Leicester City Council

# Connect to Work Programme

EDTCE Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 11th March 2026

Lead director: Peter Chandler,
Director Tourism Culture and Economy

**Useful information**

- Ward(s) affected: All wards
- Report author: Joanne Ives, Regeneration Projects & Programmes Manager
- Author contact details: joanne.ives@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: 1

## 1. Summary

1.1 This briefing and presentation provides an overview of the start of the Connect to Work programme for Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland.

## 2. Recommendation:

2.1 To note and comment on the Connect to Work Programme.

## 3. Detailed report

Background

3.1 Connect to Work is the new DWP funded supported employment programme that aims to support disabled people, people with health conditions and people from disadvantaged groups with multiple and complex barriers to move into and maintain employment.

3.2 DWP is providing an annual ring-fenced Connect to Work grant to support a maximum of 1,600 people per annum (at peak volumes) across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, with volumes ramping up over time. The funding formula indicates a total grant of up to £17.2m from 2024/25 to 2029/30 to cover programme management and delivery costs.

3.3 Connect to Work requires the commissioning or establishment of a supported employment programme to 'place, train and maintain' eligible participants to move into and maintain, or retain, employment. The service will be delivered by teams of 'Employment Specialists', who will work with individuals and co-ordinate access to integrated health and wider support (for example – debt, housing, skills).

3.4 There are two forms of delivery:

- **Individual Placement and Support (IPS):** IPS integrates employment support alongside primary and secondary health services, and other support services, usually through co-location. This aims to help people accessing health services find work to aid their recovery and is typically successful in supporting individuals with low to moderate health and/or physical health conditions. Individuals will be supported for up to 12 months for out of work individuals and 4 months for in-work individuals, and DWP estimate 75% of individuals will require IPS support.
- **Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF)**: SEQF typically supports individuals with learning disabilities, autism and/or other complex disadvantages, and hence is a more intensive intervention than IPS, with individuals supported for up to 12 months for out of work individual and 4 months for in-work individuals. The

SEQF model does not involve integration/ co-location of Employment Specialists within into integrated services (i.e. clinical teams). It follows a five stage a process (client engagement, vocational profiling, job finding, engagement, on and off job support) by improving services for vulnerable job seekers, employees, and their employers. DWP estimate 25% of individuals will require this more intensive SEQF support.

Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Scheme

3.5 A working group was established across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to review the guidance, requirements of the DWP programme, led by Leicester City Council. A bid was developed and submitted in August 2025 for review by DWP, following clarification questions this was approved, and the funding contract was signed in December 2025.

3.6 The delivery approach is as follows:

- Leicester City Council: Accountable Body lead for the programme, including delivery of the SEQF model for Leicester City residents
- Leicestershire County Council and Rutland County Council to deliver the SEQF model for Leicestershire County and Rutland residents respectively.
- IPS model to be commissioned to external provider(s).

3.7 The total individuals to be supported across the life of the programme are as follows:

| Area | Total Numbers |
|---|---|
| Leicester City | 2333 |
| Leicestershire County | 2085 |
| Rutland | 244 |
| Total Individuals | 4662 |

3.8 The total targets for delivery are follows which are split across the delivery partners.

| Description | No's | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Unemployed Individuals supported | 3963 | 85% |
| In-Work individuals supported | 699 | 15% |
| | 4662 | 100% |
| Performance Indicators | | |
| 1) Unemployed Individuals into employment (starts) | 1981 | 50% |
| 2) Unemployed individuals in employment over 13 weeks at minimum wage | 1585 | 40% |
| 3) Unemployed individuals in employment over 26 weeks at minimum wage | 1149 | 29% |
| 4) In-work individuals returning to work from sick leave | 559 | 80% |

3.9 It is recognised the targets are ambitious, but these are the numbers set by DWP and what we will need to work towards.The maximum caseloads for each job coach are 20 individuals for SEQF and 25 individuals for IPS.

3.10 The total budget is split is detailed in the table below. This is the maximum allocation per year, and funding cannot be rolled into subsequent years.

| | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 | 2027/28 | 2028/29 | 2029/30 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | £000 | £000 | £000 | £000 | £000 | £000 | £000 |
| IPS Service | 0 | 250 | 1,370 | 3,442 | 2,880 | 800 | 8,742 |
| Leicestershire County Council | 45 | 525 | 531 | 919 | 951 | 373 | 3,344 |
| Rutland County Council | 0 | 42 | 76 | 99 | 118 | 60 | 395 |
| Leicester City Council | 95 | 583 | 843 | 1260 | 1251 | 737 | 4,769 |
| Total | 140 | 1,400 | 2,820 | 5,720 | 5,200 | 1,970 | 17,250 |

## 4. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

### 4.1 Financial Implications

This report proposes that Leicester City Council acts as accountable body for £17.2m of revenue grant funding from the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP). The grant agreement will set out the grant conditions.

Leicester City Council will need to incur expenditure (including payments to the other local authorities) in advance of receiving the funds from government. Any risk associated with having to repay grant money already handed over to other local authorities will be mitigated by mirror grant agreements with those organisations.

The grant includes a sum to cover the administrative cost to the Council of acting as Accountable Body. As such, it is not anticipated that there would be any net cost to the Council of the proposed arrangements.

Signed: Rohit Rughani, Principal Accountant (on behalf of HoF)
Dated: 24/02/2026

### 4.2 Legal Implications

The report is an update - previous advice has been provided in respect of the Council's role as the accountable body, funding conditions, subsidy control and procurement obligations. Ongoing legal support to be obtained as needed.

Signed: Mannah Begum, Principal Solicitor, Commercial Legal
Dated: 13 February 2026

### 4.3 Equalities Implications

Our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires us to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010 (sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, age) and those who do not. The Council also has an obligation to treat people in accordance with their Convention rights under The Human Rights Act, 1998.

The report provides an update on the development of the Connect to Work Programme across LLR and its commencement from 1 April 2026. An equality impact assessment (EIA)

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| has been undertaken on the programme (attached) and a number of equality outcomes have been identified and will be taken forward via the action plan. These include reducing digital inclusion, disability inclusion and monitoring emerging risks. The EIA will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis, as the programme progresses over the five-year period. Monitoring uptake of the programme will also help identify any gaps or areas of concern, allowing appropriate mitigating actions to be put in place. |
| Signed: Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer |
| Dated: 12 February 2026 |

| **4.4 Climate Emergency Implications** |
|---|
| There are no significant climate emergency implications directly associated with this report. As service delivery generally contributes to the council's carbon footprint, any impacts could be managed as part of any changes made to the service, such as encouraging the use of sustainable travel options, using buildings and materials efficiently and following the council's sustainable procurement guidance, as appropriate and relevant to the option selected. |
| Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246 |
| Dated: 13th February 2026 |

**5. Background information and other papers:**

N/A

**6. Summary of appendices:**

Connect to Work Presentation