



HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

14th March 2024

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| REPORT TITLE: | WORKWELL BID |
| REPORT OF: | PLACE DIRECTOR (WIRRAL), NHS CHESHIRE AND MERSEYSIDE |

REPORT SUMMARY

The WorkWell programme is an early-intervention work and health support and assessment service, providing holistic support to overcome health-related barriers to employment, and a single, joined-up gateway to other support services. WorkWell services will involve a genuine understanding of local needs. They will draw on new and existing support in local areas, joining up health services, local organisations, and job centres.

Wirral Place has been supported by Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB) to submit a bid in partnership with Knowsley Place. This is in recognition of the specific economic and population challenges faced by each borough, but also of their work in creating effective partnerships across all sectors. The Workwell Partnership would support Wirral Place level strategic aims, including the Wirral Plan 2021-26 and Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-27

The outcome of the grant application will be known in early April 2024. Successful partnerships will be required to provide a fully costed delivery plan by 31st June 2024 and aim to have mobilised the service by October 2024.

This report affects all wards and is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to note this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 This report is to provide the Board with information and assurance on the work undertaken locally to attract resources into the borough to enhance employment support and to positively influence the wellbeing of Wirral citizens through their remaining in employment through the establishment of new services to support people and to integrate strategic effort around health and employment.

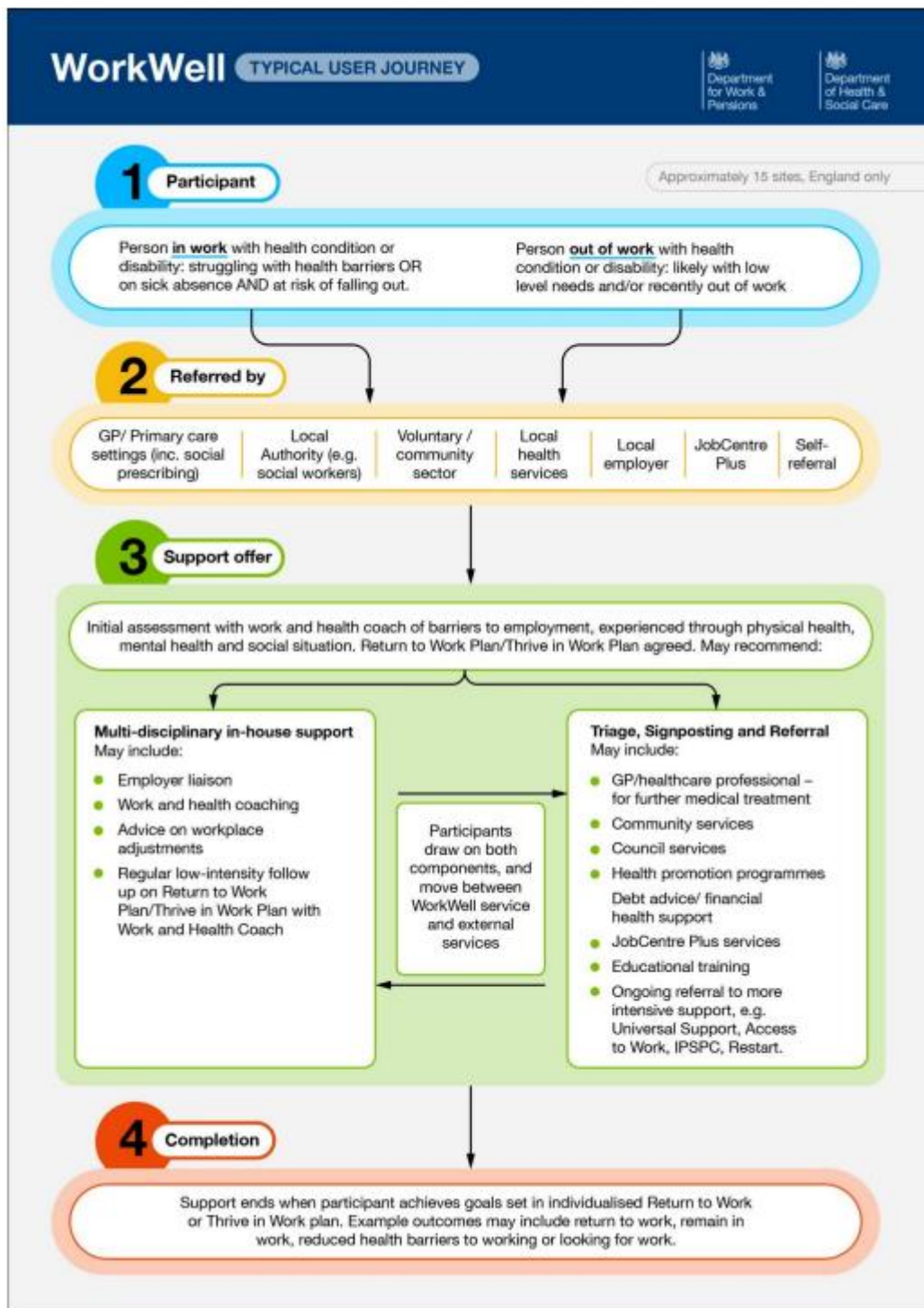
2. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other option has been considered as the Wirral WorkWell vanguard proposal is a bid for funding against a national programme with a defined application process.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1. There is significant documentary evidence that work and health are inextricably linked. Being in work raises living standards and pulls people out of poverty, and a prolonged absence from work can lead to a deterioration in health and wellbeing, both due to financial strains and the absence of positive psychological and social support.
- 3.2. The government announced a support package at the Spring Budget 2023 of over £2 billion to support disabled people and people with health conditions to start, stay and succeed in work. Building on this, the Autumn Statement 2023 set out plans to expand the employment support and treatment available, and reform the ways disabled people and people with health conditions interact with the state.
- 3.3. The WorkWell Vanguard Service will be expected provide evidence-based, low intensity work and health assessments that support individuals with their low-level occupational health needs and to overcome barriers to work. The service will be expected to prioritise intervening at the earliest possible point. It is expected that the majority of people who will benefit from the WorkWell service are those in work with health barriers putting their work at risk, and those recently unemployed with health conditions. The service will also, crucially, sit at the heart of the local work and health system, connecting together the wider support and services available to meet participants' needs.
- 3.4. In practice, there is an expectation that Vanguard Partnerships will deliver across three broad objectives:

- Deliver a holistic work and health service which includes an initial assessment of barriers to employment, return-to-work/thrive-in-work planning that address physical, psychological and social needs, employer liaison and advice on workplace adjustments, personalised work and health support with follow-up as required. The service will also serve as a triage function, connecting participants into the rest of the local work and health infrastructure. A typical user journey through the service is summarised in the diagram below:



- Take forward an integrated work and health strategy that understands the extent of cross-system working already in place in the local geography and builds on existing work and health services to support greater integration between health and care, employment and wider community place-based services.
- Be part of a national learning programme through participation in national and local evaluation in order to provide a bank of delivery experience and expertise that ensures all areas will benefit from the pilot site experience and learning.

- 3.5. The launch of the WorkWell programme was part of delivering those plans. Across 2024/25 and 2025/26, around £57 million is planned to be made available through a grants competition for approximately 15 areas to design and deliver WorkWell Vanguard Services across both financial years.
- 3.6. The pathway to approve and submit bids for this scheme was via the requisite area Integrated Care Board (ICB). The funding will be awarded to the ICB and distributed to the successful partnerships. Cheshire and Merseyside ICB have supported an integrated partnership bid between Wirral and Knowsley Boroughs.
- 3.7. Wirral place is a potentially strong candidate for inclusion in this scheme which could attract circa £2.6 million in support of the programme, due to the high numbers of people in the borough experiencing worklessness due to long term illness or disability. Details of the relevant data around employment, sickness and disability for the borough have been included in the grant application which can be read in full at appendix 1.
- 3.8. A key factor in the decision of the ICB to support this bid was the effectiveness of local partnership working, which has resulted in the establishment and mobilisation of multi-agency targeted services, for example integrated discharge and reablement services, and digital inclusion schemes. The ability to quickly establish and mobilise such partnerships has been further evidenced in the development of this bid within very challenging timescales.
- 3.9. If the application is successful, the ensuing WorkWell programme will significantly support Wirral Place level strategic ambition in terms of economic development, employability and the health and wellbeing benefits of employment. Work and Health is a fundamental component of the Wirral's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which brings together existing work and health initiatives and assets under one coherent place-based strategy. The Wirral Place Health and Care Plan also recognises that to help enable Wirral to be a thriving, inclusive borough, there is an ambition to establish an effective workforce strategy, recognising the health and wellbeing benefits of employment, promoting understanding of our people needs and responding to the workforce challenges. The Workforce programme within this plan will champion the WorkWell partnership as a key enabler of workforce health in Wirral.

- 3.10. The completion of the grant application involved a strong place level partnership which included health and care commissioning and provider organisations, public health, council employment services, local sector department of work and pensions (DWP) and Job Centre Plus teams, and a very well-coordinated collaborative of Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector (VCFSE) partners. This partnership connected fully with a similar partnership within Knowsley Place and with corporate colleagues at the ICB to curate and complete a well integrated bid, which was submitted to the national DWP team on 22nd January 2024.
- 3.11. The outcome of the grant application will be known in early April 2024. Successful partnerships will be required to provide a fully costed delivery plan by 31st June 2024 and aim to have mobilised the service by October 2024.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The grant application is for £3.9 million to fund the WorkWell schemes for Wirral and Knowsley and to cover leadership and evaluation for the entire scheme. The grant is expected to fund the service for a period of 18-months from October 2024 until March 2026. No funding is guaranteed beyond this period, however DWP at a national level aim to use the learning from the scheme to build a business case for sustainable service funding beyond this period.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 In addition to the establishment of a small core team, the WorkWell programme is based on the creation of clear and seamless pathways into existing health and work, and employment support programmes. In order to build on the integration of services it is expected that the WorkWell service would be connected into existing ICT and assets as appropriate.

7. RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The partnership tasked with establishing the application have considered the risks of the establishment and mobilisation of this programme. These include recruitment, case finding and financial sustainability. If the Wirral proposal is accepted and funding provided, a detailed programme plan for mobilisation will be developed, including a comprehensive risk and mitigation plan.
- 7.2 The Wirral system has identified a significant workforce risk including recruitment, retention and sickness absence. The potential impact of this risk includes provider

inability to meet demand for care, leading to quality and safety impacts through delays in care provision, absence of specific clinical skills and financial impacts of mitigation through temporary workforce solutions. It is envisaged that the WorkWell vanguard proposal would support the mitigation for this risk.

The risks of an unsuccessful application has been considered by the partners involved in developing the Wirral elements of the bid. Whilst clearly the absence of a funded service would result in an inability to deliver the desired level of service, partners have already identified that the effectiveness and efficacy of existing funded services to support employment and employability would be enhanced through the connections made and the opportunities to streamline referral and support pathways for people. There is an ambition to develop and further integrate service effort whether or not Wirral receives the additional funding.

8. ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The WorkWell bid was developed at pace following the publication of the opportunity by DWP in late November 2023. Despite the challenging timescales significant engagement was undertaken with key stakeholders across the Place and in particular with the Wirral VCFSE community.

9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside have a legal requirement to make sure their policies, and the way they carry out their work, do not discriminate against anyone. The WorkWell ethos and approach in Wirral will focus on tackling health inequalities and the important health and wellbeing benefits of employment. If the grant application is successful a key part of the mobilisation programme of work will include the completion of impact assessments to ensure any adverse impact is identified and mitigating actions put in place where possible. This report is for information and an EIA is not required.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no specific environment or climate implications.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Community Wealth Building in Wirral focusses on partnerships and collaboration. These partnerships are led by Wirral Council with external partners and stakeholders, including residents. NHS Cheshire and Merseyside will support the Council in community wealth building by ensuring health and care organisations in the borough have a focus on reducing health inequalities and contribute to the development of a resilient and inclusive economy for Wirral. The WorkWell proposal

will complement and enhance the existing partnerships for community wealth building and economic regeneration through the support of a vibrant employment economy and a healthy workforce in Wirral.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 WorkWell Grant Application Cheshire and Merseyside ICB

The PDF file in this paper and appendix may not be suitable to view for people with disabilities, users of assistive technology or mobile phone devices. Please contact julian.eyre@nhs.net if you would like this document in an accessible format.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

WorkWell Prospectus (DWP and NHS England 2023)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Wirral Health and Wellbeing Board in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting | Date |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Wirral Place Based Partnership Board | 22 nd February 2024 |
| Wirral Health and Wellbeing Board | 7 th December 2023 (Verbal update) |