

Implementing Connect to Work in Central London

Key considerations for its design and delivery

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Note from Commissioners

Central London Forward thanks all those involved in creating this report, which is both an important reflection of the needs of those residents the Connect to Work programme aims to serve, and a useful outline of some of the practical steps that everyone involved in the implementation of Connect to Work can take in order to meet those needs.

Due to programme deadlines and budget structures, this report has been written in parallel with the design phase of the Connect to Work programme and is being published as delivery begins. Therefore, the planning of the programme has not been informed by this report in as much detail as we would like. However, Connect to Work is a 5-year programme where we will aim to foster a culture of continuous improvement and therefore hope we can bring some of the recommendations in during implementation.

Executive Summary

Connect to Work (CtW) is a new Supported Employment programme running from April 2025 to March 2030, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). It has been designed in line with the Get Britain Working White Paper, published in 2024 by the UK Government to tackle economic inactivity and support employment.

The research was commissioned by Central London Forward (CLF) to Learning and Work Institute (L&W) – an independent research organisation – Inclusion London, and Inclusion Barnet – Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations. It was funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA), as part of the No Wrong Door initiative. This research will inform the first iteration of the CtW programme, with some of the learning and recommendations contained in the report to be considered in its continued implementation between 2025 and 2030. It includes qualitative research with employers, service users, employment support providers and employer umbrella organisations, a survey of employers, and a labour market analysis of the CLF boroughs.

Connect to Work: setting the scene

Connect to Work is a voluntary rather than mandatory programme providing support to Disabled people and people with a LTHC who are economically inactive, unemployed, or at risk of falling out of work due to their disability or LTHC. The programme has wider eligibility criteria, however this research is exclusively focused on the support that CtW will offer Disabled people and those living with LTHCs. CtW will adopt a 'place, train and maintain' approach, and be based on two models of supported employment: Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF). Designing and delivering CtW using a social model lens involves building on an understanding that programme service users are made disabled by structural barriers, including having to navigate multiple disconnected systems in their employment journeys.

Key findings

This report places a central focus on how the CtW programme should approach employer engagement, including considerations on strategic planning, commissioning, and training. This is informed by the conflicting views between employers and other research participants regarding employers' understanding of disability. The employers who participated in the research were generally confident in their understanding of disability and the support they could offer. In contrast service users, providers, and umbrella employer organisations consistently pointed to a lack of understanding amongst employers of the role of structural barriers in creating disability and how to identify and implement reasonable adjustments.

A cross-cutting theme emerging from all focus groups was the need for CtW providers to develop a good understanding of individual employers' needs and to adopt a personalised approach to engagement.

Service users who took part in this research shared systematic experiences of discrimination and ableism, both with employers and employment support programmes. Their experiences inform the key considerations (summarised below) on the need for the CtW programme to be designed, commissioned, monitored, and managed based on a genuine rather than tokenistic social model of disability approach and to be co-designed with Disabled people and people living with LTHCs.

Summary of recommendations

Design & commissioning

- Central London Forward should ensure that the social model of disability is genuinely embedded in the design and commissioning processes of the local Connect to Work programme.
- Central London Forward should design and deliver additional participatory learning activities for the programme and adapt delivery based on lessons learned.
- Service providers should develop a local employment engagement strategy.
- Service providers should ensure an active and genuine involvement of Disabled people and people living with LTHCs in the design, delivery, and evaluation of the CtW programme.

Outreach

- Service user outreach should focus on rebuilding relationships of trust with Disabled people and people living with LTHCs.
- Outreach messaging for service users should incorporate accessible communication and focus on the wider benefits and support that the programme can offer.
- Employer outreach should use a range of recruitment methods and build relationships of trust.
- Messaging for employers should highlight benefits for employers and the value added by recruiting Disabled people and people living with LTHCs.

Pre-employment

- Employment Specialists should offer personalised, tailored, holistic support to service users that builds on a thorough understanding of the systemic barriers Disabled people and people living with LTHCs experience.
- Employment Specialists should be provided with continuous training on: the social model of disability and/or disability justice approach; the Equality Act 2010 legal framework and possible reasonable adjustments; and the wider support available to employers and service users.
- Employer engagement should focus on building trust and creating a non-judgmental space.

- The programme must include a focus on training and upskilling employers.

Entering work

- Staff responsible for setting a strategic direction for employer engagement and Employment Specialists should work with employers to review and create inclusive employment opportunities.
- Employment Specialists should act as advocates for service users vis-à-vis employers.

Work retention and progression

- Once service users are in a role, Employment Specialists should continue to support them in setting up reasonable adjustments and negotiating with employers, if required.
- For in-work service users, Employment Specialists should ensure they develop a full understanding of an individual's work history and liaise effectively with all relevant parties.
- Employment Specialists should continuously review service users' access needs and ensure that sufficient support is provided later in the employment process.
- Employment Specialists should co-design and agree a programme exit plan with service users and employers.

Introduction

In London, 280,000 people are not in paid work due to ill health or disability. Central London boroughs face significant challenges with high proportions of residents out of work due to long-term sickness. In London there are wide disparities between neighbourhoods, with some areas being among the most deprived in England¹. This research focuses on how the new Connect to Work (CtW) programme could be designed, commissioned, and delivered to ensure that Disabled people and people living with long-term health conditions (LTHCs) get the right support to help them get into and flourish in suitable work. [The Equality Act 2010 defines someone as disabled](#) if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities. Under the Equality Act 2010, employers are required to make reasonable adjustments for disabled individuals to ensure they are not at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled employees.

Connect to Work is a new Supported Employment² programme, running from April 2025 to March 2030, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). It is a voluntary rather than a mandatory programme providing support to Disabled people and people with a LTHC who are economically inactive³, unemployed, or at risk of falling out of work due to their disability or LTHC. The programme has wider eligibility criteria⁴ however, this research is exclusively focused on the support CtW will offer Disabled people and those living with LTHCs. The purpose of CtW is to identify individuals in need of support with complex barriers to work and refer them to an Employment Specialist who is independent of the DWP and is able to build a trusted relationship. The programme then provides holistic, wrap-around support to service users to help tackle complex and overlapping barriers to work. The programme builds on and seeks to advance the Equality Act 2010, which legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.

¹ Central London Forward (2023) [Central London's Economy in 2023](#).

² Supported employment interventions ('place then train') are based on a model of work rehabilitation where individuals with disability/health are helped to find competitive employment as soon as possible, rather than after undergoing (clinical or other support) treatment or having completed a training programme. Popular examples include Supported Internships and the Individual Placement and Support model.

³ The term 'economically inactive' is used here to describe programme eligibility. It refers to the definition used by the Office for National Statistics: people not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last 4 weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks. Many Disabled people object to the term 'economically inactive' because it fails to recognise Disabled people's contribution to society beyond paid work. 'Out of paid work' is a preferred term to recognise this, however, 'economically inactive' is used here in line with the language used in the programme guidelines.

⁴ The eligibility criteria for the CtW programme – as per the Grant Guidance document – includes disabled people or those living with a long-term health condition, as defined in the Equality Act 2010⁴ or the Social Model of Disability or a specified disadvantaged group, including offenders (someone who is serving a community service) or ex-offenders (someone who has completed a custodial or community sentence), carers or ex-carers, homeless people, former members of His Majesty's (HM) Armed Forces (AF), a member of HM AF reserves, or a partner of current or former Armed Forces personnel, people for whom a drug or alcohol dependency, including a history of dependency, presents a significant barrier to employment, care experienced young people or care leavers, refugees or resettled Afghans, people on the Ukrainian scheme, victims/survivors of domestic abuse, young people identified as being involved or at risk of being involved in serious violence and victims of modern slavery

CtW has been devolved to Central London Forward (CLF), which is a partnership of 12 central London boroughs⁵ working together to drive inclusive and sustainable growth. CLF is the accountable body in central London, following their successful management and delivery of other DWP employment programmes, such as Pioneer Support and Work and Health programme known as Central London Works.

This research was commissioned by CLF to Learning and Work Institute (L&W) – an independent research organisation – and Inclusion London – a pan-London Deaf and Disabled People’s Organisation. It was funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA), as part of the No Wrong Door initiative. The research seeks to inform the design and delivery of CtW in CLF boroughs, drawing on the perspective of the social model of disability. The social model was developed by Disabled people and posits that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or condition⁶. Designing and delivering CtW using this lens involves building on an understanding that programme service users are made disabled by structural barriers including having to navigate multiple disconnected systems in their employment journeys. As the CtW programme will launch in April, the research findings will inform the first iteration of the programme, with some of the learning and recommendations to be considered in its continued implementation between 2025 and 2030.

Methodology

A mixed-methods research approach was adopted combining a rapid desk-based review of wider literature on employment support for Disabled people and those with LTHCs in the UK and particularly, in London; an employer poll; and qualitative fieldwork involving service users, employers, employment support providers and employer umbrella organisations. Inclusion London convened an expert Deaf and Disabled People’s Organisations’ (DDPO) Research Working Group to advise on the project, feedback on emerging findings and collaborate on the recommendations, ensuring Deaf and Disabled people’s experiences and expertise informed the research project and its outputs.

The employer poll was conducted by Savanta, a market research company, on behalf of L&W, as part of the CtW research project. Fieldwork was conducted between the 17th and 30th January 2025 using multiple panels targeting Human Resource (HR) professionals or business decision makers working in recruitment across different seniority levels. A total of 277 respondents participated in the poll, all of whom worked for organisations located in a London borough and of whom 81% were based in one of the 12 boroughs represented by CLF. The characteristics of the respondents and the key themes emerging from the findings are detailed in the appendix.

⁵ These are Camden, City of London, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth, and Westminster.

⁶ For further information on the social model of disability, please see the definition used by Inclusion London: [The Social Model of Disability - Inclusion London](#)

Qualitative fieldwork undertaken as part of this project included a total of eight focus groups – conducted online and in-person – and one online semi-structured interview, as outlined below:

- Four focus groups with **Disabled individuals and those living with LTHCs (30 service users)**
- Two focus groups with **employers (13 employers)**
- One focus group and one semi-structured interview with **employer umbrella organisations (6 organisations)**
- One focus group with **employment support providers (12 providers)**.

Organisations and individuals were recruited online, using a combination of direct recruitment emails and social media channels⁷. Focus groups with Disabled individuals and those living with LTHCs were co-facilitated with Inclusion London and Inclusion Barnet.

Connect to Work programme: an overview

As a voluntary supported employment programme, CtW adopts a ‘place, train and maintain’ approach, and will be based on two models of supported employment: Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF)⁸. There is evidence of the effectiveness of supported employment models, particularly IPS. However, it is important to note that the evidence suggests IPS is only effective when it is delivered with high fidelity to the model.⁹

By integrating the IPS/SEQF models, CtW will allocate an Employment Specialist who will provide personalised one-to-one support service throughout the participant's programme journey and in-work support. The Employment Specialist's role is to ensure that service users receive the necessary support, adjustments, and resources to enter and/or remain in employment. This holistic approach goes beyond job placement placing emphasis on ongoing support and career development. The report seeks to identify ways in which this approach can be built upon to ensure service users receive suitable and sustainable support in their journeys into work and beyond.

Characteristics of economically inactive long-term sick or disabled people in Central London boroughs

This report draws on quantitative data from two sources: the 2021 Census and the Annual Population Survey (APS) (latest release June 2024). It is important to recognise the

⁷ The recruitment targets set for service users included 40 individuals across the four focus groups – the project involved 30 service users – and a total of 24 employers. The project faced a greater challenge in identifying and engaging with employers, both at the initial recruitment phase, but also due to individuals who were unable to attend focus groups, despite having been originally confirmed.

⁸ Department for Work and Pensions (2024) Supported Employment Programme Grant Guidance.

⁹ The Health Foundation, Commission for Healthier Working Lives, Learning and Work (2025) [Supporting workers' health and access to better work](#)

limitations of these datasets. Although the Census provides information on different characteristics down to borough level, the data is now five years old and should be treated with caution. Similarly, the APS is the latest available data and the only source of evidence on whether people want to work. However, it is based on the Labour Force Survey, which is currently being revised and reweighted due to issues with the population base. Despite the limitations of both datasets, the section below seeks to support CtW in tailoring its recruitment approaches and support to the characteristics of individuals who are economically inactive due to LTSD in the CLF area.

For this section of the report the terminology “Long Term Sick or Disabled” (LTSD) and the concept ‘economically inactive’ is used in line with the datasets used in the 2021 Census. We acknowledge that many Disabled people object to this term as it fails to recognise Disabled people’s wider contributions to society beyond paid work.

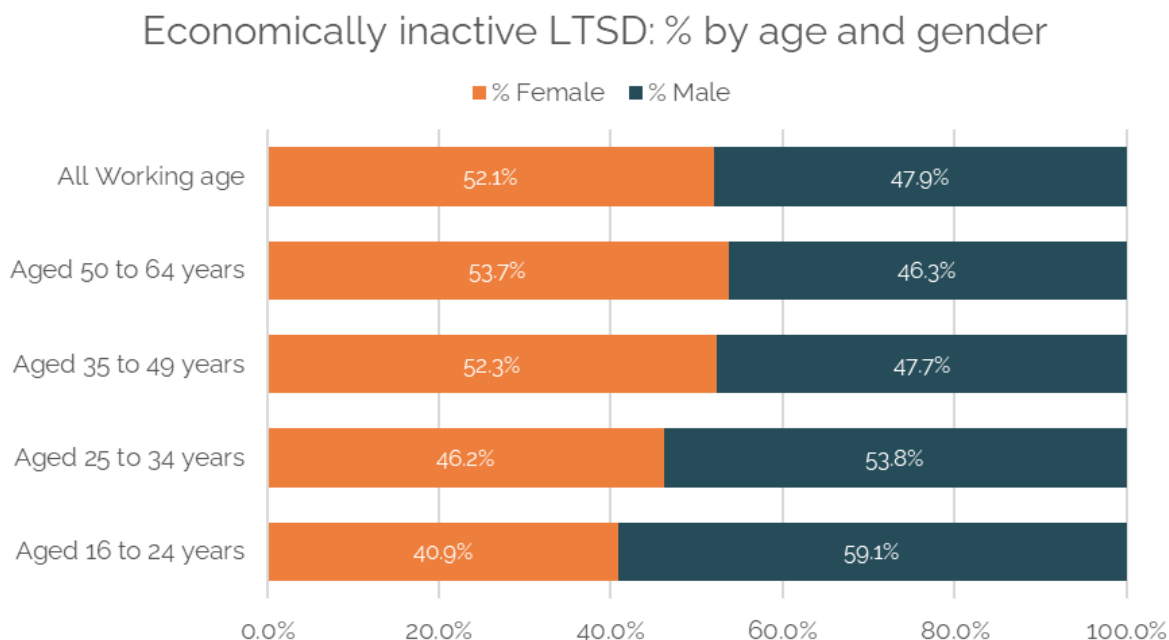
Age and Gender

In the CLF area, there are 85,828 working age people who are economically inactive due to LTSD. **The majority (58% or 49,994 individuals) of these individuals are aged 50 to 64**, with 28% (24,039 individuals) in the 35 to 49 age group. There are fewer younger people who are economically inactive due to LTSD, with 10% of this population (8,792 individuals) aged 25 to 34 years old and 3.5% (3,003 individuals) aged 16 to 24 years old. Despite being in line with the age distribution in London, the CLF area has a higher proportion of individuals who are economically inactive due to LTSD in the 50-64 age group than in England and Wales (58% in CLF boroughs vs 52% in England and Wales) and a lower proportion in the 16-24 age group (3.5% in the CLF area vs 6% in England and Wales).

Data from the APS¹⁰, shows that economic inactivity rates for CLF began to rise from 2020 (during and after the pandemic). Despite data on economic activity by reason and by age not being available at a sub-regional level, data on London as a whole point to an increase in the number of students and a steady increase in long term sickness as the main factors contributing to this trend.

¹⁰ APS responses are weighted to official population projections. As the current projections are 2018-based they are based on demographic trends that pre-date the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes in levels should be used with caution.

Figure 1. Economically inactive who are long term sick or disabled in the Central London Forward area, by age and gender



Source: 2021 Census.

There are more working age women who are economically inactive due to LTSD than men in the CLF area with 52.1% of all working age compared to 47.9% of all working age men (Figure 1). This is in line with the gender distribution at the London level and in England and Wales.

The gender distribution of individuals who are economically inactive due to LTSD varies by age group, with **younger age groups seeing a higher proportion of men economically inactive due to LTSD**. This trend is visible in the 16-24 and 25-34 age groups (40.9% women and 59.1% men and 46.2% women and 53.8% men, respectively), with the gender balance shifting in the 35-49 and 50-64 age groups, where women are more likely than men to be economically inactive due to LTSD (52.3% women and 47.7% men and 53.7% women and 46.3% men, respectively). This trend is mirrored at the London level and in England and Wales, and is influenced by the fact that women have, on average, more illnesses throughout their life than men, despite longer life spans.¹¹ For example, between 2019 and 2024, the number of women economically inactive due to musculoskeletal issues (arms, hands, legs, feet, back and neck problems) increased by 126,000 (+47%)¹².

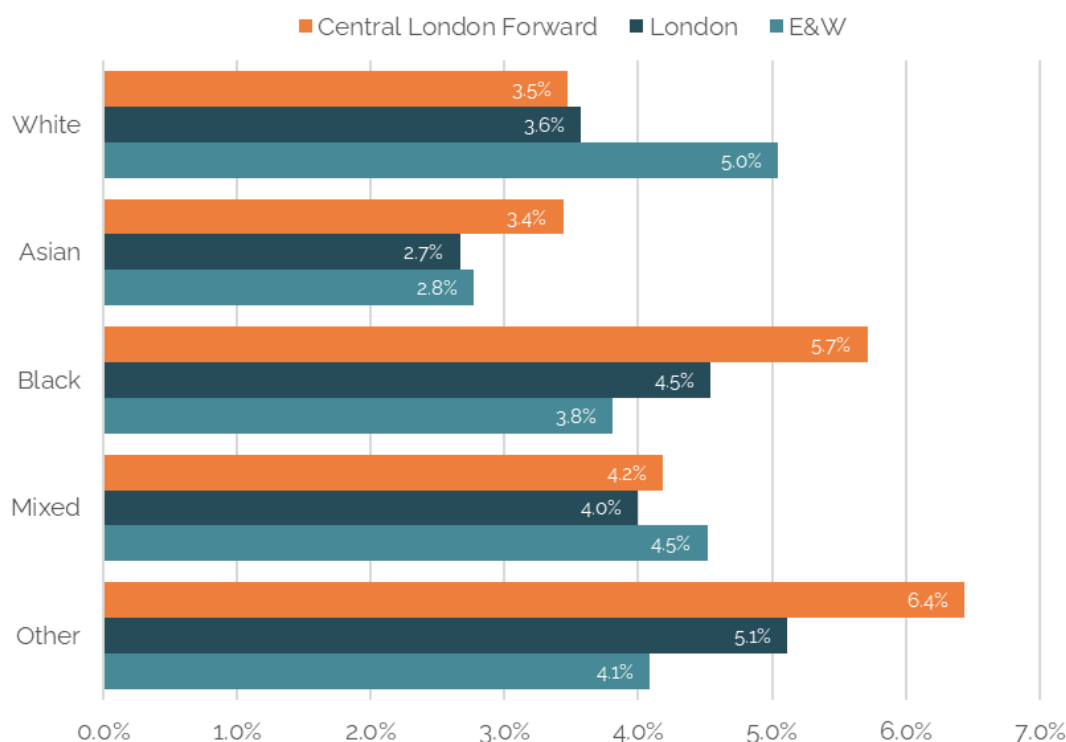
¹¹ Patwardhan, Vedavati et al. (2024) Differences across the lifespan between females and males in the top 20 causes of disease burden globally: a systematic analysis of the Global Burden of Disease Study 2021.

¹² Trades Union Congress (2024) Long-term sickness becomes top reason for women being out of the labour market.

Ethnicity

Figure 2. Economically inactive who are long term sick or Disabled in the Central London Forward area, London, and England & Wales, by ethnicity

Economically inactive LTSD: % of working age by ethnicity



Source: 2021 Census.

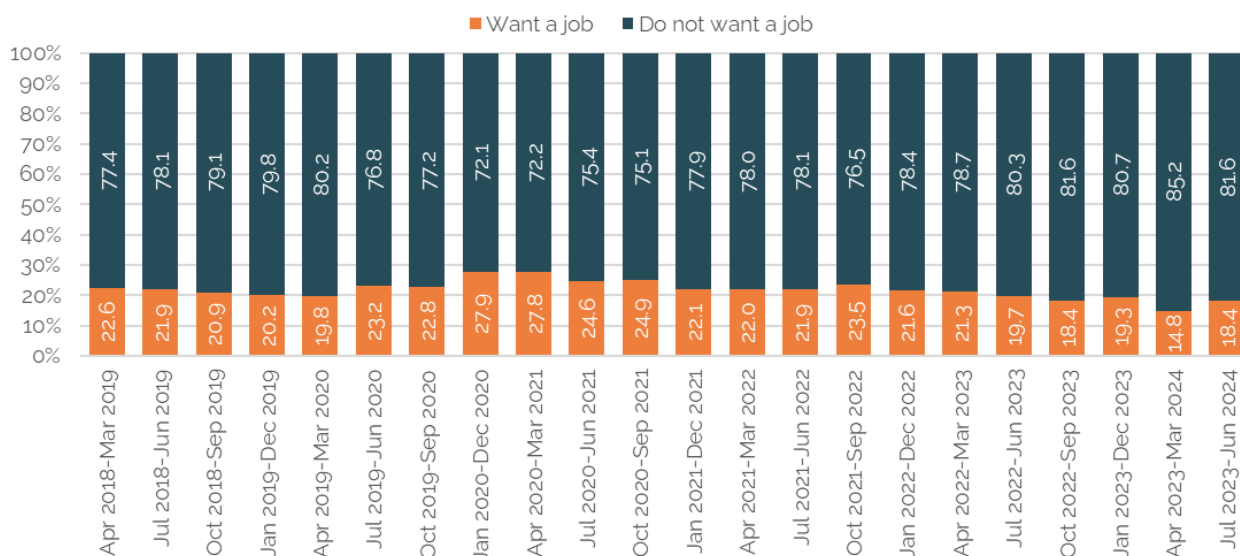
People from some ethnic backgrounds are more likely to not be working due to LTSD in CLF boroughs than in the rest of England and Wales. In CLF boroughs 5.7% of people from Black backgrounds and 6.4% of people from other ethnic backgrounds are economically inactive due to LTSD compared to 3.8% and 4.1%, respectively, in England and Wales. According to 2021 Census data, the CLF area also has a higher proportion of individuals who are economically inactive due to LTSD who identify as Black and as 'Other' than other London areas.

Housing

In CLF boroughs, 4 in 5 people (79.9%) who are economically inactive due to LTSD live in socially rented housing compared to just over half (52.7%) in England and Wales and just under two thirds (64.9%) in London. This is reflective of the higher proportion of the population of a whole who live in social housing in CLF than the rest of England and Wales. However, it should inform how outreach and services are designed and targeted by, for example, working closely with housing associations and local authorities to support those living in social housing.

Labour Market Trends

Figure 4. Economically inactive in the Central London Forward boroughs, by those who do and do not want a job, 12-month period reported each quarter



Source: Annual Population Survey (APS), ONS

A minority of working age people in the CLF area who are economically inactive report that they want a job (Figure 4). In the 12-month period from July 2023 to June 2024, 18.4% of economically inactive individuals in the CLF area reported they want a job compared to 81.6% that reported they did not want a job. It is important to recognise that survey data will not capture the full picture of whether people want to work. Wider evidence suggests that a substantial proportion of people not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last 4 weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks would like to work if the right support was in place. The Barnsley Pathways to Work Commission suggested this could be as high as 7 in 10 for their region.

Programme design and delivery: practical considerations

This chapter draws on qualitative and quantitative research findings to set out key considerations for the design and delivery of the CtW programme. Each section includes recommendations for necessary programme components and approaches, both from a service user and an employer engagement perspective.

There were conflicting views between employers and other research participants regarding employers' understanding of disability, as well as inclusive practices and reasonable adjustments. The employer poll and focus groups indicated that employers feel confident in their understanding and practices, but this was not reflected in research with other groups.

For example, poll findings indicate that there is a very high understanding of legal duties regarding reasonable adjustments amongst employers (96% of respondents agreed with this statement). Likewise, almost all respondents agreed that they are committed to making reasonable adjustments to recruit and retain disabled people/people with LTHCs (93%).

This is at odds with findings emerging from the research with service users, providers, and umbrella employer organisations which consistently pointed to a lack of understanding amongst employers of the role of structural barriers in creating disability and how to identify and implement reasonable adjustments, as well as the legal responsibilities employers have under the Equality Act 2010. As a result, this report places a central focus on how CtW should approach employer engagement, including considerations on strategic planning, commissioning, and training.

As noted above, CtW intends to support a wide range of groups who also face structural barriers when seeking to enter and remain in employment. Most of the considerations and recommendations contained within this report will also be applicable to working with other groups.

Programme design and commissioning

Connect to Work design

The design elements are built on the Grant Guidance document developed by the DWP to guide Accountable Bodies. This section focuses primarily on considerations for the local design of the CtW programme emerging from qualitative findings.

Co-design & co-production with Disabled people/people with LTHCs

Existing evidence on what works in delivering high quality employment support clearly points to the importance of service design and delivery being built on a strong

understanding of Disabled people and people with LTHCs needs and the structural barriers they experience when seeking to enter and remain in work¹³.

Co-producing services and meaningfully involving Disabled people and people with LTHCs was identified as essential by employment support providers and service users alike. Co-design and production processes should occur both at a strategic programme level, across the CLF area, and at a provider level to ensure that the views of Disabled people and those living with LTHCs inform both the strategic direction of the programme and delivery itself. Elements of the programme which may be co-designed include: recruitment approaches and messaging, partnership working, communicating with and supporting service users and employer engagement strategies, for example. Due to the timescales of delivery – commencing in April 2025 – full co-design processes may only be possible in subsequent years of implementation.

Several employment support providers shared reflections on best practices regarding genuine engagement, including:

- **Well-resourced, partnership-based and continuous co-production:** Providers shared the benefits of commissioning DDPOs to co-produce and co-design services with Disabled people and people with LTHCs, prior to and during delivery. DDPOs operating at a national or regional level would be best placed to support co-design processes occurring at a strategic level, with local DDPOs having greater place-based knowledge and links to support co-production at a provider level. Several participants felt this was essential to ensuring that the support provided to service users is fit for purpose and inclusive. For example, co-producing inclusive programme communications and accessible support elements with Disabled people. Providers also emphasised the importance of seeing co-production as an iterative process – either by repeating participatory exercises in a cyclical way or by setting up processes, such as user groups, to continuously monitor delivery. Providers saw the involvement of Disabled people and people with LTHCs as necessary at different points of programme delivery to ensure it remains relevant to service users' changing needs.
- **Involvement in recruitment processes:** providers and service users described the importance of recruiting Disabled people and people with LTHCs as operational and management staff and of actively involving service users in recruitment processes. Both strategies were seen as key to ensuring the programme is delivered from a social model of disability lens that acknowledges and addresses structural barriers. For example, one provider described how the involvement of Disabled service users in interviews for Employment Specialists supported the programme in assessing how candidates approached their communication with service users and recruiting those who demonstrated a social model approach.

¹³ Learning and Work (2019) Evidence review: Employment support for people with disabilities and health conditions. Learning and Work Institute. <https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/evidence-review-employment-support-for-people-with-disabilities-and-health-conditions/>

Zoom in: service user groups

We have a users' group that feeds back on all the work that we do, so comments on what is working well, what is not working well, and additional services that they feel would be beneficial. Also, any time there is a new member of staff we have a client interview panel where four clients interview the prospective worker and can ask any questions (*Employment support provider*).

Employer engagement strategy

A cross-cutting theme emerging from focus groups conducted with employers, service users, employment support providers and employer umbrella organisations was the need for CtW providers to develop a good understanding of employers' needs and to engage with them using a personalised approach, tailored to different sizes, sectors, inclusivity practices, and confidence levels.

Several programme design considerations are highlighted in this research to develop an employment engagement strategy that effectively meets employer needs:

- **Conducting a mapping exercise of local employers**, including their key characteristics and existing inclusivity practices, in acknowledgement of the fact that these will vary substantially within the same area. The key differentiating characteristic that emerged from the research was employer size, with larger employers being perceived as having more consistent and better resourced processes to identify Disabled employees' needs, make reasonable adjustments and create more inclusive workplaces than smaller employers. This research highlights the need to tailor outreach, and the type of support offered to different types of employers, based on this initial needs assessment process. This is further discussed in the 'Programme delivery' section below.

I think larger employers are definitely better set up to support Disabled employees (...) they have more resources, they have often more established processes to be able to do it. I think, SMEs can be hard (...) particularly if the HR director is also doubling up as an operations lead or has multiple functions within their role, they're not going to be able to devote the time that a larger employer will have, or (...) more resource to devote to it. (*Employer umbrella organisation*)

- In addition to the role of an Employment Specialist, outlined in the Grant Guidance document, providers stressed **the need to have dedicated employer engagement staff** due to the different set of skills and the capacity required to assess employers' needs and engage and support them in different ways. However, the CtW grant guidance states that Employment Specialists will be responsible for employer engagement on behalf of their individual clients. This mismatch in expectations suggests the need for upskilling employer specialists in employer engagement. There should also be dedicated strategic oversight of employer engagement, which will be key to map local employers and establish initial links with employers.

Relationships of trust could then be built by Employment Specialists, as part of their role in supporting service users. Close collaboration between the two roles would be essential to ensure smooth transitions.

The skills you need to do employer engagement are very different to the skills you need to be a job coach, where you're the person going in and supporting the employer. (*Employment support provider*)

Programme length

Existing evidence on what works in supporting Disabled people and people with health conditions into employment highlights the negative impact of short-term programmes (typically less than six months) on service users and their employment outcomes.¹⁴

The grant guidance document sets out that service users will receive support up until they achieve their employment goals and no longer require support or if they have been on the programme for 12 months for 'Out-of-Work' service users, or 4 months (122 calendar days) for service users that required 'In-Work' Retention Support. Employment support providers and service users voiced the need for in-work support to be provided from 6 months up to 1 year, due to the systemic and multiple barriers experienced by Disabled people to remaining in work. To ensure that sufficient support is provided to service users to sustain employment outcomes, the CtW programme should: develop and maintain strong partnerships with other supported employment programmes that may offer longer programme journey, to enable timely onward referrals, where appropriate.¹⁵

Partnership working

Working with and through partners will be key to the design and delivery of CtW. Accountable bodies delivering CtW should collaborate with a wide range of organisations including charities, faith groups, trade unions, DDPOs, disability job boards – such as Evenbreak – primary and community care settings, adult and community learning providers, as well as Jobcentre Plus and Integrated Care Boards, as per the sections on co-design, referrals and pre-employment support in this report. These organisations are essential for generating referrals and ensuring that CtW can provide holistic support to service users. CLF should ensure that all providers are adequately connected to its Integration Hub, to ensure they can build on existing partner relationships.

This research did not focus on specific strategies to ensure effective partnership working, however, wider evidence suggests the importance of strategic relationships, delivery focused engagement, the need to communicate a clear narrative set of priorities to partners, and the need for relationships to develop over time.¹⁶

¹⁴ The Health Foundation, Commission for Healthier Working Lives, Learning and Work (2025) Supporting workers' health and access to better work.

¹⁵ CLF's integration hub is an important resource for CtW providers to develop and maintain these partnerships.

¹⁶ Please see: Employment support for people with disabilities and health conditions; Supporting workers' health and access to better work; Central London Forward Integration Hub Employment and Skills Journey Mapping and user needs analysis; and Solent Jobs Programme.

Commissioning

This research points to the need for the CtW programme to be designed and commissioned based on a genuine rather than tokenistic social model approach. Service users who took part in this research shared systematic experiences of discrimination and ableism, both with employers and employment support programmes. They described how these experiences had eroded their trust in both providers and employers. They clearly voiced the importance of feeling that an employment support programme supports them from a social model lens, focusing on the structural barriers to work that they experience.

Findings from across the focus groups with all four stakeholder groups and the DDPO Research Working Group point to the importance of including the following as criteria in the commissioning process:

- An understanding of ableism and the structural barriers experienced by Disabled people and people with long-term health conditions
- An understanding of reasonable adjustments, employers' legal duties and the wider legal framework governing Disabled people's rights in the UK
- An understanding of the social security system and the implications of working for service users' income, in addition to demonstrable experience of conducting better off calculations and appropriate signposting for more detailed social security-related advice
- Understanding and demonstrable experience of using rights-based and trauma-informed approaches to supporting Disabled people
- Understanding and demonstrable experience of using participatory methods, such as co-design, co-production, and user-centred design to meaningfully engage Disabled people in programme delivery and monitoring
- A well evidenced track record of employing Disabled people and people with LTHCs.

DDPOs involved in the Research Working Group highlighted the importance of potential providers demonstrating concrete examples of the criteria set out above, both in regard to service delivery but also in their own practices as employers. Wider research points to the role of co-production and meaningful involvement of Disabled people and people with LTHCs in generating employment support services that are more effective as a result of meeting service users' needs¹⁷.

Programmes with good fidelity to the principles of the IPS model were found to have better outcomes than those which are inconsistently implemented. One way of ensuring that programmes deliver effective support is to commission providers which are already well-equipped to deliver on core programme components and approaches. Nevertheless, it is

¹⁷ Learning and Work (2024) [What support helps Disabled people and people with health conditions move into sustainable work?](#)

also important for providers to offer a good level of continuous training to staff to promote high programme fidelity.

As the commissioning process is already underway, not all of the considerations above may be implemented as part of the first iteration of the CtW programme.

Programme management

Research participants, including service users and DDPOs, involved in the Research Working Group, identified the need to monitor and manage CtW using a social model approach. This approach should build on the existing monitoring requirements set out in the Grant Guidance by including:

- **A balance between the sustainability and the quantity of employment outcomes.** Providers delivering CtW are expected to progress service users into employment, however, this must not be at the cost of helping individuals find and keep the right job for them. Maintaining the small caseload sizes recommended by IPS is a vital part of this as it ensures that support is sufficiently tailored and continues once the service user has started work. Prioritising the sustainability of outcomes in the management of CtW providers and their performance is also central to this goal.

They [employment support provider] just became obsessed with key performance indicators. So, these (...) KPIs dominated after that, they were no longer interested in the individual, it was just ticking off numbers.
(Service user)

- **Additional monitoring, evaluation and learning activities and an adaptive management approach** which build on centralised, DWP-commissioned evaluation activities for the wider programme. These activities should include the active participation of service users and a continuous improvement approach to involving providers. Learning activities could include:
 - Forums or communities of practice with service users and service providers to reflect on what works well and less well in delivering different elements of the programme
 - Supporting different groups of Disabled people/people with LTHCs
 - Engaging with employers and innovative practices.

Processes should be put in place to ensure that learning shared by service users and providers is consolidated and used throughout programme delivery to improve it.

Recommendations: design & commissioning

Central London Forward should:

Recommendation 1: Ensure that the local Connect to Work programme is genuinely designed based on the social model of disability. This involves embedding it in the commissioning process and programme management and delivery, as detailed throughout the report.

Recommendation 2: Adopt a social model approach to the commissioning process by exclusively working with providers with demonstrable experience of centering the structural barriers to work faced by Disabled people and people with LTHCs and actively involving Disabled people in programme design and delivery.

Recommendation 3: Design and deliver additional participatory learning activities, focused on generating continuous insight on what works well and less well in service delivery and adapting delivery based on lessons learned.

Service providers should:

Recommendation 4: Develop a local employment engagement strategy which assesses employers' needs and inclusivity practices and ensure there is strategic oversight of employer engagement, alongside the direct liaison work of Employment Specialists.

Recommendation 5: Ensure an active and genuine involvement of Disabled people and people with LTHCs in the design, delivery, and evaluation of their programmes. This should include employing Disabled people and people with LTHCs and setting up service user panels to oversee key areas of work. For example, involving the panel in recruitment processes for Employment Specialists.

Programme delivery

The following section sets out the main research findings regarding essential programme components throughout both the service user and employer journeys on CtW. This includes the outreach, pre-employment, entering, remaining and progressing in work phases.

Outreach

SERVICE USERS

Strategies

Research participants identified specific outreach strategies which were seen to be effective in engaging with service users. These include:

Partnerships with the services which Disabled people and people with LTHCs already engage with and trust

Providers and service users described the importance of CtW working through partners to reach Disabled people.

Key services and teams named include further education colleges and DDPOs, but also healthcare services such as GP practices, learning disabilities services, and occupational therapists.

Zoom in: automated referrals from GP practices

We were able to build in an alert into GPs' systems so that if a relevant patient comes in and has that discussion with the GP about work, and their health barrier, it automatically pops up and says, 'Would they like to explore this service?' and if they would then that referral comes straight through to us.
(Employment support provider)

Co-location and partnerships with healthcare teams

Bringing Employment Specialists into clinical teams is one of the IPS principles that inform CtW. However, some service users identified strong concerns associated with the co-location of employment advisers with healthcare teams. This included past negative and traumatic experiences with mandatory employment programmes being re-associated with a healthcare context. This led to substantial mental distress for some service users, which could potentially lead to disengagement with vital healthcare.

The evaluation of Health-led trials also pointed to wider challenges for providers in engaging with GPs and health partners, especially regarding sustaining involvement, following early engagement¹⁸. A key strategy to drive up engagement with partners –such as social prescribers, talking therapies and physiotherapy - to include: exploring more flexible forms of co-location and less frequent or intensive programme visits to services. Engagement strategies with this stakeholder group should be sensitive to the lack of time health professionals experience.¹⁹ They require sufficient resources to build strong relationships with teams and secure senior buy-in. However, as noted above, referrals should not be offered by health services to patients who are not asking for help with finding or staying in work. This is because of the serious health risks associated with the legacy of mandatory employment programmes – including distress and disengagement from essential healthcare.

Partnerships with different employment support providers

This was seen as key to enable cross-referrals if a programme is not the most suitable for an individual or if the support they offer is shorter term. Existing links with other employment programme providers within the Integration Hub and through other networks may be used to create an onward referral process.

¹⁸ Department for Work and Pensions (2023) [Health-led Trials: Evaluation Synthesis Report](#)

¹⁹ Department for Work and Pensions (2023) [Health-led Trials: Evaluation Synthesis Report](#)

Findings indicate that any referrals from Jobcentre Plus should emphasise the voluntary nature of CtW and focus on building trust between the service user and the CtW Employment Specialist.

Online and social media

Service users described online outreach as an important way to disseminate information about the CtW programme to encourage self-referrals. Considerations regarding online accessibility should be built into the design of this form of outreach.

Messaging

This research offers practical insight on effective messaging for service user outreach activities. At its core, promotional messaging should adopt a social model lens and build on an acknowledgment of the ableism that prospective service users may have already experienced when accessing both work and employment support. The narrative should be focused on the wider benefits and support that the programme can offer, in addition to employment, and positive case studies demonstrating its track record. Messaging should be tested with Disabled people and people with LTHCs in advance of being rolled out.

Key messaging should include:

- **Social model framing:** CtW outreach messaging should acknowledge the structural barriers likely to have affected Disabled people's employment journey. Examples of this framing, identified by the DDPO Research Working Group, include: "have you experienced barriers to work" and "do you have a good understanding of your access needs".
- **Voluntary nature of CtW:** outreach messaging should emphasise the voluntary nature of the programme in order to set it apart from mandatory services and potentially negative experiences associated with them.
- **Positive elements of CtW:** promotional materials should focus on the potential benefits of the wraparound support offered by CtW, such as building confidence for self-advocacy. They should also focus on the service's track record in supporting service users into work and on the continuity of the support offered, by producing and sharing success stories, which include service users' direct voice.
- **Accessible communication:** materials should include Easy Read 'about me' sections and a clear description of the programme offer and journey.

EMPLOYERS

Strategies

Wider evidence on what works to engage with employers identifies recurring challenges in securing employers' involvement. The evaluation of Health-led Trials points to specific challenges in engaging with employers who did not already have experience of hiring

Disabled people/people with LTHCs, with personalisation of outreach and support being seen as an effective way to promote engagement²⁰.

Employer size is the main characteristic to consider when differentiating outreach approaches. For example, insight from focus groups with employers indicates that larger employers are more likely to have capacity to engage with employment support services and to want a key point of contact within the service. Smaller and medium employers (SMEs) are “often much time poorer than larger businesses” (*Employer umbrella organisation*) and indicated a preference for being contacted directly.

Employers, employer umbrella organisations and employment support providers shared insight on the most effective outreach strategies, including:

- **Working through partners:** examples of key partners included the Greater London Authority, BusinessLDN, London Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Federation of Small Businesses and the Confederation of British Industry. This included attending events organised by these organisations and community events they may already attend.
- **Direct contact:** most employers described wanting to be contacted directly by the programme. This may be especially effective for small employers, who will potentially have less capacity.
- **Face to face outreach:** some employers – especially those within the built environment sector – wanted to receive visits from the programme, both to understand their needs and the practicalities of working in the sector and to build a relationship of trust.

More face time, direct engagement (...) actually coming to see us (...) See the challenges that we face and also that people who are applying to some of those roles face. (*Employer*)

- Some additional considerations regarding employer outreach included identifying named senior staff in organisations in order to **build a relationship of trust over time** (this is especially the case for larger employers) and focusing outreach on local employers to ensure potential opportunities are accessible for service users. The member of staff responsible for employer engagement at a strategic level could play a key role in centralising communications, especially with larger employers.

Messaging

Research findings point to the following considerations regarding suitable messaging for outreach materials aimed at employers. It should focus on:

²⁰ Department for Work and Pensions (2023) [Health-led Trials: Evaluation Synthesis Report](#).

- **Incentives for employers and the value added** of recruiting Disabled people/people with LTHCs, such as helping address labour shortages, increasing retention, and the wider benefits of more inclusive working conditions for all employees. Employers placed a particular focus on the benefit of having increased retention rates. This should be tailored to the needs and circumstances of the specific employers the programme is trying to reach.

You've got to highlight the benefits to the employers, not the features. You know, why is it beneficial for you to do this? (...) but you can't do that on scale, it has to be done on an individual basis. *(Employment support provider)*

Findings from the employer poll indicate that a very high proportion of employers (92% of respondents) see hiring Disabled people/people with LTHCs as a way to increase the number of high-quality applicants available. This was particularly the case amongst small and medium employers (96% and 94%), when compared to micro-businesses or large employers (89%).

Another key benefit of investing in inclusivity to be included in the messaging is the wider positive impact of greater accessibility on other employees and the organisation as a whole:

This is not necessarily specific for Disabled people, because if it works for the Disabled person, it can work across the board, and if they're getting it right for the Disabled person, they're getting it right for every employee. *(Service user)*

- **How current employment practices can be detrimental for business.** This includes the risk of excluding candidates who may be a good fit for the role as a result of existing recruitment or wider employment practices, as well as losing existing staff.

A lot of time both the way that they recruit and the way they train staff is detrimental to even their own processes because they're not always going to get the best candidate by the standard recruitment model of face-to-face interviews. *(Employment support provider)*

Recommendations: delivery

Outreach

Recommendation 6: Service user outreach should be designed based on an understanding of the negative experiences Disabled people/people with LTHCs may have had when accessing healthcare or employment support. It should focus on rebuilding relationships of trust, working through partners and using online and social media strategies.

Recommendation 7: Outreach messaging for service users should incorporate accessible communication (ensuring screen-reader compatibility of documents, using Plain English and avoiding jargon throughout, and providing alternative accessible formats such as Easy Read, BSL, and large print). It should also focus on the wider benefits and support that the programme can offer, its voluntary nature and positive case studies demonstrating its track record. The service user population is very diverse, so messaging should be co-designed with Disabled people, tailored and tested before roll-out.

Recommendation 8: Employer outreach should use a range of recruitment methods (in person, online and partnership based), positive case studies and focus on identifying named senior staff in organisations in order to build a relationship of trust over time.

Recommendation 9: Outreach messaging for employers should highlight benefits for employers and the value added by recruiting Disabled people/people with LTHCs (e.g. helping address labour shortages, increasing retention, wider benefits for remaining employees). Messaging should be tailored to the needs and circumstances of the specific employers the programme is trying to reach.

Pre-employment

SERVICE USERS

Service user employment journey: pre-employment

Several service users described having had negative past experiences engaging with mandated employment support:

You know, when you enter, there are security guards and (...) it's very intimidating (...) I vowed I'd never go back because of how it affected my mental health going to that place (...) meeting with a man week in, week out, in order to make sure I get my benefits, but also to prove that I am legitimately Disabled and I'm not putting on a performance, because that's what it felt more like. It was checking that, am I faking this?
(Service user)

Core components of effective pre-employment support

The views of the service users who took part in this research echo key elements of the IPS model in determining how Employment Specialists should best support service users. These include:

- **(Re)building trust:** it is key for Employment Specialists to be trauma-aware and sensitive to experiences of ableism Disabled service users may have had when interacting with multiple services, including employment support and healthcare. This awareness should cut across the support offered by Employment Specialists by focusing on building a relationship of trust. The importance of developing trustful relationships between advisers and service users is well evidenced and has been found to be a predictor of employment outcomes.²¹
- **Personalised and tailored support:** having dedicated Employment Specialists building individual relationships with service users that draw on a thorough understanding of their needs and past experiences is consistently associated with positive outcomes²². This was echoed by service users who emphasised the importance of having their past employment journeys, access needs, motivations and interests assessed early on in their programme journey. They found it key that this needs assessment determined the type of support offered by the programme. Service users who had not had their access needs heard or met in previous experience with institutions, saw the needs assessment and the tailoring of support as an important step in building trust and confidence in the relationship with the employment adviser.

²¹ UCL (2014) Increasing employment opportunities and retention for people with a long-term health condition or disability: local action on health inequalities.

²² Learning and Work (2024) What support helps Disabled people and people with health conditions move into sustainable work?

If a person has just left a job, and they don't need interview practice, they can just go into another job, 'I don't need that.' Another person may say, 'I need support with confidence,' 'I need support with CV writing,' why don't we have a bespoke system? Why does it have to be prescriptive, everybody's the same? Everybody is not the same. *(Service user)*

- **Coaching for confidence:** service users reflected on the value of receiving coaching from Employment Specialists to build their confidence following negative employment experiences and to offer continuous encouragement throughout their programme journey.

Service users and employment support providers alike saw this as a key programme component, alongside more traditional employability support, and a pre-requirement to supporting service users into work.

A lot of emphasis is placed on finding vacancies and applying for them. And that's just, kind of, almost the easy part. The difficult part is all the anxiety about doing it or the interview part. *(Service user)*

It's not even about getting them into work, they have little to no confidence in their own ability. *(Employment support provider)*

Support identifying and communicating needs from a social model lens

Service user employment journey: pre-employment

Service users and providers alike spoke of the **cyclical and systemic issues of ableism leading to Disabled people not disclosing** their impairments, combined with not having had previous experiences of reasonable adjustments **limiting their understanding of their rights** in the workplace:

It's been difficult getting a job (...) I have this dilemma of disclosing my situation to my potential employers because I feel like if I get to speak out and disclose it, it would further shorten my chances of getting a job. *(Service user)*

So many people come to us and have never been offered reasonable adjustments before, have never had this conversation with anyone before so don't know what they need, don't know what works well. *(Employment support provider)*

Service users described the importance of receiving support from Employment Specialists in identifying and communicating their access needs and required adjustments.

The thing [for] employers that is very difficult is that a Disabled person or [someone] with a hidden disability might not know what support they need. *(Service user)*

It is vital that Employment Specialists are consistently and adequately trained in the social model of disability, disability justice²³ and trauma-informed approaches and that they have a good understanding of the Equality Act 2010 legal framework and the diverse range of possible reasonable adjustments. This was identified as key in building service users' confidence and providing them with the necessary tools and knowledge to advocate for themselves from a rights-based approach. The importance of being supported in identifying and communicating needs from a social model lens was consistently highlighted by service users across every focus group:

I think one of the positives that can come from these kinds of services is that you feel less crazy, that it's not you. You're not the reason why you're not getting the job, it's the fact that there are so many societal barriers, physical barriers, attitudinal barriers that prevent you from getting the job.
(Service user)

Service user access needs identified as part of this process should be consolidated into an access passport, which could form part of the vocational action plan. Service users, employment support providers and employers all identified access passports as good practice when working to summarise access needs and communicate them effectively with employers. Unlike the Health Adjustment Passport, the access passport²⁴ should focus on required adjustments to employer work practices (e.g. part-time or flexible working), rather than exclusively providing support to navigate workplace practices that are not inclusive.

Service users saw access passports a key tool to systematise, formalise and normalise their requirements when sharing them with employers:

A disability passport, so that actually I don't need to talk about it, and about my disability, and I don't need to explain/justify, because that's what it's really about. So, when people question you (...) it should be, like, 'No. Read my disability passport,' and that should just say, 'No, this person can have that.' Doesn't have to say why. (Service user)

Service users and providers identified the creation of passports as helpful and forward-thinking exercises to work on collaboratively with an Employment Specialist – "it feels, yes, that we're thinking ahead rather than looking back, so I'm quite enjoying that" (Service user). They emphasised the importance of keeping the document up to date and ensuring that service users have ownership over it.

²³ Disability Justice is a framework that recognises and addresses the inequities faced by people with disabilities, especially those from marginalised communities. It goes beyond the legalistic approach of disability rights and focuses on the intersection of race, gender, class, and other social identities.

²⁴ For further information, please see: <https://bestpractice.evenbreak.co.uk/2017/03/14/what-is-a-workplace-adjustment-passport/>

EMPLOYERS

Employer journey: pre-employment

Employer umbrella organisations and employers described that a lack of information about inclusivity combined with concerns regarding external perceptions of their practices prevented some employers from investing in accessibility.

I think one of the things is businesses are fearful at times that they don't have the right answers to everything, and so they shy away from action (...) employers think, 'Well, I'd like to be able to do this. I'd really like to hire Disabled Londoners or Disabled people, but actually I've not done it before, or I don't have the confidence that I know how to do everything properly'. (*Employer umbrella organisation*)

The evaluation of Health-led trials points to the importance of “enhancing employer capability to recruit Disabled people and redesign work to be more accommodating of the requirements of people with health conditions”. This was echoed by all groups of research participants who described the need for a personalised approach to employer engagement. This is guided by the following considerations:

Building trust and creating a non-judgmental space

It is vital for CtW staff to **develop relationships of trust with employers where they are able to be transparent about their current employment practices**, and their knowledge of legal duties and possible reasonable adjustments, without the fear of the legal risks associated with not meeting their duties. This is a key pre-requirement for CtW to work with employers to identify areas of improvement, advise them on inclusive processes, and challenge them where necessary.

Employer journey: pre-employment

Employers generally demonstrated a lack of understanding of the systemic nature of the barriers experienced by Disabled individuals and people with LTHCs and their implications on their legal duties as an employer. Service users shared consistent and extensive discriminatory practices experienced in the workplace.

Many employers and colleagues, they don't really understand disability etiquette, and accessibility and support. It's like they think we're fragile and incapable, they don't see our strengths. *(Service user)*

The bar is set extremely high from the beginning and there's an expectation that individuals even with additional barriers to employment will be job ready. And the people are given a very, very limited window within which to prove themselves. *(Employment support provider)*

Employer training

Wider evidence notes the role of employment support providers in increasing employer knowledge in changing perceptions of disabilities and health conditions in the workplace.¹⁶ The need for employer training emerged both from the employer poll with half of respondents (51%) identifying a lack of clarity on how to make the recruitment process inclusive as the main barrier to employing Disabled people and people with LTHCS – and from qualitative insight:

Being able to offer training to employers about how to best support their employees, how to be more, so, from our perspective, neuro-inclusive, how to break down those barriers with confidence and to, kind of, bring it in and make it into just an everyday occurrence so that it doesn't take a lot to think about it. *(Employment support provider)*

Training was the main form of support identified by employers as key to help them recruit or retain Disabled people and people living with LTHCs. This included training on:

- How to retain employees when they acquire an impairment or LTHC (55%)
- Disabilities and long-term health conditions (48%)
- Different ways to make the recruitment process inclusive (47%).

Findings emerging from focus groups with employers placed a greater focus on training about how to identify and put in place reasonable adjustments, whereas service users voiced a particular need for employers to receive training on the social model of disability and the Equality Act 2010.

Training offered to employers through the programme should focus on: the social model of disability and/or disability justice approach²⁵; the Equality Act 2010 and legal

²⁵ Disability Justice is a framework that recognises and addresses the inequities faced by people with disabilities, especially those from marginalised communities. It goes beyond the legalistic approach of disability rights and focuses on the intersection of race, gender, class, and other social identities.

framework, including introducing a diverse range of possible reasonable adjustments; practical training on how to use access passports and identify and put in place reasonable adjustments; social model-based training on how to talk to employees about disability; guidance on Access to Work and other sources of support, and training on creating an inclusive workplace for all employees.

Training should also emphasise the need to shift workplace **culture into one that builds on a social model approach, where the onus of accessibility is placed on the employer:**

You always feel like you are the one demanding. Sometimes, I wish it would come from the other side, you know, from the management offering, but not demanding. *(Service user)*

Providers and employer umbrella organisations set out key considerations for the delivery of employer training, including:

- **Adopting a tailored approach to training delivery** by addressing employers' specific challenges and knowledge gaps.
- **Using 'what works' case studies to support larger employers.** Case studies were identified as a particularly effective way to provide concrete examples of inclusive employment practices and the journey to build those processes.

Having examples of where it works because sometimes employers will go, 'Someone's neurodiverse. Don't know what that means.' So, they then build up a picture of it (...) I think if you can provide employers with case studies, testimonies or examples to go, 'This is where it works, and this is how cost effective it is, or these are the adjustments that are needed.' I think that enables employers to go, 'Oh, it's not as scary as I thought.' And then act on it. *(Employment support provider)*

- **Focusing on capacity building and continuous learning:**

There is a lot for employers to think about and it's about educating themselves and their employees as well to ensure that people with disabilities can remain engaged and supported. *(Employer umbrella organisation)*

Recommendations: delivery

Pre-employment

Recommendation 10: Employment Specialists should offer personalised, tailored, holistic support to service users that builds on a thorough understanding of the systemic barriers they experience. Service users should be supported in identifying and communicating their access needs and required adjustments, which should be collated into an 'access passport'.

Recommendation 11: Employment Specialists should be provided with continuous training on: the social model of disability and/or disability justice approach, the Equality Act 2010, legal framework and possible reasonable adjustments, forms of support available to employers and service users, including Access to Work, trauma-informed approaches to supporting service users; welfare rights advice, including better off calculations, practical training on mediation between employers and service users when providing in-work support.

Recommendation 12: Employer engagement should focus on building trust and creating a non-judgmental space to review and improve existing employment practices and ensure genuine inclusivity in the workplace.

Recommendation 13: The programme must include a focus on training and upskilling employers. Training offered to employers through the programme should include: the social model of disability and/or disability justice approach; the Equality Act 2010 and legal framework, including introducing a diverse range of possible reasonable adjustments; practical training on how to use access passports and identify and put in place reasonable adjustments; social model-based training on how to talk to employees about disability; guidance on Access to Work and other sources of support; and training on creating an inclusive workplace for all employees. This could include signposting to existing training opportunities as well as providing individual support and guidance.

Using case studies of good practice was identified as an effective way to build inclusivity capacity amongst employers.

Entering work

SERVICE USERS

Service user employment journey: entering work

Service users described multiple barriers associated with the recruitment phase, ranging from online job boards not being accessible for Disabled candidates and experiencing discrimination as part of the interview process.

Sometimes, you're interviewed and asked questions that show that they do not have faith in your qualifications because of maybe the disability you're dealing with. A lot of times you get questions... around your disability, and it seems like no one really pays attention to your skills, and your ability to actually carry out the work that you're applying for.
(Service user)

Findings emerging from this research identify key considerations for how CtW approaches supporting service users in identifying and applying for roles:

- **Employment Specialists should approach job search support for service users in a twofold way:** 1) through open market job searches, accompanied by sufficient coaching and support in navigating the application process and 2) by supporting service users in identifying suitable roles in disability job boards and accessing opportunities brokered with employers.

I would have found that easier than constantly trawling through online applications and things like that, that if there was a rolling programme or employers who were willing to (...) just have a bit more of an open attitude, rather than the traditional screening recruitment or retention processes.
(Service user)

- Employment Specialists should be adequately trained to understand the social security system and advise users on how to navigate it, including the impact of number of hours worked on benefits received. This is key to advise service users on which opportunities to search and apply for and in supporting them to transition between the benefits and employment systems.

People need actual help to [know] okay, with your type of benefits you are allowed to work 1 day a week and earn, I don't know, £157, not to lose your benefits. 'Okay, then we will, for this amount of money, we think you can work for 5 hours, for 5 weeks.' And then, you will not lose your benefits, but you will get some kind of experience, and you will start building skills on your CV, so you can further progress. (Service user)

- **Employment Specialists should be trained in providing in-work support.** Findings from the evaluation of the Health-led Employment Trials²⁶ found that different skill sets were required to provide high quality in-work support, in comparison to out-of-work.

EMPLOYERS

Job brokerage

As noted above and as set out in the Grant Guidance document, CtW should play an important role in brokering suitable employment opportunities between employer and service user.

Key considerations on how job brokerage should be approached include:

- **Tailoring messaging regarding the benefits of job brokerage to SMEs:** employer poll findings indicate that large employers were more likely to want job brokerage support (48%) than medium and small employers and micro-businesses (31%, 38% and 13%).²⁷
- **Staff responsible for setting a strategic direction for employer engagement and Employment Specialists should work with employers** to review and create employment opportunities that have proportionate entry requirements, accessible recruitment processes and are sufficiently flexible, including part-time options and job shares.

When you say, 'Oh, I'm a wheelchair user and I need a part-time job,' they either offer you a very low-paid job-, which is just a disgrace, with all my investment of, like, universities that I've done, courses, and my experience, that I feel really bad about myself if I work at this level of pay-, or they say, 'Well, we can't offer you a part-time job because this is a full-time job.' So, it's impossible to find something with my level of experience that is part-time and ideally remote and ideally flexible. (*Service user*)

Support with recruitment processes

Findings from the employer poll indicate that the **least common adjustments involved the recruitment phase**, including offering a range of ways to apply for roles and demonstrate competencies (38%) and allowing extra time during selection tests (37%).

In line with these findings, CtW staff should work with employers to review and improve recruitment and initial onboarding processes. For example, this should include supporting employers in being transparent during the recruitment process about the role, its conditions and existing inclusive practices.

²⁶ Department for Work and Pensions (2023) [Health-led Trials: Evaluation Synthesis Report](#)

²⁷ These findings are not statistically significant (sample size is lower than 100 respondents).

I think we also go a long way if we have employers clearly outline available accommodations in job descriptions. So, if I have clear outlines of what I'm going to face in this type of job that I want to apply for, I would consider if it is something I can do, or I cannot do, and also I think it is important to encourage open dialogue. *(Service user)*

Zoom in – inclusive recruitment practices

Flexible and trauma-informed interview processes.

There's an interview process, which for some people, writing, you know, writing the application form would be difficult. So [then] there's a face-to-face option. There may be audio, so they could do their application online...Do they need somebody to come and support them within the space? If we're doing an interview and you can see that someone is distressed, giving them a space where they might want to go and take their time within that process. *(Employer)*

Recommendations: delivery

Entering work

Recommendation 14: Staff responsible for setting a strategic direction for employer engagement and Employment Specialists should work with employers to review and create employment opportunities that have proportionate entry requirements, accessible recruitment processes and are sufficiently flexible, including part-time options and job shares.

Recommendation 15: Employment Specialists should act as advocates for service users vis-à-vis employers. This should include supporting the candidate to find out more about the role during the application process.

Work retention and progression

SERVICE USERS

Service user employment journey: remaining in work

Service users, providers and employers described particular challenges in ensuring inclusive practices and adjustments are followed through, thereby affecting Disabled people's ability to stay in work.

If somebody does actually disclose and talk about reasonable adjustments, we're just seeing it time and time again that the employer, as soon as the person gets in the job, especially if they present as mainstream, all of that goes out the window and suddenly they are expected to do the overtime, to do the early starts, to fill in for somebody else. *(Employment support provider)*

Because I think that's another core challenge to this, that a lot of Disabled people, they might go into employment initially, but, you know, where their employer isn't supportive enough and they struggle to stay in the role. *(Employer umbrella organisation)*

It is vital that CtW provides adaptable and continuous in-work support to service users to ensure they are able to retain new employment outcomes or remain in work, if they are in-work service users. In-work support should be built on an understanding of:

- The initial phase in employment as a moment where support from Employment Specialists is particularly needed, especially to set up reasonable adjustments. Ensuring that caseload sizes are low and aligned with IPS models is key in offering in-work support to service users in their first four months in employment and ensuring the conditions are in place for them to remain in work.

What often can be the case, especially within that first 26-week period, might be something like communication breakdown. So, the employer and the employee having some key challenges around how to best communicate, which is often where we would step in and try to support and navigate that. *(Employment support provider)*.

- **Service users' changing needs:** service users highlighted the importance of employment support being responsive and adaptable in light of the dynamic nature of some impairments and of how that impacts the barriers they experience. Service users also described the negative impact of changes in the workplace, such as a change to their line manager, and the importance of being adequately supported in navigating these situations. Employment support programmes should play a central role in providing flexible and continuous support by reviewing changing needs with service users and adapting the support available.

With a lot of the employment support you receive, you get an adviser, you get the support, case is closed, go forth and prosper. However, your needs might change. (*Service user*)

- **The role CtW should play in supporting service users to navigate conversations with employers and co-workers.** This should include managed transitions for those entering the workforce, and an ongoing programme of support for those in-work. This reinforces the importance of providing adequate training to Employment Specialists to equip them with the skills and knowledge to give high-quality in-work support. Employment Specialists should work with in-work service users to co-create a timeline of their journey in their current position, their perception of its main benefits and challenges and their relationship with the employer, including any relevant documentation²⁸. This documentation can include copies of occupational health reports, the service user's job description, supervision and appraisal notes (if relevant) and work contracts. A case management approach involving line managers, human resources, relevant health services, and union or workforce representatives will also be required.

When working with either out-of-work or in-work service users, Employment Specialists should invest in building a strong relationship with the employer alongside their personalised and trusted relationship with the service user. Engagement with employers should focus on carrying out a workplace assessment and developing a good understanding of the role, wider organization conditions and inclusivity practices to effectively support service users in identifying and advocating for required reasonable adjustments. It also involves supporting service users in navigating these conversations by advocating for them and mediating potential conflict.

We also have challenges working with some people, like co-workers, because a lot of them are not aware of our situation, or they do not just understand what it means to be someone living with a disability and also having to work. So, it would be important to have some form of awareness programme for co-workers so that they can create a more inclusive working environment and just make it easier for us. (*Service user*)

- **The need for Employment Specialists to co-design and agree a programme exit plan with service users and employers.** This should include a transitional period where processes are put in place to ensure continued support from employers and co-workers, and referral to external partners where further support is needed.

²⁸ City and Hackney Mind, Yorkshire and Humber Improvement Partnership (2011) Job Retention Practitioner's Handbook.

EMPLOYERS

Employer journey: supporting Disabled employees to remain in work

This research points to systemic barriers preventing Disabled employees from remaining and progressing in work – both due to a lack of inclusivity and the quality of the roles made available.

It's the inherent structure of: you're expected to take any job, and if you need to be part-time because you haven't the capacity to work full-time then you can't get off the bottom rung of the ladder. You can't get a promotion, because as soon as you're part-time you're not a real person and you can't get promoted. Then I agree with you about you get set up in a job and then it's a real risk to move. *(Service user)*

I had a job in hospitality once, and I had to give it up, because there was training, a workshop for workers, that was supposed to be promotional, but then there was no support services for people who are Disabled, for staff who are Disabled. So, we were supposed to cover that by ourselves, those of us who really wanted to join. *(Service user)*

The support offered to employers during service user's in-work journey should include:

- As detailed above, support from Employment Specialists in advocating for the service user by mediating conversations with the service user and employer. These are vital to monitor and address emerging issues and identify potential challenges that might arise in the future and mitigating actions.

After you've worked for a number of times, there may be issues that come up from time to time, so I think it's important they create a forum, where they're always reaching back towards you to understand how we're managing the situation, and if we're having new challenges, and how best they can actually help us to go around those things. *(Service user)*

- Support in identifying progression and upskilling opportunities, with the employer and service user.

Thinking about Continual Professional Development (CPD) and how Disabled people can be supported to train within the role and develop new skills and thinking how they're supported to stay in and develop within their labour market. Because I think that's another core challenge to this, that a lot of Disabled people, they might go into employment initially, but, you know, where their employer isn't supportive enough and they struggle to stay in the role. *(Employer umbrella organisation)*

Recommendations: delivery

Work retention and progression

Recommendation 16: Once service users are in a role, Employment Specialists should continue to support them in setting up reasonable adjustments and negotiating with employers, if required. They must also work with the employer and service user to develop a plan for support in the workplace after the end of the service user's engagement with CtW.

Recommendation 17: For in work service users, Employment Specialists should ensure they develop a full understanding of an individual's work history and liaise effectively with all relevant parties (including line managers, Human Resources, health services, and Trade Unions).

Recommendation 18: It is important to continuously review service users' access needs and to ensure that sufficient support is provided later in the employment process, particularly when negotiating with employers or navigating promotional systems. If supporting in-work service users, Employment Specialists should play a key role in assessing measures to be put in place, together with in-work service users, and supporting service users in navigating these conversations with employers by advocating for them and mediating potential conflict.

Recommendation 19: Employment Specialists should co-design and agree a programme exit plan with service users and employers that creates a transitional period and promotes work retention.

Summary

Central London has a thriving economy with high quality jobs across a diverse range of sectors. However, not everyone living in CLF boroughs can access these jobs and not all employers can find the workers they need. A significant proportion of Londoners who are not in paid employment due to ill health or disability want to work. At the same time, employers in London have high vacancy rates and report skills shortages. The right kind of employment support programme has the potential to address both these challenges ensuring that Disabled people can find and access a job that is right for them and enabling employers to benefit from a larger and more diverse talent pool. This report sets out how CtW can be delivered in Central London so that it meets the needs of employers as well as Disabled people and people with LTHCs, identifying the following key themes for successful delivery.

Personalised engagement and relationship building with employers is essential to ensure the programme understands and responds to their different needs, interests and challenges, and the issues impacting on their ability to create and maintain inclusive workplaces and to recruit and retain Disabled workers.

The CtW programme should be designed, commissioned, monitored and managed based on a genuine rather than tokenistic social model approach, which requires a central focus on structural barriers to work for Disabled people and people with LTHCs.

Co-design and production processes should occur both at a strategic programme level, across the CLF area, and at a provider level, to ensure that the views of these groups inform both the strategic direction of the programme and delivery itself.

Working with and through partners will be also key to the design and delivery of CtW. Partner organisations are essential for generating referrals and ensuring that CtW can provide holistic support to service users.

The recommendations set out in this report are related to the delivery of CtW in CLF boroughs. However, it is also important to recognise the wider barriers that prevent Disabled people and people with LTHCs from accessing as well as progressing in sustainable employment. Included below are considerations identified from the research on the wider systems changes needed for Disabled people and people with LTHCs to fully benefit from CtW. These should inform any response to the Government's Green Paper, *Pathways to Work* which sets out proposals to reform health and disability benefits and employment support, and ongoing consultation for the subsequent White Paper and legislation.

- The Government should ensure that the benefits system supports rather than prevents Disabled people and people with LTHCs starting work. People who have been in receipt of benefits and then move into work should be protected if they have to return to the benefits system. This should include automatic re-enrolment on their previous regime without the need for a reassessment and with the guarantee that

they will receive the same payment level as previously. This is different to the current proposals the Green Paper sets out as 'the right to try work'.

- Consultation on how to reform the Access to Work programme is welcome but this must come with assurance that the programme will be fully resourced, ensuring that excessive delays are eliminated.
- The Government should bring forward specific plans to ensure Disabled people and people with LTHCs have a viable route to enforce their right to reasonable adjustments from their employers.
- The Government should also take into account the key themes emerging from this research, including the nature of effective employment support, the need for benefits advice, and the importance to Disabled people and people with LTHCs of an employment support system based on trust rather than compulsion.

Appendix one- Recommendations

Recommendations

Design & commissioning

Central London Forward should:

Recommendation 1: Ensure that the local Connect to Work programme is genuinely designed based on the social model of disability. This involves embedding the model in the commissioning process and programme management and delivery, as detailed throughout the report.

Recommendation 2: Adopt a social model approach to the commissioning process, by exclusively working with providers with demonstrable experience of actively involving Disabled people in programme design and delivery.

Recommendation 3: Design and deliver additional participatory learning activities, focused on generating continuous insight on what works well and less well in the delivery of Connect to Work and adapting delivery based on lessons learned.

Service providers should:

Recommendation 4: Develop a local employment engagement strategy which supports employers to assess their needs and inclusivity practices and ensures there is strategic oversight of employer engagement, alongside the direct liaison work of Employment Specialists

Recommendation 5: Ensure an active and genuine involvement of Disabled people in the design, delivery, and evaluation of the CtW programme. This should include employing Disabled people and setting up service user panels to oversee key areas of work, for example, involving the panel in recruitment processes for Employment Specialists.

Delivery

Outreach

Recommendation 6: Service user outreach should be designed based on an understanding of the negative experiences Disabled people may have had when accessing employment support. It should focus on rebuilding relationships of trust, working through partners and using online and social media strategies.

Recommendation 7: Outreach messaging for service users should incorporate accessible communication (ensuring screen-reader compatibility of documents, using Plain English and avoiding jargon throughout, and providing alternative accessible formats such as Easy Read, BSL, and large print). It should also focus on the wider benefits and support that the programme can offer, its voluntary nature and positive case studies demonstrating its track record. The service user population is very diverse, so messaging should be co-designed with Disabled people, tailored and tested before roll-out.

Recommendation 8: Employer outreach should use a range of recruitment methods (in person, online and partnership based), positive case studies and focus on identifying named senior staff in organisations in order to build a relationship of trust over time.

Recommendation 9: Outreach messaging for employers should highlight benefits for employers and the value added by recruiting Disabled people (e.g. helping address labour shortages, increasing retention, wider benefits for all employees). Messaging should be tailored to the needs and circumstances of the specific employers the programme is trying to reach.

Pre-employment

Recommendation 10: Employment Specialists should offer personalised, tailored, holistic support to service users that builds on a thorough understanding of the systemic barriers Disabled people experience. Service users should be supported in identifying and communicating their access needs and required adjustments, which should be collated into an 'access passport'.

Recommendation 11: Employment Specialists should be provided with continuous training on: the social model of disability and/or disability justice approach; the Equality Act 2010 legal framework and possible reasonable adjustments; forms of support available to employers and service users, including Access to Work; trauma-informed approaches to supporting service users; , welfare rights advice, including better off calculations; practical training on mediation between employers and service users when providing in-work support.

Recommendation 12: Employer engagement should focus on building trust and creating a non-judgmental space to review and improve existing employment practices and ensure genuine inclusivity in the workplace.

Recommendation 13: The programme must include a focus on training and upskilling employers. Training offered to employers through the programme should include: the social model of disability and/or disability justice approach; the Equality Act 2010 and legal framework, including introducing a diverse range of possible reasonable adjustments; practical training on how to use access passports and identify and put in place reasonable adjustments; social model-based training on how to talk to employees about disability; guidance on Access to Work and other sources of support; and training on creating an inclusive workplace for all employees. This could include signposting to existing training opportunities as well as providing individual support and guidance.

Using case studies of good practice as the basis of training was identified as an effective way to build inclusivity capacity amongst employers.

Entering work

Recommendation 14: Staff responsible for setting a strategic direction for employer engagement and Employment Specialists should work with employers to review and create employment opportunities that have proportionate entry requirements, accessible recruitment processes and are sufficiently flexible, including part-time options and job shares.

Recommendation 15: Employment Specialists should act as advocates for service users vis-à-vis employers. This should include supporting the candidate to find out more about the role during the application process.

Work retention and progression

Recommendation 16: Once service users are in a role, Employment Specialists should continue to support them in setting up reasonable adjustments and negotiating with employers, if required. They must also work with the employer and service user to develop a plan for support in the workplace after the end of the service user's engagement with CtW.

Recommendation 17: For in-work service users, Employment Specialists should ensure they develop a full understanding of an individual's work history and liaise effectively with all relevant parties, including line managers, Human Resource, health services, and Trade Unions.

Recommendation 18: It is important to continuously review service users' access needs and to ensure that sufficient support is provided later in the employment process, particularly when negotiating with employers or navigating promotional systems. If supporting in-work service users, Employment Specialists should play a key role in assessing measures to be put in place, together with in-work service users, and supporting service users in navigating these conversations with employers by advocating for them and mediating potential conflict.

Recommendation 19: Employment Specialists should co-design and agree a programme exit plan with service users and employers that creates a transitional period and promotes work retention.

Appendix two– Employer poll findings

The employer poll was conducted by Savanta, a market research company, on behalf of Learning & Work Institute. Fieldwork took place between 17 and 30 January 2025 and used multiple panels targeting HR professionals or business decision makers involved in recruitment across different seniority levels. There were a total of 277 respondents – their characteristics and the key themes emerging from their responses are outlined below.

Respondents' characteristics

Industry: the top five industries represented in the survey were retail (18%), construction (13%), arts, entertainment and recreation (11%), finance and insurance (10%) and accounting and auditing services (9%).

Job levels: over half of all respondents had a director/senior management role (55%), followed by 22% of all respondents who worked in mid-management. Nine per cent of respondents were owners, 8% were managing directors and 5% were board members.

London boroughs:

- Almost half of all respondents had their London office in the City of London (48%, 133 respondents), with a relatively even distribution across the remaining London boroughs (1-7%).
- A total of 81% of all respondents were based in one of the 12 boroughs represented by Central London Forward, as detailed below.

London borough	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Camden	19	7
City of London	133	48
Hackney	6	2
Haringey	8	3
Islington	10	4
Kensington and Chelsea	5	2
Lambeth	8	3
Lewisham	4	1
Southwark	14	5
Tower Hamlets	6	2
Wandsworth	2	1
Westminster	8	3

Employer size:

There was a good distribution of employer size amongst respondents:

- 10% of all respondents (28) worked for micro-businesses (under 10 employees)
- 35% of all respondents (96) worked for small businesses (under 50 employees)
- 25% of all respondents (71) worked for medium businesses (50-249 employees)

- 30% of all respondents (82) worked for large businesses (250 + employees).

Experience of employing disabled people/people with LTHCs:

There was an even distribution of experiences amongst respondents, with 35% having previously employed disabled people/people with LTHCs (97 respondents), 32% only having experience of involving disabled people/people with LTHCs in the recruitment process (88 respondents) and 33% having no experience of recruiting or employing disabled people/people with LTHCs (92 respondents).

It is worth noting that employers' responses to this question are likely to be influenced by their existing inclusivity practices, which affect the likelihood of candidates' and employees' disclosing their impairments.

Responses to this question differed mostly by employer size, with:

- **Large employers being more likely to have previously employed disabled people/people with LTHCs (51%)**, than medium (31%), small (35%) employers and micro-businesses (16%)
- **Small employers (43%) and micro-businesses (36%) being more likely to have had no experience of recruiting or employing disabled people/people with LTHCs** than medium (31%) or large employers (24%)
- **Micro-businesses and medium employers were the most likely to only have experience of involving disabled people/people with LTHCs as candidates in the recruitment process but not employing them (47% and 38%)**, in comparison to small (22%) and large (24%) employers.

Poll findings

Perceptions of recruiting or employing disabled people or people with LTHCs (n=277)

- Survey findings indicated that employers felt they had a **very high understanding of legal duties** regarding reasonable adjustments amongst employers (96% agreed, 264 respondents). **This was particularly the case amongst large (99%) and medium employers (100%)**, in comparison to small employers (93%) and micro-businesses (87%).
- **Almost all employers agreed that they were committed to making reasonable adjustments** to recruit and retain disabled people/people with LTHCs (93%, 258 respondents) and **saw hiring disabled people/people with LTHCs as a way to increase the number of high-quality applicants** available (92%, 255 respondents). Small and medium employers (96% and 94%) were more likely to agree with this statement than micro-businesses or large employers (89%).
- A high proportion of employers believed that **making reasonable adjustments was an expensive** measure (78%, 214 respondents). Micro-businesses and large employers were more likely to disagree with this statement (15%) than small and medium employers (7% and 6%).

- However, most employers (80%, 220 respondents) also believed they **had sufficient support from government programmes to do so**. Medium employers were most likely to feel they have sufficient support from the Government – 86% vs 75% (microbusinesses), 78% (small), 78% (large). Those who were aware of Access to Work were more likely to believe they have sufficient support than those who were not familiar with the grant (86% vs 75%).

Barriers to employing disabled people/people with LTHCs and support required

Employers who did not have experience of either recruiting or employing disabled people/people with LTHCs and those who had involved candidates who were disabled/lived with LTHCs in the recruitment process but did not employ them were asked **what kind of factors had prevented them from doing so** (n=180). The main factors identified were:

- **Lack of clarity** on how to make the recruitment process inclusive (51%, 92 respondents). This was despite reporting that they had a high understanding of their legal duties
- **The belief that they were too small** as an organisation to make reasonable adjustments (77 respondents, 43%). Medium and large employers were more likely to agree with this statement (49% and 48%, respectively) than micro-businesses (37%) and small employers (38%)
- **Candidates who were not disabled/did not live with a LTHC** involved in the recruitment process **had stronger skills and/or experience** (38%, 68 respondents). Large employers were more likely to agree with this statement (55%) than any other employer size (24%, 36% and 39% for micro-businesses, small and medium employers, respectively)
- **The belief that they were too young** as an organisation to make reasonable adjustments (24%, 43 respondents).

Support required by employers to employ disabled people/people with LTHCs

Every respondent was asked what kind of **support would help them recruit or retain disabled people/people with LTHCs** (n=277). The main form of support identified as useful was **training and information on**:

- How to retain employees when they acquire an impairment or LTHC (55%, 152 respondents)
- Disabilities and long-term health conditions (48%, 132 respondents)
- Different ways to make the recruitment process inclusive (47%, 129 respondents).

A significant number of respondents would also welcome **financial support to make reasonable adjustments** for staff (39%, 107 respondents) and **tailored support from an employment programme** to match available jobs with disabled applicants/applicants with LTHCs (34%, 94 respondents). Large and small employees were more likely to want job brokerage support (48% and 38%) than medium employers and micro-businesses (31% and 13%)

A smaller number of employers would like **practical support to identify and implement reasonable adjustments** for staff (22%, 62 respondents).

When asked whether they were familiar with Access to Work as a form of support (n=277), **the majority (72%, 200 respondents) confirmed they had heard of the grant**. Of those, **62% (123 respondents) had had employees access it in the past**.

Of employers who had experience of recruiting or employing disabled people/people with LTHCs (n=185), **almost two thirds had experience of working with employment support programmes** (65%, 121 respondents).

Experience of making reasonable adjustments

Most respondents with experience of employing or recruiting disabled people/people with LTHCs (n=185) **had experience of making reasonable adjustments (64%, 156 respondents)**. Only 16% (29 respondents) had no experience of doing so.

The most common adjustments made by those who had experience of doing so in the past were (n=156):

- **Making changes** to the individual's **working pattern** (46%, 72 respondents), to their **premises** (45%, 72 respondents), This was most common amongst large employers (64%), and less so amongst small (44%), medium employers (32%) and micro-businesses (28%)
- Making changes to employees' **equipment**, including acquiring new equipment (43%, 67 respondents) or to **working practices** (40%, 63 respondents). Changing working practices was most common amongst micro-businesses (48%), in comparison to small (39%), medium (38%) and large employers (40%).
- Providing **training or mentoring** (44%, 68 respondents), providing information in **accessible formats** (44%, 68 respondents) or providing a **support worker** (43%, 67 respondents).

The least common adjustments involved (n=156):

- The **recruitment phase**, including offering a range of ways to apply for roles and demonstrate competencies (38%, 60 respondents) and allowing extra time during selection tests (37%, 57 respondents).
- **Giving the individual a different responsibility or offering another suitable role** (36%, 56 respondents). This was most likely amongst large employers (53%) and the least likely amongst micro-businesses (4%). Small and medium employers (39% and 27%, respectively).

Approach to inclusivity in the workplace

When asked about their experience of employing disabled people/people with LTHCs (n=185), employers agreed that they:

- **Offered flexibility and support to all applicants** (97%, 179 respondents)

- Had **made reasonable adjustments to the workplace to ensure it was inclusive for everyone**, in acknowledgement of the fact that not every individual will feel comfortable disclosing their disability or health condition (94%, 175 respondents)
- **Proactively invited employees to disclose reasonable adjustments** they can make to ensure they can perform at their best (94%, 173 respondents)
- **Were aware of accessibility barriers in the organisation** which might prevent disabled employees/employees with LTHCs from remaining in employment (92%, 171 respondents).