

Connect to Work: Delivery Elements

High Fidelity models

Programme delivery requires the provision of high-fidelity models of Supported Employment. Providers must complete annual fidelity compliance reviews. Within the county, the council's own Oxfordshire Employment service is the sole accredited high-fidelity provider of the 5 Stage Supported Employment Model, receiving a 'Good' accreditation under the Supported Employment Quality Framework in September 2024. Other providers, such as Oxford Health, deliver smaller scale IPS provision with high fidelity accreditation. OxLEP offers a COMF-funded employment support service with significant scale but does not follow either high fidelity model.

Individual Placement Support (IPS)

The IPS model primarily supports individuals experiencing mental ill health. Provision is tailored to the needs of the participant cohort. IPS case holders typically manage larger caseloads (25 IPS vs. 20 for the 5 Stage Model). Nationwide expansion of IPS (Sever Mental Illness and Alcohol and Drug pathways), in addition to Connect to Work delivery, is planned.

Supported Employment 5 Stage Model

The 5 Stage Model supports various participant groups, particularly those with learning disabilities and/or autism. There is overlap between participant groups, with the 5 Stage Model also effectively supporting individuals with mental health needs. Service provision may be influenced by programme availability and capacity.

Both models are underpinned by independently assessed high fidelity accreditation schemes. IPS accreditation has existed longer than that for the 5 Stage Model. Fidelity accreditation is a significant commitment for provider organisations; only large-scale providers currently hold both accreditations.

Oxfordshire Employment currently delivers the Local Supported Employment Programme, intended by DWP as a precursor to Connect to Work. Oxfordshire is one of 20 local authorities that successfully bid to deliver this provision in 2022.

Front Door

An essential element of effective service provision is a single front door for triaging participant needs and directing customer flow to appropriate services. Other Lead Authorities, such as Gloucestershire, already have service-wide employment hubs or front door arrangements where skilled staff direct individuals to suitable provision. In Oxfordshire, OxLEP partners to deliver a front door to their employment services, though this does not currently include access to either high-fidelity model.

Programme guidance specifies that participants accessing the front door must be referred to the most appropriate provision to meet their needs, even if this is external to Connect to Work.

Programme Management

Programme guidance and initial discussions with DWP suggest that audit and assurance compliance will follow a model similar to that used for LSE provision. The council will be responsible for defraying costs to delivery partners and using supplied tools to monitor programme and partner performance.

Grant Funding

To support implementation, the Connect to Work Grant payment will be made monthly in arrears for planning and implementation activities during the implementation period, and quarterly in arrears for the Delivery Period. Funding is subject to an agreed delivery plan and grant cost register. Payments will reimburse costs defrayed by the council in delivering the programme.