

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 09 June 2025

Report Title

Employment Solutions 2025-26

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Employment Solutions Service was set up in 2020 to deliver a European Social Fund (ESF) Employment Support programme and then latterly from January 2024, both the ESF and Inspire projects merged to be delivered as a UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) employment support programme. The programme ran until 31 March 2025.

Overall, since October 2020 the Employment Solutions Service has delivered 4 employment support programmes, resulting in over 892 people entering employment and 849 into education and training.

Given the success of the employment support programmes and ongoing uncertainty regarding the sustainability and size of the UKSPF, the decision was taken by Council on 5 March 2025 as part of the Budget and Council Tax Report 2025/26 to fund the service permanently by committing £718,000 per year for the service to continue to support local residents into work or training.

With this funding secured, the Employment Solutions Service will continue to offer an integrated programme of bespoke pre-employment activity designed to support unemployed residents and residents on low incomes to access the labour market or improve their earning capacity.

This report details Employment Solutions' core targets and milestones for 2025/26.

Recommendations

That Cabinet note the proposed Employment Solutions targets and milestones for 2025-26.

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Customer Case Studies
- Appendix 2 Employment Solutions Support and Interventions
- Appendix 3 Employment Solutions Milestones 2025-26
- Appendix 4 Equalities Impact Assessment
- Appendix 5 Climate Impact Assessment

Background Papers

[Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy 2019-2025](#)

[Get Britain Working White Paper](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Employment Solutions 2025-26

1. Background

- 1.1 The Employment Solutions Service was set up in October 2020 to deliver a European Social Fund (ESF) Employment Support programme. The programme ran until December 2023 and aimed to support economically inactive residents back into the labour market.
- 1.2 Given the success of the ESF programme the service was then extended to include the Inspire programme, funded by the Council. Inspire ran from January 2022 to December 2023 and supported Rotherham residents to improve their earning capacity through increased skills. More than 700 residents were supported during this time to increase their skills and to access employment.
- 1.3 In January 2024, both the ESF and Inspire projects merged to be delivered through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) via the employment support programme, this funding is awarded to the Council via the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA). The programme ran until 31 March 2025. During this 15-month period over 180 economically inactive and socially excluded residents were supported to improve confidence and break down barriers to access the local labour market.
- 1.4 In December 2023, the Employment Solutions Service was also successful in securing the Individual Placement Support (IPS) programme, funded via the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Office for Health Improvements and Disparities (OHID). The focus of this programme is to provide employment support to individuals receiving structured treatment for drugs and alcohol misuse. As of March 2025, the IPS programme has supported over 100 customers into training and employment and has recently secured funded for a further 12 months delivery.
- 1.5 The Employment Solutions service offers the flexibility to support a wide range of customer groups and adapt to evolving labour market demands, including recent welfare reforms, and to respond to new funding opportunities. The service benefits from direct access to multiple internal Council departments, enabling a level of integrated support that external providers may not be able to offer. This model gives Rotherham a unique advantage when supporting customers with barriers relating specifically to housing, homelessness, or financial issues. Case studies of customer journeys are detailed at Appendix 1.
- 1.6 The table below provides a summary of residents supported since the service was established in October 2020:

Employment Solutions October 2020 to date	
Registered with Employment Solutions	2915
Gained Employment	892
Gained training	849

- 1.7 The Government's new "Get Britain Working" initiative is aimed at supporting economically inactive individuals into employment and was launched in April 2025. The Employment Solutions Service will contribute to the delivery of this initiative by establishing a Pathways to Work team which will be enrolling its first clients by August 2025.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 While very successful, the frequent changes in the grant funding landscape for employment and skills programmes has limited the potential of the Employment Solutions Service to date. Given the success of the programmes, the decision was taken by Council on 5 March 2025 to make the funding permanent with an investment of £718,000 per year for the service to help residents into work or training.
- 2.2 The Service will add value to mainstream services, such as those provided by Housing, Adult Care and Children and Young People Services by supporting residents furthest from the labour market, who typically face multiple barriers to employment and training.
- 2.3 There will be different entry points for residents, depending on the extent of the barriers they face to the labour market, their specific goals in terms of moving towards and into employment, and any previous support they may have received. Each customer journey is likely to be different and depend on factors such as educational attainment, employment record, home/family/economic circumstances, location, health, age, ethnicity for example.
- 2.4 The integrated programme of support will allow progression from significant distance to the labour market into targeted, employment-focused access activities. These include job and apprenticeship brokerage, and sector-specific training with work experience at a pace appropriate for the individual. Residents will be triaged before being directed to the most appropriate support for them.
- 2.5 The programme is flexible, sensitive to individual participant needs (adopting a 'no wrong door' approach to referral and/or support) and is more streamlined and cost-efficient than previous funded programmes.

Participant entitlement

- 2.6 Each participant, following triage to determine their needs, will receive:
- Access to a keyworker who will work with them on a one-to-one basis supporting customers to recognise individual, personal ambitions.
 - A recorded whole-person diagnostic of need to understand their current position, barriers, and circumstances.
 - A personalised action plan which identifies the most relevant support and interventions, focusing on individual customer aspirations.
 - Continued ongoing support from their keyworker, who will be a constant touch point throughout their journey.

- Up to 13 weeks of in work support to ensure that customers have achieved their goal or employment ambition.

2.7 Support and interventions identified for participants will then be drawn from a suite of activities. This will include preparation for employment activity designed to engage participants and provide employability and other targeted support to overcome personal and circumstantial barriers. Support will comprise of one-to-one keyworker support, group activities and specialist interventions. The proposed activities and interventions are set out in Appendix 2.

Post-programme support offer

2.8 Support will focus on equipping candidates with the entry-level skills, employability, knowledge, key competencies, qualifications, licences and/or work experience required to move into employment. The proposed activities and interventions are set out in Appendix 2.

Employment Solutions outputs 2025/26

2.9 The table below sets out the details of anticipated Employment Solutions delivery and outputs for 2025/2026.

Employment Solutions 2025/26			of which are Economically Inactive	
Programme	Customers Registered	Supported into work	Customers Registered	Supported into work
Core Delivery	375	115	50*	15*
Individual Placement Support	80	36	N/A	N/A
TOTAL	455	151	50*	15*

**This shows the projected total of “economically inactive” activity that the core Employment Solutions team expect to engage between April 1st to commencement of Pathways to Work project in August.*

2.10 In setting output targets there is a recognition that the Employment Solutions Service would support delivery of the wider Pathways 2 Work programme which was agreed by Cabinet in April 2025. The outputs are yet to be agreed and subject to a Cabinet decision. As the Employment Solutions Service is no longer reliant on grant funding for the service offer it is the intention to streamline and refocus on client groups that are not supported via other grant funded services. A series of milestones are detailed at Appendix 3 which detail this transition.

2.11 The Employment Solutions team will support the Pathways to Work project to engage with economically inactive residents in Rotherham delivering 400 job entry outcomes by the end of March 2026. The Employment Solutions team is currently recruiting to deliver part of the Pathways to work target and will aim to achieve the following:

Pathways to Work Targets

1 August 2025 to 31 March 2026

TOTALS	Target
Registered onto Pathways to Work	312
Supported into work	144
Conversion rate	40%

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 **Option 1 (recommended)** - offer an integrated programme of bespoke pre-employment activity designed to support unemployed residents into the labour market or improve their earning capacity as outlined in the main body of the report.
- 3.2 No other options were considered as this report is asking Cabinet to note the intentions of the service and note the service targets.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The Employment Solutions Service has established a strong network of partners and providers to ensure effective delivery. Partnerships exist with DWP/Job Centre Plus, Rotherham North Nottinghamshire college, the NHS, and Rotherham Alcohol and Drugs service (ROADS).
- 4.2 Through active Employer Engagement and collaborative working with partner organisations within the skills and employment sector, the Service is able to identify and adapt to labour market changes and ensure that the Employment Solutions service provides the right package of holistic support to meet client's needs.
- 4.3 Regular steering groups and monitoring meetings are attended by colleagues within Employment Solutions to ensure programme delivery remains on track, and attendance at Local Integration Board meetings ensure that partner agencies are informed of the wider offer of support available to Rotherham residents, with minimal cross over in service.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The proposals set out in this report will be delivered throughout the course of 2025-26. They will be overseen by Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report. The activity detailed has been and will continue to be contained within existing budgets.

- 6.2 There are no direct procurement implications associated with the recommendations detailed in this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 There are no HR implications associated with this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 There are no implications for CYPS or Vulnerable Adults.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 The programme will target economically inactive residents across a range of sub-cohorts, including, those with disabilities and health conditions (who are significantly less likely to work), ethnic minority groups (who are over-represented among economically inactive people).
- 10.2 An Equalities Analysis has been completed and is attached as Appendix 4.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 The Employment Solutions Service will have both direct and indirect implications for CO2 emissions and climate change. The expansion of employment support services will increase staff travel and office-based activities which could contribute to higher emissions. However, the programme aims to deliver activity locally within communities, minimising the distance residents need to travel to access services and receive support.
- 11.2 A reduction in rates of economic inactivity is likely to result in economic growth which has the potential to increase CO2 emissions. To mitigate negative impact, it will be necessary to draw on a range of other projects policies to promote environmentally sustainable economic growth and within the programme encourage employers to adopt sustainable workplace practices.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 The success of the Employment Solutions Service is dependent on strong collaboration between multiple partners including:
- Rotherham Council services – Rotherham Investment & Development Office and Neighbourhoods will play key roles in delivering the programme.
 - South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority – responsible for regional coordination and securing long-term funding for wider employment support programmes.

- Other South Yorkshire authorities – region wide employment support programmes need to be successful across the area. This also allows Rotherham to try different innovative approaches which could be expanded if successful.
 - Department for Work and Pensions and NHS England – providing policy support and funding for integrated health and employment services.
 - Local Employers and Business Networks – engaged to create inclusive employment opportunities.
 - Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations – essential for community-based outreach and personalised support delivery, particularly for those disengaged and disadvantaged groups where “lived experience” is necessary.
- 12.2 A revised governance framework will be established to ensure alignment between partners, avoid duplication of services and facilitate data sharing while complying with GDPR regulations.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 **Low Engagement from Target Groups** - some economically inactive individuals may be difficult to reach due to health, confidence or trust barriers.
Mitigation – further development of community-based delivery and awareness of support offer available through increased marketing activity and relationships with external partners/providers.
- 13.2 **Retaining Individuals in the Programme** – similar previous activity with these cohorts has shown a figure of below 50% is realistic for the retention of a person from initial referral to starting in employment.
Mitigation – to be managed internally within the Employment Solutions service through quality delivery and engagement with customer base to ensure retention of clients.
- 13.3 **Employer Reluctance** - businesses may hesitate to employ individuals with complex needs or those lacking the necessary support structures.
Mitigation – active employer engagement to educate local businesses of the support offer available including offer of ongoing in-work support to both clients and employers.
- 13.4 **Service Capacity Constraints** - scaling up intensive case management and outreach could strain existing support services.
Mitigation – to be managed internally within the service, caseload capacity and referral traffic to be monitored by project support officer and re-allocated to employer engagement officer or Training officer depending on the stage of the customer journey.
- 13.5 **Data Sharing and Integration Issues** – challenges in coordinating information between employment, health and skills services.

Mitigation – Although the assumption is that certain data sharing agreements are already in place, this area still requires further development as still in early stages of core funded delivery.

14. Accountable Officers

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director for Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	23/05/25
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	16/05/25
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	16/05/25

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