

# SKILLSET

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## Development of the iNorthumberland Business Support ePortal

Delivered for **ADVANCE NORTHUMBERLAND**

### AT A GLANCE

- Development of the iNorthumberland Business Support ePortal
- Online training modules to support small-to-medium sized enterprises

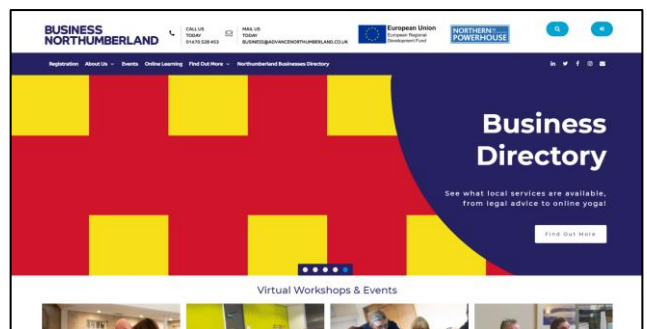
### THE CLIENT

Advance Northumberland provides support and funding for new and developing businesses across a broad spectrum of business and residential communities in Northumberland.

SkillSet was commissioned by Advance Northumberland to design, develop and deliver the iNorthumberland Business Support ePortal:

<https://www.businessnorthumberland.co.uk/>.

This first-of-a kind portal is delivering a programme of business support to enable ambitious businesses in Northumberland to harness the opportunities of superfast broadband and associated technologies in order to effectively manage and grow a business online.



### THE CHALLENGE

To design, develop, and deliver a range of online business support training for small-to-medium sized enterprises (SMEs), to help them fully understand and exploit the commercial benefits and opportunities of connecting to superfast broadband.

The online training programme would consist of a series of modules delivering 12 hours of online business support.

The training needed to be attractive, friendly, and easy to use, providing a personalised learning journey for each user, as well as being accessible by a wide range of devices.

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The ability to create robust and accurate reporting on user registration and individual use was vital. This is to ensure that the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding requirements were met.

The ePortal had to sit within a fully managed and supported, hosted server environment, scaled to enable 350 simultaneous sessions without degradation of service.

## OUR APPROACH

Advance Northumberland provided SkillSet with raw content on topics such as finance, growth, employment, management, marketing, SEO, GDPR and Microsoft Office. SkillSet then used Articulate Storyline and Vyond to develop this content into the training modules.

To ensure that the learning modules provided a rich, engaging and coherent training programme, SkillSet worked closely with Advance Northumberland subject matter experts to identify and understand the needs of the learners and how best to convey the range of subjects.

SkillSet used Joomla and Moodle to create the ePortal. Moodle allows users to access the online support, browser articles and blogs, as well as an events booking system. SkillSet worked closely with Advance Northumberland to identify issues, provide the required reporting and deliver the solution on time.

To meet the ePortal availability requirements, SkillSet used an Amazon-based cloud server to host the ePortal, with built-in system redundancy and the capability to cope with increased load from increasing content and additional users.

Once live, the server was monitored to check performance stayed within acceptable parameters with additional resources being added to meet peak load when required.

Throughout the project, SkillSet and Advance Northumberland established an honest and open stream of communication to ensure effective review of the project deliverables.



## THE RESULTS

Launched in September 2014, the iNorthumberland business support portal is a pioneering online learning system. Northumberland is the first local authority to provide online business support to local SMEs and has garnered interest from other local authorities across the country, keen to emulate iNorthumberland. The portal's many features include online business support, comprising 78 training sessions with subjects including social media, cyber security, SEO, measuring online success and cloud technologies. The training modules have gained positive reviews for the excellent quality of content and the engaging presentation.

## OUR CLIENT'S FEEDBACK

*"We were looking for an organisation to partner with us on the ePortal and one on the instructional design. We were very fortunate that, following an open tendering process, SkillSet was selected for both workstreams. We have benefitted from working with one supplier that is committed to partnering with us and going the extra mile to deliver our requirements."* **Lucy Cansfield, Digital Business Support Manager, Advance Northumberland.**

## ABOUT SKILLSET

SkillSet has been designing, developing and delivering training programmes since 1992. We work closely with our clients to make sure we understand their needs and deliver the most effective solution. We work hard to develop long-lasting partnerships - that's why we have clients that we've worked with for more than 25 years.

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