

Cabinet



Date of meeting:	13 October 2025
Title of Report:	Connect to Work & Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working Plan
Lead Member:	Councillor Sally Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Tina Brinkworth (Head of Skills and Post 16)
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Your Reference:	
Key Decision:	Yes
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

Announced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Get Britain Working White Paper introduced two new national initiatives; developing local Get Britain Working plans and a new, grant funded workforce and employability programme called Connect to Work.

The Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working (GDPTW) plan will, cover labour market issues related to participation, progression, earnings and job quality in the labour market. This strategic plan will provide strategic direction for Connect to Work, as well as future DWP initiatives such as the Youth Offer.

Connect to Work, is a new programme which will specifically support disabled people, those with health conditions and people with multiple and systemic barriers to employment, to access and experience meaningful and sustainable work.

Recommendations and Reasons

1. Approve and accept the Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working plan: 2025 - 2027

Accepting the Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working plan provides the overarching plan for delivering Connect to Work and other, new pilots and funding across this geography.

2. To delegate the authority to sign future pilot contracts and agreements associated with the Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working plan, such as the Youth Guarantee, to the Director for Children's Services, where they do not already have the authority to do so

To enable the Director of Children's Services to sign any contracts or agreement from Devon County Council or Department for Work and Pensions, on behalf of Plymouth City Council for future pilots or funds associated with the Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working plan, such as Youth Guarantee.

3. Approve the proposal for the Council to deliver the new DWP Connect to Work programme to support approximately 2,100 Plymouth residents (total value of approximately £6.8m over 5 years).

To enable the delivery of the Connect to Work programme to begin in Plymouth, which will support 2,100 residents into employment including those with disabilities, long-term health conditions and specified disadvantaged groups. Our proposed delivery will create 33 roles at peak, all fully funded through the grant allocation by the DWP.

4. To delegate the authority to sign Connect to Work contracts and agreements to the Director for Children's Services, where they do not already have the authority to do so

To enable the Director of Children's Services to sign any contracts or agreement from Devon County Council or Department for Work and Pensions, on behalf of Plymouth City Council.

Alternative options considered and rejected

1. Not to accept the Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working Plan – Devon County Council have been given the responsibility to write this plan for the entire delivery area (Devon, Plymouth and Torbay) by the Department for Work and Pensions. If we choose to not accept this plan, Plymouth City Council will not have a role in the future delivery of programmes that may result from the plan. Therefore, we chose to engage with Devon County Council and co-design this plan, both ensuring it meets the needs of Plymouth, and that we have ongoing engagement with any future programmes.
2. Not to accept the Connect to Work Funding - Funding is allocated to areas, but Plymouth City Council are also not the Lead Accountable Body for our area, that is Devon County Council. If Plymouth City Council had chosen to not design delivery for our area, Devon County Council would have had the responsibility to deliver the programme in Plymouth, and spend the funding allocated for the city. Therefore, we chose to engage with Devon County Council and co-design delivery, ensuring that the allocated funding for Plymouth is spent to support its residents.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The Connect to Work programme will directly support eligible and suitable Plymouth residents to gain employment. This new programme, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, will support and contribute to the goals and ambitions of the Corporate Plan and Plymouth Plan. It will directly support people who may be unemployed or economically inactive into work.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Connect to Work is a DWP grant funded programme. Funding is allocated for delivery areas and does not follow a competitive process. Plymouth City Council are therefore receiving our allocation of grant funding to be spent on delivering this programme and achieving the outlined outcomes.

Financial Risks

The Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working plan poses no direct financial risk, there was a very limited amount of direct funding that came into Plymouth City Council to support development of the document, but there is no other directly related funding currently. However, this plan instead provides potential routes to accessing further future funding.

Connect to Work is a DWP grant funded programme. Funding is allocated for delivery areas and does not follow a competitive process. Plymouth City Council are not the Lead Accountable Body for this funding in our area (this is Devon County Council). Therefore, we are a delivery partner and will have the Terms and Conditions passed on to us from DWP for this grant. Connect to Work is not a payment by results programme. Targets for the number of participants supported in each area have been provided, but funding is an allocation, and eligibility is focused on spending this on allowed costs. Our entire delivery model has been built to ensure all costs are allowed and eligible, therefore minimising risk.

Legal Implications

(Provided by AC)

None arising in relation to the Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working plan.

Devon County Council as the accountable body will take overall responsibility as recipient of the grant for leading the implementation of the Connect to Work programme.

As a delivery partner the Council may be required to enter into binding agreements with the DWP and /or Devon CC to set out how the funding will be drawn down and utilised. Legal advice on the terms of any such agreements will be given if/when such agreements are received.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

A climate impact assessment has been completed and attached at Appendix D.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

The Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working Plan presents the case for future investment and support of our area, specifically highlighting the challenges around economic inactivity and unemployment. The Connect to Work delivery will directly support residents who have long term illness, disabilities and from priority groups into sustainable employment. The programme will have positive benefit to these participants and will promote equality of opportunity, eliminate any unlawful discrimination and support individuals with protected characteristics.

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Connect to Work and Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working Plan Briefing							
B	Get Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Working Plan: 2025-2027							
C	Equalities Impact Assessment							
D	Climate Impact Assessment							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)						
	If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Amanda Davis (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills)											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes 15/09/2025											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Sally Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships) Date approved: 09/09/2025											

CONNECT TO WORK AND GET DEVON PLYMOUTH AND TORBAY WORKING PLAN BRIEFING

Skills and Post 16

Get Britain Working White Paper – Background

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PROGRAMMES

The Get Britain Working White Paper announcement included two new national programmes around supporting the long-standing challenges of economic inactivity. They focus on tackling health-related inactivity; supporting young people into sustained careers; improving job quality and reducing in-work poverty; enabling carers to re-enter the workforce; addressing employer labour shortages; and reducing geographic inequalities.

Both programmes are to be delivered in identical geographies, these have been defined around new 'Delivery Areas'. Plymouth is part of the Delivery Area which consists of Torbay Council and Plymouth City Council with Devon County Council as the Lead Accountable Body. Devon County Council therefore has had the responsibility to work in partnership for both programmes.

These two new programmes are;

Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working (GDPTW) plan, new plans which Delivery Areas have been asked to develop covering labour market issues related to participation, progression, earnings and job quality in the labour market. This strategic plan will provide strategic direction for Connect to Work, as well as future DWP initiatives such as the Youth Offer.

Connect to Work, a new programme which sits within the strategic plan above, will specifically support disabled people, those with health conditions and people with multiple and systemic barriers to employment, to access and experience meaningful and sustainable work.

Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working (GDPTW) Plan

BACKGROUND

Announced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as part of the Get Britain Working White Paper, local areas have been asked to develop plans covering labour market issues related to participation, progression, earnings and job quality in the labour market. These plans should set out ambitions for the next 10 years alongside more immediate goals and actions.

The geography for the development of these plans is identical to Connect to Work. Plymouth is part of the Delivery Area which consists of Torbay Council and Plymouth City Council with Devon County Council as the Lead Accountable Body. Devon County Council therefore has had the responsibility to work in partnership to design this plan. Partners engaged include Plymouth City Council, Torbay Councils, partners from voluntary, community and social enterprise, education and skills providers, employer and business representatives and the local Integrated Care Board and Job Centre Plus.

SCOPE OF THE PLAN

Areas were given some flexibility in designing these plans but were asked to address several core elements, these include:

- Labour Market Analysis
- Drivers and causes of supply and demand side labour market issues
- Current system and offer
- Working with partners
- Systemic changes
- Priority actions and longer-term goals
- Governance, local engagement and future iterations

The Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working (GDPTW) plan responds to long-standing challenges: high levels of economic inactivity and entrenched youth unemployment particularly in 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, green energy, marine, defence 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
- improving job quality and reducing in-work poverty
- enabling carers to re-enter the workforce
- addressing employer labour shortages
- reducing geographic inequalities.

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

GOVERNANCE

Oversight will be provided by the Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Get Britain Working Partnership Board, operating as part of the devolution governance framework.

The board will:

- Be co-chaired by senior representatives from local government and DWP, with Connect to Work acting as a delivery platform.
- Bring together local authorities (LA), Jobcentre Plus, the Devon Integrated Care Board (ICB), Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) providers, employer organisations including the Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP), Employment Representative Boards (ERB) Steering Board, Careers Hub cornerstone employers, and the VCSE sector alongside youth and carer representatives.
- Set the strategic direction, agree priorities, align resources, and hold partners to account for delivery.

Connect to Work Programme Delivery

BACKGROUND

Formerly known as Supported Employment, Connect to Work is a new workforce programme announced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The underpinning directive is that the potential of every individual is valued, which is in keeping with Plymouth City Councils principle of “Nobody Left Behind”.

Connect to Work is part of the wider Getting Britain Working initiative. Its intention is to enable local areas to stand up plans to tackle economic inactivity and expand employment opportunities for all and particularly those who face disadvantages in securing employment. The programme will specifically support disabled people, those with health conditions and people with multiple and systemic barriers to employment, to experience meaningful and sustainable work.

BUDGET AND TARGETS

The budget allocation and outcome target for the entire delivery area is to support approximately 5,900 participants over the full 5 years of the programme.

The Plymouth allocation of funding will support approximately 2,100 participants over the 5 years. This allocation is not a flat yearly profile but instead follows a ‘ramping-up and ramping-down’ approach, with year 3 (2027/28) expected to be the peak delivery year of the programme. At peak, Plymouth will be supporting 700 participants to start the programme during the year.

The total value of the Connect to Work allocation for the entire Devon, Plymouth and Torbay delivery area is approximately £22.7m over the 5-year programme. Plymouth City Council has worked with Devon County Council and Torbay Council to design this delivery and has £6.8m of this allocation in the city.

DELIVERY MODEL

Connect to Work will adhere to two distinctive frameworks: Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF).

- IPS Model: Primarily for individuals with mental health conditions, especially severe mental illness (SMI), integrating employment with mental health treatment.
- SEQF: Serves a broader range of individuals with various disabilities, including physical, intellectual, and other barriers to employment and provides more intensive support.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) anticipates approximately 75% of delivery to be IPS and 25% to be SEQF.

Eligible participants will be from one or more of the following groups:

- Have a disability as defined in section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 or the Social Model of Disability.
- Meet the definition of one of the specified disadvantaged groups with additional multiple and complex barriers that would benefit from support
 - ☐ offender or ex-offender
 - ☐ carer or ex-carer, homeless person
 - ☐ former, current or partner of member of HM Armed Forces
 - ☐ drug or alcohol dependency
 - ☐ care experience or care leaver
 - ☐ refugee, Ukrainian scheme
 - ☐ victim/survivor of domestic abuse
 - ☐ young people identified as involved or at risk of serious violence
 - ☐ victims of modern slavery.

PROGRAMME DELIVERY IN PLYMOUTH

Employment Specialist is a new role defined by DWP. These staff are trained on the nationally recognised IPS and SEQF fidelity quality standards through both BASE and IPS Grow. They will support a caseload of participants following a supported employment “five-stage model”.

IPS Grow supports people with mental health conditions or substance misuse issues into paid employment through the Individual Placement and Support model, which focuses on rapid job placement with personalised, ongoing help. BASE (the British Association for Supported Employment) provides a wider supported employment framework, helping disabled and disadvantaged people into sustainable work by placing them in real jobs, training them on the job, and continuing support to help them succeed.

There are clear guidance and expectations around programme delivery, in order to achieve targets. The Employment Specialists in our Connect to Work programme will actively provide support to a caseload of Participants to achieve the aim of meaningful employment. The average maximum caseload recommended for each Employment Specialist delivering solely an IPS caseload is 25, whereas an average maximum caseload of 20 is recommended for each Employment Specialist delivering an SEQF caseload, with caseloads below 20 sometimes being necessary, depending on the unique contexts of the individuals being supported.

CONNECT TO WORK TEAM IN PLYMOUTH:

To meet the requirements established by DWP, PCC has designed a new team to deliver Connect to Work locally, this is an innovative place-based solution. This team will consist of several roles directly delivering support to individuals in their caseload including Employment Specialists, Team Leaders and Peer Support Apprentices. Alongside these, the team also consists of several supporting roles including a Project Manager, Management Information Officer, Quality Lead, Skills & Workforce Coordinator and Delivery Manager who will form the first tranche of the team and be responsible for building the programme in line with guidance. Over 10% of the roles will be apprentices, with 3 apprentices recruited in phase 1 (2025/2026 FY).

The whole team will work alongside existing teams in Children's Services, wider PCC services, partners and stakeholders across the system in our city. The team will grow as the programme embeds, and our reach targets increase.

At peak, in the third year of the programme (2027/28), the team will include over 33 staff members (including a minimum of 4 apprenticeship opportunities) – ensuring quality provision for residents of Plymouth.

Some of the positions will be filled from partners in health and other organisations through secondment opportunities.

DELIVERY TEAM

To ensure integration across PCC and the city, we have explored different delivery models such as locality working, multi-functional case workers (Employment Specialists) and building specialist teams. Following a review and based on best evidence, we have decided to move forward with specialist teams and case workers. This will help to create an integrated system approach; case workers will be integrated into teams ensuring a singular referral point. This will also ensure that case workers and team leads can effectively manage key relationships and can respond both effectively and with agility to meet the needs of the service and participants. Allowing effective working across PCC, health and wider community groups, so that the right support is provided at the right time. Our work in Skills Launchpad Plymouth where we have supported over 60,000 online and supported nearly 2,000 face to face appointments since 2022 has built strong foundations for this delivery model.

To ensure we can maximise community outreach, we have established a new physical collocated presence for both the Connect to Work team and other Skills teams in Plymouth City Centre, providing a single integrated front door for employment. The caseworker will also work in communities.

We will also be establishing supportive working structures and patterns. These will include the teams co-locating on agreed upon days to enable key opportunities to share best practice and coalesce around key issues, to inform continuous high-quality delivery.

We will ensure the programme delivery is supported and informed by the experienced teams already operating within Plymouth City Council. This, alongside the above approach, will help us to support some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged residents to become financially independent, reducing financial pressure on public services.

GOVERNANCE

Overall Programme Governance for the entire Delivery Area will be held by Devon County Council as the Lead Accountable Body. Plymouth City Council attend and have representation on a Combined County Authority Skills Working Group with responsibility for Connect to Work.

Locally, as part of this programme, we will establish a programme board which will meet termly. The purpose of the programme board will be to provide oversight and critical challenge the Connect to

Work programme in Plymouth and support the Delivery Manager. This board will also ensure that the provision delivers the required outcomes and impacts positively on the wellbeing of residents in our city.

The board brings together representatives from the local authority, local delivery partners, and in some cases wider organisations such as the NHS or employment services.

Plymouth City Council will ensure transparency through regular reporting and monitoring of progress with regular reports to relevant boards and committees. The Combined County Authority will have overall responsibility for monitoring performance and ensuring compliance with DWP guidance.

A Programme Board is a local group set up in areas with *Integrated Settlements* (normally combined authority areas). Its purpose is to oversee how the *Connect to Work* programme is delivered, monitor progress against local targets, and make sure that public funding is used effectively.

The board brings together representatives from the local authority or combined authority (the Accountable Body), local delivery partners, and in some cases wider organisations such as the NHS or employment services. By working together in this way, the Programme Board provides clear oversight and ensures that delivery stays focused on agreed outcomes, such as helping more people into work and supporting them to stay there.

It also acts as the main accountability forum, making sure that responsibilities are met, risks are managed, and quality standards are maintained

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The Connect to Work programme will form part of the wider workforce and employability landscape, the team will work closely with colleagues across the Council including in Public Health, SEND, Housing, Community Connections, Youth Justice and more. The team will also be working closely with external partner organisations, ensuring strong referral and sign-posting routes.

Two key organisations in Plymouth are Livewell and Shekinah, both of which currently deliver NHS/Public Health England funded IPS programs in Plymouth. These programmes are aimed at specialist cohorts, with specific eligibility criteria around severe mental health for their participants. We have engaged both organisations already and will continue to do so through our Steering Group. Plymouth City Council's Connect to Work provision will not duplicate this provision, it is funded by DWP and has specific eligibility and suitability criteria specified by them. Our provision will work with different cohorts than both Livewell and Shekinah, but through regular engagement, we can develop cross-referrals between programmes and avoid duplication of effort, maximising resource across the system.

BRIEF NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

- Connect to Work Programme Initiation – October 2025
- Provision commences and available to participants – late October 2025
- Commence second phase of recruitment in January 2026
- Year 2 of Connect to Work starts – April 2026
- Commence third phase of recruitment in January 2027
- Scale-up for the peak year of delivery, Year 3 – April 2027
- End of programme – March 2030

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Connect to Work is a new national programme and is being delivered at geographies that have been prescribed by the DWP and with allocated total grant funded budgets. PCC have worked closely with the Lead Accountable Body for our delivery area, Devon County Council (DCC), to design a programme that will maximise the benefit for our residents. In Plymouth, we have chosen to deliver the programme in-house to ensure our delivery is impactful, locally informed and collaborative and commensurate with existing and similar provisions across the city.

If Plymouth City Council had chosen to not engage or design our own delivery, Devon County Council would have had the responsibility to deliver the programme for the entire area, including Plymouth (likely through a commissioned service), and control spend of the financial allocation to Plymouth.

Given these options, we chose to engage, and co-design Connect to Work for the best outcomes for the residents of Plymouth.