

Effective employer engagement models

What can be learned for the North East?

The North East Combined Authority (NECA) commissioned Learning and Work Institute (L&W) to support the co-development of an Areas of Research Interest (ARI) framework for the region. The ARI sets out the research priorities intended to support evidence-informed policy and strategic decision making to address economic inactivity due to ill health. The Framework is structured around three overarching themes. This policy brief developed by L&W aims to address one of the evidence gaps set out under the theme Employers.

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SUMMARY

Employers have a key role to play in supporting people with long-term health conditions into employment. Employers need to be engaged for many reasons, including being consulted on future pipelines or approached to match an individual to a vacancy. But employer engagement can be challenging.

Challenges include:

- A confusing landscape, with multiple competing offers from employment support organisations
- A lack of incentives for employers to engage unless they have a clear recruitment need
- Barriers specific to the recruitment of disadvantaged individuals
- Challenges related to job brokerage.

Effective practices for engaging employers include:

- Identifying the right employers to engage with by researching employers and prioritising those with existing awareness of disability and health in the workplace, such as Disability Confident employers or those involved with similar schemes
- Making a clear case to employers about the benefits for them of engaging with employment support programmes
- Facilitating employer-provider relationships by streamlining channels of engagement and encouraging a single point of contact within organisations
- Building trust gradually and sustaining relationships over time.

WHAT CAN NECA DO TO SUPPORT EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT IN THE REGION?

NECA has a strategic role in delivering employment support. The combined authority is therefore well placed to take a leadership role in relation to employer engagement. Drawing on findings from the evidence review, three considerations have been highlighted to help NECA frame its role:

Consideration 1: Competition between employment support providers was one of the key factors leading to duplication and confusion among employers. NECA needs to consider how to create a more collaborative environment to reduce competition between providers.

Consideration 2: NECA should work with business representatives and employers to change employer behaviour through strategic partnerships. For example, NECA could lead regional events to promote employment support programmes and demonstrate their value for employers, positioning them as sustainable recruitment channels.

Consideration 3: NECA needs to consider how more strategic and coordinated development pathways for employment support staff in the region could improve employer engagement practices.

Introduction

Employers have a central and wide-ranging role in supporting people into employment, including those with health conditions. Their role includes:

- Being the "gatekeepers" of employment – they can decide whether to hire individuals with long-term health conditions or disabilities,
- Advising individuals and employment support providers on which skills are most needed, and
- Providing strategic insights to inform the design of employment support programmes.

Employer engagement refers to the range of activities that are undertaken by organisations to support individuals to move towards employment.¹ It is complex and multiform,² and consists of a range of activities, including:

- Influencing employer behaviours and attitudes towards recruiting people with health conditions, and
- Consulting employers on the design of a programme and/or the skills people need to acquire.

Employer engagement is regarded as particularly challenging across both operational job brokerage and strategic employer engagement roles. The evidence on models of engagement that generate sustained changes in employer behaviour is also fragmented and limited. This is compounded by the fact that until recently academic research did not focus on employer engagement when researching active labour market policies.³ Evaluations of large-scale employment support programmes provide useful insights into which models of engagement have been effective, but their applicability to local contexts may be limited.

In this policy brief, we review the literature to understand which models are effective in engaging employers, what lessons can be drawn from previous experiences of employer engagement, and what approaches can be applied in the North East. After summarising the models conceptualised by academics, we outline the range of challenges undermining the sustained engagement of employers and highlight effective practice. The concluding remarks summarise several options for North East Combined Authority (NECA) to facilitate employer engagement in the region. The search protocol is included as an appendix as well as a full list of references.

Who engages employers, and why?

In the North East, a range of stakeholders engage with employers, including

- **Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).** DWP engages with large employers on a regular basis. Some of these employers have offices in the North East. For example, food chains such as Greggs have links with DWP and provide local employment. Jobcentre Plus (JCP) also has local Employer Advisers responsible for engaging with businesses on a regular basis to support recruitment.
- **NECA and constituent local authorities.** NECA and its local authorities engage with employers for a range of activities. This includes four projects commissioned as part of the Economic

¹ Van Berkel et al., 2017

² Bosman et al., 2025

³ Bosman et al., 2025

Inactivity Trailblazer to influence employers' attitudes and behaviours. These projects focus on testing new ways to support SMEs and third sector organisations to establish inclusive recruitment practices and onboarding processes.⁴ These projects will provide useful insights into effective practices to change employer behaviour.

- **Employment support providers, including voluntary organisations, social enterprises and specialised training providers.** Providers regularly conduct employer engagement mainly to place clients they are supporting into employment. They engage local employers to better understand their pipelines, job requirements, future vacancies and champion individual candidates. While relationships with employers can be the responsibility of one staff member within an organisation, it can also be the responsibility of each work/job coach. This means that within an organisation providing support, many staff may engage with employers concomitantly.
- **The skills and education system.** For example, employers are consulted to feed into Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP). Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) colleges also directly engage with employers to ensure provision meets their needs.
- **North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB).** The Health and Growth Accelerator in the North East explores how early intervention in healthcare setting can maintain people's attachment to the labour market.⁵

What are the different models of engagement?

In the literature, different models have been used to categorise employer engagement. The models are defined based on:

- The nature of the relationship between the organisation and the employer
- The type and level of engagement of the employer with the programme
- The type of activities that employers are engaged with
- The drivers and motivations behind the employer engagements.

⁴ North East Combined Authority (NECA), 2026

⁵ NHS England, 2024

Model	Categorisation	Description
Nature of the relation between the organisation and the employer	Instrumental vs. relational engagement	Employers can be ' instrumentally ' engaged in one-off or ad hoc activities, such as filling vacancies. Employers can also be ' relationally ' engaged, involving deeper, repeated and sustained engagement. This involves higher levels of employer participation and a greater use of HR-related services. Employers who are engaged 'relationally' have a higher likelihood of hiring disadvantaged groups and engaging with employment support programmes. ⁶ However, evidence shows that there is a mixed desire among employers to move to a more relational engagement. ⁷
Type and level of engagement of the employer with the programme	Employer participation vs. employer engagement	Employer participation measures involvement in employment support programmes. Engagement involves participation in programmes, but also the use of HR-related services and recruitment of individuals from employment support programmes. ⁸ Employer engagement often means that employers will be engaged more sustainably with employment support providers, which is likely to yield more hiring. However, participation can be the first step for employers to have longer term engagement.
Type of activities that employers are engaged with	Demand-side vs. supply-side led	Demand-side: Employer engagement can be proactive, comprising identification of vacancies and awareness-raising in sectors or occupations where there is likely to be a future demand for workers, and directing individuals to such opportunities. Supply-side: It can also be reactive, focusing on the identification of employment preferences of beneficiaries and then finding an employer match that fits those preferences. ⁹ Employer engagement staff emphasise the need to use both approaches at the same time. The feasibility of these approaches also depends on the size of the organisation leading the employer engagement. Case studies of Talent Match partnerships – a Big Lottery Fund strategic programme focused on youth unemployment – showed that engaging employer proactively may be more suited for larger Local Enterprise Partnerships. ¹⁰
Drivers and motivations behind employer engagement	Human Resource (HR) vs. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) logic	'HR' logic: Employers are motivated to engage with employment support programmes to source labour and offer employment opportunities. CSR logic: Employers can be driven by their willingness to contribute to society or to be seen as a 'good employer'. This may translate into a formal policy or plan that can be used to secure contracts particularly for publicly funded work. ¹¹ Evidence about employers' motivations to engage with youth employment programmes shows that both approaches should be used. ¹² However, other research suggests that CSR commitments risk being tokenistic rather than leading to genuine changes. ¹³

⁶ Ingold et al., 2015

⁷ Mansour et al., 2022

⁸ Ingold et al., 2017

⁹ Green et al., 2015

¹⁰ Green et al., 2015

¹¹ Butler and Payne, 2023

¹² Butler and Payne, 2023

¹³ Mansour et al., 2022

Engaging employers: What are the key challenges?

The key challenges of effective employer engagement include:

- A confusing landscape, with multiple competing offers from employment support organisations,
- A lack of incentives for employers to engage unless they have a clear recruitment need,
- Negative perceptions of employment support programmes for disabled people, and
- Challenges related to job brokerage.

Confusing landscape for employers

Support for employers can be confusing and fragmented, with different services competing for employers' attention.¹⁴ Employers report that the employment support landscape is difficult to navigate, and express confusion about the different types of providers, programmes and initiatives offered, as well as how to choose between them.¹⁵ Three factors have been identified in the literature to explain this fragmentation:

- **Many national and local programmes operate concurrently to support people in employment.** Research by Barnsley Council cites one analysis that identified over 50 different national programmes, led by 17 public bodies to support economically inactive people back into work. The study identified 24 services in Barnsley offering employment and skills support alongside a further 43 services likely to be in contact with economically inactive people offering wider services.¹⁶
- **National programmes that rely on employer engagement across different "teams" or "regional areas" can lead to multiple teams engaging the same employers.** This has been consistently identified as a challenge across programmes, such as the Restart Scheme or the Work and Health Programme.¹⁷
- **The design of programmes can also create competition between providers to engage employers, which in turns lead to confusion.** An evaluation of the West Midlands Combined Authority's Connecting Communities programme found that incentives, such as payment by results for providers that engage with employers, can result in competitive behaviours with providers "trampling over each other" to engage with employers.¹⁸

Employers are more likely to engage if they see a clear business need

In the literature, two drivers of engagement were identified: a Human Resources (HR) logic, whereby employers engage to source labour and a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) logic whereby employers are incentivised to carry out socially responsible practices.¹⁹ However, **research highlights that employers are unlikely to engage with programmes unless there is a HR need.**

- Case studies of employer engagement show that employers were unprepared to offer employment if there was no clear HR rationale. The authors concluded that this suggests that CSR logic alone may not be sufficient to incentivise employers to recruit via employer engagement.²⁰

¹⁴ Institute for Employment Studies, 2024

¹⁵ Ingold et al., 2017

¹⁶ Barnsley Council, 2024

¹⁷ Mansour et al., 2022

¹⁸ Institute for Employment Studies, 2022

¹⁹ See table p. 4

²⁰ Butler and Payne, 2023

- In another study, employers explained that they were reluctant to engage without a business need. They did not want to feel pressured to accept candidates from government programmes when they were not in a position to engage further.²¹

Negative perceptions of employment support programmes for disabled people among employers

Employers do not see employment support programmes as reliable and sustainable recruitment channels. Evidence also shows that employers express concerns over hiring people with health conditions due to negative views about disabled people, a lack of understanding of health conditions and a perception that employing people with health conditions can be resource intensive and involve risk to the employer.

- **Employers do not see employment support programmes as sustainable recruitment channels.** The short-term funding models of most programmes mean that employers do not see them as providing long-term recruitment channels.²²
- **Employers raise a range of challenges preventing them from hiring disabled people or people with health conditions**, including the cost of workplace adjustments²³ and that the management of some disadvantaged employees can be resource intensive.²⁴ Other barriers include a lack of HR support for SMEs as well as perceptions that employing disabled people is risky due to concerns about having to comply with Equality Act 2010 regulations.²⁵
- **Employers may also have negative views about disabled people.** Stigma and discrimination remain significant barriers for people with health conditions and disabilities. For example, employers may assume that disabled people do not want challenging careers or job roles.²⁶ Employment support providers are expected to engage employers to alleviate concerns about individual's competencies and the support they may need. However, lessons from the Individual Placement Support (IPS) model show that it takes time to convince employers that the candidate is a good fit for the vacancy and it often relies on staff having already a positive relationship with the employer.²⁷

Challenges related to individual job brokerage

Job brokerage is mainly conducted by employment support providers and JCP. Different approaches exist depending on the type of support offered and the design of the programme. Providers can approach job brokerage as an employment 'agency', whereby the employers use the providers as an agency to source labour – this often results in many people being positioned within the same business. Alternatively, providers can adopt an individualised approach, where staff supporting people research suitable workplaces, contact employers, and work with both the individual and employer to address concerns and establish adjustments.²⁸ Irrespective of the approach chosen, staff conducting job brokerage face significant challenges:

²¹ Ingold et al., 2017

²² Kramers et al., 2025

²³ Leonard Cheshire, 2021

²⁴ Ingold et al., 2017

²⁵ Commission for Healthier Working Lives, 2025

²⁶ Bonaccio et al., 2019

²⁷ Hoffman et al., 2024

²⁸ Department for Work and Pensions, 2013

- **Skills required for employer engagement.** These skills can differ significantly from the skills needed to support people. Skills required include strong communication and listening skills, as well as an understanding of the labour market, business needs, and job requirements. Experience in the private sector or recruitment agencies may be useful for conducting effective employment support. Ongoing support and training for employer engagement staff is also needed for successful employer engagement.²⁹ In some programmes, staff who support people with complex needs into employment are also responsible for engaging with employers. For example, the IPS model relies on matching clients' preferences with employers' needs. This is meant to be particularly effective in uncovering hidden vacancies and providing tailored support to clients.³⁰
- **Matching candidates with suitable roles.** Ensuring a person is a suitable candidate for the role may be more difficult without a deep understanding of both the person's circumstances and the requirements of the job. When employment support and employer engagement are not conducted by the same person, providers may not put forward the most appropriate candidates for the role.³¹ This is particularly a problem when providers are supporting people with severe health conditions and complex barriers to work. In this case, it is required for the intermediary to have a strong understanding of the challenges the individual faces to being able to advise employers on appropriate adjustments.

Engaging employers: What works?

The literature identifies several elements of effective practice in relation to:

- Identifying employers
- Making the case for employer engagement
- Streamlining and facilitating employer engagement
- Sustaining and strengthening relationships with employers.

Effective practice to identify employers

Evidence suggests that providers adopt diverse approaches to identifying employers, such as using links from existing local contacts, job fairs, online vacancy searches, cold-calling employers, social media, and working with recruitment agencies.³² Many providers and employers have memberships or involvement with local trade bodies and employer associations such as Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, local authority networks and Business in the Community. However, it is important to understand which forums or relationships will give access to the right networks of employers.³³

- **Providers can prioritise reaching out employers who have publicly demonstrated awareness of health and disability employment.** For example, providers may want to engage Disability Confident employers, or employers on other schemes such as Mindful.
- **Employer engagement staff emphasise the importance of planning and preparation before initial contact is made with employers.**³⁴ This includes: being aware of the latest labour market trends in the local area; researching the employer to anticipate their needs; and exploring a range

²⁹ Green, et al., 2015; Learning and Work Institute, 2025; Green and Taylor, 2020

³⁰ Department for Work & Pensions, 2023

³¹ Department for Work & Pensions, 2013

³² Bramley, 2022; Ingold, 2017

³³ Ingold, 2017

³⁴ Ingold, et al., 2017; Learning and Work Institute 2025.

of sources, including local authorities, business support services, and employer stakeholder groups.

- **At a Combined Authority level, existing networks can be leveraged to identify and engage employers.** Combined Authority and constituent local authorities can leverage their own services, such as Economic Development teams, Growth Hubs, local Chambers of Commerce, and local Federation of Small Businesses. Other networks to consider include housing associations, further education colleges and providers, and Business in the Community.³⁵

Making the case to employers

Clearly articulating the value for employers has been noted as essential for engagement.³⁶ The most effective approaches include:

- **Striking a balance between the HR business case and the CSR case when approaching employers.** CSR motivations, such as increasing diversity or hiring local people, can be effective to engage employers, but the economic or HR business case incentives are key drivers of employer engagement. Economic incentives, such as saving money and time on recruitment and mitigating the risks of recruiting the wrong candidate, as well as access to a wider pool of candidates, are key motivators for employers. Solutions offered by providers are largely presented as 'bespoke', 'customised', or 'tailored' to suit employers' particular needs.³⁷ Large companies may also have formal CSR policies. Using this agenda and referencing their commitments could be an effective lever for engagement.³⁸
- Understanding employers' expectations and motivations as well as being aware of any negative misconceptions they could hold about the programmes. During the first face-to-face meeting with employers, providers in one study attempted to understand the needs of the employer in as much detail as possible. It was considered imperative at this stage to be in tune with employers' expectations, identify any negative perceptions that they might hold regarding disadvantaged groups, educate employers around key policy changes and manage their expectations about the candidates that could be supplied.³⁹
- **Offering additional services on top of the core service of providing candidates for vacancies.** This can include offering employers' physical space for conducting interviews, offering to screen candidates for interviews and participating in interview panels. These services have been found to be of more value to SMEs, who do not always have dedicated HR professionals to manage their recruitment processes. Providers also use innovative practices to engage employers, such as inviting them to job fairs, conducting 'reverse job fairs' where employers can meet candidates, and inviting them to conduct information days or 'master classes' for potential candidates in their sectors.
- **Facilitating business-to-business promotion of programmes is effective at encouraging employers to participate.** Providers can identify particular employers to champion their programmes and share their positive experiences peer to peer. Providers can also promote and share the positive experiences of individual employers to help make the case for engagement to other employers.⁴⁰
- **Setting up informal meetings between job seekers and employers to reduce bias and preconceived notions about job seekers.** Evidence shows that setting up informal meetings

³⁵ Learning and Work Institute, 2025

³⁶ Mansour et al., 2022

³⁷ Green et al., 2015; Ingold et al., 2017

³⁸ Ingold et al., 2017

³⁹ Ingold et al., 2017

⁴⁰ Learning and Work Institute, 2025

between employers and job seekers can reduce employers' biases about job seekers or people with health conditions.⁴¹

Streamlining and facilitating employer engagement

Evidence shows that communication between employer and providers can be facilitated by:

- **Having a contact at the employer who has a strong understanding of different employment support programmes.** Employers have found that having a 'champion' within their organisation enables their participation in employer engagement. However, they have also emphasised that, in cases where the existing champion leaves, it is critical to quickly identify a replacement.
- **Having a single point of contact.**⁴² Employers report valuing one relationship with one individual for employment support.⁴³ A single point of contact is also helpful to reduce competition between providers to seek employers' attention. For example, the Prime Provider Network was set up as part of Restart to ensure employers have a single point of contact across the different areas. However, employment support staff may require direct contact with hiring managers / employers in some cases. For example, they may need to fully understand the job requirements to assess whether their clients are suited for the role or they may want to engage with employers directly to discuss potential job adaptations. A single point of contact will also not work for providers of Supported Employment programmes, such as Individual Placement and Support, as employment advisers are expected to conduct employer engagement.

Sustaining and strengthening relationships with employers

Building strong relationships with employers is critical to maximising the effectiveness of employer engagement.

- **Relationships built on mutual trust over time are the foundation of employer engagement.**⁴⁴ Providers report that once a relationship is established, they could more easily engage in dialogue with employers about offering them more disadvantaged candidates from their caseloads, whereas this was more difficult in the early stages of an employer relationship. Establishing long-term relationships with employers may be undermined by short-term funding and changing priorities.
- Providers feel that employers trust them when they are fully engaged in recruitment processes or future workforce development plans. Being able to provide employers with 'bespoke' support is also important for strengthening relationships with employers. Deeper and sustained engagement is supported by regular communication between employers and providers.⁴⁵
- **Sending the 'right person' to employers is critical to ensure repeat business and an ongoing relationship.** If providers send unsuitable or inappropriate candidates to employers, they are likely to lose their trust and damage the relationship.

Key lessons

Employer engagement is an umbrella term which entails many different activities. Multiple agencies engage with employers for different reasons and with many different 'asks', creating a sense of confusion among employers and duplication for organisations engaging employers. Evidence shows

⁴¹ Mansour et al., 2022

⁴² Ingold et al., 2017; Green et al., 2015; Bellis et al., 2011; Mansour et al., 2022

⁴³ Mansour et al., 2022

⁴⁴ Ingold et al., 2017

⁴⁵ Ingold et al., 2017

that different models of engagement can be effective for different types of employer or different 'asks'. However, cross-cutting learning, such as understanding employers' needs before meeting with them and clearly articulating the value of the offer to them, could be applied to all types of employer engagement, irrespective of the employer or the 'ask'.

Lessons for NECA

Combined Authorities (CA) have been recognised in the Devolution White Paper as central to local growth. They have joint-ownership of Local Skills Improvement Plans and hold the majority of the Adult Skills Fund, as well as taking a key role in delivering any DWP funded non-JCP led employment support. They are therefore ideally placed to provide strategic leadership for employer engagement across a region. This strategic leadership could take many forms, and activities could be undertaken by NECA to deliver effective support for people with health conditions in the region.

Drawing on findings from the evidence review, three considerations have been highlighted to help NECA frame their role in relation to employer engagement,

Consideration 1: Competition between employment support providers was one of the key factors leading to duplication and confusion among employers. NECA needs to consider its role in creating a more collaborative environment to reduce competition between providers. Options could include:

- Working with DWP and JCP to create a centralised single point of contact for employers across the region. The Prime Provider Network (PPN), set up for Restart provides an example of what this could look like. However, significant adaptations are required to ensure the model meets the requirements of all the programmes across the region. The key challenge would be to create a model that works for all programmes requiring employer engagement irrespective of the target population. This would require allocating significant resources to create the model and set up the single point of contact.
- When commissioning provision of services, NECA should consider how intervention design and funding arrangements can incentivise collaboration rather than competition between providers.

Consideration 2: Employers have low levels of trust in employment support programmes and might not see them as sustainable recruitment channels. NECA could work with business representatives and employers to change employer perceptions and behaviours. This could include

- Organising regional events to promote and raise awareness of the employment support programmes in the region. Promotional channels also need to demonstrate the value for employers: these programmes are a cost-effective recruitment channel for businesses and can help employers diversify their teams.
- Setting up informal meetings between employers and jobseekers to change employers' perception as well as facilitating peer-to-peer discussions with employers who have positive views of this type of programmes.

Consideration 3: Employer engagement is time and resource intensive for front-line staff working with people who need support to access employment. NECA needs to consider how more strategic and coordinated development pathways for staff in the region could improve employer engagement practices. This could lead to NECA:

- Providing training for providers/frontline staff working with people with long-term health conditions. Training could cover a range of dimensions that are found to be particularly effective, e.g., articulating HR needs and CSR logic to make the case to potential employers.
- Supporting providers/front line staff working with people with long-term health conditions to identify sectors and/or employers who may be more inclined to recruit people with certain health conditions. For example, an employment adviser with extensive experience of conducting employer engagement could be recruited by NECA to coach other staff in the region and to provide advice to providers who need to strengthen their employer engagement strategy.

Gaps and limits in the current evidence base

Employers are increasingly recognised as key players in supporting disabled people and people with long-term health conditions into employment. Evaluations of employment support programmes and the emerging academic literature provide insights into effective practices to support employer engagement. However, gaps and limitations in the current evidence base remain. Those include:

- **Lack of evidence on which payment models foster effective employer engagement at a regional level.** Existing evidence suggests that payment by results models may result in competition between employment support providers. However, more testing is needed to develop payment models that encourage collaboration while ensuring a focus on finding the right job for the right person.
- **Lack of evidence on differential employer engagement strategies by employer size or sector.** While there is some evidence on SMEs motivations to engage with employment support, more testing is needed to understand what works to engage SMEs with employment support programmes beyond financial incentives. Likewise, there is little evidence on sectoral differences that may exist between employers. Further evidence is needed on how the effectiveness of models of engagement vary by sector.

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Annex 1: Search protocol

Which models of employer engagement have proved effective in the North East or elsewhere, and why?

Evidence is fragmented on which support or models of engagement generate sustained changes in employer behaviour. This is compounded by multiple agencies approaching employers separately which creates duplication and confusion.

Research questions	
Overarching aims of the review	▪ Problem statement – what are the challenges with employer engagement? ▪ Different options – what are the different models of employer engagement? ▪ Models that have been proven to be the most effective to create sustained change – what works?
Criteria for including evidence in review	
Focus of evidence	Problem statement – what is the problem? a. What are the challenges with employer engagement? b. What evidence is there on the scale of the challenges with employer engagement and the impact on people out of work due to ill health? c. To what extent do the challenges vary by type of organisations carrying out the engagement? d. To what extent do the challenges vary by employer size/sectors? e. Are there any specific challenges to the North East? Different options – what are the different models? a. How have local governments engaged with employers (eg local economic teams, health team, youth employment teams)? b. What are the different models of engagement for large-scale programmes such as Restart and the Work and Health programme? c. Is there any evidence on how the third sector / private providers engage with employers?

	Models that have been proven to be the most effective to create sustained changes in employer behaviour – what works? a. What works to engage employers? b. How do effective practices vary by employer size and sectors? c. How do effective models vary by the purpose of the engagement?
Out of scope	Financial incentives and disincentives are out of scope of this evidence review. This is because NECA is likely to have limited leverage as fiscal policy isn't devolved to combined authorities
Geographical, time limitation	UK-wide evidence, from 2010 To include a focus on North East – specific evidence
Types of evidence	The review will include policy and academic research and grey literature (eg reports, evaluations, working papers, discussion papers, evidence reviews). It will also include material published online (eg case studies of best practice, or news items). Key literature is likely to include: ▪ What works evidence review / Top tips and guidance ▪ Evaluations of large-scale programmes including Restart, Health-Led Trials, IPS/Supported Employment programmes. ▪ Research and policy reports published by employer representative bodies, trade associations, industry bodies. ▪ Government publications and commissioned reports, including Industrial Strategy, Local Growth Plans, Local Skills Improvement Plans, Skills England analyses.
Search methods	
Electronic databases	These are likely to include (but are not limited to): • General search engines (e.g. Google and Google Scholar)

Suggested search terms	Search terms could include (but are not limited to): ▪ Employer engagement /challenges ▪ Employment support programmes AND employer engagement ▪ Employer engagement what works ▪ Top tips for employer engagement ▪ Employer engagement / economic inactivity people ▪ Changing employer behaviours ▪ Healthy workforce / employer behaviours
Methods of review	
Evidence sifting	We will screen the studies returned through the searches based on the review protocol criteria. Evidence will be categorised based on the type of evidence.
Evidence synthesis	Information from the shortlist of evidence will be recorded into individual grids to capture key information. These summaries will enable us to synthesise and structure findings around the research questions.

Considerations for next stages / when identifying evidence

- We have not limited the scope of the evidence search to evidence on engaging employers to take actions to address health related economic inactivity. We may be able to draw on learning from other “types” of employer engagement such as skills or training.
- Evidence from across the UK will be included. The insight will be analysed to consider its relevance to the North East context.

Search terms:

Google

- “employer engagement challenges” UK
- “employer engagement” UK
- “employment support programmes” AND “employer engagement”
- “employer engagement what works”
- “Employer engagement” & “economic inactivity”
- “Employer engagements” & “economic inactivity”

Employer engagement strategies – discarded