

Get Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Working Plan: 2025-2027

**A Local Approach to Tackling Economic
Inactivity and Unlocking Opportunity**

September 2025 – V7

1) A Place-Based Approach

Get Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Working encompasses the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority as well as Plymouth City Council. They provide diverse sectoral advantages, skilled workforces but face similar challenges including persistent inequalities.

Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority:

The Devon and Torbay Combined Authority area has a population of over 975,000 and a real economic output of £18.1bn. With a workforce of over 550,000, the area is synonymous with coastal landscapes and an excellent quality of life, attracting millions of visitors every year. However, this can mask its impact, with a workforce of over 550,000, and over 1 in 8 of the region's jobs supporting high tech industries. These industries address some of the UK's most complex problems; from national security and defence supply chain resilience to innovation in AI and digital technologies. The Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority works towards achieving major opportunities across several key sectoral advantages identified in the region. These include; a significant Advanced Manufacturing sector, with the £50m Centre for Clean Mobility providing innovation in AI and autonomous systems. A highly specialised and concentrated Agri-Food sector producing over £1bn worth of livestock and almost £200m of crops annually. A highly productive Professional Business Services sector and rapidly growing Digital Technologies workforce. As well as the distinctive visitor economy, attracting 30m visitors per year, supporting 33,000 jobs and backed by a growing creative and cultural industry, providing vital place-shaping, quality of life and visitor attraction.

Plymouth City Council:

Plymouth is 'Britain's Ocean City', with a population of 268,700, a real economic output of over £6.97 billion and a growing workforce of over 117,000 people. The city has strong economic foundations that link heavily with the blue economy. Plymouth's marine sector is at the leading edge of several key technologies and presents numerous opportunities for growth. Named as the UK National Centre for Marine Autonomy and housing the largest naval base in western Europe, including the only place capable of base porting the nuclear class submarines, Plymouth is positioned to see significant growth and investment over the long-term. Plymouth has also been named one of five key national defence growth areas in the UK Defence Industrial Strategy, backed by a £250 million UK-wide investment, this landmark designation marks a pivotal moment for the city, opening up access to new opportunities that can shift the dial and unlock long-term prosperity for local communities and future generations.

2) Executive Summary

Get Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Working sets out a shared ambition **to create a labour market where every resident can access, sustain and progress in meaningful work**. Meaningful work – accessible to all – is a vital building block of people’s health as well as economic resilience. Meaningful work supports physical and mental wellbeing, reduces dependency on services, and strengthens communities.

The plan responds to our most intransigent and long-standing challenges: high levels of economic inactivity in our urban communities; entrenched youth unemployment, notably in Exeter, Plymouth and Torbay; low pay in key sectors; and structural barriers across rural and coastal communities. These issues limit opportunity, but also reveal untapped potential — with strong training networks, growing sectors in health and social care, green energy, marine and digital, and committed local partners ready to act.

The plan is built around six priority themes:

- tackling health-related inactivity;
- supporting young people into sustained careers, with a focus on those who face more barriers than others;
- improving job quality and reducing in-work poverty;
- enabling carers to re-enter the workforce;
- addressing employer labour shortages; and
- reducing geographic inequalities.

Each theme combines targeted interventions with cross-cutting actions to join up services, build employer engagement and improve progression opportunities.

Delivery will be locally led and nationally aligned, underpinned by a new Get Britain Working Partnership Board. This board — co-chaired by local government and DWP — will oversee thematic workstreams and place-based pilots, starting in Ilfracombe, Newton Abbot, Torbay and Plymouth. These pilots will integrate employment, skills and health support, with learning then scaled area-wide, informing and shaping Connect to Work and other programme activity. Employers will play a central role in co-designing solutions, improving job quality and opening progression pathways.

Early actions include seek to establish a local Youth Offer, expanding integrated health and employment pathways, piloting a Job Quality Charter, improving access to flexible, carer-friendly employment, and embedding digital inclusion across all themes through strengthened local digital skills and access programmes. These efforts will be supported by drawing on complementary funding and programmes, such as those being supported this year by UKSPF, the devolved Adult Skills Fund, Connect to Work and other local and national sources. Partners will also seek to work together on future bids that will help to target gaps such as digital inclusion and transport access.

Strong governance, robust risk management and a shared outcomes framework will ensure accountability. Risks such as policy changes, funding uncertainty and

provider capacity are recognised and mitigated through joint commissioning, better alignment of budgets and programmes, and proactive engagement with national agencies. The plan also embeds resident voice and VCSE insight to ensure delivery will be shaped by continuous feedback and coproduction with residents, employers and communities, ensuring that people's lived experiences directly inform programme design, commissioning and evaluation.

By aligning activity, joining up support and working with employers, Get Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Working Plan provides a clear route to reducing economic inactivity, improving job quality and unlocking opportunity. It is a practical, locally owned plan to build a labour market that strengthens both the economy, enhances its inclusiveness and the advances the wellbeing of our communities.

3) Vision and Ambition

A Shared Vision for Economic Inclusion

Devon, Plymouth and Torbay share a bold ambition: **to create a labour market where everyone can access, sustain and progress in meaningful work.** We want no one left behind — whether through poor physical or mental health, a learning disability or other barrier to learning, caring responsibilities, low pay or limited qualifications — and no place overlooked, from rural villages to coastal towns and city neighbourhoods.

More than 145,000 working-age residents are economically inactive across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, many wanting to work but blocked by health conditions, childcare gaps, transport barriers or inflexible jobs. Plymouth has distinctly high levels of economic inactivity (22.9% in 2024), with Devon and Torbay also having significant numbers of economically inactive residents (20.3% and 20.5% respectively), with long-term sickness the main factor. Youth unemployment remains high in communities such as Plymouth, and across the area's care leavers, SEND learners and those without Level 2 qualifications, all of which face disrupted transitions into work or further learning. Low pay also remains persistent in parts of the area, particularly within roles in the tourism, care and retail sectors. .

Yet the area also has clear opportunities to overcome these barriers. The area has a wealth of untapped talent amongst its residents, a strong network of training providers, and growth in health and social care, marine, defence, shipbuilding, green energy, photonics, construction and digital technologies. Opportunities around investment in the renewables sector within the Celtic Sea, within Exeter's green technologies and intelligence clusters, and across Torbay and Northern Devon's advanced manufacturing, photonics and pharmaceutical sectors are predicted to drive significant growth over the next decade. MOD investment and innovation in naval infrastructure in Plymouth is also expected to drive significant further demand for employment, supporting both advanced engineering and entry-level technical roles. The £4.4 billion investment until 2035 at HMNB Devonport underscores Plymouth's national significance in defence. Babcock anticipate needing at least 5,500 new employees from the local area, plus an additional 2,000 construction workers. Modelling suggests the impact of this investment will grow the number of jobs across the Devon, Plymouth and Torbay area by 25,000 over the next ten year, with a broader impact on the region, further tightening labour markets. This creates a rare opportunity to link Plymouth, Torbay and Devon's residents into thousands of skilled roles, while mitigating risks from labour shortages. This is in addition to the recent MOD announcement of Plymouth as the National Centre for Marine Autonomy. We will work with defence partners to ensure this investment translates into inclusive growth. Connecting residents to these opportunities will build a fairer, more resilient economy.

However, it is also important to recognise such long term and strategic opportunities will also intensify pressure elsewhere in the system, on housing, transport and workforce infrastructure. Growth will require not only skills pipelines but also adequate housing for incoming workers, graduate accommodation, and improved connectivity across the area. In bringing forward this plan therefore, it is part to note

that it is part of a wider strategy now forming across the area, with a focus on sustainable and equitable growth.

Strategic Ambition and Long-Term Goals (2025–2035)

Over the next decade, we aim to create an inclusive, responsive and resilient labour market where residents not only enter work but thrive in it. This approach is locally led, built on strong partnerships and driven by measurable outcomes.

Our ambitions are to:

- Reduce economic inactivity by addressing health barriers, caring responsibilities and structural disadvantage. For example, we will seek to decrease the number of those inactive due to long-term physical or mental health conditions in Torbay from 42% to the national average, and narrow the inactivity gap in wider deprived areas. We will lift people out of poverty through improved access to employment and through better paid and more secure work.
- Improve job quality and in-work progression by working with employers to raise pay, improve security and expand flexible routes, particularly in care, hospitality and retail, with the aim of reducing in-work poverty and increasing financial resilience for low-paid workers. These approaches will also work to address the growing skills demand across key sectors including Defence, Health and Social Care and Construction, supporting more individuals to reskill and upskill into these opportunities.
- Support more young people into sustained careers, particularly those who have experience care or identified with a SEND requirement, reducing the NEET and claimant rates of our most vulnerable within five years through the development of a local Youth Offer. This will link participation teams, the Careers Hub, training providers, employers and any future support for youth hubs or wider provision better together to enhance outcomes.
- Target support to our most deprived wards, including key coastal, rural and urban areas, piloting integrated models in Ilfracombe, Newton Abbot, Torbay and Plymouth and scaling what works.
- Create an integrated, person-centred system where services wrap around individuals and families, driven by shared data, better aligning existing and forthcoming programme activity and co-designed future support.
- Strengthen our labour market intelligence and evidence base, using shared data and local insights to identify where need is greatest and to target resources effectively. This will enable us to track progress, adapt interventions and build a clearer picture of what works in different localities.

Our Commitment to Change

This is not a collection of standalone initiatives — it is a blueprint for transformation. We will seek to move from a history of local and national fragmented provision to a joined-up system that works for people and responds to local realities. Pilots in Ilfracombe, Newton Abbot and Torbay will test new models to achieve this, combining employment, skills and health support, with learning applied region-wide.

Anchor institutions and strategic partners — the NHS, councils, large employers and the voluntary sector — will lead by example, embedding community wealth building principles such as local procurement, skills investment and social value commitments to ensure economic benefits remain within local communities. This will include role-modelling inclusive recruitment through initiatives such as Core20PLUS5 guaranteed interviews, creating targeted apprenticeships for under-represented groups, and setting expectations for local supply chains to adopt similar practices. We will pilot employment-focused social prescribing and expand integrated health-work pathways and SEND employment pathways, recognising that meaningful work underpins good health.

Delivery is underpinned by a two-year action plan with clear KPIs, accountability through the Combined County Authority and Plymouth City Council, and strong local governance. We will listen to those most affected — young people, unpaid carers, and residents with health conditions — to ensure services reflect real experiences.

By aligning investment, joining up services and working with employers, we will unlock the full potential of our people and places. Meaningful work, accessible to all, strengthens not just our economy but our communities, health and civic life. This plan is our shared commitment to make that vision a reality, raising aspirations for young people and creating clear pathways into rewarding careers.

4) Labour Market Analysis

The labour market across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay is diverse, with strong sectors and skilled talent, but also persistent inequalities. Rural and coastal communities face isolation, limited transport and seasonal employment, while urban areas such as parts of Plymouth and Torbay contend with similar challenges. Across all these areas, entrenched deprivation remains a persistent barrier to progression. These disparities limit inclusive growth and leave too many residents detached from opportunity.

Economic Inactivity

More than 145,000 working-age residents across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay are economically inactive, around 1% above the national average. In Torbay, inactivity stands at 20.5%, with long-term sickness accounting for 42% of those out of work. Plymouth faces similar challenges, with 22.9% of its working-age population inactive due to illness and caring responsibilities. In rural Devon, inactivity rates mask the scale of the issue, with over 93,000 people out of work, many citing poor health, limited transport options and childcare gaps as key barriers.

Older workers and women with caring duties are particularly affected, often wanting to work but held back by structural barriers. Local initiatives such as Connect to Work will help to bridge these gaps by integrating employment and health support, but further action and tailoring will likely be needed. The forthcoming national Pathways to Work Guarantee will provide personalised work, health and skills support through dedicated advisers, and we will ensure this programme is embedded locally to maximise its impact on long-term sickness, caring responsibilities and economic inactivity.

At the same time, there is an opportunity to better utilise the skills and experience of people moving into the area, many of whom hold higher-level qualifications. With the right support — including language provision where needed, training, and access to good jobs — this talent can help meet local labour market needs. Further analysis will explore economic inactivity by health, age, and locality, alongside research into how housing, transport, and financial pressures shape employment outcome.

Youth Unemployment and NEETs

Youth unemployment remains high, particularly in our rural and coastal communities, within Torbay (6.6%) and within individual deprived wards of Plymouth and Exeter. Young people with SEND, care leavers and those lacking Level 2 qualifications face the greatest risk of disengagement. Seasonal economies, limited public transport and the lack of local training providers in rural and coastal areas further restrict access to opportunities for young people, creating additional barriers to engagement.

Without targeted intervention, these patterns risk scarring a generation. The plan seeks to move forward with a local Youth Offer, better aligning activity and future support to ensure every young person can access training, apprenticeships or employment, with enhanced support for vulnerable groups. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will play a central role, aligning our local Youth Offer with

national youth employment services such as the Youth Offer and Youth Hubs, ensuring that local delivery complements and integrates with existing provision rather than duplicating it. Participation teams within the local authorities, the Careers Hubs, Skills Launchpad Plymouth, wider programmes supporting young people such as supported internships and the creative use of apprenticeships, and Connect to Work seek to work together to enable a more joined-up approach to reducing unemployment amongst the most vulnerable young people, and building sustained career pathways.

Low Pay and In-Work Poverty

Employment is high, but too often low-paid and insecure. The median full-time weekly wage in Torbay is £608, in Plymouth £627 and £678 in Devon, compared to a national average of £729, with seasonal work in tourism, care and retail dominating. Many working households remain in poverty, particularly in coastal and rural areas where high housing costs and limited progression can restrict mobility and wage levels can differ significantly from the average.

Improving job quality is central to this plan. We will pilot a local Job Quality Charter, encourage fair pay and flexible work, and develop sector progression routes. In-work skills programmes like the Bootcamps are aimed at helping people move from low-wage jobs into higher-skilled, better-paid roles. Initiatives like Building Plymouth and the Caring Plymouth Partnership are also working to reduce reliance on temporary workforces brought in from outside the region by linking local residents, including those furthest from the labour market, to construction and defence sector jobs. The area will seek to reinforce such approaches through future activity, ensuring that investment in skills and workforce from government generates long-term social value as well as economic output.

Skills and Progression

Skills gaps persist across the region. Torbay has the lowest proportion of residents with Level 4 qualifications (33.8%) and higher numbers with no qualifications. Rural isolation limits access to training. Employers report shortages in digital, health and care, construction, and advanced manufacturing, as well as transferable employability skills.

The plan prioritises upskilling, not just through crucial Levels 2 and 3 qualifications, but also through non qualification routes that employers value. This includes seeking to respond to well defined areas of need, including digital training, and aligning learning provision with employer demand (as highlighted by the Local Skills Improvement Plan). Partnerships with training providers will seek to strengthen progression pathways, while existing and emerging workplace careers support (such as that offered through the National Careers Service) will help those in low-paid roles to advance, including in social care. Growth in construction, photonics and defence supply chains will also require new training routes, combining apprenticeships with modular upskilling to meet emerging demand. Progression into higher-value innovation roles will also be a key measure of success, with outcomes tracked alongside other sector indicators.

Employer Demand and Labour Shortages

Employers face shortages across sectors critical to growth and services. Health and social care is the largest employer in Torbay (26.5% of jobs) but has high vacancy rates and is traditionally seen as a low-pay, lower skills sector. Hospitality and tourism dominate coastal economies but rely on seasonal, low-pay work. Within Exeter, health also dominates alongside professional services and education occupations, with over 4,000 difficult to fill vacancies registered across the city in June 2025 alone.

Construction, engineering, digital and marine industries also face recruitment difficulties, worsened by ageing workforces and limited training pipelines. Defence activity, anchored in Plymouth with the £4.4 billion Devonport infrastructure programme, will create new demand for skilled workers while opening new pathways for local residents. To meet this emerging demand, new investment is required to support residents into these high value jobs. Working with Building Plymouth, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Babcock, we will build training pipelines that connect local talent to these opportunities.

The plan responds with sector-based pathways, expanded Skills Bootcamps — with success measured by improved completion and job conversion rates, particularly in construction — and employer partnerships to create flexible training and local talent pipelines.

Place-Based and Structural Barriers

Geography and persistent poverty in specific ward is a major barrier to inclusion. Rural Devon suffers from poor public transport, sparse services and digital exclusion. Coastal towns like Ilfracombe, Brixham and Teignmouth face high inactivity, intergenerational worklessness and underinvestment. Urban deprivation persists in Plymouth wards such as Stonehouse, Devonport and Barne Barton, where cycles of low pay and health-related worklessness interact with complex needs. Targeted pathways linked to major local employers will be central to breaking this cycle.

Housing and transport costs add pressure: in high-demand areas, workers are priced out, affecting service delivery and recruitment. These challenges require locally tailored responses that recognise unemployment in rural and coastal areas is rarely due to individual motivation alone but to the intersection of transport, housing, health, childcare and digital exclusion. An effective plan must therefore focus on removing these systemic barriers alongside improving skills access. Pilots in Ilfracombe, Newton Abbot and Torbay will test integrated models that combine employment, skills and health support, with lessons scaled regionally.

Foundations for Action

Despite these challenges, strong foundations exist: Connect to Work programme, the Local Skills Improvement Plan, Skills Bootcamps, and active employer and community partnerships. The task now is to turn these assets into a single, place-based, person-centred plan;

- Integrating health and employment support, addressing inactivity at its root.
- Targeting youth disengagement, especially among vulnerable groups.
- Raising job quality and wages, ensuring work is worth doing.
- Upskilling residents, matching training to employer needs.
- Investing in place-based solutions, prioritising areas with the greatest barriers.

With these priorities, and strong collaboration across partners, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay can unlock the full potential of its workforce and economy.

5) Priority Themes

Devon, Plymouth and Torbay face interconnected challenges that limit participation in work: persistent ill-health, low pay, caring responsibilities, and structural barriers in rural, coastal and deprived urban areas. To address these, and in line with the Get Britain Working framework, we have identified six priority themes where targeted interventions will deliver the greatest impact. Each theme is underpinned by local delivery, strong employer engagement, and measurable outcomes.

Priority 1 – Health and Work

Health-related inactivity is the largest contributor to economic disengagement across the patch. A particular issue within Torbay with 42% of inactive residents citing long-term sickness. Across the area, mental health, musculoskeletal conditions and chronic illness keep thousands out of work. Current support is fragmented, but there are strong foundations: the ICB's current pilots around musculoskeletal health and planned work through the preparatory funding for Workwell and the emerging Connect to Work programme, social prescribing, and Reaching for Independence.

Our approach:

- Make employment a core element of recovery, co-locating work coaches in GP practices, community hubs, family hubs and established co-working localities such as Youth Hubs.
- Drawing on existing health and DWP led resources and programmes, scale and better integrated integrated health-employment teams and condition-specific support (mental health, long COVID). Locally delivered programmes including Connect to Work, IPS for severe mental illness, and employment support within social prescribing teams will form the foundation of integrated health and work pathways
- Work with employers to create flexible roles and recruit from health-affected cohorts, including mid-life career changers.
- Pilot social prescribing for employment in targeted areas, with digital support built in to ensure residents can access online health, skills and employment services effectively. Building on this, we will explore piloting specialist employment-focused social prescribers within Primary Care Networks (PCNs) to strengthen links between health services and local labour market pathways
- Work together to secure additional insight into the health barriers to employment and co-produce solutions directly with people who have lived experience, ensuring future programmes reflect real-world challenges and priorities.

In Autumn 2025, The Connect to Work programme will be rolled out across Devon, Torbay and Plymouth to help disabled people, those with health conditions and people with complex barriers to employment, move into sustainable work through supported employment. By 2030 the Connect to Work programme will support over 5000 people in the region.

Priority 2 – Young People and NEETs

Youth unemployment remains high (notably 6.6% in Torbay, 5.7% in Plymouth and 4.9% in Northern Devon), with vulnerable groups — care leavers, SEND learners, rural youth — at greatest risk. Seasonal economies and weak transport links worsen disengagement.

Evidence also shows that disadvantaged young people are also disproportionately represented among those disengaged from education, employment and training. The plan will expand targeted outreach for this group, alongside care-experienced young people and SEND learners, ensuring tailored support to prevent long-term exclusion

Our approach:

- Drawing upon and aligning provision around emerging national programmes, seek to bring forward a local Youth Offer, ensuring every young person has a pathway to education, employment or training, with digital access and skills embedded as core elements to widen participation in online learning and remote work opportunities.
 - Strengthen tracking, outreach and alternative provision for those at risk.
 - Expand supported internships and other employment pathways for vulnerable groups, transition keyworkers, and rural access pilots.
 - Embed mental health and housing support into the Youth Offer, recognising wider barriers.
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Priority 3 – Low Pay, Job Quality and In-Work Poverty

Many jobs across the region are low-paid, insecure and seasonal, especially in tourism, care and retail. In-work poverty is rising, particularly for single parents, young workers and those in coastal or rural areas.

Our approach:

- Launch a local Job Quality Charter to promote fair pay, flexible work and career progression, underpinned by a three-tier Inclusive Employer Pledge. This will range from basic commitments like inclusive advertising to advanced actions such as work trials, mentoring and co-designing skills pathways. Employers will be incentivised through public recognition, access to pilot schemes and recruitment support via DWP and wider services, with values-led social enterprises invited to shape the Job Quality Charter and share best practice on ethical employment models. The Charter will also encourage adoption of the Real Living Wage and support in-work progression through anchor institutions.

- Learn from employer-led partnerships such as Building Plymouth and Caring Plymouth, and building on strategy content like that with the Local Skills Improvement Plan, demonstrating how industry leadership can drive social value, inclusive recruitment and sector progression.
- Work with employers to develop sector pathways in care, construction, advanced manufacturing / marine / defence and digital industries, as well as emerging opportunities such as around green jobs, to ensure that entry points in each sector are clearly mapped to progression routes that lead to higher-skilled roles.
- Anchor institutions will also promote retention by embedding job design principles that improve work-life balance, expanding access to workplace health support, and sharing good practice on occupational health across local employer
- Expand modular and in-work training to help low-paid workers move up the skills escalator.
- Pilot progression support for those on Universal Credit.
- Build a stronger workforce intelligence system, harnessing labour market data, employer feedback and real-time insights to understand both current and future workforce demand. This evidence base will allow us to adapt and flex provision quickly, ensuring training and recruitment support stays aligned with changing sectoral and local needs

Priority 4 – Unpaid Carers and Barriers to Work

Unpaid caring, often hidden, keeps many — particularly women aged 45–64 — out of the labour market. Long hours of care, combined with limited services and inflexible jobs, create significant barriers.

Our approach:

- Co-create carer-friendly pathways with employers, ICBs and VCSE partners and established employment services, including supported employment through the Connect to Work Programme.
 - Promote flexible jobs, job-share and remote work models, through pilots and linked to the employer charter as appropriate, including carer-friendly digital training pathways and online employment options to reduce travel and time barriers
 - Co-locate employment and benefits advice in carer hubs and family centres.
 - Run a local awareness campaign to encourage inclusive hiring practices.
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Priority 5 – Employer Demand and Labour Shortages

Persistent vacancies in care, construction, logistics, marine and digital sectors constrain growth. Small businesses struggle to recruit due to skills gaps, housing costs and lack of HR support.

Our approach:

- Continue to harness Skills Bootcamps, apprenticeships and sector academies aligned to employer need, ensuring delivery involves local training providers, social enterprises and community organisations so programmes remain flexible, locally rooted, and responsive to emerging skills demands.
- Develop locally tailored sector pathways with employers, addressing both technical, language and soft skills gaps.
- Trial an Inclusive Employer Pledge for fair recruitment, enabling employers to commit publicly to fair practices, targeted outreach and local hiring. The Connect to Work programme will support employers through job matching and employer engagement as part of the supported employment model.
- Support grow-your-own workforce models in care and education, and explore opportunities in new sectors, such as green industries and construction.
- Engage trusted intermediaries, such as the Chambers of Commerce and other recognised business representative bodies, Building Plymouth and the social enterprise sector, to strengthen links between employers, local residents and training providers, recognising the sector's unique role in delivering flexible, place-based solutions for people furthest from work.
- Strengthen employer brokerage to improve recruitment pipelines.
- The LSIP partnership will co-lead the Employer Demand theme, providing labour market intelligence through the Marchmont Observatory and ensuring training aligns with real-time employer needs.
- Employer engagement will be segmented: SMEs will receive practical support, toolkits and a single contact point; Anchor Institutions will be engaged as both major employers and system enablers through inclusive procurement and career pathways; Sector Leads will co-design training pipelines and shape demand forecasting.
- A single employer-facing 'front door' will be created in each area to coordinate all business engagement activity, giving employers a clear and simple route into local skills, recruitment and training support.

Priority 6 – Place-Based Inequalities

Structural barriers — from poor transport in rural Devon to entrenched deprivation in Torbay, Ilfracombe, and Plymouth wards — shape access to work. Coastal and rural communities face intergenerational worklessness and digital exclusion, while housing costs in growth areas limit labour mobility.

For young adults in particular, the interaction between insecure housing, limited transport, rural isolation, caring responsibilities and poor mental health can create compounding barriers to employment, particularly in rural and coastal communities.

The pilots will integrate housing support, mental health provision and employment pathways to break these cycles, with learning embedded across all youth-focused interventions.

Our approach:

- All pilots will be locally co-designed and may use the Human Learning Systems approach, with residents, employers and local services shaping solutions to barriers such as transport, housing, digital exclusion and mental health access.
 - Pilot place-based support alignment models in Ilfracombe, Torbay, Newton Abbot and Plymouth, selected due to their high levels of coastal deprivation, youth unemployment and transport barriers; with additional locations such as Plymouth or other deprived wards to be pursued as practicable.
 - Trial transport solutions such as pooled employer minibuses and smart ticketing where partners and provision can be aligned.
 - Ensure that housing and regeneration investments are aligned with active labour market programmes, using procurement and other leverage to maximise their local impact around employment.
 - Ensure digital access is embedded in all interventions, aligning any pilot activity in. Ilfracombe, Torbay, Newton Abbot and Plymouth pilots with future programmes around digital inclusion, working with partners to provide skills training, device access and online services as practicable.
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Integrating the Themes

Each priority theme will be delivered through locally tailored pilots backed by shared governance and clear KPIs. Delivery will align with sector growth, employer need and community priorities, ensuring that interventions are scalable and responsive. Together, these six themes provide a framework to tackle the root causes of inactivity, unlock opportunity and build a more inclusive economy across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay

6) Delivery Approach

Delivering the ambition of Get Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Working requires a fundamental shift: from fragmented provision to a joined-up, locally driven system. Our approach focuses on partnership, place-based innovation, and measurable outcomes. It builds on what already works, scales successful models quickly, and adapts to the unique needs of different communities.

1. From Fragmentation to Integration

Current support is extensive but often disconnected, leaving gaps for those with the most complex barriers. This plan provides a single framework to align services, funding and governance so that residents experience a seamless journey into good work.

We will:

- Establish a core delivery architecture with both place-based and thematic working groups.
 - Align local and national provision through shared planning and joint commissioning where practical.
 - Embed employment outcomes into health, skills and community services, with integrated data-sharing to improve coordination where practical.
 - Move forward with a single, joined-up governance approach, bringing together the local authorities, Devon ICB and wider partners such as the Local Care Partnerships.
 - Seek to use existing delivery footprints within the health environment, such as those of the Local Care Partnerships, to ensure clear accountability and local ownership for activity and outcomes.
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2. Place-Based Delivery Models

A one-size-fits-all approach will not work for our region. Delivery will need to be tailored to local contexts, with every area placing a focus on shared issues such as youth inactivity, but also dealing with specific hotspots. These will include:

- Torbay – addressing high inactivity, long-term sickness and low pay.
- Ilfracombe – tackling coastal deprivation, poor connectivity and housing pressures.
- Rural Devon – overcoming transport gaps, isolation and access to training.
- Urban Plymouth wards – supporting neighbourhoods with entrenched worklessness and low progression, whilst working to address the significant growth in labour demand because of the MoD Investment into HMNB Devonport¹.

¹ This will include supporting the work of Growth Alliance Plymouth in providing pathways for residents from across the Devon, Plymouth and Torbay area to access the new employment opportunities with

Each pilot area will bring together a multi-agency delivery team of existing providers and partners, led by local government, DWP and the ICB, with strong input from employers, higher educational institutions and the voluntary sector. These groups will:

- Map existing provision and identify gaps
 - Monitor delivery through shared dashboards and regular reviews.
 - Work with existing programmes to inform their commissioning approaches, seeking to maximise the value of existing programmes like Connect to Work.
 - Embed co-production with residents and continuous learning loops into all local delivery models, ensuring pilots adapt quickly to real-world feedback.
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3. Integrated Frontline Support

Support must be person-centred and joined up. We will strengthen multi-agency working at the front line by:

- Introducing shared referral and triage tools across JCP, GPs, FE providers and community organisations where practical.
- Co-locating services in accessible spaces such as shared community assets, Health and Wellbeing Hubs, rural village halls, other accessible centres and existing established co-working localities..
- Embedding integrated keyworker roles, linking employment coaches with health, carers' support, and family services.

Priority groups for this model include:

- Residents with long-term health conditions.
 - Young people at risk of NEET and economically inactive young people.
 - Unpaid carers, lone parents and returners to work.
 - Workers stuck in low pay or insecure jobs in high-churn sectors.
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4. Collaborative Commissioning and Funding

To deliver effectively, we will align resources and reduce duplication.

Our approach:

- Seek to maximise emerging funding streams and programmes to address local priorities as far as practicable (Adult Skills Fund, Connect to Work, Future DWP, DfE and MHCLG Funding as appropriate).

Babcock and the wider Defence supply chain. This place-based delivery approach will support the overarching growth in jobs, forecast to be 25,000 over the new ten years.

- Work together around area based bids to secure additional investment for digital inclusion, workforce pilots and transport solutions where possible.
 - Commission services on an outcomes basis, building on local data and evidence, co-designed with communities and reflecting lived experience where possible.
 - Ensure that rural proofing is embedded into commissioning processes to ensure services meet the specific needs of rural and coastal residents.
 - Embed higher education institutions as delivery partners for innovation, evaluation, and skills development, ensuring research and expertise underpin all commissioning decisions.
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5. Learning and Continuous Improvement

The model will be adaptive, evidence-led and shaped by lived experience.

- A shared outcomes framework will drive performance across all partners.
 - Independent evaluation will be integrated into pilots and delivery models as far as possible, with a social value mechanism introduced to measure wider community benefits and ensure funding decisions maximise local economic, social and environmental outcomes.
 - Establish continuous learning loops at both thematic and local levels, ensuring real-time feedback informs decisions.
 - Evidence will be shared across the region to scale successful approaches quickly.
 - Partners will seek to draw together the learning from pilots and other shared approaches to inform long-term plan development. They will also seek to learn from national exemplars, such as the West Yorkshire logic model for inclusive employment and integrating social mobility evidence to refine local interventions
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A New Way of Working

This delivery approach transforms the current system into one that is coherent, local and responsive. By aligning investment, integrating frontline support and learning from what works, we will create a simpler, more effective pathway into good work — ensuring no person and no place is left behind.

7) Mapping of Existing Provision

Delivering on our ambition means understanding and building on the support that already exists across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. While the area benefits from a strong mix of employment, skills, health and community programmes, provision is often fragmented and difficult to navigate — especially for residents furthest from the labour market. By mapping what is in place, we can strengthen what works, close gaps, and integrate services to deliver greater impact.

Employment and Skills Support

Across the region, a wide range of programmes provide support to jobseekers, career changers and those seeking progression. Jobcentre Plus delivers mainstream DWP provision, including Universal Credit and Restart, while Youth Hubs in Plymouth and Exeter offer targeted help for young people at risk of becoming NEET. The Devon Careers Hub engages over 100 schools and colleges to improve careers education, while FE colleges, training providers and Skills Bootcamps deliver a strong mix of adult learning and upskilling opportunities.

Local authorities already play a central role in this landscape, delivering a comprehensive programme of employment and skills support. This includes supported internships for young people with additional needs, sector-based work academies aligned to local growth sectors, the forthcoming Connect to Work scheme for residents with health barriers (delivered in partnership with Plymouth and Torbay), the work of its Post 16 Learning Participation scheme working with young people into work and education, and a broad adult learning offer through Learn Devon.

These programmes are complemented by a range of shorter-term, targeted employability initiatives, from specialist support for care-experienced young people to bespoke projects in rural and coastal communities, and many funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Collectively, these efforts ensure that employment support reaches those facing the greatest barriers while linking training directly to real job opportunities across the county.

Alongside this, there are clear place-based strengths. Plymouth benefits from an integrated approach through the Skills Launchpad and Build Plymouth and significant emerging demand through the £4.4bn Defence Investment. Build Torbay is expanding opportunities linked to the Bay's £350m capital programme. Parts of Devon have developed strong health-led employability partnerships in Exeter, Newton Abbot and Barnstaple, connecting employment support with wider health and wellbeing needs. However, rural and coastal communities such as Ilfracombe continue to face challenges in accessing training and support, relying heavily on outreach and local brokerage to bridge the gap between residents and employment services. Deprived urban wards in Plymouth, Torbay and Exeter face continued challenges of supporting residents to engage, many of whom face long-term unemployment or economic inactivity.

Health and Work Integration

Poor health is one of the biggest barriers to work, and there is promising activity linking employment and health. The Work and Health Programme and IPES support people with disabilities, while Mental Health Employment Advisors are embedded in primary care. However, there are gaps in employment support advisors for specific cohorts, including armed forces personnel, people with severe mental illness, and residents with multiple health conditions, limiting access to specialist pathways.

Local pilots and initiatives by the Devon ICB (such as its 'Career Hub' approach) seek to demonstrate that integrated models work when health, employment and skills services come together. VCSE partners play a vital role, with organisations like Active Devon and community wellbeing services tackling anxiety, isolation and inactivity. Social prescribing is increasingly connecting residents to meaningful activity, but provision remains uneven, and data-sharing between health and employability teams is inconsistent. There is clear potential to scale the most effective models, particularly where employment is embedded into care and recovery pathways.

Support for Specific Groups

Specialist support exists but is patchy. Care-experienced young people currently benefit from a mixture of targeted employment pilots and corporate parenting support, while those with SEND access supported internships through the Devon Supported Employment Forum, through Plymouth's Supported Employment Forum, and the Plymouth Your Futures Programme. However, funding for such programmes is too often short term and limited in nature, with transited often made more difficult by this inconsistency. Unpaid carers also receive valuable help from VCSE providers and Independent Training Providers, but rarely have access to long term tailored employment pathways given funding uncertainties. New programmes emerging such as Connect to Work will offer opportunities to flex and tailor local programmes to assist with these issues, but this will require a joined up approach.

The Reaching for Independence (RFI) service enables adults with learning disabilities, autism, mental health conditions, and physical or sensory impairments to develop the skills and confidence needed for more independent lives, including pathways into employment, volunteering and training. In 2024–25, RFI supported 249 people with employment-focused referrals, 42 into paid work, 62 into work experience, and over 150 to develop job-related skills, working closely with NHS services, housing providers and DWP programmes.

Support for residents in or leaving the justice system (including Youth Justice) is delivered by a mixture of national probation, local and VCSE partners, while refugees and those with no recourse to public funds access ESOL and inclusion programmes, often with limited links to mainstream employment provision. Across these groups, there is an opportunity, where practical, to co-locate services, simplify referrals and adopt trauma-informed approaches that recognise multiple barriers for place based services

Geographic and Digital Access Gaps

Place matters. Rural and coastal communities in Devon such as Ilfracombe, Brixham and parts of South Hams often face poor transport, limited childcare and weak digital infrastructure, making access to jobs and training more difficult. Urban areas in Plymouth and Torbay like Devonport and Melville Hill face many similar challenges as well as some place specific challenges — around complex needs, high turnover in services, and fragmented support.

Digital exclusion remains significant, with at least one in ten households lacking the devices or skills to engage fully online. While mobile hubs and online services help, they do not replace local, accessible, face-to-face support in communities with the highest barriers.

Opportunities for Integration

Despite current challenges, there are strong foundations to build on. A range of initiatives across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay — including Youth Hubs, #Focus5, the Plymouth Pathfinder project and Supported Internships — have demonstrated the value of partnership-based and aligned delivery in helping young people overcome barriers to work. However, while these programmes have achieved clear successes, their funding has either ended in recent years or remains uncertain beyond the current cycle, highlighting the need for longer-term stability.

New opportunities are emerging to better integrate employment and health support. Connect to Work will link job help with health interventions for young people and adults with complex needs, building on proven models such as Individual Placement Support (IPS) for mental health and addiction recovery, and expanding social prescribing roles that connect residents to employment through community settings. Devon County Council's Reaching for Independence (RFI) programme adds to this by providing tailored support to help disabled residents gain skills, confidence and independence on their journey into work.

The priority now is to align and promote these and other emerging services and programmes within a coherent system rather than as individual programmes. Key opportunities include:

- Co-locating employment, skills and health services in accessible community spaces so residents can access multiple forms of support in one place.
- Creating place based joined-up referral and triage mechanisms so people do not have to repeat their story to multiple agencies.
- Seeking shared, place-based approaches to addressing the needs of youth employability and inclusion across the whole area, embedding health, housing and careers services together.
- Aligning funding streams and programmes to better target priority groups and geographies where practical.

- Involving employers more directly in designing pathways, offering mentoring, job carving and career progression opportunities for residents.

By bringing these strands together, the region can build a more integrated and sustainable employment support system, ensuring that residents receive consistent, joined-up help regardless of where they live or the barriers they face.

Building on What Works

The mapping exercise confirms that our area has many of the right building blocks — strong providers, committed partners and innovative pilots. But it also highlights the need for a more integrated, locally responsive approach. The forthcoming Delivery Plan (Chapter 8) will set out how these opportunities will be turned into action through pilot models, better funding alignment and embedded evaluation to drive learning and scale success.

8) Governance and Delivery Model

The success of Get Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Working depends on a governance model that is clear, collaborative and focused on results. Partner feedback emphasised the need for stronger employer involvement, clearer roles at every level, and visible accountability. In response, this model blends strategic oversight, place-based delivery, and thematic leadership to ensure action is locally driven and nationally aligned.

1. Strategic Oversight

Oversight will rest with the Get Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Working Partnership Group, which has led the development of this plan. Operating as a task-and-finish group within the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority's Skills and Employment Advisory Group and Plymouth's local skills and employment governance, it will coordinate delivery and monitor progress against the plan's objectives across all three areas.

The group will:

- Be co-chaired by senior representatives from local government and DWP, with Connect to Work programme acting as a delivery platform.
- Bring together local authorities, Jobcentre Plus, the Devon ICB, FE and HE providers, employer organisations including the Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, members of LSIP ERB Steering Board, and the VCSE sector alongside youth and carer representatives.
- Seeking to bring forward lived experience, drawing on existing pathways with the local authority and health landscape locally.
- Set the strategic direction, agree priorities, align resources, and hold partners to account for delivery.

The sub group will report to the Combined County Authority and Plymouth partners, integrated with existing employment and skills boards to ensure consistency with wider economic and skills strategies. Delivery will also align with NHS Devon's emerging Anchor Institution Strategy, drawing on good practice such as Derriford's partnership work with the VCSE sector to strengthen community outcomes.

2. Operational Delivery

Beneath the board, delivery will be shaped through two complementary approaches.

First, on a place basis, we will seek to establish task-and-finish groups around specific pilots in Torbay, Plymouth and Devon, bringing together local partners to align services, coordinate outreach and employer engagement, and test new approaches. These groups will report into the board, ensuring learning and outcomes feed directly into wider strategy.

Second, the board will provide a forum for partners to work together on thematic priorities such as health and work, youth transitions, job quality, and barriers to

employment. This will allow local delivery to be informed by shared evidence and best practice while maintaining flexibility for each area to focus on its own challenges and opportunities.

3. Integration with National Agencies

The plan is locally led but nationally connected. Delivery will be underpinned by strong relationships with:

- DWP, through co-chairing, shared data and involvement in local pilots, as well as joint working around future developments, such as any future changes to the National Careers Service / JCP
- Department for Education, aligning Adult Skills Fund, LSIPs, Bootcamps, Free Courses for Jobs and wider NEET interventions.
- Department of Health and Social Care, supporting integration of health and employment outcomes through ICBs.

These relationships will be formalised through joint agreements and shared performance frameworks.

4. Voice, Employer Leadership and Inclusion

A defining feature of this governance model is the active involvement of employers and residents.

- Employers will shape sector pathways and co-design solutions to labour shortages, with clear representation at both board and thematic levels.
- Lived experience will guide decisions through programmes, ensuring services and programme interventions reflect real needs. These forums will hold formal seats on the Partnership Board and thematic delivery groups, alongside employer representatives, ensuring lived experience and business perspectives shape decision-making at every level.
- The plan will also draw on existing insight work, including the KAILO research on young people's wellbeing and engagement, to strengthen its evidence base and ensure interventions are shaped by what young people say works
- VCSE partners, including smaller organisations, will be supported to play a full role, bringing deep community insight and reach. We also recognise the challenges caused by the lack of long-term investment in VCSE infrastructure and will seek opportunities to address sustainability issues.
- Include the voice of young people wherever possible, utilising a place based participation approach.

5. Performance and Risk Management

Performance will be transparent and evidence-led.

- A shared outcomes framework will drive consistency across all partners.

- Quarterly reporting will also capture sector-specific outcomes, including growth in marine and defence apprenticeships, Bootcamp completion rates in construction, and progression into innovation-led roles.
- Thematic leads will be directly accountable to the board, with clear escalation routes where delivery falls behind.
- Risks will be managed through a shared register and mitigated proactively.
- Independent evaluation and peer review will inform continuous improvement and ensure credibility.
- Delivery will be underpinned by a human learning systems approach where possible, embedding co-production with communities and partners into all stages of design, delivery and evaluation. This will ensure that feedback loops drive adaptive responses and that services evolve based on what works for residents on the ground.

A Governance Model That Drives Change

This governance model brings together the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority and Plymouth City Council to provide shared strategic leadership, aligning employment and skills priorities across the whole area and ensuring accountability to government and local partners. The local authorities will act as convenors at a place level, facilitating activity and programmes, engaging employers and communities, and bringing partners together around local delivery. By embedding employer voice, lived experience and community insight, and aligning health, skills and employment services under one framework, this model creates clear accountability, shared outcomes and the conditions for delivery that is joined-up, adaptive and capable of scaling success across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay.

9) Delivery Plan

Our delivery plan sets out how Get Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Working will move from plan to action. It focuses on building early momentum, piloting innovative approaches, and scaling what works. The plan is structured around four phases over the first two years, with activity aligned to the plan's six priority themes.

i) Phased Implementation

Phase 1 – Mobilisation (Q3 2025)

- Establish the Partnership Board and local delivery groups.
- Finalise governance, delivery roles and data-sharing agreements.
- Begin engagement with priority areas, including Torbay, Ilfracombe, Newton Abbot and Plymouth

Phase 2 – Early Delivery and Pilots (Q4 2025 – Q1 2026)

- Draw on the forthcoming Connect to Work programme and learning from the Reaching for Independence model to shape, support and inform the delivery approach.
- Launch local developed Youth Offer pilots and new NEET re-engagement pathways, utilising emerging pilot activity to meet local needs.
- Expand Health and Work integration with ICBs and local partners.
- Co-design place-based responses for areas with structural barriers (with a focus on the pilot areas)
- Begin employer engagement for Job Quality Charter pilots.

Phase 3 – Scaling and Integration (Q2–Q3 2026)

- Extend successful interventions across the region using emerging programmes such as Connect to Work.
- Seek to align Adult Skills Fund where possible, Jobcentre Plus support and other appropriate programme activity within relevant pilot programmes.
- Promote carer-friendly employment practices and flexible work models.

Phase 4 – Review and Refresh (Q4 2026)

- Evaluate outcomes against KPIs and lived experience.
- Update the plan with partner and resident feedback.
- Shape future commissioning and prepare for deeper devolution opportunities.

ii) Thematic Delivery Priorities

Delivery will be structured around six themes, each with clear leads and timescales:

- ***Health-Related Economic Inactivity*** – Seek to align integrated employment-health pathways (e.g. mental health, musculoskeletal support), drawing upon the Connect to Work, Individual Placement Support (IPS) and local social prescribing pilots. Led by Local Authorities, Devon ICB, Jobcentre Plus, Devon VCSE Assembly and local public health teams from late 2025.

- **Young People and NEETs** – Seek to develop a local Youth Offer approach, connecting every young person to education, training or employment. with rollout through 2026. The pilot will seek to bring together robust tracking of NEET outcomes, harnessing lessons from any reductions across priority groups and geographies. This will include working together around real-time data on participation by care-experienced young people, SEND learners, and disadvantaged white boys, ensuring that progress towards reducing our NEET rates amongst those with the greatest need can be evidenced and scaled where practicable.
- **Low Pay and Job Quality** – Working with employers and through the Partnership Group, co-design a Job Quality Charter, focusing on fair work and progression in sectors such as care, hospitality and retail. Pilots begin early 2026.
- **Carers and Barriers to Work** – Working with Adult Social Care colleagues and other key partners, develop carer-friendly pathways, seeking to co-locate employment advice in community settings. Local authorities and VCSE partners will drive delivery throughout 2026.
- **Employer Demand and Labour Shortages** – Use LSIP insights to target vacancies in construction, health, logistics, digital, engineering and marine sectors. Scale Bootcamps and apprenticeships from Q4 2025.
- **Geographic Disparities** – Deliver place-based models in Ilfracombe, Newton Abbot, Torbay and Plymouth, combining employment, health and transport solutions. District councils, working with Devon Communities Together (as the Rural Community Council for Devon) and the Combined Committee will oversee implementation.

iii) **Driving Delivery**

The plan is designed to be adaptive. Pilots will test new models, with lessons used to refine and scale interventions across emerging programmes. Progress will be monitored through a shared outcomes framework, with regular reporting to the Partnership Board.

Key changes to monitoring and evaluation include:

- Retention measures at 3, 6 and 12 months for all employment outcomes.
- Qualitative KPIs covering employer satisfaction, participant wellbeing and in-work progression rates.
- Tracking job starts and sustained employment from Connect to Work, IPS and social prescribing pathways, as well as progress in digital skills, connectivity access and entry into digital or hybrid employment roles.
- Seeking to capture any additional sector-specific outcomes, including apprenticeship take-up in marine and defence industries, Bootcamp outcomes in construction, and progression into high-value innovation roles. These will however need to be mindful of the potential for double counting.

Independent evaluation and feedback from residents will ensure that delivery remains responsive, accountable and focused on impact.

A detailed six-month action plan will underpin the phases. Each priority action will have a named lead agency — for example, Devon ICB for health-work integration, local authorities for place-based pilots

Progress will be reviewed monthly through the programme office and reported quarterly to the CCA's Skills and Employment Board, and Plymouth Employment and Skills Board.

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10) Funding and Resources

Delivering a joined-up, person-centred employment support system across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay requires careful alignment of funding and sustainable investment. Given the scarcity of related resources however, it is also imperative to make best use of existing resources, avoid duplication, and secure additional funding to strengthen delivery / support existing priorities wherever possible. Our approach therefore blends current funding streams with new bids, ensuring capacity is built where it is needed most.

Existing and Committed Funding

The region already benefits from a mix of national and local funding streams. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) has supported employment, skills and local infrastructure over the past four years, but its future beyond the current cycle remains unclear. Any successor funding is likely to align closely with the priorities in this plan, though details have yet to be confirmed. The forthcoming Connect to Work programme and the Adult Skills Fund (ASF), devolved from 2025/26, will create new opportunities to deliver locally tailored interventions around digital skills, re-engagement of inactive residents and low qualification levels, but both will need to align with national objectives as well as local priorities.

At the same time, local authority and ICB budgets remain under significant pressure, limiting capacity to expand wraparound support in areas such as youth services, public health, housing and transport. However, programmes such as Connect to Work, the ASF, and core DWP resources including Jobcentre Plus and the Flexible Support Fund create opportunities to both supplement existing provision and align new activity more effectively with health, employment and regeneration priorities. This offers the potential for a more coordinated system even within a challenging funding climate.

New Opportunities and Targeted Bids

Alongside existing programmes, we will pursue additional funding to extend reach and strengthen delivery. Bids to DWP Test and Learn funds will be used to trial integrated pilots, including the local Youth Offer and health-employment initiatives. Opportunities with the Department of Health and Social Care will be explored to support Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) in linking workforce planning, prevention, and economic inclusion outcomes.

We will also seek digital inclusion funding, particularly for carers and residents in rural areas, and work with employers, FE providers, the Devon VCSE Assembly Digital Inclusion Group, and delivery partners to coordinate a refreshed digital inclusion framework. Where pilots funded through UKSPF or other short-term sources prove effective, we will seek longer-term funding solutions to avoid the cliff-edge effect when initial grants end.

Blending and Aligning Investment

Our approach will be to align and braid available funding and activity so that employment, skills, health, housing, and economic development budgets and programmes reinforce each other. Mapping expenditure across priorities and geographies will identify opportunities for better coordination and impact.

In pilot areas such as Torbay or Ilfracombe, aligned programme approaches will enable more flexible and joined-up responses to complex needs, including trauma-informed and carer-friendly interventions. We will also explore options for ring-fencing a proportion of programme resources for locally commissioned activity (such as through programmes like Connect to Work) so that delivery groups can respond quickly to any emerging needs.

Allocation criteria will be transparent, with priority given to interventions demonstrating measurable outcomes in inclusion, progression, and local economic impact. Shared outcomes frameworks will support joint commissioning and allow for innovative funding models — including payment-by-results — where appropriate.

Building Delivery Capacity

Sustained capacity is essential. We will seek to work together on a multi-agency programme basis where practical, drawing on UKSPF and ASF knowledge to coordinate delivery and monitor impact. Strategic data and evaluation capacity will ensure learning is embedded from the start. Existing programmes, such as Connect to Work and Reaching for Independence, will provide continuity and scale, while frontline integration will be supported through co-location in community venues and health settings. Finally, we will seek to ensure that we strengthen the capacity of VCSE providers, social enterprises and micro-enterprises through emerging programmes to deliver workforce skills programmes, modular training and wraparound employment support in hard-to-reach communities.

By aligning funding to existing and emerging priorities, leveraging new opportunities and investing in delivery infrastructure, this plan ensures that resources are used to maximum effect, enabling a system that is locally responsive, financially sustainable and capable of driving long-term change.

11) Risks and Assumptions

This plan sets out an ambitious vision for a genuinely partnership-led approach to employment and skills support across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. It seeks to move beyond fragmented provision towards a fully integrated system that aligns local and national resources, embeds employer and community voices, and delivers joined-up, person-centred support at every stage. Its success will depend on strong governance, shared accountability, and proactive management of both external risks and internal delivery challenges.

Strategic Risks

Delivery is shaped by several strategic risks that will require ongoing management. National policy volatility remains a key factor; changes to employment, skills, health or devolution policy and local government reorganisation could impact both funding flows and governance arrangements. Close liaison with DWP, DHSC and DfE will be essential to ensure the plan remains aligned with national priorities while protecting local flexibility.

Funding uncertainty is another critical challenge. While new national programmes such as Connect to Work and the Adult Skills Fund present opportunities, these resources are often tightly tied to specific outcomes and have not yet been confirmed beyond the medium term. At the same time, local authority and ICB budgets face sustained financial pressures, limiting their ability to expand wraparound provision and move towards an early prevention model, and in many cases even sustain existing activity levels. Without greater funding certainty and support, there is a risk that successful pilots could be left without the long-term investment needed to embed and scale what works.

Additional risks include housing, transport and cost-of-living barriers that limit residents' ability to take up employment opportunities, particularly in rural and coastal and urban wards of deprivation. There is also a risk that short-term funding cycles could undermine continuity for successful pilots, creating cliff-edge risks if longer-term funding cannot be secured.

Sufficient workforce and provider capacity is essential. Recruitment and retention pressures, particularly within health services, training providers and the VCSE sector, could constrain delivery. Data-sharing limitations also pose a risk, as fragmented systems reduce the effectiveness of joined-up support. Finally, the plan must recognise entrenched inequality and the barriers faced by groups such as care-experienced young people, unpaid carers and those with neurodiverse conditions. These will require persistent, trauma-informed approaches.

Assumptions and Dependencies

The plan assumes that key funding streams, including UKSPF and the Adult Skills Fund, will continue through to at least March 2026, supporting their current programme of employability activity, and that ASF devolution and the Connect to Work Programme will proceed as scheduled. Whilst these will admittedly be subject to multiple calls and pressures, it is assumed that any resultant programmes will be

able to complement and support the ambitions of this plan, in line with current government guidance and direction of travel.

This plan also relies on the sustained participation of the Integrated Care Boards, with aligned investment in health-related inactivity priorities, and on continued delivery through Connect to Work or a successor programme. Engagement from FE providers, VCSE organisations and employers is assumed to remain strong, particularly through thematic and locality-based partnerships. The success of these assumptions also depends on national agencies, especially DWP, maintaining alignment and co-commissioning opportunities where possible.

Managing Risks and Ensuring Oversight

Risk management will be built into governance. The Partnership Group will oversee a live risk register, updated quarterly and linked to performance monitoring. The Task and Finish Group, supported by the CCA / LAs, will track risks, escalate concerns and propose adaptations where needed. Engagement with national government will be proactive, sharing learning and influencing decisions that affect local delivery. Regular evaluation, combined with resident feedback and lived experience, will ensure that interventions remain effective and responsive.

Through this approach, risks will be actively managed rather than simply monitored, allowing the plan to adapt and remain focused on its goal: a joined-up, person-centred system that delivers lasting change.

12) Next Steps

The publication of Get Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Working marks the starting point for a major shift in how employment and skills support is delivered across the area. The emphasis now moves from planning to delivery, with clear milestones to build early momentum and ensure the system changes set out in this plan take root.

The immediate priority is mobilisation. During summer 2025, the Get Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Working Partnership Group will be convened, formalising governance arrangements and membership from the Combined County Authority, Plymouth City Council, district authorities, DWP, ICBs, employers, training providers and the VCSE sector. Terms of reference, delivery roles and data-sharing agreements will be reconfirmed to create a single, accountable framework for decision-making and oversight. Local delivery groups in Torbay, Plymouth and Devon will then be established to coordinate pilots and engage directly with communities.

Early delivery will begin in autumn 2025, shaped by the priorities in this plan. Initial actions will include:

- Developing a local place based Youth Offer approach, testing pilot models in areas with the highest NEET rates (including specific cohorts i.e. Care-experienced) and barriers to opportunity.
- Rolling out the Connect to Work programme as the main employment-health platform and using learning from the Reaching for Independence model to shape wider delivery.
- Developing a Job Quality Charter pilot with employer partners, focusing on fair pay, progression and flexible work.
- Co-designing place-based interventions in Torbay, Ilfracombe, Newton Abbot and Plymouth, integrating employment, skills, health and housing support where possible.

Through 2026, the focus will shift to scaling and integration. Lessons from early pilots will inform how the Adult Skills Fund, DWP resources and other local and national programmes are aligned behind proven models. Employer engagement will expand, particularly in construction, care, green industries, defence, digital and marine sectors, to tackle labour shortages and create clear sector pathways.

Evaluation and adaptation will run alongside delivery. A shared outcomes framework, quarterly reporting to the Partnership Group, and structured resident feedback will ensure learning shapes both immediate delivery and the 2026 strategy refresh. This refresh will inform future commissioning, support preparations for deeper devolution opportunities, and ensure long-term sustainability beyond initial funding cycles.

Annex A – Draft Action Plan: 2025-2026

Priority Theme	Key Activities (Q3–Q4 2025)	Timeline	Lead Organisation(s)	KPIs / Measures of Success
Health and Work	Launch expanded IPS pilots; Co-locate employment coaches in 5 GP practices; Pilot specialist employment social prescribers in 2 PCNs Launch Connect to Work programme across LA's	Q3–Q4 2025	ICBs, DWP, Local Authorities	150 job starts via health-linked pathways; 3 new PCNs with embedded employment roles 560 starts on Connect to Work programme
Young People and NEETs.	Develop local Youth Offer pilots across the area (Plymouth, Torbay, Ilfracombe / Northern Devon); Expand outreach to disadvantaged young people, particularly those who have experienced care and SEND learners; Embed mental health and housing support into Youth Hubs	Q3–Q4 2025	Local Authorities / CCA, VCSE	NEET rate amongst the most vulnerable / those with the greatest need cut by 20% in pilot areas by Q4 2026; 300 young people engaged through Youth Offer; 80% satisfaction in youth advisory feedback
Low Pay, Job Quality and In-Work Poverty	Co-design and launch Job Quality Charter with 10 anchor employers; Pilot Real Living Wage adoption in 3 organisations; Develop progression pathways in care and hospitality sectors	Q4 2025	Local Authorities, Employer Forums	10 employers sign Job Quality Charter; 3 anchor employers accredited with Real Living Wage; 50 workers progress to higher-paid roles by Q1 2026

Unpaid Carers	Create carer-friendly employment pledge; Co-locate employment and benefits advice in carer hubs	Q3–Q4 2025	DCC, VCSE, Employers	100 carers supported into flexible work; 90% of pilot participants report improved confidence
Employer Demand and Labour Shortages	Seek to leverage Bootcamps in construction, digital and care where practicable to support employability; Engage trusted intermediaries (e.g. Chamber, Building Plymouth, Building Torbay Building Greater Exeter) to broker local hiring; Trial 'Employer Pledge' for inclusive recruitment	Q3–Q4 2025	LSIP Partners, Building Plymouth, Building Torbay, DWP	200 Bootcamp completions; 70% training-to-job conversion rate; 20 employers sign inclusive recruitment pledge
Place-Based Inequalities	Launch integrated pilots in Ilfracombe, Newton Abbot, Torbay and wards in Plymouth Explore transport solutions (pooled minibuses, smart ticketing); Pair housing regeneration with employment support where practicable pilots are available	Q3 2025 – Q1 2026	Local Delivery Groups, DCC, PCC, TC District Councils	Year 1: pilot set-up and co-design metrics, resident engagement; Year 2: employment, housing and transport outcomes tracked
Cross-Cutting Skills	Seek to embed transferable skills (decision-making, teamwork, digital literacy) into all training and employment programmes	Q1 2026 onwards	FE Colleges, Training Providers	500 learners complete training with transferable skills accreditation by Q4 2026
Digital Inclusion and Skills	Expand digital access, connectivity and skills training across pilots and programmes	Q3 2025 onwards	Devon VCSE Assembly, Training Provider	1,000 residents gain Essential Digital Skills; Digital Inclusion Hubs established; 20% increase in rural digital access reported

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