



Get Cumbria Working

› November 2025





Foreword

As Leaders of Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council, we are pleased to present the first Get Cumbria Working Plan. The Plan sets out our approach to addressing economic inactivity and increasing labour supply, and represents a joint endeavour; not only for local authorities but our founding partners in the Integrated Care Boards (ICB) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The Plan will also be a key document for the new Cumbria Combined Authority as it establishes itself.

Our vision for the Get Cumbria Working Plan is to: ***unlock Cumbria's growth by enabling more residents, especially those facing the greatest barriers, to enter, remain and progress in good jobs, while improving health and wellbeing.***

We know that supporting more people into good quality work is important for our economy and that the proportion of our residents who are not in a job because of their health is too high. This constrains the capacity of our businesses to grow, as well as being detrimental for individuals, families and communities. Growth is also the main focus of our economic strategies at both a unitary council and Cumbria level; contributing to the government's growth mission.

The Get Cumbria Working Plan is a starting point for our joint work to increase labour supply in our county. Through collaborative action, the Plan will help to secure the best outcomes for Cumbria's people and achieve the target employment rate of 80% by 2029. Our objectives are to establish a 'no wrong door' system across public services; tackle systemic and structural challenges; and better co-ordinate employment support to fill gaps in provision.

Our Plan will be underpinned by four principles:

- **Collaboration:** sharing knowledge and experience and building strong foundations for systems change.
- **Partnership:** working together to deliver the Get Cumbria Working vision.
- **Participation:** empowering all partners to be engaged and heard.
- **Co-production:** creating person-centred systems and services based on lived experience that deliver the right support in the right way for all residents.

Implementation of the Get Cumbria Working Plan will be led by the new Work and Health Board, which includes representation from the councils, ICBs, and DWP, as well as the Council for Voluntary Service and Cumbria Social Enterprise Partnership, University of Cumbria, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and a representative from the Economic Growth Board on behalf of employers.

We know that some of the issues addressed in the Plan are of long standing. However, we welcome the government's approach to bringing local partners together to take an evidence-based approach to collective action, and we are committed to the joint work required to Get Cumbria Working.



Cllr Mark Fryer

Leader of
Cumberland Council



Cllr Jonathan Brook

Leader of Westmorland
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1. Strategic Context

Cumbria is a place of great potential, with significant opportunities in key sectors and major investments driving economic growth.



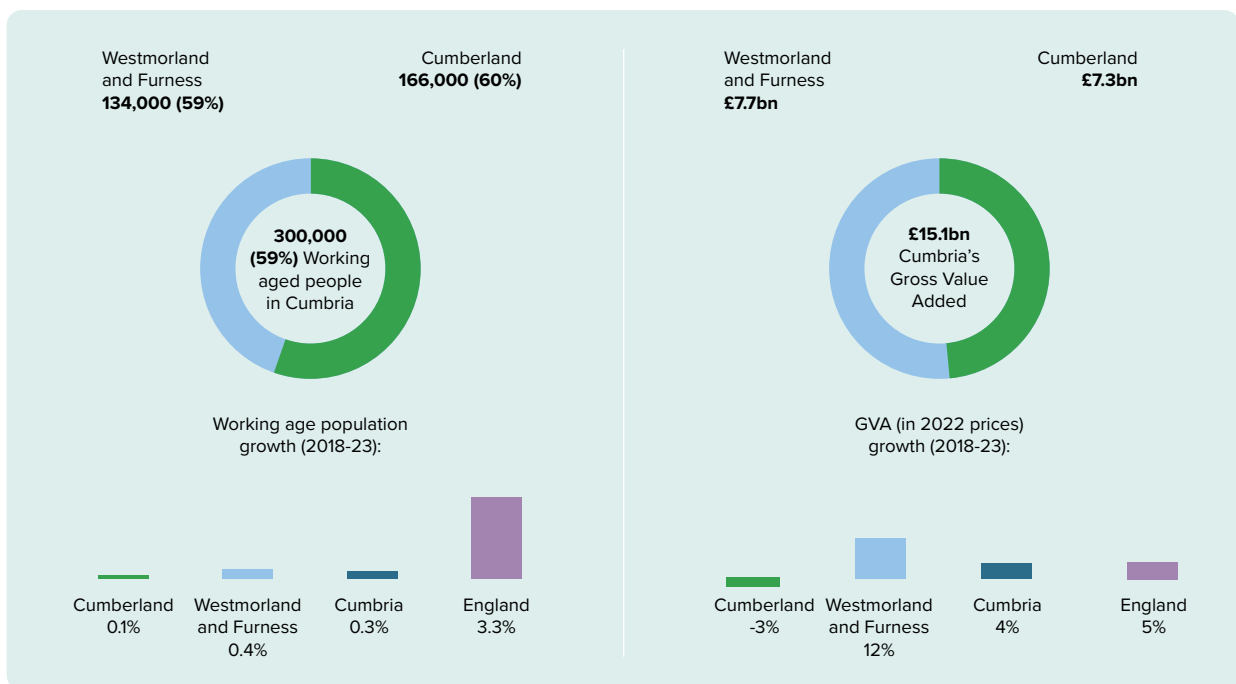




Cumbria is a place of great potential, with significant opportunities in key sectors and major investments driving economic growth. It leverages internationally renowned natural assets and an outstanding natural environment, supporting growth and regeneration in a diverse range of settlements.

Cumbria is a large and predominantly rural county in the North West of England, covering 2,614 square miles with a population of around 511,000¹. The area is diverse, spanning a heritage city, industrial urban centres and market towns, three ports, an enterprise zone, and extensive rural communities, including two national parks and 180 miles of coastline. Cumbria has a £15bn economy and is governed by two of the UK's newest and largest unitary councils, together covering nearly half of the North West's land mass.

Economic Snapshot



Sector strengths include advanced manufacturing, clean energy and nuclear industries, defence, tourism, and food production, alongside emerging sectors such as robotics. Cumbria has a growing business base and plentiful job opportunities, with a job density higher than the national average:



Cumbria has 91 jobs per 100 people (4 jobs above national benchmark)

¹ Population estimates by single year of age, ONS; Annual Population Survey, ONS

Despite these strengths, Cumbria has a productivity gap which has a direct and far-reaching impact on living standards. **The Going for Growth: Cumbria's Economic Strategy 2025-2045** identifies a £3 billion productivity gap, with an economy held back by an under-representation of high-value sectors and a skills base not fully aligned with demand. Poor transport and digital connectivity compound these challenges.



*Cumbria has an employment rate that **outperforms** the national average...*

To address these challenges, Cumbria needs to boost its working-age population to meet the needs of a growing economy, including the attraction and retention of workers, as well as the upskilling of the existing workforce. This requires investment to unlock the potential of residents and workers to support them to progress into good quality jobs and sustain employment, helping to build a more productive workforce and support inclusive growth.



Cumbria has an employment rate that outperforms the national average and high levels of economic activity. However, many residents face significant barriers to labour market participation: in March 2025, there were an estimated 59,000 residents classified as economically inactive, accounting for 20.5% of the working age population, slightly below the English average of 21.2%. A significant proportion of residents hold low or no skills, experience socio-economic exclusion, deprivation in health and income, and live in poor quality housing. There are concentrations of deprivation in coastal and urban areas, and 8% of Cumbria's LSOAs are in the top 10% most deprived nationally, influencing quality of life. Enabling everyone in Cumbria to participate in and benefit from economic growth and jobs is a key ambition set out in policy.

The **Get Cumbria Working Plan** provides a coordinated response to unlocking the economic growth potential of the area by tackling these challenges. The Plan has been developed in partnership with Enterprising Cumbria, local authorities, employment support providers, health and wellbeing specialists, skills and training organisations, employers, and the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector. The plan aligns with the government's **Plan for Change** to kickstart economic growth and raise living standards in every part of the UK, with more people in good jobs and improved employment prospects, skills and productivity, and the **Get Britain Working White Paper** and its ambition to raise the national employment rate to 80%.

Tailored to Cumbria's diverse needs and circumstances, the plan draws on local data, intelligence, and lived experience. It sets out clear actions to increase participation in the labour market, support underrepresented groups, and strengthen connections between work, health, and skills systems.

Labour Market Context

The Get Cumbria Working Plan responds to the challenges experienced across both labour market participation and progression at work, which impacts upon the individual, the local economy, and local service provision. A comprehensive baseline analysis established in a bespoke **dashboard** considers Cumbria's performance against a set of Get Britain Working Outcome Metrics and contextual indicators. The dashboard is complemented by a rich body of evidence on the socio-economic context in Cumbria, developed to support the development of economic strategies at the local and sub-regional level, complemented by targeted research, including the 2025 Cumbria Inactivity Research Report (appended), the Cumbria Connect to Work Delivery Plan and local research into issues and challenges in various localities across the sub-region.



Reduce economic inactivity by focusing on skills, health-related barriers, and providing personalised support.








The Get Britain Working White Paper aims to significantly increase the UK's employment rate and reduce economic inactivity by focusing on skills, health-related barriers, and providing personalised support. The ambition to raise the employment rate to 80% recognises that there are many components of a sustained improvement to the workforce.

Aligned with this, Cumbria is committed to addressing the systems challenges that exist and compound the barriers many people face to entering the workforce. Senior leaders, stakeholders and services across Cumbria will work as a partnership to address wider structural challenges, address systemic problems and deliver effective programmes. This requires a significant collaborative effort across partners, with shared accountability and a commitment to identifying, designing and delivering services that will address the often-complex needs of residents. Some fundamental challenges in Cumbria will require long-term thinking across a wide range of services and stakeholders, and we will seek to catalyse the discussions and relationships that need to be in place to address these. We aim to create a new system with a single outcomes framework shared across partners and providers, helping everyone to work together to a system and approach that can secure the necessary investment to deliver long-term benefit in Cumbria.

The performance of Cumbria against the key government outcome metrics supports an appreciation of the multifaceted challenges that exist. A RAG rating has been conducted with available metrics, with the following scoring:

 **Pink:** Worse than the national average

 **Blue:** Similar to the national average

 **Green:** Better than the national average

As discussed in the report, the confidence intervals are considered in the wider assessment; however, for the RAG rating, it has been assumed that the judgement will not be impacted.



Reported GBW Indicator (Exact GBW Indicator)	Cumberland	Westmorland and Furness	Cumbria	National Benchmark
Employment Rate - % aged 16-64 (18-66)	78.5%	78.2%	78.4%	75.7%
Gross Disposable Income per Head, 2024 prices (Real Earnings Component of RHDH amongst non-retired households (all ages)	£21,494	£25,686	£23,590	£26,787
Economic Inactivity due to Long Term Sick - % aged 16-64 (Long-term sick inactive as a percentage of all aged 18-66)	8.5%	9.20%	8.8%	5.7%
Disability Employment Rate Gap – percentage points (aged 18-66)	40.3	32.7	36.8	26
Female Employment Rate -% females aged 16-64 (18-66)	76.2%	74.4%	75.4%	72.3%
Young People Not in Education, Employment or training - % 16-17 (18-24)	3.8%	3.2%	3.5%	5.5%

Source: Annual Population Survey, April 2024 to March 2025, ONS; Regional Gross Disposable Household Income: Local Authorities by ITL1 Region, ONS, 2022.; Annual Population Survey, April 2024 to March 2025, ONS; InspiraNCCIS, May 2025.

These outcome metrics with supporting contextual analysis are explored below to consider the structural challenges that frame economic participation in Cumbria.



Economic Context

The following metrics support appreciation for the context within which the Get Cumbria Working Plan has been developed. A more detailed contextualised version has been developed, which can be found in Appendix 1.

Cumbria: Economic and Labour Market Overview

High Employment Rate

78.4% Employment rate compared to 75.7% nationally.



Total Employment Rose Modestly 2020-2023

From 244,725 to 252,525 full-time equivalent jobs (+3.2%) driven by gains in manufacturing, health and accommodation and food services.



Job posting led by Employment Activities (40% of top 10 Industries)



Lower Claimant Count

2.2% WAP claiming compared with 3.7% nationally.



Rising Economic Inactivity since last year

59,000 economically inactive people in Cumbria (20% of WAP population).



Demand for People-Centred Capabilities

Communication is the most demanded skill in jobs followed by management and customer service skills.



Less GDHI per head

GDHI is over £3,000 below national average (£23,590 compared to £26,787).



Higher Level of No Qualification

6.7% of WAP with no qualifications compared to nationally 6.5%.



Lower than Average Productivity per Hour but Fastly Growing

Current productivity levels per hour are £4 less than national output, however, growth in 4 years is 21.3% in Cumbria compared to 14.2% nationally.



Poorer Health Outcomes

Higher than national average: 4.7% describing their health as bad while only 4.3% do nationally. Also a higher number of people stating they are disabled with 17% compared to average of 15%.



Above Average Gender Pay Gap

Pay group in 2024 was roughly 6 percentage point above the national average. Cumbria gender pay difference for all employees is roughly £4 per hour.



NEET 16-17yr Olds

374 people 16-17-year-olds classified as NEET equivalent to 3.5%.



Growing 65+ Population (Ageing Population)

While on average all ages grew by 2.3% this was brought up by the extremely high 6.9% growth in 65+ age group.



Disclaimer: When comparing local or regional figures to national averages, please note that smaller population sizes or sample sizes can result in higher variability and lower statistical confidence. This means that apparent differences may not always be statistically significant and should be interpreted with caution. See Appendix for more detail.

Source: Annual Population Survey, 2025; NEET Participation, DoFE; Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age, ONS, 2024; Claimant count by sex and age, ONS; Census 2021

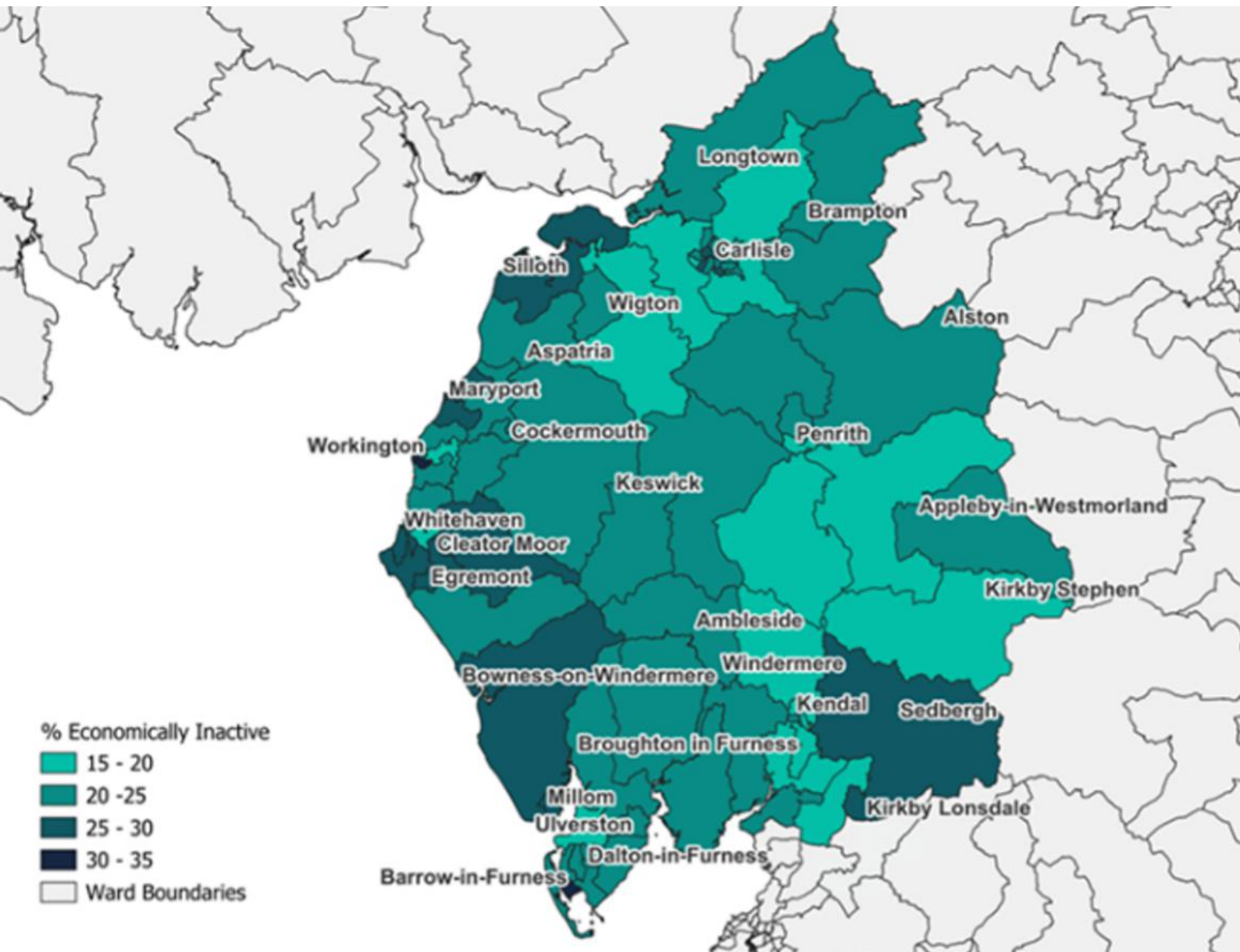
*Gross Domestic Household Income



Geographical Variations

There are significant variations in economic and labour market performance in Cumbria when looking at data at a local level, illustrating how above average employment rates at an administrative area can mask localised areas of acute need. The following infographics illustrate geographical variations across various indicators supporting appreciation of economic participation. Further localised insight is informed by analysis at the former local authority district level as presented in Appendix 1. The following map illustrates concentrations of economic inactivity across Cumbria.

Economic Inactivity by Ward, Aged 16-64, 2021



Source: Census 2021



Cumberland

The former district of Allerdale has concentrations of unemployment with a rate above 4% and economic inactivity above 26% in wards such as Moss Bay and Moorclose, Maryport South and St Michael's. Health needs are above average, with 5% of residents in bad or very bad health, and 17.4% disabled. Unpaid care is high, accounting for 11.4% of residents. A high number of households receive Universal Credit, totalling 7,438 households. NEET rates stood at 4.4%.

Within Carlisle, the wards of Castle and Upperby record the highest unemployment rates (5%), and economic inactivity levels are above 23% in the wards of Currock, Denton Holme, Morton, Upperby and Castle. Poor health is a feature, with 5% of residents in bad or very bad health, and 17% are disabled. NEET levels experienced a notable peak at 5.4% in September 2024. There are currently 8,287 households on Universal Credit.

The former district of Copeland exhibits unemployment rates above 4% and high levels of economic inactivity in areas such as Millom, Egremont and Kells & Sandwith. Copeland experiences some of the worst health outcomes in the country, with 5.8% of residents in bad or very bad health, and 18.4% disabled. High levels of unpaid care feature at 11.7%. NEET rates peaked at 5.9% in September 2024.

Westmorland and Furness

Barrow contains areas with high levels of unemployment, with the ward of Old Barrow and Hindpool experiencing a 6% unemployment rate and 33% of the working age population economically inactive. Other wards such as Ormsgill and Parkside, Risedale and Roosecote, Hawcoat and Newbarnds, and Walney Island have inactivity rates above 21%. A high proportion of residents report bad or very bad health (6%), and 19.4% are disabled. Unpaid care is provided by 11% of residents.

Within Eden, economic inactivity rates are highest in Appleby and Brough, Alston and Fellside, Hesketh and Lazonby, Penrith North, and Greystoke and Ullswater. Some 10.4% of residents provide unpaid care, above the national average. Low pay is a feature, with Eden experiencing the lowest median monthly earnings in Cumbria, significantly below the national average

In South Lakeland, there are concentrations of inactivity in Sedbergh and Kirkby Lonsdale, Kent Estuary, Windermere and Ambleside, High Furness and Grange and Cartmel, reporting rates above 21%. Around 10% of residents provide unpaid care, slightly above the national average. A high number of households are on Universal Credit.



Cumberland Economic and Labour Market Overview

High Employment Rate

78.5% employment rate compared to 75.7% nationally.



Poorer Health Outcomes

5.2% residents report poor or very poor health and 17.55% disabled under the Equality Act and nearly double the national disability employment rate.



NEET 16-17yr Olds

227 (3.8% NEET monthly count (16-17 Year Olds).



Reliance on Informal Care

10.8% residents provide unpaid support.



Above Average Youth Employment Rate

Employment rate between 16-24 is 72.1% compared to national benchmark of 50.4%.



Above Average Employees Below Living Wage

20.2% of employees have jobs paying less than living wage compared to 15.9% nationally.



Ageing Population

While all ages between 2019-2024 saw an average increase of 2.7% in population, the 65+ population grew by 8.0% compared to 1.2% of all other ages.



Lower Average Income

2022 saw £21,494.50 Gross Disposable Household income per head more than £5,000 less than national.



Wards of Highest Economic Inactivity

Top Five Wards	%WAP
» Moss Bay and Moorclose	30
» Castle (Carlisle)	28
» Maryport South	27
» Millom Without	27
» Kells and Sandwith	27



Wards of Highest Unemployment

Top Five Wards	%WAP
» Castle (Carlisle)	5
» Upperby	5
» Denton Holme	4
» Moss Bay and Moorclose	4
» Currock	4



Wards of Lowest Economic Rate

Top Five Wards	%WAP
» Moss Bay and Moorclose	66
» Castle (Carlisle)	67
» Maryport South	69
» Kells and Sandwith	69
» Upperby	70



Lower Claimant Count Rate

Rate is 2.5% compared to national benchmark of 3.7.



Below Average Older People Employment Rate

Employment Rate of those 50+ is 39.6% which is below national average of 43.1%.



Source: Annual Population Survey, ²⁰²⁵; NEET Participation, DoFE; Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age ONS, ²⁰²⁴; Claimant count by sex and age, ONS; Census ²⁰²¹



Westmorland and Furness: Economic and Labour Market Overview

High Employment Rate

78.2% Employment rate compared to 75.7% nationally.



Better Health but Higher Disability Levels

4.2% residents report poor or very poor health and 15.7% disabled under the Equality Act.

NEET 16-17yr Olds

147 (3.2%) NEET monthly count (16-17 Year Olds).



Reliance on Informal Care

10.5% residents provide unpaid support.



Above Average Youth Employment Rate

Employment rate between 16-24 is 81.3% compared to national benchmark of 50.4%.



Above Average Employees Below Living Wage

16.4% of employees have jobs paying less than living wage compared to 15.9% nationally.



Ageing Population

Children (below 16) reduced by 2.2% between 2019-2024 while aged above 65 grew 5.7%.



Lower Claimant Count

2022 saw £25,686 Gross Disposable Household income per head which lose but still below national average (£1,000).



Wards of Highest Economic Inactivity

Top Five Wards	%WAP
» Old Barrow & Hindpool	33
» Sedbergh & Kirkby Lonsdale	24
» Kent Estuary	24
» Ormsgill and Parkside	23
» Risedale and Roosecote	22



Wards of Highest Unemployment

Top Five Wards	%WAP
» Old Barrow & Hindpool	6
» Ormsgill & Parkside	4
» Dalton South	3
» Risedale and Roosecote	3
» Penrith South	3



Wards of Lowest Economic Rate

Top Five Wards	%WAP
» Old Barrow & Hindpool	62
» Ormsgill & Parkside	73
» Sedbergh & Kirkby Lonsdale	74
» Kent Estuary	74
» Risedale and Roosecote	75



Much Lower Claimant Count Rate

Rate is 1.90% compared to national benchmark of 3.65%.



Below Average Older People Employment Rate

Employment Rate of those 50+ is below national average of 43.1 with 35.8%.



Source: Annual Population Survey, 2025; NEET Participation, DofE; Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age ONS, 2024; Claimant count by sex and age, ONS; Census ²⁰²¹



Structural Challenges

Cumbria's economy faces several structural challenges which will need to be considered within plan creation. A deeper dive has been conducted for each key headline challenge as shown in Appendix 2.

Population Structure

Cumbria's ageing population presents structural challenges to labour supply. Only 59 percent of residents are of working age. Further predicted 6% rising early retirement and low employment among over-50's make it difficult to re-engage inactive individuals in work, limiting the available workforce and placing pressure on services and employers to adapt to demographic change.



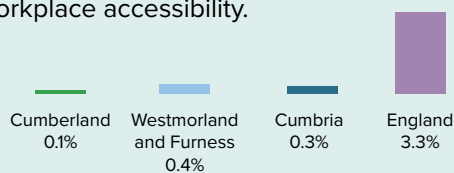
Affordability

Despite lower average housing costs, areas like the Lake District face affordability pressures from second-home ownership and short-term lets. Insecure housing and low-paid work (18.3% below Living Wage vs 15.9% in England) limit access to stable employment. Furthermore, Cumbria's household income is £25,930 which is below England's £26,787. Poor housing quality contributes to ill health, while insecure housing and low-paid work limit access to stable employment.



Disability Employment Gap and Poor Health: More Claimants.

Poor health is a major barrier to work in parts of Cumbria, with long-term sickness accounting for 43 percent of economic inactivity and anxiety levels particularly high in Barrow and Allerdale. Cumbria's disability employment gap (below) remains significantly wider than the national average, reflecting persistent barriers to inclusion and the need for targeted support and workplace accessibility.



Rurality, Transport and Access

Cumbria's rural geography and limited transport infrastructure restrict access to jobs, education, and essential services. With 58 percent of residents commuting by car, reliance on private vehicles is high due to limited public transport options.



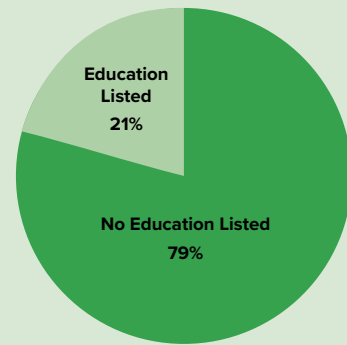
Youth Unemployment

Youth employment in Cumbria is strong at 75.9 percent, driven by high apprenticeship demand. However, 1210 young claimants and 374 NEETS highlight ongoing challenges in inclusion and opportunity.



Skills Mismatches and Gaps

Cumbria faces significant skills mismatches, with only 38.8% of residents holding degree-level qualifications compared to 47.2% nationally. This limits access to higher-skilled roles and constrains economic growth. While job adverts often omit education requirements, demand for advanced qualifications is rising. Projections show a shift toward higher-level skills by 2035, yet mid-and lower-level qualifications remain stable or decline. This evolving landscape and underscores the need for targeted upskilling and career guidance. Combined with below-average productivity in key sectors, these skill gaps present structural challenges that hinder competitiveness, workforce mobility and the county’s ability to attract and retain talent.

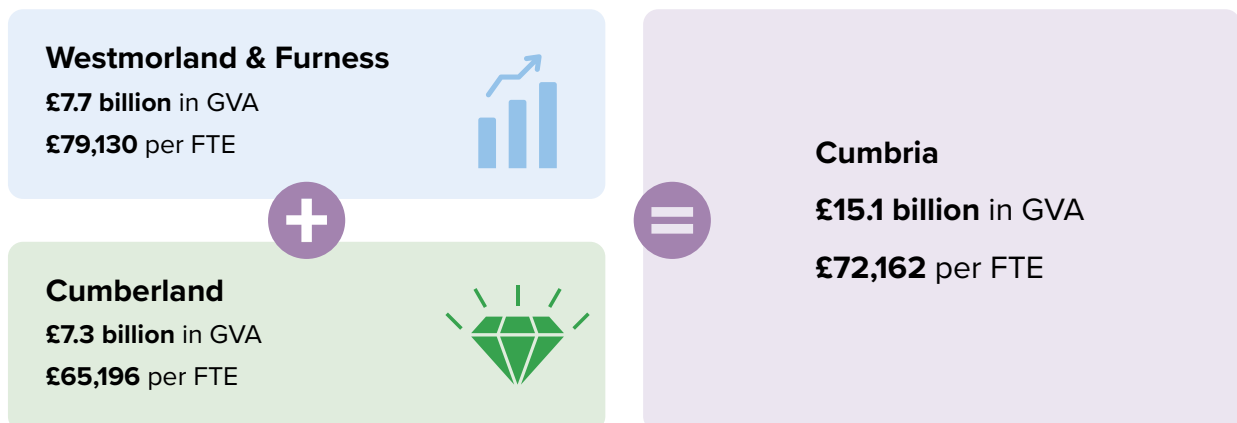


Source: Annual Population Survey, 2025; Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age ONS, 2024; Job postings, Lightcast; Census 2021; Journey times, DfT

Local Strengths and Assets

Cumbria has a number of strengths and assets that can be leveraged to support residents to progress into work and remain in work.

A Growing Economy Presenting Employment Opportunities



Source: Regional Gross Value Added 2023, ONS (2023 prices)



In 2023, Cumberland recorded £7.3 billion in GVA (£65,196 per FTE). Westmorland and Furness recorded £7.7 billion in GVA (£79,130 per FTE), with manufacturing key contributor to economic output in both areas.

At 2019 prices, Cumbria's total GVA is projected to increase by £1.7 billion between 2024 and 2034, a growth of 15.9%, outpacing the UK average of 12.9%. Within Cumbria, growth is projected at 19.4% in Westmorland and Furness, reflecting expansion at BAE Systems, and at 12.5% in Cumberland⁴.

Over the next decade, expansion demand together with replacement demand from labour-market leavers is expected to create a net requirement for around 122,600 additional employees, with replacement demand (largely retirements) accounting for over 90% of the total. The occupations with the largest projected net requirements are caring personal services (16,500); managers and proprietors (9,900); science and technology professionals (8,500); sales occupations (8,100); and business and public service professionals (7,100). More than a quarter of future roles are forecast to require degree-level qualifications.

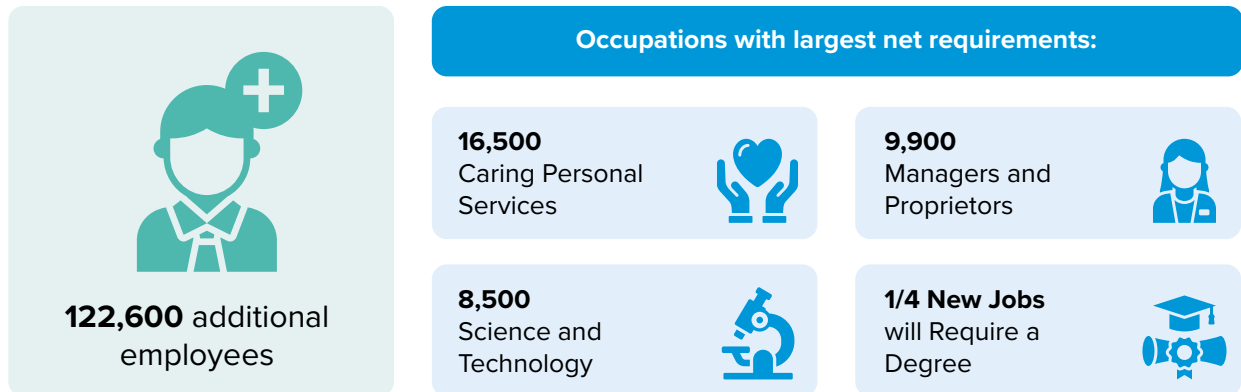
122,600

Additional employees
will be needed due to
labour-market leavers.



⁴Cumbria projections developed with the aid of CE1ER LEFM software 2024 (These data are not a forecast of what will happen, they are one scenario of what could happen based on a series of assumptions about the national/local economy. They should always be used with caution alongside other evidence.)

Expansion Demand and Replacement Demand



Replacement demand accounting for 90% of the additional employees (most early retirements)

Source: Labour market and skills projections: 2020 to 2035, DfE

Growth in key sectors aligned to the Modern Industrial Strategy is driving demand for labour. This includes advanced manufacturing, clean energy, defence and creative industries. Sector strengths in land-based industries and the visitor economy leverage Cumbria’s extensive natural capital assets. Labour demand in the foundational economy (retail, health and social care, etc) is vital to supporting everyday life.

Major investment is taking place within Cumbria, which supports economic growth, safeguarding and creating jobs. This includes:

- Major investment by key employers associated with defence and energy security, including BAE Systems and Sellafield and their associated supply chains.
- Housing development, including large strategic sites such as St Cuthbert’s Garden Village in Carlisle and Marina Village in Barrow.
- Strategic employment sites, such as Pioneer Park, Kingmoor Business Park, around the ports of Barrow and Workington, and Penrith 41.
- Infrastructure development, such as the Port of Workington and the dualling of the A66.

These are complemented by place-based investments helping to enhance quality of life, drive economic growth and support regeneration, facilitated by government funding such as Town Deal, Future High Street Fund, Coastal Communities, Levelling Up, Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and Pride in Place.



Cumbria demonstrates
a clear aspiration to be
a forward-thinking region.

Supporting infrastructure for businesses and key sectors

Cumbria benefits from a substantial network of organisations that create supporting infrastructure for businesses, the VCSFE sector and other key sectors. These include Enterprising Cumbria, Cumbria CVS, and Cumbria Chamber of Commerce. Enterprising Cumbria was formed in 2024, replacing the former Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (CLEP), with a mission to deliver economic development, provide a strong, pan-Cumbrian voice the business, and support business growth, innovation, and workforce development. It is jointly supported by Cumberland Council and Westmorland & Furness Council. Cumbria CVS is the voice of the VCSFE sector, and provides organisations with advice, training, funding support, and opportunities for strategic collaboration.

Sector-specific networks and organisations further add to the business support infrastructure in the region, for example:

- Cumbria Tourism, the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP)
- The Farmer Network
- Britain's Energy Coast Business Cluster (BECBC)

An anchor network is emerging across Cumbria, building on the existing Bay Anchor Network, which brings together partners from the NHS, Local Authorities, Education and major employers. This presents an opportunity to share best practice, for example, showcasing health and education support in workforce development and retention, and to tailor procurement and social value commitments to the needs of the community.





A testbed for innovation in service delivery to support economic participation

Existing activity in Cumbria demonstrates a clear aspiration to be a forward-thinking region that can embrace innovation in service delivery, and a willingness to be a testbed for new approaches and initiatives. The following good practice examples have created strong foundations on which to build and develop innovation in approaches.

Cumbria Health:

Cumbria Health is a social enterprise providing primary health care services in and out of hours across Cumbria via a network of 6 GP practices. Working in partnership with Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB and local organisations, Cumbria Health provides WorkWell, a free, voluntary service to support people with health conditions to remain in work or re-enter work following a period of illness. WorkWell is an early intervention, light-touch approach that offers individualised, holistic support for around 12 weeks, and can link individuals to the wider work and health infrastructure. The WorkWell model in Lancashire & South Cumbria has focused on developing a hub-and-spoke model where the programme delivers support through community venues, for example, health/community centres, GP surgeries, VCS organisations (Citizens Advice, food banks), health services (Talking Therapies) and employer premises (BAE Systems).

A National Health and Growth Accelerator Pilot:

A national Health and Growth Accelerator pilot, delivering 'WorkWell' services for those in work but struggling with unmet health needs. This will be delivered across North Cumbria and the North East of England. It is an initial one-year pilot which may be extended to determine proof of concept. A key focus will be providing interventions and support for people in-work.

Welcome to Work: in the Visitor Economy:

Welcome to Work: in the Visitor Economy is an initiative delivered by Cumbria Tourism to support people who are economically inactive to find employment in the visitor economy. Key target groups include care leavers, those who are at risk of becoming NEET, disabled people, ex-offenders, over 50s and people from deprived areas. The project was initially funded through UKSPF and was formed in partnership with Westmorland and Furness and Cumberland Councils. As well as helping people find suitable employment, they have also supported local businesses to become more inclusive by offering free training, events and toolkits. For individuals, they help raise career awareness, provide training, and connect people with employers to help them find suitable employment.

Welcome to Work has prioritised people who are most at risk of becoming economically inactive. It has provided tailored, holistic support that meets a variety of different needs. The support is intended to have sustained and long-term benefits, and by giving people transferable skills and connections with local companies, residents are better placed to find suitable and sustained employment.

Cumbria Tourism also recently formed a partnership with Movement to Work, which is aimed at helping young people in the region who are NEET to access work experience. The partnership focuses on co-creating practical pathways into work for young people by providing high-quality placements, training, mentoring, and access to employment across the visitor economy. This new partnership has the potential to act as an early intervention programme, providing young people with employment and skills opportunities and preventing them from being disengaged from the labour market for long periods of time.

Together, Welcome to Work and Movement to Work also have the potential to address skills gaps and lags in tourism and the visitor economy.

Shaping Local Response through Devolution

A key factor in terms of the shaping of local approaches is devolution. Cumbria is on the priority programme for devolution, presenting a pivotal opportunity to take greater control over Cumbria's future, enabling localised decision-making that will drive investment, unlock potential, and empower communities. The intended timetable for devolution will shape and drive key activity, and the development of governance structures to manage health work activity must take cognisance of this, both in activity and in membership.

Devolution will enable Cumbria to take on new powers, functions and funding which can improve economic growth, infrastructure, and local development. The Going for Growth: Cumbria Economic Strategy 2025-2045 sets out a new economic vision for Cumbria, drawing on a robust evidence base and extensive engagement with local and national partners. It provides the direction for Cumbria's collective efforts to unlock the full potential of its assets and address persistent barriers to growth and will form the basis of Cumbria's future devolution ambitions.

Devolution will play a crucial role in job creation through the attraction of investment and supporting businesses to thrive and grow. Access to labour supply is a critical success factor, including the provision of an appropriately skilled and competent workforce. The devolution of future supported employment funding can play a vital role in reskilling and upskilling to address skill mismatches and gaps, and help disabled people, people with health conditions, and those with more complex barriers to find a suitable job and sustain work. It can also help those at risk of inactivity to remain in work and can play a key role in facilitating more effective partnership working to reform and drive improvements in public services, which can in turn better support inactive residents experiencing poor health.





National Strategic Alignment

The UK Government's Modern Industrial Strategy, published in June 2025, explicitly links economic inactivity and low productivity, and recognises the need for targeted activities to support key sectors and strengthen the skills system to increase productivity and economic resilience. Further recent changes in national policy, including the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Get Britain Working White Paper, and the Pathways to Work White Paper, are directed toward reforming the welfare system, increasing employment, and providing enhanced support for individuals with health conditions or disabilities. However, detailed information regarding funding allocations and local implementation of these is still awaited.

The Government has committed to investing over £1 billion annually by 2029/30 in employment support programmes, with a particular focus on people with disabilities and those experiencing long-term health conditions. The Connect to Work programme, delivered as part of the devolved Get Britain Working Fund, aspires to assist approximately 3,000 individuals in Cumbria in gaining or sustaining employment over the next five years.

Addressing economic inactivity within Cumbria necessitates more than the introduction of short-term initiatives; it requires significant systemic investment, sustained support for vulnerable populations, the guarantee of long-term funding, policy flexibility, and a unified approach to tackling structural inequalities that impede access to employment.

In addition, the creation of opportunities for people to work in good jobs requires a strong link between the development of a supportive infrastructure and the wider development of Cumbria's economy. With the implementation of the Modern Industrial Strategy, the new Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, the role of Skills England and integration with DWP, and the production of Local Growth Plans, the need to link these approaches up at a strategic level is critical.

During the development of this plan the Mayfield Review was published which recommended the development of a new approach to supporting Workplace Health including recommendations on the design and implementation of the new system, its data requirements and the resourcing.

The review identifies key themes and findings, emphasising that prevention, retention, and rapid rehabilitation are far more effective than reactive approaches or long-term inactivity. It notes misaligned incentives between employers, employees, and the state, often leading employers to replace rather than retain staff. Workplace health support is described as inconsistent and reactive, with a call for a shift towards shared responsibility among employers, employees, and health services. Mental health issues among younger workers are a major driver of economic inactivity, with those aged 16–34 and experiencing mental health conditions being nearly five times more likely to be out of work.

To address these challenges, the review proposes several interventions. Central to these is the introduction of a "Healthy Working Lifecycle" model, which spans prevention, retention, and rapid return to work, aiming to become a recognised organisational standard. The creation of a Workplace Health Provision (WHP) is recommended, offering non-clinical case management and early intervention support. A Workplace Health Intelligence Unit (WHIU) is also proposed to gather data, set standards, and support incentives for adoption. Over 60 employers are partnering with government to pilot these changes, with a focus on building evidence for what works and integrating recommendations with wider employment reforms.

Although a review, it builds on a significant amount of the research and background identified through this report and is welcomed as part of this plan. The review and its potential implications for new service design and delivery will be monitored through the partnership approach outlined in this plan.



3,000 individuals in Cumbria to gain or sustain employment over the next five years.



Local Strategic Alignment and Investment Readiness

The following section summarises and outlines the key strategic alignment between the emerging Get Cumbria Working Plan and the current array of strategies and approaches which exist across the area. This is necessary to act as a starting point from which the current system leadership can be framed, and as the Plan is delivered, the Work and Health Board will need to actively engage with these partners to ensure that new, updated, replacement and reframed strategies are purposefully aligned to the objectives around Get Cumbria Working.

Economic & Labour Market Policy

At the sub-regional level, Cumbria has established a range of strategic policies to address economic inactivity and drive long-term growth. **The Going for Growth: Cumbria Economic Strategy 2025-2045** articulates a long-term vision for economic development. This strategy targets persistent barriers such as low skill levels, poor health outcomes, and limited transport connectivity. Its ambitious targets include the creation of over 6,000 new jobs in key sectors and directly addressing the projected 6% decline in the working-age population by 2045, primarily through enhanced infrastructure and services. Underpinning this, the local authorities are developing economic strategies to provide a local and place-based response.

Cumbria Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is an important initiative, aiming to bridge Cumbria's skills gaps by actively engaging with employers and setting clear actions for education providers to better align their technical education and training with local needs. The LSIP particularly addresses pressing recruitment challenges that have intensified since the EU exit and the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on supporting young people to make informed career choices. It anticipates an annual need for 10,000 additional jobs by 2035, most of which are due to replacement demand as older workers retire.

The LSIP will be a critical source of information and insight for shaping the development of programmes to support entry into work within the GCWP. Linked to this, there will be a need for the Work and Health Board to work closely with partners linked to the LSIP to identify ways of creating entry routes for people supported by this plan.

More broadly, the wider development of the regional economy, including the development of key sectors, attracting investment and creating jobs, will rely upon the insights collated by the Work and Health Board to reflect the challenges and needs of those furthest from the labour market.



Social & Health Policy

At the local authority level, **Westmorland and Furness Council's Plan** seeks to make the area a desirable place to live and work, prioritising sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The plan supports new business creation, employee wellbeing, and talent development, all to foster a healthy and high-quality working environment. Similarly, the **Cumberland Council Plan** presents a vision for enhancing health, wellbeing, prosperity, and the environment, placing emphasis on raising qualifications across all age groups and fostering strong collaboration with local communities.

Health and wellbeing strategies also play a vital role in tackling economic inactivity. **The Westmorland and Furness Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2034** sets out a vision for a healthier, more resilient community, recognising the critical link between fair employment and long-term health outcomes. It highlights long-term sickness as a significant factor behind economic inactivity and seeks to improve access to good-quality jobs for all residents.

The Cumberland Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2028 outlines shared priorities for improving health and reducing inequalities, with a strong focus on the socio-economic factors that shape individual health outcomes. The strategy underlines how economic circumstances and employment opportunities are closely tied to the overall wellbeing of the population.

These strategic approaches align around the core issues linked to labour market participation to support alignment with the Get Cumbria Working Plan. Crucially, it will be necessary for the Work and Health Board to take an active role in shaping and feeding into the associated partnerships around the opportunities, challenges and barriers impacting those with lower levels of economic activity, and participation. This includes established strategic issues such as transport and housing.

In addition, these plans and approaches at both a sub-regional and local authority level build on national and devolved programmes, including **Multiply**, the **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)**, and DWP's **Connect to Work** and **WorkWell** initiatives, all of which are already being delivered across Cumbria through local partnerships.

With the upcoming devolution of powers to the area, the potential for greater control over **Adult Skills Fund**, employability and business support will add to this arrangement. It should be noted that the uncertainty around future UKSPF funding will have a set of impacts and implications for delivery, but this does not impede the current strategic alignment.

Finally, the recently released Post-16 Education & Skills White Paper represents a further evolution in the development of both the qualifications and careers landscape. At this early stage, the proposals represent areas which are likely to shape and adjust the support for NEETs and young people and are likely to have some impact on post-18 provision as well, in terms of qualification and careers. It will be important for the Work and Health Board to understand these measures and their wider implications for economic and social policy as outlined above.

These strategies highlight a strong policy alignment between the Get Cumbria Working Plan and the local, regional and national context. Cumbria has established infrastructure to support the delivery of interventions, with active collaboration across sectors. The Get Cumbria Working Plan will leverage this strong foundation to deliver strategic goals through coordinated action.



2 Key Groups Requiring Support

To achieve the ambition of the key outcome metrics associated with increasing the employment rate to 80% and increasing real earnings amongst non-retired households, there is a need to implement targeted interventions that address the underlying causes of economic inactivity and support increased economic participation.

Understanding Factors Influencing Economic Participation

The development of an aligned research study, 'Economic Inactivity in Cumbria: Health and Wellbeing and the Economic Threat of Inactivity' (Appendix 5), supports appreciation of the drivers and causes of inactivity to inform the development of new and enhanced interventions which can be embedded into the current system of support. The previous section provided an overview of the structural challenges that shape labour market participation in Cumbria. This section considers the systemic challenges which key groups face, alongside the common structural challenges which impact them. The research study highlights:

- **Barriers are interconnected:** For example, poor transport limits access to jobs and services, which in turn affects health and wellbeing.
- **Impacts are unequal:** Disabled people, carers, young people, and those in rural areas face the greatest barriers.
- **Solutions must be multi-level:** Addressing economic inactivity requires action on structural (housing, transport), systemic (health, childcare, skills), and programme (targeted support) levels.

These findings align with the research which DWP has shared on the needs of key groups around employment support. The evidence clearly shows that there is an increased likelihood of economic exclusion amongst specific groups: NEETs, Older Workers and People with Disabilities/Long-term health conditions. Linked to this are other groups which are also likely to contribute to lower levels of economic activity and labour participation due to their circumstances (such as providers of care, women, veterans, people with substance and/or alcohol issues). Whilst an individual may be a member of multiple groups (for example, a NEET young person with a health condition who is also a Young Carer), the approach taken here, in line with the wider approach adopted by DWP, is to create a small number of broad groups as a baseline for the initial development of Get Britain Working Plans. It is anticipated that further refinement, targeting and identification of specific groups will be required as the Work and Health Board and associated partnership development is undertaken.



The challenges facing key groups are summarised below to illustrate the need for a multi-level solution.

Key Group	Structural Barriers	Systemic Barriers	Impact
Young People and NEET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor transport • Lack of local jobs • Housing (especially for care leavers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills gap • Fragmented support and mental health 	Higher risk of NEET status, long-term 'scarring' on earnings and prospects
Older Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decline of suitable jobs • Transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Digital skill • Age discrimination 	Reduced labour participation, inability to preserve earnings before retirement
People with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inaccessible workplaces • Transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health services • Employer attitudes 	Large employment gap, higher inactivity
Other Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing • Transport • Job flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare • Caring support • Benefit rules 	Lower employment, higher poverty, interrupted careers
Groups, such as carers, women and veterans		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carers Allowance upper limit • Employer bias • Skills mismatch 	Underemployment, and increased exposure to insecure work



Key Groups

The following section summarises the research and literature around the drivers of economic inactivity and lower labour participation across five key groups identified as being at most risk of economic inactivity and lower levels of labour market participation. These groups were identified through engagement, desk research and data analysis. Focusing on these key groups enables implementation efforts to be directed where they are most needed and where impact can be greatest to increase employment participation and tackle economic inactivity. These groups face significant barriers and challenges to labour market participation. It is recognised that people can sit in one or more of these groups:

Get Britain Working: Cumbria's Priority Cohorts



Overall, analysis of economic inactivity has highlighted that health-related inactivity, either in the form of physical or mental health factors are the main driver of people's labour participation. In addition, there is also significant evidence around the impact of the quality of work can have on labour participation. The presence of 'good jobs' as well as the overall effect of insecure work can have a significant impact on the perceptions of people and their desire to work.

Priority cohort 1: Economically Inactive

- Nearly one in five of all economically inactive people they want to work
- 33,720 working age people claiming one of these key benefits
- Roughly 23% of working age women are economically inactive
- Women account for 58% for all claimants despite making up only half of Cumbria's population
- Many vulnerable groups are more likely to face economic inactivity

» Inactive People	59,000
» Working Age Population %	20%
» Long-term Sickness	43%
» Retirement	22%

The economically inactive population is estimated to be around 59,000 in Cumbria, equivalent to 20% of the working age population, broadly in line with the English average of 21%. Those claiming a DWP benefit stand at 33,719, comprising 11% of the working age population.

Number of Working Age Claimants in Receipt of DWP Benefits Related to Economic Inactivity

Geography	UC No Work Requirements	UC Planning for Work	UC Preparing for Work	ESA Work Related Activity Group	ESA Support Group	Total Claimants	%WAP in receipt of benefits	Rank of 296 ⁵
Cumberland	13,552	336	1,306	393	5,756	21,346	13%	83 rd
Westmorland and Furness	7,274	196	723	317	3,861	12,371	9%	187 th
Cumbria	20,825	534	2,029	708	9,617	33,719	11%	

⁵Source: DWP Stat-Xplore, People on Universal Credit, March 2025; DWP Stat-Xplore, ESA, November 2024; Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age, 2023

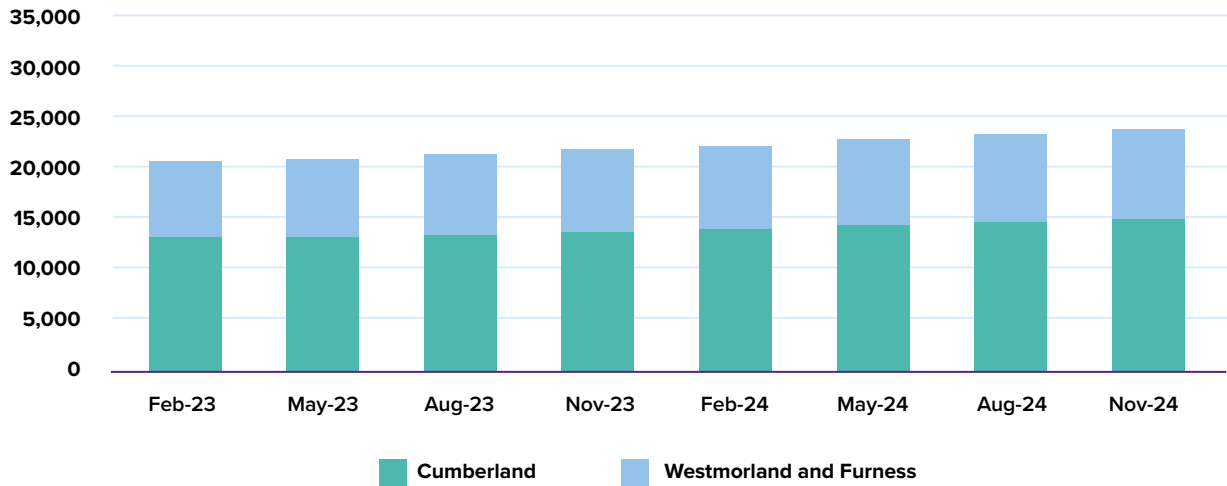
It is important to highlight that, as claimants can receive multiple benefits, there is an overlap between the number of people claiming UC and ESA. This is estimated to be 1,270 individuals, with the majority (1,228) claiming both ESA Support Group and the UC 'no work requirements'.

The number of people receiving these benefits has followed a consistent upward trend across Cumbria between the quarters ending February 2023 and November 2024, with increases recorded in both Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness. Over this period, the claimant count grew by 17%, a slower rate than the national average of 23%.

⁶ Ranking within England's LADS



Number of Working Age Claimants in Receipt of DWP Benefits Related to Economic Inactivity in Cumbria⁶



Source: DWP Stat-Xplore, People on Universal Credit, November 2024; DWP Stat-Xplore, ESA, November 2024

The main drivers of economic inactivity are health and wellbeing issues: particularly long-term physical and mental health conditions, as discussed further under Priority Cohort 2. The risk of inactivity is disproportionately higher amongst those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, exacerbating health inequalities. Research undertaken highlights that a significant number of individuals with work-limiting health conditions remain in employment, but the increasing incidence of multiple health conditions and mental health issues, especially among younger workers, is pushing more people out of the labour market.

Job quality is also a critical factor: unfulfilling and insecure work, particularly among lower earners, increases the risk of inactivity. The evolving labour market, with changing sector demand and the impact of automation, has intensified job insecurity, especially for those with fewer qualifications or in rural areas with limited job opportunities.

One area of intervention is using Skills Escalators, which focus on progression by addressing specific barriers such as skills relevance and work support. The Work and Health Board will explore how the development of a wider skills escalator model can be used to address some of the challenges around job quality.

⁶Note: This includes people on Universal Credit in the conditionality groups of no work requirements, planning for work, and preparing for work; and those in the ESA Work-Related Activity Group and Support Group. UC figures are calculated as the average of the three-monthly data points within each quarter (e.g. December, January, and February for the February quarter) to ensure comparability with ESA data, which is reported quarterly

Priority Cohort 2: Disabled People and those with a Health Condition

Poor Health & Disability

- Mental health is the **leading cause of inactivity** in Cumbria; 54% of ESA claimants cite it as their primary condition
- In Furness and Eden, **less than half of adults with long-term conditions are in work (vs 65% nationally)**
- **Anxiety and depression are rising**, especially among younger people
- **Long NHS waits and limited local support** make it harder to return to work
- **Employers, particularly in SMEs, struggle to sustain support**, increasing risks if job loss

Source: Department for Education (2025) NEET participation rates, Annual Population Survey; ONS (2024) Population estimates – local authority based by single year of age; Claimant Count by age and sex

The number of people who are working with a health condition has increased over time in Cumbria and forms a significant part of the challenges for workers who become economically inactive. The challenges are similar to those with disabilities and are linked to the challenges of managing health or disability conditions, balancing work with self-care, hospital appointments or sudden reductions in capacity.

A particular challenge for people with disabilities is the level and accommodation of support which employers are prepared to undertake, the extent to which additional support is available and the challenge around schemes such as Access to Work in terms of applying and accessing resources to support work. Employers' awareness of the support available to them and to their employees can be patchy, which in turn impacts how employers support people with additional needs in the workplace. Another challenge is the overall complexity of the benefits system, and the role work can play in access to benefits such as PIP, ESA and DLA. There are also particular challenges around these benefits and self-employment.

It can be challenging for people in Cumbria who have a health condition or disability to access the support they need, due to service accessibility or limitations. Accessibility of services in some parts of Cumbria varies due to the rurality of geographies and a lack of support for disadvantaged groups, including mental health, MSK, and neurodiversity challenges in the working-age population.

Despite some examples of good practice, health and employability interventions can often operate independently of each other. Long waiting times for health appointments also constrain meaningful progress towards and into employment. Mental health supports are particularly difficult to access, and resources increasingly struggle to match demand for services. Mental health is perceived to be an increasing challenge in the workplace generally, and small and micro businesses do not have the capacity or resources to be able to provide consistent and sustained support with this. This not only increases the risk that the businesses may be negatively impacted by the barriers and challenges employees face, but also increases the likelihood of someone leaving employment and becoming economically inactive. Long periods of economic inactivity can also exacerbate mental and physical health and wellbeing.



Priority Cohort 3: Young People and NEET

- Wage scarring and reduced mobility are risks for those who disengage early, with care leavers and low-qualified young people particularly vulnerable.
- Apprenticeship take-up is strong (15% vs 5% nationally), but graduate retention is weak, with many leaving the country for work.
- Targeted support is needed to ensure young people can access local opportunities and overcome disadvantages.

» Population (16-24)	48,985
» Employment Rate (%of 16-24-year olds)	75.9
» %NEET	3.8
» Claimant Count	1,210

Source: Department for Education (2025) NEET participation rates, Annual Population Survey; ONS (2024) Population estimates —local authority based by single year of age; Claimant Count by age and sex

Youth unemployment and inactivity are shaped by educational attainment, mental health, caring responsibilities, and local labour market conditions. Young people in Cumbria, especially those from deprived backgrounds, are at risk of long-term ‘scarring’ (persistent disadvantages in earnings and employment) if they become NEET. Young women with caring responsibilities are particularly at risk. The impact of the pandemic has further exacerbated attendance and attainment issues, increasing the risk of NEET status for the current generation. Multigenerational unemployment is thought to be a contributory factor that impacts young people’s outlook and understanding of employment options and career pathways.

Effective interventions include early identification, intensive one-to-one support, tailored careers advice, and coordinated multi-agency approaches. Programmes like the Youth Employment Initiative and targeted early intervention models have demonstrated significant reductions in NEET rates. The wider development of the labour market opportunities is a key part of ensuring that young people can progress within their local area, not only as a way to reduce the risk and overall numbers of NEET young people, but also as a way to retain younger people in rural areas as part of the wider development of Cumbria.



Priority Cohort 4: Older Workers

- 22% of inactivity in Cumbria is due to retirement
- Many aged 50-64 leave work through ill-health, caring or redundancy
- Age discrimination and skill gaps hinder re-entry to work
- Older Workers bring valuable experience; flexible, age-friendly jobs can help retain them.

» Population (50-64)	114,733
» Employment Rate (% aged 50-64)	66.5

Source: Annual Population Survey, 2025 and Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age, 2024

Older workers (over 50s) are a diverse group but face common challenges: health issues, age discrimination, skill mismatch, and the need for flexible or part-time work. Aligned research finds that older people value meaningful work but require more workplace adjustments and flexibility to remain in employment.

There is a perception amongst local stakeholders that a significant proportion of over-50s in Cumbria are not in employment but would like to be. Whilst this may be true for some of this cohort, it cannot be assumed for all; for example, some over 50s cite burnout as a reason they are not in employment. The provision of flexible employment opportunities in Cumbria can support retention in employment for longer, especially those who value hybrid or home-based working and flexible hours.

Interventions that are most effective for this group are personalised, recognising the diversity of needs and proximity to retirement. Support with skills identification, CV preparation, digital skills, and confidence-building is beneficial in terms of supporting employment.

Programmes such as Work Choice and targeted employability training for frontline staff have shown positive outcomes, but participation and sustained employment are more likely when support is localised, integrated, and addresses individual barriers.

One aspect is the need to work closely with employers to see the value in providing flexibility for older workers. Those workers with a higher skill level, and potentially higher levels of wealth or financial security, are likely to have the ability to leave work before retirement compared to those older workers who need to remain in work. For older workers who are made redundant or similarly forced out of work, their ability to maintain prior earnings and utilise skills is often diminished significantly, meaning a higher chance that they will end up in insecure work, or work that is less valuable or well paid.



Priority Cohort 5: Other Disadvantaged Groups

Other disadvantaged groups experiencing barriers to labour market participation are identified as follows.

Veterans:

- Higher concentrations of veterans live in **Old Barrow and Hindpool, Ormsgill and Parkside, Ulverston and Risedale and Roosecote**
- Many face **skill mismatches** when transitioning from military to civilian life; military qualifications are not always recognised, and adapting to less structured work environments can be difficult
- **Mental health challenges** linked to service experience and the stigma around them remain key barriers to employment
- Nationally, veterans are less likely to be in full-time work (57% vs 68%) and nearly twice as likely to be unemployed (11% vs 6%)
- Veterans can also struggle with **housing and financial stability**, compounding barriers to employment
- Evidence gaps persist in the UK, but poor employment outcomes and systemic barriers highlight veterans as a group requiring **targeted support** to reduce economic inactivity

Carers:

- Over **31,800 working-age residents** provide unpaid care - **11% of the population**, higher than the national average (10%)
- Of these, **11,390 provide 35+hours per week**; around **half are economically inactive**, compared to just 21% of non-carers
- Carers are the **largest disadvantaged group in Cumbria**, with concentrations in areas such as **Old Barrow**. Survey responses highlight **child / adult care, transport, and unaffordable childcare** as the main barriers to work, often overlapping
- Carers also report **loss of networks, skills and confidence** after long period away from the workplace
- Flexible, family-friendly jobs were the **most cited enabler** for returning to work, especially during school hours
- The scale of unpaid care has profound **economic and well-being impacts**, making carers a priority group in tackling economic inactivity locally

Domestic Abuse Survivors

- 10,595 working age residents in Cumbria are recorded on domestic abuse safeguarding lists (2023)
- Survivors face unique employment barriers, as personal safety must be balanced with the need to work and provide dependants
- Certain roles, such as community-facing jobs, can pose risks of exposure, especially in smaller localities
- Survivors often require emotional, mental health and workplace support, alongside safe and flexible employment opportunities, to rebuild confidence
- National research identifies survivors as a priority group for economic inactivity support, linking directly to public safety, rehabilitation, and inclusive growth.

Carers

Unpaid carers, defined as people providing care to children, elderly relatives, or people with disabilities, face significant barriers to labour market participation. Overall, the economic value of unpaid care is substantial, but carers are at higher risk of poverty and economic inactivity due to the complexities of balancing care and work, the challenges linked to the benefits system and the overall challenges of inflexible or insecure work. The financial constraints imposed by the Carer's Allowance earnings limit, combined with the health impacts of caring and limited support from employers, create a cycle of disadvantage. Young carers are particularly disadvantaged, with lower educational attainment and a greater risk of economic inactivity in adulthood. Young carers often fall into the wider category of NEET.

The unaffordability, or lack of, childcare and transport are common challenges which prevent carers from working. Long periods away from employment due to caring responsibilities can result in loss of confidence, deskilling, and gaps in knowledge of current progress and activity in specific professions or sectors.

Supporting carers into work requires tailored interventions. Flexible employment is a key enabler for supporting people with caring responsibilities back into employment, and should be supported by advice on assistive technology, along with employer engagement. Evidence shows that interventions such as free home care hours, paid leave, and raising the Carer's Allowance threshold could significantly improve carers' ability to remain in or return to work. The impact of interventions, however, is constrained by the impact on household benefits, including the Carers Allowance.



Women and Survivors of Domestic Abuse

Women's economic inactivity and labour participation are often linked to well-established inequities linked to the expectation on women to undertake caring responsibilities (for children or adults). There are also wider challenges for women in terms of their higher incidence of health issues, and, due to caring responsibilities, a reliance upon part-time or insecure work. Overall, a persistent gender gap exists linked to labour participation and economic inactivity, with women more likely to exit the labour market to provide unpaid care and less likely to return, particularly in the absence of flexible or supportive employment.

Policy interventions need to address the dual challenges of childcare provision and support for women with caring responsibilities. One key challenge is around the loss of relevant skills, a similar situation to the long-term unemployed. For older women, the impact of raising the female state pension age, for example, has not necessarily increased labour market participation, as women may reduce leisure activities rather than return to work, but can have the effect of keeping women near retirement age in work for longer.

In addition, women may be more likely to experience domestic abuse. National research has identified domestic abuse survivors as a priority group for economic inactivity support, linking directly to public safety, rehabilitation and inclusive growth. 10,595 working-age residents in Cumbria were recorded on domestic abuse safeguarding lists in 2023, and this figure does not include those who have not come forward to the police. Experience of domestic abuse presents unique challenges in terms of getting access to employment, as personal safety must be balanced with the need to work and provide for any dependents. As a result, the places where a survivor can work are limited. Customer-facing roles may not be suitable as they risk encountering the perpetrator, and many survivors have to migrate to other towns/ cities to seek safety from a perpetrator, which may mean they have to leave their job and look for a new one in an area where they have few connections. Domestic violence also has significant health outcomes, for example, PTSD is common, and survivors may present with physical injuries.

Interventions must focus on providing emotional and mental health support in the workplace, alongside providing safe and flexible opportunities for employment, to help rebuild confidence. Survivors would also benefit from workplaces having a comprehensive domestic abuse policy that sets out signs of domestic abuse, roles and responsibilities, education and training, steps to ensure safety in the workplace, as well as what the employer can practically offer in terms of financial assistance, flexibility and paid leave.



Veterans

Many veterans struggle to adapt to civilian life due to, for example, a lack of transferable skills, a widening gap between military and civilian employment, and difficulty navigating the housing market. For example, veterans can struggle with the much less rigid, hierarchical chain of command in civilian employment after the highly structured nature of military work. They may have to undertake new qualifications and training, where military qualifications are not recognised outside the military. Nationally, veterans are less likely to be in full-time work and nearly twice as likely to be unemployed.





3 Systems and Support Offer

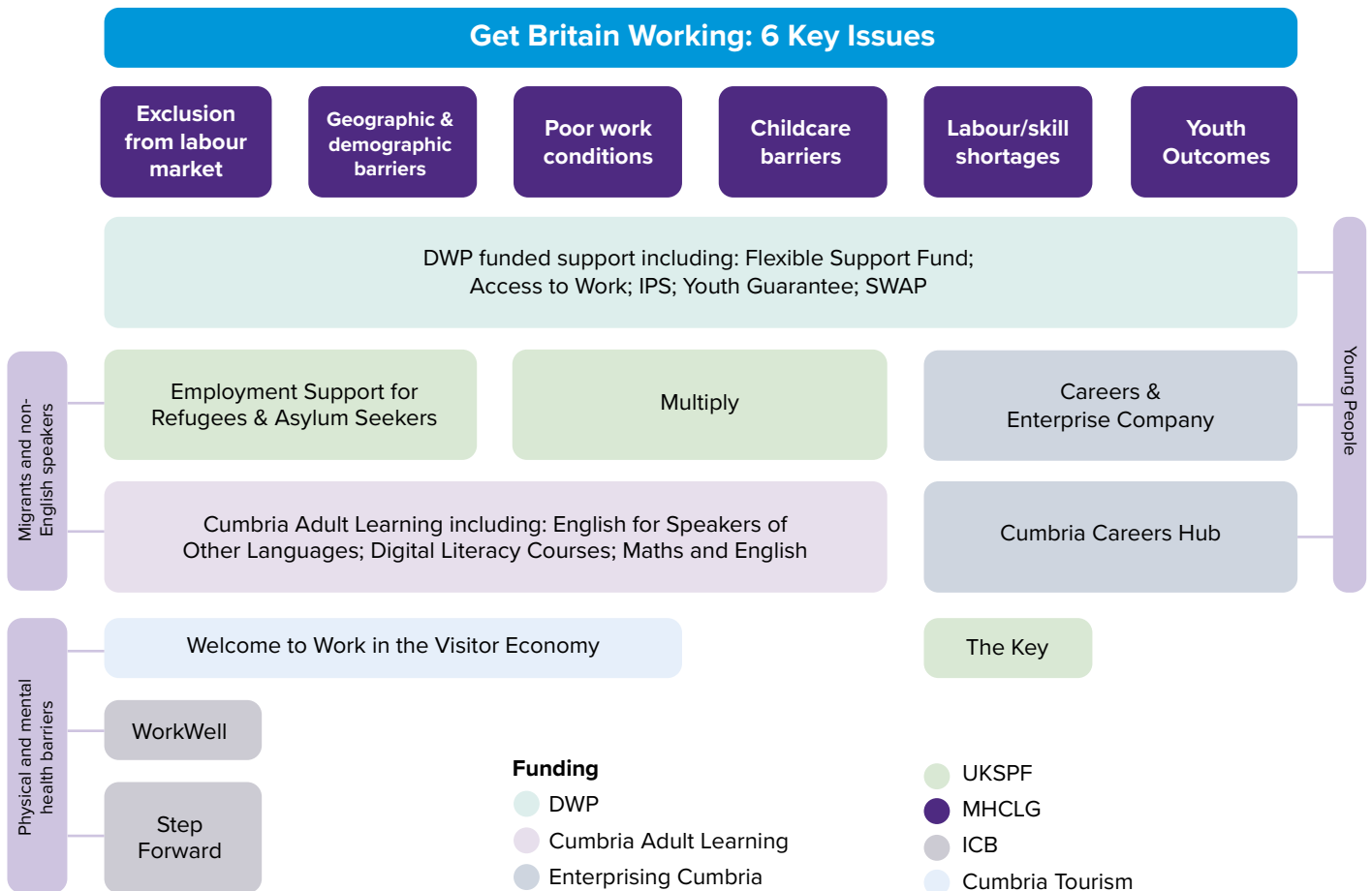
An initial mapping exercise has been carried out, which identified a wide range of programmes currently in operation across Cumbria to support individuals with employment, skills development, and access to work. These include both nationally commissioned services and locally delivered initiatives. We recognise the landscape is complex, and this mapping is considered a starting point only to help shape this Plan.

Many of the services identified align with key themes of the current employment policy landscape. For example, improving employability and job readiness; enhancing access to skills and training; reducing barriers to work such as travel, health, and childcare; and supporting disadvantaged groups and those furthest from the labour market.

National provision is largely driven by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Education, with delivery through a mix of public, private, and voluntary sector partners. Local provision complements this with targeted support tailored to the needs of Cumbria’s communities and labour market.

The figure below illustrates this initial mapping exercise of systems and mechanisms operating in Cumbria, which provide the framework for Get Britain Working to build on. It focuses on local provision, which is supported by national programmes and services. There will be services which are not currently captured in this exercise; however, this provides a broad framework for understanding the current context of support. A more detailed appreciation of the current systems and support offer is included at Appendix 3.

Initial Mapping of Systems and Support Mechanisms in Cumbria

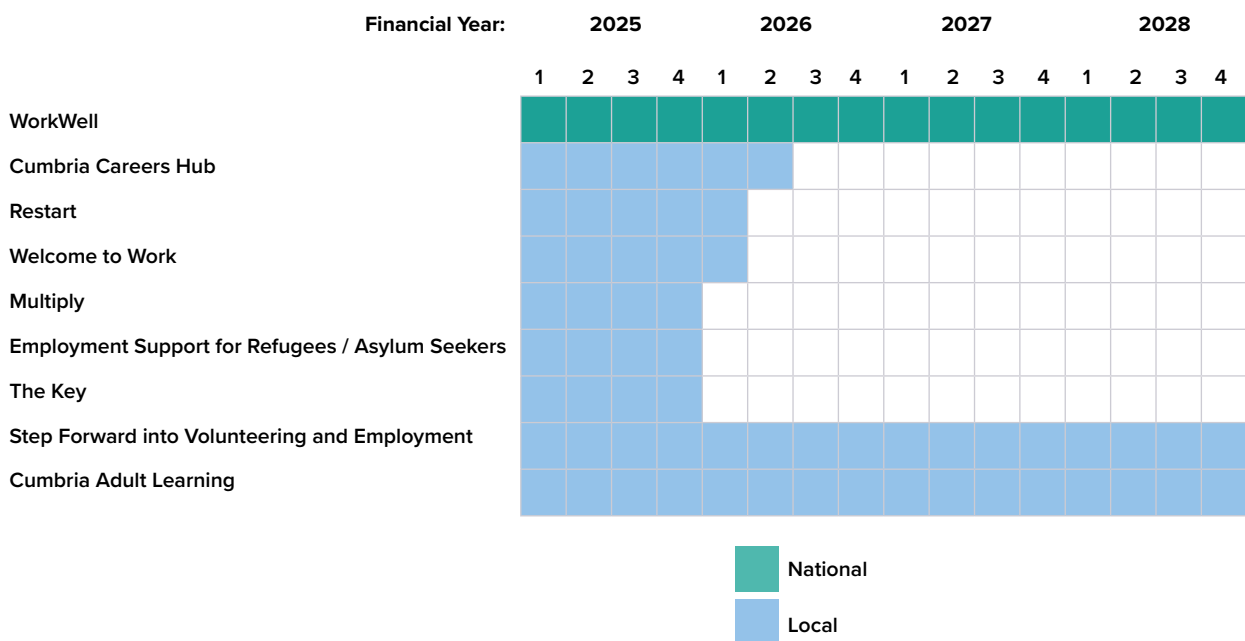


Not all the six key GBW issues are equally addressed by current provision. Existing support is inconsistent or has gaps, for some key groups. For example, the key issue of childcare availability disproportionately impacting women, has fewer services currently supporting it, with this mostly through broad programmes such as those provided by Cumbria Adult Learning.

Young people have more, and more dedicated, support services currently available. For example, the Cumbria Careers Hub provides tailored support to improve youth outcomes in Cumbria. Development of future support will need to be cognisant of the inconsistency of the current framework of support to ensure that key groups are supported, to mitigate the risk that some people will 'slip through the net'.

The figure below shows the range of funding timelines for the network of support services and mechanisms identified in the mapping exercise. A number of these at the local and national level are coming to the end of funding, including UKSPF funded projects such as The Key, and Employment Support for Refugees/Asylum Seekers.

Funding Timeline of Identified Systems and Support Mechanisms in Cumbria





Jobcentre Plus Offer

The Jobcentre Plus Offer provides personalised advice and support to help people find and sustain employment, aligning with the Government's strategy for economic growth and poverty reduction. Central to this are **Work Coaches**, who offer tailored, work-focused guidance and, where possible, support claimants throughout their journey to develop skills, find jobs, and access disability-friendly employers. Jobcentres also deliver targeted help through specialist roles such as the Youth Offer, Prison Work Coaches, Schools Advisors, and Disability Employment Advisors, while Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders assist vulnerable claimants with complex needs.

Support is further strengthened through partnerships with local and national organisations and Employer Services teams that promote inclusive recruitment and connect claimants with job opportunities. Individuals can also access national initiatives like the Restart Scheme (see Existing Programmes below) and funding through the Flexible Support Fund. Building on this, the Jobs and Careers Service, introduced in the Get Britain Working White Paper, offers more personalised, skills-based support and more extensive employer engagement.

Jobcentre In-House Offer

Jobcentre In-House Offer	
Additional work coach time	Additional work coach support provides people with health conditions or disabilities with increased one-to-one personalised support from their work coach to help them move towards, and into work
Disability Employment adviser	Offer of specialist advisors covering all sites dedicated to helping people with health conditions or disabilities to secure and retain employment
Employment Adviser Team	Provide site support to look for and secure local employment opportunities for customer base taking specific employment sectors into consideration
Youth Employability Coach	Offer of specialist support for young claimants with multiple barriers to work and with complex needs to develop the skills to look for, obtain and keep employment
Advanced Customer Support Lead	Works with senior leadership teams across DWP to focus on DWP's responsibilities to our customers most at risk
Prison work coach	Specialist role supporting people leaving prison
School's Advisor	Assists Schools to provide high quality, independent and impartial careers advice to pupils aged between 11 and 18
Family Community work coaches	Family community work coaches working in partnership with the Department for education and local authorities to empower families through employment
Armed Forces Champion	Specialist support for service leavers and veterans to enhance their employability and enable the individual to move towards lasting employment or progress in work
Flexible Support Fund	Flexible support fund is a locally managed budget to supplement existing services and tailor support to the needs of individuals in the local area
Health Adjustment Passport	The Health Adjustment Passport can support people with health conditions or disabilities to move into or stay in a job by identifying workplace adjustments etc
Probation Lead	WC undertakes appointments at Probation Offices with Probation Officers to encourage engagement from vulnerable claimants
Localised Work Coach information Sessions and upskilling sessions	WC's deliver specific MOTs such as 50+ and Childcare funding information sessions and many more
Neurodiverse Champions	Specialist support delivered by work coaches who have a personal experience with ND. Delivering tailored support and job clubs
LVP	Local Value Provision
Redundancy Support	Delivery of redundancy support to groups of employees



Existing programmes

The following programmes set out the core provision available for key groups. It should be noted that provision identified is not exclusively targeted at the key groups and will contribute towards other groups. A more in-depth description of the systems and support services identified in this section can be found at Appendix 4.

People Who are Economically Inactive

Programme	Objectives
Restart	DWP programme supporting individuals who have been out of work for six months or more. Delivered in the North West by G4S through a managing agent model, Restart brings together national and local providers, including training and community organisations
Multiply	DfE-funded initiative to improve adult numeracy for those without a GCSE grade C/4 in maths. Delivered through local colleges and employers, Multiply supports adults aged 19+ to build confidence and skills in numeracy. Outcomes of the programme target supporting people looking to improve career prospects etc
Welcome to Work: in the Visitor Economy	Cumbria Tourism initiative to support people to find employment in the visitor economy
Cumbria Adult Learning	A range of courses for adults over the age of 19 (Maths, English, English Speakers of Other Languages courses etc.) operating in Barrow, Carlisle, Kendal, Penrith, Whitehaven and Workington and surround areas. Courses are a mix of free and paid learning. Of relevance is the ESOL provision, which helps individuals for whom English is a second language to improve their literacy and communication skills. Courses are tutor-led and flexible, with learners sitting exams when ready, leading to a recognised qualification
Department for Work and Pensions support	There is a broad range of DWP provided support for the identified groups. This includes broad statutory funding such as the Flexible Support Fund and Apprenticeship Levy funding, as well as more specialised support such as the NHS Talking Therapies programme
The national Growth & Health Accelerator	Launched on 1st October 2025, this is a trial backed by £45m in UK Government funding, which builds on the progress made by the WorkWell pilot. North East and North Cumbria is one of four areas identified as a part of the country most affected by ill health driven unemployment, and is the location of an NHS Health and Growth Accelerator to provide support for this. This will test ambitious and novel approaches to addressing health challenges impacting unemployment, based around early intervention, and person-centred approaches



People with Disabilities and Health Conditions

Programme	Cohort Group & Objectives
WorkWell	Voluntary programme delivered in South Cumbria to support individuals with health conditions to remain in or return to work. Funded through Lancashire & Cumbria ICB, the service provides access to a work and health coach and a personalised support plan
Step Forward into Volunteering and Employment	Cumbria wide service funded by the North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board via NHS Mental Health Transformation Fund. Step Forward supports individuals with severe mental health experiences to work or volunteer through a person-centred, needs-led service working with individuals over nine months

Young People and NEET Support Offer

Programme	Cohort Group & Objectives
Cumbria Careers Hub	Enterprising Cumbria's Careers Hub team work with education and employers to strengthen the talent pipeline. Jointly funded by the Careers and Enterprise Company and Enterprising Cumbria the team support the secondary schools (including SEND and AP) and FE colleges to deliver the Gatsby Benchmark Framework which ensures every young person receives careers education to help them make informed choices about their future. Work in collaboration with National Careers Service and key stakeholders in Cumbria
The Key	Cumbria wide programme provided by Inspira continuing existing established employability support such as collaboration with local employers and offers a range of personalised support to economically inactive adults aged 16-25. Progression coaches for example, can support people to gain key employability skills and develop workplace experience

Other Disadvantaged Groups Support Offer

Programme	Cohort Group & Objectives
Employment Support for Refugees and Asylum Seekers	Provided through Westmorland and Furness Adult Learning, using UKSPF funding. Note this funding is due to end in February 2026. The project provides learning for refugees and asylum seekers such as English language skills provision which will support employment, with aims to boost community cohesion. Courses are non-regulated, with areas such as understanding cultural differences



Wider support

There is a wider network of statutory funding which supports this. This includes the Flexible Support Fund (FSF), which provides discretionary funding to remove practical barriers to work, such as travel, training, or childcare costs⁷. Managed locally by Jobcentre Plus, FSF enables tailored support for individuals receiving Universal Credit, carers, and lone parents. It complements mainstream provision by offering flexible, needs-based assistance that can unlock access to employment or training opportunities. UK Government guidance on the FSF suggests that it can be used to provide additional training to allow claimants to apply for promotion other job opportunities or achieve certificates which support employment, and pay for clothing, equipment, travel costs, or childcare required for a claimant to start, or progress in employment⁸.

Other sources of support also include the Department for Education-funded Children and Families grant, and the Rough Sleeping Initiative, which is funded by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Planned programmes

Connect to Work is a programme which will be delivered across Cumbria by Cumberland Council and Westmorland Furness Councils, in collaboration with Enterprising Cumbria, and funded by the Department of Work and Pensions. This will support people into sustained employment through a programme of support including actions such as supporting a joined-up healthcare and employment support offer. The programme is currently being designed by the Enterprising Cumbria and the respective local authorities and will launch in January 2026⁹.

Proposed programmes

The Get Britain Working Paper sets out the Government's commitment to piloting new approaches and programmes to address economic inactivity, including Economic Inactivity Trailblazers, Youth Trailblazers, and Health & Growth Accelerators (see above). The imminent revision of the local LSIP and the journey to devolution also create opportunities to develop new Cumbria-wide approaches and provision, and also to mitigate against short term funding that is ending in 2026 for a number of services.

With the appropriate investment and support, Cumbria is well placed to deliver additional pilot activity and contribute to learning, having already demonstrated an appetite for innovation and willingness to be a testbed for new approaches.

For example, Skills Escalator is an upskilling and reskilling model that can support people to sustain or enter employment. Skills Escalator interventions are often tailored to specific groups or sectors, and there is an opportunity to consider how this model can be deployed Cumbria-wide. This could offer a focussed programme delivering supported entry-level jobs in priority sectors, with a progression model for priority groups such as NEETs, people with disabilities or health conditions, carers, and over-50s who have been made redundant.

⁷What is the Flexible Support Fund? | Turn2us

⁸Flexible Support Fund

⁹Breaking down barriers to employment | Cumberland Council

The Youth Guarantee is a new Department for Work and Pensions initiative aimed at ensuring young people aged 18–21 have access to employment, education or training opportunities, as well as smoothing the transition between employment to prevent young people from becoming NEET. Support includes paid work placements, training opportunities, free travel passes, mental health support, and money advice. The Youth Guarantee is being piloted through regional trailblazers, with £45 million allocated nationally to test and refine delivery models, with vulnerable groups such as care leavers targeted, aiming to remove barriers to participation in work and learning. Although there is no timeline for the establishment of a Youth Guarantee in Cumbria, there is potential for thousands of young people to benefit, with local partnerships involving employers, education providers, and community organisations helping to shape tailored support. This includes new initiatives such as school-supported work experience, and increased flexibility in current opportunities, such as the availability of shorter and less structured apprenticeships in key sectors. The guarantee also includes 8 place-based trailblazers to test future aspects of the guarantee.

Collaborative capacity

With the creation of two unitary authorities in April 2023, replacing the previous seven authorities, Cumbria’s collaborative capacity has rapidly developed, and as the area moves towards devolution, new governance structures and opportunities to collaborate are emerging and evolving. There is a need to integrate with local services and with employers, and collaboration will be very important to capture innovation, engagement strategies and best practice.

Cumbria has strong foundations on which to build, with good pre-existing relationship between the two Council areas and other key partners such as ICBs. This facilitates both the identification and sharing of good practice and learning across a number of partners, organisations, systems and structures.

To build collaborative capacity, and to take forward the Get Britain Working agenda in Cumbria, a **Work and Health Board** has been established. This will sit alongside the Economic Growth Board and provide leadership and oversight of Cumbria’s Get Britain Working Plan. It brings together key senior stakeholders including Cumberland Council, Westmorland and Furness Council, Directors of Public Health, North-East and North Cumbria ICB, Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB, Jobcentre Plus, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, University of Cumbria, Cumbria CVS and Cumbria’s Economic Growth Board.

Cumberland Council’s approach to prevention and **pre-front door/front** door services plays a pivotal role in supporting employability and the broader work and health agenda. By focusing on early intervention and holistic support before individuals reach crisis point, the Council is creating a more resilient and empowered population. This preventative model identifies and addresses barriers to employment, such as poor mental health, housing instability, lack of digital skills, or others, before they escalate into more complex issues that may require intensive statutory intervention. Through integrated pathways at the “front door,” individuals are connected to community-based resources, employment support services, and health and wellbeing supports at the earliest opportunity. This not only reduces pressure on social care and health systems but also fosters a culture of independence and aspiration.





By aligning prevention with employability, Cumberland Council enables residents to build confidence, increase their skills, and sustain meaningful employment, which in turn contributes to improved health outcomes and economic participation. This proactive, person-centred approach ensures that support is timely, targeted, and tailored, ultimately creating stronger, healthier communities and a more inclusive local economy.

Westmorland and Furness Council's **Community Power** strategy aims to create the conditions for community power to thrive. It is a foundational strategy, central to the overall Council Plan and Delivery Framework, and moves the council towards a new operational model where council staff and members work alongside residents and communities in more experimental ways, fostering a learning culture, and better utilising the expertise and experience of VCFSE partners. Ultimately this is expected to improve outcomes for residents and have tangible benefits in terms of social connectedness, health and wellbeing.

Additionally, existing mechanisms to support strategic alignment and integration include:

- Cumbria Economic Growth Board
- Cumbria Health and Wellbeing Board
- Integrated Care Boards (Lancashire & South Cumbria and North East & North Cumbria)
- Employment support and skills group

Alongside this, the local supporting infrastructure detailed in Chapter 1 demonstrates the sector capability in Cumbria.

Cumbria CVS has a number of specialist networks comprising groups of third sector organisations with a common interest. These include Action for Health, Mental Health Provider Forum, Learning Disability Forum, and a Social Enterprise Partnership. Each is represented at the Cumbria Third Sector Executive. Additionally, the Cumbria Third Sector Network brings the many VCSE organisations in Cumbria together and provides a mechanism for involving them in the planning of local services. The network has mechanisms to select representatives onto Cumbria's strategic partnerships, and to give the sector a voice to lobby and influence local partners. It has existed since 2007, and the relationship between the network and local public sector partners is a mature one.

Barrow Rising is a partnership between central Government, Westmorland and Furness Council and BAE Systems. It was established in 2023 to help regenerate the town of Barrow in Furness. In January 2025 Team Barrow launched its 10-year strategic plan which includes five key workstreams: Transport; Economy, master planning and place; Education, employment and skills; Health, equity and wellbeing; and Community and social impact. Each of these intersects with the Get Britain Working Plan. The Team Barrow partnership approach is a key driver behind the support for partnership working in Cumbria.





Engaging with employers

is a critical activity. Building and maintaining employer relationships takes a lot of time and resource and needs to reflect not only where opportunities are currently available or can be easily created but also the sector aspirations of the Cumbria Economic Strategy. Cumbria Chamber of Commerce brings Cumbria businesses together to support business growth, learning and development. The two Cumbrian councils work closely with the Chamber of Commerce on key topics, and the Chamber has a central role in progressing and implementing the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). Cumbria's Economic Strategy highlights the commitment to developing the next LSIP and this provides a ready-made governance and engagement mechanism to reach employers.

Large employers in key sectors influence the local labour market and supply chain, in advanced manufacturing, energy, and defence. These employers who make a significant contribution to Cumbria's economic performance, and they are also important Anchor institutions in the region.



Challenges

To deliver systematic change, local systems need to evolve and address existing barriers to deliver improvement against the GBW outcomes.

Capacity and capability challenges

Parity in provision of support

There is a key challenge in delivering accessible services with parity across the region, due to the mix of urban and rural geographies and existing issues with poverty, transport and access to services. This increases the risk of gaps in provision developing, with rural / remote areas at greater risk of non-provision. Existing services are extremely adept at supporting many people with barriers to employment, but these services are often accessed by people who are closer to the job market, and many others remain hard to reach.

Overlapping boundaries and target groups

There is some potential overlap with the geographical boundaries for programmes such as Connect to Work and IPSPC in North Cumbria. These will support target groups including people with mental health conditions, and will deliver interventions such as mentoring and support services, help with CVs and advice and guidance. There needs to be agreement about the cohort groups each programme will focus on, and clarity on geographical boundaries.

Fragmented employer engagement

The service landscape also creates challenges with employer engagement across the region, which is fragmented and lacks coordination. Currently, multiple providers are engaging with employers who have a limited understanding of the complex funding landscape. Employment Representative Bodies (ERBs) such as the Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, Britain's Energy Coast Business Cluster, Cumbria Social Enterprise Partnership and Cumbria Tourism play a valuable role in supporting businesses to identify and overcome barriers to growth and prosper.

Both small and large businesses are key actors in supporting people into employment and to remain in employment, and each can present specific challenges in offering support to employees. For example, small businesses often lack the resources or capacity to provide occupational health services, and large businesses can lack flexibility and personalisation in the delivery of such services. This is compounded by a lack of comprehensive knowledge and understanding amongst employers about the help that is available to them and to their employees.

There is need for employers and support services to understand employment as a positive health outcome, which requires a significant information and communications effort, and a shared vision of what this means for Cumbria and its residents. Employment improves wellbeing in a number of ways, providing stability, a sense of purpose, social connection, and increasing confidence, as well as an income. Whilst many are clear on the role of good work in supporting good health, this needs to be further disseminated and embraced by wider services and, crucially, employers, to help overcome barriers to employment for people with a health condition. This message can be embedded in and underpin employer engagement activities.

Complex needs

Mental health is a prevailing concern. There is a perception that instances of poor mental health are increasing, and that this can often be hidden. Similarly, neurodiversity can often be unrecognised. This means that often necessary support is not identified or implemented, both within and out of the workplace.

System and cultural barriers

Emerging governance structures

Governance structures to support the Get Britain Working Plan in Cumbria, whilst built on strong foundations, are immature. Governance structures, systems, and delivery mechanisms will take some time to develop, embed and evolve. There is a need for partners to be flexible and adaptive in approach whilst ensuring aims and objectives of the Plan are met.

Untapped potential of anchor institutions

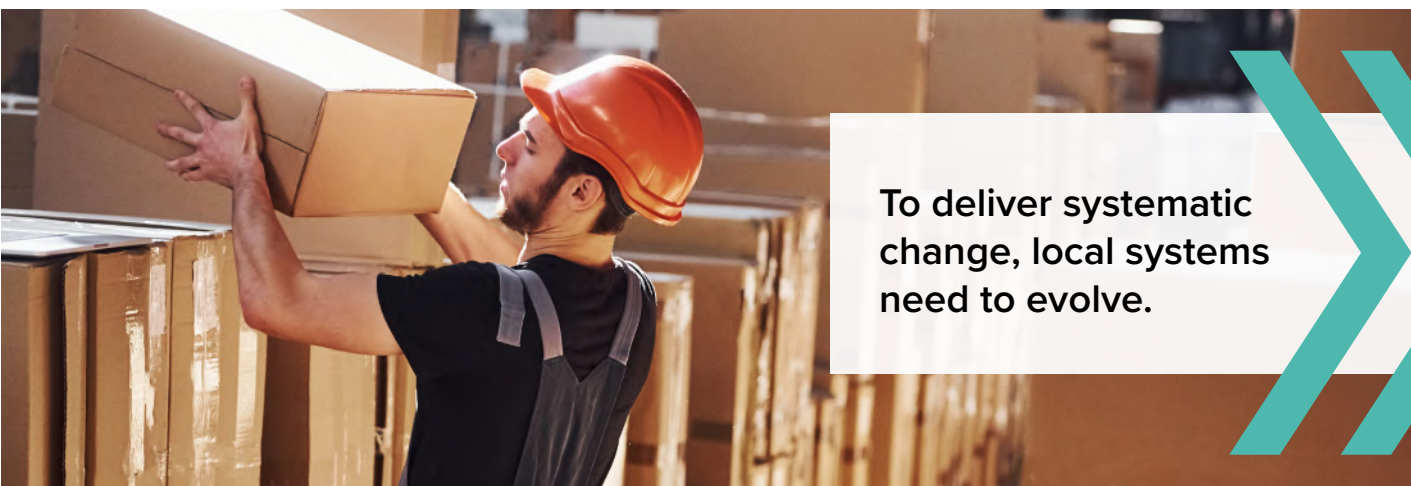
There is significant untapped opportunity in the Anchor institutions in Cumbria, which includes both large employers and organisations such as the local authorities, NHS and FE and HE providers. Understanding and leveraging this opportunity is key to embedding activity and partnerships, particularly with employers, who have a role to play in using their social value commitments and procurement processes to support the local business base and local employment opportunities.

Fragmented commissioning processes and short term funding cycles

Commissioning processes across the local authorities and ICBs are fragmented and delivered in isolation. This issue is compounded by short-term funding cycles which limits long-term planning and coordination. Greater consistency and collaboration in commissioning services will support integration and deliver better outcomes.

Data sharing systems and protocols

Data sharing systems and protocols present a potential barrier to service collaboration and integration. The inability to share data appropriately limits the information available to services to enable effective supports, signposting and referrals for individuals. This in turn slows down or prevents access to appropriate supports for individuals. It also impacts on the robustness and extent of data available for decision making, monitoring and review purposes. This requires appropriate infrastructure and permissions to be in place and is significant early consideration.



To deliver systematic change, local systems need to evolve.



Changes required to facilitate future investment

To deliver meaningful change, Cumbria must address the fragmented support system that exists to deliver a more integrated, outcomes-focused system.

Foundational system change (short-term priorities)

There are several short-term priorities to address that will help build the foundation for long-term systems change.

There is an imperative for partners to recognise the need for systems change to tackle entrenched challenges and issues linked to employment, unemployment and economic inactivity, and in the short-term there will be a key focus on **securing buy-in** from all relevant partners, and on creating consensus across these partners.

An agreed **outcomes framework** that articulates partner roles and responsibilities will demonstrate the consensus position and ensure shared accountability. It will be transparent and clear for all partners.

Building on existing links with, for example, the Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and Cumbria CVS, a targeted overarching **business and employer engagement strategy** will be developed. Early discussion amongst partners is needed to ensure there is coordination and alignment across the range of employer engagement activities that are proposed or underway. These include the Connect to Work employer engagement strategy, Cumbria Careers Hub employer engagement, and the development and implementation of the Cumbria Commitment. The purpose of the overarching strategy will be to engage employers as core partners in the development and delivery of Cumbria's Get Britain Working Plan.

Alongside this, an **engagement strategy for the VCFSE sector** will be developed. VCFSE organisations are recognised as fundamental to engaging communities and are critical partners in the development and delivery of Cumbria's Get Britain Working Plan. They are also an important conduit to engaging lived experience to inform both strategy and delivery.

Data sharing protocols between core partners will be established at the earliest opportunity to prevent delay and ensure all and any decision making is fully informed by the best available data, and that all partners have access to the relevant information on which to act. This will further strengthen the shared approach set out in the outcomes framework noted above.

A comprehensive overview of **training and upskilling opportunities** across and within key sectors will support the identification of joint approaches and activities to realise these opportunities. It will facilitate the streamlining of resources to target these more effectively and maximise expertise, as well as build a longer-term culture of learning and sharing good practice.





Short-term
priorities build
foundation for
long-term change.

Structural system change (medium to long-term priorities)

As new structures evolve and embed, there will be a focussed approach to **strengthening strategic partnerships** and Cumbria-wide governance, with regular review of progress, objectives and responsibilities. The new Work and Health Board is operating in an evolving environment and will be flexible to reflect emerging learning and partnerships, whilst maintaining clear and well-articulated objectives.

Opportunities to **coordinate commissioning** across partners will be sought and, where possible, created. Significant effort is required to explore what opportunities and challenges exist in bringing geographies, activities and timetables into closer alignment to meet shared objectives.

There is a growing awareness of the need for shift away from reactive towards **preventative action**, and the Plan will foster a focus on early intervention. Outcomes and pathways will be clearly mapped out to enable targeted approaches with those who are furthers for the job market, experiencing long term health issues, or at greatest risk of economic inactivity now and in the future. This will not only facilitate potential future cost savings but support the long-term health and wellbeing of Cumbria residents and communities.

Sustained and multi-year investment is needed to support long term planning and delivery and create confidence among partners in the approaches taken. Short term funding cycles prevent sustained intervention and create instability for staff and service provision. Identifying and making the case for sustained investment will underpin the development of a new Employment Support system which can commission programmes on a long-term basis with assurance for providers and service users. There is opportunity in the development of a Mayoral Combined Authority, and the devolved powers and settlement this will deliver. Future devolved adult skills funding and functions can be leveraged to support increased participation in education and training, and encourage reskilling and upskilling and there is significant body of evidence supporting this plan that will strengthen the case for sustained, targeted and long term investment in Cumbria.



4 Working With Partners

Get Cumbria Working is an ambitious plan that requires collaboration, cooperation and coordination across all key partners to ensure effective and impactful delivery. Only through shared accountability and responsibility will the Get Cumbria Working Plan lead to long-term change.

Each partner involved in the delivery of Get Cumbria Working has a unique perspective and skillset, and each has a clear purpose and role in the plan.

Engagement to date

In the development of the Get Cumbria Working Plan, views from a broad range of key stakeholders, groups and organisations have been sought through a variety of engagement mechanisms.

Get Cumbria Working Plan stakeholder engagement

Between March and October 2025, an extensive programme of stakeholder engagement took place in Cumbria to obtain views and socialise thinking on the approaches to Connect to Work, economic inactivity, and Get Cumbria Working. This included a series of targeted 121 and small-group interviews and culminated in a workshop attended by 24 individuals from 11 key organisations and services (including DWP, University of Cumbria, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, the two ICBs covering the area and others) who came together to consider key Get Cumbria Working priorities, challenges and approaches to addressing these.

This was supplemented by a series of deep dive interviews with key stakeholders on the topic of economic inactivity to inform understanding of the causes, drivers and impacts of economic inactivity in Cumbria.

Stakeholders engaged in this process included representatives from Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness Councils, North East and North Cumbria ICB and Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB, Directors of Public Health, Jobcentre Plus, the University of Cumbria, Cumbria CVS, major employers, and intermediary organisations such as Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, Cumbria Tourism and the Farmer Network.

Residents experiencing economic inactivity were engaged through an anonymous survey and 121 and small-group interviews. The South Lakeland Poverty Truth Commission also contributed to this process.

Poverty Truth Commission (South Lakeland)

The Poverty Truth Commission comprises of people with lived experience working alongside local decision makers and influencers to shape and inform decisions and interventions designed to address poverty in all its forms. Three working groups have worked closely with Westmorland and Furness Council: Poverty & Person-Centred Services, Poverty & Community Hubs, and Poverty & Mental Health; and until March 2025, a group of Commissioners were also working with Cumbria Development Education Centre to develop and deliver poverty proofing and poverty awareness training for the Council and their partners.

Market Engagement: Connect To Work

In July 2025, Enterprising Cumbria, in partnership with Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council, hosted a market engagement event for the Connect to Work Programme. This was an opportunity for providers, employers and partners to come together and consider local challenges and potential solutions, and their role in this. This is supported by a Connect to Work market engagement strategy that will help sustain engagement with key stakeholders in the longer term and align this with the overarching Get Britain Working engagement and activity.

Approach to partnership working

Design and planning

With a Cumbria-wide focus, Enterprising Cumbria has led the development of the Get Cumbria Working Plan, working closely with officers from Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council.

Local authorities

This core team has enabled engagement and consultation with relevant local authority teams and individuals across several services and directorates, including Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport (in Cumberland and Thriving Places (covering Economic Development and Inclusive Growth) in Westmorland and Furness, Children's Services, Public Health, and Adult Social Care.

Wider stakeholders

The core team has further facilitated engagement and consultation more widely to include key local stakeholders and intermediaries that have included Elected Members, DWP, Cumbria Economic Growth Board, the University of Cumbria, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, Cumbria CVS, the two Integrated Care Boards operating within Cumbria, employers, local service providers and intermediary organisations.

This approach has ensured not only engagement with those who deliver employability and skills services directly related to Get Cumbria Working, but also engagement with services providing health-based interventions and support and representing specialist areas. A number of these services have a key role to play and are represented on the Work and Health Board. Engaging with employers in particular has been key to developing an understanding of the demand for labour, their appreciation of economic inactivity and the barriers to participation in Cumbria, and the impacts of this on businesses.

We explored a range of topics related to the Get Cumbria Working Plan with stakeholders, including what the main priorities of the Plan should be, who should be involved in delivery, how we bridge the gap that can exist between services and residents to reach more people and those most in need, how we can better integrate services, specific local challenges, and key enablers of change.





Implementation, delivery and review

The Work and Health Board will oversee the implementation, delivery and review of the Get Cumbria Working Plan and engage with a wide range of partners through employer representative bodies such as the Chamber of Commerce, and new mechanisms and pathways such as the Get Cumbria Working consultation panel.

People with lived experience

There is growing recognition and understanding of the role lived experience plays in service implementation and review. People with lived experience bring real-time insights and experiences of how services are working for them and can support the early identification of blockage or unanticipated challenges to delivery. It is important to recognise the time and expertise people with lived experience contribute to supporting service design and delivery, and they are core partners. Work is underway to establish an appropriate mechanism that will ensure lived experience is integrated at all levels of planning and delivery, including the Work and Health Board.

Employers

Employers are also critical partners in implementation. It is clear from the engagement that has taken place to inform the development of this Plan that there is a very mixed understanding of economic inactivity and employability and skills services in Cumbria, as well as a wide range of approaches to supporting people move into or remain in work. This also varies depending on the size of the business and the sector in which they operate. We understand that employers in Cumbria's key sectors feel under pressure for a variety of reasons, some of which can only be addressed at the UK Government level through policy changes (for example, changes proposed by the new Employment Rights Bill), but we need to consider ongoing employer engagement for the work and health agenda. Westmorland Family Group provides employer representation on the Work and Health Board. Employer representative bodies such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, Cumbria Tourism, the Farmer Network, and others are also important partners who can facilitate engagement with employers, particularly SMEs.

Third sector and service providers

Engagement with the wide network of third sector and funded services across Cumbria will be shaped and driven by the Work and Health Board, but requires specific coordination locally, both Cumbria-wide and within each local authority area. This will be a complex task that will take into account the range and number of services operating locally, and there will be some services or initiatives that may be funded in the short term or operating micro-locally.

DWP

DWP will be critical to the implementation of the Get Cumbria Working Plan. DWP have been involved as a key stakeholder from the very early stages of developing the Plan and will continue to engage through the Work and Health Board, shaping local engagement and delivery through the Jobcentre Plus network.



NHS

NHS Health services will be engaged through the relevant ICB. There is, however, substantial restructuring of this system planned on a nationwide level, which may impact how a range of health services are engaged. The implications of this will be monitored and reviewed through the Work and Health Board.

Skills providers

Cumbria Chamber of Commerce is a key partner in Get Cumbria Working and leads on the development of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). This provides a route to engagement with skills providers and an opportunity to align activities. Skills providers include local Further and Higher Education providers (University of Cumbria, and local College providers) as well as independent and VCFSE sector providers. The Work and Health Board and associated engagement mechanisms (outlined in Section 6: Governance) provide a framework to ensure comprehensive engagement with this cohort. This may be through engagement with businesses, business intermediaries, third sector bodies and activities associated with the Cumbria LSIP.

Engagement mechanisms

New and emerging engagement mechanism, Get Britain Working Consulting Panel

The proposed consulting panel will create essential infrastructure to join up the voices of people with lived experience, and employers, with strategic stakeholders and service delivery partners and shape the direction of Get Cumbria Working. It will comprise an employer engagement forum and a community and lived experience forum.

The Employers Forum will primarily be a mechanism to maximise and leverage existing engagement, bringing in new voices where these are needed. It will have a particular focus on SMEs and micro businesses in key sectors. It will ensure a flow of information between employers and the Work and Health Board, strengthening the business voice provided by the Chamber of Commerce. It will also provide a mechanism to share information with employer and promote the relationship between good work and good health.

The Communities Forum will be a Cumbria-wide forum that provides a platform (in person or online) for people to share their experiences of and views on their needs and how these are met, or not met, by local service provision, what needs to change, and how this could be achieved. It will also include representation from relevant VCSFE organisations and groups. These groups provide valuable insight and have extensive and detailed knowledge of local challenges; they are also a trusted link between individuals and services, meaning their inclusion may encourage further engagement by individuals and be a supportive presence for them that instils confidence. This forum will also help ensure emerging and evolving needs are identified at an early stage, meaning approaches can be modified to respond to new circumstances.



Community Hubs Pilot

Community Hubs are currently being piloted in Cumbria. A community hub brings together a range of services in one place in specific locations. There is currently one community hub being piloted, in Workington Library, where people can access employment advice and support, health and wellbeing support, adult learning support and pathways to practical support in the form of blue badge applications, free school meal applications and school clothing grants. Future hubs are planned, with service provision shaped by local feedback. Elsewhere, existing hub models cater for specific groups such as 'Family Hubs' and 'Youth Hubs', following the same principle of co-location and shared service provision within places.

Anchors Network

As noted in Section 1, there is an emerging Anchors network in Cumbria, building on learning and engagement from the existing Bay Anchor Network. Anchor institutions are organisations and employers who have a particular connection to the community, either as a major employer, education provider, controlling significant land or assets, or through a significant cultural connection. Anchor institutions are key assets that can support new approaches to achieving inclusive and sustainable growth and economic development rooted in communities. The network in Cumbria is in early stages, and there is an opportunity and clear rationale to align it with the ambitions of Get Cumbria Working. Key organisations include the two local authorities, the two ICBs, the University of Cumbria, College providers (including Lake College, Carlisle College, Kendal College and Furness College), major employers such as BAE Systems and Sellafield Ltd, and Cumbria Tourism (the Local Visitor Economy Partnership).

Existing engagement mechanisms to align

A number of existing engagement mechanisms currently exist that, with some coordination and a planned and sustained communications approach, can provide routes to key partners as well as learning and examples of good practice. These include:

- **Cumbria Work Based Learning Providers Forum** is a membership group made up of Education, skills providers operating in Cumbria, including Enterprising Cumbria, those from the independent sector, Further Education colleges and Higher Education institutions, employer providers, and local authorities.
- **HealthWatch England** is a statutory committee of the Care Quality Commission. Local HealthWatch, including **HealthWatch Cumberland** and **Healthwatch Westmorland & Furness**, have, amongst other functions, a role to obtain the views of local people about their needs and experience of local health and social care services, and to promote and support the involvement of people in the monitoring, commissioning and provision of these services.
- **Westmorland and Furness Community Safety Partnership** operate a series of **Local Focus Hubs** that bring together a range of partners, including the emergency services and social housing providers, mental health services and third sector organisations. Community Power, as detailed in Section 3, is also a key lever that can further strengthen existing engagement.



Through community hubs people can access employment advice health and wellbeing and adult learning support.





5 Governance and Local Engagement

Delivering the Get Cumbria Working Plan will require a strategic, unified and integrated approach based on a shared commitment and understanding between all partners, local authorities, health, DWP/JCP, employers, training and education providers, community partners and residents. There will be shared responsibility with effective communication between all the Governance groups.

These arrangements are likely to evolve as the Plan embeds and structures are adjusted.

There is a clear Cumbria-wide appetite to work more closely and build on positive learning from the Barrow Rising partnership model. This underpins the principles and approach outlined in this section.

A changing context

In October 2025, Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council gave final approval to the UK Government's devolution proposals, meaning a Combined Authority for Cumbria will be established in 2026. Mayoral elections will take place in 2027.

The devolution timetable has implications for the governance of Get Cumbria Working Plan. The current governance structure has been established with the understanding that there will be significant changes locally over the next two years, and it is designed, particularly through the membership of the Work and Health Board, to be nimble and responsive to these changes, with minimum disruption to delivering the Plan.

Governance Principles

A set of principles will underpin the development, delivery and governance of Get Cumbria Working, and these will be adhered to, even as the structure evolves. These principles are as follows:

- Robust and transparent planning and delivery
- Collaborative design and delivery
- Well defined roles and responsibilities
- Clear lines of reporting
- Shared ownership and collective accountability
- Clear measures of success
- Effective and informed decision making
- Inclusive: gives effective voice to employers, communities, services users, and potential service users (people with lived experience) and services.
- Collaboration across all stakeholders, including residents and PWLE will be relational, not transactional

Governance overview

The current proposed Governance Model is designed to be streamlined and inclusive. It will adhere to a RACI framework (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) and comprises three key groups

- **Joint Executive Committee (JEC)** (Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness Councils). This comprises the Leaders of Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness Councils, Cabinet Members for Children’s Services Education and Skills, Adult Care, Economy, Finance (W&F) and portfolio holders for Adult Social Care, Children’s Services, Family Wellbeing and Housing, and Financial Planning and Assets (Cumberland). There is currently a proposal under consideration to extend the powers of the JEC to support the transition to a Mayoral Combined Authority.
- **Work and Health Board**, with ownership and oversight of the Get Cumbria Working Plan and associated activity. It will provide advice to the JEC on matters of labour supply and options to overcome any constraints.
- **Economic Growth Board**, working alongside the Work and Health Board. The Economic Growth Board has oversight of Going for Cumbria’s Going for Growth Economic Strategy and provides advice to the JEC on matters of labour demand, and areas of growth and opportunity.

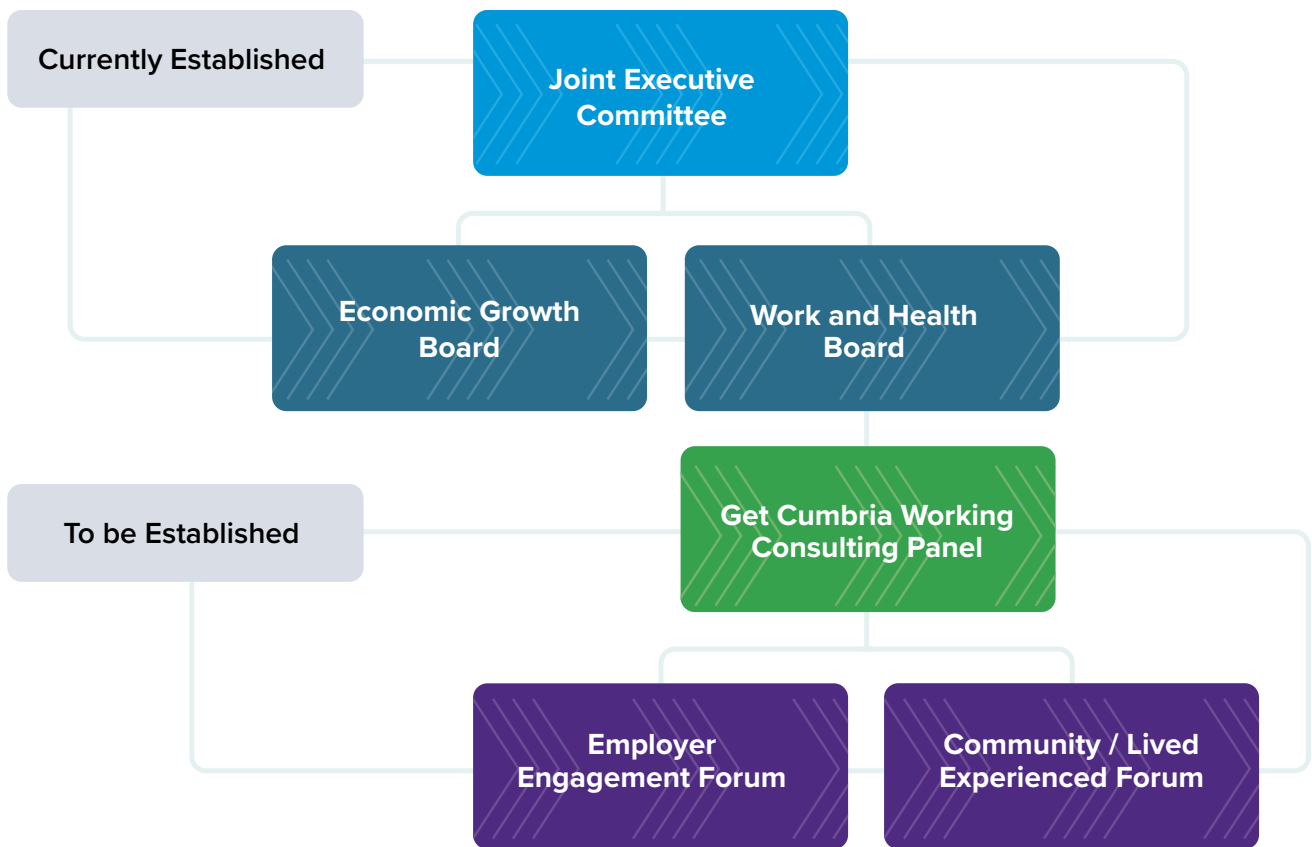
Both the Work and Health Board and the Economic Growth Board will provide an advisory function to the JEC. The roles of each Board will be clearly defined, and a strategic link between the two established - both in membership and focus - to ensure that alignment, accountability and clarity are established and maintained.

In addition to this, the Connect to Work Delivery Plan for Cumbria proposes the establishment of an employer engagement forum, which will inform a wider consulting panel, to ensure inclusive input and feedback. A separate forum to engage communities and people with lived experience will also be established. The figure below details this structure.





Current Proposed Structure



Role of the Work and Health Board

The primary role of the Work and Health Board is to provide leadership and oversight on matters contained in the Get Cumbria Working plan. The Board will monitor the delivery of associated programmes such as Connect to Work, and others that may be commissioned by government under the Get Britain Working strategy. The remit of the Work and Health Board is as follows:

- To provide oversight of the delivery of the Get Cumbria Working plan, ensuring a detailed implementation plan is in place and monitoring activity, risks, outputs, outcomes, and impacts. If delivery objectives are not being met, the Board will commission the development of improvement plans.
- To provide expert advice to the Joint Executive Committee on the broader issue of labour supply across Cumbria, gathering such data and evidence as may be required to maintain a level of knowledge on pressures, constraints and progress.



- To advise the Joint Executive Committee on decisions that may be required to improve labour supply, for example, where additional programmes or projects could be commissioned, or where other intervention may be warranted, such as additional research or evaluation.
- To monitor delivery of the Connect to Work programme, maintaining oversight of the numbers of participants, performance on published KPIs and other success measures including Fidelity scores, case study evidence, continuous improvement activity and feedback, wider learning and evidence of impact. If delivery objectives are not being met, the Board will take steps to be satisfied that robust plans are in place to bring performance in line with tolerance.
- To lead partnership work or collaborations in response to opportunities for additional funded programmes to come into Cumbria.
- To develop and maintain partnership working arrangements with the Economic Growth Board, Strategic Leaders Group, Cumbria Anchor Group and the two Place-Based Partnerships for North Cumbria and South Cumbria.
- To act as consultee on questions of labour supply, on behalf of the Joint Executive Committee.

Membership of the Work and Health Board

The Work and Health Board is a new structure and as such membership is still evolving to a degree. However, as a formal partnership of local stakeholders, it includes representation from Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness Councils, North East and North Cumbria ICB and Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB, Directors of Public Health, Jobcentre Plus, The Chamber of Commerce (as the Employer Representative body), the University of Cumbria, Cumbria CVS to provide voice to the VCFSE sector, and appropriate representation from the Economic Growth Board to ensure alignment, communication and transparency between the two Boards.

Given the important role of Anchor Institutions in providing employment opportunities and in employability supports more generally, consideration is being given to how the burgeoning Anchors network can have an effective voice within the Work and Health Board which will specifically reflect the Anchors agenda. This may be a fixed-term (for example 1 year) role that passes to different Anchor institutions at the end of the term. This will give different members of the Anchors Network the opportunity to ensure the Anchors voice is adequately represented on the Work and Health Board, ensuring broad representation of this. In the interest of maintaining consistency in a changing environment, it will however be prudent to secure initial representation for a two-year period.

It is crucial to engage people with lived experience at all stages and levels of planning, delivery and monitoring, and ensuring lived experience is represented within the Board is also being explored. Engaging people with lived experience in this way this may require providing support, training, mentoring or guidance to those individuals, and to the existing Board members, in order to ensure their role is meaningful and appropriately facilitated. There is good practice locally to learn from; for example, Enterprising Cumbria has recently appointed two young people to their board and have developed a clear engagement, nomination, assessment and recruitment process in order to do so.



Get Cumbria Working Consulting Panel

The consulting panel comprises two elements: an Employers Forum and a Communities Forum.

The Employers Forum will be facilitated by the Connect to Work Partnership Manager and build on good practice and existing engagement routes. The forum will therefore not be a discrete, new entity. Engagement mechanisms will be flexible to minimise the burden, particularly on SMEs. Employers will be engaged using existing networks, for example through Cumbria Tourism, the Federation of Small Businesses, and others. The forum will also facilitate consistent and comprehensive messaging and communications with employers.

The Communities Forum will be led by the VCFSE sector, where there is substantial experience to build on to develop this, for example People First, South Lakeland Poverty Truth Commission, Healthwatch, and Barrow and District Disability Associated (BDDA). People With Lived Experience should be involved in co-producing how this forum will operate. They must also be supported to ensure they are able and comfortable to contribute, and that this engagement is genuine and their voices heard and taken into account. There will be scope for this group (led by VCFSE) to take specific questions out to local residents and communities.

Looking to the Future

Recognising that the wider policy landscape is evolving and moving towards the establishment of a Mayoral Combined Authority, the structure above is likely to undergo revision in the short (1-2 years) to medium (2-5 years) term. However, it is anticipated that the underlying hierarchical structure will align to any new arrangements put in place and any evolution of the JEC.

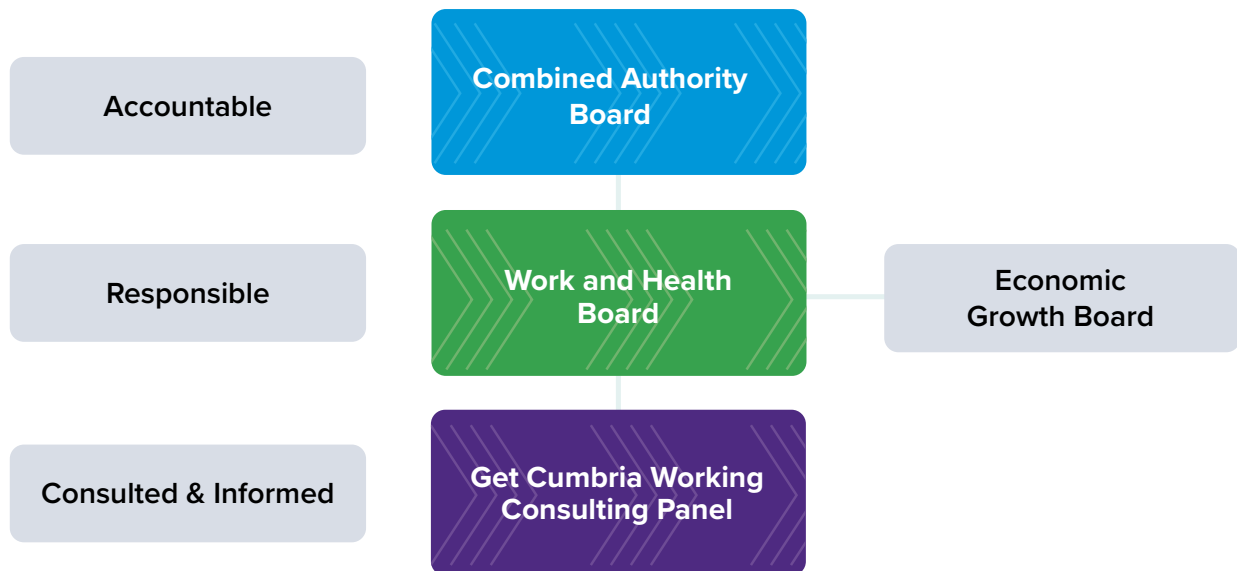
The proposed structure going forward also has three layers and is designed to ensure that all stakeholders have an effective voice. The three layers are as follows:

- Cumbria Combined Authority Board (strategic)
- Cumbria Work and Health Board (delivery) – this will be maintained going forward
- CGBW Consulting Panel (informed by relevant fora for employers, community, lived experience)
- Future alignment and relationship with the Economic Growth Board is to be defined.

Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed

Governance of the Cumbria GBW will adhere to a RACI framework (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed).

RACI Framework



The table overleaf explains the proposed future governance structure and how it reflects a rigorous RACI approach.



	Body	Membership	Role	Reporting
Responsible	Cumbria Work and Health Board	Enterprising Cumbria, Cumberland Council W&F Council, North East and North Cumbria ICB and Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB, Directors of Public Health, Jobcentre Plus (DWP), Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, University of Cumbria, Cumbria CV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational responsibility. Day-to-day decision making. Monitoring and reviewing progress and performance Maintain a risk register with quarterly reviews and reporting to the CC 	<p>To CCA</p> <p>Inform about proposals</p> <p>Provide feedback loop to the Consulting Body</p> <p>On an as needs basis, provide specific themes and questions to the Consulting Body</p>
Accountable	Cumbria Combined Authority Board Predicated on the establishment of a Mayoral Combined Authority	Evolved from the JEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountable body responsible for setting the strategic direction of the Work and Health Board and Get Cumbria Working Plan Oversee risk Overseeing governance and the work of the Work and Health Board Ensure alignment with other strategies, plans and policy 	Provide progress updates UK Government, local strategic stakeholders and decision makers
Consulted & Informed	<p>Get Cumbria Working Consulting Panel</p> <p>Comprising two discrete contributing fora for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers Communities 	<p>Employers Forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local employers in key sectors SMEs as well as large employers Employer representative bodies <p>Communities Forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People with lived experience, residents and service users VCFSE organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To inform the development and implementation of CGBW and help shape it going forward Empowered to challenge, make suggestions and receive feedback on how their input is, and has been used. Scope to take specific questions out to their 'communities' i.e. employers and communities 	Report into the Work and Health and Work Board and through that, to CCA

6 Plan Objectives

The Get Cumbria Working Plan is based on the need to create an integrated partnership system that can address the issues of inactivity and low labour participation. It recognises that at a fundamental level, work (in various forms) can benefit people’s mental, physical and social wellbeing, and that often the right jobs, pay and conditions/flexibilities and opportunities are beyond a person’s reach.

The following objectives set out the ambitions to be achieved on behalf of the key groups and cohorts identified. These are not objectives which can be reached quickly or in isolation. Progress will be dependent on a committed partnership that can discuss the priorities, challenges and trade-offs needed to meet these objectives and deliver a system of employment support that will benefit Cumbria, its residents, businesses, and communities for years to come.

Establishing a system principle of ‘no wrong door’

A key challenge is the level of fragmentation between agencies, and sometimes within them, that prevents people from getting the support they need. A key objective is to create a system that is built on the fundamental principle that there is no wrong door for help and employment support. Instead, we will create a system that means that no matter if a person is at their GP or local library, they can access the advice, information and guidance they need, and when necessary, their needs and challenges are heard, understood and responded to by a system that shares information quickly, effectively and efficiently.

This will not be easy. Systems are strained, and different bodies use different systems, and have a mixture of different methods, approaches and processes. However, system change will be underpinned by a shared endeavour that everyone within the system is trying to do the right thing, to provide the best service and help. As such, we will create a system that is focused on the individual, and we will work with service users, our staff and our partners to create a system based on the principle of ‘no wrong door’.

Address Wider Structural Challenges, Address Systemic problems and deliver effective programmes

Economic inactivity is complicated. Cumbria residents are impacted by numerous events which can increase the chances of them becoming inactive or reducing their labour participation. As outlined above, some of these challenges are structural (housing, transport and the labour market), and some are systemic (childcare, waiting lists for treatment).

Our objective is to ensure that we identify, develop, commission and deliver an array of programmes that help people into work and support their needs and wellbeing, and to do so in a way that is practical and recognises the challenges which people face and the responsibilities within the wider system. This means that ensuring that information, insight and data around structural challenges is fed to the appropriate authorities, the Local Councils and (eventually) the Combined Authority, reflecting their responsibilities around transport and housing. We will also ensure we focus on fixing the systemic problems that we have the levers to address through our partners represented on the Work and Health Board.



Co-ordinate the employment support system to fill gaps in provision

The current array of services, programmes and approaches does not fully reflect the needs of residents to access to support and services they need to address their barriers to work. There is an opportunity to build on current good and effective practice, reflecting, for example, the Team Barrow model and support delivered through by employers.

A fully coordinated system will meet the needs of residents, provide a focus on the multiple challenges and issues which residents can face and will work as a single system. Based on the evidence we have gathered, the insights we have received and the knowledge we have around the way the current system works, our aim is to develop and enhance this system with a single outcomes framework shared across partners and providers, so that everyone is working together. We also want to create the confidence in the system that we can move towards long-term financial commitments to resource this system, with partners prepared to commit, share or pool resources for the long-term benefit of communities across Cumbria.



7 Priority Actions for the Next 2 Years

Based on the plan objectives and key cohorts outlined above the following priority actions have been developed to support ongoing discussions within the Work & Health Partnership, and with partners of the delivery of employment support across Cumbria.

These priority actions are intended to provide a stepping off point for delivery of employment services, and the associated development needed, to improve alignment and integrated working towards the overall objectives outlined in this plan.

Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council have approved the UK Government's devolution proposals for Cumbria, with a Combined Authority to be established in 2026 and Mayoral elections taking place in 2027. This has shaped the Get Cumbria Working Plan with a focus on the immediate short-term (2025-2027) to ensure the system change that is needed can be implemented and progress made towards delivering on key priorities and targets.

Establish a 'no wrong door' system:

Develop an integrated approach where individuals can access employment support and advice from any point of entry, such as GPs, Job Centres, or libraries, ensuring their needs are understood and addressed efficiently, regardless of where they first seek help.

Tackle structural and systemic challenges:

Identify and address the underlying structural issues (like housing, transport, and labour market) and systemic problems (such as childcare and treatment waiting lists) that hinder employment, by commissioning and delivering effective programmes and sharing insights with relevant authorities.

Co-ordinate the employment support system to fill gaps in provision:

Improve partnership working and establish a shared outcomes framework across the employment support system so that gaps in provision can be identified; take a 'test and learn' approach to build on good practice in considering how to meet needs, including through piloting initiatives such as resource pooling.

Action Plan (2025/26 – 2027/28)

By April 2028, we expect work on the Get Cumbria Working agenda to have had the following impacts:

- The Work and Health Board is fully established and resourced with an agreed shared outcomes framework that is driving a fully integrated approach to employment support across local authority, health and government service delivery.
- The Work and Health Board has led work across partner organisations to address structural and systemic challenges, with evidence of tangible changes.
- Employers of all sizes understand how they can create more inclusive workplaces and increasing numbers of employers are taking steps to do so.



Strategic Enabler Actions

Strategic enabler actions are central to the development of the partnership and the creation of a new employment support system. They represent a set of fundamental actions that will improve system leadership, governance, accountability and engagement.

Strategic enabler actions focus on the role played by the Work and Health Board.

Programme Delivery Actions

The programme delivery actions relate back to the Objectives of Addressing Wider Structural Challenges, Address Systemic Problems and Deliver Effective Programmes' and are focused on the interconnected challenges, barriers and opportunities to address economic inactivity and lower levels of labour participation.

These delivery actions are intended to start a wider process of developing solutions and programmes across Cumbria. Many of these, notably wider structural and system challenges around the labour market, transport, and childcare, are out with the remit of the Work and Health Board and beyond the scope of the Get Cumbria Working Plan but have been identified as key dependencies. These will require effective partnership working, collaboration, and influence, and are included here to illustrate the scale of the challenge.



Strategic Enabler Actions will improve system leadership, governance, accountability and engagement.

Strategic Enabler Actions

Theme	Actions	Outcome	Lead / Partners / timeline
Developing Governance Capacity and System Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a shared outcomes framework to articulate and define roles and responsibilities of partners • Utilising innovation to underpin partnership integration and collaboration: develop transformation approach and agree starting points for alignment and integration among partners • Explore further the creation of ‘no-wrong door’ principle: creation of shared data systems, performance monitoring, case management using select test and learn existing initiatives i.e. Community Hub • Development of shared outcomes framework 	<p>Robust governance and leadership that aligns with wider strategies and programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Work and Health Board is aligned with, and informs, the Economic Growth Board • Partners understand their contribution to Employment Support • Strategies are aligned as the basis for future system development • Work & Health Board receives detailed reports into priority cohorts across Cumbria and Customer Journey including performance and outcomes 	<p>Work and Health Board, Strategic Leaders Group</p> <p>Q1 26/27</p>
Partnerships and Engagement (VCFSE, Employer and lived experience)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Work and Health Board Consulting Panel is established • VCSE and Employer/Business partners are engaged via the Consulting Panel • The Work and Health Board appoints an Anchors representative • Lived experience representation is appointed to the Work & Health Board • The Work and Health Board facilitates capacity building and training for all Board representatives to support lived experience contributions 	<p>Inclusive decision-making across the Work and Health Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer representatives engage and articulate SME and business community perspective on Board recommendations • The community and VCFSE sector has a voice and clear pathway to input to the work of the Work and Health Board • The Anchors agenda is represented and articulated through the Work and Health Board • Lived Experience representatives are built into the emerging governance and leadership • Design and delivery is informed by lived experience and responsive to needs and demands 	<p>Work and Health Board, member organisations</p> <p>Q4 25/26</p>



Strategic Enabler Actions Continued...

Theme	Actions	Outcome	Lead / Partners / timeline
Current System Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed mapping of current provision, building on initial mapping exercise Comprehensive review of system capacity and workforce, based on mapping Detailed mapping of service user journeys within the current system 	Established foundations to enable capacity growth and effect systems change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current Employment Support system in Cumbria is understood Workforce challenges are identified Service user journeys are understood, including transition points, gaps, and point where there is significant risk of disengagement Work and Health Board is able to design and commission interventions and make recommendations to partners including new Combined Authority 	Work and Health Board, member organisations Q4 25/26
Options on Future System Design, with a particular focus on addressing mental health challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on detailed mapping exercise, consider options for any gaps in provision Options will include the assessment of feasibility on topics including development of workforce, service reconfiguration, commissioning, long-term funding and the shared outcomes frameworks, and opportunities to take a more strategic approach to Social Value commitments Options will also include impact of innovative models that are appropriate to Cumbria's context, such as the proposed Natural Health Service 	(Assuming gaps in provision remain) recommend employment support system design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options are shared with new Combined Authority Process of integrating partners and aligning activity is started 	Work and Health Board, Strategic Leaders Group Q3 26/27

Programme Delivery Actions

Theme	Actions	Outcome	Lead / Partners / timeline
Addressing Wider Structural Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour Market – Based on insight from providers and partners, the Work and Health Board will work with LSIP partners and the Economic Growth Board to strengthen and increase provision and availability of entry level jobs across Cumbria 	Increased entry level opportunities across Cumbria	Economic Growth Board, working with Work and Health Board and LSIP Steering Group Annual reporting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport – Work with partners to review current voucher schemes to ensure alignment with current GBW priority groups 	Transport is improved for people who are economically inactive	Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils; Cumbria Combined Authority. private and third sector partners Q4 26/27
Addressing Systemic problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare – Work with partners to ensure the sufficiency of childcare places is reviewed, taking account of the needs/barriers and challenges faced by those with low labour participation or inactive 	Shared approach to planning childcare provision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of childcare provision and identified gaps 	Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils (part of Best Start in Life government target) Q3 26/27
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a “lessons learned” approach, develop recommendations around future integration of services based on the impact of Connect to Work and WorkWell initiative 	Improved employment support through service integration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved service integration 	Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils, ICBs, and delivery partners Q2 26/27
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Support – working closely with Economic Growth Board and Local Authorities, support the development of information and guidance for SMEs around employment support and the needs of key groups 	Improved employer uptake of employment support available <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved employer awareness and understanding of barriers and supports impacting on key groups 	Cumbria Combined Authority, Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils, Economic Growth Board, CCoC Q2 26/27



Programme Delivery Actions

Theme	Actions	Outcome	Lead / Partners / timeline
Addressing Systemic problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the proposed introduction of V-Levels as an opportunity to explore the co-delivery of employment support solutions for adults and NEETs & Young People returning to education 	<p>Pathways at level 2 (and below) into new V-Levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualification pathways for NEETs, Young People and people who are economically inactive are developed 	<p>Cumbria Combined Authority, Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils</p> <p>Q4 26/27</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of Short-Course funding pots using Growth & Skills Levy to develop courses for leaders & managers on Healthy Workplaces 	<p>Healthier workplaces in Cumbria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved employer understanding and skills in delivering healthy workplaces 	<p>Cumbria Combined Authority</p> <p>Q4 26/27</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress development of a 'Good Work Charter' for Cumbria based on 'good' work (including flexibility, security, employee voice, development), recruitment, equality and diversity, and employee wellbeing 	<p>Cumbria and key sectors are perceived as providing attractive opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a framework for employer support and establish shared principles Increased jobs quality 	<p>Strategic Leaders Group, Economic Growth Board</p> <p>Q4 25/26</p>
Deliver Targeted Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current delivery of targeted interventions is maintained Performance, impact and associated information is shared with Work and Health Board on six-monthly basis. Reports should include identification of challenges, trend changes and service satisfaction to inform design and delivery of future interventions 	<p>Current provision is maintained</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work and Health Board has an overview of the current delivery of employment support that is data and evidence led Obtain understanding of Cumbria wide performance and any issues with this to inform future provision and service design 	<p>Work and Health Board</p> <p>Ongoing plus bi-annual reportin</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch WorkWell in North Cumbria and maintain delivery of WorkWell in South Cumbria Encourage collaboration between the two WorkWell initiatives underway / being launched in Cumbria to share effective practice on delivery models and impact on target groups to support future system design 	<p>People are supported by WorkWell across Cumbria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve service delivery in North and South Cumbria Insight, evidence and continuous improvement for future service design 	<p>North East and North Cumbria ICB and Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB</p> <p>Ongoing (while WorkWell funding maintained) Bi-annual reporting</p>

Theme	Actions	Outcome	Lead / Partners / timeline
Deliver Targeted Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch Cumbria Connect to Work in January 2026, providing employability support to people with disabilities, health conditions or other barriers. Connect to Work will deliver Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and the five stages of the Supported Employment model for Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF). Key target groups will include carers and veterans, survivors of domestic abuse, people with drug and alcohol dependence, those experiencing homelessness, ex-offenders, and refugees 	<p>People are supported and barrier to employment are addressed through Connect to Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated support for people with health conditions and disabilities and other barriers • Improved service integration and partnership working • Increased employer engagement 	<p>Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils</p> <p>Q4 25/26 Bi-annual reporting</p>
Developing new solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an approach to organise the identification, assessment and approval of new projects, programmes and initiatives to address economic inactivity and low labour participation • Identify and assess new projects, programmes and initiatives • Received proposals will be considered as part of wider Future System Design process 	<p>Bespoke projects, programmes and initiatives are identified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New projects, programmes and initiatives are identified linked to the needs of key cohorts • New system design process takes account of new projects, programmes and initiatives 	<p>Work and Health Board</p> <p>Q1 27/28</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilisation of new Family Hubs for identification and early intervention with families at risk of inactivity or lower labour participation 	<p>Increased engagement and participation of target groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family hubs support early identification and intervention • Communications and promotion of family hubs include tailored messages for specific groups 	<p>Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils, partner agencies</p> <p>Q2 26/27</p>



Programme Delivery Actions Continued...

Theme	Actions	Outcome	Lead / Partners / timeline
Developing new solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore development of Multi-Agency Teams (NHS, JCP, LAs) that undertake data-led interventions in specific neighbourhoods, utilising the roll out of existing initiatives such as Community Hubs, Youth Hubs and Family Hubs to test and learn to support design of the 'no wrong front door' approach in Cumbria	Improved employment support through service integration <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve service integration and shared planning to address challenges	Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils, Strategic Leaders Group Q2 26/27



8 Measuring Success: Outcomes, Measurement and Evaluation

Principal outcomes from the Get Cumbria Working Plan will be:

Theme	Outcomes
People & places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher employment participation across both local authority areas • Reduced health-related inactivity • Narrowed disability and gender gaps • Improved youth participation in education, employment and training
System & employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functioning, inclusive governance • Governance structure supported by data-sharing and continuous improvement processes • Healthier workplaces at scale, especially within SMEs
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased real household incomes • Increased productivity • Improved retention of the working-age population

The outcomes framework has been developed to support the Government’s ambition of an 80% national employment rate. While core Get Britain Working metrics are defined nationally and monitored by the DWP, local labour markets need tailored frameworks to reflect their unique context. The methodology therefore reconciles national metrics with local priorities, using robust local evidence to monitor progress in improving the support system, addressing local labour market challenges, and Get Britain Working outcomes.

Setting the Context for the Outcomes Framework

Local Methodology and Evidence Base

As noted in section 7, devolution proposals for Cumbria have been approved, and Combined Authority will be established in 2026. Mayoral elections will follow 2027. Consequently, the Get Cumbria Working Plan has a focus that is concentrated on the immediate short-term (2025-2027) with a light-touch review of the Plan proposed after 12 months and a further, more detailed, review in Year 2.

There is currently no standard approach to data intelligence across the two Local Authorities in Cumbria. Whilst the wider outcomes framework has been agreed in principle, this may evolve as a standardised approach to data intelligence is developed.



Proposed Outcomes Framework

The proposed outcomes framework sets out how each of the high level outcomes will be measured and the sources of evidence and data for these. A number of Programme Delivery Outcomes data sources will be determined as the Work and Health Board gains momentum and partners take forward key actions.

A. Strategic Enabler Outcomes

Purpose: Evidencing integration, collaboration and system-wide improvement

Outcome	How It Will Be Measured	Data Source for Measuring Success
Robust governance and leadership that aligns with wider strategies and programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work and Health Board membership includes full representation from the range of partners and interests in get Cumbria Working • Mechanisms, including data sharing protocols, to share relevant reports are established between partners and services • Number of partners' strategies referencing shared objectives and outcomes of the plan • Number of partners using shared data systems • Evidence of learning from practice in developing shared activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work and Health Board published ToR, meeting minutes, action plans or other documents • Partner policy documents
Inclusive decision-making across the Work and Health Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of Board members from Anchor institutions, SMEs, VCFSE, lived experience backgrounds • Evidence that input from these groups informs delivery of the plan and design of future programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work and Health Board published ToR, meeting minutes, action plans or other documents • Anchor institution annual reports
Established foundations to enable capacity growth and effect systems change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of development of priority actions to address workforce, system and service challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service mapping exercise output • Service user journey mapping exercise output • Recommendation paper to Combined Authority
Recommended employment support system design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of early integration of services and partners • Evidence of service design proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation paper to Combined Authority • Work and Health Board published meeting minutes, action plans or other documents

B. Programme Delivery Outcomes

Purpose: Measuring engagement and progress in addressing local challenges

Outcome	How It Will Be Measured	Data Source for Measuring Success
Increased entry level opportunities across Cumbria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of job vacancies requiring less than 2 years of experience • Number of apprenticeships vacancies and starts • Proportion of apprentices in a sustained positive destination (employment, learning, or both) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lightcast • Apprenticeships, DfE • Further Education Outcomes, DfE
Transport improved for people who are economically inactive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of voucher recipients from GCBW priority groups • Feedback indicating improved awareness and access to voucher schemes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Shared approach to planning childcare provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of households accessing childcare • Proportion of households with unemployed or economically inactive parents accessing childcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Improved employment support through service integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and proportion of programmes with integrated support • Number of beneficiaries supported through multi-agency pathways • Partner feedback on effectiveness of integrated delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD • Service reporting
Improved employer uptake of employment support available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of SMEs accessing employment support programmes • Participant and employer feedback on support and outcomes achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service reporting • TBD
Healthier workplaces in Cumbria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of leaders and managers reporting increased skills in promoting health and wellbeing • Proportion of leaders and managers reporting implementing changes in the workplace • Number of fit notes issued • Average scores of wellbeing • Average scores of wellbeing among disabled people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD • NHS England • Personal wellbeing estimated by local authority, ONS • The employment of disabled people, DWP
Cumbria and key sectors are perceived as providing attractive opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of job vacancies with flexible hours • Number of hybrid/remote job vacancies • Proportion of employees with hourly pay below the living wage • Gender pay gap • Proportion of Cumbria residents studying at the University of Cumbria • Net migration of working-age population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lightcast • PAYE RTI, ONS • Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, ONS • HESA • Internal Migration in England and Wales, ONS



B. Programme Delivery Outcomes Continued...

Outcome	How It Will Be Measured	Data Source for Measuring Success
Current provision is maintained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of participants satisfied or very satisfied with current targeted interventions • Number of service gaps or delivery issues identified and addressed • Number of improvements or changes made to current provision as a result of findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work and Health Board based on reports shared by providers
People are supported by WorkWell across Cumbria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants of WorkWell • Proportion of participants satisfied or very satisfied with the programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumbria Health
People are supported and barrier to employment are addressed through Connect to Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants of Connect to Work • Proportion of out of work participants achieving first earnings • Proportion of out of work participants achieving lower payment threshold in employment • Proportion of out of work and in-work participants achieving higher payment threshold in employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CtW reporting
Bespoke projects, programmes and initiatives are identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new bespoke projects, programmes and initiatives targeting GCW priority groups • Number of GCWP partners engaged in the identification and design process of new projects, programmes and initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Increased engagement and participation of target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of people with disability or health conditions supported into employment • Proportion of people with caring responsibilities supported into employment • Proportion of young people supported into employment • Proportion of people aged 50+ supported into employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider data

C. Get Britain Working Outcomes

Purpose: Measuring labour market outcomes aligned with GBW outcomes metrics¹¹

Outcome	How It Will Be Measured	Data Source for Measuring Success
Increased and sustained employment rate, aligned with the 80% long-term ambition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment rate - % aged 16-64 • Proportion of payrolled employees - % aged 16-64 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Population Survey, ONS • AYE RTI, ONS
Increased household incomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real gross disposable household income per head 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Gross Disposable Households Income, ONS
Reduced economic inactivity rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic inactivity rate - % aged 16-64 • Proportion of 16-64 years olds claiming economic inactivity related benefits, associated with health or caring responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Population Survey, ONS • DWP Benefit Statistics
Reduced health-related economic inactivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic inactivity due to long term sick - % aged 16-64 • Proportion of 16-64 years olds in UC health journey and/or claiming ESA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Population Survey, ONS • DWP Benefit Statistics
Reduced disability employment rate gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difference between employment rates of disabled (EA core) and non-disabled people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Population Survey, ONS
Reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and proportion of 16 and 17 year olds who are NEET • Claimant count rate among people aged 16-24 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspira • Claimant count, ONS
Increased employment rate of women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female employment rate - % aged 16-64 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Population Survey, ONS
Increase employment among households with children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of children living in working households • Number of households on UC with children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workless households for regions across the UK, ONS • DWP Benefit Statistics

¹¹Note: A key limitation of official statistics is the wide confidence intervals in surveys as well as the lack of frequently collection of metrics at lower geographical levels, such as those available through the Census or the Employer Skills Survey. For example, although Cumbria's annual employment rate has ranged between 76% and 81% over the past decade, confidence intervals in the Annual Population Survey indicate that apparent progress towards the 80% target is not statistically robust. Consequently, indicators using this data source should be interpreted with caution and used primarily to monitor long-term trends rather than short-term changes. Complementary labour-market measures have been incorporated into the framework to provide a fuller picture.



Data collection and monitoring

Data collection

An initial task of the Work and Health Board will be to agree and assign roles and responsibilities for delivery of the Get Cumbria Working Plan. Central to this is agreeing an approach to data collection and monitoring.

We will agree a core set of data we require in order to monitor progress and outcomes in the next two years. Published data, examples of which are noted below, will form part of this, but we anticipate this may be supplemented by other data sources collated by partners.

An existing basic Cumbria Observatory currently collates and publishes Cumbria-level intelligence, and this may provide a shared system for data collection and dissemination. However, it is not currently suitably developed or resourced to do this at the level of detail and rigour that would be required to monitor the Plan, and detailed discussion will be needed on how the Cumbria Observatory may be supported, resourced and developed to support the delivery of Get Cumbria Working.

Given the two-year initial focus of the Plan, there is no current demand or expectation to develop a single shared Management Information System to support data collection at a more granular and service level. However, this will form part of the development discussion over the initial two-year period to ensure that as a partnership, we explore the feasibility of this and understand the challenges and limitations of this approach. This will ensure we are well-equipped to make longer-term decisions data collection as we move through the devolution process and into a new structure.

Monitoring Get Cumbria Working

The Work and Health Board will be responsible for monitoring and reporting on Get Cumbria Working progress, outputs and outcomes. There will be quarterly monitoring of progress and performance using the GBW Outcomes Indicators.

Monitoring of the Get Cumbria Working Plan will draw on published and other data in line with DWP data sources (as a minimum)

- Nomis
- RTI and ONS statistics
- DfE data on skills provision and outcomes
- Stat-Xplore
- Lightcast
- Employers engaged leading to an uptake of employment, health and skills offers.
- It will also draw on other relevant data sets as available for example reports produced by local stakeholders and any research undertaken or commissioned as part of the CGBW.

Reporting

The Work and Health Board will be responsible for the provision of quarterly progress reports to be shared with the Combined Authority. Appropriate summaries will be provided to the Get Cumbria Working Consulting Panel.

The quarterly reports will also report on Get Cumbria Working activity and outputs for the quarter and aggregated Year to Date.

The reports will state progress against targets along with any emerging issues, risks and mitigating actions. Consideration should be given to the format and tools that could be applied to reporting for example a RAG Dashboard and Power BI.

To support accountability and improvement, in the first 24 months there will be a cycle of quarterly review workshops, where the Work and Health Board and frontline staff will provide feedback on progress to the CCA and the Get Cumbria Working Consulting Panel.

Review and Evaluation of the Get Cumbria Working Plan

Preparing the Get Cumbria Working Plan has been a collaborative process that has built and strengthened relationships. The accountable body will oversee a light touch review of it after 12 months working with the Work and Health Board. This process will review the new and emerging context, the Plan's purpose and strategic goals, policy alignment, alignment with need at the review point, and operational aspects to inform the future. This review will allow the Get Cumbria Working Plan to adjust to and maximise opportunities of devolution.

After 24 months there will be a formal, external process and impact evaluation, the Evaluation Report will be published and shared. It will include a summary document suitable for non-specialist audiences.





9 Next Steps and Implementation Plan

Delivering this Plan will rely upon the rapid alignment of the partners within the current system, and an understanding of the resources and capacity available across the partnership. Agreement of the partners is needed to undertake a process of transformation and development over the next two years that will create and deliver a new employment support system in Cumbria.

The objectives and priorities within this Plan are based on the fundamental starting point of the partnership itself agreeing to the elements that will support its delivery. Considering the future journey which Cumbria will undertake around devolution, the implementation process outlined below is intended to be indicative of the wider development of the partnership. The Plan is designed to be flexible, evolving over time as policies, system integration and service delivery progresses in Cumbria.

The first step is expected to bring the partnership together via the Work and Health Board to ascertain each partners' current delivery of services, available resources, workforce capacity and to collectively agree the transformation journey and the commitment of each partner.

Key Milestones – Year 1:

Timeline	Milestone	Description
Q4 2025	Establish Programme Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formalise the Work and Health Board's terms of reference, membership and associated Consulting Panel, and decision-making protocols
Q4 2025 – Q1 2026	Raise awareness of the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver presentations and briefings to inform partner organisations and broader stakeholders about the plan, emphasising the critical need for aligning policies to enable successful implementation
Q1 2026	Develop Forward Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-produce a 2-year forward plan including meeting cadence, thematic priorities, and key deliverables aligned to priority actions Develop shared outcomes framework, data sharing protocols, and embedding insight and intelligence functions
Q1 – Q3 2026	Facilitate Development Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run quarterly workshops to build shared understanding of roles, responsibilities, and cross-sector collaboration Build capacity and provide training for Board representatives / Consulting Panel to support lived experience contributions
Q4 2026 – 2027	Programme Delivery and Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement priority actions, monitor progress, and adjust based on feedback and performance data

Achieving the goals of the plan relies on several critical enablers:

- **Strong governance and effective system leadership** are essential to drive integrated delivery and transformative change. This depends on a collective commitment, a readiness to innovate, and a culture of shared leadership.
- **Alignment of policies across a complex landscape** is necessary to ensure that the Get Cumbria Working Plan, alongside other local initiatives, both supports and benefits from national funding, guidance, and performance frameworks.
- **Securing sustained and adaptable funding** is vital for maintaining and expanding interventions. Flexibility in funding allocation will enable the partnership to respond to evolving needs and priorities effectively.

The Get Cumbria Working Plan offers a bold, transformative approach to supporting economic growth and creating the conditions where everyone has the chance to thrive. It recognises that real progress requires more than isolated initiatives—it demands a unified, integrated system where every partner, every community, and every individual has a role to play. By embracing innovation, shared accountability, and a ‘no wrong door’ approach, Cumbria is poised to break down barriers to employment, address deep-rooted structural and systemic challenges, and create pathways to good jobs for all residents.

The plan requires commitment to long-term change, flexibility and sustained investment. It calls for new ways of working, deeper partnerships, and a keen focus on outcomes that will drive higher employment, reduced inactivity, and improved wellbeing for all communities in Cumbria.

Together, let’s get Cumbria Working.

