

BRIEFING	TO:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Board
	DATE:	9 th September 2025
	LEAD OFFICER:	Fiona Fletcher Pathways to Work Service Manager R&E Mobile:07345 466197 Telephone: 01709 823934 Ext:23934
	TITLE:	Progress update on the implementation of the Pathways to Work Economic Inactivity Trailblazer programme
1. Background		
1.1	Pathways to Work is a UK government initiative focused on supporting individuals with disabilities, health conditions, or other barriers to employment to find and maintain work. It aims to reform the benefits system and provide tailored support to help people move from welfare into employment. This includes early intervention, personalised support and addressing barriers to work.	
1.2	The Pathways to Work programme key objectives are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce long-term economic inactivity • Reform the benefits system • Provide tailored support • Increase employment rates 	
1.3	The Pathways to Work Economic Inactivity Trailblazer (EIT) is part of the wider Pathways to Work programme offer and is a government-funded initiative piloted in nine regions across England to test and learn new approaches to reducing economic inactivity. This initiative involves a coordinated network of local employment, skills, and health services to provide personalized support for economically inactive people, particularly those with long-term health conditions, caring responsibilities, or other barriers to employment. The goal is to create a cohesive system that helps individuals find, stay in, or return to work, ultimately aiming to improve employment outcomes and boost the economy.	
1.4	The Pathways to Work EIT is managed in South Yorkshire by the Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA). Funding is passed on to each of the local authorities, who have responsibility for delivery of the programme within their area.	
1.5	Funding is currently agreed for the 2025/26 year, with formal confirmation of onward funding for 2026/27 imminent. For the current year Rotherham has a target of moving 400 economically inactive residents into employment by the 31 st March 2026. This will be through a process including:	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement – through Voluntary Community Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations delivering hyper local activity in areas, and to groups, with the highest economic inactivity rates. • Personalised support – support to individuals, focussed on helping them overcome the barriers they face to securing and retaining employment. This includes delivery through the Council's dedicated Pathways to Work Employment Advisor team, working alongside Employment Solutions, and through the VCFSE • Employer Engagement – Work with local businesses to identify vacancies suitable for programme beneficiaries, identifying requirements for these posts and providing tailored training to support successful move into work through the EIT, as well as assessment of onward support that may be required once the new employee is in post, to ensure they sustain and maintain employment.
1.6	<p>The Pathways to Work commission report provided the evidence base for establishing South Yorkshire as an NHS England Health & Growth Accelerator (HGA) area, which funds tailored support to integrate health, skills and employment services. The HGA builds on the commission's recommendations for a radical, joined up approach to tackling economic inactivity by integrating support for people with health issues.</p> <p>The South Yorkshire HGA has identified 3 key priority areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in work: Supporting people in work with repeated or longer-term absences at risk of falling out of work due to MSK, Chronic Pain, depression or anxiety • Young People: Supporting 16-24 year olds struggling to remain in work or education or enter the workplace due to experiencing depression and anxiety • Occupational Health: Working jointly with employers to provide enhanced occupational health and wellbeing support
1.7	<p>Regionally, the ambitions of the Pathways to Work initiative is further supported by the introduction of Connect to Work, a UK Government funded voluntary employment support programme, designed to help people with disabilities, significant long term health conditions, and others with relative complex barriers to find and maintain employment. It focuses on individuals who are often outside the workforce or facing significant labour market disadvantages. A core element of the programme is its focus on integrating employment and health systems to support people with significant health conditions to move into sustained employment.</p>
1.8	<p>Connect to Work utilises evidence based 'place, train and maintain' models of supported employment, which includes Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and Local Supported Employment (LSA) options.</p>
2. Key Issues	
2.1	<p>Progress to date on the Pathways to Work EIT Programme includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathways to Work Service Manager started in post on 4th August 2025 • Contracts to deliver engagement activity have been awarded to 9 local VCSE organisations. • Dedicated Pathways to Work Employment Support team have been recruited, with the new team of 12 focusing solely on assisting economically inactive residents in to work. • Commissioning of Personalised Support through locally based VCFSE organisations is underway with awards pending. This will ensure the widest geographical reach and provide targeted bespoke support, through the most appropriate organisation for the individual.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reprofile of spend and outputs is being agreed with SYMCA – financial and activity outputs/outcomes remain consistent, but more backloaded to take account of slower than expected start to activity, which arose as a result of funding agreements with SYMCA not being in place until April. This impacted on our ability to commit expenditure until after this date. • Following agreement of restructuring proposals in the Economic Development service within Regeneration and Environment, recruitment to key posts within the Pathways to Work will now be initiated.
3. Key Actions and Timelines	
3.1	Monthly highlight/progress reports are submitted to SYMCA.
3.2	Planning for Year 2 is now underway, identifying priority test and learn criteria which reflects progress made in Year 1 and onward programme development.
3.3	VCFSE organisations already delivering against Engagement Sub Grant Agreements, with Personalised Support expected to commence within communities from September 2025.
3.4	Triage service established with single point of contact via email or dedicated phone line, currently covered by existing RIDO teams, recruitment to Triage Officers post is pending the outcome of the role grading process
3.5	Internal cross service collaboration to ensure Pathways to Work addresses employment challenges for all residents – Early Help, Housing, Employment Solutions, Adult Social Care – audit of current provision and gap analysis.
3.6	Targeted provision planned for young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) to support young people to move into positive destinations, including into work/apprenticeships and employment related learning.
3.7	Connect to Work launch in September will see enhanced provision for residents experiencing barriers to work relating to disability and longer-term health issues.
3.8	Plan for increased levels of employer engagement and activation underway, working alongside local cornerstone employers, key networks and Chamber of Commerce.
3.9	Partnership working with Health Growth Accelerator leads to ensure mutual programme enhancement and seamless referral routes.
3.10	Continuation of Pathways to Work funding has been announced, with confirmation of this received from SYMCA, awaiting formal written notification. Delivery plan in development for submission early September.
3.11	Confirmation is needed on future funding of the programme. This needs to be a priority to avoid any impact on Council staffing of the project and the activity that has been commissioned to the local VCFSE.
4. Recommendations	
4.1	That progress on the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer and wider Pathways to Work programme, is reported to the Board on an annual basis.