

Connect to Work – Employer Readiness

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19th August 2025



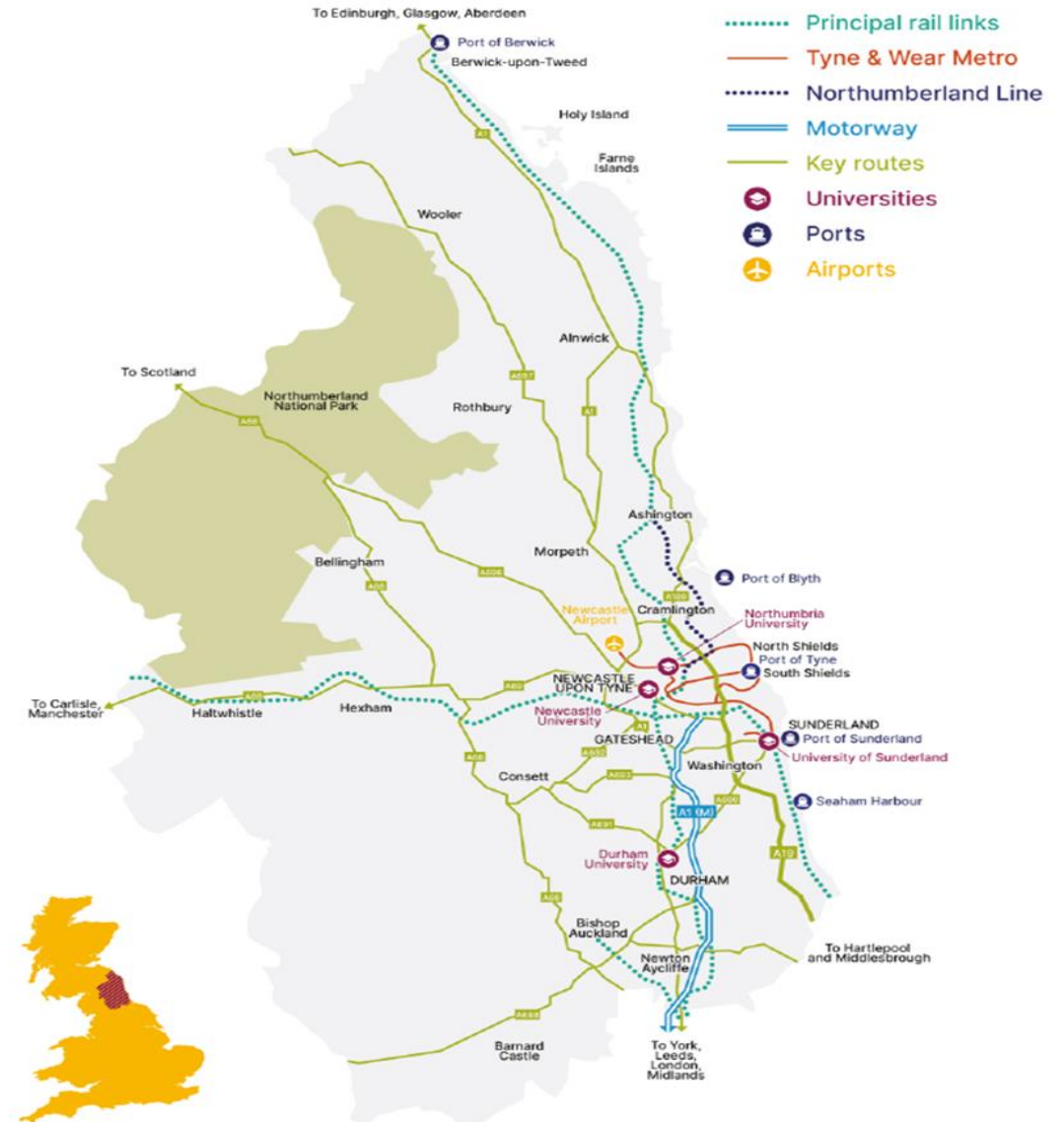
The Combined Authority

The North East Combined Authority was formed on 7 May 2024, following a devolution deal for the North East being announced in December 2023.

Led by an Elected Mayor and Cabinet, covering the seven local authority areas of County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland, the CA gives local people more control over the things that matter most to them.

Through devolution deals, the Government is giving areas of the country more powers to make their own decisions on issues such as transport, skills and support for business.

We work closely with organisations and people from all across the region. These range from health trusts, emergency services, voluntary organisations and local businesses.



Our Region



Low unemployment by historic standards but rising levels of health-related inactivity



3 deep-water ports, riverside assets, and international airport providing onward connectivity via Paris, Amsterdam and Dubai.

New CA, with strong political leadership and already delivering and innovating

Second largest MCA by area



A diverse geography with three cities, many vibrant towns, and extensive rural and coastline communities

An economy punching below its weight – with skills, productivity and GVA behind national averages. Closing the gap will benefit regional residents and economy, as well as UK plc.

Metro – the UK's original modern light rail system – operates over 77km of track, connecting Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, and Sunderland. Complemented by the successful introduction of the **Northumberland Line**.



Excellent connectivity to rest of UK via East Coast mainline and strategic road network including A1, A19 and A69

2,000,000 inhabitants

4 universities, 9 FE colleges and other exemplar skills provision

54,705 businesses providing 820,000 jobs

Vibrant VCSE sector, with around 30,000 employees and unparalleled expertise of communities.

Distinctive cultural & visitor economy offer: >500km of coastline, two UNESCO Heritage sites, Northumberland National Park, historic castles and cathedrals, leading football teams, an international cricket ground, diverse and distinctive cultural venues

A £54bn economy at the heart of the UK union



Our Missions

The overall aim of these five missions is to increase opportunity, create more well-paid employment, improve transport connections, build a greener North East and reduce child poverty.

Powering these missions is our commitment to devolving more powers out of Westminster wherever possible.

The North East Combined Authority believes people acting locally produces better results than having our decisions taken for us from afar.

We will continue to push for ambitious devolution deals and a single settlement with government.



1. Home of real opportunity



2. A North East we are proud to call home



3. Home to a growing and vibrant economy for all



4. Home of the green energy revolution



5. A welcoming home to global trade



Our Local Growth Plan

The North East has the assets and ambition to deliver growth that benefits the whole of the UK. Our regional coalition can play a vital role in helping Government deliver national targets with the right deployment of regional powers and investment.

If the North East were to grow at the same projected rate as the fastest growing G7 economy today our economy will be £13.1bn larger by 2033.

1

Partners across the North East are working towards...



Creating tens of thousands of new jobs, including in the green, creative and foundational economies



Increasing residual household incomes for all our residents through better paid jobs and a better functioning housing market



Lifting tens of thousands of children out of poverty, as a first step towards its elimination



Supporting more people into work, including through a unified approach to work and health, and a more co-ordinated skills system



Supporting Government's commitment to deliver 1.5m new homes, enhancing our housing market for all our residents



Creating stronger neighbourhoods, including by reducing educational inequalities and investing in communities

* Calculated by applying USA (the fastest growing G7 country) growth forecasts published by Congressional Budget Office to ONS estimates of current North East GDP.



National policy context



The UK is facing a **significant inactivity challenge** – 21.9% inactivity rate
There are 2.8m people out of work due to long term illness



The **Get Britain Working White Paper** set out how the Government is investing £240m to trial new ways to get people back into work, this includes:



Launching the **Connect to Work** programme to: support people with health conditions, disabilities and complex barriers, and/or from specified disadvantaged groups, to seek sustained employment; and support those people who are in work but at risk of losing their employment.

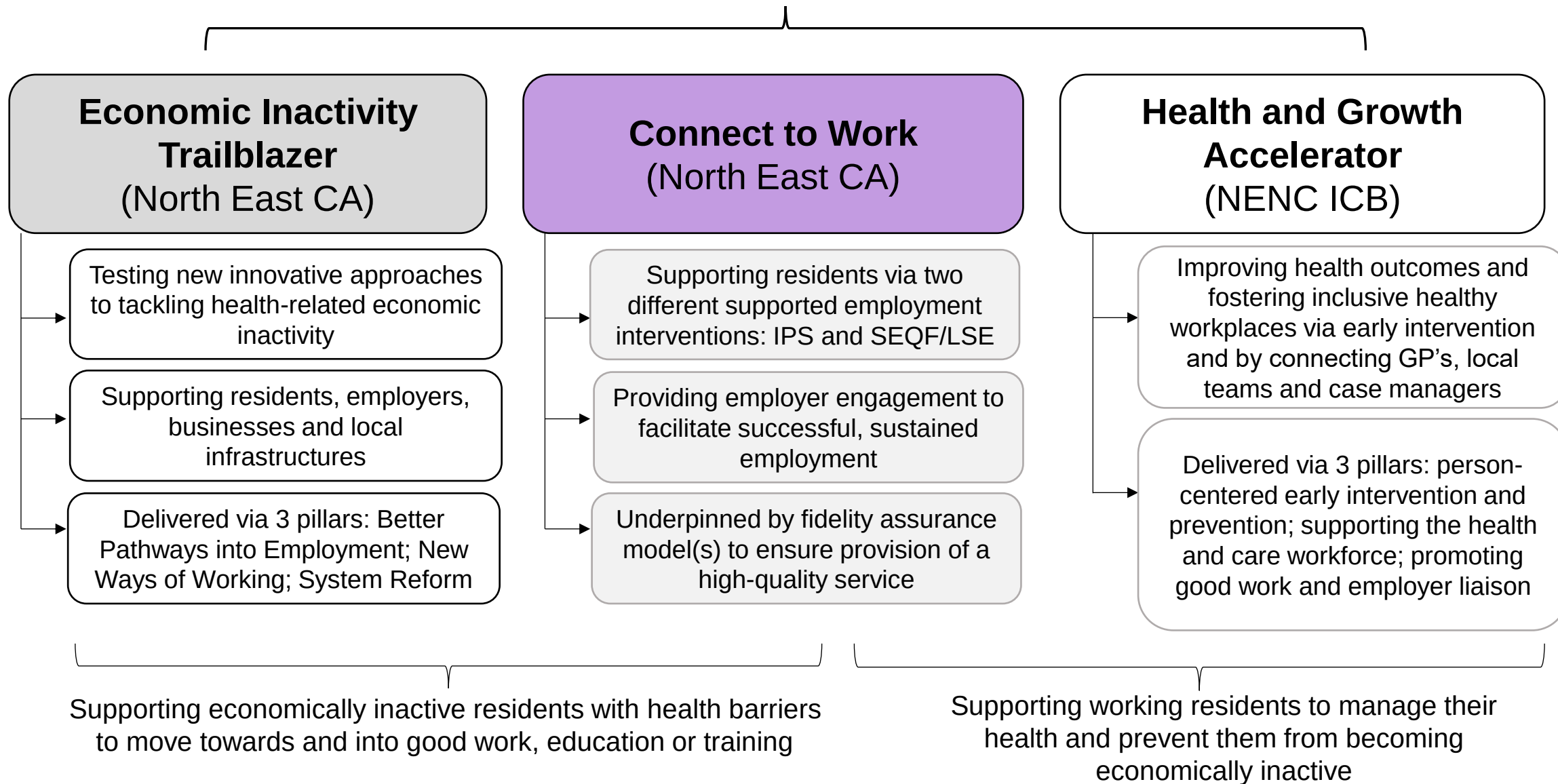


£125m to mobilise eight **trailblazer areas** in England and Wales that will bring together and streamline health, employment and skills services to improve the support available for people who are economically inactive. Focus on joining up help and support based on the needs of local people and places.



In three of these areas Integrated Care Systems will be funded through **NHS Health and Growth Accelerators** to develop evidence of the impact of targeted action on the top health conditions driving inactivity.

Tackling Health-Related Economic Inactivity in the North East





Connect to Work

- The “Get Britain Working” White Paper outlines Government’s strategy to invest £240m to support the ambition of a national 80% employment rate and help improve workplace health and keep people in work
- Connect to Work is the first major element of the White Paper
- Nationally the programme will deliver support to 100,000 disabled people, people with health conditions, and those with complex barriers to get into employment and to get on in work, from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2030, in England and Wales
- As Accountable Body, North East CA is responsible for the commissioning, implementation, delivery and management of the programme
- In the North East, programme funding of up to £52.5million is available to support a minimum of 13,500 participants from October 2025 to March 2030
- Connect to Work is a voluntary programme which will be targeted at the right people, at the right time and based on an individual’s circumstances.



Principles of the programme

The programme will use the proven **Supported Employment** model, 'place, train and maintain' to support participants.

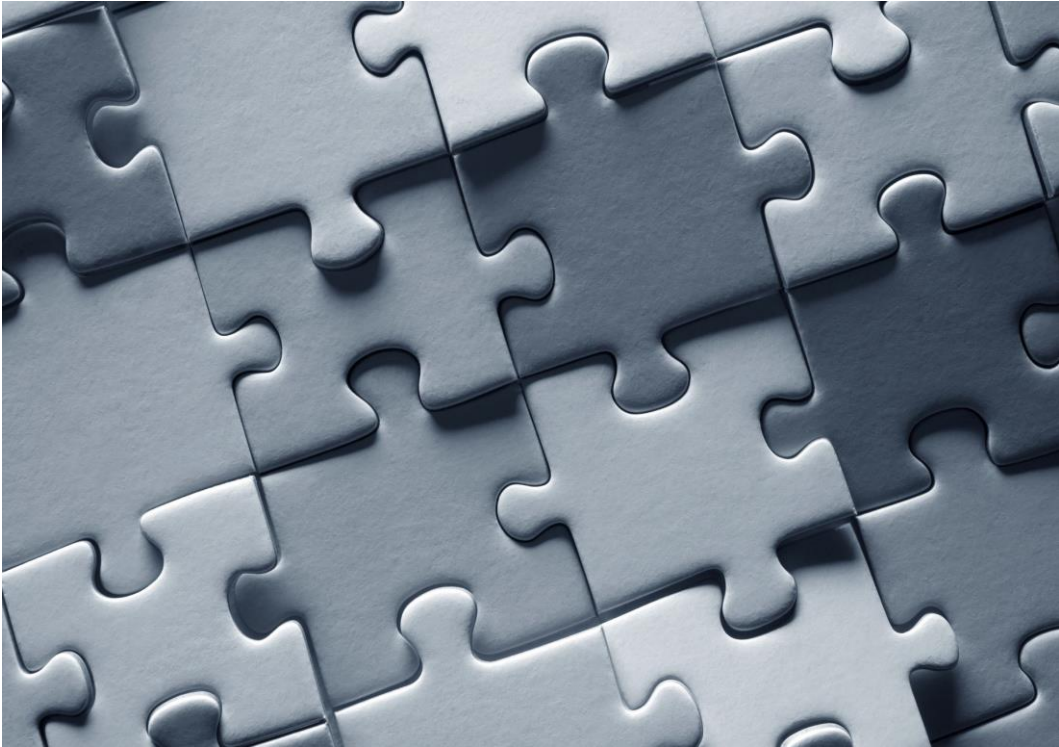
Depending on the needs of the participant, support will be delivered via two different types of interventions:

- **Individual Placement and Support (IPS)** is an intervention which integrates employment support alongside primary and secondary health services, and other support services. People with health conditions, disabilities and or from specified disadvantaged groups will be supported via this intervention.
- **SEQF/Local Supported Employment (LSE)** is a more intensive intervention than IPS, due to the depth of support delivered. This intervention will support people with autism, learning disabilities and or from specified disadvantaged groups. Under this intervention, a participant will receive more contact and support from their Employment Specialist.

Connect to Work is underpinned by a Fidelity Assessment system, to ensure the development, implementation and delivery of consistent, high-quality support.



Fit with Other Provision



- Individuals should be referred to provision that is the best fit for their needs, even if this is not Connect to Work.
- Any employment support delivered at the same time as Connect to Work should be complementary - individuals cannot be on Connect to Work at the same time that they are on another intensive employment provision
- Integration with other relevant services for individual participants is key and is encouraged, to provide holistic support.



Supported Employment

Providers are expected to adhere to the 5-stage place, train and maintain Supported Employment Model in line with the IPS-25 Fidelity Scale or the SEQF-10 Fidelity Scale.

Supported employment is different to traditional models of employment support - focus on placing participants into work at the earliest opportunity and providing ongoing support to help them succeed in work.

It helps individuals gain employment and **empowers them to maintain their jobs and thrive in the workplace.**

Engagement

An opportunity for a potential participant to learn about Supported Employment and decide whether it is right for them.



Vocational Profiling

A planning process enabling a participant to identify what they want to achieve and work out a plan for getting there.



Job Matching

The participant is supported to find vacancies that meet the jobseeker's employment goals.



Employer Engagement

The participant learns about the job and works out a plan with the employer on how they will be supported through the recruitment process and in the workplace.



On and Off the Job Support

The participant is supported to learn the job and sustain employment. This could include job coaching, training/support from mentor and workplace reviews.



Eligibility and Suitability

- The programme is designed to support out-of-work residents with a health condition, disability or in priority disadvantaged groups, and in-work residents who are at risk of losing employment
- Eligibility – a person must:
 - Have a disability or long-term health condition
 - Belong to a specified disadvantaged group (on the right)
- Suitability – a judgement of the individual's fit with the programme aims:
 - Participants shouldn't be on any other intensive support programmes while on Connect to Work
 - Participants should be motivated to look for work
 - Participants would benefit from Supported Employment over other provision

Specified disadvantaged groups are:

An offender or ex-offender

A carer or an ex-carer

A homeless person

A former member of the Armed Forces, reserves of partner of AF personnel

A person for whom a drug or alcohol dependency (or history of) presents a significant barrier to employment

Care experienced young person or a care leaver

A refugee, a resettled Afghan

A person on the Ukrainian scheme

A victim or survivor of domestic abuse

Young people identified as being involved or at risk of being involved in serious violence

A victim of modern slavery



Delivery Model

The North East CA is Accountable Body (AB) for Connect to Work, working closely with DWP, our seven constituent local authorities and other key stakeholders to develop and deliver the model as follows:

- 75% of participants will be supported via the IPS intervention, 25% of participants will be supported via the SEQF/LSE intervention.
- 85% of participants will be out of work and require support to move into employment, 15% of participants will be in work and require in-work retention support
- A key requirement of the model is that delivery needs to be integrated with health and other local support services to provide holistic support to the target participant groups.
- Participants will be supported to move into employment quickly, with support then provided to both the participant and employer to sustain the employment.
- Effective work with individual employers is key to successful delivery of Connect to Work, helping to strengthen inclusive employment practices, understand recruitment needs and retention challenges, and carve new roles where appropriate.



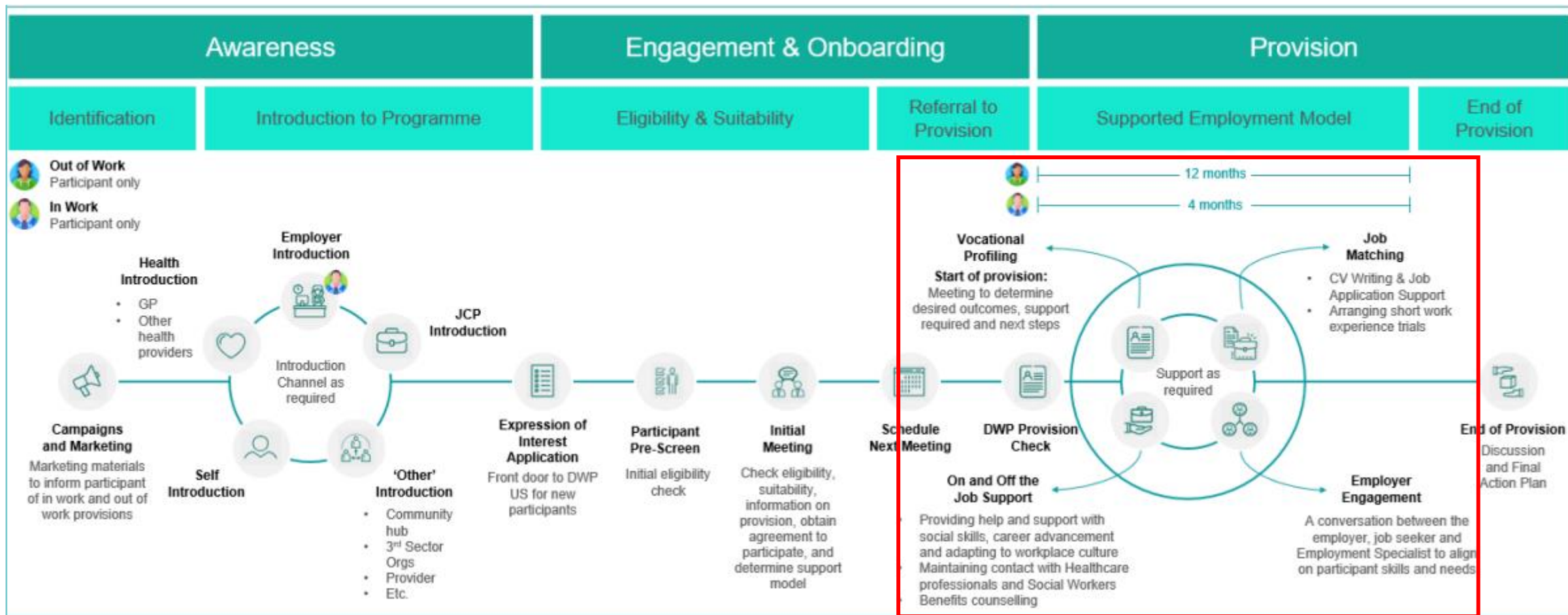
Outputs and Outcomes

Up to March 2030, 13,500 residents will start on programme. Of these, the following outputs and outcomes will be delivered:

Job Starts	At least 50% of total Programme Starts to achieve first earnings ('Out-of-Work' Participants)
Outcomes	At least 40% 'Out-of-Work' Participants of total Programme Starts to achieve a Lower Threshold Job Outcome .
	At least 29% 'Out-of-Work' Participants of total Programme Starts to achieve a Higher Threshold Job Outcome .
	At least 80% of 'In-Work' Retention Support Participants to achieve a Higher Threshold Job Outcome (higher only – Employed and Self-employed Job Outcomes).

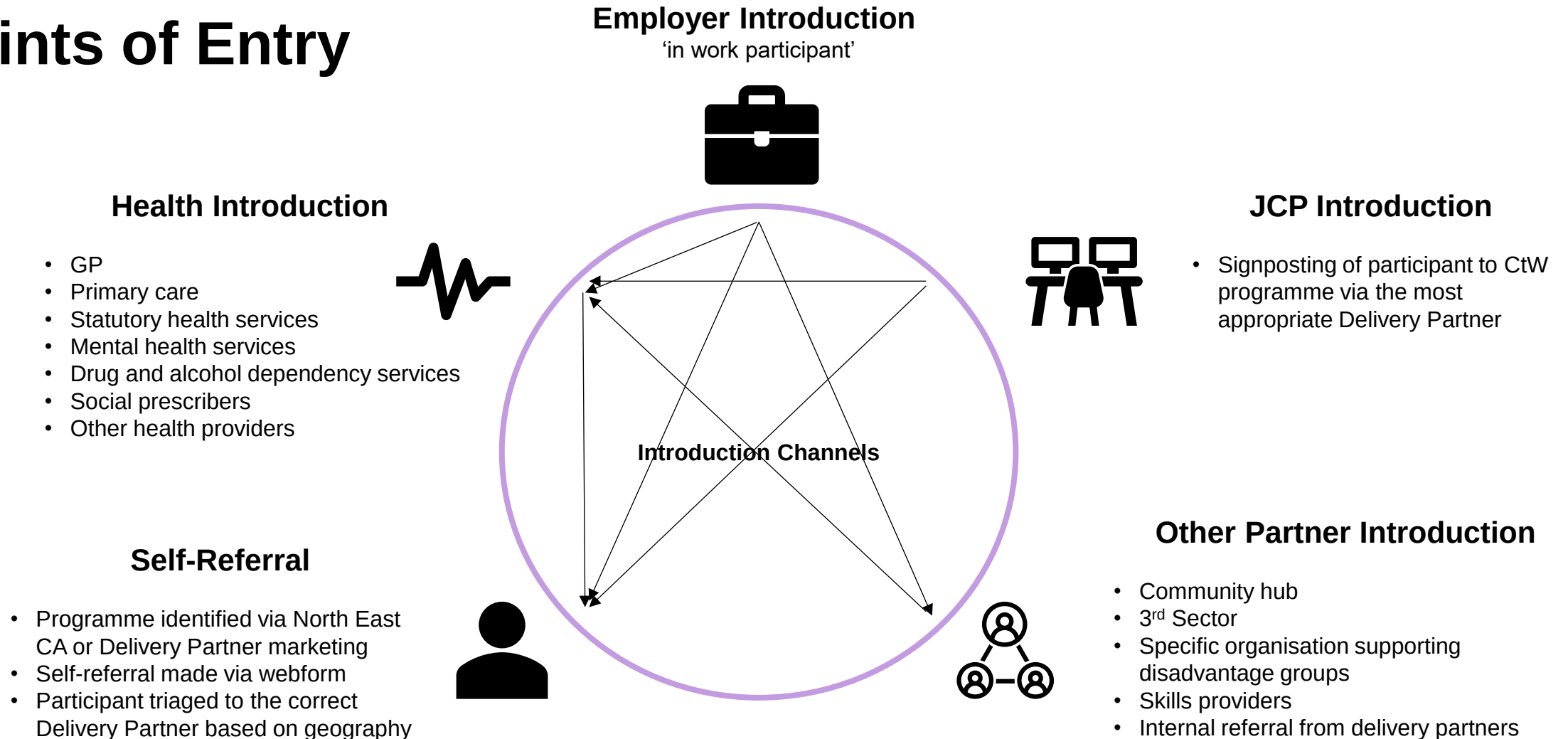


The Participant Journey





Points of Entry





Benefits to your Business

Studies of **Supported Employment** have found:



Increased productivity



Improved work environment



Increased customer
diversity

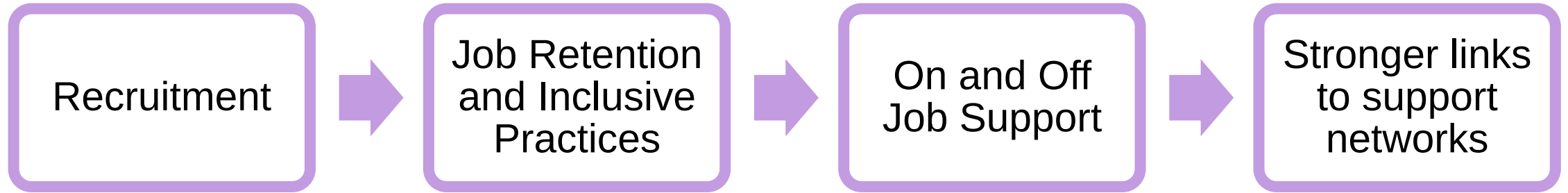


Reputational gains



Reduced staff turnover

The Process



A Connect to Work Employment Specialist will work in partnership with employers to match participants to suitable job opportunities, saving time and recruitment costs.

The Employment Specialist will **provide comprehensive support** for the employee and employer to create a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Connect to Work participants will be provided with up to **12 months Employment Specialist support** (4 months, if already in work), supporting induction, training, career planning and identifying potential reasonable adjustments, if required.

Employment Specialists can direct employers to useful services, for example, starting their disability confident journey by registering to become a Disability Confident Employer through to progressing employers on that journey.



Next Steps

1. Register your interest through our Employer Expression of Interest webform (launching 1st Oct)
2. Once connected with our local Delivery Partner, an Employment Specialist will walk you through the recruitment process, support with adjustments and guide your recruiting managers
3. Employment Specialist to provide individually tailored support for your employee, support workplace culture and empower team members to provide holistic support



FAQs

Can any sized employer take part?

Yes! There is an increasing number of employers using supported employment and the size of an employer does not prevent you from taking part in Connect to Work.

We don't have time to provide support.

A key benefit of Connect to Work is the access to Employment Specialists who can work in partnership with you and the participant to understand your business requirements whilst working to build the confidence and capability of the wider workforce.

What about increased sick leave?

Studies show there is little no difference between the amount of sick leave taken by employees on support employment programmes vs not. Your Employment Specialist can help with any concerns.

Are reasonable adjustments costly?

Reasonable adjustments are a legal requirement for all employers, often cost very little and can improve efficiency.

E.G – providing flexible working patterns may allow an individual to work the hours they are most productive.

Any questions contact –

ConnectToWork@northeast-ca.gov.uk