



Report to:	Employment and Skills Committee
Date:	19 October 2023
Subject:	Employment Support
Director:	Felix Kumi-Ampofo, Director of Inclusive Economy, Skills, and Culture
Author:	Josh Rickayzen, Policy Officer Anna Myers, Employment Support Manager

Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1. To update members on the ongoing work related to the co-development of the Employment Support Blueprint.
- 1.2. To update members on the progress of partnership work being undertaken to agree a set of design principles for 'Youth Hub' delivery across West Yorkshire as a template for best practice for Employment Support for young people searching for work, building on national, regional and local partner offers and ensuring that there is flexibility to respond to local need.
- 1.3. To inform members of the change request related to the local delivery of Employment West Yorkshire.

2. Information

Evidence Base (see appendix 1 for further detail)

- 2.1 Labour market conditions in West Yorkshire are showing signs of softening, reflecting the national position and the impact of interest rate rises and slow growth in the economy. There are some distinct patterns in local authority areas.
- Employment growth has levelled-off in recent months, whilst the average level of pay is starting to decline.
 - The claimant count has been growing since late 2022, albeit at a modest rate, with young people worst-affected.
 - The employment rate for young people is currently falling and inactivity is rising for the group, partly due to ill-health
 - However, recruitment demand reflected in online job postings currently remains robust.
- 2.2 The region also faces structural challenges arising out of high levels of economic inactivity, particularly for groups who are disadvantaged in the labour market. These issues were examined in the employment support paper prepared for the July meeting of the Committee.
- Specific groups of young people face significant levels of disadvantage when attempting to access the labour market, including care leavers, young offenders and disabled young people.
 - Targeted and bespoke provision is required to meet the needs of groups that face disadvantage within the labour market, through an enhanced, place-based employment support system.

Employment Support Blueprint

- 2.3 As previously reported to the Committee, an employment support blueprint is being co-developed by the Combined and Local Authorities to set out how the system could work better at a regional and local level for local residents and the regional economy, building on the principles of the [LGA's Work Local model](#). The work is being overseen by a Project Board made up of multi-disciplinary teams from the Combined and Local Authorities with the aim to prepare for future devolution opportunities and respond to government policy, programme interventions in the meantime. Inclusion of local Employment and Skills Boards in the co-development of the Blueprint and to embed Work Local principles, inviting Chairs of local Employment and Skills Boards to West Yorkshire's Employment and Skills Committee could be considered.
- 2.4 Work continues to be undertaken in co-developing the West Yorkshire Employment Support Blueprint and members of the Committee will be invited to indicate their preference for a date to join a private workshop to support its design and development.

2.5 Alongside this, a number of further opportunities to have been identified to raise the profile of the work taking place in West Yorkshire on the Employment Support Blueprint. These include:

- Working with the *Institute of Employment Studies* to host an evidence session for their *Commission on the Future of Employment Support*. This session will focus on discussing what a better system for Employment Support would look like.
- Hosting an evidence session in November in West Yorkshire with Policy Connect, as part of their *Skills 2030* inquiry, focussed on the theme of *Devolution & Skills Policy*, which will provide further opportunity to explore the intersection of skills, employment and devolution with gathered experts.
- Facilitating a visit to a local Youth Hub by the Mayor of West Yorkshire, in order to understand how national, regional and local multi-agency partner provision works at its best.
- Building relationships with the Employment Related Services Association and exploring how their Youth Employment Forum can provide opportunity to showcase the approach to Youth Hub delivery in West Yorkshire.

Youth Hubs – Current Delivery

2.6 ‘Youth Hubs’ as a model have been in existence for some time. During the pandemic, DWP provided funding to areas where there was an absence of provision at the national level. The model is not ‘owned’ or driven by any government department or agency.

The DWP’s Youth Offer is often routed through and located in ‘Youth Hubs’. The Youth Offer seeks to provide targeted and bespoke employment support to those aged 16-24, who are currently in receipt of Universal Credit (UC). A recent expansion of eligibility for this service from 25th September means that those considered economically inactive (and not in receipt of UC) can now receive support through the Youth Offer.

2.7 Each strand of the Youth Offer is distinct in that the service is designed around level of need of the claimant and an assessment of the individual’s distance from the labour market. There are 3 key strands to the Youth Offer:

Youth Employment Programme

13 weeks of support and provision, delivered through work coaches at a Jobcentre. The aim is to help individuals prepare for work, and can include SWAPs, work experience and mentoring circles.



Youth Hub Offer

DWP policy intent is that, in partnership with key stakeholders, a holistic service is delivered to claimants aged up to 24. DWP Youth Hub attendees receive up to 6 months support from a Work Coach, based at an offsite location that is distinct from a Jobcentre. Support from Work Coaches includes CV development and interview preparation, alongside promoting and supporting claimants to access other services that remove barriers into work. Youth Hubs operate on a pure partnership model. Partners are invited to co-locate to offer services (e.g. mental health support, social housing/welfare advice) that address wellbeing needs that may present barriers to employment. Youth Hubs are delivered within each Local Authority area in West Yorkshire but models differ.

Youth Employability Coaches

Intensive support for claimants with extensive barriers to work, who are assessed as being up to 12 months away from work. Youth Employability Coaches may be based in job centres, outreach locations or youth hubs. Suitable locations are determined according to customer need.

- 2.8 Currently the delivery of Youth Hubs differs across West Yorkshire, with regards to the physical location of the hubs, the additional services provided for customers alongside employment support provision, and the partners co-located within the Hubs. Some Youth Hubs in West Yorkshire have been led by DWP's Youth Offer and follow the model described above, whilst others vary.
- 2.9 Evaluation of Youth Hubs has identified potential to have improved outcomes for young people and their labour market status. The Committee has previously identified youth employment as an area of priority and in partnership with DWP, Police and Crime, Local Authorities and others, an exercise to map the current offer in West Yorkshire been undertaken to inform a set of co-developed design principles for Youth Hub commissioning, and local delivery across West Yorkshire. The principles are based on existing good practice from Youth Hubs both within the region and from further afield and are predicated on LGA Work Local principles to allow for adaptability of the delivery model in Local Authority areas in order to meet place-based need whilst improving regional coordination of commissioning and wider agency services and partnerships.

Youth Hubs – UKSPF

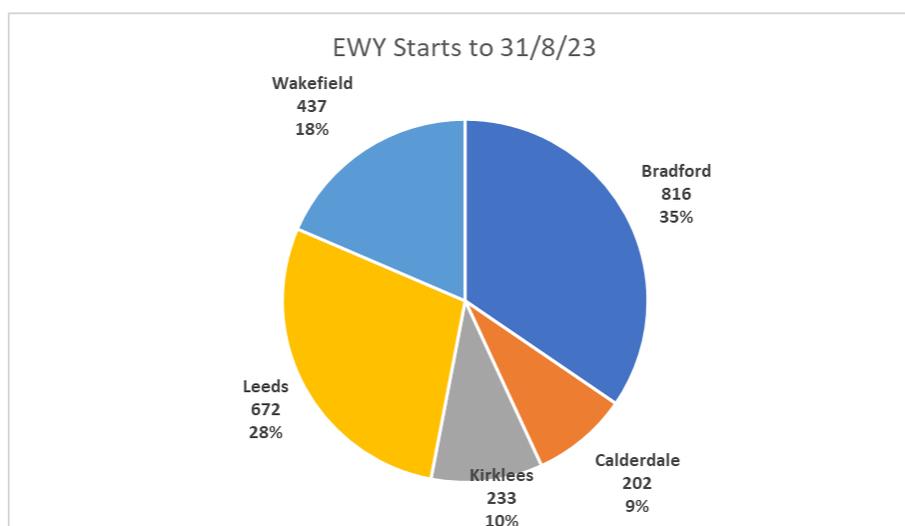
- 2.10 As discussed at July's committee, £2m has been allocated to an open call developed with Local Authorities through UKSPF, to appoint an organisation to provide coordination of youth hub services complementary to targeted youth unemployment activity and identifies best practice to inform future youth employment activity.

Work & Health

- 2.11 As discussed previously, long-term health conditions and disability – across all age groups – are a key contributor to economic activity in the region. There are a number of programmes designed to support those experiencing long-term sickness with employability related activity. These include:
- **Universal Support** – a package of support through DWP/JCP provision, designed to support claimants to overcome complex barriers to work through matching them with employers and providing wraparound in-work support.
 - **Local Supported Employment** – grant funding provided by DWP for local councils, to help adults with learning disabilities to move into competitive employment.
 - **Work & Health** – tailored support to meet individual needs of those with long-term health conditions/disabilities. Funding for this programme is due to end in 2024.
- 2.12 To ensure that West Yorkshire is well placed to maximise any future opportunities for its residents through national funding rounds and pilots, a Work and Health Partnership working group has been established, bringing together Local Authority public health leads, Local Authority skills officers, and Combined Authority officers across employment, skills and health. The aims of the group are to:
- define current challenges facing West Yorkshire re health and work inc key drivers and any insight we collectively hold from communities
 - key areas for intervention across the spectrum of whole population and efforts to target intervention
 - describe learning from best practice
 - map the existing work across the West Yorkshire partnership (WYCA/LAs/ICB/DWP)
 - set out next steps and areas of further development
- 2.13 An open call to the maximum value of £4m will be available through UKSPF Pillar 3 to fund interventions to support individuals or households with multiple health related challenges to address inequalities and remove barriers to employment.
- 2.14 A further open call for a community grants programme will also be available through UKSPF to support activities delivered by appropriate third sector organisations, and provide a balanced regional portfolio and specialist community based provision for individuals and communities with multiple and complex barriers to engage with work and other activities.

Current Delivery; Employment West Yorkshire – Delivery and Change Request

- 2.15 Employment West Yorkshire is a universal regionally co-ordinated employment support programme delivered by the five West Yorkshire local authorities. Between April 2023 and March 2025, the programme will support 7,700 people of all ages. Employment West Yorkshire provides support, advice and guidance to move customers closer to the labour market/into new employment, and supports the acquisition of skills to allow for progression (both towards work and in work).
- 2.16 In the first five months of delivery Employment West Yorkshire (EWY) has engaged 2,360 individuals across the region. Overall engagement performance is above expected delivery target to date and demonstrates the programme's ability to reach a diverse range of individuals from the region's local communities. Below is a breakdown of the number of starts in each Local Authority area:



- 2.17 Of programme starts so far:
- 49% of participants are female (vs 50% target)
 - 23% identify as disabled (vs 23% target)
 - 55% are from an ethnic minority background (vs 22% target)
 - 61% of participants live in the two most deprived neighbourhoods within West Yorkshire, IMD 1 and 2 (vs 40% target)
 - 38% of all participants are aged 15-24; 45% are aged 25-49 and 17% are aged 50 and over.

- 55% of participants are defined as socially excluded or disadvantaged

- 2.18 As an illustrative example of the work being undertaken: the Wakefield EWY programme recently supported an individual – who had been unemployed for 15 years – to successfully gain employment. The individual came from a household where other family members were unable to work due to ill health and had accrued large household debts. Through an initial meeting with an Employment Adviser, the individual was helped to access debt support from Money Smart, alongside employment support and advice. The Employment Adviser supported the individual to create a CV, search and apply for vacancies, and supported the individual with interview practice and confidence building activities. As a result of the support, the individual successfully secured employment. The positive experience of the individual has now also led another family member to seek support through EWY provision.
- 2.19 The £12 million programme is currently fully funded through devolved gainshare. For the 2024-25 financial year (year two of delivery), the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Local Investment Plan - approved by government - sets out the intention to use Pillar 3 UKSPF to part-fund delivery of Employment West Yorkshire.
- 2.20 An allocation of £4m from UKSPF Pillar 3; People and Skills has been agreed, in principle, to part-fund Employment West Yorkshire delivery for 2024-25. A change request regarding this allocation has been submitted via the Combined Authority's Assurance Framework to change the funding source for the programme from Gainshare only to a split of Gainshare and UKSPF. It is expected to go to Combined Authority Board for approval on 7th December 2023. This change of funding source will allow £4m gainshare funding to be allocated to other regional priorities.
- 2.21 Delivery funded by UKSPF will adopt interventions, outputs and outcomes outlined by Government in the UKSPF guidance. Funding and compliance requirements, reporting and claims processes will also follow these guidelines. Grant funding agreements will be varied accordingly with local authority delivery partners. The Gainshare allocation will ensure the EWY programme can continue to support a diverse range of individuals and is not limited to UKSPF interventions/outputs/outcomes. UKSPF Pillar 3 funding must be spent in the 2024-25 financial year.
- 2.22 To complement the Combined Authorities programmes, a regional digital inclusion initiative will commence in the new year. The programme will be coordinated centrally by the CA and delivered in partnership with the Local Authorities who will appoint a Digital Inclusion Officer in each area. The programme is based on an existing successful model (100% Digital Leeds) with flexibility for local delivery. It aims to increase the numbers of digitally enabled residents in West Yorkshire, improve community organisations' resilience and ability to deliver digital inclusion, ensure that poverty is no longer a barrier preventing individuals from accessing the internet, and raise awareness of the importance and benefits of digital inclusion in an increasingly digital society.

2.23 The programme will focus on boosting the capacity of community organisations to deliver digital inclusion, equitably and within a flexible model appropriate to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion needs of each area. Therefore, staff and volunteers within organisations across West Yorkshire will be enabled to support digitally excluded residents to, for example, help manage their money, health, housing, leisure and mental wellbeing.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

3.1. There are no climate emergency implications directly arising from this report.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

4.1. There are no inclusive growth implications directly arising from this report.

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

5.1. This report outlines policy development work to ensure that those most disadvantaged in the labour market are supported towards and into work, including young people.

6. Financial Implications

6.1. There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

7. Legal Implications

7.1. There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

8. Staffing Implications

8.1. There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

9. External Consultees

9.1. No external consultations have been undertaken.

10. Recommendations

10.1. That members note the current figures on Youth Employment in the region and recognise the proposals to increase support for young people to find sustained and meaningful employment.

10.2. That members note the work of the partnership between LA, CA & DWP colleagues in establishing a set of design principles for Youth Hub provision across West Yorkshire, which in turn will help for better support of young people into employment within the region.

10.3 That committee members note the submission of a change request to use an allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to fund the second year of delivery of Employment West Yorkshire, to allow the programme to continue in providing vital employment support across Local Authority areas.

11. Background Documents

There are no background documents referenced in this report.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 summarises the latest economic data related to this report.