



Title of report: Good work for everyone: The relationship between work and health

Meeting: Health and Wellbeing Board

Meeting date: Monday 15 September 2025

Report by: Public Health Training Placement

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All wards

Purpose

In addition to the two core priorities of the Herefordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy, there are six supporting priorities which are also critically important for population wellbeing. Good work for everyone is one of these six priorities. This paper updates on progress made to date including the new Herefordshire & Worcestershire Integrated Care System (ICS) Health and Work Strategy, and WorkWell.

Recommendations

That the board:

1. **notes the progress towards the priority of achieving good work for everyone;**
2. **supports the Herefordshire & Worcestershire ICS Health and Work Strategy; and**
3. **considers how all members can contribute further to this priority.**

Alternative options

1. The board could choose not to support the strategy but this is key to demonstrating the supporting priority ('Good work for everyone') of the Herefordshire Health and Wellbeing strategy.

Key considerations

Case for change

1. 'Good work for everyone' is also one of the six 'supporting priorities' of the Herefordshire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (see p20).

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
David Collyer, david.collyer2@herefordshire.gov.uk

2. The relationship between work and health is bi-directional – good health is a key factor in an individual being able to work, and good work is one of the prime social determinants that leads to good health. Work matters for our health directly, as well as underpinning other determinants of health such as income or social networks.
3. In England and Wales, 4 million working age adults (1 in 10) now claim either disability or incapacity benefits, up from 2.8 million in 2019 (1 in 13).
4. Evidence shows that unemployment can harm health in numerous ways – including as a source of stress, as a trigger for unhealthy coping behaviours (e.g., smoking or drinking), and through the adverse health effects of poverty.
5. These effects become more pronounced as the duration of unemployment increases. People also experience a loss of the health-promoting aspects that good work can offer, such as social connections or a sense of structure and purpose.
6. In addition to simply being employed, the quality of people's jobs can also markedly affect health. Evidence shows that low job satisfaction, autonomy, pay or security (e.g., zero-hours contracts) can also have detrimental effects on health.

Employment in Herefordshire

7. Around 57.7% of Herefordshire's population is of working age (16-64 years), compared to 63% nationally - meaning the county has a significantly higher dependency ratio between working and non-working age residents.
8. The Government's Get Britain Working White Paper aspires for 80% of the working age population to be employed. Although the current rate in Herefordshire exceeds this (81.4%), the county has a relatively high level of long-term sickness-related economic inactivity. (People are classed as "economically inactive" if they are not in employment but don't meet the criteria for being "unemployed". This means they have not been seeking work within the previous four weeks or were unable to start work within the next two weeks. Common reasons include being retired, looking after the home or family or being temporarily or long-term sick and disabled.)
9. Approximately 24,600 working age people (16-64) in Herefordshire were economically inactive in March 2025 (just over a fifth of the working age population), with 23.2% inactive due to long-term sickness (this compares to 29.4% across the West Midlands, and 27.1% across England) (Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS).
10. Across the UK, around 1 in 5 of the working age population are classed as disabled, and only around half of this group are in work. Herefordshire bucks this trend however with around 73% of people with disabilities in employment.
11. In Herefordshire, the youth unemployment rate (16-24 age group) was 4.4% in May 2025, according to the latest data (compared to 14.1% for the UK as a whole).

National policy context – the 'Get Britain Working' White Paper (published Nov 2024)

12. The White Paper outlines proposals to reform employment, health, and skills support with the goal of tackling rising economic inactivity, helping individuals find fulfilling work, and creating a healthier, more inclusive workforce. The overall aim is to reach an 80% employment rate in the UK.
13. The document addresses key issues such as the exclusion of people with health conditions or caregiving responsibilities from the workforce, challenges for young people accessing good opportunities, the prevalence of insecure employment, difficulties faced by women with caregiving duties, and employer struggles to fill vacancies. It also highlights significant regional and demographic inequalities in employment outcomes.

14. Key proposals are –

- Scaling up and deepening the contribution of the NHS and wider health system to improve employment outcomes, including reducing waiting lists
- Backing local areas to shape an effective work, health and skills offer for local people – with each area developing its own local ‘Get Britain Working Plan’
- Delivering a Youth Guarantee so that all 18-21 year olds have access to education, training or help to find a job or apprenticeship
- Creating a new jobs and careers service by bringing together local job centres and the national careers service to create a new public employment service
- Undertaking an independent review into the role of employers in promoting healthy and inclusive workplaces

Sub-regional strategic context - The Get Marches Working Plan

15. The Get Marches Working Plan is the localised version of the Get Britain Working strategy and will cover the local authority areas of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. A first draft is due for publication in September 2025.

16. Proposed priority target groups in the plan are –

- 1) Disadvantaged young people – particularly: care leavers; those ‘not in education, employment or training’ (NEETs) aged 18-24; those with Special Educational Needs (SEND) or with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD), or those with physical impairments
- 2) Disabled adults including people with physical impairments and learning disability
- 3) People with long-term health conditions, particularly musculoskeletal conditions, mental illness and chronic conditions (e.g., chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- 4) People with caring responsibilities – particularly lone-parent households, young carers and parent carers

Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICS Health and Work Strategy, 2025-2030

17. Following the successful selection of our ICB for the Vanguard WorkWell Pilot in 2024, the ICB was tasked with developing a comprehensive Health and Work strategy for both counties. The final draft is to be found in Appendix A.

18. This strategy outlines the current landscape using available data, highlights existing programmes and support, and sets out a series of ambitious goals to drive progress.

19. It is built around four key strategic ambitions:

(1) Fostering Inclusive Workplaces

- Introduce a Good Employment Charter across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.
- Enhance communication with employers about available programmes.
- Increase the number of Disability Confident employers in both counties.

(2) Creating Supportive Pathways into Employment

- Establish a “no wrong door” approach to ensure individuals receive tailored support and are matched with the most suitable programmes.
- Strengthen collaboration with the DWP’s Connect to Work initiative.
- Align efforts with the Get Britain Working agenda across the two counties.

(3) Providing Early Support for Those in Work

- Expand access to programmes that help individuals remain in employment.
- Raise awareness of existing support options.
- Assist employers in improving absence management policies.

(4) Enhancing Collaboration Across the System

- Build stronger relationships between system partners.
- Improve governance around the strategy.
- Explore future commissioning opportunities to enable joint working.

20. Each ambition is supported by clearly defined focus areas, success measures, and actionable steps to ensure effective implementation.

Examples of local programmes

WorkWell

21. The WorkWell service is a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) pilot to support people who are struggling to get into, or stay in employment, because of a health condition or disability.
22. Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICS is one of 15 areas selected nationally to test a range of service models, which DWP will evaluate later in the year before committing to long term funding. The local model is a service embedded in Primary Care through the employment of work and health coaches who are employed by Taurus Healthcare and support all 19 General Practice Teams across Herefordshire.
23. The service is accessible to everyone in Herefordshire who lives in the county or is registered with a Herefordshire GP. Individuals can access the service through GP referral, signposting from their employer, through a local Job Centre or by self-referral. The aim of the service is to ensure that people can overcome health conditions to enable them to be active in the workplace. As such, people may be self-employed or employed but beginning to struggle with their work, or absent on sick leave. Equally, people may be looking to start employment but worried about a health condition and how it will affect their employability.
24. There are three work and health coaches who can see up to 40 people a month throughout the duration of the pilot scheme, which is likely to run for 2-3 years following recent government announcements.

Workplace Health Checks

25. Herefordshire Council, in partnership with Taurus Healthcare’s Talk Wellbeing service, is successfully delivering the government’s national Workplace Cardiovascular Disease Health Checks pilot programme.

26. As part of its successful bid, the council is rolling out free cardiovascular health checks directly to workplaces across the county. This innovative initiative is designed to remove barriers - such as travel, time, and cost - that often prevent working adults from accessing vital health services. It focuses particularly on employees in rural, agricultural, manufacturing, and lower-income roles, where health inequalities are often more pronounced.
27. This pilot marks the first time the government has brought together local authorities and employers to deliver NHS Health Checks in the workplace, making prevention more accessible than ever and helping to protect the heart of the workforce.

Community impact

28. Interventions developed in the Health and Work strategy will have impact on the most disadvantaged communities in Herefordshire.

Environmental impact

29. This report is considered to have minimal environmental impact

Equality duty

30. The detail in the Work and Health Strategy has due regard to this duty. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows: A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to – a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
31. The strategy seeks to address and reduce existing societal inequalities, with particular regard to population groups facing socio-economic disadvantage and those with protected characteristics – e.g., through increasing inclusive workplaces, and through targeting of workplace Health Checks to those in lower income roles.

Resource implications

32. Accepting the recommendations of this report does not in itself have resource implications.

Legal implications

33. In line with the Council's constitution paragraph 3.5.25, and as per the Health and Social Act 2014, the role of the Health and Wellbeing Board is to consider this report in line with its responsibilities to support and encourage joint working to improve health and social wellbeing across the county.

Risk management

34. No financial, legal, or reputation risks identified.

Consultees

35. None.

Appendices

Appendix A - Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICS Health and Work Strategy, 2025 – 2030

Appendix B – Presentation slides

Background papers

None identified.