



Board Meeting (Agenda Item 6)

Date: 19 March 2025

Title: Connect to Work Programme Update

Director: Keri Denton, Director of Performance and Partnerships (DCC)

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Combined County Authority (and confirmation under the provisions of the Constitution) before taking effect.

In order for this matter to be agreed, it requires:

- (a) The majority of members of the DTCCA (or their substitutes) present and voting at the meeting to be in favour.
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1. Recommendation

- 1.1 That the Board note that Devon County Council is the nominated Accountable Body for the Connect to Work programme and the intention that this responsibility transfers to the DTCCA at a future date to be agreed.
- 1.2 Agree that in the interim period, a twin track decision making and governance approach will be adopted to aid a smooth transition to the DTCCA at an agreed future point.
- 1.3 Agree the intended delivery approach for the programme during 2025/26 and the use of £100,000 implementation funding by Devon County Council.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 This report sets out the current known position on the Connect to Work Programme (CTW), and the proposed next steps for local mobilisation.
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- 2.2 The preparatory work for the CTW programme began in advance of the establishment of the DTCCA, and the report proposes an approach for 2025/26, that can support programme delivery while being cognisant of future responsibility and accountability transitioning to the DTCCA in future.

3. Background

- 3.1 Connect to Work is a voluntary supported employment programme, led by DWP but devolved to local authority areas, aimed at assisting individuals who face significant barriers to employment. It is focused upon those aged 18 plus with a disability, health condition, or other complex personal challenges, with an emphasis on both supporting individuals to access work and supporting those in the workplace to retain work who may otherwise be at risk of a loss of employment.

- 3.2 DWP specifies two approaches for delivery of the programme:

Individual Placement and Support ('IPS') – An offer where individuals benefit from a traditional support offer to enter employment and supported by primary and secondary health services, and other support services. Integration of the offer is normally achieved through the co-location of advisory and support services, to ensure a seamless offer to individuals. IPS is particularly successful in supporting individuals with mild to moderate mental health and/or physical health conditions, as opposed to those with more severe mental health and drug and alcohol challenges, who are catered for through alternative programmes.

Supported Employment Quality Framework ('SEQF') – A more in-depth intervention than IPS, oriented towards supporting those with more acute learning disabilities and/or autistic adults, as well as wider complex support needs, but where clinical integration may not be needed or appropriate.

- 3.3 In bringing forward the CTW Programme in the local area, DWP expects authorities to deliver a 75% / 25% split between IPS and SEQF, mixing a programme of supporting those in employment (15%) with those moving people into employment (85%).

Overview of Local Programme Scope and Accountability

- 3.4 DWP has allocated around £30m to the Connect to Work Programme in Devon, Plymouth, and Torbay through to 2030, with local authority partners required to work with 1,900 individuals per annum over the next five years, at a cost of £3,800 each. The grant however is only confirmed by DWP on receipt of a satisfactory Delivery Plan submitted by the accountable body. The Delivery Plan should set out how the Grant is to be used to deliver the CTW programme across Devon, Plymouth, and Torbay together with a spend profile. (Grant Cost Register) which forms the basis of the contract.

- 3.5 A more detailed breakdown of the grant element and related deliverables is provided in table 2 below. Delivery increases after mobilisation and then reduces in the final year. It is anticipated that DWP will consider future funding as part of the next Spending Review for a continuation of support and depending on evaluation of the CTW.

Table 1 - Allocation of Annual Funding

Local Authority	Maximum Participant Numbers at Peak Activity	Maximum Annual Funding Allocation at Peak Activity
Programme Governance (Devon)		£ 509,838
Plymouth	700	£ 2,350,544
Torbay	300	£ 1,020,060
Devon	900	£ 3,339,558

Table 2 - Allocation of DWP Grant and Required Outcomes Per Area

Local Authority	Maximum Participant Numbers at Peak Activity	Allocation of DWP Early Payment of Grant Payment
Devon	900	£ 50,000
Plymouth	700	£ 35,000
Torbay	300	£ 15,000

- 3.6 The programme represents the first time where a national health and work programme has been devolved, whilst the model has been designed nationally and provides consistency across the country. CTW is the first national programme being implemented under the Get Britain Working policy and the DTCCA will be required to produce a local Get Britain Working Plan, as set out in the devolution framework within the English Devolution White Paper.
- 3.7 Within the Devon, Plymouth, and Torbay delivery area, DWP identified Devon County Council as the Accountable Body for the operation of the CTW programme. This decision predates the agreement of the devolution deal and formation of the DTCCA, and it is proposed that the Council performs this role until arrangements are made with DWP for the DTCCA to become the Accountable Body. DWP expect that the responsibility for Accountable Body status will move to the DTCCA in line with the devolution framework. Further dialogue and is required between the DTCCA, Devon County Council (DCC) and DWP to understand the mechanism for the transfer at a future point.
- 3.8 However, to aid a future transition of the Accountable Body responsibility and accountability for the programme, this report details an approach of twin tracking governance and financial decisions from the inception of the programme.
- 3.9 This paper also sets out DCC's intended approach including the use of an initial £100,000 mobilisation funding.

Emerging Operational and Governance Approach

- 3.10 To mobilise activity and deliver the 1,900 annual placements required by the CTW programme, considerable work has already been undertaken by the County Council working in partnership with Torbay Council and Plymouth City Council to develop a preferred approach to local delivery and governance that meets DWP criteria for operation and management of CTW funds. There are three elements that the County Council is

proposing and under a twin-track decision process is seeking agreement from the DTCCA Board:

a) Accountable Body Relationship

- 3.11 Acting on behalf of the three upper tier local authorities and the DTCCA, DCC will operate as the accountable body for the CTW Programme. It will be responsible and accountable for the delivery of at least the first year of the programme. During this time future delivery arrangements will be jointly considered by the DTCCA, DCC and DWP.
- 3.12 To ensure consistency and line of sight around programme decisions in the interim period, DCC will take a twin track approach to agreeing any substantive matters with the DTCCA. Financial decisions, including procurement and reporting will be undertaken in accordance with DCC's usual processes, however where these have implications or span future years of delivery a view from the DTCCA will be sought to inform DCC's decisions. Reports and monitoring will be shared with the DTCCA as requested. Advice on the scrutiny and audit approach is required to support a smooth transition.
- 3.13 The CTW programme spans Plymouth which is not part of the DTCCA. It is proposed that a Connect to Work Programme Board reporting into the DTCCA Skills and Employment Advisory Group (SEAG) is created with representation from Plymouth. The programme board could be a task group, under the SEAG which is provided for within its Terms of Reference.
- 3.14 It is anticipated that the CTW delivery plan will be signed off in April / May 2025 and submitted to DWP. Establishing the Programme Board is a priority and will be considered at the first meeting of the SEAG.

b) Programme Management

- 3.15 A programme team is required to support delivery. This team will be recruited to over the coming months with a lead role being recruited now and funded from the £100,000 up front allocation from DWP. The Director of Operations for the DTCCA would be invited to be part of the recruitment and the design of the team required.
- 3.16 Appendix 1 provides an initial outline of the proposed core team developed with Torbay Council and Plymouth City Council and shared with DWP colleagues. It should be noted discussions around the central management function are still ongoing with DWP.

c) Emerging Programme Delivery Approach

- 3.17 Following preparatory work across the local area that has considered the current delivery landscape, the emerging proposed CTW programme falls into three place-based delivery approaches. This will involve the CTW core team working with the three upper tier authorities to tailor delivery and stakeholder engagement within each area. Whilst this work is still ongoing, a brief overview of progress to date and the approach to delivery of the CTW service in each area is set out below:
- **Devon:** A mix of in-house and externally commissioned delivery working with Public Health, Adult Social Care and Children's' services.
 - **Torbay:** Commission / procure through a common approach with Devon.

- **Plymouth:** majority in house staffing and delivery, working with local health colleagues and in liaison with the core team working on outreach, engagement, and commissioning.

3.18 The final model and funding agreements still need to be put into place and will be reported to a future Board meeting.

DWP Mobilisation Grant

3.19 As part of the initial joint working with DWP, the county Council has been awarded a £100,000 of initial funding to support delivery plan development and implementation over the next six months.

3.20 Following consultation with the three upper tier authority partners, it is currently proposed that the funding is used for two discrete functions:

- **Recruitment of a Programme Lead** – Recruitment and tasking of a programme lead officer within DCC to cover the next 9 months offered as a secondment and develop the Devon implementation model.
- **Support for in House Resources within Plymouth and Torbay Councils** – Support for existing team resources within Plymouth and Torbay to lead on the development of local delivery plans.

4. Options and alternatives

4.1 There is an option where DCC and local authority partners continues to develop and implement the first year of the programme without engaging the DTCCA. This would not provide for any dual consideration of key decisions and would not support a smooth transition at the appropriate time. It would also not provide for the level of awareness and knowledge of the programme within the DTCCA and its Advisory Groups and would hamper the consideration of the programme within the development of other programmes and projects, strategies and plans being led by the DTCCA, including the development of a local Get Britain Working Plan.

4.2 There is an option where the programme moves under the DTCCA in terms of responsibility and accountability immediately. As the Accountable Body for the programme and the DTCCA this may be straightforward, however as the CCA is focused on its processes, procedures the capacity to take on this significant programme and within the timescales set by DWP would be challenging. This is likely to create delay and reputational risk for the DTCCA.

5. Financial considerations

5.1 Whilst DWP have confirmed the volumes of delivery required at peak activity together with the maximum payment for each beneficiary, final confirmation of any further grant funds (beyond the £100,000 already confirmed to DCC) will not be received until the Delivery Plan and Cost Register is approved by DWP and the offer signed by the Accountable Body. As such, there are no major financial decisions related to this paper for the DTCCA beyond endorsements of DCC's proposed use of its enabling grant.

6. Legal considerations

- 6.1 There are no substantive legal considerations associated with this report. DCC is developing a Memorandum of Understanding to transfer the proposed contribution to Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council that sets out the required setting up and mobilisation work for the first six months.

7. Environmental impact considerations

- 7.1 There are no environmental impact considerations arising from this report.

8. Equality considerations

- 8.1 There are no specific equality impact considerations arising from this report except to say the programme targets employment support to many of the most disadvantaged residents across Devon, Plymouth, and Torbay. Eligibility requirements for the programme are determined by DWP.

9. Engagement and consultation

- 9.1 DCC has been working with Plymouth and Torbay Council's to develop the Delivery Plan and worked closely with DWP.
- 9.2 Informal conversations have been held with a variety of stakeholders, mindful of procurement regulations to inform the decisions within the Delivery Plan.
- 9.3 Market engagement is planned for March 2025 for Devon and Torbay.

10. Associated risks

- 10.1 The key risks relate to timing of the governance processes and decision-making with DWP which will impact on the programme performance through pushing back delivery starts, completion of procurement and loss of existing staff in post which will negatively impact on the programme ability to meet the agreed performance profile.
- 10.2 As a national programme, the wider systems ability to effectively resource this through skilled staff across in-house and procured services may impact on the programme performance.
- 10.3 A detailed risk register is being developed as part of the specification required for DWP and will sit under the Risk Register of DCC, if agreed by the DTCCA.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 The Connect to Work programme will support the employment of a considerable number of adults both those in work and those out of work. It is a significant programme and the first time that a national work programme has been devolved. It represents a significant opportunity for the area, and the proposed approach and transitional arrangements would support a smooth start to the programme.

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

None

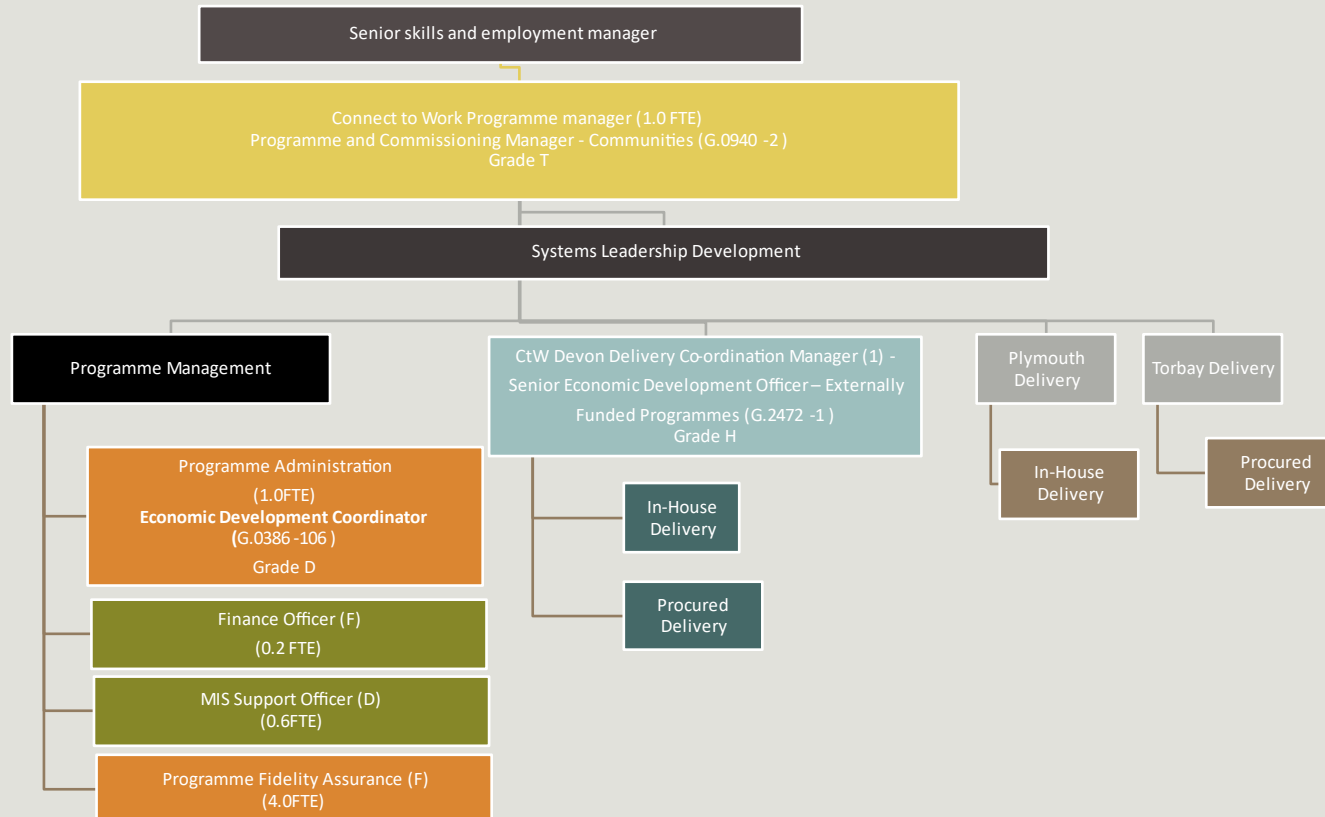
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Appendix 1 – Core Team Structure

Connect to Work Programme Management



Key	
Employment Position	Yellow
Employment Position	Orange
Function from EES / Corporate Services	Green
External to DCC Delivery	Brown
DCC Delivery	Dark Blue