

Cumbria Connect to Work – Market Engagement Event, 18 July 2025

Question and Answer Log, update 28 July 2025

Ref	Area	Question	Response
1	Bid process	Do we need to be registered on the Chest to be a Delivery Partner?	No, although you may wish to be in order to be notified when the ITT is published. However, you do need to be registered on the Central Digital Platform if you are planning to be a formal sub-contractor or partner within any bid. This will allow you to generate a share code that can be included in the submission. Register via this link: https://www.gov.uk/find-tender
2	Bid evaluation	We've talked a lot about localism and the importance of local organisations being involved. Will this be reflected in the evaluation of bids?	This information will be published in the procurement documentation. However, given importance of local integration to programme delivery, it is likely to form part of our approach to evaluation. We also want to ensure that organisations not simply state that they will use local organisations and then don't. We are highly likely to seek confirmation from Delivery Partners that they are fully engaged and committed to support delivery – this is likely to be via a signed declaration.
3	Bid evaluation	Will there be any financial thresholds that will mean that we are excluded from bidding?	We will be seeking a Service Coordinator who can meet the demands of the contract which may mean an ability to meet working capital requirements where your expenditure is less than the income in the short term and early stages of the contract. It is important to us that organisations are financially resilient, and we will be testing the risks around this. We do not plan to artificially test the size of an organisation, or the turnover of an organisation against the contract value.

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4	Contract (duration)	Cumbria has indicated that the contract is to March 28 but also talks as if the contract has been extended to March 30. Can you confirm the position please?	<p>We only have guaranteed funding to March 28 at the current time. Whilst we cannot guarantee an extension we are, for planning purposes, working on the basis that contracts will be extended to March 30. However, as we have stated no guarantee can be given, Supplier should consider how they commit to costs or built a flexible resource base as we are unlikely to be able to give any more than 3-months-notice or an extension or not.</p> <p>We recognise that this is not particularly helpful and will work with the Supplier during the contract period to get as much clarity as early as possible. If the contract does end before March 30 we will work and agree with the Supplier a safe exit for all, especially participants on programme.</p>
5	Contract (funding)	Can Cumbria please advise the funding available per each individual year?	Not at this stage, this information will be made available with procurement documents.
6	Contract (Funding)	Is the competition based on price?	<p>The competition is likely to be based on Unit Cost. What we mean by this is we are seeking to commit 100% of the funding but to see how many people we can help for the funding. Suppliers are likely therefore to say how many Programme Starts they will achieve. The price competition is therefore likely to be a Unit Cost – Total Funding / Participant Starts offered. The element of the evaluation attached to commercial (price) is likely to be quite low as we want to drive quality services to all participants across Cumbria regardless of place.</p> <p>We are looking at ensure that there are some controls in place to stop people simply offering unrealistic high volumes – we are currently looking at what these mechanisms may be.</p>

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7	Contract (funding)	Is there funding to facilitate travel costs for participants to attend training or work?	Yes We are working on the basis that Suppliers will include a Participant Support Fund for such items within their delivery proposals. We are working through the details of such at the current time.
8	Delivery model	Is it up to the Service Co-ordinator to decide if an individual goes on the IPS or SEQF model?	Yes, as part of their triage function. The default option will be IPS if an individual could be supported by either one.
9	Delivery model	Is the expectation that the Service Co-ordinator carries out the triage function?	It is for the Service Co-ordinator to propose their model for this, whether it is carried out by them or by one of their delivery partners.
10	Delivery model	We know that physical health is an important component in supporting people to remain in work. What do you see as the role of the leisure or sport sector in this programme?	We would agree that physical wellbeing is important. We haven't identified a specific role for leisure or sport organisations but will take this away for consideration as we design the specification. However, organisations tendering for this opportunity will also wish to consider this in relation to their service design.
11	Delivery model	Is it expected that participants will be on the programme for a fixed period of time?	Time on the programme is capped at 12 months for those who are out of work at the time of joining, and 4 months for those who are in work. Some participants may reach a point where they no longer need support sooner. In some cases an extension may be possible, but this will on a case by case basis. The proposed cut-off dates for starts on the programme are drawn from these maximum time periods. However, there is some flexibility that can be agreed on a case-by-case basis.
12	Delivery model	Have we considered digital provision, given some of the rurality of Cumbria, as well as some potential participants who may struggle to access services.	We would like Service Co-ordinators to design a programme that is participant led, so this would also factor in the geography of Cumbria. Some people could be digitally excluded, and therefore find an online service inaccessible. However, there may

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			be some participants who would prefer some element of digital service. This could be funded via the Participant Support Fund.
13	Delivery model	Is self-employment an outcome for CtW?	Yes. It would be worth being aware that this will require a clerical process to manage, as earnings outcomes are tracked via HMRC Real Time Earnings data.
14	Delivery model	Will there be a CRM system?	<p>We are asking Service Co-ordinators to provide a CRM to capture programme data. This may require some degree of evolution over the life of the programme as it matures. Service Co-ordinators will also need to use DWP's Provider Referral and Payment [PRaP] system, so it may be beneficial to have a CRM system that can integrate with PRaP.</p> <p>The Authority and DWP will also be looking at how digitisation of the MI can be progressed and the Supplier will need to work with us to identify opportunities.</p>
15	Delivery model	We are a small niche organisation specialising in supporting specific customer groups and support. Is there a place for us?	<p>Yes. We are looking to the Service coordinator to engage with the rich tapestry of local organisations in building their service offer. Whilst these will include Delivery Partners we believe there is also an opportunity for specific ad-hoc interventions and support. We would like to build a Participant Support Fund into the contract – funding the Service Coordinator puts aside for direct support of Participants. This could be to support additional childcare costs or career costs, travel support, mobile assets if digitally excluded. This could also include call-off, spot purchases, specialist support (e.g. self-employment) etc of other support that could be called on by the Employment Specialist as part of the participant-centric service.</p>

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16	Delivery Model	“Delivery partners” – can you confirm if this refers to subcontracting relationships or informal partnership agreements?	This refers to formal subcontracting or other formal relationships with organisations to deliver Connect to Work IPS/SEQF intervention activity.
17	Employer engagement	Given how critical employers are to the success of Connect to Work, what engagement has been done with them to date?	So far, we’ve talked to the Economic Growth Board and Chamber of Commerce, and to the anchor organisations including the Integrated Care Boards. Councils expect to co-produce an Employer Engagement Strategy led by the Partnership and Integration Manager, and to create a Forum to co-ordinate this activity once the contract is mobilised. This recognises the importance of not confusing or overwhelming employers, particularly SMEs.
18	Fidelity	Is a separate organisation to be contracted by DWP to carry out Fidelity Assurance?	This contract has been let by DWP to Social Finance. Fidelity will be carried out at Accountable Body level (i.e. Cumbria)
19	Fidelity	Will Fidelity be programme specific?	Fidelity will be tailored to Connect to Work.
20	Key Performance Indicators	The Lower Income Threshold and Higher Income Thresholds were referenced in the Key Performance Indicators. Do outcomes under these headings make a difference to the payments to suppliers?	No. These are KPIs through which the Accountable Body will be managed by DWP, but the payment by results element of our delivery model is based on starts rather than outcomes.
21	Key Performance Indicators	If a participant is in work but has not intention of increasing their hours, can they still join Connect to Work?	Yes, there is no requirement for them to increase their earnings. The measure is based on them maintaining their existing earnings.
22	Participant (Volumes) Subcontracting	Can providers who are unable to support the total number of participants partner with another organisation?	In short yes. Organisations could form a consortium or Joint Venture or lead provider (Service Provider) and partners (subcontractors/Delivery Partners).

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			However, the Contractor must commit to delivering the full service, across Cumbria without any diminished service or quality offerings – everyone must have access to a similar quality service regardless of place.
23	Participants	Have you considered the impact of rurality on the service and participant access?	Yes We do not expect participants to travel more than 60-minutes each way to the programme, based on public transport. Furthermore, we recognise that for some Participants 60-minutes may not be possible. Suppliers will need to consider this when developing their proposals, for example, use of outreach.
24	Programme finances	Is there a financial implication of people being on either the IPS or SEQF model?	Connect to Work has been designed on the basis of 75% of participants receiving IPS and 25% SEQF. It is expected that those on SEQF will receive more intensive support, which will require greater input from the delivery organisation(s). It is up to the Service Co-ordinator to design how this works in practice.
25	Programme finances	Will any of the Payment by Results be linked to keeping people engaged, or is it just on starts?	At the moment we are proposing that PbR incentivises starts on the programme, but we will take this point away for consideration as we draw up the specification.
26	Programme finances	Are programme starts spot funded?	In steady state, payments to the Service Co-ordinator will comprise 85% Service Fee and 15% Payment by Results, payable monthly in arrears. In the first six months of the programme, we are proposing payments are 100% Service Fee.
27	Programme finances	Is it up to the Service Co-ordinator to manage payments to their delivery partners, or is this for the council to do?	This is for the Service Co-ordinator to do – they will manage the financial relationship with their supply chain.
28	Programme finances	Is there any anticipation of clawback?	The Accountable Body will have a range of performance measures through which we will be monitoring delivery.

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			We are proposing an element of liquidated damages to protect the Council should it be required to invest resource in performance improvement. However, we are not expecting to have to clawback Service Fee payments, unless there has been fraudulent conduct.
29	Service Directory	How can we ensure the Service Directory captures all of the excellent practice that is being delivered in Cumbria?	<p>We will publish this as soon as possible and continue to iterate it over time, as new organisations become involved. We would encourage bidders to make use of the Directory as they design their proposed delivery model for Connect to Work in Cumbria. The Service Directory can also be used to signpost participants for ongoing support at the end of their time on the programme.</p> <p>Once the contract has been let we would expect the supplier to build on this for use in service delivery – signposting participants who are better supported elsewhere (or not eligible and/or suitable), complete the programme without sustained employment and to help Employment Specialists identify support during the Participants journey.</p>
30	Service Directory	Would it be possible for the Service Directory to include a couple of lines from each organisation to explain how they can support delivery of Connect to Work?	This is a good idea – we will develop the Service Directory to include this information.
31	Supported Employment model	What role will volunteering play in Connect to Work, as a valuable means of engaging people and providing them with the skills and behaviours to progress towards employment?	Connect to Work is focused on employment, so if participants are more interested in volunteering, the programme may not be suitable for them. However, if having completed some voluntary work, an individual is interested in building on this to access paid employment, Connect to Work could be beneficial. Or a short period of

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			volunteering could form part of their support on the programme, but the goal is ultimately paid work.