

Top Tips: Strategic integration and joining up services

Joining up services can help improve health and employment outcomes of residents. It can provide holistic support to Connect to Work (CtW) participants, improve employer engagement and boost numbers. Similarly, CtW can support other services' primary aims by boosting the number of residents in good and sustainable employment. For example, as residents move to sustainable employment, the pressure on housing services could reduce.

Once services have been identified and engaged (see the [Top Tips: Engagement with wider partners](#) for more information), Accountable Bodies can work towards further alignment and, in some cases, integration of some of these services. Joining up health and employment services is central for the delivery of the programme and is one of the core principles of Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model. CtW represents an opportunity to strengthen integration and alignment of health and employment support services in the area as well as increasing the connections within council services, including adult and community learning, adult social care, public health, housing, education and skills and economic development. This document focusses on ways to join up services within the council and beyond, and factors to consider for facilitating further alignment and integration.

You can find more information about the context in which this document was developed [here](#).

Lessons learned

Lessons learned are drawn from evaluations of a range of Supported Employment, including [Health-led Trials](#) and [Working Well: Individual and Placement Support in Primary Care](#). We have also included examples that are not Supported Employment programmes but have key lessons that can be applied to CtW and are compatible with the Supported Employment model, as well as evidence on how to improve joint working, including a report by the Institute of Employment Studies on [Improving Health & Employment Outcomes through Joint Working](#) and L&W's [Evidence review: Employment support for people with disabilities and health conditions, the evaluation of Working Well](#), and the evaluation of the [Solent Jobs Programme](#).

Integration and alignment between services is required at strategic and operational levels:

- Strategic integration involves senior staff and decision makers in local government and supporting organisations working together.
- Operational integration involves coordination amongst front-line staff, with Employment Specialists working with delivery staff across a range of services.

Joining up at a strategic level

Ways to facilitate strategic joined-up working include:

- **Establishing how CtW can support broader strategic plans, such as Local Skills Improvement Plans, Local Growth Plans, and local Get Britain Working Plans.** This will help to make connections, establish collaborative working, and help secure buy-in from key partners that can support further integration and alignment at strategic level.
- **Forming connections with relevant services and agreeing shared objectives.** This can include clear accountabilities between partners and arrangements for monitoring delivery and the outcomes that are achieved. This can also help to understand the wider support landscape offered in the area, such as housing and economic development services.
- **Identifying governance or other structures that could support joined-up working, such as Integrated Care Systems or integration boards introduced for other programmes.** For example, one of the local government partnerships, delivering the [Work and Health Programme](#), has set up integration boards to strengthen links between relevant agencies, bringing together senior staff who work together to overcome delivery challenges, such as the lack of common objectives, accountabilities and funding streams, and competing or overlapping priorities.
- **Recruiting integration coordinators or managers to facilitate the integration between different services.** For example, NHS integration coordinators were recruited as part of the [Working Well programme](#) to support the integration of the health and employment support components.
- **Ensuring sufficient resource for collaboration and networking activities to build and maintain connections between services.** Collaborative working and engagement across networks are essential so that leaders, managers and front-line staff know how other services operate, the support available for service users and how to signpost to the right support. This level of engagement can be resource intensive and programmes often underestimate the amount of time required.

Integration at a strategic level

The Liverpool City Region employment programme for healthier lives aims to embed health and wellbeing within economic policy. As such this programme is not aimed to support disabled people and people with health conditions into work, but it aims to incorporate health and wellbeing within all the Liverpool City Region strategies. While the project is still ongoing, the framing of the programme can inform and highlight how local economic development and health strategies can be linked to meet the needs of all residents.

This programme is funded by the Health Foundation and the Liverpool City Region, aims to inform what changes could be made to further integrate the health and wellbeing strategy with economic development strategy across the city region. This approach will provide the opportunity for residents, employers, and other key stakeholders to directly contribute to and influence the work undertaken by the programme, as it seeks to better understand the impact particular health conditions can have on the employment prospects of the people in the city region. It will also help to identify simple, inexpensive and practical steps that can be taken by the resident and the employer to overcome these challenges. An output of the programme will be a 'Economy and Health integration toolkit' which will be a blueprint that other regions can also follow.

Joining up at an operational level

Operational integration and alignment can be supported by building a common culture, and supporting the sharing of data and systems between services. This can be facilitated by a range of measures, including:

- **Developing protocols for data sharing.** This can help integrate the programme into already established systems. This can also support handovers of participants, reduce data inputting, and help track participants between staff and organisations.
- **Developing information for delivery staff to improve understanding of the programme.** Information sheets outlining the referral process and the support available to participants can ensure everyone fully understands the programme and supports handover in case of staff turnover. It can include frequently asked questions and diagrams of the referral process and employment support. Information could be tailored to the intended audience and used alongside direct communication.
- **Building connections and opportunities for frontline staff to share knowledge, to aid communication and buy-in.** Good practice forums, shared learning and training opportunities can be used to facilitate indirect networking. This could be done by developing Communities of Practice or establishing regular engagements for programme staff and partners. For example, staff delivering the IPS in Primary Care (IPSPC) in Greater Manchester hold joint meetings with healthcare professionals. Healthcare teams with existing experience of joint-working, such as [Living Well Teams](#), were more open to engaging with those teams.

- **Encouraging co-location of health and employment services and hub models.** Co-location of services where Employment Specialists, or other staff, are located in partner settings can facilitate joined-up working. IPS's expectations is that staff prioritise settings in which participants feel comfortable. For example, in the [Working Well: IPS Primary Care programme in Greater Manchester](#), Employment Specialists and the NHS Integration Coordinator were working from existing hubs, such as Living Well Hubs as well as in non-health settings, such as libraries and cafes.

Key considerations

Joining up at a strategic level

How can existing organisations (such as Health and Wellbeing Boards, Integrated Care Systems and local training providers) be brought together to help promote the programme?

What are the objectives of the programme? How will you communicate with partners to ensure they understand the objectives and the benefits of the programme? What is the narrative of CtW?

What local strategies or plans do you need to be aware of in the design and implementation of CtW? How could the programme support the objectives or outcomes of existing local strategies or plans?

What are the governance arrangements needed to facilitate integration and alignment? Who needs to be a part of this? How often will they meet? What programme management arrangements for you need? How will you use governance arrangements to ensure delivery and outcomes are monitored and achieved?

Do you have a map of connections? Who will be responsible for maintaining this and continuing to build partnerships? What resource is being given to build collaborative working?

Joining up operationally

What other local public service or essential support networks are there in the area? How might you involve local delivery organisations?

How will you build relationships and information sharing between frontline staff delivering CtW and other relevant support services? Do you already have health (or non-health related) hubs in the area that could support the co-location of services?

How will you communicate the purpose and approach of CtW with other integrated support? Is it worth drawing up information sheets with a series of frequently asked questions and a diagram on process to aid understanding of the programme?

Examples of what is working well

Some in local government have introduced 'Integration Hubs' to bring together services. Using existing shared health services hubs, such as Living Well Hubs, has been effective in Greater Manchester (as part of the Working Well: Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care programme) to facilitate the co-location of health and employment support professionals has been facilitated. Others have introduced hubs specifically dedicated to creating one stop shop for residents, which can be explored as places to locate supported employment professionals. For example:

- **Local London** is a partnership of nine London Boroughs in the North East and South East of the capital. Their Integration Hub team bring together employment services, employers and residents looking for work, apprentice/traineeships or training opportunities. The Hub aims to ensure people across the sub-region can access employment and learning options.
- **Working Well North Tyneside** have set up their Working Well Employability Hub which is a one stop shop to make it easier for people to access employment, health and skills support. The service is delivered by North Tyneside Council in partnership with the NHS, Department for Work and Pensions, the community and voluntary sector and local employers.
- **The Gorton Hub in Manchester** opened in 2022 as a one-stop shop for the residents of Gorton and its surrounding neighbourhoods. This new community hub aims to improve public service delivery through co-location and integration in a purpose-built facility. It brings together a range of different services all in the same venue allowing people to access the various support networks much more easily. It includes services from the library, adult education service, a housing association and the integrated community health and social care team. It also includes Jobcentre Plus, a pharmacy and will eventually have a café.