



# Unlocking Potential in Telford and Wrekin: Good and Fair Employment

## Executive Summary: A High-Level Cross-Sector Alliance for Health Equity

Good and fair employment is fundamentally recognized as a critical social determinant of health, directly impacting the long-term well-being and life chances of Telford and Wrekin residents. The Unlocking Potential (UPIT) Alliance funded by Lloyds Bank Foundation has brought together a group of local and regional leaders to address systemic barriers to work.

Our strength lies in the seniority and breadth of our cross-sector engagement. Over the last two years, we have built an active alliance involving 48 local stakeholders, including the CEOs and Chairs of local organizations, alongside active employers and a People's Forum ensuring lived experience informs all strategy. This robust collaboration has identified critical health and employment barriers, including disability, ill-health, and inadequate childcare provision, with employer flexibility being a key priority.

This report summarizes our evidence and activity, establishing Good and Fair Employment for all as a core pillar of our strategy. Our focus now shifts to translating this powerful alliance and evidence into clear, evidenced-based system-level priorities for 2026.

## Why This is an Urgent Health Issue

Addressing employment inequality is not merely an economic goal; it is a direct public health imperative. This work directly aligns with the Marmot Review's principle to 'Create fair employment and good work for all' and the core mandate of Integrated Care Boards to address the Wider Determinants of Health.

Local data demonstrates the deep connection between employment status and health outcomes in Telford and Wrekin:

- **Economic Inactivity:** Telford and Wrekin's economic inactivity rate stands at 25.5%, significantly higher than both the West Midlands and national averages.
- **Deprivation:** 24.9% of the population resides in the 20% most deprived areas nationally, necessitating urgent and innovative pathways to inclusive work.

The health system itself recognizes the link between work and illness:

Unemployed people are nearly six times more likely to report poor health (14.1% vs. 2.4% of employees). Unemployment is consistently associated with an increased risk of poor mental health (e.g., depression, anxiety), cardiovascular disease, and limiting long-term illness. By tackling employment barriers, we are engaging in long-term prevention that reduces demand on acute health services.

## **The Value of Cross-Sector Collaboration and Impact**

The UPIT Alliance's cross-sector structure is our greatest asset, bringing together employers, the public sector (including Health), and the voluntary/community sector. This collaboration ensures that strategies are not siloed but address the entire system from job seeker support to internal employer practices.

## **Evidence and Key Findings**

Our work to-date, including the Good and Fair Employment Survey and the Re-imagining Recruitment events, has provided concrete evidence guiding action:

- **Disability and Health:** The high rate of ill-health and disability being reported as a barrier necessitates a focus on employer flexibility and enabling recruitment practices that look beyond traditional CVs.
- **Awareness Gaps:** Young people (16-25) are less aware of existing job support services (27% unaware), pointing to a need for centralized, targeted information.
- **Employer Practice:** We are actively engaging the Telford Employer Group and partnering with the Chamber and the Telford Business Board to champion progressive, health-enabling practices, such as prioritizing staff health and well-being and better connecting staff to local public health resources.

Our influence extends beyond the local area, positioning Telford and Wrekin as a test-and-learn area: Our model has been showcased as a successful case study in the Midlands Good Work Movement report and we continue to engage with regional partners (including Keele University, ACAS, and the TUC) to embed our principles more widely.

## **Systemic Priorities for 2026 and Strategic Asks**

Our immediate focus is to translate the commitment of our senior stakeholders and our evidence base into sustainable, long-term systemic change, moving from reactive short-term funding to prevention.

## **Confirmed System Priorities for 2026**

1. **Employers Taking More Social Responsibility:** Fostering stronger, formalized partnerships between employers and community organizations.
2. **Developing a Job Seeker Accreditation Scheme:** This will provide more inclusive pathways for those furthest from the job market.

3. Centralised Work Experience Opportunities: Creating easily accessible and quality work experience across the borough.
4. Innovating Recruitment Practices: Championing health-enabling approaches to recruitment that reduce bias and focus on potential.

### **Our Asks of the Health and Wellbeing Board**

To ensure maximum impact and system-wide accountability, we request the Health and Wellbeing Board to:

1. **Establish Good and Fair Employment as a Core Pillar** of the borough's Public Health and Well-being Strategy, allowing for full resource alignment and shared progress reporting with our collective work.
2. **Assign a Senior Public Health Lead** (e.g., a designated Board member) to actively champion and support this vision, ensuring system-wide accountability and resource alignment.
3. **Align Existing or Future Public Health Funding/resources** (e.g., health promotion, prevention budgets) with our system change priorities, solidifying our shift towards long-term prevention