

Work Local:

our employment and skills offer to a new
Government to boost inclusive growth (2024)

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#worklocal

Background to our original Work Local ambition

- **Built case for reform:**
 - LGA [analysis](#): £20 billion spent on 49 national employment and skills related programmes and services – 9 Whitehall departments and agencies, multiple providers, different geographies. Centralised, siloed and sub-optimal.
 - [Evidence](#) of local government leadership, knowledge and innovation bringing together partners, national and local schemes to improve outcomes for residents and employers. But sector's knowledge underutilised.
- **Set out a clear ambition:**
 - Devolved and integrated employment and skills services that join-up with local support led by local leaders with a single pot of funding.
 - A [cost benefit analysis](#) revealed across a local area, pooling budgets and working collaboratively could increase by 15 percent the number of people moving into work and improving their skills.
- **Positive impact** on public policy (expanded / deepened devo, integrated LEP functions, Multiply and Universal Support grant funded). Paved the way for change and further devolution.

Our new Work Local proposals (2024)

- **General Election 2024:** put Work Local on political parties' radars as part of the solution to labour market challenges and opportunities.
- Established a **working group** of officers from across local government partner associations, councils and devolved authorities to inform the new policy.
- **Our new proposals in a nutshell – three interlinked offers** led by local government across England to improve services for:
 - young NEETs supported into their first job or career path (Youth Pathways)
 - adults that need to secure and progress in work (Working Futures)
 - local employers to address workforce needs, help residents gain skills for jobs and develop a culture of lifelong learning (Skills for All)
- Focused on **role / functions needed to improve services**; requires a completely new way of working bringing partners, agencies providers together in places.
- Outcome-focused **Local Employment & Skills Agreements (LESAs)** of at least three years, within a **clear national framework**.
- This could move us, in time, towards a fully devolved and integrated approach.

Youth Pathways offer

Purpose. Dedicated employability service supporting 16-24 year-olds at risk of, or who are 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) - including UC claimants - into their first job or career path. It would connect them with jobs, learning and support they need locally, and bring in expertise from partners etc. It would include:

- co-ordination of support for young people **at risk of becoming NEET**
- in-depth assessment leading to a **personal job and skills plan**
- promoting **work experience**, internship and traineeship opportunities
- **apprenticeship pathways** for vulnerable and under-represented young people
- access to **Further Education courses** (including competencies and qualifications in English and Maths) and addressing support needs whilst on a course
- a local service for **information advice and guidance**, in partnership with jobcentres, employers, further / higher education to set ambition for young people
- specialist support for **SEND young people**
- referral to **mental health provision** and work with Mental Health Support Teams
- initiatives to provide a **stable living environment** and prevent homelessness.

Working Futures offer

Purpose. Ambition to commission / directly deliver employment services for people struggling in the labour market – including UC claimants - so it is accessed alongside other services. All areas can start with a ‘core service’ around ‘[Universal Support](#)’ as it is phased in from 2025, laying the ground to serve more people. It would include:

- an option to **co-locate** Jobcentres and local authority premises
- continual assessment leading to **personal plans** using an all age careers service
- access to new and better qualifications, including relevant job-ready training
- **national employment support contracts** accountable to *Working Futures*, with WF replacing Restart when current contracts finish
- managed routes into **specialist provision** (health and disability, ex-offenders, drug and alcohol rehabilitation etc)
- help to **resolve problems** such as housing, childcare, financial advice, etc
- **job search, job placement and support for self-employment**
- **employer engagement** for placements and recruitment
- **in-work support**, when appropriate, to promote sustained employment.

Many areas already doing more ... so those that are should be enabled to pilot new approaches e.g. how a fully merged jobcentre and local service might work etc

Skills for All offer

Purpose. A dual offer to employers and residents to address skills supply and demand issues.

For **residents**, it would include:

- **all-age careers advice service** for partners to mobilise around with referral to YP and WF.
- **guaranteed access for adults to a Level 2 functional skills offer** in community venues, with onward advice on Level 3 qualifications
- employer-led technical skills for priority sectors
- a **menu of local and online learning opportunities** for residents and targeted support for those on YP and WF residents
- joined up local network of institutions and providers to create clear **progression pathways**
- **adult and community learning** courses many of which may be income generating.

For **employers and the local economy**, it would provide a ‘single front door’ to:

- **area-wide** and bespoke **workforce needs analysis** to employers plus advice on upskilling, workplace adjustments, well-being, inclusive recruitment, mentoring and networking
- enhance **Local Skills Improvement Plans** (LSIPs) and maximise use of existing provision
- **brokerage service** to match employers with individuals from YP and WF
- a route to **influence local careers advice**
- a single point of contact for **inward investment and major schemes** maximising the **impact of social value** by contractors

Planning and delivery

- **This is achievable.** All offers based on working group views, and builds on local government's existing or upcoming responsibilities. Only local government can join up these services.
- Three offers would be locally planned and commissioned through outcome-focused **Local Employment & Skills Agreements (LESAs)** of at least three years, setting out an integrated strategy, funding, and delivery plans and involving other local partners.
- Local areas have **different needs**, so delivery of the offers will differ from place to place.
- LESAs should fit within a **clear national framework** that sets standards.
- Recommend **mayoral areas and their constituent councils** run with this first with **other areas to follow** via an ambitious devolution path. As a first step the offers will **use existing programmes and devolution deals**.
- Purposely decided not to go into too much detail. **Our aim is to co-design this with a new Government.**

Work Local: what needs to happen?

To start the journey requires three critical steps to be taken by the new Government:

- 1) Dialogue, planning and leadership:** establish a *joint national board*, chaired by a **Minister**, tasked with overseeing employment and skills devolution to local government; a *new Joint Unit*, staffed by civil servants and local authority officers, to co-ordinate detailed planning; expand partnership working with the local NHS.
- 2) Early practical actions:** a new *'duty to co-operate'* to encourage partners to work together to improve services; a programme of *joint working and co-location* of jobcentres and councils; shape DWP's planned *'Universal Support'*; urgently review the *devolution deal* process.
- 3) Building for the future:** a realistic *multi-year plan for the roll-out* of devolution; an early call for *new initiatives / pilots*; develop *best practice* exchange to drive improvement; form new *policy, planning and delivery* networks to promote dialogue and learning.

Translating our proposals with emerging new Government policy

Clear similarities between LGA proposals and Govt's back to work plans as well as plans to expand and deepen devolution. Their priorities include:

- National Jobs and Careers Service merging jobcentres and National Careers Service, which will connect with local services
- A Youth Guarantee for 18-21 years
- Work, Health and Skills plans to tackle economic inactivity 'led by Mayors and local areas'
- Commitment to continue devolving adult skills funding
- Skills England to deliver national, regional and local skills needs of the next decade
- Reforming the Apprenticeship Levy to a Growth and Skills Levy

More detail expected in the Get Britain Working and Devolution White Papers both set for Autumn publication.

Landing our proposals and next steps

Our aim is to embed these proposals with:

- **Whitehall and Ministers** by advocating for Work Local to be adopted to frame and shape emerging Government policy in this space and for a new national / local government partnership at political, senior and lead officer levels.
- **Our council and mayoral authority colleagues** so the sector has a united vision for employment and skills, and that it can inform local thinking as places move through their own devolution journey.
- **Stakeholders and partners** who are increasingly recognising that place-based decision making is a key priority for this Government.

Please visit [*Work Local: Our employment and skills offer to a new Government to boost inclusive growth \(2024\) | Local Government Association*](#)

If you're interested in discussing Work Local with us, contact jasbir.jhas@local.gov.uk