss is £1740).

#### **“Developing revenue streams to achieve self-sustainability by 2026”**

Our current operating yearly budget to run the business is met by grant funding, 60% donations and operating profit, 40%. We plan to achieve £560k annual turnover by 2026. We will continue to work with consultants, partners, and the wider network to put in place best practice to achieve this objective. This aim is important to help alleviate demand on public sector funding and to provide high value of public and private sector partnership working.

#### **“Improving connection with existing members through measured customer experience and engagement performance”**

Developing engagement is key to improving the adoption of cyber resilience practices and provides worthwhile support to SMEs.

## 2023-26 BUSINESS PLAN

### **“Growing student services by links to Sheffield Hallam and Northumbria University and other regional universities”**

Promoting student services and the talent pipeline by engaging with partners and provider universities and the NCDSV programme in all 7 forces.

### **“Budgetary Breakdown”**

Understanding and maximising the various funding streams and commercial services to realise self-sufficiency by 2026. The NEBRC budget has a variety of streams- Home Office support via the National Cyber Crime Programme, donations from private sector and external grant funding. Alongside this the NEBRC offers Student Services, commercial cyber security services delivered by students and supervised by an industry specialist.



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North East Business  
Resilience Centre



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