

## RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 working days have passed and the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

**1. Description of decision**

- (1) That the commitment to work in partnership with West Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes, Central Bedfordshire, Luton, and North Northamptonshire Councils to deliver the Connect to Work project, outlined in the attached report published to accompany this decision, be approved; and**
- (2) That delegation to the to the Head of Regeneration, Property & Local Economy, in consultation with the Service Director for Governance, to finalise the terms of and enter into an Inter Authority Agreement (reproduced at Appendix A of the report published to accompany this decision) for project delivery over the five-year delivery term, be authorised.**

**2. Date of decision**

15 October 2025

**3. Reasons for decision**

To allow the Council to enter a strategic partnership with local authorities across the South Midlands area to effectively deliver the Connect to Work programme in Bedford Borough.

**4. Alternatives considered and rejected**

The alternative is not to sign the Inter Authority Agreement or deliver the Connect to Work Programme in Bedford Borough. This was rejected as it would limit opportunities for residents to find employment.

**5. How decision is to be funded**

The project is fully funded through an external grant from DWP, administered by West Northamptonshire Council as the Accountable Body. As such, there will be no financial costs for the Council as all costs are recovered. Resource commitments, including new staff appointments, necessary to fulfil the Connect to Work Delivery Plan will be on the basis of contracts for the duration of the project so that termination costs are avoided.

**6. Conflicts of interest**

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

Not Applicable

Signed: 

Date: **15 October 2025**

Name of Decision Taker: **Mayor Tom Wootton**

**This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.**

Date decision published: .....**16October2025**.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in: .....**24October2025**.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....**NO**.....)

**Bedford Borough Council – Executive Decision**

**Date of Report: 15 October 2025**

**Report by: Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Planning & Prosperity and Head of Regeneration, Property & Local Economy**

**Subject: DELIVERY OF THE CONNECT TO WORK PROGRAMME IN BEDFORD BOROUGH**

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Connect to Work Programme (CTW) is a grant funded initiative from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) targeting the 'economically inactive' in local areas.
- 1.2 Areas have been identified in advance by DWP and Bedford Borough was allocated to the South Midlands area (together with Milton Keynes, Central Bedfordshire, Luton, North Northants and West Northants Councils).
- 1.3 West Northants are determined as the lead authority and the Local Accountable Body (LAB) for the delivery area. As the LAB, West Northants have overall responsibility for the regional delivery plan, grant allocation and associated funding.
- 1.4 To be able to work in partnership with the five other local authorities in the South Midlands region, the Council is required to sign an 'Inter Authority Agreement'. The Inter-Authority Agreement relates to the sharing of obligations and liabilities deriving from the Grant Funding Agreement for the DWP CTW.
- 1.5 The estimated grant funding for Bedford Borough over the five-year delivery amounts to approximately £2.4 million and will be delivered through the Jobs Hub service.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **2.1 That the Mayor is requested to consider and, if satisfied, to:**

- (a) Agree to work in partnership with West Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes, Central Bedfordshire, Luton, and North Northamptonshire Councils to deliver the Connect to Work project; and**
- (b) Agree that authority is delegated to the to the Head of Regeneration, Property & Local Economy, in consultation with the Service Director for Governance, to finalise the terms of and enter into an Inter Authority Agreement (reproduced at Appendix A) for project delivery, for a term of five years.**

## **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To allow the Council to enter a strategic partnership with local authorities across the South Midlands area to effectively deliver the Connect to Work programme in Bedford Borough.**

## **4. THE CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1 The Connect to Work programme is a new national initiative being delivered. The funding for this scheme was accepted in March 2025 by West Northamptonshire Council, as the Accountable Body in respect of the Delivery Area.**
- 4.2 This programme will be delivered through the existing Jobs Hub (Careers Information Service), which operates to support residents into employment opportunities.**

## **5. DETAILS**

- 5.1 The Connect to Work programme is funded by DWP and is a major UK Government initiative launched under the Get Britain Working Strategy, aimed at tackling economic inactivity by supporting people with disabilities, health conditions or complex barriers to competitive employment to find and sustain meaningful work. Around 1.9 million people in the UK want to work but are not participating in the labour market, often due to ill health-related issues or disabilities. Competitive employment is regarded as employment in the open labour market and receiving commensurate pay for work carried out.**
- 5.2 CTW is the largest programme of its kind, designed to complement other initiatives like WorkWell and Individual Placement and Support (IPS) programmes for people with severe mental illness or substance dependency.**

- 5.3 DWP invited grant applications in respect of grant funding from approximately 45 Delivery Areas in England, to take part in Connect to Work. The South Midlands area has been awarded a total grant of £32 million (of which over 50% relates to staff costs) and, of this, the sum of £2.4 million has been allocated to Bedford Borough Council to implement the project
- 5.4 The Inter-Authority Agreement, at **Appendix A**, has been coordinated by West Northamptonshire Council, acting as the Local Accountable Body for the South Midlands region. This formal agreement is required to be signed by all participating local authorities within the region. Its purpose is to ensure transparency, consistency and shared accountability across all partners involved in programme delivery.
- 5.5 Delivery of the Connect to Work programme will be delivered entirely in-house through the Jobs Hub service which is already in operation and delivering support to residents across the borough. The CTW Delivery Plan is reproduced at **Appendix B** and the project funding will enable the following services, over a five-year period:
- (1) 75% of provision will be in relation to Individual Placement and Support (IPS) on a yearly basis.
- IPS is a model that integrates with health and other services to help people with long term health conditions or in disadvantaged groups to find and keep paid employment. It offers intensive, individually tailored support to help people to choose and find the right job, with ongoing support for the employer and employee to help ensure the person keeps their job. IPS aims to help people find paid jobs within just weeks of being referred to the service.
- (2) 25% of provision will be Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF), over the life of the programme.
- SEQF offers a deeper level of support to both the participant and employer due to the more complex needs of the participant group. In delivery terms, this may mean that a participant will receive more contact and support from their Employment Specialist; particularly in work support for both employer and employee.
- 5.6 The Cost Register is reproduced at **Appendix C**, and provides a breakdown of planning and implementation costs, together with project cost breakdown.
- 5.7 Performance management of the programme is achieved through robust regional level monitoring meetings with all programme delivery officers who will keep track of deliverables, milestones, performance and budget. The agreement requires ongoing monitoring and feedback of performance levels to DWP so that the programme can be monitored in terms of success rates.

## **6. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

- 6.1 The alternative is not to sign the Inter Authority Agreement or deliver the Connect to Work Programme in Bedford Borough.
- 6.2 If Bedford Borough Council chooses not to sign the Inter Authority Agreement or not to deliver the Connect to Work programme, the consequences could be significant across several strategic areas:
- (a) Loss of Strategic Influence and Funding:
    - i. The Council may miss out on central government funding, powers, and flexibilities intended to support infrastructure, housing, transport, skills, and employment.
    - ii. Without participation, Bedford Borough risks being excluded from regional decision-making, reducing its ability to shape policies that affect its residents.
  - (b) Risk to Local Reputation and Partnerships:
    - i. Not engaging may be perceived as a lack of commitment to regional collaboration.
    - ii. This could damage the Council's relationships with neighbouring authorities and central government, potentially affecting future partnership opportunities.

## **7. KEY IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 Legal Issues – relevant legal power**

The Council has general powers of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. The Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA), coordinated by West Northamptonshire Council as the Local Accountable Body for the South Midlands region, provides a formal governance framework for collaborative delivery of the Connect to Work programme. Its legal basis is supported by provisions under the Local Government Act 2000 and Section 113 of the Local Government Act 1972, which enable local authorities to share resources and responsibilities for joint service delivery

## **7.2 Policy Issues**

The programme links to the Corporate Plan of “Supporting Individuals and Families”, “Stimulating Economic Growth in Bedford Borough” and “Promoting Health and Wellbeing” through assisting residents into employment opportunities.

## **7.3 Resource Issues**

The programme is fully funded through the Connect to Work initiative and, as such, there will be no financial costs for the Council as all costs are recovered. Resource commitments, including new staff appointments, necessary to fulfil the Connect to Work Delivery Plan will be on the basis of contracts for the duration of the project so that termination costs are avoided.

Work undertaken towards delivery of the project outcomes will be aligned to activities already carried out by the Council (including the Jobs Hub) and Council officers will be involved in supporting the agreement in their normal activities and existing policies.

## **7.4 Risks**

This is a funded programme and there is a risk of funding not being utilised. This will be mitigated through regular monitoring of the delivery of the service.

The Inter-Authority Agreement relates to the sharing of obligations and liabilities deriving from the Grant Funding Agreement but there is not considered to be a risk of cost liabilities falling on the Council from non-delivery of the programme.

## **7.5 Environmental Implications**

There are no direct environmental implications with this programme.

## **7.6 Equalities Impact**

In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council’s statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

## **7.7 Impact on Families**

There will be a positive impact on families as residents will be supported into employment and therefore improving the opportunities of everyone in the family.

## **7.8 Community Safety and Resilience**

There are no direct community safety and resilience impacts with this programme

## **7.9 Impact on Health and Wellbeing**

There will be a positive impact of health and wellbeing as employment can lead to better physical and mental health by providing a sense of purpose, routine, and social interaction.

## **8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME**

8.1 The following Councillors, Council units, Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Planning & Prosperity  
Corporate Leadership Team

## **9. WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS**

9.1 Ward councillor views were not sought for this report as it is a borough-wide programme.



## 10. **CONTACTS AND REFERENCES**

Report Contact Officer:	Eleanor Karklas, Manager for Economic Growth & Development
Declarations of Interest by the Report Author:	None
File Reference:	10-25 Connect to Work
Previous Relevant Minutes:	None
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	Appendix A – Inter Authority Agreement Appendix B – Connect to Work Delivery Plan Appendix C – Cost Register

# CONNECT TO WORK

## INTER-AUTHORITY AGREEMENT

Between

- (1) WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
- and
- (2) NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
- (2) MILTON KEYNES CITY COUNCIL
- (2) CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL
- (2) LUTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
- (2) BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Inter-Authority Agreement

Relating to the sharing of obligations and liabilities  
deriving from the Grant Funding Agreement for the  
DWP Programme "CONNECT TO WORK" 2025

IKEN Reference: WNC CMS33039  
West Northamptonshire Council  
One Angel Square  
Angel Street  
Northampton  
NN1 1ED

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<b>Schedule 6</b>	<b>DATA PROCESSING</b>

**THIS DEED of AGREEMENT** is dated the                      day of                      2025

**BETWEEN:**

- (1) **WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL** of One Angel Square, Angel Street, Northampton NN1 1ED (the “Accountable Body”); and
- (2) **NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL** of the Corby Cube, George Street, Parklands Gateway, Corby, Northamptonshire, NN17 1QG (the “Recipient”);

each a “Party” and together “the Parties”.

**RECITALS**

- (A) The Connect to Work programme is funded by DWP and is aimed at helping adults who have a disability or a long term health condition (as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or Social Model of Disability) and those who belong to specific disadvantaged groups, move into competitive employment (meaning employment in the open labour market and receiving commensurate pay for work carried out) and/or providing the support they need to maintain that employment/self-employment.
- (B) DWP invited grant applications in respect of grant funding for approximately 45 Delivery Areas in England, to take part in Connect to Work.
- (C) West Northamptonshire Council has agreed to act as the Accountable Body in respect of the Delivery Area which is the subject of this Agreement, namely [DELIVERY AREA] and has successfully completed the Delivery Plan Appraisal Process on behalf of itself and the other ADAM (including the Recipient) in order to secure Connect to Work funding in the form of the Grant.
- (D) DWP will provide the Grant to the Accountable Body as provided for in the Grant Funding Agreement and the Accountable Body will make payment of Recipient Funding to the Recipient under the terms of this Agreement to be used solely for the costs outlined in the Recipient’s Cost Register in respect of the Recipient Funded Activities in accordance with the Recipient’s Delivery Plan.
- (E) This Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) is entered into between the Accountable Body and the Recipient and an IAA in substantially the same form will be entered into between the Accountable Body and each of the ADAM to set out the Parties’ respective legal obligations.
- (F) The Parties will herein agree to fairly and reasonably share equally the liabilities, indemnities and warranties which the Grant Funding Agreement requires of recipients and support the Accountable Body in fulfilling its obligations under the Grant Funding Agreement.
- (G) It is intended by the Parties that this Agreement satisfies the conditions in clauses 3.5.2, 3.5.4 and 3.7 of the Grant Funding Agreement.

**IT IS HEREBY AGREED** as follows:-

**1. DEFINITIONS AND GENERAL**

1.1 1.1 The expressions in this Agreement shall have the meanings more particularly identified in the Grant Funding Agreement save where contained in Schedule 1 (*Definitions and Interpretation*).

1.2 The Recipient confirms that the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement have been read and understood fully.

**2. BACK-TO-BACK OBLIGATIONS AND ROLE OF THE ACCOUNTABLE BODY**

2.1 In consideration of the Accountable Body entering into the Grant Funding Agreement and making the Grant available to the ADAM including the Recipient under the terms of this Agreement, the Recipient agrees to use all reasonable endeavours to procure that the Accountable Body can comply with all provisions and obligations under the Grant Funding Agreement (including providing all necessary information and assistance in the format and within the timescales as may be required by the Grant Funding Agreement).

2.2 The Recipient hereby:

2.2.1 authorises the Accountable Body to apply for and receive the Grant on its behalf;

2.2.2 confirms that it has not applied nor will apply for grant funding on its own behalf as part of Connect to Work; and

2.2.3 acknowledges that the Accountable Body may enter into Ancillary Arrangements and incur Termination Costs.

2.3 Without prejudice the generality of Clause 2.1, the Recipient shall:

2.3.1 comply with the conditions in the following clauses of the Grant Funding Agreement as if each condition that the Accountable Body must meet contained therein is a condition of this Agreement: 3.5.3, 4.8, 4.10.1, 4.10.2, 5.1, 5.2, 7.2, 8.2, 8.6, 9.1, 9.2, 11, 12, 14.1, 14.2, 14.3, 15.1, 15.3, 15.4, 16.1, 16.2, 16.4, 17.1, 17.2, 17.4, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25.2, 25.3, 25.6, 30, and 34.1;

2.3.2 use the Recipient Funding solely for Allowable Costs in respect of the Recipient Funded Activities; and

2.3.3 in all other respects comply with the Conditions of the Grant Funding Agreement insofar as it reasonably applies to it in its capacity as an ADAM.

2.4 Further, the Recipient:

2.4.1 agrees to full transparency open book working with the Accountable Body in relation to the Recipient Funded Activities;

2.4.2 will support the Accountable Body and DWP to comply with the assurance requirements relating to the Funded Activities in accordance with clauses 8 and 10 of the Grant Funding Agreement. The Recipient will provide such information and assurances including where necessary assurance from the Recipient's Chief Finance Officer or Finance Director in relation to the Recipient Funded Activities as may be required by the Accountable Body and will ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to mitigate against the risk of both fraud and payment error; and

2.4.3 will comply with all its legal and statutory obligations and adhere to any relevant consents relating to the Recipient Funded Activities.

2.5 The Accountable Body:

2.5.1 shall give to the Recipient notice in writing as soon as possible after it becomes aware of any dispute between the Accountable Body and the DWP arising out of the Grant Funding Agreement; and

2.5.2 shall not be under any obligation to provide the Recipient Funding to the Recipient after the expiry of the Funding Period.

2.6 The Parties:

2.6.1 acknowledge that DWP may publish relevant data about the Funded Activities and may use it to inform public statements; and

2.6.2 undertake to cooperate in good faith regarding all matters relating to the Funded Activities and the Grant Funding Agreement.

3. **PAYMENT OF THE GRANT**

3.1 The amount of the Grant and the Recipient Funding is capped and the Accountable Body shall not be obliged to increase the Recipient Funding above the Maximum Recipient Funding in the event of any overspend by the Recipient in its delivery of the Recipient Funded Activities or for any other reason.

3.2 The Recipient will provide any necessary assistance and information to the Accountable Body in respect of the Recipient Funding in order that the Accountable Body is able to comply with its obligations under clause 4 of the Grand Funding Agreement (Payment of the Grant). The Accountable Body shall only be obliged to pay any or all or the Recipient Funding to the Recipient on receipt of any Grant received by the Accountable Body in respect of the Recipient Funding, and the Accountable Body shall not be obliged to pay any Recipient Funding as a result of the Recipient's failure to comply with this Clause 3.2.

3.3 The Recipient shall invoice the Accountable Body for payment of the Recipient Funded Activities at the time the Recipient Funded Activities are expressed to be payable on a quarterly basis in accordance with the Recipient's Costs Register at Schedule 4. All invoices shall be directed to the authorised representatives.

3.4 Subject to the provisions of this Clause 3 the Accountable Body shall pay the Recipient Funding for the Recipient Funded Activities which have become payable within thirty (30) days of receipt of an undisputed invoice from the Recipient.

- 3.5 Payment at Clause 3.4 is subject to the Accountable Body being in receipt of sufficient cleared funds from DWP. In the event of delay of payment of funds to the Accountable Body, in accordance with the Payment Schedule set out in Annex 5 of the Grant Funding Agreement, the Accountable Body reserves the right to delay payment of invoices to the Recipient until it has received sufficient cleared funds from DWP.
- 3.6 The Recipient shall not suspend the provision of the Recipient Funded Activities if the payment of any Recipient Funding is disputed or delayed for any reason.
- 3.7 The Recipient Funding is exclusive of VAT, which shall be added at the prevailing rate as applicable and paid by the Accountable Body following delivery of a valid VAT invoice. The Recipient shall indemnify the Accountable Body against any liability (including any interest, penalties or costs incurred) which is levied, demanded, or assessed on the Accountable Body at any time in respect of the Recipient's failure to account for, or to pay, any VAT relating to payments made to the Recipient under this Agreement.
- 3.8 The Recipient shall maintain complete and accurate records of, and supporting documentation for, all amounts which may be chargeable to the Accountable Body pursuant to this Agreement. Such records shall be retained for inspection by the Accountable Body for six years from the end of the contract year to which the records relate. Records may be held electronically.

#### **4. LIMITATION OF LIABILITIES**

- 4.1 Nothing in this Agreement shall be construed to limit or exclude either Party's liability for:
- 4.1.1 death or personal injury caused by its negligence or that of its employees, agents or sub-contractors;
  - 4.1.2 fraud or fraudulent misrepresentation;
  - 4.1.3 any breach of any obligations as to title implied by statute;
  - 4.1.4 any other act or omission, liability for which may not be limited under any applicable Law;
  - 4.1.5 wilful default.
- 4.2 Subject to Clause 4.1, in no event shall either Party be liable to the other for indirect special or consequential loss or damage in connection with this Agreement which shall include, without limitation, any loss of or damage to profit, revenue, contracts, anticipated savings, use, goodwill or business opportunities whether direct or indirect.
- 4.3 Each Party shall at all times take all reasonable steps to minimise and mitigate any loss or damage for which the relevant Party is entitled to bring a claim against the other Party pursuant to this Agreement.
- 4.4 Nothing in this Agreement shall impose any liability on the Accountable Body in respect of any liability incurred by the Recipient to any other person.
- 4.5 The Accountable Body has made provision within the Grant from DWP for redundancy costs for any staffing related to the Accountable Body's functions. However, if this provision is not sufficient and / or any other unforeseen costs occur, the ADAMs agree that the Accountable Body can utilise



the ring-fenced South Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership reserves in line with the other South Midlands services hosted by West Northamptonshire Council. Use of the reserves in respect of this agreement only relates to Accountable Body costs and not delivery costs for WNC.

## 5. **VARIATION**

- 5.1 Any proposed variation to this Agreement which would require a change to the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement will be subject to the change request process described in the Grant Funding Agreement.
- 5.2 No variation of this Agreement shall be effective unless made in writing and signed by or on behalf of each of the Parties.

## 6. **DISPUTES**

- 6.1 All disputes and differences arising out of or in connection with this Agreement (a "**Dispute**") shall be resolved in accordance with Clauses 6.2 to 6.4 below, and the Parties shall use their reasonable endeavours to resolve such Dispute amicably and in good faith.
- 6.2 Any Dispute shall, (within ten (10) Business Days of the dispute occurring or such other period as the Parties may both agree) be escalated to each Party's authorised representative/contract manager for resolution.
- 6.3 If such dispute is not resolved within ten (10) Business Days of being referred to the Parties' authorised representative/contract managers, such dispute shall be referred to senior officers of the Parties (the "**Senior Officers**") for resolution as follows:
  - 6.3.1 in the case of the Accountable Body, the relevant service director from time to time;
  - 6.3.2 in the case of Recipient, the [relevant service director] from time to time; orin each case, to such other appropriate individuals as each Party shall respectively appoint in its sole discretion.
- 6.4 If the Dispute is not resolved by the Senior Officers within ten (10) Business Days of being referred, the Parties will attempt to settle the Dispute by mediation in accordance with the CEDR Model Mediation Procedure.

## 7. **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION**

- 7.1 The Parties are subject to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (**FOIA**) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (**EIRs**).
- 7.2 The Recipient shall:
  - 7.2.1 provide all necessary assistance and cooperation as reasonably requested by the Accountable Body to enable the Accountable Body to comply with its obligations under the FOIA and EIRs;

- 7.2.2 transfer to the Accountable Body all requests for information relating to this Agreement or the Grant Funding Agreement that it receives as soon as practicable and in any event within 2 working days of receipt;
- 7.2.3 provide the Accountable Body with a copy of all information requested in the request for information which is in its possession or control in the form that the Accountable Body requires within 5 working days (or such other period as the Accountable Body may reasonably specify) of the Accountable Body's request for such information; and
- 7.2.4 not respond directly to a request for information unless authorised in writing to do so by the Accountable Body.

7.3 The Recipient acknowledges that the Accountable Body may be required under the FOIA and EIRs to disclose information without consulting or obtaining consent from the Recipient. The Accountable Body shall take reasonable steps to notify the Recipient of a request for information (in accordance with the Secretary of State's section 45 Code of Practice on the Discharge of the Functions of Public Authorities under Part 1 of the FOIA) to the extent that it is permissible and reasonably practical for it to do so but (notwithstanding any other provision in this Agreement) the Accountable Body shall be responsible for determining in its absolute discretion whether any information is exempt from disclosure in accordance with the FOIA and/or the EIRs.

## 8. **CONFIDENTIALITY**

8.1 Each Party recognises that under this Agreement it may receive Confidential Information belonging to the other.

8.2 Each Party agrees to treat all Confidential Information belonging to the other as confidential and not to disclose such Confidential Information or any other confidential information relating to the Funded Activities arising or coming to its attention during the currency of this Agreement to any third party without the prior written consent of the other Party and agrees not to use such Confidential Information for any purpose other than that for which it is supplied.

8.3 The obligations of confidence referred to in this Clause 8 will not apply to any Confidential Information which:

- 8.3.1 is in, or which comes into, the public domain otherwise than by reason of a breach of this Agreement or of any other duty of confidentiality relating to that information; or
- 8.3.2 is obtained from a third party without that third party being under an obligation (express or implied) to keep the information confidential; or
- 8.3.3 is lawfully in the possession of the other Party before the date of this Agreement and in respect of which that Party is not under an existing obligation of confidentiality; or
- 8.3.4 is independently developed without access to the Confidential Information of the other Party.

8.4 Each Party will be permitted to disclose Confidential Information to the extent that it is required to do so:

- 8.4.1 to enable the disclosing Party to perform its obligations under this Agreement or the Grant Funding Agreement; or

- 8.4.2 by any applicable law or by a court, arbitral or administrative tribunal in the course of proceedings before it including without limitation any requirement for disclosure under the FOIA and the EIR; or
- 8.4.3 by any regulatory body (including any investment exchange) acting in the course of proceedings before it or acting in the course of its duties; or
- 8.4.4 in order to give proper instructions to any professional adviser of that Party who also has an obligation to keep any such Confidential Information confidential.

8.5 The Recipient will ensure (subject to confirmation by its Data Protection Officer that any such material can be lawfully shared whether as Controller or Processor) that data can be shared for the prevention and detection of fraud and will include the following wording in substantive form in all agreements with companies or external entities in relation to the Recipient Funded Activities:

8.6 Data may be shared with other enforcement agencies for the prevention and detection of crime.

## 9. **ASSIGNMENT AND SUB-CONTRACTING**

9.1 Subject to Clause 9.2 neither Party shall be entitled to assign, novate or otherwise dispose of any or all of its rights and obligations under this Agreement without the prior written consent of the other Party.

9.2 A Party shall be entitled to novate this Agreement to any other body which substantially performs any of the functions that previously had been performed by that Party

## 10. **OPERATION OF THE GRANT FUNDING AGREEMENT**

10.1 The Parties acknowledge that any claim arising as a result of a breach of this Agreement may amount to a breach of the Grant Funding Agreement and any Losses flowing from a breach of the Grant Funding Agreement are reasonably foreseeable Losses within the contemplation of the Parties in entering into this Agreement.

10.2 Where:

10.2.1 there is a breach or default in the Grant Funding Agreement (a **Connect to Work Breach**); or

10.2.2 there is a reduction in the Grant under the Grant Funding Agreement (**Connect to Work Reduction**);

the Parties shall work together in good faith to find a resolution to the issues which have caused the Connect to Work Breach and/or Connect to Work Reduction (as applicable) and to reduce or mitigate any adverse impacts arising from the Connect to Work Breach and/or Connect to Work Reduction.

## 11. **DURATION AND TERMINATION**

11.1 This Agreement shall commence on the Commencement Date and unless terminated earlier, shall expire on the Expiry Date.

- 11.2 This Agreement may be terminated on written notice if:
- 11.2.1 the Parties agree to terminate the Agreement; or
  - 11.2.2 on the Recipient giving not less than 6 months' notice of termination to the Accountable Body.
- 11.3 This Agreement may be terminated immediately:
- 11.3.1 If the DWP seeks to recover all or part of the Grant under the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement;
  - 11.3.2 on the termination of the Grant Funding Agreement;
  - 11.3.3 where a Party has received notice from the other Party to rectify any persistent or persistent breach or breaches of this Agreement and has failed to do so; or
  - 11.3.4 where a Party has committed a serious breach of this Agreement which is not reasonably capable of remedy.
- 11.4 On the termination of the Agreement howsoever and whenever arising:
- 11.4.1 the Recipient shall not be eligible for further Recipient Funding;
  - 11.4.2 the Recipient shall return any Recipient Funding which has not been spent;
  - 11.4.3 Termination Costs shall be borne equally between each of the ADAM and the Accountable Body;
  - 11.4.4 the Recipient shall be responsible for the Recipient Termination Costs;
  - 11.4.5 the Accountable Body shall invoice the Recipient for the Recipient Termination Costs as they arise and the Recipient shall pay these promptly.
- 11.5 Where termination of the Agreement has taken place prior to the Expiry Date, the Recipient shall remain liable to the Accountable Body for the Recipient's Termination Costs in accordance with Clause 11.4, notwithstanding that the value of the Recipient's Termination Costs may not be calculated until after the Expiry Date.
12. **SUBSIDY CONTROL**
- 12.1 The Parties confirm that they have each independently reviewed the position regarding the subsidy control regime and believe that payment of the Recipient Funding by the Accountable Body to the Recipient is lawful within the terms of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. If there is a successful legal challenge, or a governmental or other body with jurisdictional powers rules that the Recipient Funding amounts to an Unlawful Subsidy or is otherwise in breach of the Subsidy Control Act 2022, the Recipient undertakes to repay all or some of the Recipient Funding on request by DWP or such other competent body with powers to order repayment.

12.2 The Recipient confirms that the use of the Recipient Funding for the Recipient Funded Activities is lawful within the terms of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. If there is a successful legal challenge, or a governmental or other body with jurisdictional powers rules that the Recipient Funding amounts to an Unlawful Subsidy or is otherwise in breach of the Subsidy Control Act 2022, the Recipient undertakes to repay all or some of the Recipient Funding on request.

13. **INSURANCES**

13.1 The Recipient shall at its own cost effect and maintain with a reputable insurance company a suitable policy or policies of insurance in respect of all risks which may be incurred by the Recipient, arising out of the Recipient performance of the Agreement, including death or personal injury, loss of or damage to property or any other loss.

13.2 The terms of any insurance or the amount of cover shall not relieve the Recipient of any liabilities under the Agreement.

13.3 The Recipient shall hold and maintain the Required Insurances for a minimum of six years following the expiration or earlier termination of the Agreement.

14. **DATA PROTECTION**

14.1 Both Parties will comply with all applicable requirements of and all their obligations under the Data Protection Legislation which arise in connection with the Agreement and where applicable comply with the requirements of Schedule 6.

15. **NO PARTNERSHIP/AGENCY**

15.1 Nothing in this Agreement is intended to create a partnership between the Parties, or to authorise either Party to act as agent for the other.

15.2 Except where expressly so stated in this Agreement neither Party will have authority to act in the name or on behalf of or otherwise to bind the other.

16. **NOTICES**

16.1 Any notice required to be given under this Agreement shall be in writing and shall be delivered personally or sent by pre-paid first-class post or recorded delivery or commercial courier to the Party required to receive the notice as set out below:

the Accountable Body: One Angel Square, Angel Street, Northampton NN1 1ED

Attention: [ Vicky Hlomuka, Head of Economic Inward Investment Service ]

Recipient:

**Address []**

Attention: [ Insert name ]

or as otherwise specified by the relevant Party by notice in writing to the other Party.

16.2 Any notice shall be deemed to have been duly received: -

16.2.1 if delivered personally, when left at the address and for the contact referred to in this Clause 16; or

16.2.2 if sent by pre-paid first-class post or recorded delivery, three (3) days after posting exclusive of the day of posting; or

16.2.3 if delivered by commercial courier, on the date and at the time that the courier's delivery receipt is signed.

16.3 The provisions of this Clause 16 shall not apply to the service of any proceedings or other documents in any legal action.

## 17. **PREVENTION OF BRIBERY**

17.1 For the purposes of this Clause 17 the expressions '**adequate procedures**' and '**associated with**' shall be construed in accordance with the Bribery Act 2010 and guidance published under it.

17.2 The Parties shall each ensure that it and each person referred to in Clauses 17.3.1 to 17.3.3 (inclusive) does not, by any act or omission, place the other Party in breach of any Bribery Laws.

17.3 Each Party shall comply with all applicable Bribery Laws, ensure that it has in place adequate procedures to prevent any breach of this Clause 7 and ensure that:

17.3.1 all of its personnel and all direct and indirect subcontractors of that Party;

17.3.2 all others associated with that Party; and

17.3.3 each person employed by or acting for or on behalf of any of those persons referred to in Clauses 17.3.1 and/or 17.3.2

involved with this Agreement so comply.

17.4 Without limitation to Clause 17.3, each Party shall not in connection with this Agreement make or receive any bribe (which term shall be construed in accordance with the Bribery Act 2010) or other improper payment or advantage, or allow any such bribe or improper payment or advantage to be made or received on its behalf, either in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, and will implement and maintain adequate procedures to ensure that such bribes or improper payments or advantages are not made or received directly or indirectly on its behalf.

17.5 Each Party shall immediately notify the other as soon as it becomes aware of a breach or possible breach of any of the requirements in this Clause 17.

18. **WAIVER**

- 18.1 Failure of any Party to enforce or exercise, at any time or for any period, any term of this Agreement, does not constitute, and shall not be construed as, a waiver of such term and shall not affect any future right to enforce such term or any other term in this Agreement.

19. **GOVERNING LAW AND JURISDICTION**

- 19.1 This Agreement, and the relationship between the Parties, shall be governed by the laws of England, and each Party agrees that all disputes arising out of or in connection with this Agreement, and/or with its negotiation, validity or enforceability, and/or the relationship between the Parties, (in each case whether or not regarded as contractual claims) shall be exclusively governed by and determined in accordance with English law.
- 19.2 Each Party expressly submits to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English Courts.

20. **SEVERANCE**

- 20.1 If any provision of this Agreement is held to be unenforceable or illegal, in whole or in part, such provision or part shall to that extent be deemed not to form part of this Agreement but the enforceability of the remainder of this Agreement shall remain unaffected.

21. **ENTIRE AGREEMENT**

- 21.1 This Agreement constitutes the entire agreement and understanding between the Parties in respect of the matters dealt with in it and supersedes any previous agreement between the Parties relating to such matters.
- 21.2 Each of the Parties represents and agrees that in entering this Agreement it does not rely on, and will have no remedy in respect of, any statement, representation, warranty or understanding (whether negligently or innocently made) of any person (whether party to this Agreement or not) other than as expressly set out in this Agreement. Each of the Parties gives up any rights against the other regarding any warranty or representation except in respect of any warranty or representation expressly made in this Agreement. No Party shall be entitled to rescind (except for fraudulent misrepresentation).
- 21.3 Except for those expressly set out in this Agreement, all warranties, conditions, representations, and undertakings (including without limitation any and all warranties, conditions, representations and undertakings implied by statute, common law or otherwise) are excluded to the fullest extent permitted by law.

22. **SURVIVAL**

- 22.1 Provisions of this Agreement which are either expressed to survive its termination or, from their nature or context, are apparently intended to survive such termination shall remain in full force and effect notwithstanding termination.

23. **FURTHER ASSURANCE**

23.1 Each Party will at the request of the other Party at its own cost do (or use its reasonable endeavours to ensure that others do) everything necessary to give the other the full benefit of this Agreement.

24. **RIGHTS OF THIRD PARTIES**

24.1 Save where expressly provided, no term of this Agreement is intended to confer a benefit on, or be enforceable by, any person who is not a party to the Agreement (whether under the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999 or otherwise).

25. **COUNTERPARTS**

This Agreement may be executed in any number of counterparts and by each of the Parties on separate counterparts each of which when executed and delivered shall be deemed to be an original, but all the counterparts together shall constitute one and the same agreement.

This Agreement has been entered into and delivered as an agreement on the date stated at the beginning of it.

<b>EXECUTED</b> by	)
<b>WEST</b>	)
<b>COUNCIL</b>	)
by:	)

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

Authorised Officer



**EXECUTED by** )  
**NORTH** )  
**COUNCIL** )  
by: )  
**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE** )

Authorised Officer

**EXECUTED by** )  
**MILTON KEYNES CITY COUNCIL** )  
by: )

Authorised Officer

**EXECUTED** by  
**CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**  
by:

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Authorised Officer

**EXECUTED** by  
**LUTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
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Authorised Officer

**EXECUTED** by  
**BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
by:

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)

Authorised Officer

## SCHEDULE 1

### DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION

0. In this Agreement the following words and expressions have the following meanings unless the context otherwise requires:-

<b>“Accountable Representative”</b>	<b>Body’s</b> means the Recipient [insert]
<b>“ADAM”</b>	Means the Additional Delivery Area Member authorities, for [DISTRICT] being: <b>NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL</b> of the Corby Cube, George Street, Parklands Gateway, Corby, Northamptonshire, NN17 1QG (“NNC”); <b>MILTON KEYNES CITY COUNCIL</b> of Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Milton Keynes MK9 3WJ (“MKCC”); <b>CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL</b> of Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ (“CBC”); <b>LUTON BOROUGH COUNCIL</b> of Town Hall, Luton, Bedfordshire LU1 2BQ (“LBC”); and <b>BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL</b> of Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford MK42 9AP (“BRC”).
<b>“Ancillary Arrangements”</b>	shall include, but are not limited to, those supply contracts, other commercial arrangements or employment contracts entered into or arranged with third parties and individuals by the Accountable Body on behalf of itself and the ADAM in furtherance of the Funded Activities or otherwise pursuant to its obligations under the Grant Funding Agreement and/or the Grant Agreement.
<b>“Availability Period”</b>	means the period commencing on the Commencement Date and ending on the Expiry Date
<b>“Bribery Laws”</b>	means the Bribery Act 2010 and associated guidance published by the Secretary of State for Justice under the Bribery Act 2010 and all other applicable United Kingdom laws, legislation,

	statutory instruments and regulations in relation to bribery or corruption
<b>"Business Day"</b>	means any day other than a Saturday or Sunday or a bank or public holiday in England
<b>"CEDR Model Mediation Procedure"</b>	means the model mediation procedure of the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution as amended, updated or replaced from time to time
<b>"CFO Assurance Letter"</b>	means the letter to be submitted by the Accountable Body to DWP as part of the funding arrangements between the Accountable Body and DWP
<b>"Commencement Date"</b>	[    ]
<b>"Confidential Information"</b>	means all information relating to the existence or terms of this Agreement in respect of which a Party becomes aware in its capacity as a Party to this Agreement or which is received by that Party in relation to this Agreement (including all financial information provided by another Party) from another Party or any of its advisors or from any third party if the information was obtained by that third party directly (including any viability information provided as part of a planning application where there is consent from the third party to share that information) or indirectly from another Party or any of its advisors in whatever form (including information given orally and any document electronic file or other means of recording or representing information which includes derives or is copied from such information.
<b>"Controller"</b>	as defined in the Data Protection Legislation.
<b>"Data Protection Impact Assessment"</b>	an assessment by the Controller of the impact of the envisaged processing on the protection of Personal Data.

<b>“Data Protection Legislation”</b>	all applicable data protection and privacy legislation in force from time to time in the UK including the UK GDPR; the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) (and regulations made thereunder) and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 (SI 2003/2426) as amended and the guidance and codes of practice issued by the Information Commissioner or other relevant regulatory authority and applicable to a party.
<b>“Data Protection Officer”</b>	as defined in the Data Protection Legislation.
<b>“Data Subject”</b>	as defined in the Data Protection Legislation.
<b>“Data Subject Access Request”</b>	a request made by, or on behalf of, a Data Subject in accordance with rights granted pursuant to the Data Protection Legislation to access their Personal Data.
<b>“Dispute”</b>	has the meaning given in Clause 6.1
<b>“DWP”</b>	means the Department of Work and Pensions
<b>“DWP Assurance Requirements”</b>	means the activity and requirements described in clause 9.2 of the Grant Funding Agreement
<b>“Connect to Work Documents”</b>	means the Grant Funding Agreement and any other documentation entered into with or issued by the Accountable Body to DWP in relation to the Grant including but not limited to the S151 Declaration
<b>“EIR”</b>	means the Environmental Information Regulations 2004
<b>“Expiry Date”</b>	31 March 2030
<b>“FOIA”</b>	means the Freedom of Information Act 2000
<b>“Fraud Risk Assessment Guidance”</b>	means the fraud risk assessment guidance provided by DWP as updated or amended from time to time

<b>“Funded Activities”</b>		means the activities set out in the Grant Funding Agreement at Annex 4 (Funded Activities) and further described in Section 'Funded Activities' of the Grant Guidance and the Delivery Plan (Annex 8, Accountable Body's Delivery Plan).
<b>“Funding Period”</b>		starts on the Commencement Date and ends on [DATE] unless terminated earlier in accordance with this Agreement.
<b>“Grant”</b>		means the Grant in respect of Connect to Work paid by the DWP to the Accountable Body pursuant to the Grant Agreement.
<b>“Grant Agreement”</b>	<b>Funding</b>	The DWP Grant Funding Agreement for Connect to Work between the Accountable Body and the DWP dated [DATE] set out at Schedule 2.
<b>“Information Commissioner”</b>		the UK's independent authority which deals with ensuring information relating to rights in the public interest and data privacy for individuals is met, whilst promoting openness by public bodies.
<b>“Law”</b>		means any applicable Act of Parliament, subordinate legislation within the meaning of Section 21(1) of the Interpretation Act 1978, exercise of royal prerogative, enforceable community right within the meaning of Section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972, regulatory policy, guidance or industry code, judgment of a relevant court of law, or directives or requirements of any regulatory body.
<b>“Maximum Funding”</b>	<b>Recipient</b>	the maximum sum of £XXX payable to the Recipient from the Grant during the Funding Period.
<b>“MFA Declaration”</b>		means confirmation made by Grant Recipients to the Recipients that in accordance with section 37 (2) (c) of the Subsidy Control Act the Grants comply with the 'Minimum Financial Assistance' criteria.

<b>“Personal Data”</b>	as defined in the Data Protection Legislation.
<b>“Personal Data Breach”</b>	as defined in the Data Protection Legislation.
<b>“Processor”</b>	as defined in the Data Protection Legislation.
<b>“Processor Personnel”</b>	all directors, officers, employees, agents, consultants and suppliers of the Processor and/or of any Subprocessor engaged in the performance of its obligations under this agreement.
<b>“Protective Measures”</b>	appropriate technical and organisational measures which may include: pseudonymising and encrypting Personal Data, ensuring confidentiality, integrity, availability and resilience of systems and services, ensuring that availability of and access to Personal Data can be restored in a timely manner after an incident, and regularly assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of the such measures adopted by it including any outlined in this agreement.
<b>“Recipient Cost Register”</b>	the Recipient’s budget breakdown of spend on each element of the programme over the 5 years set out at Schedule 4.
<b>“Recipient Delivery Plan”</b>	the Recipient’s plan for delivery covering the full Funding Period setting out how the Recipient will deliver Connect to Work, as agreed prior to the Commencement Date set out at Schedule 5.
<b>“Recipient Funded Activities”</b>	means the Funded Activities in respect of which the Recipient will use the Recipient Funding set out at Schedule 3.
<b>“Recipient Funding”</b>	means that element of the Grant which relates to the Recipient Funded Activities up to the Maximum Recipient Funding.
<b>“Recipient Termination Costs”</b>	the Recipient’s one sixth share of the Termination Costs.



<b>“S151 Declaration”</b>	means the declaration signed by the Accountable Body’s Section 151 Officer and submitted with the Bid
<b>“Termination Costs”</b>	the Accountable Body’s unavoidable costs and/or other liability on the expiry or earlier termination of the Agreement, including, but not limited to any liability to the DWP arising from and recoverable under the Grant Funding Agreement, or any liability arising from or connected to the Ancillary Arrangements, including, in respect of employment contracts, any . Where Termination Costs relate to employment contracts, this may include, but is not limited to, redundancy costs, pension liabilities and the cost of taking or defending any action or claim arising therefrom.
<b>“Unlawful Subsidy”</b>	means any subsidy which does not comply with the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022
<b>“UK GDPR”</b>	has the meaning given to it in section 3(10) (as supplemented by section 205(4)) of the Data Protection Act 2018

1. Any defined terms in this Agreement which do not have an associated definition in paragraph one of this Schedule shall be construed as having the same meaning as the equivalent defined term in the MOU.
2. The masculine includes the feminine and vice versa.
3. The singular includes the plural and vice versa.
4. Any reference in this Agreement to any condition, sub-condition, paragraph, Schedule, Annexure or section heading is, except where it is expressly stated to the contrary, a reference to such condition, sub-condition, paragraph, Schedule, Annexure or section heading of this Agreement.
5. Any reference to this Agreement or to any other document shall include (except where expressly stated otherwise) any variation, amendment or supplement to such document to the extent that such variation, amendment or supplement is not prohibited under the terms of this Agreement.
6. Any reference to any enactment, order, regulation, determination or similar instrument shall (except where expressly stated otherwise) be construed as a reference to the enactment, order, regulation, determination or instrument (including any EU instrument) as amended, replaced, consolidated or re-enacted.

7. A reference to a person includes firms, partnerships and corporations and their successors and permitted assignees or transferees.
8. Headings are for convenience of reference only.
9. A time of day shall be a reference to London time.
10. A Party means a Party to this Agreement.
11. The words includes or including are to be construed without limitation.
12. A document in the agreed form is to be the form of the relevant document agreed between the Parties and for the purpose of identification initialled by each of them or on their behalf (in each case with such amendments as may be agreed by or on behalf of the Parties) or in the form set out in a Schedule to this Agreement.
13. A paragraph in a Schedule shall be construed as references to a paragraph in that particular Schedule.
14. A deliberate act or omission of any person shall exclude acts or omissions which were within the contemplation of the Parties or which were otherwise provided for in this Agreement.
15. An obligation to do anything includes an obligation to procure its being done.
16. Any restriction includes an obligation not to permit infringement of the restriction.
17. If there is any ambiguity or conflict between the implied terms and the express terms of this Agreement then the express terms shall prevail.

**SCHEDULE 2**  
**GRANT FUNDING AGREEMENT**

**SCHEDULE 3**  
**RECIPIENT FUNDED ACTIVITIES**



**SCHEDULE 4**  
**RECIPIENT'S COST REGISTER**

**SCHEDULE 5**  
**RECIPIENT'S DELIVERY PLAN**

**SCHEDULE 6**  
**DATA PROCESSING**

**1. Status of the Controller**

1.1 The Parties acknowledge that for the purposes of the Data Protection Legislation, the nature of the activity carried out by each of them in relation to their respective obligations under a contract dictates the status of each party under the Data Protection Legislation. A party may act as:

- (a) “Controller” in respect of the other party who is “Processor”;
- (b) “Processor” in respect of the other party who is “Controller”;
- (c) “Joint Controller” with the other party;
- (d) “Independent Controller” of the Personal Data where the other party is also “Controller”,

in respect of certain Personal Data under a contract and shall specify in this Schedule which scenario they think shall apply in this agreement.

**2. Where the Parties are Joint Controllers of Personal Data**

2.1 The parties agree that they are Joint Controllers in respect of Personal Data under the agreement as specified in Annex 1, and the parties agree the terms set out in Annex 2 to this Schedule 3 to comply with UK GDPR Article 26.

**3. Independent Controllers of Personal Data**

3.1 The parties agree that they are Independent Controllers in respect of Personal Data of Accountable Body and Recipient staff as specified in Annex 1. With respect to Personal Data provided by one party to another party for which each party acts as Controller but which is not under the Joint Control of the Parties, each party undertakes to comply with the applicable Data Protection Legislation in respect of their Processing of such Personal Data as Controller.

3.2 Each party shall Process the Personal Data in compliance with its obligations under the Data Protection Legislation and not do anything to cause the other party to be in breach of it.

3.3 Where a party has provided Personal Data to the other Party in accordance with paragraph 3.1 of this Schedule 3 above, the recipient of the Personal Data will provide all such relevant documents and information relating to its data protection policies and procedures as the other party may reasonably require.

3.4 The parties shall be responsible for their own compliance with Articles 13 and 14 UK GDPR in respect of the Processing of Personal Data for the purposes of the agreement.

3.5 The parties shall only provide Personal Data to each other:

- (a) to the extent necessary to perform their respective obligations under the agreement;



- (b) in compliance with the Data Protection Legislation (including by ensuring all required data privacy information has been given to affected Data Subjects to meet the requirements of Articles 13 and 14 of the UK GDPR); and
  - (c) where it has recorded it in Annex 1 (*Processing Personal Data*).
- 3.6 Taking into account the state of the art, the costs of implementation and the nature, scope, context and purposes of Processing as well as the risk of varying likelihood and severity for the rights and freedoms of natural persons, each party shall, with respect to its Processing of Personal Data as Independent Controller, implement and maintain appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure a level of security appropriate to that risk, including, as appropriate, the measures referred to in Article 32(1)(a), (b), (c) and (d) of the UK GDPR, and the measures shall, at a minimum, comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Legislation, including Article 32 of the UK GDPR.
- 3.7 A party Processing Personal Data for the purposes of the agreement shall maintain a record of its Processing activities in accordance with Article 30 UK GDPR and shall make the record available to the other party upon reasonable request.
- 3.8 Where a party receives a request by any Data Subject to exercise any of their rights under the Data Protection Legislation in relation to the Personal Data provided to it by the other party pursuant to the agreement ("**Request Recipient**"):
  - (a) the other party shall provide any information and/or assistance as reasonably requested by the Request Recipient to help it respond to the request or correspondence, at the cost of the Request Recipient; or
  - (b) where the request or correspondence is directed to the other party and/or relates to that other party's Processing of the Personal Data, the Request Recipient will:
    - (i) promptly, and in any event within five (5) Working Days of receipt of the request or correspondence, inform the other party that it has received the same and shall forward such request or correspondence to the other party; and
    - (ii) provide any information and/or assistance as reasonably requested by the other party to help it respond to the request or correspondence in the timeframes specified by Data Protection Legislation.
- 3.9 Each party shall promptly notify the other party upon it becoming aware of any Personal Data Breach relating to Personal Data provided by the other party pursuant to the agreement and shall:
  - (a) do all such things as reasonably necessary to assist the other party in mitigating the effects of the Personal Data Breach;
  - (b) implement any measures necessary to restore the security of any compromised Personal Data;
  - (c) work with the other party to make any required notifications to the Information Commissioner's Office and affected Data Subjects in accordance with the Data Protection Legislation (including the timeframes set out therein); and
  - (d) not do anything which may damage the reputation of the other party or that party's relationship with the relevant Data Subjects, save as required by Law.

- 3.10 Personal Data provided by one party to the other party may be used exclusively to exercise rights and obligations under the agreement as specified in Annex 1 (*Processing Personal Data*).
- 3.11 Personal Data shall not be retained or processed for longer than is necessary to perform each party's respective obligations under the agreement which is specified in Annex 1 (*Processing Personal Data*).

## Annex 1 - Processing Personal Data

1. This Annex shall be completed by the Controller, who may take account of the view of the Processors, however the final decision as to the content of this Annex shall be with the Accountable Body at its absolute discretion.
- 1.1 The contact details of the Accountable Body's Data Protection Officer are:  
[dataprotection@westnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@westnorthants.gov.uk)
- 1.2 The contact details of the Recipient's Data Protection Officer are: [insert details]
- 1.3 The Processor shall comply with any further written instructions with respect to Processing by the Controller.
- 1.4 Any such further instructions shall be incorporated into this Annex.

Description	Details
Identity of Controller for each Category of Personal Data	<p><b>The Parties are Joint Controllers</b></p> <p>The Parties acknowledge that they are Joint Controllers for the purposes of the Data Protection Legislation in respect of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recipient customer and service users who will benefit from the Recipient Funded Activities.</li></ul> <p><b>The Parties are Independent Controllers of Personal Data</b></p> <p>The Parties acknowledge that they are Independent Controllers for the purposes of the Data Protection Legislation in respect of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Business contact details of Recipient Personnel for which the Recipient is the Controller,</li><li>• Business contact details of any directors, officers, employees, agents, consultants and contractors of the Accountable Body (excluding the Recipient Personnel) engaged in the performance of the Accountable Body's duties under the agreement and managing the agreement) for which the Accountable Body is the Controller.</li></ul>
Duration of the Processing	Term of the Agreement.

Nature and purposes of the Processing	<p>The nature of Processing includes collection, sharing, storage and use.</p> <p>The purposes of Processing are to enable the Recipient to provide the Recipient Funded Activities and auditing in line with government requirements, and to enable the Accountable Body to manage the agreement.</p>
Type of Personal Data	<p>Forename</p> <p>Surname</p> <p>Date of Birth</p> <p>Age</p> <p>Gender</p> <p>Address</p> <p>Postcode</p> <p>Unique Identifier (i.e. NINO or similar)</p> <p>Racial or ethnic origin</p> <p>Health or Social Care Status</p> <p>Sexual life and/or Sexual orientation</p> <p>Salaried data</p> <p>Information related to employment</p> <p>Personal Data being processed include: Name, date of birth, address and postcode, National Insurance Number, telephone number, e-mail address, health conditions.</p>
Categories of Data Subject	<p>Recipient customers and service users who will benefit from the Recipient Funded Activities.</p> <p>Accountable Body and Recipient staff</p>
<p>Plan for return and destruction of the data once the Processing is complete</p> <p>UNLESS requirement under the Law to preserve that type of data</p>	<p>Data is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure up to date data.</p> <p>Will not be held for longer than required or original purpose. Each controller will hold under their own data retention policies.</p> <p>Corporate Data Retention schedules will be followed in maintaining data accuracy in line with the Grant Funding Agreement.</p>

## **Annex 2 - Joint Controller Agreement**

### **1. Joint Controller Status and Allocation of Responsibilities**

- 1.1 With respect to Personal Data under Joint Control of the parties, the parties envisage that they shall each be a Data Controller in respect of that Personal Data in accordance with the terms of this Annex 2 (Joint Controller Agreement). Accordingly, the parties each undertake to comply with the applicable Data Protection Legislation in respect of their Processing of such Personal Data as Data Controllers.
- 1.2 The Parties agree that the Recipient:
- (a) is the exclusive point of contact for Data Subjects and is responsible for all steps necessary to comply with the UK GDPR regarding the exercise by Data Subjects of their rights under the UK GDPR;
  - (b) shall direct Data Subjects to its Data Protection Officer or suitable alternative in connection with the exercise of their rights as Data Subjects and for any enquiries concerning their Personal Data or privacy;
  - (c) is solely responsible for the Parties' compliance with all duties to provide information to Data Subjects under Articles 13 and 14 of the UK GDPR;
  - (d) is responsible for obtaining the informed consent of Data Subjects, in accordance with the UK GDPR, for Processing in connection with the Services where consent is the relevant legal basis for that Processing; and
  - (e) shall make available to Data Subjects the essence of this Annex (and notify them of any changes to it) concerning the allocation of responsibilities as Joint Controller and its role as exclusive point of contact, the Parties having used their best endeavours to agree the terms of that essence. This must be outlined in the Recipient's privacy policy (which must be readily available by hyperlink or otherwise on all of its public facing services and marketing).
- 1.3 Notwithstanding the terms of clause 1.2, the parties acknowledge that a Data Subject has the right to exercise their legal rights under the Data Protection Legislation as against the relevant party as Controller.

### **2. Undertakings of both parties**

- 2.1 The Recipient and the Accountable Body each undertake that they shall:
- (a) report to the other Party annually on:
    - (i) the volume of Data Subject Access Request (or purported Data Subject Access Requests) from Data Subjects (or third parties on their behalf);
    - (ii) the volume of requests from Data Subjects (or third parties on their behalf) to rectify, block or erase any Personal Data;
    - (iii) any other requests, complaints or communications from Data Subjects (or third parties on their behalf) relating to the other party's obligations under applicable Data Protection Legislation;
    - (iv) any communications from the Information Commissioner or any other regulatory authority in connection with Personal Data; and
    - (v) any requests from any third party for disclosure of Personal Data where compliance with such request is required or purported to be required by Law, that it has received in relation to the subject matter of the agreement during that period;

- (b) notify each other immediately if it receives any request, complaint or communication made as referred to in Clauses 2.1(a)(i) to (v);
- (c) provide the other party with full cooperation and assistance in relation to any request, complaint or communication made as referred to in Clauses 2.1(a)(iii) to (v) to enable the other party to comply with the relevant timescales set out in the Data Protection Legislation;
- (d) not disclose or transfer the Personal Data to any third party unless necessary for the provision of the Services and, for any disclosure or transfer of Personal Data to any third party, (save where such disclosure or transfer is specifically authorised under the agreement or is required by Law) ensure consent has been obtained from the Data Subject prior to disclosing or transferring the Personal Data to the third party. For the avoidance of doubt, the third party to which Personal Data is transferred must be subject to equivalent obligations which are no less onerous than those set out in this Annex;
- (e) request from the Data Subject only the minimum information necessary to provide the Services and treat such extracted information as Confidential Information;
- (f) ensure that at all times it has in place appropriate Protective Measures to guard against unauthorised or unlawful Processing of the Personal Data and/or accidental loss, destruction or damage to the Personal Data and unauthorised or unlawful disclosure of or access to the Personal Data;
- (g) take all reasonable steps to ensure the reliability and integrity of any of its Personnel who have access to the Personal Data and ensure that its Personnel:
  - (i) are aware of and comply with their duties under this Annex 2 (Joint Controller Agreement) and those in respect of Confidential Information
  - (ii) are informed of the confidential nature of the Personal Data, are subject to appropriate obligations of confidentiality and do not publish, disclose or divulge any of the Personal Data to any third party where the that Party would not be permitted to do so;
  - (iii) have undergone adequate training in the use, care, protection and handling of personal data as required by the applicable Data Protection Legislation;
- (h) ensure that it has in place Protective Measures as appropriate to protect against a Personal Data Breach having taken account of the:
  - (i) nature of the data to be protected;
  - (i) harm that might result from a Personal Data Breach;
  - (iii) state of technological development; and
  - (iv) cost of implementing any measures;
- (i) ensure that it has the capability (whether technological or otherwise), to the extent required by Data Protection Legislation, to provide or correct or delete at the request of a Data Subject all the Personal Data relating to that Data Subject that it holds; and
- (i) ensure that it notifies the other party as soon as it becomes aware of a Personal Data Breach.

2.2 Each Joint Controller shall use its reasonable endeavours to assist the other Controller to comply with any obligations under applicable Data Protection Legislation and shall not perform its obligations under this Annex in such a way as to cause the other Joint Controller to breach any of its obligations under applicable Data Protection Legislation to the extent it is aware, or ought reasonably to have been aware, that the same would be a breach of such obligations.

### **3. Data Protection Breach**

- 3.1 Without prejudice to clause 3.2, each party shall notify the other party promptly and without undue delay, and in any event within 48 hours, upon becoming aware of any Personal Data Breach or circumstances that are likely to give rise to a Personal Data Breach, providing the Accountable Body and its advisors with:
- (a) sufficient information and in a timescale which allows the other party to meet any obligations to report a Personal Data Breach under the Data Protection Legislation;
  - (b) all reasonable assistance, including:
    - (i) co-operation with the other party and the Information Commissioner investigating the Personal Data Breach and its cause, containing and recovering the compromised Personal Data and compliance with the applicable guidance;
    - (ii) co-operation with the other party including taking such reasonable steps as are directed by the Accountable Body to assist in the investigation, mitigation and remediation of a Personal Data Breach;
    - (iii) co-ordination with the other party regarding the management of public relations and public statements relating to the Personal Data Breach; and/or
    - (iv) providing the other party and to the extent instructed by the other party to do so, and/or the Information Commissioner investigating the Personal Data Breach, with complete information relating to the Personal Data Breach, including, without limitation, the information set out in Clause 3.2.
- 3.2 Each party shall take all steps to restore, re-constitute and/or reconstruct any Personal Data where it has lost, damaged, destroyed, altered or corrupted as a result of a Personal Data Breach as it was that party's own data at its own cost with all possible speed and shall provide the other party with all reasonable assistance in respect of any such Personal Data Breach, including providing the other party, as soon as possible and within 48 hours of the Personal Data Breach relating to the Personal Data Breach, in particular:
- (a) the nature of the Personal Data Breach;
  - (b) the nature of Personal Data affected;
  - (c) the categories and number of Data Subjects concerned;
  - (d) the name and contact details of the Recipient's Data Protection Officer or other relevant contact from whom more information may be obtained;
  - (e) measures taken or proposed to be taken to address the Personal Data Breach; and
  - (f) describe the likely consequences of the Personal Data Breach.

#### **4. Audit**

- 4.1 The Recipient shall permit:
- (a) the Accountable Body, or a third-party auditor acting under the Accountable Body's direction, to conduct, at the Accountable Body's cost, data privacy and security audits, assessments and inspections concerning the Recipient's data security and privacy procedures relating to Personal Data, its compliance with this Annex 2 and the Data Protection Legislation; and/or
  - (b) the Accountable Body, or a third-party auditor acting under the Accountable Body's direction, access to premises at which the Personal Data is accessible or at which it is able to inspect any relevant records, including the record maintained under Article 30 UK GDPR by the

Recipient so far as relevant to the agreement, and procedures, including premises under the control of any third party appointed by the Recipient to assist in the provision of the Services.

- 4.2 The Accountable Body may, in its sole discretion, require the Recipient to provide evidence of the Recipient's compliance with Clause 4.1 in lieu of conducting such an audit, assessment or inspection.

## **5. Impact Assessments**

- 5.1 The parties shall:
- (a) provide all reasonable assistance to each other to prepare any Data Protection Impact Assessment as may be required (including provision of detailed information and assessments in relation to Processing operations, risks and measures); and
  - (b) maintain full and complete records of all Processing carried out in respect of the Personal Data in connection with the agreement, in accordance with the terms of Article 30 UK GDPR.

## **6. ICO Guidance**

The parties agree to take account of any guidance issued by the Information Commissioner and/or any relevant Central Government Body. The Accountable Body may on not less than thirty (30) Working Days' notice to the Recipient amend the agreement to ensure that it complies with any guidance issued by the Information Commissioner and/or any relevant Central Government Body.

## **7. Liabilities for Data Protection Breach**

- 7.1 If financial penalties are imposed by the Information Commissioner on either the Accountable Body or the Recipient for a Personal Data Breach ("**Financial Penalties**") then the following shall occur:
- a) if in the view of the Information Commissioner, the Accountable Body is responsible for the Personal Data Breach, in that it is caused as a result of the actions or inaction of the Accountable Body, its employees, agents, contractors (other than the Recipient) or systems and procedures controlled by the Accountable Body, then the Accountable Body shall be responsible for the payment of such Financial Penalties. In this case, the Accountable Body will conduct an internal audit and engage at its reasonable cost when necessary, an independent third party to conduct an audit of any such Personal Data Breach. The Recipient shall provide to the Accountable Body and its third party investigators and auditors, on request and at the Recipient's reasonable cost, full cooperation and access to conduct a thorough audit of such Personal Data Breach;
  - b) if in the view of the Information Commissioner, the Recipient is responsible for the Personal Data Breach, in that it is not a Personal Data Breach that the Accountable Body is responsible for, then the Recipient shall be responsible for the payment of these Financial Penalties. The Recipient will provide to the Accountable Body and its auditors, on request and at the Recipient's sole cost, full cooperation and access to conduct a thorough audit of such Personal Data Breach; or
  - c) if no view as to responsibility is expressed by the Information Commissioner, then the Accountable Body and the Recipient shall work together to investigate the relevant Personal Data Breach and allocate responsibility for any Financial Penalties as outlined above, or by agreement to split any financial penalties equally if no responsibility for the Personal Data Breach can be apportioned. In the event that the Parties do not agree such apportionment then such Dispute shall be referred to the Dispute Resolution Procedure set out in Clause 6.



- 7.2 If either the Accountable Body or the Recipient is the defendant in a legal claim brought before a court of competent jurisdiction ("Court") by a third party in respect of a Personal Data Breach, then unless the Parties otherwise agree, the party that is determined by the final decision of the court to be responsible for the Personal Data Breach shall be liable for the losses arising from such Personal Data Breach. Where both parties are liable, the liability will be apportioned between the parties in accordance with the decision of the Court.
- 7.3 In respect of any losses, cost claims or expenses incurred by either party as a result of a Personal Data Breach (the "Claim Losses"):
- (a) if the Accountable Body is responsible for the relevant Personal Data Breach, then the Accountable Body shall be responsible for the Claim Losses;
  - (b) if the Recipient is responsible for the relevant Personal Data Breach, then the Recipient shall be responsible for the Claim Losses: and
  - (c) if responsibility for the relevant Personal Data Breach is unclear, then the Accountable Body and the Recipient shall be responsible for the Claim Losses equally.
- 7.4 Nothing in either clause 7.2 or clause 7.3 shall preclude the Accountable Body and the Recipient reaching any other agreement, including by way of compromise with a third party complainant or claimant, as to the apportionment of financial responsibility for any Claim Losses as a result of a Personal Data Breach, having regard to all the circumstances of the Personal Data Breach and the legal and financial obligations of the Accountable Body.

## **8. Termination**

If the Recipient is in material Default under any of its obligations under this Annex 2 (*Joint Controller Agreement*), the Accountable Body shall be entitled to terminate the agreement by issuing a termination notice to the Recipient in accordance with Clause 24 (*Termination for breach*).

## **9. Sub-Processing**

- 9.1 In respect of any Processing of Personal Data performed by a third party on behalf of a party, that party shall:
- (a) carry out adequate due diligence on such third party to ensure that it is capable of providing the level of protection for the Personal Data as is required by the agreement, and provide evidence of such due diligence to the other party where reasonably requested; and
  - (b) ensure that a suitable agreement is in place with the third party as required under applicable Data Protection Legislation.

## **10. Data Retention**

The parties agree to erase Personal Data from any computers, storage devices and storage media that are to be retained as soon as practicable after it has ceased to be necessary for them to retain such Personal Data under applicable Data Protection Legislation and their privacy policy (save to the extent (and for the limited period) that such information needs to be retained by the a party for statutory compliance purposes or as otherwise required by the agreement), and taking all further actions as may be necessary to ensure its compliance with Data Protection Legislation and its privacy policy.

## **Appendix 1 – Data Processing Schedule**

### **Part 1 – Processing by the Recipient**

1. The **Scope** of the processing will encompass receiving the Personal Data from the Accountable Body or otherwise being provided with access to the Personal Data by the Accountable Body, storing temporarily, organising or otherwise filing the Personal Data, comparing the Personal Data to data obtained from other sources, collating the Personal Data in an organised and transportable form.
2. The **Nature** of the processing will be, collection, recording, structuring, storage, organised filing, access, retrieval, consultation, use, disclosure by transmission, alignment and combination of the Personal Data.
3. The Personal Data was collected and will be processed for the following **Purpose**:
  - the Recipient Funded Activities
4. The **Duration** of the Processing under this Agreement will be from the commencement of this Agreement, until its termination.

## **Part 2 – Types of Personal Data**

1. The **Types** of Personal Data processed under this Agreement will be:  
Forename  
Surname  
Date of Birth  
Age  
Gender  
Address  
Postcode  
Unique Identifier (i.e. NINO or similar)  
Racial or ethnic origin  
Health or Social Care Status  
Sexual life and/or Sexual orientation  
Salaried data  
Information related to employment  
Personal Data being processed include: Name, date of birth, address and postcode, National Insurance Number, telephone number, e-mail address, health conditions.

## **Part 3 – Categories of Data Subject**

1. The **Categories** of Data Subject whose Personal Data will be processed under this Agreement will be Recipient customers and service users who will benefit from the Recipient Funded Activities and Accountable Body and Recipient staff



# **Connect to Work Grant Guidance**

## **Appendix B – Delivery Plan template**

**29 November 2024**

To access Connect to Work Grant funding, Accountable Bodies are being asked to complete a Delivery Plan, setting out how they intend to use the funding and deliver the programme. The Delivery Plan should be completed in accordance with information contained in the Grant Guidance and technical notes, as set out below.

Since this is the first step in the Government's Get Britain Working Strategy, we are keen that your Delivery Plan not only captures information about your specific plans for delivery of the programme, but also starts a process of considering your wider strategy on work, health and skills, and how this support will fit within it.

Accountable Bodies are asked to develop their Delivery Plan in collaboration with local partners and particularly Additional Delivery Area Members (where appropriate). Plans will need to be agreed by both the Accountable Body and DWP before entering into a Grant Funding Agreement.

Capitalised terms and acronyms referred to in this Delivery Plan Template shall have the meanings given to them in the Grant Guidance or Grant Funding Agreement.

**Please note, that when answering the following sections, you are doing so on behalf of your Delivery Area.**

This Delivery Plan should be completed with reference to the following documents:

1. Connect to Work Delivery Plan Guidance
2. Connect to Work Grant Guidance
3. All applicable Technical Notes (see Technical Note: General, for a schedule of future Technical Notes)
4. Connect to Work Grant Cost Register

## Section 1 – Contact information

The following information is to help support communication during this Delivery Plan process.

<b>1.0</b> Name and address of the Accountable Body for your Delivery Area:	West Northamptonshire Council One Angel Square Northampton NN1 1ED
<b>1.1</b> Please provide the following details for the Accountable Body:	
Single Point of Contact Name:	Vicky Hlomuka
Single Point of Contact Email:	Vicky.hlomuka@westnorthants.gov.uk
Single Point of Contact Phone:	07880 162063
Role of Single Point of Contact:	Head of Economic Growth and Inward Investment

## Section 2 – Connect to Work delivery

Within this section, please set out your response to how you will deliver your service, who you will work with to deliver and integrate it, and how you will ensure you have a suitably qualified workforce (either in-house or via commissioning) in place, to deliver the Supported Employment model.

**2.0** In the delivery of Connect to Work please indicate which delivery method you intend to use across your Delivery Area (Please select one option only)

In-house	Commissioned	Mixed (both in-house and commissioned)
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**2.1** Where a **mixed delivery method** is indicated, please provide details on the proportion and nature of how the model will be split. Is this by provision (IPS and SEQF)? Is it by geographical location? Is it by Participant group? etc.

Each Local Authority area will manage the mixed model differently as locally required and manageable. Methods are rationalised based on existing infrastructures, skill sets, remit, and collaborative partnerships with local organisations already active within the supported employment sector and / or demographic cohorts and key contributors to delivery and outcomes.

Commissioned activity refers to contracted services, rather than grants.

The below table outlines the Local Authority breakdown of delivery on a yearly basis in relation to Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF).

Bedford	100% in-house  75% of provision will be IPS, 25% SEQF over the life of the programme.
Central Beds	Year 1: 100% in-house Year 2: Mixed 85% inhouse, 15% IPS commissioned Year 3: Mixed 89% in house, 11% IPS commissioned Year 4: Mixed 85% in house, 15% IPS commissioned Year 5: Mixed 69% in house, 31% IPS commissioned  75% of provision will be IPS, 25% SEQF over the life of the programme and all SEQF to be delivered inhouse.  The contract amounts for the commissioned aspect above of £150-200k are in line with what the council currently do for adult education and have high demand and successful delivery. Light touch engagement has taken place with local providers on possibilities of delivery and any procurement will undergo full tender process in line with regulations and will include appropriate market engagement, with potential interest already established.
Luton	Year 1: 100% in-house Year 2: mixed - 75% in house, 25% commissioned Year 3: mixed - 75% in house, 25% commissioned Year 4: mixed - 75% in house, 25% commissioned Year 5: 100% in-house

	<p>75% of provision will be IPS, 25% SEQF over the life of the programme, both in-house and commissioned partners will adopt a 75/25 delivery method split by fidelity model. The contract amounts for commissioned work are in line with the council's commissioning of some of its Department for Education Tailored Learning funding.</p> <p>Light touch market engagement has taken place with local providers to find out what interest there is. A full procurement activity will take place in line with procurement law and will include appropriate market engagement to contract value.</p> <p>Participant output costs are high in Luton due to the multiple barriers to participation caused by the high levels of deprivation and the very significant health inequalities in the town. 1 in 57 people experience homelessness and Luton has 4 areas that are in the top 10% of the most deprived areas in the country.</p>
Milton Keynes	<p>Year 1: 100% in-house.</p> <p>Year 2: mixed – 50% in-house, 50% commissioned</p> <p>Year 3: mixed – 50% in-house, 50% commissioned</p> <p>Year 4: mixed – 50% in-house, 50% commissioned</p> <p>Year 5: in-house only</p> <p>75% of provision will be IPS, 25% SEQF over the life of the programme, therefore both in-house and commissioned partners will adopt a 75/25 delivery method split by fidelity model.</p>
North Northants	<p>100% in-house</p> <p>70% of provision will be IPS, 30% SEQF over the life of the programme.</p>
West Northants	<p>75% of provision will be IPS, 25% SEQF over the life of the programme</p> <p>Mixed – 25% SEQF will be wholly delivered by North Northants on behalf of West Northants</p> <p>75% IPS will be delivered 5% in-house, 65% North Northants and 30% commissioned.</p> <p>Where provision is delivered by North Northants Council, the team will travel and be based locally in West Northants to ensure journey times and travel costs are kept to a minimum. Due to previous joint working there is office access for the North Northants Team in the West Northants geography.</p>

	<b>At Peak</b>	<b>% region</b>	<b>LA SEQF</b>	<b>LA IPS</b>	<b>SEQF Region</b>	<b>IPS Region</b>
Bedford	200	7.69%	25%	75%	2%	6%
Central Beds	400	15.38%	25%	75%	4%	12%
Luton	400	15.38%	25%	75%	4%	12%
Milton Keynes	500	19.23%	25%	75%	5%	14%
North Northants	600	23.08%	30%	70%	10%	12%

West Northants	500	19.23%	25%	75%	5%	12%
TOTAL	2600	100%			30%	70%

Breakdown of the IPS / SEQF delivery is broken down based on Local Authorities local delivery models and given as a regional overall delivery of 70/30 for the South Midlands region and is based on existing infrastructure, budget, risk management, and local delivery landscape at a local level. The 70/30 of IPS and SEQF delivery is in line with DWP 5% variance of the 75/25 split.

In-house provision by Bedford, Milton Keynes and North Northants is due to established teams being able to undertake delivery. Other in house provision will be delivered by other Local Authorities in the region such as Luton after they have undertaken recruitment to the staffing roles following the grant funding agreement and delivery partner contract being signed.

**Geography.** Delivery is based on Local Authority geographical areas, except for Northamptonshire, where North Northants will deliver the SEQF split on behalf of West Northants because there is an established team in place (covering the former Northamptonshire County geography).

Regional split of 30% (SEQF) and 70% (IPS) is impacted by North Northamptonshire's 70/30 split, which will be achieved with zero impact on allocated cost due to the existing infrastructure, skill base and expertise of the delivery team and the intention to carry and deliver dual caseloads). 70/30 split is supported by local IPS and SEQF referral numbers recorded in the past 12 months. Approx. 275 IPS and 542 SEQF. The absence of Work Well, Local Supported Employment programme and the availability of two IPS services in our county supports a 70/30 split. GCR supports our ability to financially deliver with zero impact on the wider south midlands cost allocation. SEND numbers across North Northamptonshire were 10,109 (an increase of 38.7% in only 4 years, a further 3045 expected by 2028 and within the lifetime of this provision. There is a significant local SEND need, growing at a faster than national rate. No other local provision and a high SEND need supports a case for a 70% IPS and 30% SEQF split and is in line with the 5% margin prescribed in the grant guidance.

To ensure robust oversight of geographic splits and maintain alignment with overall programme targets, the Accountable Body will implement a structured performance management approach that enables proactive monitoring, early intervention, and adaptive delivery. This will include:

- Monitoring performance at a regional level using key metrics against committed targets as a region, this will allow easy identification of any shortfalls so that action can be taken to mitigate.
- Regular performance reviews will be conducted with each Local Authority delivery partner to monitor progress, share best practices, and address any delivery challenges. Where underperformance is identified, we will initiate a structured escalation process in line with DWP monitoring and assurance guidance and requirements, including root cause analysis and the development of a targeted recovery plan. This would be communicated with our Regional Engagement Lead (REL) as appropriate.

- Potential reallocation of IPS/SEQF split if a Local Authority area is unable to meet its allocated SEQF/IPS split for delivery, a discussion may be had in line with performance review on the possibility of reallocating a proportion of the specific volume to another area within the region that has capacity to transfer IPS/SEQF split. This will be done in consultation with local stakeholders and delivery partners to ensure that reallocation decisions are evidence-based and do not compromise local delivery quality or overall regional IPS/SEQF split.

Through this approach, we will maintain strong oversight of geographic splits, mitigate the risk of underperformance in any one area, and ensure that the programme remains on track to meet its overall objectives for a regional as a whole.

**2.2** Please detail your high-level plan for delivery which captures the key milestones and indicative timings for implementation activities. These could include:

**The date your team will be in place to start delivering the programme**

Each Local Authority area has some internal resource in place that is leading on local planning and implementation activities, and each has undertaken a resource profiling exercise to consider local needs – delivery and administration – over the course of the programme. Local programme leads have been meeting regularly since December 2024 to ensure strategic alignment across the areas and embed a partnership approach. The core Accountable Body team is in place to be able undertake required functions and plans are in place to supplement the team with technical specialists as roles and remits become more defined.

with the required deadline.

**Your anticipated timeframe for scaling up and the associated starts volumes**

Bedford	Year 1: start volumes = 72 (11/12 starts per month) Year 2: start volumes = 192 (16 starts per month) Year 3: start volumes = 200 (16/17 starts per month) Year 4: start volumes = 146(12/13 starts per month) Year 5: start volumes = 16
Central Beds	Year 1: start volumes =144 (23/24 starts a month) Year 2: start volumes= 384 (31/32 starts a month) Year 3: start volumes= 400 (33/34 starts a month) Year 4: start volumes 288 (25 starts a month) Year 5: start volumes = 36
Luton	Year 1: start volumes = 46 (8 starts per month increasing to 18) Year 2: start volumes= 281 (starts at 13 starts per month increasing to 40 a month) Year 3: start volumes= 524 (43/44 starts a month) Year 4: start volumes 351 (starts at 41 starts per month decreasing to 19 starts per month) Year 5: start volumes = 45
Milton Keynes	Year 1: start volumes = 180 (15 starts per month) Year 2: start volumes = 480 (40 starts per month) Year 3: start volumes = 500 (42 starts per month) Year 4: start volumes = 360 (30 starts per month) Year 5: start volumes = 45 (5 starts per month)
North Northants	Year 1: start volumes = 216 (35 starts per month, based on 6 months delivery planned for in year 1) Year 2: start volumes = 576 (40 starts per month)



	Year 3: start volumes = 600 (50 starts per month) Year 4: start volumes = 432 (30 starts per month) Year 5: start volumes = 54 (5 starts per month)
West Northants	Year 1: start volumes = 450 (7/8 starts per month) Year 2: start volumes = 535 (45 starts per month) Year 3: start volumes = 500 (42 starts per month) Year 4: start volumes = 440 (37 starts per month) Year 5: start volumes = 45 (4 starts per month)

Each Local Authority area is working within the guidance to cap caseloads at 20 (SEQF) and 25 (IPS) both for in-house and procured contracted delivery.

### Timeline

	Receiving EOI	Operational Delivery
Bedford	Sep-25	1-Oct-25
Central Beds	Sep-25	SEQF – Oct 25 – in house delivery in place IPS – April 26 once contracting is complete.
Luton	Sep-25	Commencing 1-Oct-25, building up to fully operational as further staff are recruited.
Milton Keynes	Sep-25	1 April 2026 (following procurement of commissioned provider to start in year 2)
North Northants	Sep-25	1-Oct-25 — in house delivery in place
West Northants	Sep-25	1-Oct-25 – delivery by North Northants will commence by 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2025, with contracted delivery starting later.

\*Delivery plan sign-off anticipates a timeframe where EOIs could be received from September 2025 allowing some Local Authorities with existing teams to go-live at an earlier than October 2025 date. This EOI date is subject to change pending delivery plan sign off but remains achievable as per this plan version.

While some Local Authority areas are well equipped to begin delivery imminently, owing to current operational setups, it is anticipated that the South Midlands region will begin a phased implementation to be ready to deliver from October 2025 over a 6 month period as a region, pending approval of its delivery plan, grant cost register and signed Grant Funding Agreement. Full operational delivery will be achieved once all procurement activity has concluded with individual Local Authorities. It is anticipated that this will be by April 2026.

Contracted partners for the Local Authority delivery will be procured by individually by each Local Authorities in line with The Procurement Act 2023, which each Local Authority is trained in and compliant with regulations. This will be managed by in house delivery teams supported by the Councils procurement team to ensure compliance. Support will be available to Local Authorities from the Accountable Body Procurement Team and through the gold support package from DWP corporate finance team.

Procurement will be undertaken and managed by the Accountable Body for agreed regional level activity. Due to the South Midlands delivery model, this will not include delivery support in terms of SEQF/IPS delivery by Employment Specialist but will include regional facilitation and economy of scale activity, such as a joint crm system or event and employer engagement.

Please attach a copy of your draft project plan, which shows your key milestones and timeline. – a MoSCoW project planning outline (a prioritisation technique used to categorise project requirements, tasks, or features into four groups: Must have, Should have, Could have, and Won't have) can be found under July as an attached document and the below timeline will be updated for accuracy depending on DWP feedback and will be accurate at time of final submission.

Feb 25

- Local delivery plans finalised.

Mar 25

- Local delivery plans approved through council governance processes.
- Regional delivery plan drafted.

Apr 25

- Regional delivery plan (Draft 1) submitted to DWP for review.

May 25

- DWP feedback reviewed (Draft 1)
- Regional delivery plan (Draft 2) submitted to DWP for review.
- Progress briefings via governance process.

Jun 25

- DWP feedback reviewed (Draft 2).
- Update provided to South Midlands Authorities Board.
- Paper submitted to Accountable Body Cabinet and delegated authority to sign grant funding agreement.

Jul 25

- Regional delivery plan (Draft 3/Final) submitted to DWP for review and approval.
- Partnership agreements signed between Local Authorities.
- Ongoing development activity outlined in draft project plan inserted below.
- Recruitment in some areas begins to ensure resourced in house delivery teams.



Project Plan  
MSCW.pdf

Aug 25

- Grant Funding Agreement signed.
- Partner contracts signed.
- Procurement activity begins in some areas such as West Northants.
- Engagement with Commercial Finance Team and Gold Support for procurement.

## Sep 25

- MK Jobs Fair (19/20 September)
- Expression of Interest and engagement begins.
- Depending on when the grant funding agreement and partners contracts are signed, some Local Authorities within the region are in a position to start delivery immediately.
- Procurement activity begins in some areas such as Central Bedfordshire and Luton.

## October 25 – April 2026

- Phased launch begins over a 6 month period \*depending on when the grant funding agreement is signed, some Local Authorities within the region are in a position to start delivery sooner.

## Ongoing

- Regular steering group meetings which will commence post project go live
- Annual delivery partner self-assessments which include identifying areas of strength and improvement, accountability and transparency, risk management and alignment with strategic and performance goals.
- Regular programme updates to the South Midlands Authorities Board (5-6 meetings per year)
- Reporting as appropriate to the Accountable Body Executive Team and Cabinet.
- Annual/3 yearly fidelity assessments for SEQF and IPS with local self-assessment plans in place from go-live to track against fidelity in preparation for annual audits. Local self-assessment plans to be reviewed at least quarterly.
- Delivery contract manager reviews on programme delivery.
- Regular engagement with DWP Regional Engagement Lead (REL).

**Capacity and Capability**

Within this section, please provide details of the capacity and capability to deliver Connect to Work across your Delivery Area.

**2.3 Please describe the capacity and capability to deliver Connect to Work across your Delivery Area.**

Please include the key capacity and capability challenges you have and what further support you may need to help address these challenges. Please highlight any challenges across your whole Delivery Area.

We have a strong and experienced team to deliver Connect to Work across the South Midlands. Since January, leads from each Local Authority and the Accountable Body have been meeting as a programme team on a weekly basis to develop a quality and integrated delivery model as a regional team. Some areas have more prior experience than others, which is why we appointed two Subject Matter Experts (from North Northamptonshire Council and Milton Keynes City Council) in the programme team to build consistent capacity across the whole team and expertise to support the development and compliance for the Accountable Body regional plan and localised delivery. Some capacity building interventions have included opportunity for shadowing of established teams as well as a regional training programme. We have also had an away day as a regional team to build capability and cohesion as a regional team.

**Anticipated capacity across the regional programme once fully recruited includes:**

Regional Programme team (Accountable Body)	<p>Programme Management – 1 Programme Manager and 3 Programme Contract Officers in the life of the programme</p> <p>Finance Manager</p> <p>Audit team expertise</p> <p>Procurement Lead</p> <p>Legal and data protection expertise</p> <p>Marketing Lead</p> <p>2 x Subject Matter Experts to build capacity and capability across the programme</p> <p>S151 Management support</p>
Bedford	<p>7 FTE Employment Specialists (3 in post, 4 to be recruited during ramp up phase ahead of peak delivery)</p> <p>1FTE Project Officer (in post already)</p> <p>1FTE Team Leader (in post already)</p> <p>0.56 Compliance Officer (to be recruited at programme start)</p>
Central Beds	<p>0.3 FTE Employment and Skills Manager</p> <p>0.3 FTE Quality Manager</p> <p>0.3 FTE MIS Officer</p> <p>0.3 FTE Finance Officer</p> <p>0.33 FTE Contract Manager</p> <p>0.3 FTE Engagement and Employment Manager</p> <p>1.0 FTE Employment Support Team Leader to be recruited</p> <p>10 x Employment Specialists (7 to be recruited)</p> <p>2 x Administrators (to be recruited)</p>
Luton	<p>2FTE Team Manager (1 recruited, 1 being recruited)</p> <p>1FTE Employment Support Administrator (being recruited)</p> <p>10 FTE Employment Specialists (being recruited for in house delivery)</p>
Milton Keynes	<p>5 FTE Employment Specialists</p> <p>1 FTE Team Leader</p> <p>1 FTE Employment Support Service Manager</p> <p>0.2 FTE Strategic Lead</p> <p>0.05 FTE Head of Service</p>
North Northants	<p>1FTE Supported Employment Manager</p> <p>1FTE Supported Employment Team Leader</p> <p>10.4FTE Employment Development Officers</p> <p>1FTE Systems and Data Management Officer</p> <p>1FTE Data Management Assistant</p>
West Northants	<p>0.5 FTE Funding and Programmes Manager – leading on the contracting activity and relationship manager with North Northamptonshire Council for managing</p> <p>0.5 FTE Economic Growth Officer</p> <p>0.5 FTE Project Officer</p> <p>1 FTE Employment Support Specialist (Resettlement Team) – delivering integrated IPS support to refugees, resettled Afghans and persons on the Ukrainian scheme</p>

Each Local Authority area has several postholders in place to deliver Connect to Work if they are delivering in house, many of whom benefit from the support of related

services areas that will support local delivery plans. Areas will undertake local recruitment activities over the life of the programme to supplement this resource where necessary and in line with the profiling within the Grant Cost Register. A regional approach to recruitment will be adopted to ensure consistent job descriptions and salary ranges (within Local Authority grading processes), and a co-ordinated regional advertising approach to aid recruitment and retention of specialists.

The core Accountable Body team is in place to coordinate regional activities and support coordination of locally led activities to provide a consistent approach and exploit economies of scale where practicable. The Accountable Body team is subject to dynamic review across the life of the programme to ensure adequately supports local delivery teams and is compliant with requirements set out by DWP guidance.

The Accountable Body team currently meets fortnightly and includes the following leads – procurement, legal, data protection, marketing, programme delivery and finance.

The Accountable Body is a contracting Authority with an experienced procurement team who report to the section 151 Officer. They are trained to fully comply with procurement regulations – including the new 2023 regulations and two experienced Procurement Officers are supporting the Connect to Work programme. They will also work closely with any of the Local Authorities in the partnership who will be undertaking procurement of delivery activity (namely – Central Bedfordshire, Luton, and Milton Keynes). Each of our Local Authorities have experienced procurement teams who are used to delivering multi-million pound contracts compliantly and effectively – including appropriate advertising periods for tenders, rigorous scoring processes, due diligence, and appropriate awarding, contracting and performance management. The procurement workstream will ensure that best practice is followed and that advice and support from the Gold commercial team at DWP is undertaken – including the webinars and training resources on glass cubes.

### **Capability**

Each Local Authority area's existing teams have experience in delivering supported employment programmes and can evidence recent positive outcomes from working with the target cohorts. For example, in West Northamptonshire, the Employment Support team have commissioned several UKSPF people and skills projects in 24/25 to provide supported employment initiatives to targeted cohorts including care experienced young people and ex-offenders. These projects are being used as a test bed for the development of the Connect to Work programme within West Northamptonshire.

The diverse nature of local teams means there is wide-ranging and comprehensive expertise across the partnership which aids the Accountable Body in ensuring best practice across the South Midlands region.

Local teams operate across their geographical areas and have extensive local knowledge of the opportunities and challenges of their areas, which has underpinned the priorities of local delivery plans. Local teams also boast connections to local partners, often working alongside them in co-located spaces, which helps to both promote Connect to Work and assist in mitigating any challenges.

To summarise experience across the partnership:

Regional Programme team (Accountable Body)	Team members have experience in delivering multi million pound government funded programmes across multiple delivery partners – including experience with audit, compiling claims across multiple delivery partners and delivering successful programmes across multi years.
Bedford	37 years of combined experience between the team supporting the delivery of employment and skills projects. Experience of supporting economically inactive participants through the delivery of the Shared Prosperity Funded employment support. Also experience of delivering DWP Flexible Support fund, Multiply, ESOL. Extensive experience of direct delivery to people with disabilities, long term health conditions and those in disadvantaged groups.
Central Beds	Have been working with economically inactive customers and those seeking employment for 15 years under the National Careers Service contract and more recently been providing more intense support to economically inactive customers under the UKSPF grant, where targets have been exceeded in the first year. The team work closely with the local job centres and are based in their offices on a weekly basis. The council have contracts with the DfE to deliver adult learning and apprenticeships, graded Ofsted good in July 2024 and are Matrix accredited. We have extensive experience of direct delivery to people with disabilities, long term health conditions and those in disadvantaged groups.
Luton	Has worked with unemployed and economically inactive residents for more than 30 years. This has been through DWP Flexible Funding; DfE Adult Skills Funding, Tailored Learning Funding and Multiply funding; MHCLG UKSPF and ESOL for Integration funding; Big Lottery Building Better Opportunities funding and other various Public Health funding pots; all of which have enabled the team to work successfully with people with multiple complex barriers to employment. They have an Ofsted grading of Good and are MATRIX accredited.

We will be establishing a regional programme Steering Group to support the delivery of Connect to Work. This will comprise leads from each of the six authorities, as well as stakeholders in the region who have related expertise and potential referral pathways for Connect to Work, as well as representing the types of cohorts we are seeking to support. We anticipate the Steering group being no more than 15 people across these membership types and holding the first meeting of the steering group in autumn 2025. The group will provide subject matter expertise to check and challenge our approach, to ensure we effectively reach the cohorts we are trying to support and to monitor performance and be part of the risk escalation for the programme.

### **Training**

Training will have a regionally agreed foundational approach across all Local Authority areas and staff delivering the programme via a regional training programme to ensure consistency and best practice. This will include an average per person contribution

towards staffing costs and will include training on IPS, SEQF, employer engagement, MAPPA, disclosure and other training as required to further enhance the delivery of the programme to a high standard.

Well trained staff will be one of the mitigating actions to manage provision and delivery risks of the programme, to ensure performance management, compliance and quality of support given to participants.

### Challenges

Each Local Authority area has a detailed summary of challenges and mitigations in their local delivery plans which will be managed locally, in close liaison with the Accountable Body for programme oversight. Where challenges of a similar nature are identified across the partnership, discussions will take place at a regional level to identify suitable mitigations that are beneficial to all partners. Concerns faced by all partners include:

- **Training.** Ability to adequately train teams to IPS/SEQF standard in good time to match the scaling-up activities for in-house and commissioned delivery. Mitigation includes a regional training programme for delivery staff.
- **Recruitment.** Recruiting and retaining adequately skilled employees at appropriate times to meet demand. Mitigations includes a co-ordinated recruitment approach and consistency in role between Local Authority areas, as well as the South Midlands able to promote vacancies on a regional level. This approach will include template job descriptions for employment specialists, as well as benchmarking where possible on salaries (within council grading processes). There will also be the opportunity for officers to join interview panels to ensure consistency of different recruitment rounds – whether that be IPS or SEQF.
- **Employer support and engagement with the programme.** Achieving and maintaining employer support owing to this being a new programme and employers facing challenging operating environments and encouraging flexible approaches to recruitment and becoming Disability Confident employers. Mitigation includes a coordinated employer engagement approach across the region and potential support from other council teams on engagement opportunities and warm lead facilitating. Employment Engagement will have its own task and finish group to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach especially where employers are cross boundary employers. We have committed to attending the Milton Keynes Jobs Fair as a collective in September 2025 as an example of this South Midlands coordination. Hundreds of employers from across our region will also be showcasing at this event and we are looking to run a workshop at the event specifically aimed at employers to raise awareness / seek commitment for Connect to Work. Our joint CRM system will help track employer engagement and through the task and finish group, we will agree a common approach, training resources and best practice.
- **Suitability of local employment opportunities.** Sourcing suitable jobs for individuals that meet needs and criteria. This will be mitigated through employer engagement at a regional level but also staff training that ensures they are well equipped to manage employer engagement from lead to hire.
- **Referrals.** Achieving a good flow rate of referral to meet targets of 50% job entry and 80% sustainment, or referrals exceeding planned-for capacity. Mitigation includes anticipating a 75% conversion rate and having more referrals than starts as we recognise that not everyone who is referred or shows interest may be eligible or want to progress with the support, so to ensure we meet starts, we are anticipating a higher initial programme engagement level than those that convert to eligible participants. However, we anticipate being in a position to be able to have the

capacity to support anyone who is referred and is eligible and willing to progress with the support; as well as having clear eligibility criteria provided to external partners and referral bodies to reduce ineligible people being referred to the programme.

- **Funding.** Concerns about how quickly funding can be distributed to Local Authority partners and any subcontractors from DWP. Mitigation includes ensuring claims are high quality when provided to the Accountable Body to ensure a faster turnaround in payments by undertaking spot check of claims. Contracts with delivery partners would confirm the payment schedule of funds being received from DWP to reduce pressure on internal cash flow.
- **Absence.** The impact of any prolonged periods of unforeseen employee absence which impact delivery. In periods of leave or absence from work, Employment Specialists will provide interim cover on caseloads as a short term risk mitigation action. Having a centralised CRM system would mean that all data and account management would be saved live on the system for delivery partners to be able to access and would cause minimal impact or disruption on the participant or engagement with the business.

### Regional factors

The South Midlands region contains rural and semi-rural areas where transport/mobility is an issue for people who live in areas of deprivation without access to a vehicle or good transport. Poor transport links into urban, industrial and business areas challenge employers, employees and learners attending training. Online training can partially mitigate this challenge, but many skills (construction, engineering, catering etc) need to be done in person. Data from the Office National Statistics and Lightcast shows activity within the labour market to be slowing down.

Key points are:

- Employment numbers and rate are increasing in the South Midlands.
- Employment decreased in Milton Keynes and West Northamptonshire in 2023. Both have seen a reduction in head office business counts predominately due to changing working practices and rationalisation. This has impacted SMEs providing IT support/programming and office administration support with business counts reducing.
- Male employment continued to grow but female employment reduced in 2023.
- The proportion of employment that is part-time is increasing in the South Midlands.
- The shift from full-time to part-time is mainly for females in roles related to care, administration, leisure and travel.
- Unemployment rate in the South Midlands is above the level pre pandemic and equal to the national average.
- The economic inactivity rate in the South Midlands for 16-64-year-olds reduced in 2023, below the national rate.
- The unemployment rate in Luton has remained high since the data records started in 2004 predominately due to a larger number of females looking after the family/home. The rate increased in Milton Keynes and West Northamptonshire in 2023 due to an increase in students, and looking after the family/home in Northamptonshire.
- The percentage of those inactive wanting a job reduced to 14.6% (England 17.8%). Higher reduction for females to 12.3% (Eng 16.7%), males to 19% (Eng 19.4%).



- Job postings decreased by 9.5% (March 2024 vs March 2023) with the highest demand in occupational groups largely unchanged (STEM related, Health and Care, Education, Skilled Trades)
- Job postings show increasing focus on attitudes, behaviours and core transferable skills, less on qualifications

The South Midlands Authorities use a labour market information system that evidences sectors of need and vacancy rates across the regional area which the Local Authorities use in conjunction with their own economic intelligence. This ensures that we are focusing on the right businesses where there are known vacancies and skills shortages for the long term needs of the South Midlands and job security and sustainability, whilst working to ensure the support and roles for participants are.

### **Support requirements**

**Commercial Procurement support.** The Accountable Body is confirmed for the Gold level support package from the DWP.

**Timely responses.** Ongoing support to resolve questions and queries to subjects that are not explained in detail in technical notes or Glasscubes is with sufficient detail rather than a signpost to existing documentation is appreciated.

**Training and information sharing.** Ongoing training and webinars on various aspects of the programme are appreciated. Clarity on the fidelity assessment model, including what level of integration will be required into health and the other cohorts we are supporting, will be required.

**Previous experience.** All of the South Midlands Authorities have experience of delivering programmes to support people into work, through the Education & Skills Funding Agency. North Northants has significant experience in delivering SEQF programmes and Milton Keynes are experienced in delivering IPS. Programme leads from these authorities are using their experience to shape the regional approach, ensuring all Local Authority delivery partners benefit from their experience and support as subject matter experts to achieve a consistent standard.

### **Fidelity assessment scores from previous assessments:**

Bedford – N/A

Central Beds – N/A

Luton – N/A

Milton Keynes – N/A

North Northants – Previous SEQF score 2018/2021 – Good

West Northants – N/A

**Procurement:** The Accountable Body has secured ongoing support from internal teams include 2 Lead Officers to ensure compliance due to the potential size of contracts and has registered for the DWP's Gold standard commercial procurement support package. They will also work closely with any of the Local Authorities in the partnership who will be undertaking procurement of delivery activity (namely – Central Bedfordshire, Luton, Milton Keynes, and West Northants Council as a delivery element as well). Each of our Local Authorities have experienced and resourced procurement teams who are used to delivering multi-million pound contracts

compliantly in line with funder requirements and government regulations, and also effectively – including appropriate advertising periods for tenders, rigorous scoring processes, due diligence, and appropriate awarding, contracting and performance management. The procurement workstream will ensure that best practice is followed and that advice and support from the Gold commercial team at DWP is undertaken – including the webinars and training resources on glass cubes. There is an active task and finish group on procurement to ensure a consistency in approach across borders and where possible to provide saving in larger procurement to take advantage of economy of scale contracts.

**2.4** Please provide details of how your project will be administered. Where possible, please describe the individual posts within the team(s) that will be delivering the project:

- How is the team set up to manage the project?
- What resources, expertise, skills, responsibilities and experience do they have?
- Will existing staff be employed, or will new staff be recruited (if recruited, how and when)?

Where you have indicated some, or all your delivery will be done in-house, please also provide the following details:

- Staff roles and responsibilities, including volumes.
- Recruitment plans and timelines, including any specific skills and knowledge needed for those roles

Please refer to job titles rather than the actual names of individuals.

The South Midlands Connect to Work programme is a regional approach of six Local Authorities working together as a regional team, but with each local team delivering a tailored place based approach within a strong regional framework. The regional programme team meet weekly and have built a strong culture and understanding across the regional team to ensure a consistent approach to delivery.

This is underpinned by a strong regional Accountable Body team who manage the programme – ensuring the programme is delivered in a consistent and timely manner and deploying tools such as a shared CRM system and a common set of paperwork for the client journey. There will also be a regional training programme and regional agreed approach to employer engagement to ensure consistency of delivery.

### **Team setup**

Each Local Authority partner has an established and experienced team in place to manage local delivery and programme management. These existing teams will be responsible for liaising with the regional Accountable Body team to ensure local issues are fed into regional-level plans, and they will also be responsible for providing local context to regional decisions for the senior management teams. These teams will oversee the day-to-day delivery of Connect to Work in their local areas.

The Accountable Body has a programme team in place to coordinate regional activities and support local teams to resolve challenges and ensure best practice. It is anticipated that the make-up of the programme team will change over time to meet the needs of the programme timeline (for example, the audit team will get more involved as we prepare for Fidelity Assessment). However, at its core, it will have a strong programme management team to ensure compliant, timely and effective delivery.

Leads from the Accountable Body and each local team currently meet weekly, as well as through task and finish groups on specific topics such as procurement, marketing,

or training, to ensure the cohesion of the programme and that issues and actions are implemented efficiently.

### **Resources, expertise, skills, responsibilities and experience**

Training will have a consistent and regionally agreed foundational approach through a regional training programme across all Local Authority areas and staff delivering the programme. This training programme will include training on IPS, SEQF, employer engagement and other training as required to further enhance the delivery of the programme to a high standard. Other training includes MAPPA, disclosure and other training as required regionally or locally to further enhance the delivery of the programme to a high standard in both compliance and customer journey and support. A consistent regional training programme and expectation for training and well trained staff will be one of the mitigating actions to manage provision and delivery risks of the programme.

This training programme will also include train the trainer within the region to ensure rapid delivery across and ongoing need for upscaling whilst anticipating potential staff changes throughout the programme to ensure cost efficiency.

The training programme builds on existing experience levels as follows:

Bedford	All employees will undertake the Supported Employment Practitioner Level 3 certification (SEQF with BASE), IPS Grow training and MAPPA training to bring them up to standard. Existing Employment Specialists are experienced in supporting target groups into work and hold IAG qualifications.
Central Beds	The team hold recognised IAG qualifications and have experience in moving unemployed participants, or those at risk of losing their job, into employment. One of the advisors in particular is supporting those 16+ and is developing IPS knowledge, with the expectation of undergoing further learning.
Luton	Training to commence within the next 3 months for IPS and SEQF through BASE and IPS GROW. Existing staff already have Mental Health First Aid, including Train the Trainer (Programme Leader for Passport to Employment), safeguarding and PREVENT.
Milton Keynes	Expertise in the following areas: Mental Health; Homelessness; Parents & Carers; Refugees; Drugs & Alcohol; Welfare to Work; Women returning to the workplace following maternity and family leave. Trained in the above areas in addition to PREVENT, safeguarding, Autism, MH First Aid; Working with Challenging Behaviours. Required training during this period will be IPS and SEQF specific to ensure all ESs are trained to or working towards Supported Employment Techniques training and Level 3 Certificate for Supported Employment Practitioners with the British Association for Supported Employment. This will sit alongside IPS training with the Centre for Mental Health.
North Northants	Staff trained to, or working towards, Supported Employment Techniques training or Level 3 Certificate for Supported Employment Practitioners. Other training and expertise include Autism Awareness, Mental Health First Aid, Suicide Awareness, Drug and Alcohol, MAPPA, PREVENT and safeguarding

West Northants	Training to commence over the spring/summer in conjunction with potential local delivery partners to include IPS and SEQF through BASE and IPS GROW, safeguarding, mental health first aid, suicide awareness, drug and alcohol.
Accountable Body	Programme management training (Prince2, Agile, MSP), financial management training, procurement training, risk management training. Any of the delivery training above as appropriate to ensure a high quality delivered programme.

**Will existing staff be employed, or will new staff be recruited (if recruited, how and when)?**

The table below outlines the existing staff and the recruitment plans for the Connect to Work programme. Recruitment of new staff is being phased to ensure we are able to ramp up delivery in line with volumes across the five year model and to ensure we don't exceed the funding allocation per year in our grant cost register which ensuring fidelity assessment compliance for caseload management. Where employment specialists are not being recruited until 2026 and beyond, this is part of this phasing of recruitment in line with the ramping up of volumes towards year 3 and as budgets allow in line with our Grant Cost register.

Bedford	Recruitment of a Compliance & Monitoring Officer: advertise after contract signing for an immediate start for go live date. Recruitment of a further five Employment Specialists will commence in a phased approach: Feb-26 for a May-26 start; Mar-26 for a Jul-26 start; May-26 for an Aug-26 start; Jun-26 for a Nov-26 start; and Oct-26 for a Feb-27 start. Recruitment of an additional Project Support Officer will comment Jan-26 for an Apr-26 start.
Central Beds	An IPS-trained Project Manager will be recruited, who will the recruit: Job Brokers; Employment Support Specialists; Administrators throughout years 1-2 in a phased approach in line with caseload requirements within the delivery model and volume needs in line with the grant cost register.
Luton	Recruitment to the posts of: Employment Support Team Leader, Employment Support Specialist, Employer Support Administrator (depending on regional commissioning approach).
Milton Keynes	The existing service will be restructured in Year 1 to deliver Connect to work. During Years 2-5, 2FTE Employment Specialist in Year 2; 2FTE Employment Support Services Team Leader and 1FTE Employment Specialist in Year 3 will be recruited on a fixed term basis to support the increase in participant volumes detailed in the grant cost register. Recruitment will commence in the late autumn of the preceding year in preparation for having sufficient staff resource as the new volume year begins – for example recruitment for positions in Year 2 will begin in October/November 2025 in preparation for an April 2026 start. As with all recruitment in a Local Authority, the process will

	adhere to safer recruitment practices and in line with council process and policy. There will be a reduction in the number of posts through ending fixed term contracts during Year 4-5.
North Northants	There will be no recruitment during Year 1. Staff FTE to increase from Year 2 in line with volume increases and caseload management, existing Learning, Independence, Volunteering and Employment (LIVE) Team may offer a full or part resolve. Secondment opportunities would be an exploration to resolve resource requirements.
West Northants	Utilising existing staff and then most of the delivery will be contracted out rather than obtained through recruitment and in house delivery. Most of the delivery will be in partnership with the VCSE community and EADS with 5% being delivered in-house.
Accountable Body	The regional programme team will be a mixture of existing staff, in addition to recruitment of some new roles – namely a Programme Manager and 3 Project Contract Officers, this will be phased recruitment of staff between planning and implementation and year 2. The Project Contract Officers will be recruited to a general job description for all three roles, but will undertake a variety of tasks, supporting the Programme Manager including; quarterly claim management, regional activities and events regional contract management such as crm and employer engagement, PRAP system inputting, and Board and meeting secretariat responsibilities.

Recruitment activities will be undertaken locally by each Local Authority, supported by template job descriptions, regional promotion, and the opportunity for recruitment panels to be populated from across the programme team for consistency and knowledge expertise. Luton has begun undertaking recruitment ahead of the Grant Funding Agreement being signed in an at risk position due to the need to have the in house team in place ready for operational delivery.

Recruitment for Accountably Body roles will be undertaken by West Northamptonshire Council and will be subject to its recruitment policy and procedures.

**Where you have indicated some, or all your delivery will be done in-house, please also provide the following details:**

Staff roles and responsibilities (employment specialist roles and caseload roles – the volumes will be in line with fidelity assessment requirements and in line with volume caseload management outlined in the grant cost register):

Bedford	7FTE Employment Specialists 1FTE Project Officer 1FTE Team Leader 0.56FTE Compliance Officer
Central Beds	1FTE Engagement and Partnerships Officer 1FTE Skills and Partnership Manager 2FTE Engagement Officers 10FTE Employment Specialist (IPS & SEQF)

Luton	2FTE Team Manager 1FTE Employment Support Administrator 10 FTE Employment Specialists
Milton Keynes	5 FTE Employment Specialists 1FTE Team Leader 1 FTE Employment Support Service Manager 0.2 FTE Strategic Lead 0.05 FTE Head of Service
North Northants	1FTE Supported Employment Manager 1FTE Supported Employment Team Leader 10.4FTE Employment Development Officers 1FTE Systems and Data Management Officer 1FTE Data Management Assistant
West Northants	0.5 FTE Funding and Programmes Manager – role – training and contract management of delivery partners. Employer Engagement 0.5 FTE Economic Growth Officer – Contract management, employer engagement, training, procurement, gathering claims, payments, finances. 0.5 FTE Project Support Officer 1 FTE Employment Support Specialist (resettlement team).
Accountable Body	The Accountable Body programme team will not have an active caseload for delivery but will lead on programme management and oversight ensuring compliance and delivery of the regional programme. 1FTE Programme Manager 3FTE Programme Contract Officers (phased recruited throughout programme cycle) Dedicated Finance Manager support Audit team available as needed and especially in compliance checks and preparation for fidelity assessments Procurement Officers support dedicated to the programme in tendering process and contract management Legal for planning and implementation stage, contract management support and partners contract management Data protection expertise including data sharing agreements, contract input and training and regulation compliance Marketing Lead commitment for strategic communications management, campaign development and asset design and management. 2 x Subject Matter Experts to build capacity and capability across the programme S151 Management support and compliance, claim management and oversight of the regional programme – grant funding agreement signing was delegated to S151 officer at the June 2025 cabinet meeting.

Volumes for delivering staff will be in line with the fidelity assessment requirements for IPS and SEQF caseloads.

Programme leads from experienced authorities are using their experience to help shape the regional approach and ensure that all delivery partners within the South Midlands can benefit from their experience and support as Subject Matter Experts to support the region, this will include activity such as mentoring, shadowing, knowledge transfer, especially in the planning and implementation stage, and guidance support to support mitigation of any challenges as they arise.

The Accountable Body has assigned two officers from its Procurement Team - Procurement Business Partner and Procurement Manager to provide ongoing procurement guidance and support for the programme.

- Procurement Business Partner - Brings over 35 years of procurement experience across the private and public sectors, including Local Authorities, the NHS, and the Civil Service. MCIPS accredited since 2010, participated in Deep Dive sessions, and holds TPP Certification under the new PA23 regulations.
- Procurement Manager - Brings 36 years of public sector experience, with 16 years in procurement roles at Central Bedfordshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council. Achieved MCIPS status in February 2014 and completed TPP training and certification in July 2024. Actively participates in Communities of Practice and ongoing Informal Procurement Act group sessions.

The programme management team will ensure compliant, timely, and effective delivery by implementing a robust governance framework supported by clear contractual arrangements with delivery partners – both Local Authorities and expectation of sub-contracting to meet same expectations on delivery. These contracts will outline key performance indicators (KPIs), delivery milestones, and compliance expectations, with regular reporting requirements to monitor progress. Governance structures, such as programme boards and performance dashboards, will be used to review delivery against targets. Quality assurance will be maintained through audits, spot checking, and stakeholder feedback mechanisms, ensuring that delivery remains aligned with agreed standards and timelines. Risk and issue management processes will be embedded to identify and address potential challenges proactively.

Where local areas are not meeting targets, the programme management team will act appropriately to identify underperformance through data analysis and reporting. Targeted support will be provided as appropriate and proportionately, which may include additional support, training, or peer learning opportunities. Delivery partners may be required to develop and implement performance improvement plans (PIPs), with progress monitored closely by the Accountable Body. This approach ensures accountability and enables corrective action to be taken promptly, safeguarding the overall success of the programme. Close consideration will also be made in any concern of underperformance in line with the DWP performance measurement and assurance technical notes and also ensuring any concerns regarding the 70/30 split of IPS and SEQF are actively monitored and managed and communicated to our Regional Engagement Lead (REL) as appropriate.

#### **Commissioned delivery**

Where you have indicated that some, or all, of your delivery of Connect to Work will be commissioned, please provide the following:

**2.5** A summary of the procurement process (including timeline) that will be followed to identify and appoint Delivery Partner(s), including how the process will ensure the following is met:

- Requirements of the Grant Guidance
- Conditions of the Grant Funding Agreement
- Support for all eligible and suitable Participants
- Full coverage across your Delivery Area

The below document provides a timetable for procurement activity as planned across the South Midlands Connect to Work programme:



Procurement  
timetable.docx

We will also be undertaking some smaller procurements as the programme develops at regional level led by the Accountable Body e.g. support with employer engagement and recruitment of employers and also design and print work for marketing. However, these are likely to be much smaller procurements but will still follow the procurement regulations and be supervised by experienced procurement professionals in line with the Accountable Body policy and process. The strategy for this work would vary depending on what service or goods is being procured, but as a minimum consideration would be made for necessity, value for money, optimum payment model, and ensured deliverability. Local level procurement will be undertaken by the Local Authorities, with support from the Accountable Body and DWP where required.

For contracts for commissioned delivery by delivery partners, payment will be on appropriate payment models depending on contract and contract award value, this may include payment by results, milestones, or cost plus with a % of payment on award and subsequent payment of the contract on delivery. The preferred payment model will be agreed with the individual Local Authority with consideration of mitigation of risks to the programme delivery and output management, improve accountability of the contracted delivery partners, and results orientated contract management, as well as being in line with guidance from procurement and legal teams.

Other procurement that is for non-commissioned delivery or goods such as asset purchase or MK Jobs Fair will be paid in line with payment requirements for delivery of goods.

**Market engagement.** Formal market engagement on the delivery related procurements has yet to commence. However, West Northants held an informal information session for interested parties in Connect to Work. Market engagement activities began in April with a light-touch webinar event to measure interest and shape future activities. The event was attended by circa 60 organisations and explored opportunities for collaboration. This webinar was recorded so it can be shown to other interested parties. There is scheduled to be a market engagement event on 3 September with the notice expected to be published early August to allow 3 weeks notice.

Central Bedfordshire Council has done light touch engagement with local providers on the programme and potential upcoming procurement to gauge interest and ability to delivery in the local area. This has been positively received with interest registered by local providers to be a contracted partner in the delivery of the programme for their area.



We are working with the Accountable Body procurement team on formal market engagement. The emerging market engagement strategy is likely to consist of an initial information webinar, followed by more detailed events to introduce the Connect to Work programme. This approach will apply to both regionally and locally procured activity to ensure best practice.

However, our initial light touch approach demonstrates that there is plenty of interest in delivery Connect to Work and from organisations who are likely to have the capacity and capability to deliver. There was some useful feedback from interested suppliers on how we ensure local understanding and coverage, but not splitting the number of delivery partners too much to ensure value for money and consistency of delivery.

We have evaluated the level of risk in achieving delivery through the market through our market engagement so far, and feel that the interest from the market is there to deliver the 20% of overall participant numbers we are contracting out.

Our procurement workstream is live and meeting to ensure we demonstrate a consistent and collaborative approach to procurement. Having explored options – from procuring one delivery partner to deliver all outsourced delivery as one contract, to very localised options and utilising grants rather than contracting, we have landed on the approach which we feel will best serve the needs of our communities and deliver the best quality support for participants, and ensure deliverability and accountability from a programme management point of view. This approach is that each Local Authority will contract their own delivery partners on a local level, however we will share best practice, utilise the Accountable Body procurement team to provide guidance in line with procurement regulations and DWP expectations and share best practice documents / have shared scoring panels where possible, including ongoing support from the Gold standard procurement support from DWP. We have regional variances in cohorts, size of outsourced delivery, and this approach ensures consistency whilst tailoring delivery to local need.

Shared tender scoring/panels across the region may be undertaken where possible in line with individual council procurement policy to add value to the scoring and consideration process. This may include members of staff from across the region supporting local processes such as tender scoring or being on the interview panel to provide subject matter or programme management expertise. To ensure transparency, scoring decisions and justifications will be fully documented, creating a clear audit trail in line with Local Authority policy which is in line with PA24. Oversight will be provided by a regional programme board or designated Procurement Lead to ensure compliance with procurement regulations. Additionally, detailed feedback will be offered to all bidders, and contract award outcomes will be published in line with transparency requirements and council processes, reinforcing the integrity of the process.

The agreed principles include:

- Contract terms to follow DWP guidance: maximum of 3+2 years.
- Appropriate payment models will be used for delivery partners
- A shared list of potential suppliers will be developed.
- Consistent paperwork and tender templates will be used across Authorities where possible.

- All contracts not to be further subcontracted out.
- Any contractors to be data processors.

The Accountable Body has assigned two Procurement Officers, including Senior Officer to provide full ongoing procurement guidance and support in relation to the Connect to Work programme.

### **Requirements of the Grant Guidance**

A Procurement Lead has been appointed within the Accountable Body team from the procurement team to ensure that the requirements of the grant guidance and public procurement rules are met and adhered to. Where Local Authorities are procuring activity directly for their own local areas, their own Procurement teams will oversee this process but receive guidance from the Accountable Body procurement team where necessary as well as the DWP Gold standard support. The requirements of the grant guidance will also be integrated into the back-to-back agreements which each Local Authority will sign, to ensure they are adhering to the grant guidance and in line with the grant funding agreement.

The Accountable Body is a contracting authority with an experienced procurement team who report to the Section 151 Officer. They are trained to fully comply with procurement regulations – including the new regulations and two experienced Procurement Officers are supporting the Connect to Work programme over the life of the programme. They will also work closely with any of the Local Authorities in the partnership who will be undertaking procurement of delivery activity (namely – Central Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes). Each of our Local Authorities have experienced local procurement teams who are used to delivering multi-million pound contracts compliantly and effectively – including appropriate advertising periods for tenders, rigorous scoring processes and appropriate awarding, contracting and performance management. The procurement workstream will ensure that best practice is followed and that advice and support from the Gold commercial team at DWP is undertaken – including the webinars and training resources on glass cubes.

Examples of the sort of activities undertaken to ensure alignment with the guidance include: carrying out due diligence, pre-procurement checks and ongoing performance management of all delivery partners – whether procured at local or Accountable Body level.

### **Conditions of the Grant Funding Agreement**

In line with the grant funding agreement, both the Accountable Body and Local Authority partners will ensure they adhere to the grant funding agreement conditions. We are all contracting Authorities, and as such will utilise our in-house procurement teams to ensure alignment with current public procurement regulations (as cited and defined in the draft Grant Funding Agreement).

The back-to-back agreement which each Local Authority partner signs, will include the conditions from the main Grant Funding Agreement to ensure consistency. For clarity, some of the activities will include – ensuring adherence to the procurement regulations, ensuring value for money is obtained, and robust performance and contract management.

### **Support for all eligible and suitable participants**

There is likely to be procurement both at local and regional Accountable Body level. To achieve a consistent approach and best use expertise and resources, a workstream has been established within the programme team. Where possible, a standard set of explanatory contexts for the programme will be included in specifications, as well as adopting standard contract wording. Commissioned delivery partners will be required to accept responsibility for supporting eligible and suitable participants, with guidance and support provided to ensure that any delivery partners have a robust mechanism for assessing eligibility for the programme.

### **Full coverage across your Delivery Area**

There will be two approaches to procured activity. Where a regional approach is beneficial - marketing support, employer engagement, or specific agreed volumes for delivery - the Accountable Body will commission delivery partners on behalf of all Local Authority partners, including potential cross boundary procurement to ensure economy of scale. Specification for these activities will state that the delivery partner must cover the South Midlands geography.

Each Local Authority partner may also conduct local procurement activity for delivery. For example, West Northamptonshire Council is aiming to commission most of its delivery. These activities will require any commissioned delivery partner to cover the whole geography of West Northamptonshire.

Procurement will be undertaken in line with DWP and Accountable Body process and procedures required and will be using PA23 requirements. Depending on services procured and cost, timelines will be followed as per Local Authority process and depending on the contracting process followed including framework and quotes. Any locally procured provision will comply with assured Local Authority practice in line with PA23 and will be procured with the support of resourced internal procurement teams.

Scope for a joint CRM system is in development. It is anticipated that the system will be available with initial staff training by the go-live date to ensure readiness for delivery. The procurement of the system will be undertaken with support from the Accountable Body Procurement team for this multi-year contract. Functionality will include an integrated progress and case management system including SMS reminders for participants, and employer engagement and vacancy matching. Possible future developments include consideration of wider access to other professional groups such as the NHS, in line with appropriateness and GDPR possibilities. The system also includes robust programme management and reporting at a regional and local level and future possible strategy engagement or data considerations such as Get South Midlands Working.

Employer engagement will be led by participant lead and relations with Employment Specialists within the teams of the delivery partners. There will be provision for regional engagement include potential employer events alongside existing engagement provision to facilitate warm lead generation. Engagement with other teams within the council such as Economic Development teams or regional provision at a regional level such as the South Midlands Growth Hub or other employer representative bodies, will support employer provision for the programme.

Shortage of resource nationally has been identified as a risk, given demand for these skills and similar recruitment timelines. Resource will be utilised at regional level to reduce any duplication and a regional approach to marketing for recruitment of roles will mitigate any competition between individual Local Authorities.

A centralised market engagement approach will be considered to ensure that providers and participants in the South Midlands are aware of the programme and understand the Accountable Body's procurement processes.

**2.6** If you intend to appoint a managing agent to oversee the implementation and delivery of Connect to Work, please provide details below, including your rationale for this decision.

Not applicable.

**2.7** Please provide details of the market assessment and engagement strategy for your commissioning activity.

A procurement task and finish group has been established to oversee a consistent procurement approach and progress priority activity, reporting back to wider programme group as appropriate. Procurement will be undertaken at regional and local level depending on the nature of the procurement, as outlined in 2.6. This group will act as a best practice group, as well as bring in support from the DWP Gold support programme. It will also contain a procurement lead from the Accountable Body to ensure compliance and support for the entirety of the Connect to Work programme.

Market engagement activities began in April with a light-touch webinar event led by the West Northamptonshire Council local delivery team in preparation for their delivery as detailed in 2.6. The purpose was to measure interest and shape future activities. The event was attended by circa 60 organisations and explored opportunities for collaboration. The event was recorded and will be utilised as a learning for future market engagement events. Central Bedfordshire Council has also undertaken light touch engagement with local providers to gauge appetite in programme delivery which has resulted in interest in potential future contracting opportunities for when the time comes. The emerging engagement strategy is likely to consist of an initial information webinar, followed by more detailed events to introduce the Connect to Work programme. The exact details of the approach are still to be confirmed, but from initial discussions with the procurement team may include:

- Notifying the market of our intention to hold a market engagement event or activities already taken place for transparency via a 'Preliminary Market Engagement Notice (UK2)'.
- Notice would include information on the requirement, contract term, classifications, contract locations, date, format of the event, participation i.e. for voluntary, SME, VCSE attend, who to contact etc. West Northants Council notice is expected to be published early August 2025.
- Types of market engagement that may be utilised depending on process undertaken and contract award value:
  - Obtain information via a questionnaire i.e. around types of solutions available, if the bidder is interested in bidding. West Northants has confirmed to use this tool.

- Supplier day – present requirements and procurement procedures we intend to follow. Include real time feedback on current thinking, discussions explore feasibility or alternative solutions. West Northants has confirmed to use this too and the event is on 3 September.
- Site visits – see potential solution in practice, or for bidders to understand our requirement better through seeing what is currently in operation
- Workshops – collaborative approach to support codesign, work with market to identify potential solutions to define the requirement.
- Presentations – allows bidders to present a potential solution to local and regional requirements which may allow us to explore alternative solutions.
- 1-1 meetings – to discuss potential solutions where suppliers may not be comfortable to share in an open forum.

Please note that not all of the above activities will be undertaken with each procurement opportunity, and that activity will be proportionate and in line with Local Authority process and best practice depending on contract value.

- We must ensure suppliers participating are not put at an unfair advantage;
  - The competition for the award of the contract is not otherwise distorted
  - Act with integrity ensuring transparency requirements by treating bidders the same
  - Follow steps i.e. conflict of interest
  - Regard SME's, community & Social Enterprises
  - Take regard for social value
- Record keeping – any relevant info/findings to be shared as part of the tender process (where relevant) and kept for audit purposes
- We will consider holding a joint premarket engagement event with all 6 the Local Authorities in our region who are contracting our delivering – meaning one UK2 notice would be required and issued by the lead Authority (other Local Authorities would be named on the notice).
- We have a duty to consider Lots prior to undertake the procurement.

Market engagement activity is anticipated to vary depending on contract award size and also when sub delivery is expected to begin on the year of the programme such as one year contracts versus multiyear contracts. Timelines are fully considered in relation to ensuring that both required and appropriate time is given to the process and will include planning, execution, and analysis phases. Many councils within the region are beginning procurement process as soon as possible after agreements are signed and some are operating at risk given value size and delivery need to allow as much time as possible for the process given contract value, however this is a decision made by individual councils on council policy and risk mitigation. For example, West Northants Council has begun delivery procurement with the notice being published on 1 August <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/045013-2025> , a supplier event on 3 September ahead of the contract opportunity being live.

Due to our mixed model programme of in house delivery and commissioned delivery, the percentage of delivery that is being undertaken by suppliers for the programme compared to the percentage of delivery that is being undertaken in house, we consider it a manageable risk in the region for potential impact with minimal delays.

Contingency planning is also being considered in the timelines of activity to safeguard service delivery in the event of slippage, especially in Year 1 due to delayed timelines

of getting the delivery plan signed off and the grant funding agreement signed. Any concerns on deliverability will be raised with the Accountable Body and will be communicated as appropriate to the Regional Engagement Lead (REL).

**2.8** Are there any Delivery Partners that have already been identified or commissioned? Please provide details of how they were identified and commissioned and how you plan to utilise existing contracts, if applicable.

Delivery partners have not yet been identified beyond the in-house teams within local authorities. For clarity:

**Bedford Borough Council.** Has a small existing supported employment team in adult social care who has been consulted on Connect to Work, but only deliver to existing social care users and very tight eligibility for their programme. There is no capacity for them to deliver Connect to Work as well.

**Central Bedfordshire Council.** Has no existing supported employment team but has light touch gone out to potential external providers to gauge interest and ability to support programme delivery.

**Luton Borough Council.** Has no existing supported employment team, however the council is currently out for recruitment for the Team Leader roles and the Employment Specialist role on an at risk position ahead of the grant funding agreement being signed. This is to ensure that the in house team is in place and has undertaken expected training ahead of delivery starting. The team have undertaken light touch market engagement with potential external providers to gauge interest and the ability to support programme delivery within Luton

**Milton Keynes City Council.** Has a small existing supported employment team. Their focus is outside the eligibility and suitability criteria for Connect to Work. MK Council will undertake procurement and market engagement will commence following cabinet delegated approval due September 2025.

**North Northamptonshire Council.** Has an existing supported employment team that will be delivering Connect to Work.

**West Northamptonshire Council.** The majority of our provision will be delivered by the Employment and Disability Service (EADS) who already deliver across Northamptonshire and who are a specialist supported employment team. They exist to provide bespoke support to individuals facing barriers to employment to work towards and achieve their employment goals. Raising aspirations, empowering individuals and providing local support to local people, EADS has over 38 years' experience building futures and changing lives. EADS will deliver 65% IPS and 25% SEQF. A supplier engagement event will be held to attract external providers. and we have a small inhouse team integrated in the resettlement team.

Where in house teams or members of the team are not yet in place, but are being recruited to for the delivery of this programme, provision of support is being considered to ensure risk mitigation of readiness of teams. This is outlined in section 2.4 but includes training, subject matter expertise secured by the Accountable Body, and also shadowing of established teams and staff members for knowledge transferring.

TUPE does not apply within the Local Authority teams.

Delivery partners have not yet been commissioned, but a specification will be developed within the procurement process to outline skills and training requirements in line with in-house delivery roles to ensure quality of support provided, and ensure use of the collective customer journey; including common paperwork and CRM system use. Very early market engagement has taken place, but specifications for procurement and evaluation criteria will focus on relevant skills and experience from delivery partners. Economy of scale will be considered with commissioned support whilst maintaining local insight, relationship and engagement levels, however for commissioned delivery, this is expected to take place on a local provisioned level.

When commissioning delivery partners, consideration will be given to existing IPS delivery in the NHS and drug and alcohol services to ensure the Connect to Work delivery compliments existing delivery and reduces duplication within the region and builds on already existing, well established and successful delivery and support.

Consideration has been given to utilising existing regional resources for cross-boundary working including the South Midlands Growth Hub and South Midlands Careers Hub. However, both are in-house resources to the Accountable Body so would not require procurement.

### Section 3 – Connect to Work design

#### Design principles

You will recognise from the Grant Guidance the importance of adhering to the principles and the five stages of the Supported Employment model for both IPS and SEQF. This section is to understand how you will design your overall programme in line with these principles.

**3.0** Please provide a clear description of your proposed Connect to Work offering and how this meets the requirements set out in the Grant Guidance.

The regional programme consists of a mix of IPS (70%) and SEQF (30%) models which will be used to support participants into employment and to sustain the role. A blend of in-house and commissioned delivery is planned which is outlined in section 2.1. These aspects will ensure consistent quality and adherence to the grant guidance and model:

- A common set of paperwork used by all delivery teams – both in-house and commissioned – aligned to the five-stage model and IPS fidelity scale.
- A common customer journey based on the five-stage model and IPS fidelity scale.
- Bespoke supported employment training of all staff (both in-house and commissioned) to ensure quality of delivery, including specialist training to support delivery to a broad and complex cohort of people.
- A joint CRM system to manage the customer journey.

The five-stage model of supported employment, with additional factors that influence delivering to the IPS-25 fidelity model include:

#### Stage 1 – engage

**Weeks 0-4**

Meaningful initial engagement meeting within 10 working days from receipt of expression of interest, with the aim of completing the initial assessment and documentation relating to data protection, consent to share, complaints process, and confirming any documents required from the expression of interest (e.g. Right to Work). This could be achieved within one 1–2-hour meeting or in multiple shorter meetings over the initial four weeks to best meet the needs of the person. To start development planning, with a minimum of 2 development goals and plans detailing SMART actions to work towards achieving these goals. During this time, and whilst waiting for confirmation by the DWP that the participant is eligible for Connect to Work, the first vocational profiling session will be scheduled for five days following the initial meeting. Subsequently, by the end of this initial period of engagement, the first face to face contact with employers will be made based on the preferences of the participants employment goals.

**Stage 2 – vocational profile**

Weeks 4-8 (with planned for monthly reviews).

Create a vocational profile, bespoke to the person, and start CV writing / creating covering letters to support future job applications. Continue to review and update development plans, including creating new plans to replace any already achieved.

**Stage 3 – job analysis**

It is important this is started within weeks 0-12. The job analysis, when sat alongside the vocational profile, will create a skills gap analysis, which is vital in understanding and planning for support. For IPS referrals employer engagement is expected within the first 30 days from start and the job analysis is a crucial tool prior to employer engagement.

The 12-month programme will be delivered at a pace that works for the person but the urgency of employer engagement and job seeking must not be overlooked in favour of getting somebody 'job ready'. The assumption we must work to is that everybody can work with the right support and so our focus needs to be on identifying support needs and then solutions to barriers.

**Stage 4 – employer engagement**

This must be within the first 30 days for IPS referrals. Create an effective and detailed employer engagement plan and make proactive contact with employers on behalf of the person. At least 6 meaningful employer contacts weekly, with detail inputted into the employer engagement spreadsheet to ensure all communication and contacts are up to date for the wider team and to increase effective engagement.

Focus on active vacancies as well as the hidden job market, strategic employer partners and broad-brush approaches. Record the persons job seeking activity to measure the effectiveness of their CV and approach and tailor and adapt where needed to increase effectiveness of applications.

The employer is the third part in the supported employment jigsaw and must not be overlooked as an important partner.



Support to the person during this stage could include application support; accompanied interviews; interview preparation; personal presentation; job carving; aids and adaptations.

### **Stage 5 – in-work support**

Create a bespoke in-work support plan that identifies needs and solutions, which could include aids and adaptations, organic resolves, travel, clothing, induction training and support, work buddy, system training and access. Sustaining the right person in the right role and with the right support is crucial. Quality in work support should not underestimated. Once a person is in work meaningful contact planned for weekly for the first four weeks to ensure the person has the right support during their initial transition into their new role. Beyond Week 4, a communication plan created with the person that works for them.

### **General**

Meaningful face-to-face meetings with the person for the duration of the programme will be at least fortnightly, with meetings lasting at least 30 minutes each time. Vocational profiles will be reviewed and updated at least monthly. Development plans reviewed and updated at least fortnightly.

Retention referrals will receive an initial assessment and intensified in-work support plan. Provision will last for four months and is likely to include HR/manager meetings as well as meetings both in and outside of the workplace, guidance and support on aids and adaptations, reasonable adjustments, and condition management in the workplace. Stress management support will be provided, along with referral to legal support and job coaching and mentoring. Fortnightly meeting will focus on support needs and resolutions. Up to 15% of overall participants numbers are expected to be provided with retention support.

### **Fidelity assessment**

This partnership is committed to embedding best practice in relation to fidelity and compliance. The Accountable Body will establish a focus on fidelity and assessment through its steering group and intends to:

- Align client paperwork, CRM system and associated processes with fidelity assurance requirements.
- Undertake an annual self-assessment report at each Local Authority, underpinned by an ongoing trackable action plan that is overseen by the Audit function within the Accountable Body.
- Commit to peer assessment among local authorities within the South Midlands, overseen by the Audit function within the Accountable Body.
- Comply with external fidelity assessment by the DWP.
- Identify any areas which require improvement and introduce action plans to mitigate any identified issues, supported by robust performance management.
- Provide training to relevant teams on the fidelity assessment process.
- Empower a Programme Contract Officer within the Accountable Body team to oversee a consistent and coordinated approach to fidelity assessment, working closely with the internal Audit Team.

**3.1** Please provide details of how you intend to ensure the support provided to Connect to Work Participants, adheres to the fundamental principles of Supported Employment, Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF). This should include:

- supporting people into competitive employment in the open labour market.
  - ensuring Participants receive commensurate pay for work carried out.
  - providing appropriate support through all the stages of the five-stage process.
- (See Technical Note: Supported Employment Delivery Model for more information)

A common set of paperwork and customer journey will be adopted to ensure adherence to fundamental principles, along with regular training to ensure consistency and quality. Guiding principles include:

**Zero exclusion principle.** Ensure all individuals who express a desire to work can access the programme by adopting this principle, providing they fulfil one of the targeted cohorts for the programme, and are not already receiving support through contracted provision, are eligible and suitable for employment services. This includes those with health conditions and disabilities, together with several disadvantaged groups all of whom would benefit from these models of employment support.

**Integrated employment and treatment.** Where possible and feasible, integrate employment services within other provider services who form part of the Expression of Interest network into Connect to Work alongside providing support to participants. This can include community health and disability teams, the local job centre, adult social services, and homeless prevention support services. Employment Specialists will work closely with Case Managers, and other professionals to address issues that may affect work and recovery, such as medication side effects, mobility difficulties, and other complex issues.

**Competitive employment.** Focus on providing the right support to everyone to help them find paid, competitive jobs in the community. Voluntary work may be used as a stepping stone towards paid employment to build confidence, skills and stamina but will not be considered as an outcome. This may happen because of an individual's pathway to employment and will be solely dependent on personal circumstances. Helping participants into paid work promotes self-sufficiency and reduces stigma, therefore adhering to the principles of the supported employment delivery models. Securing regular jobs that pay at least the minimum wage is a priority.

**Early employer engagement, place and train.** The programme aims to facilitate an effective job search process, connecting participants with employment opportunities as soon as they express interest, really understanding their aspirations and their career choices. Early employer engagement will be key to this process, even more so with consideration to IPS referrals, which will best suit anyone where there is a clear health need. Employment Specialists will commence job search immediately following the initial vocational profiling meeting and the intensity and frequency agreed at this stage. This approach emphasises the importance of finding meaningful placement in jobs to support recovery and build momentum.

**Individualised support.** Support will be tailored to the unique needs and preferences of each participant following initial assessment meetings between Employment Specialists and participants. Further guidance and support provided to participants will be reflective of the type of model of employment support, which is suitable and relevant to the individual's circumstances, either IPS or SEQF. Types of support will include providing intensive, personalised assistance during the job search, placement, and ongoing employment phases. Right support, right person, right time.

**Time-appropriate support.** Participants will receive support for a duration determined by the needs of the individual and the most appropriate model of employment support for their personal circumstances. Out of work participants on either model of employment support can receive support for a maximum of 365 days, plus additional days for in-work support should this extend beyond the 12-month period to help people maintain employment and address any challenges that arise. In-work participants on either model of employment support can receive support for a maximum of four months, plus additional days for further in-work support should this extend beyond the four-month period. The approach is based on supporting people who are eligible for the programme and want to work, with zero rejection, and with the opportunity for people to come back to the programme if deemed appropriate and on exit.

**Focus on participant preferences.** Where possible and dependent upon the skills and qualifications of participants, the programme will prioritise the job preferences and career goals of participants when applying in the open and competitive labour market, and whilst engaging with prospective employers. By ensuring that the employment opportunities align with their interests and aspirations the impact of securing paid work is greater and the likelihood of sustaining employment increases. Participants will remain in paid work longer if this is in their desired area and holds their interest. Right person, right support, right employer.

**Quality assurance and continuous improvement.** The partnership will adhere to IPS and SEQF fidelity scales by regularly monitoring and evaluating services, and the support offer by Employment Specialists. Each element of our delivery (whether in-house or commissioned) will have access to a playbook for the programme, including a common set of paperwork, a common customer journey, access to training and guidance to ensure consistency and quality of delivery. Quality assurance will form part of the monthly agenda of supervision with Employment Specialists to monitor compliance with both fidelity scales. For any non-compliance, Employment Specialists will be expected to improve their delivery and may be subject to disciplinary measures if non-compliance continues. For example, in the absence of a team/contractor or Employment Specialist achieving starts or outcomes within a three-month period, a performance improvement plan would be considered to help support improved delivery and achieved grant funded profiles. Self-audits and/or peer audits will be undertaken periodically to ensure that the delivery support offer maintains adherence to the fundamental principles and standards of IPS and SEQF. This will ensure that the offer provides a consistent and fair approach to all engaged participants and adheres to recognised model of employment support. It is expected that following any audit, actions will be taken by the local delivery partner and Accountable Body to improve service delivery and maintain the efficacy of IPS and SEQF.

Each Local Authority will undertake an annual fidelity self-assessment and any concerns about the results of self-assessments will be addressed individually with the Local Authority, in line with contract arrangements and potential performance management may be considered if flagged as a programme or compliance risk.

The Accountable Body will ensure suitable training to all staff delivering the programme to ensure quality provision in place at a regionally level and a budget has

been provisioned for this to ensure compliance and standard of support under the fidelity assessment.

**3.2** Please provide details on how you will engage with local employers, to support them to develop more inclusive employment practices, ensuring their jobs are accessible to Connect to Work Participants and individuals are supported to sustain those roles.

Employer engagement will be key to the success of the programme. Supported employment remains an effective model because of the equal partnership of person, provider, and employer. Building relationships with local employers, understanding needs of workplaces, and providing education and training are central elements of the activities the partnership will undertake.

**Building relationships.** Several different approaches to building relationships and developing a network of employers to ensure paid work is accessible to participants will be adopted, including:

**Existing networks.** Local delivery areas benefit from existing Supported Employment teams that have established associations with local employers. The programme will use these existing relationships to identify suitable roles and opportunities across a spectrum of different employment sectors. The Connect to Work team will also work closely with the Growth Hub for the South Midlands which has a sizeable database of small and medium sized businesses. There are other partners with SMEs to engage with too – including the Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, sector councils, employer representative bodies, and business minded groups.

**Internal collaboration.** A variety of services within Local Authorities work alongside local employers to achieve the goals and duties of the council. Local delivery leads will collaborate with departments such as Economic Development and Procurement to use existing business connections. Acting as a conduit between Connect to Work and employers, Economic Development and Procurement are in positions to introduce companies to the programme, share existing relationships, provide alerts and intelligence on recruitment and businesses relocating to local delivery areas, plus highlight large scale contracts which are subject to social value provision. Working together as a collective of Local Authorities, this will enable further avenues of securing paid work opportunities for participants throughout the South Midlands.

**Local partnerships.** Local delivery areas benefit from successful partnerships with the job centres and labour market recruitment specialist teams. Within the region, some of the established teams have collaborated on past joint ventures such as employment and skills events for job seekers and the public, and will continue to value and promote this relationship moving forwards. This aim will also be developed across the region in areas where this does not exist already to ensure that we are applying a 'whole region' approach to local partnership arrangements, including where providers are cross boundary employers with sites in multiple locations within the region.

**Direct engagement.** Employment Specialists will be expected to make direct contact with employers based on their interactions with and preferences of their caseload to enable opportunities to be realised and applied for. Through identifying and reaching out to local employers who are open or interested in inclusive employment practices, this helps to understand specific needs and challenges of each workplace and helps tailor the employment support provided.

**Providing support with inclusive practices.** Engaging with local employers to develop more inclusive employment practices involves ensuring roles are accessible, individuals are supported through the recruitment process and into the workplace. We will be working closely with local DWP teams on the Disability Confident approach and encourage employers to engage with this training and accreditation. Through the programme, local delivery areas will offer support and guidance to employers who are open and interested in developing or refining their practices.

**Providing education and training.** Organise workshops, small group, and one to one work on the benefits of inclusive employment, legal requirements, and best practices. Topics can include unconscious bias, disability awareness, and creating supportive work environments. Offer customised training sessions for HR teams and managers to equip them with the skills needed to support diverse employees effectively. Share resources, tools, and best practices with employers to help them create more inclusive workplaces.

**Supporting recruitment.** Assist employers in reviewing and revising job descriptions to ensure they are inclusive and free from biased language. Ensure job listings are accessible to all candidates, including those with disabilities. This can involve using accessible formats and platforms, and training employers on inclusive interview techniques that focus on candidates' abilities and potential rather than limitations. Help employers understand and implement reasonable accommodations during the hiring process and in the workplace.

**Ongoing support and retention.** Establish mentoring programs where new starters are paired with experienced employees who can provide guidance and support. Conduct regular check-ins with both employers and employees to address any issues and provide ongoing support. Implement feedback mechanisms to continuously improve the inclusivity of employment practices. Partner with local community organisations, disability advocacy groups, and employment services to create a network of support for both employers and employees. Subject Matters Expertise at the Accountable Body level will also be utilised to ensure shared best practice and guidance to delivering roles and programme management.

**Regional employer engagement.** Local employer engagement strategies will be supplemented by a regionally led employer engagement framework, whereby an appointed provider (procured via appropriate procurement and tender processes) will facilitate engagement with local businesses and create warm leads that the Employment Specialists can pick up and translate into programme employers. An account management style approach will be reviewed in line with national or cross-boundary employers to support engagement in different areas which will filter down to the relevant delivery partners areas.

Regional cohesion of approach – Through our Employment Engagement task and finish group, we will have a statement of intent which ensures we have a common agreed approach to Employer Engagement. The joint CRM system, will help to avoid duplication of engagement across employers and our regular communication (including weekly meetings), will ensure we are joined up for employer engagement events and opportunities and that we have a cohesive message and approach which avoids confusion for employers. The marketing lead will create assets and tools to assist with this engagement, and common assets and an agreed approach will ensure consistency across the region. The programme team in the Accountable Body will meet regularly with local leads to ensure they are adopting this agreed approach. The joint CRM system will also help to ensure cross referral where employers are only based in part of the locality or where they have multiple contacts across the locality. We will have regular opportunities for all of our Employment Specialists to come together – and to form a community of practice – where it is clear who they can refer to if an employer is relevant to another part of the region. We are all participating in the MK Jobs Fair for the whole region in September 2025 – and running a joint workshop for employers to further cement our joint approach to Employer Engagement.

#### **Identification of Participants**

Identification of the appropriate volumes of eligible and suitable Participants is an important element of Connect to Work, with the programme being targeted at the right people, at the right time and based on individual circumstances. Take up of Connect to Work will be promoted and marketed to citizens to help identify eligible/suitable potential participants in your Delivery Area.

**3.3** Please provide details of how you will generate interest, including marketing of Connect to Work to meet your expected profile volumes?

**Strategy.** An insight-driven campaign will market the programme to referral partners, delivery partners, and participants. A regional-level framework that has been agreed with the Local Authority partners will provide a consistent, structured, and strategic approach following a recognised planning model, such as the OASIS (Objective, Audience insight, Strategy, Implementation, and Scoring) model endorsed by the Government Communications Service, to ensure engagement activities are effective, efficient and evaluated. This framework will include planning templates, messaging toolkits, and creative assets that can be minimally tailored to meet local need, whilst maintaining consistent messaging for a regional programme. It will enable broadcast promotion to be coordinated at a regional level, supported by locally led activities for coordinated targeted communications to the varied audiences. To ensure the adopted approach is embedded across the region, communications management will be facilitated by the Accountable Body, with oversight and coordination support with regular engagement with the local Programme Leads and council Communications Team. An ongoing task and finish group comprising programme officers and marketing officers from Local Authorities has been established to maintain alignment, share best practices, and support continuous improvement of campaign delivery. Regions are actively adopting the approach into their local planning processes, using the shared tools and templates, and participating in regular working group sessions to align on messaging, review performance, and adapt strategies based on shared insights and outcomes.

The South Midlands Connect to Work marketing framework can be found here -



Connect to Work  
Marketing Framework

**Data/insight.** Local Authorities have a good understanding of their target audiences and use a range of data sources to inform and validate their approach.

Sources include Lightcast to gain up to date labour market intelligence on the local area, and NOMIS – official census and labour market statistics. Local communications teams can provide insight on the effectiveness of available local communications channels to inform tactical communications decisions.

Delivery teams will work closely with local DWP teams to ensure we access the intelligence from Job Centres to ensure alignment with local demand, to target support where the demand is strongest. For example, in West Northamptonshire, currently 15% of participants at the Northampton Job Centre are on a health journey, compared to 45% of Daventry Job Centre participants.

Close working with the two Integrated Care Boards in the South Midlands will also provide additional insight.

Cohort mapping has been undertaken to identify target cohorts in each local delivery area, as well as referral partners and delivery partners. This insight informs the strategic approach, and shapes engagement activities, particularly in relation to integration. All participant groups will be engaged from the outset, but insight will be continually reviewed to identify specific needs among cohorts – in local delivery areas or across the South Midlands – and shape any prioritisation of engagement activities as the programme develops.



South Midlands  
Cohort Mapping.xlsx

## Channels

**Social media.** Regular postings through regional and local accounts (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn) to reach a wider community audience including both potential participants and employers, with the possibility of paid advertising to enhance reach.

**Case studies.** Testimonials and success stories from participants and employers who have benefited from the programme in a range of digital and print formats for use across marketing channels.

**Email marketing.** Targeting local businesses, community organisations and providers, and potential participants including opportunities with organisation newsletters and publications.

**Influencer marketing.** Targeted campaigns specifically towards services and organisations that can positively promote the programme to participants and facilitate expressions of interest for potential participants. Internal examples include Adult

Social Care, Youth Offending, Homelessness Prevention, Family Centres, Leaving Care, and Early Help services. External examples include Job Centre Plus, IPS providers, local infrastructure organisations and community employment support organisations.

**Websites.** Dedicated presence on Local Authority websites, including skills-related microsites with detailed information about the programme, eligibility and suitability for the support offer, the guidance and support processes, alongside testimonials/success stories. Page will also include an expression of interest form for potential participants to voluntarily refer into the programme or other professionals looking to refer potential participants.

Presence on regional South Midlands website South Midlands Authorities will be developed and cross-promoted across existing regional services such as Careers Hub and Growth Hub to enhance reach.

**Community engagement.** Participation in, and facilitation of, local job fairs including the committed MK Job Fair in September 2025, community events, and possibly business expos to promote the programme and to encourage referrals into or encourage engagement. This will including tapping into existed engagement commitments to engage with wider businesses and potential participants through already existing channels and relationships. Hosting of informational workshops and webinars for employers and potential participants to learn more about the programme and its benefits.

**Partnerships with local organisations.** Collaborating with organisations that support delivery, including referral pathways and employment pathways. Fostering a partnership approach will embed Connect to Work and provide opportunities for integration. Organisations including Job Centres, Integrated Care Boards, homelessness partnerships and colleges will be a priority, with engagement prioritised by the cohort mapping activity which sets out the priority target cohorts across each local authority area. The Job Centre's Labour Market Recruitment team and Chamber of Commerce will also be key.

Where possible and within GDPR use of the programme, data sharing agreements will be set up with partner organisations such as the NHS and Primary Care Networks, to include the potential for honorary contracts to enable access to health data sets where available, where Data Sharing agreements are not able to be utilised, consideration will be given for anonymised data sharing to support delivery and support for participants.

**Integration.** Opportunities to integrate with existing provision in the South Midlands, such as ICB referrals, will be explored to ensure a smooth transition process for participants and a mitigated risk of participant eligibility and accurate eligibility to have a high conversion rate onto the programme. There is expected to be a slight variance in engagement with existing localised provision depending on the locality, however the use of a common CRM system, templated paperwork, and regional training requirements will ensure consistent customer journey and access to support. Further detail on health and IPS is referenced in section 6, which outlines anticipated touch points and mechanisms for integration with Primary Care in particular across the South Midlands geography.



The region is exploring opportunities with partners on support and provision within the programme on self-employment support and training opportunities such as through business support providers such as the South Midlands Growth Hub and Business & Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC), and also entrepreneurship skills development through education partners for training alongside potential existing employment to support the transition into self-employment. Conversations on this element are still ongoing, we will provide an update to the delivery plan on this during the implementation phase.

**Evaluation.** The communications strategy will contain a range of evaluation criteria linked to programme objectives to demonstrate impact of communications and marketing tactics and also articulate programme success through stories and human-centred content to bring performance indicators to life.

### **Local delivery area commitments**

Provide training sessions/briefings about the programme to educate other internal teams within the delivery partner organisations about the referral process and the benefits of successful referrals.

Align to future ways of delivering care at a system, place and integrated neighbourhood level, Connect to Work teams will seek to embed in place and neighbourhood teams particularly around Primary Care. Additionally, work will be undertaken to consider how we work with local acute trusts, mental health and community providers to capitalise on joint waiting well early intervention and recovery pathways.

Equip internal teams with the necessary resources and information to make effective referrals, and signposting to the relevant online and digital platforms.

Encourage a culture internally where all staff, and in particular teams who currently support potential participants, feel motivated to capitalise on the support provided and put forward expressions of interest.

Regularly communicate the importance and positive impacts of referrals to the organisation, highlighting effectiveness and participant achievement.

**3.4** Which introduction channels would you expect 'Expressions of Interest' to come from and how do you expect to monitor and manage these routes in live running to ensure they remain effective throughout the grant period?

Existing and established referral pathways/introduction channels for expressions of interest, while developing new partnerships and pathways, including but not limited to:

### **Internal (local delivery area) services**

- Employment Support
- Early Help and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- 16-19 Information, Advice and Guidance services
- Adult Social Care
- Children's Social Care – including Leaving Care and Early Help services
- Youth Offending and similar teams that work with young people involved with or at risk of being involved with the criminal justice system.
- Homelessness Prevention

- Resettlement
- Community Learning – predominantly the curriculum areas of Employability and Skills, and Health and Wellbeing.
- Revenue & Benefits

#### **External channels / Signposting Agencies:**

- Self-referrals
- JCP Work Coach and demographic / group leads
- Primary Care Networks
- NHS 11 DoS and out of hours provision
- Community Health Providers i.e Child and Family Wellbeing Services
- Joint Health and Justice Partnerships
- Neighbourhood Working Teams
- Other local Employment Support services
- IPS service (Severe Mental Illness, Primary Care, Drug & Alcohol)
- Integrated Care Boards
- Local education providers
- GPs, health centres and hospitals

It is anticipated that expression of interest will be received in these formats:

**Digital.** Local online forms accessible from each Local Authority webpage which can be completed by either individuals or professionals referring people to the programme, these forms will be downloaded directly into the shared CRM system. Autoreplies will acknowledge receipt, provide guidance on next steps, and prompt an Employment Specialist (caseworker) to engage.

**Email.** Likely a scanned version of the paper-based form to a dedicated inbox in each local delivery area. If this is not possible then the email should contain all the information requested from an expression of interest. Autoreplies will acknowledge receipt and provide guidance on next steps. Emails with missing information will be returned to sender with a request provide outstanding information. A central list of EOI email addresses to be shared with Local Authorities depending on locality and Accountable Body as appropriate or unclear of geography to ensure timely redirection if needed and prompt response and engagement.

**Paper-based.** A hardcopy version will be available for people who struggle with digital skills or prefer paper-based applications, though digital completion will be encouraged. Paper-based forms can be handed to any member of the Connect to Work team and will be processed the same as any other referral route.

Expressions of interest will be made available in a variety of accessible formats to ensure that there is fair and equitable access to the service.

Use of a regional CRM system (commissioned by the Accountable Body) and template paperwork across all delivery partners and any contracted support will ensure consistency of the customer journey throughout the process.

All fields within the system will mirror MI technical guidance, fidelity assessment and reporting requirements, and all staff will be trained in a consistent manner on use of the system and information collection.

Any changes throughout the process will ensure it follows MI and fidelity needs and will be the same for all users.

Technological advances during the life of the programme may generate new methods of communicating information. This will be monitored throughout the duration of the programme and new methods may be introduced to capitalise on the routes that expression of interest can be received or delivered.

Regular reviews will be undertaken to ensure that referral pathways, submissions of expressions of interest, and software/tracking systems monitoring flow and engagement are fit for purpose and perform the functions expected of them.

Periodic reviewing of online presences will identify any technological issues or bottlenecks in any of the systems in place and allow opportunities to test out new introductory channel methods. Active monitoring and managing all introduction channels will ensure they remain effective throughout the duration of the grant period.

Effectiveness will be measured through regular analysis of data from all channels will help to identify any trends or areas of improvement. For partnerships, both internal and external, regular communication and feedback will be maintained to ensure that information flows remain sound, up to date and collaborative, and that participants receive the high-quality support.

**3.5** If you propose to prioritise specific groups of people, please describe your rationale and describe how you will do so within the agreed Eligibility and Suitability Criteria.

Prioritisation will be in context to any of the identified access groups from the grant guidance based upon the strategic focuses of the South Midlands region or DWP, at the time it is needed, however at the onset of the programme as a region it has been agreed to have an open approach of eligibility and not targeting specific participant groups, only those in need of support as long as they meet eligibility criteria clearly set out within the programme. Should this occur, details will be published through the Connect to Work communication channels to ensure openness and transparency to all potential participants and referral pathways and discussed as a region before enacting to ensure a considered approach across borders to regional offer and in line with any council priorities.

The Accountable Body will have a clear understanding on caseload management of the delivery partners and have clear requirements set out in agreements, if any concerns on delivery are apparent, this will be discussed individually with delivery partners and any potential commissioned contractors. A methodology for this performance management and service standards will be developed to ensure consistency, including an agreed approach to safeguarding, MAPPA and delivery standards in the tendering and procurement process.

Key to delivery will be delivering with a zero-rejection approach. If people are eligible, suitable and want to work, there should be no access barriers. This may mean cohort groups are not specifically targeted, but we have worked on a marketing strategy to ensure priority groups will be aware of the opportunity Connect to Work can offer.



Connect to Work  
Marketing Framework

As time progresses it may be necessary to revisit this, and in the eventuality of cohort groups being underrepresented or change in local community needs, we may address through a specific event, marketing campaigns or seek further partnerships to resolve. This will not impact projected volumes.

### **Participant journey**

This section is to outline how you will support and manage Participants through the Connect to Work process.

#### **3.6 Please provide details on how you will provide tailored support for each Participant, as described in the Grant Guidance?**

Each participant journey will be unique and tailored to individual needs and circumstances. All participants will be afforded the same access to support and assistance but the extent to levels of usage will be dependent upon individual need along with the prescribed supported employment model the participant is enrolled with, with their Employment Specialist. A combined South Midlands marketing and communication strategy and plan will support consistency in the message and opportunity for Connect to Work. For example, shared and branded South Midlands Connect to Work area at the Milton Keynes Jobs Fair (19/20 September 2025) is expected to be attended by over 15,000 job seekers and the region will be represented by all 6 Local Authorities. Our shared approach and joint events; plans and strategies support this unity, with regional level work developed by both the Accountable Body programme team in partnership with Local Authority Delivery partners.

All Employment Specialists will receive the appropriate training to ensure that they are competent and confident in delivery of IPS and SEQF models of employment support which has been budgeted and outlined in section 2.4. This will include specific IPS and SEQF delivery training and techniques such as motivational interviewing and action planning, as the latter enables them to develop their engagement skills and focus participants of the end goal of paid work and the steps required to get there. A minimum foundational staff training requirement plan will be rolled out in all 6 Local Authorities and become part of provider requirements for those procured to deliver. Minimum training standards across all Local Authorities will underpin quality delivery and support and drive consistency.

The entire suite of paperwork (assessments, expressions of interest, action plans, vocational profiles and more) will be standardised to ensure that all participants receive a consistent level of service and will be available in various formats to ensure they are accessible to all participants. The level of depth and emphasis in certain areas of completion/support will be reflective of the participants current circumstances and personal history. The vocational profiling paperwork will be a standard format and completed by all participants with their assigned Employment Specialist however the focus and detail of the information sections will be unique and different for everyone. This will be further underpinned by a shared CRM system to ensure consistency in delivery via recording and reporting, accessing shared documentation and aligning process across the south midlands.

Prior to any application/introduction, all potential participants and referrers should be furnished with the knowledge of the programme: what it entails, what is expected from them as participants and from programme staff, and what the desired outcomes are. This will be undertaken by local delivery areas in relation to how the service is communicated, published and marketed both online and to referral partners. If this stage has been successful potential participants and referrers should be fully aware of the voluntary nature of Connect to Work and the possible journey people may be embarking on. Each Local Authority will have one front door and clear signposting, geographically specific, to support easy and timely access to support. A shared CRM system aligned and united approach and shared documentation will ensure that once through the right, single front door the person receives support that is replicated in all 6 Local Authority areas. The joint system will also ensure that should a participant relocate within the programme during support, it is able to continue to be supported within the region with minimal impact. If an individual or referral comes in to the Accountable Body team, it can be reviewed and redirected to the appropriate delivery partner to engage, to ensure that there are multiple opportunities to engage and they will all be supported and responded to.

### **Expression of Interest**

The robustness and compliance with DWP guiding principles for the expression of interest will ensure only eligible and suitable individuals will be put forward or put themselves forward for the programme. If the conditions of suitability/eligibility are met, individuals will be invited to an initial/introductory meeting with an Employment Specialist (pending final screening of eligibility by DWP). If eligibility is not given, the meeting will be cancelled and referrers (either people themselves or other professionals) will be informed of the decision, the reasons why they have been declined and signposted to source alternative provision. A zero-rejection policy will be always applied to ensure that the individual is supported regardless. If the person is eligible, suitable and wants to work, there will be the opportunity to access.

EOIs will be submitted to the SM area through a shared and centralised regional CRM system. Completed EOIs will be matched by postcode to the relevant Local Authority who will receive an alert for action. Each Local Authority will be responsible for managing any data requests including entering and uploading information on the PRaP system and will each be assigned 1-2 licences to undertake this work. Any regionally procured services to deliver Connect to Work will not be granted access to the PRaP system. The responsibility will fall to the contracting Local Authority to manage the data, enter, upload and share information with the DWP and to relevant systems. The Accountable Body will also have PRaP access to support and have programme oversight of the delivery and check accuracy.

### **Initial/introductory meetings**

Will be scheduled to take place within 10 working days from receipt of the expression of interest acknowledgement. These meetings may be held face-to-face and will take place at the Connect to Work location/office. The Employment Specialist hosting the meeting will remain as the advisor for the duration of support with the participant.

This ensures a good working relationship with stability, consistency, and trust can be developed to support the participant to achieve their goal of paid work. In rare circumstances of relationship breakdowns, participants will be assigned a new Employment Specialist. In periods of leave or absence from work, Employment Specialists will provide interim cover. It is fully expected that all case notes are up to

date, and handovers are clear, concise and involve the participant, with details up to date on the joint CRM system to ensure minimal disruption or impact to the participant.

In practice, the first meeting with the assigned Employment Specialist will fully explore eligibility/suitability, the participant motivation, desired outcome (will be dependent on whether out of work participant or in-work, job gain or job retain), obtain permissions and consent to engage and share information, and gather some additional information to determine which model of employment support would be most suited to the participant. Following this meeting and assuming the provision screen is returned from DWP without consequence, participants will progress to the vocational profiling stage.

### **Vocational profiling/job matching**

The opening meeting will be scheduled to take place within five working days from the initial meeting. Vocational profiling is a 'live' and continually refreshed stage of support where Employment Specialists meet regularly with participants to build a full picture of the support required.

This will include the participant's desired outcomes, aspirations and career goals, challenges they experience, training and qualifications required to meet career goals, and the support required to solve these issues, plus action planning and next steps to meet the aims the participant wants. Meetings will vary in terms of intensity and purpose and the expectation is that these are scheduled for a minimum of once a week until the participant enters paid work.

In tandem and whilst building a fuller picture of the participants vocational profile, the Employment Specialist will work with the participant to identify suitable and capable paid work opportunities to apply for. Job search support will become a regular feature of each support meeting until the participant achieves their goal of paid employment.

Along with job search support, the Employment Specialist will work with the participant to discover the employers and roles they may wish to do and have the skills to undertake. Once this information has been gathered, the Employment Specialist will then start on engaging with specific employers or contacting employers about specific roles to facilitate further job opportunities, in essence job matching.

When opportunities arise, the Employment Specialist will help to set-up introductions to participants and invite employers to meetings and support participants during the recruitment phase. For participants who do not have access to digital technology, have challenges with confidence in using digital platforms/technology, or want to independently job search, an area will be made available in the Connect to Work premises for self-supporting job search and application. This area will enable access to computers/tablets, the internet and the availability of Employment Specialists so they can be supported directly.

### **On- and off-the-job support**

When participants are successful and commence paid work, the Employment Specialist will be available to support individuals in the workplace during the induction phase helping them to settle into work. This will either be through direct or indirect

channels and will be agreed between the participant and the Employment Specialist depending on wants and needs.

### **In-Work Retention Support**

Participants referred as being at risk of exiting employment due to their health condition, disability or complex issue will receive tailored In-Work Retention Support (IWRS) to help them sustain and progress in their roles. This support is designed to address the specific challenges they may face in the workplace and ensure they have the tools and guidance needed to remain in employment. Key elements of the support include workplace mediation - resolving issues with employers, including communication challenges, adjustments, or misunderstandings; health and wellbeing support - signposting or referrals to mental health services, occupational health, or other relevant support networks; flexible support plans – developing health adjustment passports and wellbeing action plans that adapt to the participant's evolving needs and employment context; and skills development - access to training or coaching to build confidence, improve job performance, or prepare for progression opportunities. This proactive approach aims to reduce early job exits and promote long-term employment stability and satisfaction.

Through our engagement with businesses via individual Employment Specialists job matching or wider networking events such as MK Job Show, it is anticipated that majority of referrals for IWRS will be received directly from employers or potential participants. Engagement about the IWRS offer will focus upon the support Connect to Work can provide and will be shared using case studies, testimonials, and examples of good practice regionally and nationally, demonstrating the positive outcomes and benefits this offer can bring. To further promote the IWRS offer, we are working collaboratively with the Chambers of Commerce (Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes, and Northamptonshire) plus the South Midlands Growth Hub to cascade and share information with their networks of businesses to encourage referrals across the region.

Where people have a health condition, disability or complex issue that requires workplace adjustments, the Employment Specialist will be positioned to work with the employer to assist, advise and guide.

Reasonable adjustments will be unique and individual to the person and the workplace. Further support to employers and participants can be training, advice and guidance on inclusive work practices. Employment Specialists will be available to provide support to employers with developing inclusive workplaces and offer resources to help with the transition.

Throughout the participant journey, Employment Specialists, with participant consent and agreement, will encourage and involve external people in developing the support package. This can include families, partners, parents, carers, and other professionals. Involving others into the journey can help build relationships, familiarise people with what the participant is trying to achieve, strengthen any learning/training, and ultimately how best they can support the participant with their journey to achieving paid employment.

Each stage will be tracked via recording and reporting on a shared CRM system that will support a consistent approach and the opportunity for data to be analysed to ensure this remains the case throughout the life of provision. Staff training aligned processes and a united approach to marketing and communications further support both a strong, consistent and measurable south midlands offer.

The region is exploring opportunities with partners on support and provision within the programme on self-employment opportunities and training opportunities such as through business support providers such as the South Midlands Growth Hub and Business & Intellectual Property Centre (BPIC). Opportunities to develop entrepreneurship skills through education partners, such as colleges that provide training alongside potential existing employment can support the transition into self-employment.

The regional training programme for staff will include identification of viable employment options including self-employment to ensure support is provided on the various pathways and opportunities.

**3.7** How will you safeguard Participants, including those who are subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Agency (MAPPA) arrangements and embed the public sector equality duty into the design and operation of your service e.g. through appropriate ongoing equality impact analysis?

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) participants will be identified through several routes and at different stages within the Connect to Work journey. Early stages, such as the Expression of Interest (EOI) may highlight whether the participant is an offender (someone who is serving a community service) or ex-offender (someone who has completed a custodial or community sentence). Similarly, who the EOI is received from, may highlight any restrictions the individual is subject to. For example, if an EOI is received from the Probation Service, this would then alert the Employment Specialist to follow this up in advance of the initial meeting stage.

Once at the initial meeting stage, all potential participants will be asked to confirm that they understand they will need to declare an unspent criminal conviction or Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and agreement for data sharing. If accepted on to the Connect to Work Programme, the Employment Specialist will contact other agencies (e.g. Probation Service) to obtain further information about the individual, including risk information.

For an individual who is subject to MAPPA restrictions at the stage of vocational profiling, a Risk Management Plan (RMP) will be initiated on the crm system. This plan will tailor to the individual and be circumstantial but will include levels of risk, risk triggers, protective factors and details of other agencies involved in managing the risk posed. The RMP will determine how the individual will be managed through the programme, during periods of training and in the workplace. The RMP will also include a mandatory monthly review to ensure it reflects the most current circumstances and management strategies.

The centralised MAPPA process will be followed by all delivery partners, as per the centralised crm system which will ensure consistency amongst the region. Deviation from this agreed process will be managed through performance reviews by the AB.



New staff employed within each council's recruitment process will include mandatory checks and references, including DBS.

All staff will have regular updates on any new safeguarding news through training sessions, in tutor forums, bulletins, and questionnaires. Close links with a range of local organisations will ensure that learners are safe by all staff having up to date and correct information.

Staff will be made aware of the importance of safeguarding through local induction processes. Council leadership teams have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that action is taken to safeguard all participants. Additional training can provided (for example via Northamptonshire Police [MAPPA@northants.pnn.police.uk](mailto:MAPPA@northants.pnn.police.uk)) and will be taken into consideration with regional training expectations.

All staff will undergo mandatory child protection, safeguarding and 'Prevent' training. In addition, many take up the wide-ranging opportunities available across the Council and online courses to improve their awareness about current safeguarding and counter-terrorism issues. Recent training has covered subjects such as forced marriage, modern slavery, and female genital mutilation. As a result of this extensive training, staff increase their skills and confidence to discuss safeguarding issues with participants. This ensures that participants improve their awareness about how to keep themselves safe.

Staff use their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding to identify the small number of concerns that arise and use the clear and well-publicised procedures that are in place to report these. Logs of safeguarding incidents, which are held securely by managers, record actions taken, including where referrals have been made to other Council departments such as the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or Adult Social Care.

In-house staff will be trained to work with a MAPPA referral system and will be made aware of how to work with a MAPPA referral. There will be a secure process to ensure only appropriate details are recorded and access will be restricted. No details will be accessible by the whole team or individual local delivery areas.

Training standards will also be expected by contracted and commissioned organisations delivering the programme to ensure their staff are trained to the standard we require for this programme in line with in house delivery teams to ensure consistency and high delivery of service and support. This will form part of the specification for the procurement process.

#### **Estimated costs and volumes**

Please complete all sections of the Grant Cost Register (GCR), which has been supplied separately. The GCR is a service costing tool which we are asking Accountable Bodies to use in planning and costing their Supported Employment provision. Guidance on completing the GCR has been included within the model. DWP Commercial Finance are also available to provide general support on completing it where requested.

DWP recognises that costs may change during the live running of the programme and any changes can be discussed as part of the annual review.

### 3.8 Please embed the completed Grant Cost Register



250804 SM Grant  
Cost Register.xlsx

#### Risk

An understanding of your risks involved in delivering Connect to Work and the need for having effective systems in place to manage them, is important to enable the delivery of Connect to Work, from implementation to live running.

### 3.9 Please describe the key risks and mitigations, including operational, commercial and financial, that could affect Connect to Work delivery.

#### Operational:

**Initial referrals do not meet expected volumes.** Build strong internal and external referral networks. Develop a marketing strategy and campaign plan to promote the programme. Consider eligible participants from local Shared Prosperity Fund programmes.

**Referrals exceed planned for capacity.** Regularly monitor capacity against workforce and caseloads. Maintain a flexible workforce and have plans to rapidly increase capacity through secondments or recruitment activity. Waiting lists will be used within teams as well as interim signposting to ensure the participant gets timely support.

**Job starts lower than 50% target.** Build employer networks, regularly communicate with employers, meet with Economic Development colleagues for new leads, track and monitor targets monthly.

**Job sustainment lower than 80% target.** Employment Specialists to have weekly contact with participants and identify issues early on for swift resolution.

**Delays to recruitment impact service delivery.** Sharing of job descriptions and person specifications between councils. Maximising recruitment opportunities across partnership networks and channels. Explore secondment opportunities.

**Disruption to service due to staff absence.** Develop business continuity plans to mitigate the impact of potential absence. Maintain flexible workforce and use staff trained for mixed caseloads only as a temporary measure and with robust and minimum training requirements in place to support delivery and absorb the impact of disruption in the event of unplanned, prolonged staff absence.

**Disruption to service due to technical failures or external factors.** Develop business continuity plans to provide instructions on continuity in the event of technical failures. Continually review the risk register for development of external factors that may impact the programme at regional or local level and, if necessary, assign a competent risk owner to design mitigations.

**Delays to training or shortage of specialist training due to high demand.** Create detailed role-specific training plans. Use a learning needs analysis to identify additional requirements. Regular one-to-ones that include progress checks on

learning needs. Regional procurement and coordination of specialist training. Use the train-the-trainer model to reduce costs and lead times and have in house regional expertise.

**Availability of quality employers to support the programme.** Use established engagement processes to continue to build good employer relationships. Be aware of the operating environment and challenges faced by employers, for example, the rise in employer National Insurance contributions.

**Managing peak and decline periods.** Closely monitor targets, outcomes, turnover and staffing levels. Make best use of available data to predict issues early, including exploring the use of predictive analytics.

**Issues with technology, such as software failures, non-compatibility, or cybersecurity threats, can disrupt project delivery.** Implement robust IT systems and security measures.

**Delivery delay due to procurement dependencies.** Proactive procurement management and good support from DWP to expedite resolution of issues.

#### **Financial:**

**Poorly defined contract terms can lead to disputes, delays, and additional costs.** Have clear, detailed contracts and to understand all terms and conditions. Implement robust contract management principles at local and Accountable Body level.

**Disruptions in the supplier chain or supplier failures can impact project schedules.** Build strong, reliable relationships with suppliers. Understand market challenges as far as possible to inform contingency options.

**Poor project performance, negative publicity or failure can damage regional or local reputation.** Ensure high-quality outcomes are ambitions for all involved with Connect to Work. Have effective communications strategies in place to communicate successes and work with local Communications teams to manage any negative publicity.

**Data sharing between internal and external departments could add a layer of complexity and risk.** Have clear data sharing agreements in place between internal and external departments with accountability and breach procedures in line with DWP requirements of the programme.

**Employers may invest in automation and other technology to offset higher costs, reducing available jobs for low skilled workers.** Ensure that participants on the programme can acquire new skills. Collaborate with training and education partners is key to providing training which aligns with the needs of the local job market.

#### **Commercial:**

**Changes in market conditions, such as fluctuations in demand or prices, can affect project viability.** Conduct thorough research and develop contingency plans can help to manage risks.

**Delays in receiving payments can disrupt cash flow and project timelines.** Establish clear payment terms and maintain effective stakeholder relationships and forward cashflow management.

**Exceeding the allocated budget due to unforeseen expenses.** Implement strict budget controls, conduct regular financial reviews, and establish contingency funds to cover unexpected costs. Regular scrutiny of budget spend vs. forecast.

**Insufficient funding to sustain the programme.** Ensure financial plan is followed and that inflation costs have been calculated in advance, ensure transparent financial management and renegotiate costs if possible.

**Hidden unforeseen expenses such as legal disputes, contract management costs and inflationary rises.** Continuously monitor expenses and review financial performance, consider including inflation clauses in contracts to account for potential price rises.

**External factors, including changes in the political landscape and economy (rises in employer national insurance contributions and an increase of the minimum wage).** Focus on building strong local partnerships, ensuring delivery remains flexible and adaptable and sell the benefits of participating in the programme.

#### **Accountable Body:**

**Delays in submitting regional level information to DWP or long lead times for responses from DWP can impact timelines.** Have a programme plan in place with identified milestones and clear ownership of actions to reduce likelihood of delays. Have governance and approval processes documented, including nominated points-of-contact who can approve requests in key contact's absence. Hold regular meetings with DWP to discuss risks and understand pressures.

**Inconsistent quality or formats lead to delays in collation.** Implement standardised procedures and regular quality audits to maintain high service standards across all services.

#### **Delivery:**

**Employer engagement.** Risk of flooding the marketing with demands of businesses in this programme but also other regional provision asks such as student careers provision and Get Britain Working strategic ambitions. Engagement will be done to facilitate events and engagement to create a pipeline of warm leads and new businesses engaged rather than reliance on large anchor businesses in the region.

**Shared engagement opportunities.** If a delivery partner has engaged with the programme in one area, but not another, to work together collectively to support communication. Where there is a national employer, agree as a regional on the engagement approach and facilitation.

**Staff training levels for employer engagement.** Ensure that regional level training is provided to ensure consistent approaches and skills to underpin the delivery of the programme.

The risks of the programme from an Accountable Body perspective and that of the delivery partners will be managed in a risk register throughout the life of the programme.

**3.10** Please detail your approach to fraud risks that could affect your delivery and how you might mitigate these.

As Local Authorities, each area has robust counter-fraud and anti-money laundering policies in place which will be applied rigorously to local activities. Each area will manage these through designated Compliance Officers or teams responsible for ensuring adherence to policies, conducting regular training, and maintaining up to date procedures. Whistleblowing policies exist in all Local Authorities and are actively promoted to encourage reporting. Risk reporting and mitigation will be undertaken locally by area-specific risk leads, who will escalate any risks impacting the programme (at a local or regional Accountable Body level) to be added to the programme risk register and actively managed by the Accountable Body programme management team and as appropriate S151 Officer as part of the Accountable Body oversight responsibility.

**Procurement and contracting.** Delivery partner's exposure to fraud risk will be mitigated assessed through due diligence reviews, including financial health checks and review of governance controls already existing in procurement process. Local Authority procurement teams will carry out market analysis to highlight any past fraud incidents and open and competitive processes will be used to deter collusion between suppliers. Risk monitoring will be appropriate to the size and complexity of each contract/delivery partner will be built into the monitoring process. Regular supplier audits can verify suppliers' legitimacy. Multi-layer subcontracting will be avoided as far as possible to ensure accountability, and this will be specified in the tendering process.

**Grant payment and distribution.** DWP grant guidance will be strictly adhered to, alongside terms set out in the Grant Funding Agreement ensuring only eligible expenditure is claimed in line with the cost register. Spot checks of claims and adherence to requirements for any supporting documentation will be sampled throughout the programme and will reduce the risk of falsified claims. Local finance and programme teams will be responsible for ensuring only eligible expenditure is claimed and that all documentation is retained and auditable.

**Data and intelligence.** Regular and structured financial and performance reporting will be undertaken to ensure delivery partners and sub-contractors are delivering as expected/required. Cross-checking and sampling of records, and against payment and contractual terms will be undertaken.

**Specialist counter-fraud advice.** The Accountable Body will engage specialists as appropriate to independently assess approaches and processes for fraud risk to reduce gaps in oversight and the risk of poor controls, including highlighting any areas where the Accountable Body or delivery partners should apply stricter control to prevent potential data manipulation arising from conflicting pressures.

**Participant fraud.** Each area will manage participant fraud through identity confirmation at all stages, logged in the joint CRM system and supported by local

documentation. Local delivery teams will be trained in due diligence procedures and responsible for ensuring consistent application across the region.

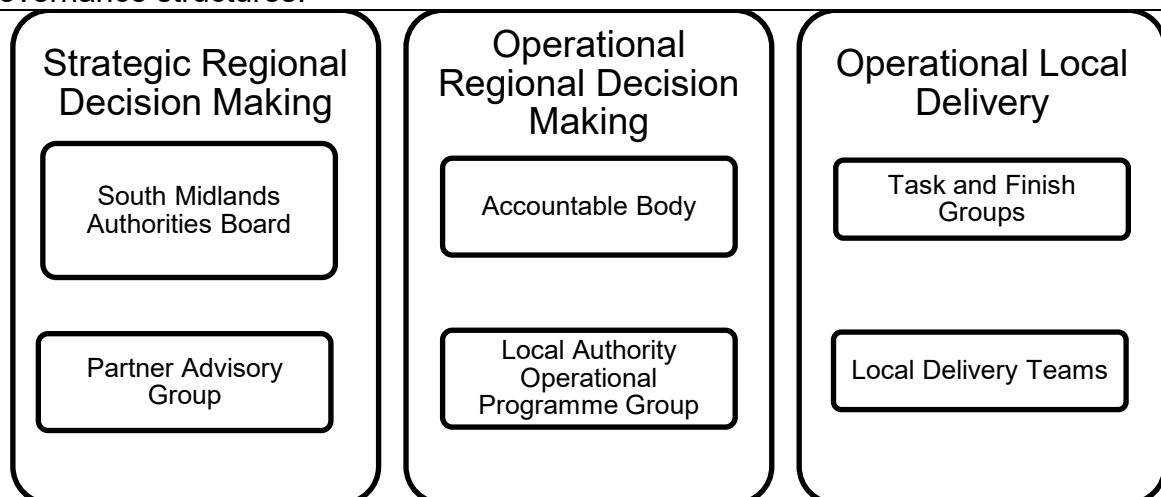
It is accepted that eliminating all risk is unachievable. The Accountable Body and local delivery programme leads aim to manage and mitigate risk in a proportionate manner relative to the severity of the risk, with each area taking ownership of their responsibilities and contributing to a cohesive, region-wide approach to fraud prevention and risk management.

## Section 4 – Governance

### Outline of governance approach & experience

Within this section, please provide details of the governance arrangements for Connect to Work across your Delivery Area.

**4.0** Please summarise the governance structure you will have in place across your Delivery Area, including how any advisory panels or associated partnership groups are made up. Please specify whether these are pre-existing structures, new structures, or whether contingency arrangements are temporarily being put in place. Please explain how these arrangements will be sustained through the life of the programme. Please also include details of any challenges you foresee in relation to the governance of Connect to Work and any support you may need to develop your governance structures.



### Structure

**South Midlands Authorities Board.** An existing structure created to champion economic growth across the South Midlands with a track record of successful partnership working. Each authority is represented by its leader, and delegated authority for strategic decision-making has been secured for a nominated senior officer of each Local Authority. This Board meets bi-monthly and is soon to be a formal Joint Committee which provides a robust framework for decision making and oversight of the programme for the six authorities involved in the partnership. The Local Authority Operational Programme Group will be accountable to the South Midlands Authorities Board, in addition to each Local Authority taking appropriate decisions to their respective decision-making committees where required.

**Accountable Body.** This function is undertaken by West Northamptonshire Council. A dedicated programme team (1 FTE Programme Manager and 3 FTE Programme Officers) is being established and recruited to, to undertake the required oversight and management functions and coordinate regional-level activities on behalf of the South Midlands partnership. As part of the governance structure, the Accountable Body will hold overall responsibility for performance management and assurance across the programme. The team will be supported by technical advisers including procurement, legal, finance etc – who will provide specialist expertise to enable delivery and ensure compliance. This team will work closely with all six Local Authority delivery teams through structured partnership working and contract management to monitor and drive performance. In addition, the Accountable Body will play a key role in identifying, sharing, and embedding best practice across the region, ensuring continuous improvement and consistency in delivery standards among all partners.

**Local Authority Operational Programme Group.** A forum established at the outset of this programme attended by lead officers from each Local Authority. Members are responsible for local delivery – including briefing their senior officers and acting as the link between their Authority and the Accountable Body. The group is responsible for operational decision-making and for shaping any recommendations that require decision-making by the Accountable Body. . It also serves as a platform for sharing learning and best practice, enabling Local Authorities to adopt successful approaches and innovations from across the region, thereby strengthening collective delivery and impact.

**Partner Advisory Group.** Each Authority maintains beneficial relationships with key partners that will aid delivery. A small advisory group will be formed of key partners including Integrated Care Boards that will support regional activity, operate across the geographical area or will be influential in aiding delivery. The membership may evolve over time.

**Business Board.** An established structure created to advise the South Midlands Authorities on business matters relating to economic growth and impact. A champion board member will be sought to raise the profile of Connect to Work in this forum and act as a strategic link with the Operational Programme Group Accountable Body Programme Management Team, influencing the Authorities Board where necessary.

**Task and finish groups.** Groups will be convened with representatives from local delivery teams and technical/subject matter experts to progress specific activities or approaches. This involves a structured approach to assess the challenge or opportunity, specify requirements, assess options available to achieve the desired outcome. Group will make recommendations on approaches to the Operational Programme Group and be responsible for pursuing actions.

Group	Representation	Outcomes expected
Marketing and Communications – inc. market engagement and employer engagement	Contributions from all local delivery authorities, including Communications reps	Agreed marketing strategy Confirmation of branding and assets Market engagement opportunities and planning Employer engagement proposal

CRM	Contributions from all local delivery authorities	Joint CMR system established Training for staff Templated joint paperwork
Cohort mapping	Contributions from all local delivery authorities	Identification of primary and secondary cohorts for integration, key contacts across partners
Training	Contributions from all local delivery authorities	Commitment in statement of intent for regional needs
Data sharing	Accountable Body DPO, programme lead and SME	Agreed joint controller approach PRAP access Consistent data protection provision
Procurement	Accountable Body and authorities undertaking contracted delivery	Consistent regional approach Economy of scale opportunities Compliance Shared templates and consistent wording

**Local delivery teams.** Established teams will manage delivery across their area. While each Authority has committed to a coordinated approach to programme governance through the South Midlands Authorities Board, each area is committed to ensuring appropriate awareness and oversight of local aspects in line with local policy. This may include periodic reporting to senior leadership teams, cabinet or portfolio holders, or overview and scrutiny committees in line with each individual councils governance and reporting requirements.

In addition to the governance structure, the Local Authorities involved in the partnership will all have a back-to-back/partnership agreements which will mirror the Grant Funding Agreement with DWP so that the expectations of the partnership are set out clearly, and form part of the overall governance for the programme and also enabling performance management by the Accountable Body.

**4.1** If the proposed governance structures are not yet in place, please indicate when these are likely to commence.

Most of the governance model detailed in Section 4.0 is established. However, the specific parts which aren't yet established are:

**Partner Advisory Group.** The terms of reference for this group are currently under development ahead of the Group being put together ahead of the go live date for the programme. Discussions are ongoing with partner representatives at local and regional level including the Integrated Care Boards, and local VCSE groups. It is anticipated that formal arrangements for this group will be in place by the go live date for the programme ensuring it is fit for purpose and adds value to the region and programme.

**Task and finish groups.** These groups are dynamic in nature and will be as required between March and go live date. Depending on the nature of discussions, some may continue beyond the planning and implementation period.

**4.2** What controls and assurance mechanisms will you put in place to ensure that all spend incurred in delivering Connect to Work is accurate, valid, and reasonable?

Each Local Authority will undertake checks to validate each cost claimed as part of the claim process (normally quarterly) in line with what has been agreed in the grant



cost register and a regional and local level. They will also use robust accounting software to ensure costs are easily identified and segregated for the project. All invoices and receipts will be retained in line with retention requirements for the programme and financial retention requirements.

All evidence will be checked locally by each Local Authority's internal validation processes for grant claims before submitting to the Accountable Body for checking prior to submission of the regional claim. The Accountable Body will undertake a 10% sample checks to ensure costs submitted are recorded, valid and evidenced. It will be a requirement for each Local Authority involved in delivery to retain records for the required time period and have information available for audit purposes at any stage. Equally, any commissioned sub-contractors will have requirements built into their contracts to ensure that any spend undertaken as part of the contract is compliant, to retain and hold evidence, and evidence will be checked as it is requested for the quarterly claims by the Accountable Body.

This will be supported by local measures, which may include regular budget reviews and periodic internal audits of the programme.

Fidelity assurance will be monitored and reviewed in line with contractual requirements and improvement plans developed, and additional training if required.

There will be regular steering group engagement made up of the six delivery partners to ensure compliance of claims, process and project is being delivered in line within contracted requirements and an expected level of best practice and consistency. All costs will be confirmed with local delivery partners as part of the local grant cost registers that feed into the Accountable Body regional grant cost register ensuring that all planned costs are within the allowable costs outlined by DWP.

**4.3** What controls and assurance mechanisms will you put in place to ensure that the quality of delivery of Connect to Work, is of the required standard and how frequently will this be reviewed?

**Controls:**

**Fidelity assessment.** Performance against the criteria of SEQF and IPS fidelity audits which will be undertaken in line with DWP requirements for the programme with the first assessment after 12 months of the programme delivery. All teams will also have SEQF / IPS self-assessments in place that will be reviewed at least quarterly in line with and preparation for annual audits. Data capture, focus and evidence building over the whole year will support fidelity readiness that will not be considered as just an annual process.

**Matrix assessment.** A measure of information, advice and guidance - annual review and three yearly assessments.

**Sampling.** A standardised approach to initial assessment, development plan, employer engagement plan and in-work support plans enables sampling to ensure individual needs and personal characteristics are accounted for and will be review on a biannual basis or more frequently if a delivery partner is on a underperformance management plan. Financial sampling and spot checking will be undertaken on a 10% basis on each claim.

**CPD.** Plans to ensure Employment Specialists are adequately trained and committed to continuous development throughout the programme lifespan, particular around supporting people with complex needs and safeguarding.

**Monthly monitoring.** Check and reporting to be undertaken on core measures including, but not limited to: starts; exits; outcomes; participant spend; vocational profiles; development plans; employer engagement plans; in-work support plans.

**Data entry for reporting.** agreements will be in place with delivery partners to ensure data and reporting is provided to the Accountable Body in a timely manner to feed into DWP reporting structure and timeline. The joint CRM system will also enable the Accountable Body to note live data and programme delivery across the region.

**Caseloads.** Regular supervision with delivery partners, contractual responsibility from DWP will be shared to delivery partner assurance including sample checking throughout the programme in line with fidelity assessments requirements for caseload management for both IPS and SEQF caseloads.

**Standard operating procedures.** Adoptions of standard processes and procedures – at a regional level where practical – to ensure consistency and compliance, such as paperwork and reporting.

**Best practice.** Steering groups will meet quarterly to enable best practice to be shared and ensure delivery and support is consistent in the South Midlands.

**Performance management.** Any delivery partners found to be underperforming will have regular engagement with the Accountable Body for performance improvement in line with funding agreements including additional sample checks, programme review, risk management assessment and increased mitigation actions to support the delivery partner back to a performing programme. Any underperformance will be managed on a rag rated system to ensure that response and actions taken are in proportion to the situation, and this response would be in line with the DWP performance measurement and assurance guidance.

#### **Assurance:**

**Independent reviews.** Engage external auditors outside of the day to day delivery and management team to conduct periodic reviews of the processes in place.

**Quality assurance.** Regular monitoring of quality following internal policies and procedures to monitor and evaluate service delivery.

**Benchmarking.** Compare service delivery with other services within the regional consortium as well as nationally.

**Risk management.** Use of a risk management framework to identify, assess and mitigate risk that could have a negative impact on the service delivery, with local findings feeding regional action plans.

**Continuous improvement.** Embedding a culture of continuous improvement and knowledge share, conducting regular reviews and updates of service delivery, sharing feedback of local impacts to shape regional approach.

**4.4** How you will demonstrate continuous improvement to the quality of your services, safeguard high standards of care and create an environment in which excellence will flourish?

**Participant surveys.** Issued at every exit to capture feedback on what has worked well, what we could do better and what we can do more of. Analysis to identify areas of best practice and success to inform regional continuous improvement.

**Audits and assessments.** Analysis of SEQF, IPS, matrix and Investors in People assessments to inform actions to shape service development and maintain high standards of delivery.

**Quality assurance framework.** Production of a framework, using the grant guidance as the basis, will drive consistent improvement. A framework concept ensures adaptability at a local level to achieve regional outcomes.

**Culture.** Embedding a safe-to-fail and learning culture to encourage innovation and sharing of learning between each partner to create a positive and encouraging work environment where excellence and high expectations are the norm.

## Section 5 – Performance and Management Information (MI) reporting requirements

The agreed set of MI will be essential to the effective running of Connect to Work. This will include shared MI which will be used to monitor and manage the grant, including the agreed performance measures.

MI/data gathered will also be used to provide a source of evidence for the monitoring and evaluation of the programme, and additionally to enable wider evaluation activities such as sampling for research and impact analysis.

Please note that in this section we are referring to the collection of data/Management Information and ensuring quality across your Delivery Area.

**5.0** How will you manage performance within the Accountable Body, to achieve the levels set out in your Delivery Plan, including the agreed performance measures?

Management information will be collected through a hybrid approach using DWP systems and manual returns to the Accountable Body. Access to DWP's Provider Referrals and Payments (PRaP) system - secure automated exchanges of information about participants referred to the programme – is provided to local delivery areas. DWP's system link with HMRC to enable real-time tracking of paid work outcomes.

The joint CRM system will be a key tool to ensure effective performance management and it will be a requirement of all Local Authority partners and any commissioned delivery partners that the CRM is populated with accurate and required information about participants on the programme to ensure progress can be tracked and monitored as part of programme delivery. Tools such as Power BI will be used to aggregate data and provide monthly/quarterly reports to the partnership to track performance and identify any underperformance quickly.

Live data through the joint CRM system, which is mirrored to the fidelity assessment requirements and MI technical guidance, will ensure that the Accountable Body is able to review data as and when required. Inputting requirements will be set in any delivery partner agreements and sub-contracts to ensure reliability of data and monitoring. The CRM will have provision to be able to export all data required into a csv file for ease of reporting.

Regular performance meetings with all Local Authorities and delivery partners will focus on programme starts and outcomes. The Power BI reports will assist with this helping to analyse trends and where performance is at risk of being off track. This will link back to risk management where any underperformance will be flagged as a risk and dealt with in line with an agreed performance management/control approach. Performance management will be proportionate to performance concerns but may include:

- More frequent review meetings between the Accountable Body Programme Management Team and Delivery Partners, which may include contracted providers if underperformance relates to contracted delivery.
- Independent reviews to assess project status, risks, and improvement areas
- Developing targeted action plans with clear objectives, timelines, and responsibilities to bring up to expected performance.
- Capacity building such as training, shadowing, and coaching to address gaps in performance and address any skills gaps
- Process review and improvement to improve communications, toolkits, support efficiencies and adapt to new approaches to support delivery.
- Re-aligning with operational work group and stakeholders to clarify goals and secure support.
- Governance escalation as required through the Accountable Body S151, legal and contract management.

Where services are commissioned, the procurement process will include clear requirements around the accuracy and frequency of input to the CRM system.

**5.1** How will you manage the accurate and timely collection of Management Information, including the timelines agreed in the Grant Guidance (and the Technical Note: General).

**Develop a reporting schedule.** Clearly outline data and metrics required, including the specific system of measurement and formats, ensure compliance with the grant guidance as part of the delivery partner agreement; building milestones into the Accountable Body programme plan for awareness among the Operational Programme Group. This will be included as part of the delivery partner contracts milestones and expectations to ensure that data is provided in a timely manner in line with Accountable Body reporting requirements and schedules to DWP. The data will be transferred to DWP within the agreed requirements and processes, ensuring the protection of sensitive personal data, such as using .gov.uk emails, encryption, or potentially data transferring portals such as 'transfer your file'.

**Standardised forms and templates.** Adoption of standard documentation across the region to ensure consistency in data collection across different areas, teams and departments.

**Systems.** Implement robust data management systems and/or software to streamline data collection, storage, and analysis. Explore dashboards (e.g. through Power BI)

and real-time monitoring tools to track live data and progress and promptly identify delays or issues.

**Staff guidance.** Provide training and support to ensure all staff involved in data collection and processing understand their roles and responsibilities. Embed accountability mechanisms to ensure timely and accurate data collection.

**Validation.** Implement data validation reviews to ensure accuracy and completeness of submitted information and will be spot checked on a quarterly basis by the Accountable Body Programme Management Team as well as any local delivery partner internal spot checks. If a delivery partner is on performance management, validation checks will be more frequent until performance is at an agreed satisfactory level.

If the data is confirmed to be inaccurate or if there are any concerns, a structured approach should be taken to resolve the issue and prevent it from recurring. The first step is to address the immediate impact by correcting any errors or consequences.. A thorough investigation would then be conducted to identify cause and scale (whether it was a regional wide issues, delivery partner issues, or a singular member of staff), which may involve reviewing processes, systems, and staff input. Based on the findings, processes would be updated, additional checks or validations introduced as required and proportionate to the issue and risk, and staff retrained where necessary. Preventative measures would be considered and implemented to reduce the risk of future issues. The timescale of managing concern about inaccurate data would be managed on a proportionate response and rectifying actions to ensure that it minimised the operational delivery of the programme, reporting, and support for the participant on the programme. as appropriate, this will be discussed with our Regional Engagement Lead (REL).

**Risk management.** Regular review of identified risks in relations to data collection as part of the regional risk register, including nominating a risk owner to shape mitigations.

**Staff resource.** Each Local Authority will ensure sufficient resource to achieve compliance and quality assurance, while the Accountable Body team will ensure sufficient resource to undertake 5-10% spot checking on a quarterly basis. Contracts will ensure that compliance and responsibility is shared with delivery partners. Any delivery partners not aligning to these commitments will be subject to performance management and frequency of engagement will increase until the Accountable Body is satisfied with delivery level.

The shared crm system is currently in the procurement process and is expected to have the contract signed by the end of July 2025. The provider has been provided the technical guidance as well as written up processes and system build that has been developed to ensure that the system is built to required specifications. The provider has confirmed that given the above timeline of contract signing, there is no concern in ensuring that the crm system will be built ahead of the programme starting, including buffer time to allow to testing and training for staff.

## Section 6 - Developing an integrated support offer with strategic fit to local priorities

As set out in the Grant Guidance, a key element of the Supported Employment models is that services are well embedded with other local support for the target groups and local labour market systems. The funding will be the first contribution to enabling you to stand up (over time) a wider offer to tackle inactivity, by connecting broader work, health and skills support and, in turn, supporting the Government's Get Britain Working strategy, bringing fundamental reform and transforming our relationship with local areas. Please set out your intended approach to building partnerships and integration across all appropriate local services and stakeholders

**6.0** Please set out details of your current understanding of how integration with local services, including health services, is being delivered to ensure holistic support for individuals. What do you plan to do in the future, including steps to drive greater local join up between employment, health, and wider community place-based services for the target groups and in turn how do you anticipate this will improve the effectiveness of your supported employment delivery.

### **Current integration:**

**Collaborative networks.** Local services – including health, skills, employment and community services – are working together through established networks and partnerships in local delivery areas. These arrangements present an opportunity to promote and integrate the Connect to Work offer, and the nature of services means cross-agency working ensures individuals receive comprehensive tailored support specific to their needs and are signposted to appropriate organisations for assistance. This information will be collated at a regional level to inform engagement strategies that make clear relationship links and managers to reduce duplication and overlap.

**Information sharing.** Information sharing and customer consent protocols are in place with partnership organisations to facilitate effective working between local delivery areas and existing providers, making all relevant information available to all parties involved in the customer's care.

**Project involvement.** Local delivery areas aim to include key partners in local project development and delivery conversations. Representation can include but is not limited to delegates from health and social care, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and specialist providers working in the locality. This participation enables partners to offer expert advice and guidance on local delivery, integration and signposting opportunities. This local perspective will be shared among other members of the Local Authority Operational Programme Group to share best practice and connections. Where appropriate, conversations will be supplemented at a regional level.

### **Future integration:**

**Enhanced collaboration.** Each delivery area will continue to identify and progress opportunities to strengthen partnerships in their area to create more cohesive support networks, this will include relationships with delivery partners; supported employment organisations; voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations; health services including GP surgeries and other primary care providers. Through collaboration between local delivery leads via the Local Authority Operational Programme Group, the programme will act as a collective in developing relationships

with larger partners such as Integrated Care Boards that operate across local delivery area boundaries.

**Integrated digital platforms.** Suggested by the Integrated Care Boards, there could be potential to develop some form of regional digital platform or application to provide details of employment support and other types of support available to participants in their area. This would enable promotion of the programme as well as signposting to other relevant support services, including social prescribing, physiotherapy, childcare facilities.

#### **Aims and outcomes:**

**Better outcomes.** By integrating with services more effectively, participants are likely to experience better overall outcome, including improvements to health, enhanced job prospects and achieving paid employment alongside social well-being.

**Efficiency.** Better coordination and collaboration between services will lead to more efficient use of resources, reducing the need for duplication and ensure that support is targeted to where it is needed most and at the right time.

**Accessibility.** Enhanced integration will make it easier for participants to be signposted and access the services they need when they need it, reducing barriers and enhancing the holistic support available to improve overall outcomes.

#### **Current and Future Flex Activities Across South Midlands Connect to Work Foot Print:**

In order to consolidate, enhance and amplify a stewardship approach that promotes subsidiarity across the work, health and skills integration agenda a Work and Health Stewardship Partnership is operational delivering on an Office for Health Improvement and Disparity (OHID) approved Work and Health Integration Strategy, Mapping activity and jointly adopted transformation plans across the geography. A similar approach is currently being co-produced across the Northamptonshire geography with buy in secured from Public Health, Local Authority, OHID, DWP and Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board. Aligned to Anchor Programmes, the partnership adopts an approach that has a focus on co-production and people powered results, membership includes people with lived experience, public sector providers, business, Voluntary Community Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE)E partners and also organisations such as the Money Advice Pension Service. There is a focus on driving resilience across our communities with the roll out of Zero Suicide Alliance, Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and Money Guiders Training.

The Work and Health Integration Programme Stewardship Partnerships is hosted within Local Authority public health team and BLMK (Bedford, Luton, and Milton Keynes) ICB and is a convening and connecting group that serves communities of place, purpose and interest across the south midlands geography through the lens of both system, place and neighbourhood working.

It seeks to amplify and improve the wellbeing of our population throughout their working lives; and exists to convene and co-produce outcomes that support the

further development of healthy, purposeful learning communities that are both aspirational and economically active. The Group is comprised of system partners that have a focus on subsidiarity evidence-based approaches, health equity and always taking an asset-based approach to build on what is strong not what is wrong.

The Work and Health Stewardship Partnership will have a particular focus on amplifying the aspirations of the Get Britain Working and Connect to work programmes.

The Partnerships are driven by the key policy drivers for change set out below:

### **Key Policy Drivers**

- Get Britain Working
- Mayfield Review
- Darzi Review 2024
- Marmot Review Update 2024
- **Dame Carol Black's 'Review of the health of Britain's working age population (published March 2008):** *Government should fully integrate health support with employment and skills programmes, including mental health support.*
- **Labour's five missions to rebuild Britain, two of which directly impact the Work and Health Integration agenda:**
- **Kickstart economic growth:** *To secure the highest sustained growth in the G7 – with good jobs and productivity growth in every part of the country making everyone, not just a few, better off.*
- **5) Build an NHS fit for the future:** *that is there when people need it; with fewer lives lost to the biggest killers; in a fairer Britain, where everyone lives well for longer.*
- **Joint Work and Health Unit (2016)**
- **Two main outcomes:**
- *Improve health outcomes for working aged people with health conditions and disabilities, to improve productivity and labour market participation.*
- *Improve employment outcomes for people with health conditions and disabilities, to contribute to halving the disability employment gap.*
- **Supported by six delivery objectives:**
- *to create a more integrated and supportive individual journey through the work and health systems.*
- *to encourage work to be seen and embedded as a health outcome within the health and care system.*
- *to create cultural change so that individuals, employers and wider society recognise the importance of work and health.*
- *to influence employers so that they support health in the workplace thus improving productivity and recruit and retain people with health conditions and disabilities.*
- *to use the resources currently expended by the employment and health and care systems where they make most difference. and to develop delivery models that support and incentivise the outcomes we want.*

**Future Transformation Aspiration and areas for delivery:**



Areas currently in scope to delivery across the South Midlands foot print that will contribute to ensuring robust delivery of the requirements of Connect to Work and any future Work Well Initiatives are set across three key missions set out below of Empower, Embed and Integrate:

## Empower: An overview

### Digital Space Creation & Enhancement

- Develop a digital platform to support employer education and access to skills resources.
- Create a co-production space and a forum for people with lived experience to share best practices, inspired by a "work and health trust" pilot approach.

### Social Movement Campaign

- Launch a campaign to drive awareness and support for the workstream's goals supporting Connect to Work and Get Britain Working.

### Community Research

- Conduct ongoing community conversations to understand perspectives and needs better.

### Integrated Model for Health and Employment

- Address health inequity, personalisation, and social determinants of health.
- Align efforts with Primary Care and Neighbourhood-level wellbeing initiatives.

4

## Integrate: An overview

### Focus on Integration

- Enhancing **asset-based models of care** to incentivise community outcomes.
- Developing a whole-system network for integrating work and health strategies.

### Embedding Existing Practices

- Building on the Healthy Workplace Standard, which fostered inclusive employment practices.
- Redeveloping a streamlined version to continue supporting workplaces.

### Employer Engagement

- Addressing gaps in employer awareness of available support services.
- Such as sharing resources like brochures on free workplace services.

### Community Engagement

- Understanding aspirations and barriers through targeted engagement in rural and urban areas.
- Addressing employment challenges like transport, confidence, and personal circumstances.

### Leveraging Social Value

- Using social value contracts to meet community needs and promote workforce development.

### Data and Insights

- Consolidating insights from service users, providers, and employers to inform strategies.

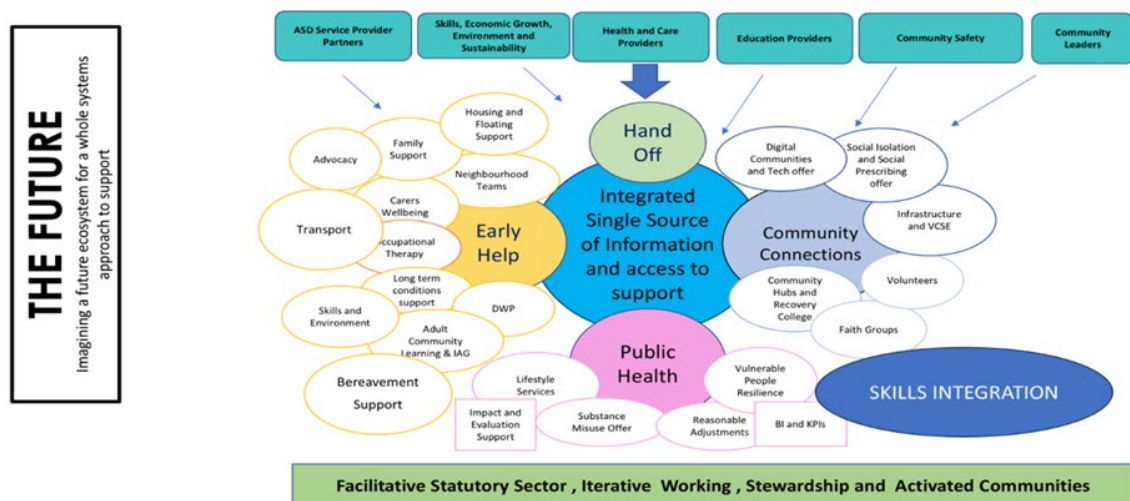
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### Connect to Work and Integrated Neighbourhood Working:

Get Britain Working and Connect to Work must be able to integrate at System, Place and at Neighbourhood level. Across the South Midlands Connect to Work geography Integrated Neighbourhood Working Models are at differing levels of maturity, however there is consensus that there is a need for an integrated Care Navigation Plus Model

that will provide a single case management system, social impact evaluation approaches and self service early intervention and prevention directory of services; that once established can be continuously updated using AI and Nudge technology. The proposed model to support this approach is set out below This approach has been delivered impactfully through Work Well Models in Leicestershire plus Cambridge and Peterborough ICBs, further proof of concept of this model has also been delivered through the Essex Wellbeing Service.

The figure below sets out a suggested delivery model:



In addition to the above model that will capitalise on Primary Care and connecting Social Prescriber/ Health Coaching resource through the Additional Role, Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS), Work and Health Stewardship Partnerships will work to support Connect to Work and more broadly the Get Britain Working ethos through case finding via Waiting Well Pathways across our acute trusts, whilst also connecting in service by service based employment support offers i.e Mental Health and Muscular Skeletal (MSK) employment advisors through a mapping programme. There is a focus on ensuring that existing pathways around IPS and other employment support offers are aligned i.e MSK, Mental Health and Addiction support offers, in order to ensure that duplication is avoided in the context of case finding and resource is directed in a way that maximises the impact of the Connect to Work offer.

Further work is underway through the Connect to Work Partnership and Get Britain Working Collaborative to refine and iterate how IPS will integrate at Primary Care Network (PCN) level including the interface with existing care pathways aligned to Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol and MSK Community Provision. A range of mechanisms for further IPS integration are anticipated and are set out below:

- Integration of IPS into Integrated Neighbourhood Models of Care aligned to the requirements of left shift and the NHS 10 Year Plan 2025
- Feasibility studies to ascertain the potential for co-location of teams to allow for sessional support to be offered within Primary Care Settings

- Further exploration i.e Bedford Borough is being undertaken to ascertain the appetite of Primary Care and Mental Health Collaboratives to host/directly employ IPS staff to aid further integration and prevent challenges with data sharing between agencies
- Data sharing and manual consent processes are being explored with a view to ensuring multi-agency and neighbourhood teams can better support individuals

A Prevention Business Case is being developed to look at the potential for the use of the Joy App to assist in delivering a more integrated Care Navigation Plus approach that will also support better Neighbourhood Working.

When the project goes live, IPS (Individual Placement and Support) integration will occur across all designated delivery areas within the South Midlands region. This includes embedding IPS principles and practices directly into frontline operations, and where possible Employment Specialists are co-located within existing IPS services, and other relevant partner agencies. This coordinated approach will ensure that IPS is not only accessible but also fully embedded into the wider employment support infrastructure from day one.

### **Bedford**

An aspiration for IPS integration into the health system in Bedford is to seek to host posts within Secondary Mental Health and Primary Care, conversations have commenced to broker pathways to securing agreement for this approach.

Additionally, work will commence on the creation of a triage system to support effective flow between the Connect to Work offer and existing employment health pathways across Mental Health, Talking Therapies, the Drug and Alcohol Service and the Community MSK service. Opportunities for co-location are being explored with Primary Care Networks and ICB colleagues, along with conversations aligned to IPS integration into Neighbourhood Working Teams.

### **Central Bedfordshire**

IPS will integrate with Primary Care Networks through a range of modalities including co-location and the potential for posts hosted within Primary Care. Joint working with the Social Prescribing, Health Coaches and Link Workers is anticipated as part of Integrated Neighbourhood Working Models. A triage system will be developed in order to ensure that individuals can be connected into existing employment health models of care where appropriate to do so i.e MSK, Neurodivergent offers and employment health advisor offers within Secondary Mental Health and Talking Therapies. Across Central Bedfordshire discussions are underway to ensure that data sharing agreements are in place to support impactful case finding i.e Fit Note Data.

### **Luton**

IPS and health integration in Luton will focus on co-location of teams, the potential for hosted posts within Primary Care, further connectivity and triage relating to existing work and health care pathways including personalised care roles, the MSK plus Primary and Secondary Mental Health Pathways. Development conversations are also underway in relation to a Care Navigation plus approach, this will align with

existing ARRS roles i.e Social Prescribing. Across the BLMK geography, conversations are also underway with ICB colleagues to support data sharing across health and Connect to Work.

### **Milton Keynes**

Initial discussions with health trust to join local IPS (Secondary Mental Health, Neurodivergent Services and Talking Therapies) with Connect to Work, and where possible, share accommodation. Working together to develop a triage type system of referrals for Milton Keynes to ensure fair and integrated employment support delivery alongside ensuring that all potential participants are signposted the service most suited to their needs.

### **North Northants**

Collective conversations are in train to ensure that data sharing arrangements are developed across the work, health and skills landscape to support impactful case finding. Initial discussions have commenced to enable the teams in North Northants to optimise co-location and further join up with Primary Care Networks, Neurodivergent Services, Secondary Mental Health Provision and Talking Therapies with Connect to Work. An element of integration is anticipated to support a triage model to ensure individuals are referred into the right service at the right time. Conversations are underway to look at key enablers to supporting a Care Navigation Plus Model within the context of Integrated Neighbourhood Working.

### **West Northants**

In West Northants conversations are underway to integrated Connect to Work into Integrated Neighbourhood Working, this will include the potential for sessional co-location of resource, the potential for hosted posts, shared training offers with ARRS roles within Primary Care such as Social Prescribers, Health Coaches and Link Workers. A business case that could support digital solutions around a Preventative Care Navigation Plus model has also been drafted. Work is also currently underway regarding the development of data sharing agreements to assist in the delivery of a more holistic support offer.

**6.1** Please provide details of your current relationships with key partners and how you will build and develop relationships with these partners during the delivery of Supported Employment funded by this Grant, with consideration of partners for future integrated support offers. This may include health partners, the JCP, voluntary sector, and other relevant local services.

The South Midlands has several relationships with partners which will support the development and delivery of Connect to Work. The Accountable Body and programme team have built on some of the relationships to ensure Connect to Work will be well embedded within the regional ecosystem, including:

**Integrated Care Boards.** The South Midlands is covered by two boards – Bedfordshire, Luton & Milton Keynes, and Northamptonshire. Both boards have been involved in the development of Connect to Work, including the Health and Work Leads, who have participated in programme meetings and assisted with the development of the delivery plan. They have provided links with other aspects of the ICB, such as the Fit Note Project within primary care providers and social prescribers, and they will also form part of our regional governance structure for Connect to Work

delivery. The ICB is also critical to helping us with integration for IPS by providing links with different aspects of our local health system including primary health care, physiotherapy services.

**JCP.** Close liaison with the DWP Regional Area Managers, Anna Marshall and Brendan Downey, continues. We have also been working with the local Partnership Managers and teams to ensure that we have a strong signposting route from local job centres. They have also provided useful demographic information about their clients within the job centre including those on a health journey so we can focus Connect to Work in the right geographical locations. We are also establishing who the best person will be in each area to provide a link person for fidelity assurance. We are also planning a joint disability confident event as part of our employer engagement.

**Probation** – We have commenced engagement with Probation, the East of England team in particular, and explored partnership options agreeing they will be a referral partner. We have discussed options for integration, but due to data sharing and other challenges, they have expressed their preference would be referral rather than full integration. We continue these discussions and ensure processes are in place by go live date and EOI to ensure that participants are able to be engaged in the programme and support available.

**Public Health** – the public health teams within each Local Authority are involved in Connect to Work and working closely with programme management and delivery teams. They have provided useful links with health partners, health data which has helped inform Connect to Work and within Northamptonshire, Connect to Work is one of the priority projects within the positive employment workstream in the Anchor Institutions Network. BLMK are exploring a similar approach.

**Office for Health Improvement and Disparity (OHID)** – ongoing engagement with including input into their wellbeing and wider determinants of health programme. OHID are providing direct input around population health data and insights.

**Other teams within Local Authorities** – we have built links with many teams within the local authorities which can assist with referral and integration for IPS within Connect to Work. For example, resettlement and refugees, care leaver support team, housing and homelessness, domestic abuse team, adult social care, youth offending teams, armed forces covenant and reablement. Many of these teams will be referral partners for Connect to Work. Some of them will be part of integration for IPS – for example in West Northants the resettlement team will be integrating IPS delivery into the service.

In addition to this, we have additional local partners in each area and have outlined below have we are developing these relationships to support Connect to Work.

**Bedford:**

- **NHS Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service.** Agreement to work collaboratively, the service will send refer people who fit programme criteria and would benefit from the Connect to Work provision. They will be a referral partner for Connect to Work.

- **IPS NHS teams and the East London Foundation Trust.** Established relationship through delivering mental health services in Bedford. Collaborative approach will continue and they will be a referral partner for Connect to Work.
- **Beds Rural Communities Charity.** Good working relationship with this charity, where the local Social Prescribers team is based. They will be a referral partner for Connect to Work – through their social prescribers.
- **Bedford College.** Excellent working relationship with this college, which delivers a skills programme aimed at supporting people wanting to focus on mental health wellbeing and recovery support.
- **YouTurn Future.** Referral network developed with this local social justice charity who support offenders and ex-offenders in Bedfordshire.

#### **Central Bedfordshire:**

- **Central Beds Council.** Children's Services, Public Health, Integrated Care Board, Housing, Refugees/migrants, and Adult Social Care are engaged and will support the referral process.
- **Established relationships with existing partners.** Whipsnade Zoo, Center Parcs, Warburtons, Amazon, NHS, Co-op, Ocado, Lidl, Bidfoods, Noatum, Bond International, and other local supermarkets through supporting local recruitment drives. These relationships will assist with ensuring we have employers to support Connect to Work.

#### **Luton:**

- **Holistic practitioners.** Total Well Being, East London Foundation Trust, The Recovery College, Mind and the Disability Resource Centre are engaged in discussions about Connect to Work. They will be referral partners.
- **Strategic partnerships.** Regular engagement through The Inclusive Economy Board, Employment and Skills Partnership Board, Skills Provider Forum, Health Equalities Board and the BLMK employment stewardship. The forums will provide strategic direction for Connect to Work.

#### **Milton Keynes:**

- **Health partners.** Collaboration embedded through existing delivery of employment support initiatives, including links with IPS SMI, IAPT Employment Support services, Recovery College run through CNWL, Public Health as part of Healthy Workplace Standards, internal Adult Social Care service and the ICB. These relationships all have a different benefit to the customer including to and from referral/support pathways, employer access for vacancies and inclusive workplaces, holistic social care support and advice and guidance. They will all form part of the referral pathway for Connect to Work.
- **JCP.** Established relationship which includes Work Coaches, the Labour Market Recruitment team, and the Disability Employment Advisor team. Information sharing protocol in place and frequent collaboration on job/careers related events and integration on local project planning.

#### **North Northamptonshire:**

- **Local employers.** Established relationship with several local employers including: Morrisons, 24x7 Group, Co-op, Phoenix Training, GXO, Amphenol Procom, Admin and More, Green Bottoms, Grange Transport, Treacle Moon, ILG, Nevara and J&J Global. Past support has included recruitment and retention and removing complex barriers to employment, including the development of accessible recruitment

pathways. We will build on these relationships to secure future employers for Connect to Work.

- **Holistic practitioners.** Emily Joy
- **Support services.** Spring Northamptonshire, Together for Mental Well-being, Salvation Army, Helpful. Will be referral partners for Connect to Work.
- **Education providers.** Bedford College, Phoenix Training, KCU, Read Easy, Multiply, Cidori, The Learning Centre. Support to raise awareness of Connect to Work.

#### **West Northamptonshire:**

- **Local employers.** The Employment Support team within the Economic Growth & Inward Investment Team has a wide network of stakeholders, organisations, and partners that we work alongside to achieve quality and sustainable employment outcomes for the people we support. The Anchor Institutions Network, led by Public Health, brings together employers across Northamptonshire – working closely with North Northamptonshire Council. One of the workstreams is Positive Employment Opportunities and Connect to Work is going to be a flagship part of this workstream.
- **Support providers.** Established relationships with a variety of social enterprises and organisations which offer support to people facing barriers to employment including: Right Resolution, Goodwill Solutions, Spring Northamptonshire, Salvation Army, Mencap, UpskillU.

**6.2** Please provide details of how you will maintain relationships with key partners, across both the geography and full spectrum of services, to ensure regular and frequent contact throughout delivery of the programme.

**Strategic approach.** As described in section 4.0, we are establishing a Partner Advisory Group that will provide strategic input to the programme. The diagram in 4.0 outlines how this advisory group will feed into the wider governance and decision making for Connect to work. This group will have terms of reference and the membership is likely to include health and social care representatives from the ICB, public health, primary care, business representative organisations, senior members of local authorities.

Based on the detail of stakeholders in Section 6.1, both regionally and locally, a communications strategy informed by a thorough stakeholder analysis exercise will identify appropriate communications channels to engage key partners, among others. The strategy will use a blend of direct and targeted engagement and broadcast tactics to encourage engagement. Whether activities are driven at an Accountable Body or Local Authority level, protocols and processes in place will ensure they are adequately supplemented and resourced.

**Regular communication.** The partnership is committed to providing regular and relevant updates to key partners. This can include a variety of meetings centring on strategic priorities of local delivery areas or the region as a whole, operational delivery of employment support across local delivery areas, and individual participant case conferencing/professionals' meetings.

Alongside meetings, regular information exchange through newsletters, good news stories, up and coming events, programme updates and important changes will be shared and publicised to key partners to ensure consistency of information and transparency of service delivery for the programme.

**Relationship management.** For key stakeholders, dedicated relationship managers/leads may be assigned at a local or regional level to facilitate engagement. The relationship manager will maintain regular contact, share information, manage concerns, and facilitating collaboration, as well as gathering feedback to understand stakeholder needs.

**Geographic considerations.** Each local delivery area will focus on strengthening their relationships with the other key stakeholders in the South Midlands to share good practice, learn from each other, work together to increase, and improve standards of delivery and performance, and develop a shared ethos for achieving the common goal of reducing economic inactivity throughout the South Midlands. The role of the Local Authority Operational Programme Group will be to act as a conduit between partners, bringing best practice to the table for the mutual benefit of all partners in the region, and to embed learning in their respective organisations.

**Multi-level engagement.** Partners aim to engage with key partners on both a strategic and operational level to ensure that best practice is shared to improve participant outcomes, while aligning Connect to Work with relevant organisational strategy and policy. Beyond regular meetings and updates, this may include co-location and cross-organisational working arrangements.

**6.3** Please provide details of how this Supported Employment provision will fit strategically within your local priorities and overall plans to tackle inactivity – building towards your work, health and skills planning. Please provide information about how the Supported Employment funded by this Grant will join up with and provide additionality to local provision in your area, including pre-existing Supported Employment or other support funded from UKSPF, WorkWell, and the Adult Education Budget.

Within the South Midlands, we have two ICBs with health and work strategies in Bedford, Luton, and Milton Keynes (BLMK) and Northamptonshire. In Northamptonshire, the Live your Best Life strategy. In BLMK the strategy is in draft form, but representatives from the ICB are helping to ensure Connect to Work is well aligned with it.

The Live your Best Life strategy has ten ambitions and Connect to Work aligns closely with these ambitions. It supports the employment and poverty reduction ambition – where supporting individuals and families with employment helps avoid poverty. It also supports second chances, providing opportunities for individuals to start anew.

Each Local Authority involved in delivery is aligned with the health and work strategies for the ICB referenced above. This is summarised for each below:

**Bedford:**

The council's Economic Prosperity Plan identifies key actions to target and stimulate investment and secure the delivery of growth in jobs and prosperity over the next five years. The programme links to the plan's 'People' theme, addressing each of the three strands of jobs, skills and wellbeing.

One of the plan's goals is to create a borough where anyone that wants to work, can. This aligns with the ethos of the Connect to Work programme which says that those



who want to work, can work with the right support, regardless of their disability or disadvantage.

The programme provides additionality to local provision by enabling our Employment Specialists to work more closely with employers, directly accessing them to ensure access to work, work adjustments and barriers to employment are removed at the earliest possible stage.

The council has a small Supported Employment team that sits within Adult Services, working in collaboration to refer some of our participants to this service and, vice versa, they refer some of their participants to the Jobs Hub.

The Connect to Work programme will not duplicate this service but complement existing provision. Any participants on the Supported Employment waiting list will be referred to the Jobs Hub subject to eligibility.

The Jobs Hub is currently delivering a UKSPF-funded employment service which focuses on those that are economically inactive. When participants come to the Jobs Hub for support services, we will ensure that they are fully assessed. Those on the UKSPF programme, who fit the eligibility criteria for Connect to Work, will be encouraged to take up that provision if the fit is better for them.

We also have a shared adult education service (BESA) with Central Bedfordshire Council, who deliver the adult education budget on Bedford Borough's behalf. During the initial engagement stage, if a potential participant is not eligible for the Connect to Work programme, we will refer them to our BESA service for adult training and education.

### **Central Bedfordshire:**

The council's Vision 2050 is a statement of aspirations for its place, people and the economy, which improves the lives of all its residents, communities and businesses.

- Skilled for the future - We want an education system that is truly inclusive, closes the skills gap, helps our young people into great jobs and supports our older generations in lifelong learning.
- A culture of innovation - We want to harness the benefits of economic recovery and growth and be increasingly productive. We will continue to nurture our local industries and leading sectors
- Diverse and flourishing local businesses - We will continue to be a great place for business - especially SMEs which bring investment, employment opportunities and vibrancy to our towns and villages.

The council's Skills for All Strategy is to create places, pathways and practices which deliver the best education and skills outcomes for residents to allow them to experience economic, social and personal success and access jobs that will drive Central Bedfordshire's future prosperity.

Central Bedfordshire's Employment and Skills Academy are currently delivering the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which focuses on supporting economically inactive people with positive results supporting many people into employment. They also have a National Careers Service contract and currently support JCP by having a presence in job centres. This presence will remain as part of Connect to Work. The DFE adult

learning budget sits within this service and the team are experienced at delivering a range of courses to support employment and upskilling, delivery is also on behalf of Bedford Borough Council.

### **Luton:**

The council's Inclusive Growth Plan identifies key actions to target and stimulate investment and secure the delivery of growth in jobs and prosperity over the next five years. The programme links to the plan's 'People' theme, addressing each of the three strands of jobs, skills and wellbeing.

One of the plan's goals is to create a borough where anyone that wants to work, can. This aligns with the ethos of the Connect to Work programme which says that those who want to work, can work with the right support, regardless of their disability or disadvantage.

Luton's Employment and Skills Plan has four strategic priorities: driving economic recovery and growth; developing a pipeline of talented and resilient people; tackling long-term inequality and economic activity and creating an adaptable, upskilled workforce.

Delivery of the Luton Employment and Skills Plan underpins the five priorities of building a more inclusive economy; improving population wellbeing; becoming a child friendly town; tackling the climate emergency and becoming a net zero town; and supporting a strong and empowered community within the Luton 2040 vision where everyone can thrive and no-one has to live in poverty.

### **Milton Keynes:**

The council has an aim for "everyone living in Milton Keynes to lead happy, healthy lives and believe that growing our city and economy is the best way to provide this" and "to make our economy work for everyone, we must make sure all our people have the skills needed to get good quality jobs." (Milton Keynes Strategy for 2050).

- Local Growth plan
- Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)
- Business Improvement District (BID) Plan 2024-2027.
- City Plan
- Education, Employment and Training Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers (2020).
- Milton Keynes City Council Plan 2022-2026.
- Co-exist with current Supported Employment team who focus on higher need individuals with SEND who are not yet in the position or have the skills to enter the competitive labour market.

The Connect to Work Programme aligns with the council's Economic Development, and Skills strategies, and local priorities in addressing economic inactivity and social disparity. Part of the Vision 2050 objectives is to accelerate social mobility by equipping residents from deprived communities with the skills needed to secure and sustain long term employment, improving life chances.

**Targeted support:** Connect to Work's focus on targeting people from identified disadvantaged groups, and providing tailored support aligns with Milton Keynes' focus

on inclusive growth and supporting economically inactive individuals. Our skills strategy prioritises widening participation among all resident groups, particularly those from disadvantaged groups, to strengthen our local labour pool and reduce the skills gaps.

**Targeted (flexible) local approach.** The flexibility in the delivery approach ensures alignment with existing strategies, such as the Regeneration Strategy and Economic Development Strategy. It will also support collaboration between the council and local employment support partners and health services, enhancing current initiatives and fostering stronger relationships.

**Skills development.** The programme's emphasis on integrating work, health, and skills support, complements Milton Keynes' focus on improving education provision and workforce skills. Enterprise and Skills are core priorities of the city's Economic Development Strategy, with an emphasis on creating an employable local workforce, equipped with the required skills to support business growth and overall prosperity.

**Long-term impact.** The programme's aim to help people into sustained employment aligns with one of the key goals of the Economic Development Strategy, of creating a more resilient and inclusive society through long term employment and career progression.

**Funding.** Access to additional funding provided by the programme will compliment the delivery existing programmes, further supporting efforts to reduce disparity and foster economic growth.

#### **North Northamptonshire:**

With 100% delivery via our existing and embedded supported employment team and with consideration to other provision closing or closed to new referrals (Work and Health Programme / Pioneer) and in the absence of WorkWell and Local Supported Employment Support in North Northamptonshire Connect to Work will become a priority provision and underpin our strategic goals toward employment, economic growth, health and skills planning. We are working towards integration with our ICB and social prescribing team as well as economic growth services to join the local dots, maximise resource and potential and ensure this provision has both maximum impact and reach. Our supported employment provision will continue to form an important part of the Economic Strategy for the area and help to ensure that local activities are aligned and provide additionality.

#### **West Northamptonshire:**

To achieve the Connect to Work priorities and outcomes we will be working closely with our 9 Local Area Partnerships (LAPs). The LAPs cover communities of between 28,000 and 76,000 people with the aim of working together to ensure health and care services are better co-ordinated and focused on the needs of each area. Each LAP has a range of organisations working together to help meet the community needs.

Three Local Area Partnerships have high proportions of population from the White non-British group, largely people of Eastern European descent based on our knowledge of those populations. This is a priority group which can often find the UK

systems of support difficult to navigate. Northampton Central can also be seen to have higher proportions of people reporting their ethnicity as Black, Asian or Mixed than much of the rest of the county. Rural West has a high proportion of working age adults; Universal Credit Health recipients and economic deprivation compared to its surrounding villages.

**6.4** Tell us about any challenges you may face in developing partnerships and an integrated approach to mobilising this Supported Employment and your approach to managing those challenges. Describe what, if any, support you may require from DWP in this process.

### **Challenges in developing partnerships across the South Midlands**

**Coordination and communication.** Effective communication and coordination among multiple partners can be challenging. Different organisations may have varying priorities, communication styles and operational procedures.

**Resource allocation.** Limited resources, such as funding, staff and facilities can hinder the ability to develop and sustain partnerships. Competing demands for these resources can create tension among partners.

**Data sharing and privacy.** Sharing data across different organisations while maintaining privacy and confidentiality can be complex. Ensuring compliance with data protection regulations adds an additional layer of complexity.

**Cultural differences.** Different organisational cultures and values can impact collaboration. Aligning these to work towards common goals requires time, effort and compromise.

### **Mitigations**

**Clear communication channels.** Open, clear, and consistent communication channels are in operation to facilitate the regular and transparent exchange of information, data and expectations; including regular meetings, data sharing and providing updates.

**Data governance framework.** A robust data governance framework will be implemented that outlines data sharing protocols, privacy measures and compliance with protection regulations. This ensures that any data is shared securely, responsibly and relevantly.

**Defined roles and responsibilities.** Each partner's roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined to avoid confusion and overlap. The Accountable Body and each local delivery area will put in place accountability mechanisms to ensure everyone meets their agreed commitments.

### **Support from DWP**

**Policy support.** Assistance from the DWP could be beneficial in navigating policy and regulatory requirements, particularly around data sharing and privacy. Clear guidelines and support in this area will facilitate smoother collaboration.

**Capacity building.** Support from DWP in building capacity of partner organisations through training, technical assistance, and access to best practices. This helps in enhancing the skills and capabilities of all partners.

**Facilitation and mediation.** In the event of relationship breakdowns, DWP can play a role in facilitating and mediating partnerships, particularly resolving conflicts. Their involvement can help in maintaining strong and effective partnerships.

Any challenges as appropriate will be included in the risk register for the programme to ensure ongoing management and mitigation.

## Section 7 - Protecting Participant data

It is important for personal data to be collected, stored, and always used appropriately and securely in line with legal and statutory requirements. The Accountable Body and their Delivery Partners are required to meet established standards for data security, including UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and other applicable data protection legislation.

**7.0** Briefly describe how you are embedding data protection by design into the design and delivery of Connect to Work.

To embed data protection by design into the Connect to Work programme, measures adopted will include:

Where possible, the South Midlands will take a common approach to data protection as outlined below. With regards to lawfulness, in line with DWP, we propose using public task approach for Connect to Work data. We will also have a common set of paperwork for participants on Connect to Work including how data will be processed and shared, and what their data subject rights are to ensure all involved in the programme are aware of the use of their personal data and that it is respected and handled accordingly in relation to the programme.

**Local Authority policies.** Each Local Authority will adhere to its own data protection policies, which comply with GDPR regulations so that data protection measures are tailored to the specific needs and contexts of each Local Authority.

In terms of demonstrating compliance (as per Article 30 of the GDPR), the Accountable Body and Local Authority Data Controllers will have Record of Processing Activities documentation to record data processing activities.

**Data Protection Officers.** Local Authorities have their own Data Protection Officer to oversee compliance, and each authority will adhere to its own practices in relation to data impact assessments, data sharing agreements, privacy notices, breach policies, and subject access requests. Officers will ensure that all data processing activities within their jurisdiction comply with GDPR and other relevant regulation including the Information Commissioner's Office.

Local Authority Data Controllers will ensure that processes are in place through which individuals can rectify incomplete or incorrect data and/or Local Authority Data Controllers will undertake regular quality assurance checks of the data they hold'

Local Authority Data Controllers will ensure that the minimum necessary data is collected and will use pseudonymisation safeguards wherever possible.

**Data Sharing Agreement.** An agreement will be established within the partner contracts of the Connect to Work programme, outlining the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved, ensuring a consistent approach to data protection across the region. This will be based on the data sharing agreement between DWP and the Accountable Body.

**Accountable Body statement.** An overarching statement will be included in the programme's contracts which will outline the Accountable Body relationship with DWP. This statement will define the roles and responsibilities of the Accountable Body in ensuring data protection compliance across all delivery areas that will satisfy the grant funding agreement.

**Subcontracting data protection.** Measures will also extend to subcontractors involved in the programme which will be both on a Accountable Body contracting level and Local Authority contracting level. Any commissioned subcontractors will be required to comply with GDPR and other relevant regulations, and their data processing activities will be monitored to ensure they meet the same standards as the primary contractors/Local Authority partners. It has been agreed with partners that any commissioned providers will not be able to sub contract any further to ensure accountability, and this will be specified in the tendering process.

**Training for staff.** All staff associated with the programme will be up to date on GDPR training and Freedom of Information training, and understand GDPR implications of the programme.

**Secure file storage.** Only authorised access to files and data relating to this programme and will be on a secure council system, such as SharePoint, and any commissioned providers will be required to provide assurance of data security measures.

**Encryption.** As appropriate documents and files will be saved and shared with encryption such as document password protection, through secure sending such as Egress. This is especially important due to potentially sensitive health personal data held in relation to the programme purpose.

**Data transferring.** The data will be transferred to DWP within the agreed requirements and processes, ensuring the protection of sensitive personal data, such as using .gov.uk emails, encryption, or potentially data transferring portals such as 'transfer your file'. Any data sharing between partners that have the appropriate data sharing agreements in place will be shared in a secure way including encrypted options through .gov emails, egress or shared file storage if appropriate – all with the purpose of minimising data touch points.

Whilst the Accountable Body will be an Independent Controller with DWP, the six Local Authorities that form the South Midlands Authorities will be Joint Controllers, but any organisation or company subcontracted for any delivery activity will be identified as a Data Processor and will have the processor relationship written into any activity and agreements.

**7.1** Explain the data sharing and data governance mechanisms within your Delivery Area, to support the delivery and evaluation of Connect to Work. This work can be

ongoing, but please elaborate as far as you are currently able on work undertaken so far.

As a South Midlands programme group, we will have a shared CRM system for the six Local Authorities and commissioned delivery partners to use to input data and caseload management. Data sharing will be governed by a data sharing agreement. PRaP licenses will be given to each of the Local Authorities to support the Accountable Body in conducting eligibility checks and uploading participant information. This will be done in line with GDPR regulations and in a consistent way to ensure compliance.

Each Local Authority will have a Data Officer who is responsible to provide the Accountable Body with information required by DWP. The Accountable Body will collate this and submit this to DWP

Sharing mechanisms will include:

**Collaboration.** Data will be shared between each partner to streamline service delivery and enhance coordination across the region. This includes sharing data on employment, health, and skills development to take a better joined up approach.

**Subcontracting.** Data may be shared with third-party organisations to support delivery under strict guidelines and contract restrictions to ensure data security and privacy in line with the above provisions, and any contractor will be a processor under the contract rather than controller.

Governance mechanisms will include:

**Legal Frameworks.** GDPR governance and adherence to ensure compliance with privacy and security standards in the UK.

**Policy guidelines.** Privacy notices will provide guidance on data sharing practices of the programme at an Accountable Body and Local Authority level, including the data that may be shared, with who, the methods of sharing, and the safeguards in place to protect sensitive personal data.

Technical notes guidance provided by DWP and details included in the grant funding agreement will be followed to ensure data is shared in a consistent and secure manner in line with programme requirements with the upmost respect for individuals personal data. This includes protocols for relationship management, data sharing and security, and audit trails.

**7.2** As the Accountable Body for your Delivery Area, it will be your role to ensure that the required Data Sharing Agreements (Agreements) are in place with (and where necessary, between) Delivery Partners, so that data can be shared for delivery and evaluation purposes, including sharing data with DWP. Please advise where Agreements are already in place or, where these are not yet agreed, outline what plans are in motion to put these in place.

Data sharing is a provision in the Heads of Terms for the South Midlands Authorities Board in relation to South Midlands services including the Growth Hub and Careers Hub, which work in the same geography of this programme.

The Grant Funding Agreement between DWP and West Northamptonshire Council as the Accountable Body will outline the relationship between the two parties as

Independent Controllers and a data sharing agreement is in the process of being agreed and signed in line with the signing of the grant funding agreement.

It has been agreed in the spirit of partnership that the Local Authorities in the South Midlands will be joint controllers of data. This is because we are taking a regional approach and as such, we consider it one programme. This will be helpful, for example, if a participant moves address within the geography.

**7.3** Provide details of the procedures and systems that you plan to deploy, to ensure that Participant information is being stored securely at all times.

The singular CRM management system for the South Midlands Connect to Work programme– including all six Local Authorities will have security access that includes:

- Log-in details linked to professional email address
- Individually set passwords
- Locally set passcodes that will be changed on a regular occurrence
- Protected systems

The system provider:

- Is ISO27001 certified
- Is cyber essentials certified
- Follows documented security policies which are regularly reviewed by a board level member within the organisation
- Has a formal documented Information Security Incident and Management Policy

**Secure file storage.** Only authorised access to files and data relating to this programme via a secure council system, such as SharePoint.

**Encryption.** Documents and files will be saved and shared with encryption such as document password protection and through secure sending such as Egress as and where appropriate.

## Section 8 – Subsidy control

The following questions relate to subsidy control. Connect to Work is not intended to be a subsidy (as defined in the Subsidy Control Act 2022) and therefore DWP needs assurances from the Accountable Body and its Additional Delivery Area Members that the Grant will not constitute “financial assistance that confers an economic advantage on one or more enterprises”.

Please detail and provide DWP with responses to the questions set out below together with sufficient evidence (if appropriate) to substantiate the responses given, to provide assurance to DWP that either a) no or only minimal economic activities are undertaken by the Accountable Body and each Additional Delivery Area Member; or b) any funds that may be granted under Connect to Work will be adequately ringfenced from any economic activities the Accountable Body and each Additional Delivery Area Member carries out.



An “economic activity” for these purposes means the offering of goods or services on a market.

Further detail on subsidy control, economic activities and ringfencing can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/658025b295bf65000d719140/uk\\_subsidy\\_control\\_regime\\_statutory\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/658025b295bf65000d719140/uk_subsidy_control_regime_statutory_guidance.pdf)

Please provide responses in respect of the Accountable Body, and each Additional Delivery Area Member.

DWP reserves the right to raise further questions if needed to establish whether or not any funding may constitute a subsidy, and ultimately decide not to award the Accountable Body the Connect to Work Grant.

8.0	Is the Accountable Body or any Additional Delivery Area Member involved in any economic activities?  <b>NB.</b> for the avoidance of doubt we do <b>not</b> consider ‘in-house’ delivery (i.e. for themselves and not commercial in purpose) by Accountable Bodies or Additional Delivery Area Members to be ‘economic activities’ as these services are not being offered on a market (as per the definition above) and they are not acting for a commercial purpose.	No
8.1	If the Accountable Body or any Additional Delivery Area Member is involved in any economic activity, what proportion of the Accountable Body's or Additional Delivery Area Member's capacity do the economic activities constitute?  Other than minor income from lettings, Building Control, Car Parking and potentially charging for activities, shops and council owned community cafes which could be economic activity for the purposes of subsidy control. However, that level of activity is extremely low being a fraction of the Council's turnover.	
8.2	Please provide a description of the Accountable Body's or the Additional Delivery Area Member's economic activities and how they relate to activities proposed to be funded under the Connect to Work Grant (including any areas of overlap).  Any funds that may be granted under Connect to Work will be adequately ringfenced from any economic activities the Accountable Body and each Additional Delivery Area Member carries out	
8.3	What measures, if any, will the Accountable Body's or the Additional Delivery Area Member implement in order to ring-fence the Connect to Work Grant funding from the Accountable Body's or the Additional Delivery Area Member's economic activities?  The budgets are not connected in any way being in separate Directorates/ Service Areas and there is no opportunity for horizontal virement as the Council's usual fiscal procedures would prevent it.	

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## Section 9 – Accountable Body declaration

By submitting this Delivery Plan signed by an authorised representative, the Accountable Body confirms that:

- The information set out in the Delivery Plan is accurate and true.
- The Accountable Body is the lead local authority applying for the Connect to Work Grant on behalf of the Delivery Area. As such, the Accountable Body confirms that it is appropriately empowered by legally authorised Additional Delivery Area Members to deliver the Connect to Work service proposed in the Delivery Plan. This includes due consideration of the mechanisms available to them to deliver the Connect to Work service.
- It will put in place its own arrangements across the Delivery Area.
- It is committed to completing and collecting MI as part of delivering a Connect to Work service (see section 'Management Information (MI) and Reporting Requirements' of the Grant Guidance for further details).
- It is committed to participating in a regional/national network to share good practice between other Accountable Bodies' delivering Connect to Work.
- It is committed to delivering Connect to Work in accordance with the final Grant Funding Agreement between the DWP and the Accountable Body.

Signature:



Name and position of authorised representative:	Martin Henry, Executive Director – Resources (Chief Finance Officer)
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Date:	4/8/2025
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For and on behalf of the Accountable Body

GRANT AGREEMENT:	Connect to Work
ACCOUNTABLE BODY:	West Northamptonshire Council
DELIVERY AREA	South Midlands
Connect To Work	Allowable Costs Register

WORKBOOK ERRORS	0
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WORKSHEET ERRORS	0
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**IMPORTANT**

The protection on the sheet will not allow additional lines to be added. Please use the tab 'Additional Information' to show any calculations and / or further data relating to the **Allowable Costs** if required that will assist DWP in understanding assumptions and calculations for cost lines within the input tabs.

The table below provides the breakdown of **Allowable Costs** that can be included in the input tabs for costs relating to this programme.

Allowable Costs Register			
Level 1 Category	Level 2 Category	Description	Allowable
Planning & Implementation Costs	Planning & Implementation Costs	Costs incurred during the planning and implementation of the Grant. They could include any costs listed below as allowable.	Yes
Staff Costs	Direct Staff Costs	Salary costs incurred from Direct Staff. Direct Staff are defined as those directly involved in front-line activities. Examples of this may be Employment Specialists and front-line supervisors. This should include the full cost to the employer, and therefore include both employer NI contributions and any pension costs.	Yes
Staff Costs	Management Staff Costs	Salary costs incurred from Management Staff. Management Staff are defined as those involved in the Management and indirect activities within the business. Examples of this may be performance manager or supply chain manager. This should include the full cost to the employer, and therefore include both employer NI contributions and any pension costs.	Yes
Staff Costs	Staff Related Expenses	Staff Related costs incurred. This is defined as any costs incurred from staff, not including salary costs. Examples of this may be staff travel and staff subsistence incurred in delivery of this Grant.	Yes
Staff Costs	Staff Training	Costs incurred training staff members. This is defined as any training staff require to deliver this Grant. Examples of this could be one-off specialist adviser training or on-going training required.	Yes
Staff Costs	Staff Recruitment	Costs incurred in recruiting staff members. This is defined as any directly attributable cost incurred in recruiting staff members. An example of this could be the cost of facilitating a recruitment event.	Yes
Staff Costs	Other Staff Costs	Costs incurred relating to staffing which do not fit into any previous category.	Yes
Accommodation Costs	Rent / Lease / Mortgage Payments	Costs incurred in relation to Accommodation. Depending upon the Supplier model this may be mortgage, rent or leased. Please ensure only costs for property directly used in delivery of this grant are included in this cost line.	Yes
Accommodation Costs	Fit-out Costs	Costs incurred in relation to the purchase of furniture, fixtures and fittings to ensure the accommodation is fit for grant delivery.	Yes
Accommodation Costs	Rates	Costs incurred from rates payable for the accommodation. Any rates applicable to the accommodation should be included in this category, which may include business rates, insurance rates and service charges.	Yes
Accommodation Costs	Facilities Management Costs	Costs incurred relating to facilities management.	Yes
Accommodation Costs	Premises Security Costs	Costs incurred relating to premises security. This should include any accommodation security costs including any security systems and security services required.	Yes
Accommodation Costs	Other Accommodation Costs	Costs incurred relating to accommodation which do not fit into any previous category.	Yes
ISIT Costs	IT Hardware	Costs incurred in relation to IT hardware used for the grant. Please include the full capital cost and no depreciation / amortisation for this category.	Yes
ISIT Costs	IT Software	Costs incurred in relation to IT software used for the grant. Please include the full capital cost and no depreciation / amortisation for this category.	Yes
ISIT Costs	IT Maintenance	Costs incurred in relation to maintenance of IT equipment used in this grant.	Yes
ISIT Costs	IT Security Costs	Costs incurred in relation to security of IT equipment and systems used in this grant.	Yes
ISIT Costs	Telephony and Communications	Costs incurred to provide telephony and communications for this grant. This category may include the provision of landlines, mobile devices and 3G cards.	Yes
ISIT Costs	Other IS IT Costs	Costs incurred relating to ISIT which do not fit into any previous category.	Yes
Participant Costs	Participant Travel Costs	Costs incurred re-imbursing travel costs to participants in relation to interviews with supplier, travel to job interviews or any other travel to support the participant gaining employment.	Yes
Participant Costs	Participant Training Costs	Costs incurred in providing relevant training courses to provide participants with relevant skills, or to move them closer to the labour market.	Yes
Participant Costs	Participant In-work Support Costs	Costs incurred in providing the participant with in-work support once the participant has gained employment. Any travel costs after the participant gains employment should be included in this category.	Yes
Participant Costs	Participant Childcare / Caring Responsibilities Costs	Costs incurred in providing the participants with financial support towards childcare and caring responsibilities, to ensure they can take up employment opportunities.	Yes
Participant Costs	Participant Mental Health Costs	Costs incurred for mental health services, wellbeing, specialist interventions and bereavement counselling.	Yes
Participant Costs	Participant IT Digital Poverty	Costs incurred relating to ISIT reducing digital poverty through providers issuing laptops and broadband for participants who want to engage digitally.	Yes
Participant Costs	Other Participant Costs	Costs incurred relating to participants which do not fit into any previous category.	Yes
Delivery Partner(s) Costs	Delivery Partner(s) Costs	All costs incurred paying Delivery Partners for grant delivery.	Yes
Operating Costs	Printing and Stationery	Costs incurred for stationery including costs for office machinery such as printers. This should also include consumable items required such as pens, paper and print cartridges.	Yes

Operating Costs	Office Equipment	Costs incurred in purchasing any other office equipment used in delivery of the grant.	Yes
Operating Costs	Postage and Courier	Costs incurred for third party courier services, including any distributions of forms and letters. Costs for any secure postage required for transferring sensitive information should also be included in this category.	Yes
Operating Costs	Marketing Costs	Costs incurred for marketing support in delivery of this grant.	Yes
Operating Costs	Storage Costs	Costs incurred for storage of documentation relating to this grant. Storage costs should only be charged when complying with data protection legislation or DWP regulation.	Yes
Operating Costs	Other Operating Costs	Costs incurred relating to operating costs which do not fit into any previous category.	Yes
Consultancy / Professional Service Costs	Legal Fees	Costs incurred for any legal fees in relation to delivering the grant.	Yes
Consultancy / Professional Service Costs	Auditing Fees	Costs incurred for any auditing fees in relation to delivering the grant.	Yes
Consultancy / Professional Service Costs	Interpretation Services	Costs incurred for any interpretation services required in delivering the grant.	Yes
Consultancy / Professional Service Costs	Other Professional / Consultancy Services	Costs incurred relating to professional and consultancy services which do not fit into any previous category.	Yes
Corporate Overheads	HR Support	Costs incurred for centralised human relations support in delivery of this grant.	Yes
Corporate Overheads	Finance Support	Costs incurred for finance support in delivery of this grant.	Yes
Corporate Overheads	Financing Costs	Costs incurred in obtaining finance to deliver this grant.	Yes
Corporate Overheads	Other Corporate Overheads	Costs incurred relating to other corporate overheads which do not fit into any previous category.	Yes

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