

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested¹ and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.

This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.

Issue: Oxfordshire Employment Services

Lead Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Adults

Date response requested:² 16 September 2025

Response to report:

Enter optional text here

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
1. That the Council should explore whether an accreditation scheme would be an effective strategy to encourage businesses to work with Oxfordshire Employment Services.	Partially Accepted	This option has been fully explored. There are currently a number of national schemes recognising inclusive innovation amongst employers operating in Oxfordshire, including the DWP Disability Confident programme, The Inclusive Employer Standard,

¹ Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

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		(Inclusive Employers), Workplace Time to Change (Time to Change) Mindful Employer (NHS IPS) and Visibly Better (RNIB). Locally, Oxfordshire Public Health is launching the Thrive at Work Oxfordshire, an employer accreditation supporting health, wellbeing and inclusion in the workplace. Public Health has consulted with Oxfordshire Employment in the development of the programme. The council is also expanding it's supported employment provision through the introduction of Connect to Work - GOV.UK in Oxfordshire. The scheme, which aims to support 2000 local residents over the coming four years has a specific employer engagement function, with nationally recognised branding and a supportive fidelity framework relating to the engagement of employers. Discussions with stakeholders as part of the Connect to Work build process has highlighted that employers are unlikely to see an additional accreditation scheme as either motivational or effective in increasing engagement with supported employment services. We believe that the Connect to Work programme's national branding and promotion and funded resources for engaging employers, coupled with Thrive at Work Oxfordshire will promote a strong local engagement with our supported employment offer.
2. That the Council should expand and enhance the work of Oxfordshire Employment Services by increasing the Connect to Work programme target from 2,000 to 2,500 individuals over five years, in recognition of the service's success and the	Partially Accepted	Connect to Work will provide a single funding stream for Oxfordshire Employment's adult provision as part of the Oxfordshire Connect to Work programme. Current participant numbers are profiled and funded by the Department for Work and Pensions.

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wider social and health benefits of sustained employment.	The council as the Accountable Body for Connect to Work does not directly have the ability to increase programme capacity. However, DWP has stated that unallocated funds within the programme will be made available to Accountable bodies to bid against during the delivery year. This will provide opportunities to offer increased capacity within the local offer. It is the council's intention to bid for additional capacity when this becomes available. As a lack of guaranteed funding may make a higher target impossible to achieve, it is recommended the current target of 2000 participants is retained. It is recommended that the programme delivery team seek to maximise additional funding to increase participant numbers over the term of Connect to Work.
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