

# Decision Pathway – Report



**PURPOSE:** Key decision

**MEETING:** Cabinet

**DATE:** 05 March 2024

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>WorkWell Partnership – Specialist Employment Support Programme</b>		
<b>Ward(s)</b>	All		
<b>Author:</b> Jane Taylor	Head of Service. Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning		
<b>Cabinet lead:</b> Cllr Asher Craig Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Equalities	<b>Executive Director lead:</b> Hannah Woodhouse – Executive Director, Children & Education		
<b>Proposal origin:</b> BCC Staff			
<b>Decision maker:</b> Cabinet Member <b>Decision forum:</b> Cabinet			
<b>Purpose of Report:</b> To seek approval to hold detailed bid negotiations with the NHS BNSSG (Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire) and DWP (Department of Work and Pensions) to become a Vanguard Programme for the Government’s WorkWell Partnership Programme - designed to improve employment outcomes for people who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment through their health conditions across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire areas.			
<b>Evidence Base:</b>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The BNSSG area has a working age population of 1,538,862 (ONS, 2022). In the 22/23 financial year, 192,751 fit notes were written in the 22/23 financial year. 5.9% (circa 9637) of these individuals were identified as “may be fit for work”. This number has remained relatively stable over the 22/23 and 21/22 financial years. Furthermore, 32.8% of fit notes were awarded for a duration of 5 to 12 weeks, the highest of all identified durations.</li> <li>2. The most prevalent diagnosis was mental health disorder followed by musculoskeletal, diseases of the respiratory system, symptoms signs and abnormal clinical / laboratory findings, injury, poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes.</li> <li>3. 62,900 individuals within Bristol are economically inactive, at 19.4% of the population, this is higher than the Southwest average but lower than the national average. The percentage of individuals economically inactive due to long-term sickness (26.7%) is higher than both the southwest (25%) and national percentages (26.6%)</li> <li>4. The BNSSG WorkWell Project will be targeted within specific localities within local authority areas. The localities have been selected due to their high levels of Disabled people and people with health conditions, together with life expectancy.  Economic inactivity due to long-term sickness was higher than both the national and Southwest average in two of the 3 Local Authorities covered by the BNSSG ICS. While the project will cover the 3 Local Authority areas, the majority of resources will be focused on Bristol and North Somerset due to the higher levels of inactivity, “fit notes” and population density.</li> <li>5. In Bristol, the Employment Support Team will build on existing work and health partnerships and</li> </ol>			

programmes – including the WE Work for Everyone programme.

6. The Bristol WorkWell programme model and approach will reflect the social model of Disability by ensuring that client access needs are identified and met, and that individuals are supported to overcome systemic discrimination and prejudice in the workplace.
7. The focus of the Bristol programme will be on people in the Bishopsworth, Stockwood, Easton and Horfield areas with an initial focus on individuals being provided with their first or second fit note due to mental health reasons.
8. On a quarterly basis, the steering group will expand the WorkWell provision to include musculoskeletal (Q2), respiratory system (Q3), and injury, poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes (Q4). During quarter 3, the Steering Group will look to expand the provision to other areas of the BNSSG region, which will be identified through consultation and collaboration with all BNSSG ICS locality partners.
9. The BNSSG will be informed whether they have been selected as a vanguard site by April 2024. Chosen vanguard sites will then be required to develop fully costed delivery and workforce plans and begin to prepare implementation of WorkWell services from April to September 2024. Subject to approval, vanguards will then go-live with local services between October 2024 and March 2025.

**Officer Recommendations:**

That Cabinet:

1. Authorises the Head of Service Employment, Skills and Learning in consultation with the Cabinet Member Children’s Services, Education and Equalities to take all steps required to negotiate with BNSSG and, if successful, to accept and spend the funding and lead on the regional implementation and delivery of the Employment support element of the WorkWell Partnership Vanguard Programme as outlined in this report.

**Corporate Strategy alignment:**

Improving the employment of people health conditions contributes to the Mayor’s commitment to inclusive economic growth and social mobility. It also helps reduce the reliance of people with health conditions on public services and promotes their economic and social independence, health and wellbeing.

**City Benefits:**

By implementing these recommendations, Bristol City Council can lead the way in relation to our employment practices – we can demonstrate proactively how we are taking positive action to prevent discrimination against people with health conditions and how our programmes are reflective of the communities we serve. We can also work with other employers to improve their access to specialist support and resources so that their workforce and business can benefit from the employment of people with health conditions.

**Consultation Details:**

The initial proposal to apply for funds was discussed and agreed with BNSSG, DWP, WECA and partner authorities. This proposal has also been discussed and developed with lead managers and budget holders in the City Council who are currently responsible for services to improve employment outcomes for people health conditions. It has been discussed with external bid partners: North Somerset and South Gloucestershire; DWP; VCS providers, including specialist agencies with expertise in providing support to people with health conditions.

**Background Documents:**

Work Well Prospectus: [WorkWell prospectus: guidance for Local System Partnerships - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114141/WorkWell_prospectus_guidance_for_Local_System_Partnerships_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

<b>Revenue Cost</b>	£1.584m	<b>Source of Revenue Funding</b>	£1,584,000 grant from BNSSG, awarded though NHS / DWP funds over a period of 18
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<b>Capital Cost</b>	£nil	<b>Source of Capital Funding</b>	N/A
<b>One off cost</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Ongoing cost</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Saving Proposal</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Income generation proposal</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Required information to be completed by Financial/Legal/ICT/ HR partners:**

**1. Finance Advice:** Whilst this report is seeking approval to enter into negotiations, which carries no financial implications in themselves, this report recommends that if negotiations are successful then funding should be accepted and spent on the delivery of the programme, which does carry financial implications.

The total grant is £1.584m and the service has costed plans for delivery to a total of £1.584m. The majority of costs are on salaries - £1.426m at today's pay rates. There is a provision for redundancy in this, of £0.025m as is prudent, and the project has an allowance of 5% for salary increases, which may be sufficient, but if settlements are different may create an additional pressure of higher, or free funding if lower. I would recommend that an allowance for future year salary rises be incorporated into the plan to March 2026.

There is a modest allowance - £0.157m – for procured support, including website development. Without having scrutinised what provision is being budgeted for in this procurement support then it's unclear if this is sufficient for the project or how any potential creep or further development/support will be funded.

A final consideration is that the grant funding is expected to be paid in arrears, following claims, therefore BCC will be exposed to the cashflows and to the consequences of late/denied or otherwise ineligible claims.

Finance Business Partner: Travis Young Finance Business Partner 13 February 2024

**2. Legal Advice:** The submission of bids for grant funding raises no particular legal issues. If successful, any procurement process must be conducted in line with the 2015 Procurement Regulations and the Councils own procurement rules. Legal services will advise and assist officers with regard to the conduct of the procurement process and the resulting contractual arrangements.

**Legal Team Leader:** Husinara Jones Team Manager/Solicitor 8 January 2024

**3. Implications on IT:** I can see no implications on IT regarding this activity.

IT Manager Alex Simpson – Lead Enterprise Architect. 9 January 2024

**4. HR Advice:** There are no significant HR issues arising from this report in respect of Bristol City Council employees

**HR Partner:** Lorna Laing, HR Business Partner 9 January 2024

<b>EDM Sign-off</b>	Reena Bhogal-Welsh – Director Education & Skills	17 January 2024
<b>Cabinet Member sign-off</b>	Councillor Asher Craig	23 January 2024
<b>For Key Decisions - Mayor's Office sign-off</b>	Mayor's Office	5 February 2024

<b>Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix B – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix C – Summary of any engagement with scrutiny</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix D – Risk assessment</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix E – Equalities screening / impact assessment of proposal</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Appendix F – Eco-impact screening/ impact assessment of proposal</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Appendix G – Financial Advice</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix H – Legal Advice</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix I – Exempt Information</b>	<b>NO</b>

<b>Appendix J – HR advice</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix K – ICT</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix L – Procurement</b>	<b>NO</b>