A woman with long brown hair, wearing safety glasses and a white lab coat, is focused on working on a blue circuit board. She is using a soldering iron in her right hand and a pair of tweezers in her left hand. The background is blurred, showing other people in a laboratory or workshop setting. The text 'PATHWAYS TO WORK' is in white, and 'SOUTH YORKSHIRE' is in yellow, both in a bold, sans-serif font.

# PATHWAYS TO WORK SOUTH YORKSHIRE

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Our plan to  
Get South  
Yorkshire Working

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# FOREWORD

## MAYOR OLIVER COPPARD

IN SOUTH YORKSHIRE, WE BELIEVE  
IN THE POWER OF GOOD WORK TO  
TRANSFORM LIVES, STRENGTHEN  
COMMUNITIES, AND SHAPE OUR  
REGION'S FUTURE.



In South Yorkshire, we believe in the power of good work to transform lives, strengthen communities, and shape our region's future. The [Get South Yorkshire Working Plan](#) is our bold and ambitious blueprint for tackling economic inactivity and unemployment; and unlocking the full potential of our communities.

This isn't just a plan for jobs. It's a plan for opportunity and inclusion: for ensuring every resident, whatever their background or circumstances, can access meaningful work and build a career, and in doing so, contribute to a thriving South Yorkshire.

We know the challenges we face. Too many people are held back – by poor health, by limited skills, or by long-standing inequalities. But we also know our strengths. South Yorkshire is home to world-class industries and pioneering health and employment programmes. Our region is powered by a community spirit that drives resilience and innovation. From Barnsley to Doncaster, Rotherham to Sheffield, we are building a region that works for everyone.

This plan sets out how we'll do that work. Our approach focuses on prevention and progression, underpinned by a commitment to empowering people to take control of their pathway into work. It builds on the success of our Pathways to Work approach and the insights of our Commission. It leverages the power of devolution to deliver support that's tailored to people and places. We are not waiting for permission to act. South Yorkshire is leading the way nationally. We are integrating health and employment in new ways, redesigning systems to work better for people. We're ensuring that lived experience shapes everything we do. Together, we will create a future where work and health go hand in hand, and where South Yorkshire becomes a place of opportunity for us all.

Let's get South Yorkshire working.

Oliver Coppard  
South Yorkshire's Mayor



Cllr Sir Steve Houghton CBE

In South Yorkshire, we know that good work changes lives. It brings dignity, purpose, and pride, not just to individuals, but to families and communities. That’s why the **Get South Yorkshire Working Plan** is so important. It’s not just a strategy, it’s a commitment to making sure everyone in our region has the opportunity to thrive.

We face real challenges: too many people are out of work due to poor health, caring responsibilities, or a lack of the right skills. But we also have real strengths: strong local partnerships, a growing economy, and a shared determination to do things differently.

This plan builds on what we’ve already achieved through the Barnsley Pathways to Work Commission, which brought together the voices of residents, employers, and experts to understand the barriers people face and how we can overcome them. The Commission’s insights have shaped this plan and are helping to influence national policy.

The **Get South Yorkshire Working Plan** sets out how we’ll work together, across councils, the NHS, Jobcentre Plus, employers, and the voluntary sector, to tackle economic inactivity head-on. It’s about prevention, support, and progression. It’s about making sure that no one is left behind.

We’re proud of our communities in South Yorkshire. They deserve a system that works for them; one that’s joined-up, easy to navigate, and focused on what matters: helping people into good jobs and supporting them to stay and progress in work.

This plan is ambitious, but it’s also practical. It’s rooted in local knowledge, shaped by lived experience, and backed by strong partnerships. Together, we will deliver a stronger, fairer, and more inclusive South Yorkshire.

Sir Steve Houghton CBE  
Leader of Barnsley Council

Paula Varley

The Department for Work and Pensions is proud to support the **Get South Yorkshire Working Plan**, a bold and locally-led strategy to tackle economic inactivity and improve employment outcomes across the region.

At the heart of this plan is a commitment to partnership. Jobcentre Plus (JCP) plays a vital role in South Yorkshire’s employment ecosystem, not just as a provider of frontline support, but as a strategic partner working alongside local authorities, the NHS, the voluntary sector, and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority.

Together, we are building a more integrated and responsive system, one that puts people first. Through co-location, joint planning, and building a shared understanding of data, JCP is helping to deliver a joined-up offer that supports residents at every stage of their journey: from early intervention and health-informed support, to job search, training, and in-work progression.

This plan reflects the best of what local and national collaboration can achieve. It builds on the insights of the Barnsley Pathways to Work Commission, the innovation of the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer, and the ambition of the national Get Britain Working agenda. It shows how we can work together to break down barriers, unlock potential, and create a labour market that works for everyone.

We look forward to continuing to work with our local partners in South Yorkshire to deliver this plan, support inclusive growth, and ensure that every resident has the opportunity to access good work and build a better future.

Paula Varley  
Deputy Director, Yorkshire & Lincolnshire Group, Department for Work and Pensions.

Pearse Butler

Good work is good for health. It provides purpose, connection, and stability, all of which are fundamental to our physical and mental wellbeing. That is why the NHS in South Yorkshire is proud to be a key partner in delivering the **Get South Yorkshire Working Plan**.

This plan recognises what we in the health system have long understood: health and employment are deeply interconnected. Too many people in our region are held back from work by poor health, and too many jobs do not support people to stay well. If we are to reduce economic inactivity and improve population health, we must address both challenges together.

The **Get South Yorkshire Working Plan** sets out a bold and integrated approach to doing just that. It builds on the foundations laid by the Barnsley Pathways to Work Commission and the pioneering work of our Health and Growth Accelerator. It commits us to early intervention, personalised support, and a system that wraps around the individual, whether they are entering work, returning after illness, or seeking to progress in their career.

As Chair of the Integrated Care Board, I am proud that our NHS is working closely with local authorities, Jobcentre Plus, the voluntary sector, and employers to deliver this vision. Together, we are embedding the recognition that employment is a health outcome, co-locating services, and designing personalised support that reflects the realities of people’s lives.

This is not just about reducing unemployment. It is about tackling the deep-rooted health inequalities that have shaped our region for too long. It is about creating a South Yorkshire where everyone, regardless of their background or health status, has the opportunity to live well, work well, and thrive.

Pearse Butler  
Chair, NHS South Yorkshire, ICB







# INTRODUCTION

The [Get South Yorkshire Working Plan](#) outlines our local approach to addressing the six key issues identified in the Get Britain Working White Paper.

1.

**Exclusion from the Labour Market:**

Many individuals, particularly those with health conditions, caregiving responsibilities, or lower skill levels, are excluded from the labour market. The national strategy emphasises the need for inclusive policies and support systems to bring these individuals into employment.

2.

**Youth Employment:**

Ensuring that young people leave school with essential skills and access to high-quality further learning, apprenticeships, or support to work is crucial. The national strategy focuses on providing pathways for young people to thrive at the start of their careers.

3.

**Insecure and Low-Paying Work:**

Addressing the prevalence of insecure, poor-quality, and low-paying jobs is essential for economic stability and individual wellbeing. The national strategy aims to improve job quality and security.

4.

**Challenges for Women:**

Women, particularly those with family caregiving responsibilities, face significant challenges in staying and progressing in work. The national strategy seeks to create a more supportive environment for women in the workforce.

5.

**Labour and Skills Shortages:**

Many employers struggle to fill vacancies due to labour and skills shortages, which hinders economic growth. The national strategy focuses on addressing these shortages through targeted skills development and training programmes.

6.

**Disparities in Labour Market Outcomes:**

There are significant disparities in labour market outcomes between different regions and demographic groups. The national strategy aims to reduce these disparities and promote equitable economic growth.

This plan aims to revitalise the region's workforce by reducing economic inactivity, lowering unemployment rates, and bridging the skills gap that impedes economic growth and prosperity in South Yorkshire.

Integral to this approach is the recognition that health and employment are deeply interconnected. Good health enables individuals to participate fully in the workforce, while meaningful employment contributes to better health outcomes. By fostering a healthier population, we can enhance workforce participation and productivity, creating a virtuous cycle where work supports health and health supports work.

# THE CHALLENGE

South Yorkshire faces deep-rooted challenges linked to persistently high levels of economic inactivity and a labour market characterised by low skills and low wages.

A significant proportion of the working-age population remains disengaged from the labour market, often due to complex and overlapping barriers such as poor health, caring responsibilities, or lack of access to suitable opportunities. At the same time, too many jobs in the region are low-paid and offer limited progression, contributing to in-work poverty and underemployment. These structural issues undermine economic resilience and limit the region's ability to fully harness its talent and potential.

Recent trends indicate a challenging job market with an increase in redundancies. According to the 2025 Labour Force Survey, the estimated number of those made redundant in the three months prior to the survey across Yorkshire and the Humber rose from 3,682 in Dec 2024–Feb 2025 to 6,638 in Feb–Apr 2025<sup>1</sup>. In addition to these immediate pressures, longer-term structural risks, such as the impact of automation on key sectors, also pose significant challenges to job security and labour market inclusion. These themes are explored further in the Landscape section of this plan.

The health of the population in South Yorkshire is a critical factor influencing economic activity. The region experiences poorer life expectancy compared to the national average, with cancer, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory disease playing a significant role in shaping these outcomes.

These health issues not only affect individuals' ability to work but also increase economic inactivity. Crucially, they are shaped by high levels of deprivation across the region, which lead to people experiencing poor health earlier in life, living longer with illness, and dying younger than those in more affluent areas.

20  
YEARS  
LOWER

In some South Yorkshire communities, healthy life expectancy is up to 20 years lower than in the least deprived areas.

As highlighted in the Health is Wealth report,<sup>2</sup> these inequalities are not inevitable; they are driven by social and economic conditions such as poor housing, insecure work, and limited access to services. Improving health outcomes through better healthcare access, preventive measures, and integrated health services is essential for enhancing workforce participation and productivity.

1. Redundancies by age, industry and region – Office for National Statistics (ONS)

2. Health is Wealth – How South Yorkshire will become the country's healthiest region

By addressing these health challenges alongside those related to employment and skills, South Yorkshire can not only reduce economic inactivity and support a more robust and resilient labour market, it can also advance its wider ambition to become the healthiest region in the country, recognising that good health is not only a driver of economic growth, but a foundation for individual and community wellbeing.

Skills development is an enabling factor to increasing the economic activity rate. Skills challenges exist in South Yorkshire, where only 59.8% of adults aged 16–64 were qualified to Level 3 and above in 2024, compared to 67.3% nationally.<sup>3</sup> Whilst the region has a higher proportion of residents with qualifications at Level 2 and below than the rest of England, 10.2% have no formal qualifications, significantly above the national average of 6.6%. These disparities highlight the need for targeted upskilling and progression pathways to improve labour market inclusion and resilience.



## 1.2

# THE NEED

South Yorkshire's labour market challenges are shaped by a diverse range of residents who face persistent and often overlapping barriers to employment. To achieve inclusive growth and reduce economic inactivity, targeted support is needed for both focus cohorts, those facing the most significant barriers, and additional priority groups who require tailored interventions.

### Focus Cohorts

These groups represent the most urgent priorities for intervention due to the scale of exclusion and the complexity of support needs:

- **Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)** As of 2024, there were 1,572 young people aged 16–17 who were NEET, across South Yorkshire, representing 4.9% of that age group. Rates are highest in Sheffield (6.5%) and Rotherham (4.3%), with additional young people classified as 'activity not known', pushing disengagement rates above 7–8% in some areas.<sup>4</sup> These young people often face low attainment, mental health challenges, and limited exposure to the world of work, requiring early, relationship-based support.

- **Individuals with Long-Term Physical Health Conditions and Disabilities:** Long-term sickness is the leading cause of economic inactivity in South Yorkshire, cited by 28.1% of inactive residents, around 63,000 people.<sup>5</sup> The region also has a higher-than-average rate of disability benefit claimants and sickness absence. Barriers include limited access to flexible roles, workplace adjustments, and integrated health-employment support.
- **Individuals with Mental Health Conditions:** Mental health is now the leading cause of long-term sickness absence nationally, with over 500,000 people economically inactive due to mental health conditions since 2019. In South Yorkshire, this trend is reflected in rising ESA and Universal Credit claims, particularly among younger adults. Stigma, fluctuating symptoms, and poor access to timely support contribute to exclusion and underemployment.
- **Older Workers (50–64):** Census 2021<sup>3</sup> data indicates that economic inactivity due to long-term sickness among older workers in South Yorkshire was above the national average. While more recent data is not available, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions, this suggests a persistent trend that may be linked to outdated skills, digital exclusion, and age-related discrimination. Limited re-entry pathways and low levels of employer investment in upskilling further compound the challenge.

3. Annual Population Survey, January to December 2024 – ONS

4. Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) – ONS

5. Annual Population Survey: January 2024 – December 2024, ONS



Additional Priority Groups

While not the primary focus, these cohorts also face distinct challenges that require tailored, place-based support:

- **Neurodivergent Individuals and Those with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities**  
Nationally, employment rates and pay gaps for these groups are among the worst. In South Yorkshire, demand for supported employment is particularly high in Rotherham and Doncaster, where provision is limited relative to need.
- **Parents and Carers**  
Caring responsibilities, especially among lone parents, restrict access to employment and progression. Sheffield and Rotherham have the highest concentrations of lone parent households, highlighting the need for flexible work and childcare support.
- **Care-Experienced People**  
Care leavers often face disrupted education, limited networks, and trauma-related barriers. Tailored, person-centred pathways are essential to support long-term stability and independence.
- **Ex-Offenders**  
South Yorkshire has a higher-than-average rate of prison leavers, particularly in Doncaster. Stigma, legal restrictions, and gaps in work history hinder re-entry into the labour market.
- **Refugees and Asylum Seekers**  
Sheffield has the highest concentration of asylum seekers and refugees in the region. Language barriers, trauma, and lack of recognition of overseas qualifications require ESOL provision and culturally sensitive support.
- **Veterans**  
Barnsley and Doncaster have relatively high numbers of veterans per capita. While many possess valuable skills, some face challenges transitioning into civilian employment, especially those with service-related health conditions.

More detailed analysis of the groups requiring support can be found in Appendix A: Local labour market fact sheet



# 1.3 THE AMBITION

South Yorkshire aims to achieve an **80% employment rate by 2029**, aligning with the national target. As of 2024, the employment rate in South Yorkshire is estimated at 72.5%.<sup>6</sup> With a working-age population of around 890,800, this means approximately 646,300 people are currently employed.

6. Annual Population Survey, January to December 2024 – ONS

To reach the 80% employment rate target, South Yorkshire would need to support an additional 55,000 to 70,000 people into employment over the next four years. While the exact number will vary due to population and labour market fluctuations, this range reflects the scale of the challenge, and the opportunity, to drive inclusive growth and reduce economic inactivity across the region.

Achieving an 80% employment rate by 2029 is an ambitious goal that will require concerted efforts to create and sustain job opportunities. Addressing the challenges posed by redundancy trends and increased automation and leveraging economic growth will be key to reaching this target.



# 1.4

## THE LANDSCAPE

South Yorkshire is a region of industrial heritage and future-facing innovation. Strategically located at the heart of the UK, it is home to world-class capabilities in advanced manufacturing, clean energy, defence, digital technologies, life sciences, and the creative industries. These strengths underpin a diverse and resilient economy, aligned with national priorities for growth and security.

The region's expertise in high-precision engineering supports critical sectors such as aerospace, nuclear, and defence, while its leadership in clean energy is demonstrated by a significant share of the UK's CleanTech economy. South Yorkshire is also a hub for digital innovation, with a thriving tech ecosystem spanning AI, gaming, and data-driven services.

Life sciences and preventative health are key growth areas, supported by a strong cluster of medical device manufacturers and translational research facilities. Cultural and creative industries contribute significantly to the economy and regional identity, with strengths in screen content, music, and live events.

South Yorkshire's innovation assets, including the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District and health research centres, have attracted global investment and positioned the region as a leader in applied research. Its two universities and strong further education network provide a robust talent pipeline to meet future workforce needs.

With space to grow, grid capacity, and excellent connectivity, South Yorkshire is well-placed to support new and expanding industries. The planned reopening of Doncaster Sheffield Airport as part of South Yorkshire Airport City will further enhance regional connectivity and economic impact, with ambitions to support up to 5,000 jobs and contribute £5 billion to the economy by 2050.

### South Yorkshire is also home to the UK's first Investment Zone.

The Investment Zone has been a critical vehicle for bringing forward spatial and sectoral projects within our Growth Areas. With each pound invested matched by ten from private investors, the zone is set to create 8,000 new jobs and attract £1.2 billion in private sector investment by 2030.

A culture of resilience and community-led innovation continues to shape a region committed to inclusive and sustainable growth. However, automation in logistics presents a growing challenge. Technologies such as robotic pickers and automated sorting systems are reshaping the sector, reducing demand for low-skilled roles and creating a need for new skills. In South Yorkshire, the impact is particularly pronounced: 13% of jobs in Doncaster, 9.3% in Barnsley, and 7.6% in Rotherham are at high risk of automation, compared to the national average of 7%. Without targeted support, this shift could widen the skills gap and limit access to entry-level employment, especially in communities already facing economic disadvantage. Addressing automation risks through proactive upskilling and workforce support will be key to ensuring no one is left behind.



# 1.5

## THE FOUNDATIONS

South Yorkshire, comprising Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield, forms the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA), led by Mayor Oliver Coppard.

This devolved structure provides powers and funding to shape priorities in economic development, skills, transport, and infrastructure, enabling a collaborative, place-based approach that aligns with community needs and supports inclusive growth.

Strong and deepening partnerships between SYMCA, the Integrated Care Board (ICB), Jobcentre Plus (JCP), local authorities, and wider system partners underpin the region's shared governance. This joint oversight and coordination provide a robust platform for delivering the [Get South Yorkshire Working Plan](#).

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) plays a vital role in engaging economically inactive residents. Through Pathways to Work, VCS partners support individuals with complex needs into employment. Learning from more established areas is helping to strengthen delivery across the region.

### South Yorkshire is also influencing national policy.

Barnsley hosted the Pathways to Work Commission, chaired by Rt Hon Alan Milburn, which engaged 750 residents and reviewed over 100 reports to identify barriers to work. Its recommendations, on aligning health and employment services, employer engagement, and place-based solutions, are shaping both regional and national strategies.

Through the Sheffield Policy Campus, Department for Education and Department for Work and Pensions are working with SYMCA and local authorities on a Community Mission Challenge to reduce NEET rates among 16–24-year-olds. Supported by the Cabinet Office, this test-and-learn initiative will trial scalable solutions as part of the Opportunity Mission.

South Yorkshire receives £42m annually in devolved adult skills funding, alongside support for Bootcamps and Free Courses for Jobs. SYMCA commissions provision aligned to labour market needs and convenes stakeholders to ensure agility and responsiveness across the skills system.

As one of nine Economic Inactivity Trailblazer areas and one of three NHS Health and Growth Accelerator sites, South Yorkshire is piloting integrated approaches that align health, skills, and employment. Employer partnerships and work on the Foundational Economy, including the Young People in the Pandemic studies, further support inclusive growth.

The region benefits from strong employer engagement infrastructure. In Sheffield, Business in the Community leads the Pride of Place campaign, a flagship employer-led initiative focused on inclusive recruitment and social mobility. Across South Yorkshire, the SYMCA Careers Hub works with over 100 employer enterprise advisers to support schools and colleges in raising career standards, delivering industry encounters, and improving work readiness. The Hub is backed by a strong Cornerstone Employer group, including major local and national employers committed to improving opportunities for young people.

These foundations position South Yorkshire as a national leader in tackling economic inactivity through joined-up, locally driven, and health-informed strategies.



# 1.6 THE APPROACH



At the heart of the [Get South Yorkshire Working Plan](#) is a commitment to transforming not just the services we deliver, but the system that underpins them.

This begins with a bold programme of **system redesign**; a cross-cutting effort to create a more integrated, intelligence-led, and person-centred employment and skills system. It focuses on aligning governance, commissioning, data, and delivery across employment, health, and skills, ensuring that services are joined up, accessible, and responsive to local needs.

This system transformation addresses long-standing structural barriers such as fragmented provision, inconsistent access, and limited data sharing. It also harnesses the opportunities presented by devolution, innovation, and strong local partnerships.

By simplifying access, embedding shared outcomes, and enabling real-time decision-making, system redesign provides the infrastructure needed to deliver better outcomes for residents and a more effective experience for practitioners.

Building on this foundation, the plan is structured around four strategic **Pathways**:

[Prevent & Protect](#), [Engage & Empower](#), [Secure & Sustain](#), and [Thrive & Elevate](#), each of which is enabled by the system redesign programme.

The redesign provides the infrastructure, governance, and data integration necessary to deliver these **Pathways** effectively. For example, integrated triage systems and co-commissioned services ensure that individuals are matched to the right **Pathway** based on their needs, while shared outcomes and data tools allow for real-time tracking of progress across all four **Pathways**.

These **Pathways** represent the full spectrum of engagement with the labour market: from those at risk of disengagement, to those furthest from work, actively seeking employment, and those looking to progress in work.

Each **Pathway** addresses a distinct set of support needs through tailored, person-centred interventions. Together, they provide a coherent framework for aligning services, funding, and partnerships around shared goals, supporting a seamless journey into, through, and upwards within the labour market. This structure ensures that the Plan is not only comprehensive and inclusive, but also capable of adapting to the diverse and evolving needs of South Yorkshire's residents.

## Prevent & Protect

- Preventing unemployment and economic inactivity
- Addressing health and economic risks early
- Building personal and community resilience
- Supporting sustainable, health-informed education-to-work transitions

Prevention



## Engage & Empower

- Enabling individuals facing complex and multiple barriers to move closer to employment through intensive, tailored support
- Focusing on those with long-term ill health, disabilities, and economic inactivity

Economic Inactivity



## Secure & Sustain

- Supporting unemployed individuals by accelerating access to sustainable employment
- Improving access to employment services, skills development, and employer engagement

Unemployment



## Thrive & Elevate

- Supporting individuals to advance on their careers, improve their skills, and access better-quality jobs
- Reducing the risk of regression into unemployment and enhancing job satisfaction and economic resilience

In Work





2.

# REDESIGNING SYSTEMS TO MEET LOCAL NEEDS



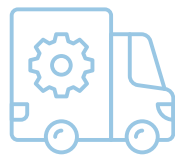
## OBJECTIVE

South Yorkshire is undertaking a bold system redesign to address economic inactivity, poor health outcomes, and fragmented employment support. The goal is to build a unified, intelligence-led system that aligns governance, funding, services, and data around shared outcomes; ultimately improving health, employment, and economic wellbeing across the region.



# KEY CHALLENGES

Despite strong foundations, several systemic challenges persist:



• **Fragmented Service Delivery**

South Yorkshire benefits from a diverse and evolving support offer, but the lack of a fully coordinated system remains a persistent challenge. Many organisations deliver high-impact services and collaborate well, yet the current configuration misses opportunities to harness collective capacity for system-wide transformation.



• **Disjointed Employer Support Landscape**

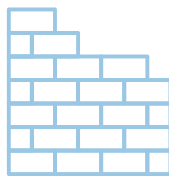
Employers face significant challenges navigating a fragmented support system. Services are spread across health, the Combined Authority, local authorities, and education providers, making it unclear where to go for the right help. When businesses do seek support, they are rarely redirected to the most appropriate offer, leading to missed opportunities and disengagement. This is especially difficult for SMEs, which often lack the time and capacity to explore multiple avenues.

In addition, some employers are less motivated or aware of the benefits of inclusive practices. Addressing these issues requires a more coherent, joined-up system with clear access points, supported by strategic communication and practical tools that demonstrate the value of workforce investment.



• **Difficult Access & Navigation for Individuals**

Similar to employers, individuals often face complex and fragmented pathways into support. Many must repeat their stories multiple times and struggle to access the right help at the right moment, undermining trust and outcomes.



• **Barriers to Data Integration**

Legal, technical, and cultural obstacles continue to hinder seamless data sharing between key partners, including ICBs, DWP, JCP, NCS, DfE, DHSC, and SYMCA. This fragmentation leads to duplicated effort, missed opportunities for early intervention, and incomplete views of individual needs. Overcoming these barriers is essential to delivering holistic, person-centred services.



• **Limited Local Control**

National funding and policy constraints restrict South Yorkshire's ability to tailor interventions to local needs. The MCA would like to see greater flexibility in devolved powers to design and deliver solutions that reflect the region's unique challenges and opportunities.

# OUR OPPORTUNITIES

South Yorkshire is leveraging devolution, innovation, and local leadership to drive change:

1.

**Pathways to Work as a Catalyst**

The Barnsley Pathways to Work Commission laid the groundwork for redesign, influencing national policy and shaping the [Get South Yorkshire Working Plan](#). Key initiatives include:

- **System Redesign:** New roles (system stewards, service managers), unified governance, and local triage systems simplify access and improve service alignment. Work is now underway to streamline the support offer, reduce complexity for participants and referrers, and embed integration across service pathways. Future commissioning and service design will focus on building a coherent, accessible infrastructure capable of delivering inclusive economic participation at scale.
- **Employer Engagement:** A region-wide strategy supports inclusive recruitment, especially among SMEs, and pilots innovative models like work simulation.
- **Personalised Support:** South Yorkshire is delivering a growing portfolio of trauma-informed, strengths-based services coordinated at local authority level, offering tailored support through a flexible provider network built on a hyper-local commissioning approach. This personalised model is complemented by preventative health interventions commissioned by the Integrated Care Board (ICB), which provide targeted support for individuals at risk of falling out of work due to health conditions. Together, these offers aim to support 2,000 residents into employment and prevent 950 from becoming economically inactive in the first year.  
  
By embedding support within community settings and aligning provision with local needs, this approach ensures that services are accessible, responsive, and capable of reaching those who face the greatest barriers to engagement. It reflects a commitment to holistic, place-based delivery that meets people where they are and supports long-term inclusion and wellbeing.

These innovations directly support the delivery of the Engage and Empower and Prevent and Protect Pathways by simplifying access and embedding personalised support.

2.

**Enhanced Devolution**

South Yorkshire MCA is pursuing greater control over funding and service design to better meet local needs. Priorities include:

- Cohort-specific interventions
- Integration and alignment of employment, health, and skills services
- Localised decision-making and accountability
- Stronger employer collaboration
- Targeted support for vulnerable groups
- Performance monitoring under SYMCA oversight

The MCA believes devolved powers will allow us to tailor interventions across all four Pathways, ensuring that each cohort receives the right support at the right time.

3.

**Data Integration for System Change**

A regional data management system has been procured to support data collection and performance monitoring across programmes. This lays the foundation for:

- Real-time, collaborative decision-making
- Hyperlocal targeting of interventions
- Data-driven service improvement
- Cross-sector collaboration and insight sharing
- Robust data governance and privacy protections

However, full integration remains a challenge. Addressing barriers to data sharing is essential to delivering seamless, person-centred support and unlocking the full potential of the system. Real-time data will enable dynamic allocation of resources across Pathways and allow us to monitor progress against the 80% employment target.

OUR AMBITION

By 2035, in South Yorkshire, we will:

- Establish South Yorkshire as a nationally recognised innovation region in employment, skills, and health, shaping national policy and hosting regular learning exchanges.
- Deliver a fully integrated, co-commissioned support system where employment, skills, and health services are unified and delivered through accessible community hubs.
- Ensure every resident can access holistic, person-centred support without navigating fragmented systems.
- Create a seamless, joined-up user experience that 'hides the wiring' of the system, making access simple, clear, and effective.
- Embed a live, shared data infrastructure that powers real-time decision-making, commissioning, and continuous reform across employment, skills, and health.

The system redesign is not a standalone initiative, it is the enabling framework for delivering the four Pathways to Work. Each Pathway relies on the redesign's core components: integrated service delivery, shared data infrastructure, and coordinated governance. For example, the Prevent and Protect Pathway benefits from early risk identification through population health management, while the Engage and Empower Pathway is supported by trauma-informed services and flexible commissioning models.

These Pathways, which are described in the following section, translate the principles of system redesign into targeted, stage-specific interventions that support residents throughout their journey into, through, and within the labour market.



We will do this by:

1.

Innovation and Learning

- Establishing a regional innovation and learning forum to share best practice, evaluate pilot programmes, and influence national policy through evidence-based insights.
- Developing and implementing a portfolio of innovative pilot programmes across employment, skills, and health, with a focus on testing new delivery models and reaching underserved populations.
- Embedding a test-and-learn approach across all system redesign initiatives, ensuring continuous improvement through iterative evaluation, feedback loops, and adaptive delivery.

2.

Integrated Service Delivery

- Mobilising triage functions at Local Authority level to improve referral pathways and ensure residents are directed to the most appropriate support.
  - Piloting co-location of public sector business engagement teams within a single Local Authority to streamline employer engagement.
  - Designing and implementing a regional community hub strategy aligning Youth Hubs, family hubs, and employment support centres to provide holistic, non-duplicative services.
  - Embedding employment as a recognised outcome in clinical care pathways and explore integration into health and social care training programmes.
  - Reviewing commissioning and contracting models to prioritise coordination around resident needs rather than funding silos.
  - Working with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to align SYMCA and ICB budgets and resources, enabling co-commissioning of services that address both employment and health outcomes.
- This will support more integrated delivery, reduce duplication, and ensure commissioning is shaped around resident needs rather than organisational or funding silos.

3.

Strategic Partnerships and Governance

- Developing a joint commissioning framework between SYMCA, ICB, and local authorities to align funding and interventions around shared outcomes.
- Forming a strategic partnership with Jobcentre Plus (JCP), including joint planning, data sharing protocols, and collaborative pilots.
- Support integration of JCP and National Careers Service (NCS) into a career-focused support model, as policy develops, ensuring every interaction promotes long-term progression.

4.

Data Integration and Intelligence

- Working towards securing data-sharing agreements across key partners (JCP, health services, local authorities) with an intent to ensure standardisation of data fields across employment, skills, and health provision to enable system-wide analysis and performance monitoring.
- Building a shared South Yorkshire labour market and opportunity dashboard offering real-time insights from services and employers.
- Developing a 'data on a page' performance tool tracking key metrics (e.g. employment rate, inactivity rate, NEET levels, progression outcomes, employer engagement, and population health).

5.

Employer Engagement

- Piloting joint employer engagement teams across public sector organisations to provide coordinated, responsive support to employers and reduce duplication.



# 3.

# SOUTH YORKSHIRE'S PATHWAYS TO WORK:

## SUPPORT FOR EVERY STEP OF YOUR EMPLOYMENT JOURNEY



This section sets out the objectives, challenges, current support landscape, and future ambitions for each of South Yorkshire's four strategic pathways. It outlines how each pathway responds to specific stages of labour market engagement and distinct support needs, providing a clear framework for targeted action, investment, and collaboration across the region.

# 3.1

## PATHWAY ONE

# PREVENT AND PROTECT

Addressing risks to maintain employment stability

### OBJECTIVE

To prevent individuals from becoming unemployed or economically inactive by addressing health and economic risks early, building personal and community resilience, and supporting sustainable, health-informed education-to-work transitions.

### KEY CHALLENGES

South Yorkshire faces a range of interconnected challenges that heighten the risk of disengagement from the labour market, particularly in areas of high deprivation and poor health. These require early, preventative action to build resilience and support sustained employment.

#### Young People (NEET Risk)

- In 2024, there were 1,572 young people aged 16–17 who were NEET (4.9% of that age group<sup>7</sup>), with the highest rates in Sheffield's most deprived areas.
- Persistent school absence is a key risk factor; South Yorkshire's rate was 22.2% in 2023/24, above the national average of 20.0%.<sup>8</sup>
- Lower prior attainment is prevalent across the region, with higher proportions of residents holding no qualifications or only RQF1/RQF2 levels (except Sheffield for RQF1).<sup>9</sup>

#### Older Workers (Labour Market Exclusion)

- At Census 2021, 34% of economically inactive 50–64 year olds cited long-term sickness as the reason (5.3 percentage points above the national average).<sup>10</sup>
- Employer investment in upskilling older workers remains limited, reducing re-entry prospects.<sup>11</sup>

7. Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) – ONS

8. Pupil absence in schools in England, Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics – GOV.UK

9. Annual Population Survey, January to December 2024 – ONS

10. Census 2021 – ONS

11. Time for a right to retrain? – Chartered Management Institute (CMI)

12. Universal Credit Health Caseload – Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

#### Health and Work

- Between April 2024 and March 2025, an average of 7,925 fit notes were issued monthly, 0.9% of the working-age population, compared to 0.7% nationally.<sup>12</sup>
- Mental health and musculoskeletal issues are leading causes, often escalating to long-term absence or labour market withdrawal.
- 248,600 individuals are in work while managing a long-term health condition (48.2% of those with such conditions),<sup>9</sup> highlighting the need for in-work support and early intervention.

#### Job Quality and Security

- Workers in low-paid sectors face greater exposure to insecure employment (e.g. zero-hours contracts, agency roles, vulnerable self-employment).<sup>13</sup>
- Insecure work contributes to financial instability and in-work poverty, with frequent cycles of job entry and exit.<sup>14</sup>
- Limited progression routes and economic reliance on low-paid sectors exacerbate vulnerability.

13. Inequalities in insecure work – The Health Foundation

14. The UK Insecure Work Index 2024

These challenges highlight the need for a proactive, preventative approach that identifies risk early, builds individual and community resilience, and supports sustainable transitions into and within the labour market.





# CURRENT SUPPORT LANDSCAPE

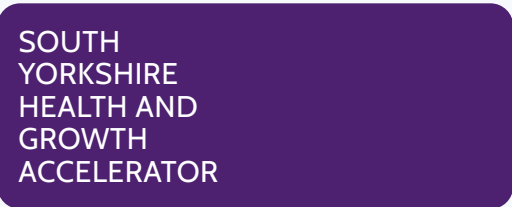
A range of services are in place to deliver on the Prevent and Protect ambition: helping individuals remain economically active by addressing employment and health-related risks early, building resilience, and supporting transitions both into work and within the labour market.

A number of targeted programmes contribute to this ambition, including:

This includes support for education-to-work pathways, in-work retention, and re-entry following health-related absence. More details of the support landscape in South Yorkshire can be found in Appendix B: Mapping existing local support.

## WorkWell

- WorkWell**  
  
WorkWell provides low-intensity, short-term personalised support for individuals who are in work or have recently exited employment and are managing a health condition. The programme focuses on early intervention to prevent labour market disengagement and promote recovery and resilience.



- Health & Growth Accelerator**  
  
The Health & Growth Accelerator complements this by delivering preventative health-focused interventions. It is currently piloting a population health management approach to identify and support individuals at risk of exiting the workforce due to ill health, enabling more proactive and targeted support.



- Working Win (IPSPC)**  
  
Working Win offers specialist, evidence-based employment support for individuals with health conditions and/or disabilities. The service helps participants to either remain in work or enter employment where health has previously been a barrier, supporting long-term labour market inclusion.



- Connect to Work**  
  
Supports individuals at risk of leaving employment due to health-related challenges. Approximately 15% of its caseload is focused specifically on in-work retention, helping to prevent avoidable job loss and sustain economic participation.



- The South Yorkshire Careers Hub**  
  
This plays a critical role in reducing the risk of young people becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) and in strengthening the future workforce pipeline. Working in partnership with schools and colleges, the Hub connects business volunteers with education settings to inspire young people, raise aspirations, and increase awareness of local career opportunities and priority growth sectors.  
  
From the 2025/26 academic year, the Hub will place greater emphasis on high-quality workplace experiences, enabling young people to gain first-hand insight into different industries, build employability skills, and develop the confidence, resilience, and networks needed to make successful transitions into further education, training, or employment.  
  
For young people who are NEET, and for individuals who are low-skilled or underemployed, wider employability and upskilling provision continues to support transitions into sustainable employment. These services complement the region's in-work retention programmes and contribute to a more inclusive and resilient labour market.

South Yorkshire has a strong foundation of preventative programmes that support early intervention, in-work retention, and education-to-employment transitions.



- Jobcentre Plus**  
  
Contributes to early intervention and prevention through tailored support for individuals at risk of disengagement from the labour market. Work coaches provide personalised guidance to people with health conditions, older workers, and vulnerable groups, helping to address barriers before they escalate.  
  
The Health Adjustment Passport and Access to Work schemes support individuals to remain in employment, while disability employment advisors and advanced customer support senior leaders offer specialist input for those with complex needs. Co-location in family hubs and collaboration with local services further enhances preventative support, aligning with the pathway's focus on reducing flows into economic inactivity.

Initiatives like WorkWell, Health & Growth Accelerator, and Working Win demonstrate effective integration of health and employment support. However, services remain fragmented and unevenly accessible across the region.  
  
To maximise impact, there is a need to better integrate services, simplify access pathways, and deliver support in the communities where people live and work. Strengthening collaboration between health, education, and employment partners will be key to building a truly preventative, place-based system.

# OUR AMBITION

By 2035, in South Yorkshire, we will:

- Embed employment as a recognised and measurable health outcome across NHS and Integrated Care Board (ICB) pathways, ensuring that work is considered a key determinant of health and wellbeing.
- Establish a preventative, health-informed employment system that identifies and mitigates risks early; supporting individuals to sustain meaningful work throughout their lives.
- Ensure all young people in South Yorkshire experience high-quality, supported transitions from education into employment, with a significant reduction in NEET rates and persistent absence.

We will do this by:

1.

## Health and Work Integration

- Delivering workplace health and support in partnership with employers, promoting physical and mental health awareness, access to occupational health, and effective return-to-work pathways.
- Piloting co-investment models with businesses to jointly fund health and wellbeing support for employees. This approach will maximise the financial impact of public investment, foster shared ownership of workforce wellbeing, and strengthen employer commitment to inclusive, preventative practices that support retention and productivity.
- Expanding the use of tools such as the Health Adjustment Passport and Access to Work to support in-work retention and reduce avoidable job loss.

2.

## Early Intervention and Risk Identification

- Scaling up population health management approaches to proactively identify individuals at risk of labour market disengagement due to health or socioeconomic factors.
- Strengthening collaboration between Jobcentre Plus, family hubs, and local services to deliver joined-up, preventative support for vulnerable groups.
- Enhancing the Careers Hub's role in identifying and supporting young people at risk of becoming NEET, with a focus on persistent absence and low attainment.

3.

## Youth Transitions and Resilience

- Expanding access to high-quality workplace experiences for young people, particularly those in deprived areas, to build confidence, networks, and employability skills.
- Strengthening post-16 pathways through integrated support that combines careers advice, skills development, and health-informed coaching.

4.

## Insecure Work and Older Workers

- Working with employers and sector bodies to improve job quality in low-paid sectors, including progression pathways, fair contracts, and access to training.
- Launching targeted upskilling and re-entry programmes for older workers, addressing digital exclusion, health barriers, and age bias.







# 3.2

## PATHWAY TWO

# ENGAGE AND EMPOWER

Support for those furthest from the labour market

### OBJECTIVE

To enable individuals facing complex and multiple barriers to move closer to employment through intensive, tailored support, particularly those with long-term ill health, disabilities, and sustained economic inactivity.

### KEY CHALLENGES

South Yorkshire continues to experience high levels of economic inactivity, particularly among individuals facing complex and overlapping barriers. The Engage and Empower pathway supports those furthest from the labour market to overcome obstacles and re-engage with work, education, or training.

#### Long-Term Sickness and Disability-Related Inactivity

- Economic inactivity among working-age residents (16–64) stood at 25.2% in 2024, above the national average of 21.3%.<sup>15</sup>
- Rotherham (26.5%) and Sheffield (26.4%) recorded the highest rates in the region.<sup>15</sup>
- Long-term sickness was cited by 28.1% of economically inactive individuals, equating to approximately 63,000 residents.<sup>15</sup>

#### Fragmented Support Systems

- Health and employment services often operate in isolation, creating a disjointed experience for individuals seeking support.
- The Pathways to Work Commission recommended a person-centred, locally integrated model aligning health, skills, and employment provision.<sup>16</sup>

15. Annual Population Survey, January to December 2024 – ONS

16. Pathways to Work Commission Report – July 2024

17. Economic inactivity – ONS

18. Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) – ONS

#### Structural and Practical Barriers

- Key barriers include:<sup>16</sup>

Limited access to affordable childcare, disproportionately affecting women and single parents.

Poor transport connectivity, especially in rural and peripheral areas, restricting access to employment.

Skills mismatches between local labour market needs and resident qualifications.

Persistent employer discrimination against disabled people, particularly in recruitment, workplace adjustments, and progression.<sup>17</sup>

- These barriers are more pronounced in deprived communities and contribute to sustained economic inactivity.

#### Risk of Long-Term Disengagement Among Young People

- In 2024, there were 1,572 individuals aged 16–17 who were NEET (4.9% of that age group).<sup>18</sup>
- Without targeted intervention, this group is at risk of long-term exclusion from the labour market.





# CURRENT SUPPORT LANDSCAPE

A range of programmes are currently in place or scheduled to commence to support individuals who are economically inactive and face complex or multiple barriers to employment, aligning with the Engage and Empower pathway.

Current and planned support includes:

## ECONOMIC INACTIVITY TRAILBLAZER

- **Economic Inactivity Trailblazer (2025–2027)**  
  
A high-intensity, longer-term programme designed for individuals who are not yet ready to enter employment. It offers personalised support, exposure to work environments, and wraparound services to build confidence, skills, and readiness for work.



## CONNECT TO WORK Funded by UK Government

- **Connect to Work – Regional IPS Model (2025–2030)**  
  
Delivers intensive, personalised support for individuals with health conditions, integrating employment specialists within primary care settings. The model adheres to the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) fidelity framework and is designed to enable rapid and sustainable transitions into employment.
- **Connect to Work – Local SEQF Model (2025–2030)**  
  
Targets individuals with learning disabilities, autism, or complex disadvantages. This model provides high-intensity support without requiring health team involvement and is aligned with the Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF).



- **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Programme (2025–2026)**  
  
Offers employability support, upskilling, and assistance with labour market transitions for NEET young people, low-skilled individuals, and underemployed residents.

## ADULT SKILLS FUND

- **Adult Skills Fund – Tailored Learning**  
  
Provides flexible, community-based learning opportunities for adults of all ages and backgrounds. The programme supports progression towards formal learning, employment, or self-employment; improves health and wellbeing (including mental health); strengthens parenting and caregiving capacity; and fosters stronger, more resilient communities.  
  
Provision is designed to be accessible in terms of location, format, and level, particularly for those facing disadvantage.

The Economic Inactivity Trailblazer and Adult Skills Fund provide flexible, person-centred pathways. However, fragmentation across services, limited coordination, and barriers to access in underserved areas persist.

To empower residents effectively, South Yorkshire must embed integrated, community-based delivery, expand inclusive employment pathways, and ensure services are accessible and culturally responsive. Strengthening local partnerships and co-location of services will be essential to reach those most excluded.



- **Jobcentre Plus**  
  
Jobcentre Plus plays a key role in engaging residents and empowering them to take steps towards employment. Youth hubs and youth employability coaches provide targeted support for young people, including those with multiple barriers, while schools advisers promote early careers engagement. The Flexible Support Fund enables tailored provision to meet local needs, and work coaches offer consistent, personalised support to build confidence and motivation. The offer also includes specialist roles such as Armed Forces champions and prison work coaches, ensuring inclusive engagement across diverse cohorts. These services align with the pathway's ambition to connect individuals with meaningful opportunities and build aspiration.

The current landscape offers a promising mix of high-intensity, tailored support for those furthest from the labour market, including innovative models like IPS and SEQF.



OUR AMBITION

By 2035, in South Yorkshire, we will:

- Achieve a significant and sustained reduction in economic inactivity across all age groups, particularly among those with long-term health conditions, disabilities, and complex barriers.
- Deliver a fully integrated, person-centred support system that aligns employment, health, and skills provision to empower individuals furthest from the labour market.
- Ensure inclusive access to tailored support for all communities, with targeted interventions for underrepresented groups including disabled people, older workers, and those with limited English.
- Become a national exemplar for inclusive employment practice, with employers routinely adapting recruitment and workplace practices to support diverse talent.

We will achieve this by:

1.

Inclusive Employment Pathways

- Expanding employability training for diverse cohorts (SEND, LDD, sensory impairments), aligned directly to employment opportunities, following the Doncaster Aspire to Be model.
- Piloting a new local employment offer for people furthest from the labour market, with elements of Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) with targeted, personalised approaches that match local employer needs.
- Trialling vocational ESOL pilots in at least one locality, aligned to local employer needs, to support residents with limited English into priority sectors.
- Working with anchor institutions to pilot ringfenced employment routes for economically inactive residents, building on successful models with NHS Trusts and Barnsley Council.

2.

Integrated and Responsive Support

- Developing a support offer aligned with the Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper, ensuring residents who can realise the benefits of work are supported to do so, such as enabling them to trial work without immediate impact on their benefits.
- Strengthening collaboration between Jobcentre Plus, local authorities, and voluntary sector partners to deliver joined-up, community-based support. This includes building on the community outreach work already being delivered by Jobcentre Plus in selected areas, such as co-location in family hubs and targeted engagement in local venues. By scaling these approaches, we can embed employment and skills support into trusted, non-stigmatising settings, libraries, community centres, faith venues, and other places where residents already feel safe and supported.

3.

Progression and In-Work Support

- Expanding access to Skills Bootcamps, Adult Skills Fund, and Free Courses for Jobs to support upskilling, reskilling, and career advancement.
- Enhancing in-work support through programmes like WorkWell and IPS to help individuals sustain employment and progress in their careers.
- Supporting employers to develop progression pathways and invest in workforce development, particularly in low-paid sectors.



3.3

PATHWAY THREE

SECURE AND SUSTAIN

Support for those actively seeking employment

OBJECTIVE

To accelerate access to sustainable employment for job-ready individuals by improving access to employment services, skills development, and employer engagement.

KEY CHALLENGES

The Secure and Sustain pathway aims to support individuals into good-quality, sustainable employment and help them remain in work. Key challenges across South Yorkshire include:

Skills Mismatch and Hard-to-Fill Vacancies

- According to the 2024 Employer Skills Survey, 35% of vacancies in South Yorkshire were hard-to-fill.<sup>19</sup>
- 27% of vacancies were due to skills shortages.
- 5.3% of employees judged not fully proficient, which is higher than the national average of 4.1%.

Limited Access to Personalised Employment Support

- Employment support is available but often fragmented and lacks coordination across health, skills, and employment services.
- Individuals with complex needs (e.g. long-term unemployment, caring responsibilities, mental health issues) require tailored, person-centred support.
- The Pathways to Work Commission (2024) highlighted the need for integrated provision to improve outcomes.

Digital Exclusion

- 18% of adults in Yorkshire and the Humber have low or very low digital capability.<sup>20</sup>
- Digital exclusion affects older people, disabled individuals, and low-income households, limiting access to online job applications, training, and remote work.
- Addressing digital skills and access is essential for labour market inclusion.

19. Employer Skills Survey 2024 – ONS

20. Consumer Digital Index 2024 Report – Lloyds Bank

Persistent Unemployment and Underemployment

- Unemployment in 2024 was 3.1%, below the national average (4.0%) due to higher economic inactivity.<sup>21</sup>
- As of June 2025, 4.1% of working-age residents claimed unemployment-related benefits, with higher rates in Sheffield (4.5%) and Doncaster (4.2%).<sup>22</sup>
- According to the Census 2021 29% of residents require upskilling; 21% need access to higher-skilled roles aligned with their qualifications.<sup>23</sup>

In-Work Poverty and Limited Progression

- 30% of Universal Credit claimants in South Yorkshire are in employment, reflecting the scale of in-work poverty.<sup>24</sup>
- Low wages, insecure contracts, and limited career progression are prevalent, especially in part-time and temporary roles.
- Lack of progression pathways and employer investment traps individuals in low-quality employment, undermining financial independence and long-term stability.

21. Annual Population Survey, January to December 2024 – ONS

22. Claimant Count by Sex and Age – ONS

23. Census 2021 – ONS

24. People on Universal Credit – DWP





# CURRENT SUPPORT LANDSCAPE

The following initiatives align with the ambitions of the **Secure and Sustain** pathway and are designed to accelerate entry into sustainable, good-quality work by improving access to employment services, skills development, and employer engagement.

Current and planned support includes:

## CONNECT TO WORK

Funded by **UK Government**



Funded by  
**UK Government**

- **Connect to Work – Regional IPS Model (2025–2030)**

While also supporting economically inactive individuals, this programme provides intensive, personalised support for those with health conditions who are actively seeking employment. It integrates employment specialists with health professionals in primary care settings and follows the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) fidelity model to facilitate rapid job entry and sustained employment.

- **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Programme (2025–2026)**

Offers employability support, upskilling, and job-readiness interventions for unemployed individuals, including young jobseekers, over-50s re-entering the labour market, and those recently made redundant.



- **Jobcentre Plus (JCP) Services**

Jobcentre Plus delivers a core employment support offer across South Yorkshire, including job search assistance, access to training and work experience, and employer engagement through sector-based work academies and recruitment events.

The Restart scheme provides enhanced support for those unemployed for six months or more, while Work Coaches offer tailored guidance to help individuals secure and sustain employment. The integration of Jobcentre Plus with local multi-agency hubs and the National Careers Service supports a more joined-up approach. These services contribute to the pathway's goal of accelerating access to sustainable, good-quality work and improving retention outcomes.

## WorkWell

- **WorkWell**

Provides short-term, low-intensity personalised support for individuals who have recently exited employment, particularly those with health conditions. The programme focuses on building confidence, addressing health-related barriers, and supporting re-entry into work.



- **Adult Skills Fund (ASF) and Free Courses for Jobs (FCFJ)**

Provides fully funded or subsidised training for adults, including basic skills, digital literacy, and Level 1 to Level 3 qualifications. This supports individuals to gain the skills needed for progression into further learning, career advancement, and access to higher-paid roles.



- **National Careers Service (NCS)**

Provides impartial careers advice, skills assessments, and support with CVs and interview preparation.



- **Skills Bootcamps**

Short, intensive training courses at Levels 2–5, co-designed with employers to meet sector-specific skills needs in areas such as digital, construction, health and social care, and engineering. Skills Bootcamps support:

- Economically inactive and unemployed individuals to move into new roles
- Employed individuals seeking to reskill into different occupations
- Self-employed residents to grow their businesses
- Employers, through up to 90% co-funding to upskill existing staff, reduce skills gaps, and improve retention and productivity

**South Yorkshire offers a wide range of employment and skills programmes, including Skills Bootcamps, Restart, and the National Careers Service.**

These initiatives support jobseekers and those recently unemployed, with increasing emphasis on digital access and employer engagement. Yet, navigation remains complex, and support is not always tailored to individual needs or local labour market realities.

To improve outcomes, the region must streamline access through integrated digital and physical front doors, align provision with employer demand, and deliver services in community settings. A joined-up system that supports both job entry and progression will be vital to reducing underemployment and in-work poverty.





# OUR AMBITION

## By 2035, In South Yorkshire, we will:

- Ensure all residents can access high-quality, personalised support to secure and sustain good work, with a particular focus on those facing disadvantage or underemployment.
- Embed a joined-up, digitally enabled employment and skills system that is easy to navigate and responsive to individual and employer needs.
- Reduce underemployment and in-work poverty by supporting progression into higher-skilled, better-paid, and more secure roles.
- Establish a South Yorkshire Better Business standard that defines and promotes good practice in recruitment, retention, and workforce development.

## We will achieve this by:

### 1.

#### Inclusive and Age-Friendly Employment

- Promoting age-friendly and inclusive recruitment through employer networks, supporting returners and older workers, and encouraging flexible roles, apprenticeships, and career change opportunities.
- Launching a South Yorkshire Better Business campaign and standard to recognise and incentivise employers who invest in inclusive recruitment, workforce development, and progression.

### 2.

#### Integrated Access and Navigation

- Creating and launching a single, easy-to-navigate online and physical front door for employment, skills, and health, with 'Careers' embedded, to help people understand their options and plan their next steps.
- Designing and adopting a digital employment support model that includes interactive online triage, virtual coaching, digital CV and application tools, and employer engagement platforms, complementing face-to-face services.
- Strengthening integration between Jobcentre Plus, National Careers Service, and local providers to ensure a seamless user experience.

### 3.

#### Progression and In-Work Support

- Expanding access to Skills Bootcamps, Adult Skills Fund, and Free Courses for Jobs to support upskilling, reskilling, and career advancement.
- Enhancing in-work support through programmes like WorkWell and IPS to help individuals sustain employment and progress in their careers.
- Supporting employers to develop progression pathways and invest in workforce development, particularly in low-paid sectors.







# 3.4

## PATHWAY FOUR

# THRIVE AND ELEVATE

Enabling progression in work

### OBJECTIVE

To support individuals to advance in their careers, improve their skills, and access better-quality jobs, reducing the risk of regression into unemployment and enhancing job satisfaction and economic resilience

### KEY CHALLENGES

The Thrive and Elevate pathway supports individuals to progress in work, improve earnings, and access personal and professional development. These outcomes are essential for reducing in-work poverty, improving wellbeing, and fostering inclusive economic growth across South Yorkshire.

#### Stagnant Wages and Limited Progression

- Median gross annual earnings in South Yorkshire were £29,978 in 2024 – that's 5.8% below the England average (£31,840).<sup>25</sup>
- Rotherham recorded the lowest median earnings (£28,001).
- Female earnings were 7.6% below the UK average, compared to 6.3% for males.
- Many residents are employed in low-paid, low-skilled roles with limited advancement opportunities.
- Lack of structured progression pathways and employer investment contributes to persistent in-work poverty and financial insecurity.
- Supporting progression helps unlock entry-level roles and strengthens labour market mobility.

#### Underinvestment in Adult Learning and Skills

- 10.2% of residents have no formal qualifications, above the England average (6.6%), with higher rates in Rotherham (14.9%) and Barnsley (11.4%).<sup>26</sup>
- While RQF Levels 1–3 are above average, RQF Level 4+ attainment is consistently lower across all local authorities.
- Limited access to lifelong learning and upskilling opportunities, particularly for those in work or with lower qualifications.
- National analysis highlights gaps in adult skills provision and the need for targeted investment in reskilling to meet evolving labour market demands.<sup>27</sup>

25. Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings – Residents Analysis – 2024 – ONS

26. Annual Population Survey, January to December 2024 – ONS

27. Skills England: Skills for Growth and Opportunity 2025 – Department for Education (DfE)

#### Health-Related Barriers to Advancement

- An estimated 248,600 individuals aged 16 and over are in work while managing a health condition lasting more than 12 months (48.2% of those with long-term conditions).<sup>26</sup>
- Fluctuating health, lack of workplace adjustments, and limited employer understanding hinder progression.
- Mental health and musculoskeletal conditions are particularly prevalent and, if unsupported, may lead to reduced productivity, increased absence, or labour market exit.
- Inclusive workforce development and integrated health and employment support are essential to enable sustained advancement.



# CURRENT SUPPORT LANDSCAPE

A range of support is currently available or due to commence across South Yorkshire to help individuals progress in work, improve their skills, and access better-quality employment.

Support includes:



- **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Programme (2025–2026)**  
  
Offers upskilling and employability support for low-paid and underemployed individuals, helping them to transition into higher-skilled roles. The programme also supports progression pathways for young people and those in insecure work.
- **Adult Skills Fund (ASF) and Free Courses for Jobs (FCFJ)**  
  
Provides fully funded or subsidised training for adults, including basic skills, digital literacy, Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications. This supports individuals to gain the skills needed for progression into further learning, career progression and access to higher-paid roles.

These initiatives also support employers to invest in workforce development and create inclusive, high-quality job opportunities. Together, they align with the ambitions of the Thrive and Elevate pathway and provide a foundation for future delivery.



- **Skills Bootcamps**  
  
Short, intensive accredited or bespoke training courses at Levels 2–5 for adults, co-designed with employers to meet sector-specific skills needs across a variety of industries in areas such as (not limited to) digital, construction, health and social care, and engineering. Skills Bootcamps are designed to support:
  - Economically inactive and unemployed individuals into new jobs
  - Employed individuals who are aspiring to reskill into a new job
  - Self-employed residents to grow their own business
  - Employers, by providing up to 90% co-funding to upskill existing staff to decrease business skills gaps, whilst increasing staff retention and business productivity.



- **Apprenticeships, Higher Technical Qualifications and T-Level Industry Placements**  
  
Available across a range of sectors, these programmes support individuals to gain work-based qualifications while enabling employers to develop their future workforce. Provision ranging from level 2 to Level 7 offering clear technical pathways to careers advancement. Apprenticeships are supported by the South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub, a joint South Yorkshire Colleges Partnership and SYMCA programme.



- **Workplace Health and Wellbeing Initiatives**  
  
Delivered in partnership with the NHS and local authorities, these initiatives support employers to create healthier, more productive workplaces. This includes mental health support, occupational health services, and return-to-work programmes.



- **Skills Bank**  
  
Established in 2015 and unique to South Yorkshire, this offers contribution for staff training in businesses across the region, where a clear link between the training offer and growth potential can be evidenced.



- **Employer Support through the South Yorkshire Growth Hub**  
  
The Growth Hub provides localised expert advice and support to access funding to businesses investing in workforce development, including leadership and management training, digital adoption, and inclusive recruitment practices.





# HIGHER EDUCATION

- Higher Education

South Yorkshire is home to two universities, the Advance Manufacturing Training Centre, the South Yorkshire Institute of Technology and the Sheffield University Technical College, all offering higher level skills provision. This is complemented by a higher-level offer from the Further Education Colleges and independent training providers.

jobcentreplus

- JobCentre Plus and National Careers Service

Jobcentre Plus supports progression and long-term career development through initiatives aligned with the Thrive and Elevate Pathway. A pilot programme, the New Jobs and Careers Service Pathfinder in West Yorkshire, is currently testing more personalised, skills-focused support, and we will be looking to learn from its findings to inform future developments in South Yorkshire.

In the meantime, South Yorkshire benefits from the established National Careers Service offer. This includes free, impartial careers advice and guidance for adults, delivered through community-based support that helps individuals identify strengths, improve employability, and explore career opportunities. Locally, work coaches help individuals identify pathways to advancement, and the Flexible Support Fund can be used to address gaps in provision, supporting upskilling and sector-specific training. Employer Services teams promote inclusive recruitment and connect claimants with growth opportunities.

**South Yorkshire has a rich ecosystem of progression-focused support, from apprenticeships and Skills Bank to workplace wellbeing initiatives.**

Together, these elements contribute to a system that not only supports job entry but also enables individuals to thrive in work and progress into higher-quality roles.

The region's commitment to lifelong learning and employer-led pathways is evident. However, access to upskilling remains uneven, and progression routes are not always clear or inclusive. To enable residents to thrive, South Yorkshire must embed career advice across all life stages, expand flexible learning in local settings, and support employers to invest in workforce development and inclusive practices. A more integrated and accessible progression system will help unlock potential and reduce in-work poverty.





# OUR AMBITION

By 2035, in South Yorkshire, we will:

- Ensure all residents have access to personalised, high-quality careers advice and guidance at every life stage; whether returning to work after illness, changing career mid-life, or leaving prison.
  - Embed a culture of lifelong learning and workforce development, enabling individuals to upskill, reskill, and thrive in a changing labour market.
  - Reduce in-work poverty and stagnation by supporting advancement into better-paid, more secure, and fulfilling roles.
- Strengthen progression into high-quality jobs and careers, supported by employer-led pathways and a responsive skills system.

We will achieve this by:

1.

## Careers, Advice and Pathways

- Embedding personalised careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) into all employment programmes, ensuring individuals understand routes to sustainable, good-quality work.
- Delivering careers interventions from primary school onwards as part of an all-age careers offer, building on successful models such as Sheffield's 'See it Be it'.
- Using Careers Hub data to identify and address gaps in employer encounters and sector pathways.
- Developing and rolling out clear pathways for priority and growth sectors, using occupational maps aligned with local labour market intelligence and curriculum offers.

2.

## Skills for Progression

- Expanding access to Skills Bootcamps, Adult Skills Fund, and Free Courses for Jobs to support upskilling and reskilling into higher-level roles.
- Promoting apprenticeships, Higher Technical Qualifications, and T-Level industry placements as structured routes to career advancement.
- Supporting employer investment in workforce development through initiatives like Skills Bank and the South Yorkshire Growth Hub.

3.

## Inclusive Workforce Development

- Supporting in-work progression for individuals managing long-term health conditions through integrated health and employment support.
- Promoting inclusive recruitment and progression practices, particularly for women, disabled people, and underrepresented groups.
- Encouraging employers to adopt flexible working, workplace adjustments, and wellbeing initiatives to enable sustained advancement. We will support employers to understand the clear economic benefits of helping individuals progress in work, such as improved retention, reduced recruitment costs, increased productivity, and stronger workforce resilience.

By demonstrating how inclusive practices contribute directly to business performance, we aim to foster a virtuous cycle where employers are internally motivated to invest in their workforce. This approach moves beyond external incentives, embedding progression and wellbeing as strategic priorities that benefit both employees and employers alike.





4.

# STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

## WITH NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL PRIORITIES



This section outlines how the [Get South Yorkshire Working Plan](#) aligns with national policy priorities and complements regional and local strategies across South Yorkshire. It demonstrates strategic coherence with government reforms on employment, health and skills, while also reflecting the ambitions and delivery models of South Yorkshire's local authorities and regional partners.

# 4.1

## NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND POLICY CONTEXT

The [Get South Yorkshire Working Plan](#) (GSYWP) aligns closely with a range of national strategies aimed at tackling economic inactivity, improving employment outcomes, and promoting inclusive growth.

The graphic to the right highlights the shared priorities and thematic coherence between the GSYWP and key national frameworks such as the Get Britain Working White Paper, the Employment Rights Bill, and the Keep Britain Working Review. This alignment reinforces South Yorkshire's role as a delivery partner in national reform and ensures that local action contributes meaningfully to broader UK ambitions.

# 4.2

## REGIONAL STRATEGIES AND FRAMEWORKS

The [Get South Yorkshire Working Plan](#) (GSYWP) sits within a broader landscape of regional strategies that collectively support inclusive economic growth, health and employment integration, and workforce development.

The diagram to the right illustrates how the GSYWP aligns with several of these frameworks, highlighting shared priorities and strategic coherence.

While not exhaustive, the diagram complements wider regional initiatives, including the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) strategy and the Mayor's Better Business campaign, which also align closely with the plan's ambitions. Together, these strategies reinforce a joined-up, place-based approach to improving outcomes for South Yorkshire's residents and communities.

See [Appendix C: Links to local and national strategies](#) for more detailed linkages between these documents and the [Get South Yorkshire Working Plan](#).

### GET SOUTH YORKSHIRE WORKING PLAN

Core themes:

- Integrated health and employment support
- 80% employment rate by 2029
- Targeted support for key cohorts
- System redesign for joined-up delivery
- Work as a health outcome
- Inclusive, person-centred services
- Employer engagement and Better Business standard
- Digital access and career navigation tools



#### Pathways to Work Green Paper

- Reforming benefits
- Enabling safe work trials
- Delivering more integrated, locally responsive support for people with health conditions and disabilities.

#### Keep Britain Working Review

- Ill-health and disability
- Prevention and retention
- Employer engagement
- System coordination
- Pathways back to work

#### 10 Year Health Plan

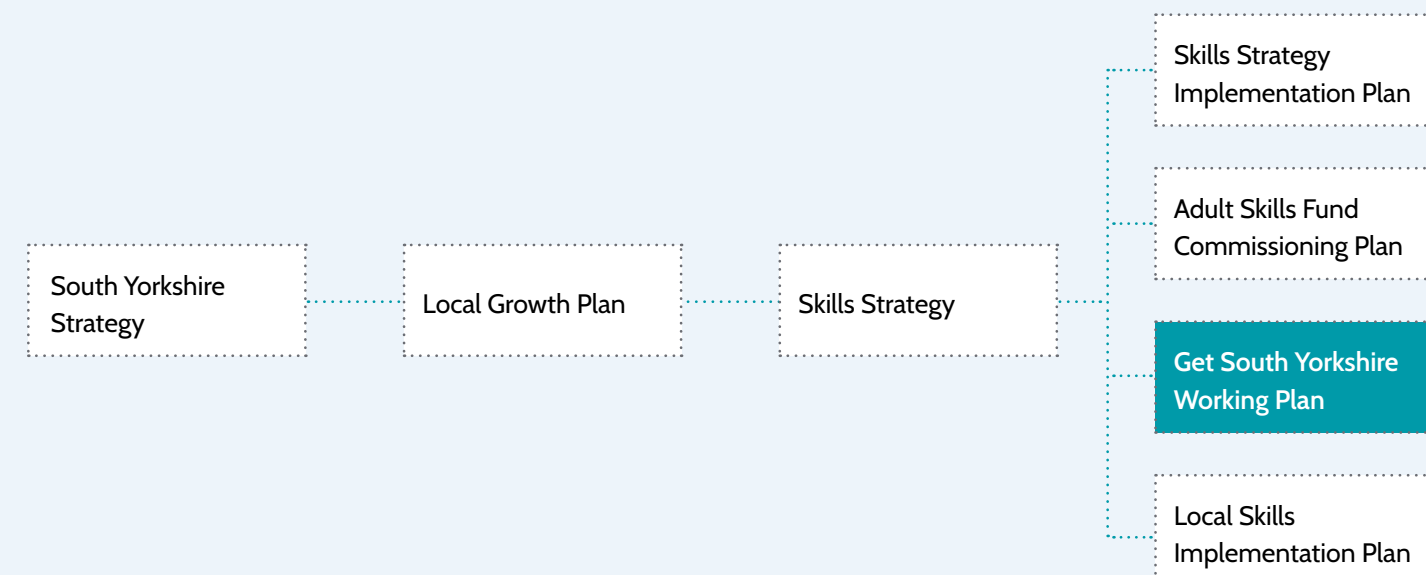
- Health–work integration
- Mental health support
- Inclusive employment practices
- Digital and telehealth access
- Community-based services
- Outcome-based metrics

#### Get Britain Working White Paper

- Exclusion from labour market
- Youth Employment
- Insecure/low paid work
- Challenges for women
- Labour/skills shortages
- Disparities in labour market outcomes

#### Employment Rights Bill

- Day-one rights
- Statutory Sick Pay reform
- Stronger protections against fire and rehire
- Flexible and predictable working rights
- Enhanced rights for pregnant workers and new parents
- Mandatory action on harassment and fair pay





# 4.3

## LOCAL AUTHORITY PLAN AND PLACE-BASED DELIVERY

Each of South Yorkshire's four local authorities, Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield, has developed its own strategic approach to inclusive economic growth, skills development, and workforce participation.

This section summarises how each area's local plans align with and contribute to the ambitions of the [Get South Yorkshire Working Plan](#), highlighting place-based priorities — innovation, and delivery models that support shared regional goals.



# BARNSLEY

The Barnsley Inclusive Economic Growth Strategy 2025–2030,<sup>28</sup> developed in partnership with the Inclusive Economy Board, sets out a vision for a flourishing, inclusive economy where opportunity is accessible to all.

## BUILT ON THREE GROWTH MISSIONS

1. Establish Barnsley as the UK's leading digital town
2. Future-proof logistics and manufacturing sectors.
3. Empower communities to thrive.

## LEVERAGES KEY STRENGTHS

- Strategic location (M1/A1 corridor)
- Strong manufacturing base
- Growing logistics and digital sectors
- Enterprising Barnsley
- Digital Media Centres

## FLAGSHIP INITIATIVES

- Health on the High Street Hub – integrates health and employment support.
- Seam Digital Campus – drives innovation and skills, with ambitions for a National Centre for Digital Technologies.
- Pathways to Work – holistic employment support, aligning adult skills and employment services.

28. [Barnsley Inclusive Economic Growth Strategy 2025–2030](#)

### LOCAL CONTEXT

Population

~250,000

a borough with a legacy of resilience and transformation.

**Rapid job growth** – nearly double the national average between 2015 and 2022

Over £300m invested in regeneration, including town centre revitalisation.

Deep-rooted economic and health inequalities between east and west of the borough.

Strong ambitions to become the UK's leading digital town and empower all communities to thrive.

These initiatives reflect Barnsley's bold, innovative approach and align with the GSYWP's commitment to inclusive economic participation.

# DONCASTER

Doncaster’s strategic approach is shaped by two complementary plans:

- 1. Economic Strategy 2030 – sets a vision for a regenerative, inclusive wellbeing economy.
- 2. Education & Skills Strategy 2030 – promotes lifelong learning and equitable access to opportunity.

Together, they support a Talent & Innovation Ecosystem that connects business and education through sector-focused centres and flexible learning pathways.

## DELIVERY MODEL

- Thrive Model – builds community resilience through tailored, locality-based support with voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) partners.
- Health Determinants Research Collaboration – informs a test-and-learn approach to integrated delivery.



### LOCAL CONTEXT

Population

**~310,000**

One of the UK’s newest cities.

Strong transport links, including [Doncaster Sheffield Airport](#).

Diverse communities across towns, villages, and urban centre.

Doncaster’s focus on skills, economic development, and health integration supports the GSYWP’s goals of reducing inactivity and promoting inclusive growth.

# ROTHERHAM

Rotherham’s economic strategy centres on growth through investment in key sectors, infrastructure, and skills.

## REGENERATION

- Significant funding secured to revitalise the town centre and improve living conditions.

## KEY INITIATIVES

- Expansion of Advanced Manufacturing Park – attracts high-tech firms and skilled jobs.
- Investment in transport and digital connectivity.
- Workforce upskilling in advanced manufacturing, digital, and health.<sup>29</sup>

29. Council Plan – Rotherham context: [rotherham.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/council-plan-one-council-2](https://rotherham.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/council-plan-one-council-2)

### LOCAL CONTEXT

Population

**~265,000** **70% RURAL**

High deprivation: **22%** of residents in England’s most deprived 10%.

Rotherham’s strategy aligns with the GSYWP through its focus on high-tech job creation, infrastructure development, and inclusive workforce growth.





# SHEFFIELD

Sheffield's Growth Plan 2025–2035 aims to unlock economic potential and reduce inequalities by growing key sectors and raising living standards.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Advanced manufacturing, digital and creative industries, health-tech innovation.
- Infrastructure and skills investment to support inclusive growth.

## KEY INITIATIVES

- Sheffield Innovation District – supports start-ups and scale-ups in high-growth sectors.
- Local Plan to 2039 – includes 35,700 new homes, with a focus on sustainability and regeneration.

### LOCAL CONTEXT

- Largest city in South Yorkshire, home to over 40% of the region's population.
- Strong cultural identity and industrial heritage.

Sheffield's emphasis on innovation, green jobs, and health integration supports the GSYWP's ambition to reduce economic inactivity and promote inclusive prosperity.

# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA), as the accountable body for the [Get South Yorkshire Working Plan](#) (GSYWP), will lead on monitoring delivery and evaluating outcomes across the region.

SYMCA will ensure that all programme activity aligns with the strategic objectives of the GSYWP and contributes to measurable improvements in employment, health, and skills outcomes.

Monitoring will be embedded throughout the programme lifecycle, with partners required to report against agreed indicators at regular intervals. These indicators will reflect both national priorities and local ambitions, including employment rates, economic inactivity, job quality, and health-related barriers to work.

SYMCA will coordinate quarterly performance reviews with delivery partners, using a shared data framework to assess progress, identify risks, and inform continuous improvement. These reviews will feed into a biannual reporting cycle to the SYMCA Board and relevant stakeholders, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Annual impact reports will be published to summarise progress against strategic goals, highlight best practice, and inform future iterations of the plan. These reports will also support alignment with national frameworks such as the Get Britain Working White Paper.

These are outlined in more detail in [Appendix F: Proposed Outcomes and Metrics](#).



# REVIEW PROCESS

The **Get South Yorkshire Working Plan** will be reviewed and updated regularly over the next ten years to ensure its effectiveness and responsiveness to changing circumstances.

Progress against agreed actions will be assessed at appropriate junctures, particularly following major fiscal events and significant programme changes. This includes updates in response to locally delivered provisions such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Connect to Work, as well as national provisions.

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Ongoing engagement is central to the success of the **Get South Yorkshire Working Plan**, ensuring it remains relevant, responsive, and embedded into practice over time. We are committed to maintaining strong, collaborative relationships with a wide range of partners, including local authorities, the ICB and NHS providers, Jobcentre Plus, the National Careers Service, VCSE organisations, education and skills providers, employer and business groups, and trade unions, throughout the lifespan of the plan.

Crucially, we are committed to embedding citizen voice into the delivery and evolution of the plan. By actively involving individuals with lived experience of economic inactivity, we are ensuring that services are shaped by those they are intended to support. This includes creating mechanisms for continuous feedback, co-production, and community-led insight to inform decision-making and service design. Regular dialogue, shared data and insights, joint delivery mechanisms, and iterative learning loops will underpin our approach.

This commitment to inclusive, transparent engagement will help us adapt to emerging needs, maintain alignment across partners, and drive meaningful, lasting impact for South Yorkshire's people and communities.

Additionally, reviews will be conducted when South Yorkshire becomes a strategic authority or experiences significant local economic changes.

This dynamic approach ensures that the plan remains aligned with regional needs and national priorities, fostering continuous improvement and adaptation to new challenges and opportunities.

## GOVERNANCE

The delivery of the **Get South Yorkshire Working Plan** is supported by a mature and collaborative governance structure that brings together key partners across employment, health, and skills.

This structure ensures strategic alignment, shared accountability, and coordinated delivery across the region.

At the centre of this model is the **South Yorkshire Work and Health Board**, which provides strategic oversight of the region's integrated work and health agenda. The Board brings together senior representatives from the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA), the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (SYICB), Jobcentre Plus (JCP), local authorities, and other system partners. It acts as a programme and steering board for key initiatives including the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer and the Health and Growth Accelerator.

While the Board does not hold formal decision-making powers, it plays a critical role in shaping delivery, informing investment decisions, and ensuring that partners remain aligned around shared outcomes.

The Work and Health Board is supported by two sub-groups:

- 1

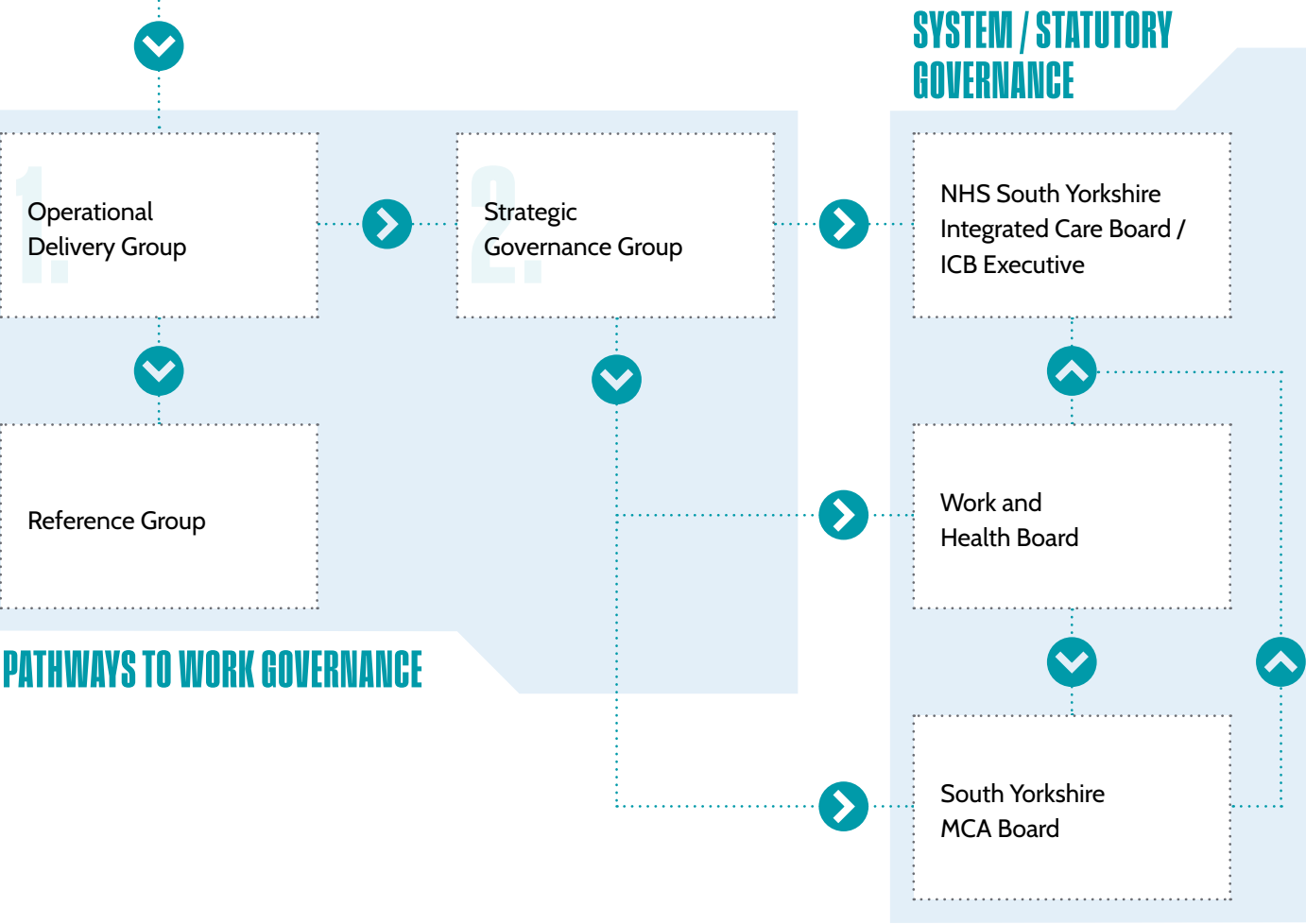
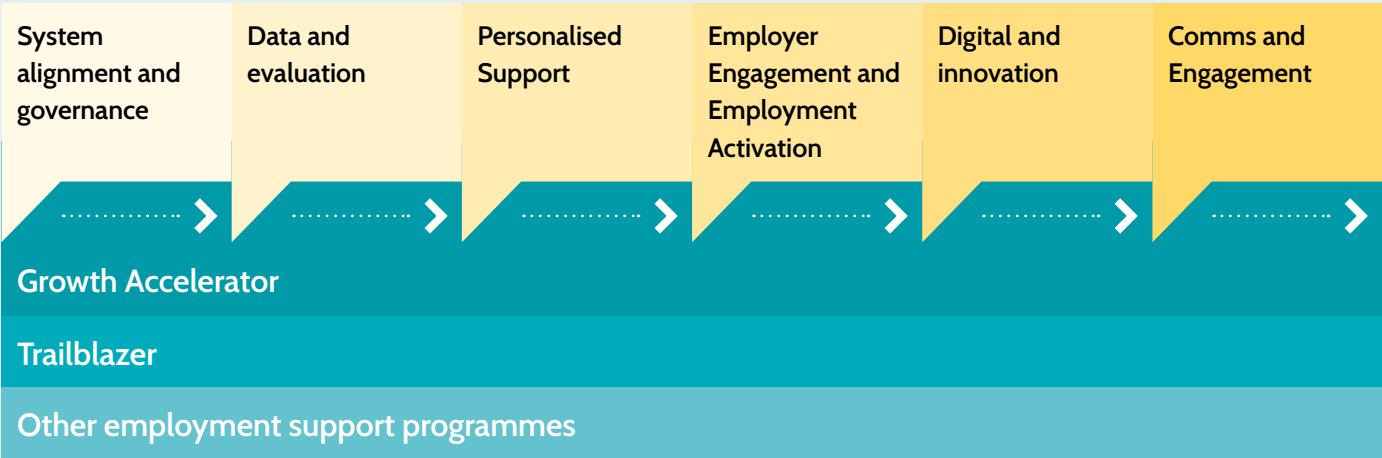
**Operational Delivery Group**

Focused on implementation, performance monitoring, and operational coordination across programmes.
- 2

**Strategic Governance Group**

Responsible for aligning strategic priorities, reviewing progress, and advising on system-wide decisions.

## PATHWAYS TO WORK WORKSTREAMS







# CONCLUSION

The [Get South Yorkshire Working Plan](#) represents a change in how we approach economic inactivity and employment support in the region.

It is a plan built on evidence, shaped by collaboration, and driven by ambition. By aligning health, skills, and employment systems, we are creating a more inclusive, responsive, and resilient labour market.

Our commitment is clear: to ensure that every resident, regardless of their background or circumstances, has the opportunity to access good work, improve their wellbeing, and contribute to a thriving South Yorkshire economy. Through continued partnership, innovation, and local leadership, we will deliver a future where work and health go hand in hand, and where no one is left behind.



APPENDIX A

This appendix summarises the labour market and economic landscape of South Yorkshire and its local authorities. Where relevant, wider Yorkshire and Humber data is included and signposted. Evidence is benchmarked against the England average to highlight key challenges. All data sources are referenced. Annual Population Survey figures are estimates and should be treated as indicative. Reference periods vary across sources, so minor misalignments may occur. The appendix provides a snapshot based on the data available at the time of drafting the GSYWP plan, with reference periods clearly stated.

South Yorkshire Labour Market Analysis

1. Economic Context and Productivity
  - South Yorkshire has a £40 billion economy and a population of 1.4 million.
  - The region is strategically positioned within England's transport and logistics network.
  - Its industrial heritage in coal, steel, and manufacturing has shaped the local workforce and economic geography.
  - Despite past economic decline, South Yorkshire retains strengths in high-precision engineering, advanced manufacturing, and applied problem-solving, now being adapted for the fourth industrial revolution.
  - Rotherham is among the fastest-growing sub-regional economies for productivity in the UK.
    - The region faces constraints including:
      - Low business density
      - Limited private sector R&D investment
      - Underutilisation of innovation assets
  - In 2023, South Yorkshire recorded:<sup>1</sup>
    - 38 start-ups per 10,000 people
    - 284 businesses per 10,000 people
    - Five fewer start-ups and 40 fewer businesses than West Yorkshire
  - These factors contribute to:
    - Fewer professional occupations
    - Lower median wages
    - Challenges in retaining graduate talent
2. Employment, Inactivity and Workforce Participation
  - Economic inactivity
  - In 2024, South Yorkshire's working-age economic inactivity rate was 25.2%, 3.9 percentage points (pp) higher when compared to the national average (21.3%).<sup>2</sup>
  - Rotherham (26.5%) and Sheffield (26.4%) see the highest rates in the region.

Local labour market fact sheet

Geography	Economic inactivity rate of 16–64 population (January–December 2024)
Barnsley	23.1%
Doncaster	23.2%
Rotherham	26.5%
Sheffield	26.4%
South Yorkshire	25.2%
England	21.3%

1. Centre for Cities, Combined Authority factsheet South Yorkshire, 2025

2. Annual Population Survey, January to December 2024 – ONS

Employment Rate

- South Yorkshire's employment rate was 72.5% in 2024, 3.1 pp below the national average (75.6%).<sup>3</sup>
- Rotherham (70.6%) and Sheffield (72.1%) see the lowest rates in the region.

Geography	Employment rate of 16–64 population (January–December 2024)
Barnsley	74.8%
Doncaster	73.4%
Rotherham	70.6%
Sheffield	72.1%
South Yorkshire	72.5%
England	75.6%

3. Annual Population Survey, January to December 2024 – ONS

4. Participation in education, training and NEET age 16 to 17 by local Authority, 2023/24 – DfE

NEET (not in education, employment or training)

- 4.9% of 16–17-year-olds were NEET in South Yorkshire in 2024, compared to 3.2% nationally.<sup>4</sup>
- Sheffield had the highest rate at 6.5%, followed by Rotherham 4.3%.

Geography	Proportion of those aged 16–17 NEET in 2024
Barnsley	3.4%
Doncaster	3.8%
Rotherham	4.3%
Sheffield	6.5%
South Yorkshire	4.9%
England	3.2%

5. Pupil absence in schools in England, academic year 2023/24 – DfE

Persistent Absence

- 22.2% of pupils in South Yorkshire were persistently absent in 2023/24, compared to 20.0% nationally.<sup>5</sup>

Geography	Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed of possible school sessions) in 2023/24
Barnsley	22%
Doncaster	21.2%
Rotherham	22.4%
Sheffield	22.7%
South Yorkshire	22.2%
England	20%

Lower-Paid Work

- Median gross annual earnings for South Yorkshire residents in 2024: £29,978, 5.8% below England (£31,840).<sup>7</sup>
- Female earnings are 7.6% below England average; male earnings 6.3% below.

Geography	Median gross annual salary of full-time and part-time residents in 2024 (Male and Female)	Median gross annual salary of full-time and part-time residents in 2024 (Male)	Median gross annual salary of full-time and part-time residents in 2024 (Female)
Barnsley	£30,435	£35,051	£25,848
Doncaster	£30,228	£35,338	£24,839
Rotherham	£28,001	£35,168	£23,715
Sheffield	£30,155	£35,190	£24,996
South Yorkshire	£29,978	£35,273	£24,812
England	£31,840	£37,503	£26,691

7. Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings – Resident Analysis – 2024 – ONS

**Unemployment**  
The South Yorkshire unemployment rate was 3.1% in 2024, lower than the national average (4.0%) but this is due to higher inactivity.<sup>6</sup>

Geography	Unemployment rate of 16–64 population (January–December 2024)	Economic inactivity rate of 16–64 population (January–December 2024)
Barnsley	2.7%	23.1%
Doncaster	4.5%	23.2%
Rotherham	4.0%	26.5%
Sheffield	2.1%	26.4%
South Yorkshire	3.1%	25.2%
England	4.0%	21.3%

6. Annual Population Survey, January to December 2024 – ONS



In-Work Poverty

- As of May 2025, 30% of Universal Credit claimants in South Yorkshire were in employment suggesting low quality/low pay work is an issue.<sup>8</sup>

Geography	% of Universal credit claimants unemployed – May 2025	% of Universal credit claimants employed – May 2025
Barnsley	68%	32%
Doncaster	67%	33%
Rotherham	70%	30%
Sheffield	71%	29%
South Yorkshire	70%	30%
England	65%	35%

8. People on Universal Credit – DWP

3. Skills, Qualifications and Education

Qualification Levels

- In 2024, 10.2% of working-age residents in South Yorkshire had no formal qualifications, compared to 6.6% nationally.<sup>9</sup>
- Rotherham (14.9%) and Barnsley (11.4%) have the highest rates.

Geography	% of residents aged 16–64 with no qualifications in 2024
Barnsley	11.4%
Doncaster	10.0%
Rotherham	14.9%
Sheffield	8.0%
South Yorkshire	10.2%
England	6.6%

Higher-Level Qualifications

- RQF Level 4+ attainment is consistently lower across all South Yorkshire authorities.<sup>9</sup>
- RQF Levels 1–3 are above average, but progression to higher levels is limited.

9. Annual Population Survey, January to December 2024 – ONS

Geography	% of residents aged 16–64 with RQF Levels 1-3 in 2024	% of residents aged 16–64 with RQF Levels 4+ in 2024
Barnsley	45.7%	39.8%
Doncaster	58.0%	25.5%
Rotherham	47.8%	33.2%
Sheffield	45.9%	42.1%
South Yorkshire	48.7%	36.7%
England	42.3%	46.8%

Skills Mismatch and Underemployment

- According to Census 2021, 9% of South Yorkshire residents could benefit from upskilling.<sup>10</sup>
- 21% need access to higher-skilled roles aligned with their qualifications.
- Only 50% of residents have qualifications matched to their occupation.

Geography	Matched (%)	More qualified than average (%)	Less qualified than average (%)
Barnsley	47%	22%	31%
Doncaster	45%	23%	32%
Rotherham	48%	21%	32%
Sheffield	55%	20%	25%
South Yorkshire	50%	21%	29%
England	51%	20%	27%

South Yorkshire has strong institutions:

- University of Sheffield
- Sheffield Hallam University
- Technical education providers

Despite this, private sector investment in skills and R&D is low. In 2018, despite similar levels of public R&D investment per person, Greater Manchester businesses invested £40 more per person in R&D than South Yorkshire.<sup>11</sup>

10. Census 2021 – ONS

11. South Yorkshire Plan for Growth: Economic Analysis

4. Sectoral Strengths, Challenges and Labour Market Demand

Key Growth Sectors

Advanced Manufacturing

- £3.4bn GVA; 12.5% of regional economy.<sup>11</sup>
- Hosts global firms (e.g. Boeing, Rolls-Royce).
- Innovation assets: AMRC, COMPASS.

Clean Energy

- Largest share of UK CleanTech economy (6.9%).<sup>11</sup>
- Capabilities in hydrogen, nuclear (SMR, fusion), and sustainable aviation fuels.

Digital and Tech

- £3.1bn GVA; 700% growth over the last decade.<sup>11</sup>
- Strong in DeepTech, AI, robotics, quantum.

Creative Industries

- Up to £2bn GVA; 6% annual growth.<sup>11</sup>
- Strengths in content production, live events, and design.

Life Sciences

- £3bn GVA; 275 health tech organisations.<sup>11</sup>
- Focus on medical technology, gene therapy, preventative health.

Skills Shortages

- In 2024 35% of vacancies in South Yorkshire were hard to fill (same as nationally).<sup>12</sup>
- 27% of vacancies advertised due to skills shortages (same as nationally)
- 5.3% of employees judged not fully proficient higher than the national average of 4.1%

Job Quality and Insecurity

- South Yorkshire sees a higher concentration of employment in elementary occupations with an estimated 14.4% employed in elementary occupations in 2024, higher than the 8.9% nationally.<sup>9</sup>
- The wider Yorkshire and the Humber region sees a higher proportion of employees in insecure work compared to other regions (10.7% in 2024), second only to London (11.7%).<sup>13</sup>

12. Employer Skills Survey 2024 – ONS

13. Inequalities in insecure work – The Health Foundation

5. Health and Workforce Resilience

Life Expectancy

- South Yorkshire residents live 1.5 to 1.9 years less than the England average.<sup>14</sup>
- Healthy life expectancy is approximately 7 years lower than the national average.<sup>15</sup>

14. Life Expectancy for Local Areas of Great Britain December 2024 – ONS

15. Health state life expectancy, all ages December 2024 – ONS

Geography	Life expectancy 2021–2023 period (Average of male and female)	Healthy life expectancy 2021–2023 period (Average of male and female)
Barnsley	78.5	50.8
Doncaster	79	55.5
Rotherham	79.3	53.7
Sheffield	80.2	56.4
South Yorkshire	79.4	54.1
England	81.1	61.6

Fit Notes and Health-Related Absence

- South Yorkshire saw an average of 7,925 fit notes issued monthly (April 2024–March 2025).<sup>16</sup>
- This equates to 0.9% of the working-age population, compared to 0.7% nationally.
- When looking at PIP cases which were awarded between April 2024 and March 2025, the most prevalent disabilities included mental health and musculoskeletal conditions.<sup>17</sup>

Geography	Average of live fit notes (April 2024–March 2025) as proportion of 16–64 population
Barnsley	0.9%
Doncaster	0.8%
Rotherham	1%
Sheffield	0.9%
South Yorkshire	0.9%
England	0.7%

16. Universal Credit Health Case Load – DWP

17. PIP Clearances – DWP

Working with Long-Term Health Conditions

- Estimated 248,600 people in South Yorkshire are in work while managing a health condition lasting over 12 months.<sup>9</sup>
- This represents 48.2% of all individuals with long-term health conditions.<sup>9</sup>



Geography	Residents with health conditions or illnesses lasting more than 12 months (aged 16+) in employment 2024
Barnsley	45.2%
Doncaster	50.5%
Rotherham	42.4%
Sheffield	50.8%
South Yorkshire	48.2%
England	49.1%

Disability and Economic Inactivity

- In the UK disabled people are almost three times more likely to be economically inactive than non-disabled people.<sup>18</sup>
- South Yorkshire PIP cases as a proportion of the 16+ population stood at 10.1% in January 2025, higher than the England average of 7.2%.<sup>19</sup>
- As of December 2024, 4.3% of the 16+ population in South Yorkshire were on universal credit with limited capability for work and work-related activity, higher than the England average of 3.1%.<sup>20</sup>

Long-Term Sickness

- Cited by 28.1% of economically inactive individuals across South Yorkshire in 2024, approx. 63,000 residents.<sup>21</sup>
- Whilst age breakdowns are not available in the latest data, Census 2021,<sup>22</sup> suggested that older adults (50–64) cited long-term sickness than nationally suggesting long-term sickness disproportionately affects 50–64 year olds in South Yorkshire (34%, 5.3pp above the national average).

Geography	% of those economically inactive age 16–64 citing long-term sickness as the reason (January – December 2024)
Barnsley	34%
Doncaster	25.1%
Rotherham	32.7%
Sheffield	25.4%
South Yorkshire	28.1%
England	27.4%

18. The Employment of Disabled People 2024 – GOV.UK

19. PIP Cases with Entitlement – DWP

20. People on Universal Credit – DWP

21. Annual Population Survey, January to December 2024 – ONS

22. Census 2021 – ONS

APPENDIX B

Mapping existing local support

Integrated Support for Employment and Skills in South Yorkshire

South Yorkshire offers a layered and integrated employment and skills support system designed to meet diverse needs across its communities. The region combines national programmes with locally commissioned services to create inclusive, person-centred pathways into work.

Support is structured around four strategic pathways, Engage & Empower, Prevent & Protect, Secure & Sustain, and Thrive & Elevate, and delivered through a mix of national, regional, and community-based initiatives. These programmes work in concert to address barriers to employment, promote progression, and strengthen employer engagement.

Core Employment Support

Includes nationally commissioned services such as Jobcentre Plus, Restart, Access to Work, National Careers Service and the Flexible Support Fund, which provide foundational support for jobseekers, including those with health conditions or disabilities.

Skills and Progression Pathways

Regionally coordinated by SYMCA and partners, these include Skills Bootcamps, Adult Skills Fund (ASF), and Free Courses for Jobs (FCJ), supporting upskilling and career development aligned to labour market needs.

Community-Based and Specialist Support

Delivered by local authorities and VCSE partners, these services, such as Connect to Work, WorkWell, the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer, Health and Growth Accelerator, and Individual Placement and Support (IPS) for people with severe mental illness, offer tailored, wraparound support, often co-located in community hubs and family centres.

Together, these programmes form a cohesive ecosystem of support that enables individuals to overcome barriers, build skills, and move towards sustainable employment.

Support Mapping Table

Programme/ Service	Delivery Partner(s)	Primary Pathway(s)	Focus Area	Target Cohort	Start Date	End Date
Connect to Work  1. SEQF: 2. IPS 3. IPS	1. Local authorities 2. TBC 3. Local authorities	Engage & Empower	Supported employment	1. People who are neurodivergent 2. For people with a disability or health conditions 3. Disadvantaged cohorts	1. Aug 25 2.. Oct 25 3. Apr 26	Mar 30
Growth Accelerator	VCS/NHS	Prevent & Protect	Health-focused preventative interventions	Adults at risk of worklessness due to health issues	Apr 25	Mar 26
Economic Inactivity Trailblazer	VCS/LAs	Engage & Empower	System change programme for economically inactive	Economically inactive adults (incl. long-term sick)	Apr 25	Mar 26
UKSPF	LAs	Engage & Empower	Keyworker support for excluded and inactive groups	Excluded and inactive groups (incl. disabled, NEET)	Oct 23	Mar 26
IPS for Severe MI	SYHA	Secure & Sustain	Intensive support for severe mental illness	Adults with severe mental illness	Oct 22	Mar 26
Employment Advisors in Talking Therapies	SY Mental Health Trusts	Multiple / General	Psychological therapies with employment support	Adults accessing talking therapies	Apr 22	Mar 25
WorkWell	SYHA	Prevent & Protect	Early intervention for health-related work issues	Adults with emerging health-related work barriers	Oct 24	Mar 26
Working Win	Shaw Trust	Engage & Empower	IPS support for people with health conditions	Adults with health conditions/ disabilities	Apr 23	Sep 26
Apprenticeship Hub	In-house/ Sheffield College	Prevent & Protect Thrive & Elevate	Connecting individuals and businesses to apprenticeship opportunities, supporting skills and career progression, and facilitating unspent levy funds	Local individuals and employers, particularly those looking to access apprenticeship opportunities and levy funding	Oct 23	Oct 25 Pending further funding approval
Careers Hub	SYMCA/ local authorities	Prevent & Protect	Supporting schools and colleges to deliver high-quality careers guidance and connect young people to education, training, and job opportunities	Young people in schools and colleges	2021	Sept 26 Pending further funding approval
DWP Restart	The Growth Company	Engage & Empower	Mandatory support for long-term unemployed	Long-term unemployed adults (18+)	Jun 21	Dec 27
JCP Work Coaches	JCP	Secure & Sustain	Individualised support for jobseekers	All jobseekers, incl. specialist roles for disability, youth, prison leavers, families	Jan 13	

Programme/ Service	Delivery Partner(s)	Primary Pathway(s)	Focus Area	Target Cohort	Start Date	End Date
Skills Bank	In-house/ Calderdale College	Thrive & Elevate	Employer- led workforce development	Employees and employers in South Yorkshire	Jul 22	Oct 25 Pending further funding approval
LSE	Doncaster, Barnsley, Sheffield local authorities	Multiple/ General	Supported employment for neurodiverse individuals	Neurodiverse adults (incl. autism, ADHD)	Nov 22	May 26 (referrals have now closed)
Adult Skills Fund	Grant (including local colleges and local authorities) and procured learning organisations	Engage & Empower Secure & Sustain Thrive & Elevate	Essential skills training for personal development, employment, or progression.	Adults aged 19+, economically inactive, unemployed, employed	Aug 21	Annual Budget - Ongoing
Skills Bootcamps	Grant (including local colleges and local authorities) and procured learning organisations	Secure & Sustain Thrive & Elevate	Targeted training courses to address employer skills gaps and support residents into job outcomes	Adults aged 19+. Unemployed seeking employment, self- employed aspiring to obtain new contracts/ business growth, employed seeking career change or progression with existing employer	Mar 23	Annual Budget TBC
Free Courses for Jobs	Grant (including local colleges and local authorities) and procured learning organisations	Secure & Sustain Thrive & Elevate	Funded Level 3 course opportunities to support adults aged 19+ into work or to progress in work	Adults aged 19+, unemployed or employed but earn less than £34,977.43 and who do not already hold a Level 3 qualification	Aug 21	Annual Budget - Ongoing

The **Jobcentre Plus Offer** is a comprehensive package of personalised support aimed at helping individuals find and sustain employment, particularly those facing barriers due to age, health, or personal circumstances. Central to the offer are **Work Coaches**, who provide tailored, work-focused guidance throughout an individual's journey. Specialist roles enhance this support, including **Disability Employment Advisors**, **Youth Employability Coaches**, **Prison Work Coaches**, and **Family Community Work Coaches**, each addressing specific needs.

Jobcentres also host **Youth Hubs**, offer additional support for over-50s and those with health conditions, and deploy **Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders** for vulnerable claimants.

The **Flexible Support Fund** and **Health Adjustment Passport** provide financial and practical assistance, while national programmes like **Restart** and **Access to Work** offer extended help for long-term unemployed and those with disabilities.

Employer engagement is strengthened through **Employer Services** teams and **DWP Work Psychology Services**, promoting inclusive recruitment. The **New Jobs and Careers Service**, launched via a Pathfinder in West Yorkshire, will build on these foundations to deliver more personalised, skills-focused support. Overall, the offer reflects a joined-up approach across government and partners to reduce poverty and support economic growth through employment.

## APPENDIX C

### 1. National Context

The **Get South Yorkshire Working Plan** (GSYWP) aligns with several national strategies aimed at reducing economic inactivity and promoting inclusive employment including:

**Get Britain Working: White Paper on Economic Inactivity and Employment Reform (November 2024).**<sup>23</sup>

Sets out radical reforms to tackle economic inactivity and build an inclusive labour market, aiming for an 80% national employment rate.

Key Recommendations:

- Launch a new national jobs and careers service
- Introduce a Youth Guarantee for learning or earning
- Reform health and disability benefits to support work
- Mobilise local authorities to integrate work, health, and skills support
- Support employers to recruit and retain people with health conditions

**Keep Britain Working Review: Discovery (March 2025).**<sup>24</sup>

Explores employer-led solutions to health-related economic inactivity, with a focus on prevention, retention, and rehabilitation.

Key Recommendations:

- Align incentives between employers and employees to support retention
- Improve access to timely interventions, especially for mental health
- Introduce effective case management for those absent due to ill health
- Prioritise rapid return to work within the first year of absence
- Promote system-wide change rather than incremental tweaks

**Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working (March 2025).**<sup>25</sup>

Consultation paper proposing reforms to health and disability benefits and employment support, building on the Get Britain Working White Paper.

23. [Get Britain Working White Paper – GOV.UK](#)

24. [Keep Britain Working Review: Discovery – GOV.UK](#)

### Links to local and national strategies

Key Recommendations:

- Replace Work Capability Assessment with PIP-based eligibility
- Restrict PIP to those with higher needs
- Reform Universal Credit health element
- Launch pilots including Try Work Guarantee, PIP Transition Support Service, Community Support Hubs, Integrated Health & Employment Services, Access to Work Reform Pilot

**Make Work Pay: Employment Rights Bill (October 2024 – ongoing).**<sup>26</sup>

Aims to modernise employment law and strengthen protections for workers, as part of the government's 'Make Work Pay' agenda.

Key Recommendations:

- Ban exploitative zero-hours contracts
- End 'fire and rehire' practices
- Make flexible working and parental leave day-one rights
- Strengthen protections for pregnant women and whistleblowers
- Establish the Fair Work Agency and Fair Pay Agreements
- Reinstate negotiating bodies for school support staff and social care

**Fit for the Future: 10-Year Health Plan for England (July 2025).**<sup>27</sup>

Sets out a long-term vision to reinvent the NHS through community-based care, digital transformation, and prevention-first approaches.

Key Recommendations:

- Move care from hospitals to communities
- Transition from analogue to digital services
- Shift focus from sickness to prevention
- Introduce new neighbourhood provider contracts
- Empower patients with choice and control
- Align NHS workforce and finances with reform goals

25. [Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper – GOV.UK](#)

26. [Make Work Pay: Employment Rights Bill: Government response to the Committee's Third Report](#)

27. [10 Year Health Plan for England: fit for the future – GOV.UK](#)



2. Regional Context

GSYWP complements and operationalises several regional strategies:

South Yorkshire Skills Strategy.<sup>28</sup>

- Missions:
- Move those far from the labour market into work
  - Raise attainment of core knowledge and skills
  - Increase supply of a high-skilled workforce

South Yorkshire Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) Strategy.<sup>29</sup>

- Aims to improve health outcomes and workforce participation
- Supports co-location of health and employment services

South Yorkshire's Local Growth Plan

- Focuses on economic recovery and transformation.
- Aligns with GSYWP's employment and inclusion goals.
- Will be published in Autumn 2025

Mayor's Better Business Campaign

- Promotes inclusive recruitment and employer engagement
- Supports job creation and progression
- To be launched in 2025

South Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).<sup>30</sup>

- Aligns training with employer needs
- Addresses digital and sector-specific skills gaps

28. South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority – South Yorkshire MCA

29. Integrated Care Partnership Strategy – South Yorkshire I.C.S.

30. South-Yorkshire-Local-Skills-Improvement-Plan-Digital-Skills-Final.pdf

APPENDIX D

Proposed outcomes and metrics

Core metrics	Data source
<b>Increase Employment Rate:</b> Aim to raise the employment rate for people aged 18 to 66 towards the long-term ambition of 80%	<b>Office for National Statistics (ONS):</b> Labour Force Survey, Annual Population Survey  <b>South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA):</b> Employment profiles and regional reports

Core metrics	Data source
<b>Reduce Economic Inactivity:</b> Decrease the proportion of the working-age population that is economically inactive due to health issues, caregiving responsibilities, or other barriers	<b>ONS:</b> Disability Employment Gap statistics from the Annual Population Survey  <b>Department for Work and Pensions (DWP):</b> Disability employment reports and statistics
<b>Support Young People:</b> Increase the proportion of 18 to 24-year-olds in education, employment, or training, and ensure more 16 to 21-year-olds are in education or jobs with training	<b>ONS:</b> Youth employment and NEET (not in education, employment, or training) statistics  <b>Local Authority Education Departments:</b> Data on education and training participation rates
<b>Enhance Job Security:</b> Reduce the incidence of severely insecure work, including gig economy jobs, zero-hour contracts, and part-time work	<b>ONS:</b> Data on insecure work, including gig economy jobs and zero-hour contracts  <b>Work Foundation:</b> Reports on job security and employment conditions
<b>Improve Wage Levels:</b> Raise the average weekly wage to align more closely with the national average	<b>ONS:</b> Average weekly earnings data  <b>Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE):</b> Detailed wage statistics
<b>Support Lone Parents and Families:</b> Increase the employment rate among lone parents and parents in couples, reducing the number of families where at least one parent is out of work	<b>ONS:</b> Employment rates among lone parents and families from the Annual Population Survey  <b>DWP:</b> Reports on family employment and benefits
<b>Address Local Variations:</b> Reduce local variations in employment rates, ensuring more uniform employment opportunities across South Yorkshire	<b>ONS:</b> Local area employment statistics  <b>SYMCA:</b> Regional employment profiles and local authority reports

APPENDIX E

Jargon buster

Term/Acronym	Definition
<b>Adult Skills Fund (ASF)</b>	Funding for (19+ yrs) adult education and training, including basic skills and vocational qualifications.
<b>Better Business Campaign</b>	A regional initiative to promote inclusive recruitment and workforce development among employers.
<b>Connect to Work</b>	A new integrated supported employment programme for people with health conditions, physical or learning disabilities or from a disadvantaged group.
<b>DWP</b>	Department for Work and Pensions – UK government department responsible for welfare, pensions, and employment.
<b>Economic Inactivity</b>	Refers to people of working age who are not in employment and not actively seeking work (e.g. due to health, caring responsibilities, or early retirement).
<b>Equal Rights Bill</b>	Legislation aimed at strengthening protections against workplace discrimination and promoting equality.
<b>Free Courses for Jobs (FCFJ)</b>	Government-funded Level 3 courses for adults to improve employability in priority sectors.
<b>Getting South Yorkshire Working Plan (GSYWP)</b>	Get South Yorkshire Working Plan – the region's strategic framework to reduce economic inactivity and improve employment outcomes.
<b>Integrated Care Board (ICB)</b>	Oversees health services and integration with employment support.
<b>Insecure Work</b>	Employment with low stability or protections, such as zero-hours/fixed term contracts, agency work, or gig economy roles.
<b>In-Work Poverty</b>	When individuals are employed but still live below the poverty line due to low wages or unstable hours.
<b>Individual Placement and Support (IPS)</b>	A personalised, evidence-based supported employment model that rapidly helps people with health conditions or disabilities into paid work and provides tailored, ongoing one-to-one support integrated with clinical care.
<b>Job Centre Plus (JCP)</b>	National employment service providing job search support and benefit administration.
<b>Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)</b>	A regional strategy to align education and training provision with employer needs.
<b>Local Supported Employment (LSE)</b>	Supported employment programme for individuals with learning disabilities and/ or neurodiversity (no longer accepting referrals).

Term/Acronym	Definition
National Careers Service (NCS)	Offers careers advice, skills assessments, and job preparation support.
NEET	Not in education, employment or training – refers to young people aged 16–24 who are disengaged from formal education or work.
Pathways to Work	<p>South Yorkshire’s integrated employment support system. It brings together all local employment, skills, and relevant health services under one umbrella, enabling coordinated delivery across partners.</p> <p>Within this we have identified four strategic pathways, each supporting residents at different stages of their employment journey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Prevent &amp; Protect</b> – Early support to help people stay in work or education and avoid disengagement.</li><li>• <b>Engage &amp; Empower</b> – Intensive help for those furthest from the labour market to re-engage with work or training.</li><li>• <b>Secure &amp; Sustain</b> – Support for job-ready individuals to access and retain good-quality employment.</li><li>• <b>Thrive &amp; Elevate</b> – Help for people in work to progress, upskill, and move into better-paid, more secure roles.</li></ul>
RQF Levels	Regulated Qualifications Framework – UK system for categorising qualifications by level (e.g. Level 1 = GCSE grades D–G; Level 4+ = Higher Education).
Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF)	A model for providing high-quality supported employment for people with learning disabilities and/or who are neurodivergent.
Skills Bank	Provides financial support to businesses for workforce training linked to growth.
Skills Bootcamps	Short, intensive training programmes designed to help adults gain sector-specific skills quickly.
South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA)	The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority is a group of local councils (Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield), led by the mayor, that work together to improve transport, create jobs, and support local services, using some funding given directly from the government.
Universal Credit (UC)	A UK welfare benefit for people who are unemployed or on low income.
UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)	Government funding to help local areas invest in jobs, skills, businesses, and community projects.
Work and Health Programme	Employment support programme for unemployed and economically inactive individuals (no longer taking referrals).
WorkWell	A personalised employment support service helping people with health conditions or disabilities to stay in or return to work.
Working Win	SYMCA’s IPS-based supported employment programme for people with health conditions (transitioning into Connect to Work).



# PATHWAYS TO WORK SOUTH YORKSHIRE



City of  
Doncaster  
Council

Rotherham  
Metropolitan  
Borough Council



**NHS**  
South Yorkshire  
Integrated Care Board

