



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Health & Wellbeing Board

Thursday 27 November 2025

Connect to Work Update

Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children, Young People, Education, Employment & Skills
Lead Director:	Simon Wellman - Director: Education & Skills
Service Area:	Education & Skills
Report Author:	Richard Probert – Strategic Lead – Adults and Communities
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	Health & Wellbeing Board – 27 November 2025

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that the Health and Wellbeing Board:

- 1.1 Recognise the positive impact Connect to Work will have locally in supporting people with disabilities, additional needs and other barriers into employment, and through its work support and encourage relevant partners to make referrals to the programme.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a briefing on Connect to Work including an update on delivery since the programme went live.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The 'Get Britain Working' white paper (November 2024) set out the government's aim to create a new programme called 'Connect to Work', with a purpose to

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provide support to adults with disabilities, health conditions and other complex needs to move into and/or sustain employment. All local authorities (or combined authorities) are being provided with funding to deliver this initiative.

- 3.2 Connect to Work is designed to help and support unemployed adults with more complex needs into work. It aligns well with our ambitions for economic development and the Skills Strategy.
- 3.3 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) approached Shropshire Council in November 2024 to ask them to act as the Lead Accountable Body for Connect to Work across The Marches geographical area (Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and Herefordshire) to develop and implement a delivery plan.
- 3.4 DWP will pay funding quarterly in arrears based on actual spend, up to the amount agreed in the delivery plan. DWP expect a very detailed Grant Cost Register to be submitted by each local authority, detailing monthly programme start profiles and planned monthly expenditure for each and every post and expenditure line.
- 3.5 Shropshire Council will sign the funding agreement with DWP and will put in place mirror agreements with Herefordshire Council and Telford and Wrekin Council. Funding is initially for 3 years with a 2-year extension, but DWP is already strongly indicating they expect the programme to run well beyond year 5 pending confirmation of future Treasury funding commitments.
- 3.6 DWP will provide funding worth up to an average of £4000 per person for participation in the programme and Telford and Wrekin has been set a target of 300 people starting the programme each year when in full delivery, but with recognition that authorities will need time to build capacity and programme starts will be lower in year 1 and 2. Delivery is broadly expected to start within 6 months of 1st April 2025.
- 3.7 Oversight and governance of the Connect to Work programme sits with The Marches Joint Committee, this arrangement has been used for previous Marches-wide funded projects. Locally, it is proposed that our performance will be tracked within the Education and Skills directorate and in corporate performance measures.
- 3.8 DWP has specified that delivery must operate two models of supported employment; Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF). Each model provides 1:1 support from specialist staff operating a caseload with defined maximum caseload sizes per staff member. (25 for IPS, 20 for SEQF)
- 3.9 Customers' participation in the Connect to Work programme is voluntary, and they can receive up to 12 months of initial support if unemployed, and up to 4 months if already in work but at risk of losing their job due to disability or health issues.
- 3.10 DWP currently expect at least 50% of participants to achieve 'first earnings', but targets will be kept under review as national performance trends become available.

- 3.11 DWP will undertake monthly monitoring of programme performance, annual fidelity reviews and quarterly finance assurance of actual spend.
- 3.12 Connect to work is being delivered as a strand of the council's Job Box service.

4.0 Summary of Main Proposals

- 4.1 Reorganisation and expansion of the existing Job Box Delivery Team, has been undertaken to create the capacity needed to start delivery of Connect to Work in line with the DWP approved grant cost register.
- 4.2 Staffing ratios and maximum caseload sizes demanded by the programme and IPS/SEQF fidelity standards dictate the amount of staffing required for delivery.
- 4.3 In addition to the existing 3 FTE supported Employment Specialist posts, an additional 13 FTE Employment Specialists are required to deliver Connect to Work to the scale expected by DWP when at full capacity.
- 4.4 DWP has set profiled targets for each year of delivery, these are set out in the table below:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Starts	69	175	339	314	31	928
Employment Outcomes	35	88	170	157	16	466
Delivery Staffing Req.	Add +3 FTE	Add +5 FTE	Add +5 FTE	No Change	Minus 13 FTE	

- 4.5 In addition to saving the costs of the existing Job Box Delivery Team's staffing. Connect to Work income will be able support some other existing staffing costs that were previously funded by the Multiply programme which ended on 31st March '25, which has saved potential redundancy costs.
- 4.6 3 FTE Job Box posts have been separated out from the current team to continue providing the drop-in desk in SW1. Within the Job Box service there is now a job Box team and a Connect to Work Team in line with the original proposals.
- 4.6 Currently we have been able to successfully recruit an additional 2 FTE Employment Specialists, with an additional 1 FTE required to complete the Year 1 staffing capacity. Interviews for this remaining post are taking place on Friday 21st November.
- 4.7 As shown in 4.4 above, further recruitment activity will be needed to add the capacity required to deliver Yr 2 and beyond, in line with DWPs funding profile. However, there are 2 FTE Employment Specialists working on the DfE funded

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non-EHCP Pilot programme that can be transferred onto Connect to Work, if DfE does not continue their funding beyond August '26.

- 4.8 Connect to Work went live at the end of September 2025, the first month of delivery was October. The starts target for October was 7 and the service achieved 8 starts.
- 4.9 Demand for the programme has been positive in these early stages with 21 expressions of interest in the first month.
- 4.10 Since the programme started the service has already supported 2 participants to achieve an employment outcome.
- 4.10 Currently a key focus is training and development of new Employment Specialists and a comprehensive training and mentoring programme is in place to support them, which will be followed with ongoing professional development.
- 4.11 Work is ongoing to develop further referral pathways in to Connect to Work, particularly with primary care networks and musculoskeletal services within the NHS. Existing links with other priority groups are also being strengthened with allocated Employment Specialists acting as the link and with the possibility of co-locating with teams/services to enable greater integration and drive referrals. This activity will continue to expand as the team increases its capacity, and the programme starts target increases.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 SMT and Business Board approved adopting a direct-delivery approach to Connect to Work, as it offers the greatest flexibility and responsiveness to local needs. The approach to delivery will be kept under review and should any changes be necessary in the future further reports will be provided for SMT and Cabinet's consideration.
- 5.2 Shopshire Council are directly delivering Connect to Work through their Enable service.
- 5.3 Herefordshire have changed their approach, deciding now on a mixed delivery model of direct and commissioned provisions, rather than being wholly commissioned. They will now directly deliver the SEQF strand of Connect to Work through their Youth Hub, and commission the IPS strand.
- 5.4 Currently only Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire Council's have gone live, with Herefordshire due to go live with direct delivery in December, and commissioned provision due to commence in January.

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 DWP is funding the programme by quarterly reimbursement of actual spend, not payment by outcomes, which has historically been the approach taken by DWP.

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This significantly reduces the financial risk to the Borough if delivery does not perform to the expected standard/scale. DWP has taken this funding approach specifically for this reason, to ensure LAs are willing to engage in delivery of the programme.

- 6.2 Failure to recruit sufficient numbers of quality staff would put the overall delivery of the programme at risk, but this can be mitigated for through multiple robust recruitment activities. We have also put in place comprehensive training and development so that we can support people with the right qualities to learn and grow into roles.
- 6.3 Securing sufficient levels of referrals and programme starts as the programme expands in Year 2 and beyond is a risk, however as outlined above, referral pathways are being developed and strengthened in order to mitigate this risk. This work will be ongoing for the duration of the programme.

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 The proposals set out in this report support the following council priorities:
- Every child, young person and adult lives well in their communities.
 - Everyone benefits from a thriving economy.
 - A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 DWP is providing 100% of the funding to support the additional costs of delivering the Connect to Work Programme. As this funding is based upon agreed costs, rather than delivery criteria, the financial risk of the programme is significantly reduced.
- 8.2 As noted above, the Connect to Work Programme has enabled some existing staff within the Council's Job Box service to transfer to this new programme. Much of the funding for the Skills area as a whole comes through government grants, some of which have delivery criteria attached. The financial position of the area will be kept under review as part of overall financial monitoring, to ensure that it remains within the overall financial resources that are available.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 Connect to Work funding will pass as a grant to the Accountable Body by virtue of S.2 of the Employment and Training Act 1973. As regards the definition of those within a disability group a disabled person remains defined under s.6 Equality Act 2010 and disadvantaged groups are detailed within the Connect to Work Guidance in Annex B. Connect to Work is aligned with the Council's objectives

and as regards the contractual arrangements the DWP contracts with Shropshire Council primarily as the Lead Accountable Body.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 Connect to Work will provide a significant increase in support for adults with disabilities and/or health conditions, or other complex need to seek, find and sustain employment. Increased employment levels is a positive outcome for all wards.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

- 11.1 Improved support for adults with disabilities and/or health conditions will lead to increased employment levels. Adults in employment typically have better health than adults who are unemployed, in terms of both physical and mental health.
- 11.2 Increased levels of employment will have a positive impact on the Borough's economy.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1 Connect to Work will deliver significantly increased levels of support for adults with disabilities and/or health conditions or other complex need. These groups typically face significant barriers to employment and other disadvantages. Improved levels of support will positively impact the opportunities and outcomes for this group.
- 12.2 Although the overall capacity for supported employment will increase, beyond what is currently provided by the existing Job Box Delivery Team. The eligibility criteria for the Connect to Work programme does have some limitations. Some adults that would previously have had support through JBDDT, may not be eligible for Connect to Work, however it is anticipated that this would be small number of people. Additionally, JBDDT support is not time-limited and can therefore work with adults with most complex need over a longer period of time, whereas Connect to Work support is time-limited to 12 months.

13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

- 13.1 The climate change and environmental impact as a result of Connect to Work is expected to be minimal.

14.0 Background Papers

None.

15.0 Appendices

None.

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	19.11.2025	19.11.2025	ON
Finance	19.11.2025	19.11.2025	TD
Director	19.11.2025	19.11.2025	SW