



SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

Get Surrey Working Plan

*A partnership approach,
informed by evidence*

FINAL DRAFT

20 November 2025



Connect to Work:
Support for you and your employees to help them stay in, and succeed, at work.



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Executive summary

This plan sets out delivery priorities in Surrey framed within the Get Britain Working Plan. Through evidence and stakeholder engagement, we have identified key local issues we need to focus on and address together across the system to reduce inequality in our county.

Surrey is an area of many economic strengths, a dynamic innovative region long considered a key contributor to the UK economy, with more than 110,000 businesses and a highly skilled workforce. In a dynamic economy, past achievements are no guarantee of future success, and there are several strategic challenges, including significant numbers of people in small neighbourhoods, often overlooked by data sets, that struggle with poverty, poor physical and mental health, worklessness, alcohol and substance abuse, and domestic abuse.

Our primary focus through the Get Surrey Working Plan, is on supporting our 26,900 economically inactive residents that are seeking employment, our key areas of deprivation, and key cohorts facing barriers to employment.

The response to these local challenges will entail streamlining the skills and employment offer and ensuring clear pathways are in place for the range of programmes now and in the future.

When addressing unemployment in Surrey, it is important to recognise the polycentric and mixed urban and rural nature of our county, with the population spread across different areas, including some that are difficult to access, which can present challenges for targeting geographies and areas of need.

This plan is part of a strategic co-designed approach to bring together the various local strategies, creating a harmonised and coordinated Workforce, Employment and Skills Framework.

This work directly aligns with priority 1 of the [Surrey Economic Growth Strategy](#), which commits to ensuring Surrey's residents can support the workforce and skills demands of Surrey businesses.

Across all aspects of the plan, we will work to core principles to ensure the best outcomes for Surrey:

- We will recognise the core role of employers as investors in developing a thriving Surrey workforce.
- We will take a strengths-based, individualised approach in our employment service offer to residents.
- We will take a joined up, cross-system approach to delivering an exceptional outcome-based employment and skills service.

As part of our framework, we will ensure that, in our approach to operationalisation:

- We understand the priority workforce needs of our employers and support them to have access to the appropriately skilled local workforce they require.
- Surrey residents facing barriers to employment are given the support they need to take up the substantial range of employment opportunities available in Surrey.
- We work across the system to actively support access to good quality, sustained employment as a significant opportunity to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for people, particularly those with long-term health conditions and / or those facing mental / physical health challenges.

As this plan sets out, there is already a lot of effective provision and work underway but strategic gaps remain. Current and upcoming initiatives and programmes such as Connect to Work and WorkWell will help to address this. The new [STEP Surrey](#) portal will also ensure a joined-up and easily accessible approach to employment support.

There is much still to do and with developments such as the devolution of the Adult Skills Fund, we will be able to ensure a truly local approach to skills and employment, responding to need in a way that has not been possible before.

As the county embarks into Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), this strategic partnership approach to skills and employment is vital to ensure we work together to achieve maximum benefits for Surrey. The governance section in the plan summarises the structure set out to help ensure ongoing engagement and shared commitment against priorities, with the Get Surrey Working Plan embedded under the One Surrey Growth Board, with additional oversight from the Health and Wellbeing Board and its Prevention and Wider Determinants of Health Delivery Board.

Introduction and background

All areas nationally are producing local Get Britain Working Plans which are central to the government's ambition for a thriving labour market where everyone has the opportunity for good work and to achieve the ambition of an 80% employment rate. This plan sets out the picture for Surrey, considering related work and plans to confirm priorities.

Local plans are tasked with tackling six key issues identified in the Get Britain Working White Paper:

- too many people are excluded from the labour market – especially those with health conditions, caring responsibilities or lower skill levels.
- too many young people leave school without essential skills or access to high-quality further learning, an apprenticeship, or support to work so that they can thrive at the start of their career.
- too many people are stuck in insecure, poor quality, and often low-paying work, which contributes to a weaker economy and health and wellbeing.
- too many women who care for their families still experience challenges staying in and progressing in work.
- too many employers cannot fill their vacancies due to labour and skills shortages, holding back economic growth, driving up reliance on overseas labour, and undermining living standards.
- there is too great a disparity in labour market outcomes between different places and for different groups of people.

Through the following sections, this plan considers these key issues in the Surrey context as well as related work such as the Economic Growth Strategy, Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), and national policy and developments such as the benefit reforms set out in the Pathways to Work Green Paper.

Surrey County Council and stakeholders also have work underway to improve returns to work and prevent economic inactivity through support programmes for Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) young people and tackling in work poverty and progression.

There are also various programmes underway or recently started which will respond directly to the nationally identified issues, such as Connect to Work and WorkWell.

Delivery against this plan will require a partnership, collaborative approach, which is already well-established in Surrey, and will help ensure a joined-up effective response to achieve the best outcomes locally.

Labour market analysis

Surrey faces a range of labour market challenges that reflect both its unique demographic profile and its economic context.

Despite having a lower-than-average rate of economic inactivity (17.8%), 131,000 residents are not participating in the workforce, with 26,900 of those actively seeking employment (Jul 2024 to Jun 2025). The three primary drivers of economic inactivity are: full-time education (30.6%), long-term health conditions (20.4%), and caring responsibilities for family or home (19.3%). This highlights the need for more flexible employment opportunities and targeted support for those facing barriers to work.

Despite having a highly skilled workforce (52.3% achieved level RQF4 and above – Jan to Dec 2024), Surrey's proximity to London results in significant out-commuting, with many skilled professionals seeking employment outside the county. This contributes to a wider local skills mismatch across a range of sectors and limits the availability of talent for Surrey-based employers. Some sectors, such as health and social work, automotive and technology sectors, are struggling to recruit. Surrey has significantly fewer residents employed in manufacturing, distribution, hotels and restaurants, and agricultural industries than comparators, along with a substantial employment decline in these areas since 2018.

Due to a combination of economic hardship, inflation and the ongoing migration from legacy benefits, over 28,000 households with children in Surrey are now on Universal Credit – an increase of 14.5% over one year. The number of single parent households on Universal Credit has also risen by 15.2% over the last two years. Residents without formal qualifications are disproportionately likely to be economically inactive compared to national averages.

The county's workforce is also ageing, with the most significant growth observed in the over-50 age group. This trend presents both opportunities and challenges, particularly in terms of workforce planning, succession and the need for age-inclusive employment practices. Surrey exhibits a wider gender pay gap than comparable areas. Women are more likely to be employed in lower-paid, lower skilled roles (such as caring, leisure, and service) indicating a need for more inclusive career progression pathways.

While Surrey is often perceived as affluent, there are pockets of significant deprivation, with 30,000 people living in the most deprived wards. Certain neighbourhoods rank among the worst 10% nationally for education and skills, highlighting the need for targeted place-based or group interventions to ensure inclusive growth. The high cost of living in Surrey contributes to some residents experiencing in-work poverty. The upcoming Indices of Deprivation update will provide a timelier indication of deprivation in the county and will be reviewed and considered accordingly across the ongoing programmes of work and plans. The upcoming welfare reform might also bring about a potential increase on demand for employment support provision and changes in future demand will require monitoring.

Annex 1 outlines the six key issues identified in the Get Britain Working White Paper and explores each of these from a Surrey perspective.

Supply and demand – drivers

The previous section has explored some of the primary drivers and causes of economic inactivity in Surrey. In many cases, there are multiple factors which may limit people's ability to access work.

In Surrey, some of the key drivers include:

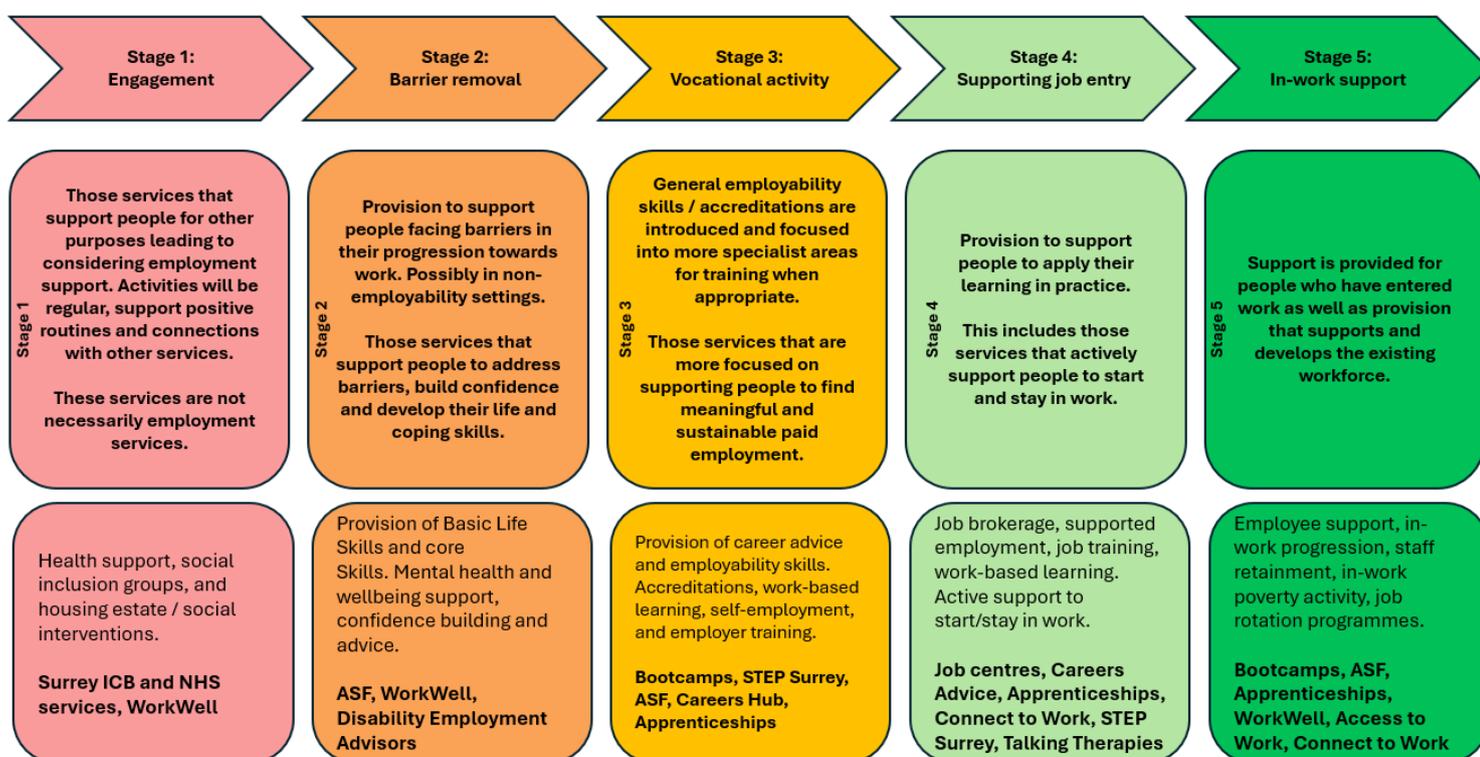
- **Transport** – transport within the county is a challenge, with often limited public transport options to get across Surrey, (without going into London and out again) and to rural areas. Travelling east to west is particularly challenging. Therefore, this limits the distance people can travel to work without a car. Road congestion is also an issue and impacts on journey times. Some employers have addressed this through offers such as shuttle buses where they are based in rural areas and remote working can obviously also help to overcome this. Transport challenges are often highlighted as a barrier by organisations working with young people and adults.
- **Housing** – the housing affordability ratio in Surrey stands at 10.8 times the median salary to afford a median priced home. This clearly makes it challenging for people to live and work in Surrey, for those going into entry level jobs and residents in lower paid roles, particularly across foundation sectors. Similarly high rent prices and housing costs are often highlighted by teams working with young people and adults with additional pressures, such as health conditions and caring responsibilities.
- **Childcare** – this has been highlighted regularly as a barrier to employment, particularly given that costs for childcare have generally increased in recent years. This further illustrates why women have challenges entering or staying in the workforce as they are still likely to be the main carers. More flexibility increasingly offered by employers should help to address this, although it is important to ensure that any intervention is able to be sustained independently over time.
- **Proximity to London** – while there are benefits to being close to the UK capital, it also brings challenges. Many Surrey residents commute to London which limits the availability of skilled workers to remain employed locally. This factor should encourage employers to access the county's untapped workforce, looking to secure talent not currently serving the London market.

The current system and offer

Current provision in Surrey is wide ranging in its geography and the cohorts supported.

The Five Stage Strategic Employment Pipeline (figure one below) looks at provision ranging from engagement to in-work support. There are currently 66 different services supporting residents with employment and skills, with almost half operating countywide. There is also a mixture of nationally provided support (e.g. Restart) and very local services (e.g. Skills and Employment Hubs through district and borough authorities). Most of the services fall into stages 2, 3, and 4 of the pipeline, with over half providing general support on vocational activity and job entry.

Figure one: Five stage Strategic Employment Model with Surrey-wide examples



There is provision in place for individuals with additional needs and disabilities. However, it tends to be generic in nature, focusing primarily on stage 2 ‘barrier removal’ services. There is a need to ensure there is person centred support available across the whole journey into employment, including in-work support.

A small number of programmes proactively provide employment support provision but tend to be focused on smaller geographical areas and linked to time-limited funding pots (i.e. skills hubs in three districts and boroughs). For example, up to 2025/26, the national UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) provided funding directly to district and borough councils in Surrey. Part of the fund was invested in a small number of limited employment support programmes. A small number of skills hubs were funded through UKSPF for a limited period and pursued alternative funding models to maintain their localised delivery afterwards. Their establishment is reactive

to local circumstance with no targeted county-wide strategic oversight. However, if we are to target our resources in places where inequality and deprivation are highest and excluded groups are out of plain sight, the high street model of employment support does not always offer the best service delivery option.

A handful of programmes are focused on specific cohorts: carers, ex-forces, people experiencing domestic abuse, refugees, and people with drug and alcohol problems. These services are not always joined up with most not offering county-wide coverage. However, some of these cohorts may be supported by more generic support services offered through Jobcentres such as Prison Work coaches, Schools Advisers, Family and Community Work Coaches, Youth Employability Coaches, Armed Forces Champions, and Pathways to Work Advisers.

The analysis indicates a lack of targeted employment support focused on our key 21 neighbourhoods and that programmes are funded by a range of funding streams, for discrete and disconnected client groups, and for different periods of time. Direct feedback highlights that individuals and support organisations find the current landscape complex and difficult to navigate, with programmes available in different geographies and for different cohorts. This can lead to gaps in provision and duplication. Some are also time limited, so keeping pace with what is available can be challenging.

Going forward, it is important to ensure the strategic targeting of programmes and funding, such as Connect to Work, WorkWell, and future initiatives to provide an agile, peripatetic model of delivery to better respond to local circumstances. This will also allow for a joined-up approach to avoid duplication and ensure efficient use of public money for maximum benefit to Surrey residents and businesses.

Following the allocation of UKSPF to upper-tier authorities in 2025/26, Surrey County Council adopted a targeted county-wide strategic approach – establishing an economic growth strategic funding framework and allocating grants in line with the Economic Growth Strategy and the Employment and Skills Framework. This approach is delivering more direct support to local SMEs, enabling them to grow, scale, and create jobs, while also supporting broader employment outcomes. This has embedded job creation directly into the economy and facilitated the provision of county-wide strategic skills provision, ensuring a more sustainable approach to avoid substantial impacts from the closure of specific funds such as UKSPF.

There are several opportunities to address the challenges of targeting employment support services in a person-centred way, aligned to employment outcomes. The recent awards of funding for WorkWell, Connect to Work, and Skills Bootcamps (along with imminent devolution of the Adult Skills Fund) are designed to deliver targeted services to support people facing barriers to work or career progression. We will explore in following sections some of the ongoing work to address this, while joining up the local offer for the benefit of Surrey residents.

Further information on the current offer is provided in Annex 2. We also commit to ongoing mapping of services to minimise potential duplication, ensure gaps are proactively addressed, and cross-system assistance with signposting.

Collaboration and partnership working

Foundational work to inform this plan has been developed over several years with all relevant stakeholders, building a comprehensive evidence base and with insights gleaned from local understanding and experience.

It is a plan built on a system-wide, cross-cutting approach with multiple interests being represented including employers, health partners, voluntary and community sector, businesses and resident insights. We also acknowledge this is a fast moving and changeable environment, so we will continue to keep our evidence up to date.

This plan has been developed jointly with colleagues from public health, Jobcentre Plus, Surrey Chambers of Commerce, employment support providers and others. They are ensuring alignment of the approach and objectives, engaging in data input and analysis, mapping current service provision, and action plan drafting.

We have presented our proposed approach for feedback to the Prevention and Wider Determinants of Health Delivery Board (a sub-board of the Health and Wellbeing Board), which includes representatives from district and borough councils, public health, Integrated Care System (ICS), clinical leads, and voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE).

Clearly the priorities set out in the plan will only be possible through partnership working, collaboration and a shared commitment to delivery. The governance and local engagement section (page 16) demonstrates how we will do this.

Systemic changes required

As Surrey progresses through LGR and devolution, it is vital to ensure the emerging action plan includes ambition for the short, medium, and long term.

Through the Get Surrey Working Plan, we will collectively work to ensure the future strategic authority for Surrey prioritises the building of an inclusive and thriving labour market via a county-wide approach which drives benefits that are balanced across the county.

The partnership will proactively work to embed the Surrey Workforce, Employment and Skills Framework, ensuring everyone in Surrey has the opportunity of good work and the chance to progress at work, improving health and wellbeing outcomes.

It will be essential to deliver a more joined up approach to employment and related support, translating national ambition into a coordinated local offer where all stakeholders move towards the same priorities, while ensuring the landscape and offer is clear to residents. This coordinated approach will generate efficiencies in spending, avoid duplication, and ensure support is reaching those that need it.

To support the partnership journey, the Plan will look to government departments to seek further alignment so that different funding streams work together to complement outcomes and deliver cohesive benefits.

Priorities and action plan

Alongside Get Britain Working local plans, the government is in the process of establishing several new national priorities relating to work, health, economic inactivity, and skills.

The new emerging policy and funding streams have required the production of a strategic framework for delivering workforce, employment, and skills in Surrey. This helps Surrey to meet health, economy, and community-centric priority objectives which would all have cross-cutting components. These objectives ensure people gain skills to enter or sustain employment in Surrey, develop connections between vocational training provision and the needs of local employers, and help tackle health-related economic inactivity. The Get Surrey Working Plan and delivering against agreed priorities is an important component of this framework and will be pivotal to success.

To drive progress toward our overarching ambition of maintaining and improving upon our 80% employment rate, the following priority actions are proposed. These are designed to embed effective partnership working, address identified labour market challenges, and support priority groups. In the coming months and years, we will deliver against the following priorities:

System Change

- Streamline our employment and skills offer through our new Skills, Training, and Employment portal (STEP Surrey). Through a triage model we will support residents to find the right services, learn new skills, find jobs, or get support. This triage function will require alignment with the Jobs and Careers Service model through the ongoing working partnership with DWP.
- We will work cross-system to coordinate a Surrey employment-support offer that responds to our local situation underpinned by efficiency and effectiveness.
- Establish strategic governance structures – launch the Growth Board Executive and its three thematic sub-groups to provide strategic oversight, ensure cross-sector collaboration, and maintain alignment with employment objectives.
- Complete Surrey's LGR and Devolution transition, finalising structural reforms and securing devolved powers to enhance local decision-making and resource allocation. This will strengthen the ability to respond to local labour market dynamics and deliver integrated services county-wide.

Delivery through strategic targeting

- Through our new employment support programmes, we will engage Surrey residents excluded from the labour market, focusing on the untapped workforce of the 26,900 economically inactive people who want to work through targeted engagement that recognises the disparate nature of where excluded groups are located in Surrey. This will include NEETs that are seeking further opportunities.

- We will target alignment of support to our identified key neighbourhoods ([Key Neighbourhoods | Surrey-i](#)) and priority groups across the county, to directly address disparity in labour market outcomes between different places and groups of people. We will establish a strategic view of the support available for our target cohorts and geographies.
- Deliver the Adult Skills Fund Strategy and Commissioning Framework – finalise and implement the strategy for the Adult Skills Fund, focusing on priority sectors and skills gaps. This will enable residents to gain qualifications and competencies aligned with local employer needs.

Underpinned by our Workforce and Skills Strategic Framework:

- We will direct provision to help employers fill vacancies in Surrey, through targeted business, skills development, and employment support programmes that look to get people into jobs but also support with workforce planning, succession, and inclusive employment practices.
- Young people without skills or access to further learning will be supported, focusing on early intervention in schools to reduce risk of becoming NEET and ensuring we provide clear vocational pathway offers, including work experience.
- We will address insecure, poor quality, low-paying work through targeted employment services and employer support/training, enabling residents with health-related barriers to be included in the labour market and employers to grow a diverse workforce. This will be through a joined-up approach with the government's Pathways to Work Guarantees being rolled out from April 2026.
- We will implement the Connect to Work programme, providing tailored support for a diverse range of cohorts and placing local employment as real opportunities for our residents, including people with physical / mental barriers to health or long-term conditions, people with additional needs, refugees, ex-forces personnel, people with substance misuse issues, people experiencing domestic violence, and more.
- Deliver and evaluate the WorkWell Programme to support individuals with health-related barriers to employment. A robust evaluation will assess impact and inform continuous improvement of this and/or future programmes.

The following pages introduce the emerging action plan tables, outlining the projects and priority actions identified so far to be delivered through partnership efforts over the short, medium, and long term. It should be noted that the content is not exhaustive, and the tables will remain as live documents for the partnership to add to and continue to shape as the Plan progresses.

Short-term – up to September 2026		
Objective / action	Milestones	Outcome
Deliver Connect to Work, focus on priority cohorts as set out by government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify partnership connections to align support Launch programme and implement cross-system referrals Deliver programme to support up to 2,575 Surrey residents into work up to 2030 	Those in priority cohorts receive one-to-one support to get into or maintain and succeed in work.
Launch and expand STEP Surrey (Skills, Training & Employment portal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch at Surrey Skills Conference in October 2025 Integrate with CRM system to provide triage service Align with partners to streamline access to support Develop and implement phase two content with partners 	Simplified access to employment and skills support, incorporating provider and employer support, and offering a triage model to better enable residents to find the right services.
Complete mapping of existing provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map Surrey support programmes across each of the five stages of the Strategic Employment Pipeline model Identify / ensure person centre support is available for individuals across all five stages 	Gaps in service proactively addressed, duplication avoided and joined-up signposting. Locally responsive, strategic approach to funding and agile delivery.
Coordinated pilot response to test innovative partnerships to support NEETs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated shared resource for 12 months between education and employment teams Pilot local projects to support innovative responses to support NEETs or at risk of becoming NEET 	Integrated effective ways of working and collaboration between local authorities, employers and providers to support NEETs in a joined up, innovative and efficient way.
Deliver Bootcamps wave 6 and prepare model for future years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant allocation to providers considering local employer requirements, promote and deliver courses Monitor contracts and outputs (e.g. enrol up to 695 learners where 75% minimum enter employment or progress in-work) 	Support businesses to address skills gaps through recruitment or investment in training for their workforce, supporting residents to upskill, change careers or enter employment.
Careers Hub work experience pilot within Careers Hub Contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 95 schools and colleges supported to prepare for modern work experience and employer engagement started 15 priority schools selected, based on Gatsby Benchmark 6 performance and Risk of Neet (RONI) data 	Lay the foundations to inform the future work experience model in Surrey.
Establishing the commissioning framework for Adult Skills Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First draft (Nov 2025) – inc. strategic alignment, funding principles, delivery expectations and performance Update following confirmation of 26/27 ASF budget Grant agreements in place and any procurement completed in advance of 26/27 academic year 	Set out how we intend to use the Adult Skills Fund to deliver our strategic objectives – working with providers to meet the needs of Surrey employers and learners.

Medium-term – up to March 2027		
Objective / action	Milestones	Outcome
Maintain strategic oversight of the workforce, employment and skills strategic objectives through LGR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing oversight of strategic provision mapping, ensuring resources are targeted where there are continuing gaps in existing provision • Identify and utilise devolved funding and resources including alignment with LSIP, influencing 16-19 and Higher Education to strengthen connections with vocational training, careers education and meet the needs of employers 	Strong county-wide strategic workforce, employment and skills related outcomes from devolved resources and responsibilities
Potential delivery of extended WorkWell programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand government’s intention for extension of programme • Agree approach to year 2 and beyond, ensuring alignment of priorities and delivery with Connect to Work 	People with health issues and / or disabilities are support via one-to-one work and health services to get back to work or remain in work.
Creation and launch of the Surrey Professional Baccalaureate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop proof of concept with initial focus on key roles • Work with stakeholders to establish pathways for key roles inc. wider support for learners • Launch phase 1 in advance of 2026/27 academic year 	Meeting employer demand by creating pipeline of learners for key roles through clear pathways and enabling learners to access relevant advice, guidance and support.
Deliver devolved Adult Skills Fund (ASF) aligned to contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish ASF contracts • Oversee and monitor contracts with ongoing review 	Successfully devolved ASF aligned to economic need and commissioning principles

Long-term – beyond April 2027		
Objective / action	Objective / action	Outcome
Review NEET Pilot and national programmes to establish longer term solutions for young people at risk of and not currently in Education, Employment or Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update data and evidence from pilots to understand Surrey context and existing provision • Alignment with ongoing work e.g. local and national NEET activity, Surrey Careers Hub and Surrey Bacculaureate to maximise impact and success. • Further target to hidden populations and geographical areas of need 	Reduction in NEET numbers. An increase available resources for young people to access learning and training in their local area.
Working to ensure the future strategic authority for Surrey recognises the important of youth employment and prioritises the building of an inclusive and thriving labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedding the Surrey Workforce Employment and Skills Framework as we progress through LGR and Devolution • Undertaking more comprehensive changes to commissioning of ASF provision to align more strongly with employment needs. • Prepare the required evidence base(s), analysis and propositions for incoming local government authorities (two unitaries and strategic authority). 	A strategic Surrey-wide perspective is retained so that everyone in Surrey has the opportunity of good work and the chance to progress in at work, breaking down barriers to opportunity, and to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

Governance, local engagement and future iterations

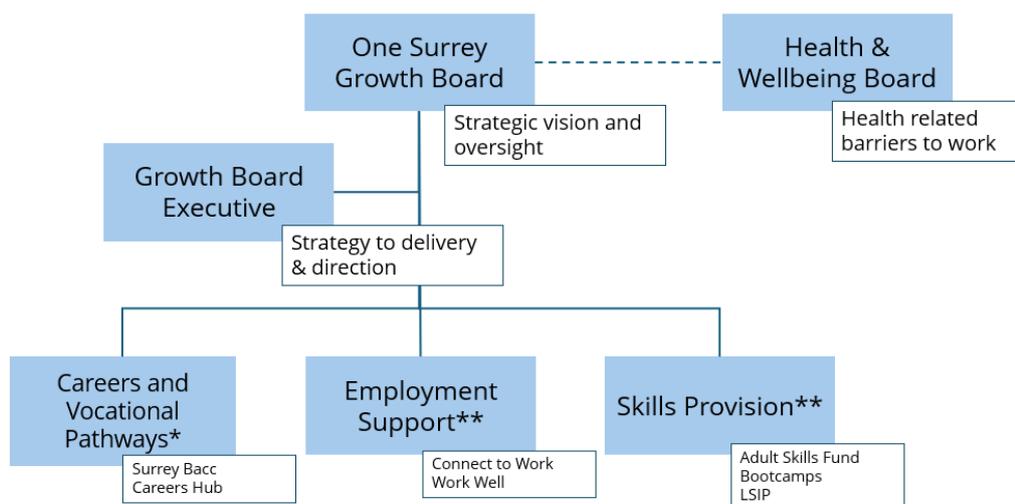
Governance of the Get Surrey Working Plan will sit under the One Surrey Growth Board (OSGB) with additional oversight from the Health and Wellbeing Board and its Prevention and Wider Determinants of Health Delivery Board.

The OSGB has agreed to establish an executive group to ensure the Get Surrey Working Plan receives strategic direction, supported by three thematic delivery groups – Careers and Vocational Pathways, Employment Support, and Skills provision. Employment Support and Skills Provision governance will include health, Department for Work and Pensions, Jobcentre Plus, and delivery partners as appropriate. The structure is illustrated in figure two below.

Stakeholder representation across the governance structure includes Surrey County Council, district and borough CEOs, ICS, universities, businesses, employer representative bodies, community sector and further education providers. As Surrey progresses through LGR, local authority representation will be reviewed within the emerging unitary context. NHS representation will be via the new Surrey and Sussex Integrated Care Board, in line with national changes for expansion of their footprint across both counties from April 2026. Surrey Chambers of Commerce (the designated employer representative body developing the LSIP) will have representation at all three governance levels.

The Boards will receive regular updates and reports, share progress against priorities, enable buy-in and strategic coordination across the system, and provide ongoing engagement and scrutiny. There will be regular oversight and management of the data and evidence informing the plan. Reviews of priorities will be undertaken if significant changes occur or issues emerge that need addressing. This will also enable the ongoing shaping of upcoming programmes and deployment of funding.

Figure two: Governance structure to support the delivery of the Get Surrey Working plan



* Overseen by Surrey Skills Forum

** New groups established to include Health / ICB & Providers

Conclusions and next steps

This plan has set out the Surrey response to the government priority for a thriving labour market. This has also been outlined within the context of the Surrey Workforce, Employment and Skills Framework, and informed by evidence. A key driver for delivery will be the 26,900 economically inactive Surrey residents who would like to work and helping to achieve the government target of 80% employment.

Positively, much is underway already or about to commence including programmes such as Connect to Work and WorkWell, tools such as STEP Surrey and devolution of budgets such as the Adult Skills Fund. This presents an excellent opportunity for a truly local and integrated approach to employment and skills which is efficient, joined up and delivers the optimum outcomes for Surrey residents and businesses. There is much still to do, building on these new areas of work as well as maintaining and adapting current provision.

Success will only be possible through partnership and through all stakeholders helping to deliver against priorities. Therefore, a **call to action** to all would be to galvanise behind the priorities and actions.

It is also a period of change, with LGR, devolution, new government initiatives and upcoming policy such as the Pathways to Work Green Paper. Local clarity and agreement about need and priorities is clearly vital in this changing landscape and in which this plan is a central part.

The priorities and actions that have been set out will inform next steps, including putting in place the strategic governance structures, streamlining the approach to employment and skills, and the successful roll out of programmes such as Connect to Work.

Get involved! In the immediate term you can help to deliver against the actions by engaging in priorities, such as:

- ✓ Spread the word about **STEP Surrey** and use this as a tool
- ✓ Help raise awareness of programmes such as Connect to Work and WorkWell
- ✓ If you are recruiting, consider employment of residents facing barriers to work
- ✓ Let us know about related work
- ✓ Reach out via STEP Surrey to seek support

Annex 1 - National challenges in Surrey context

Issue 1 - People excluded from the labour market

- Surrey has **131,000 economically inactive people** (17.8%), which is lower than the Great Britain average (21.2%), but still represents a significant portion of the population (Jul 2024 – Jun 2025). This cohort could increase in future given planned benefit reforms which could increase the number of people looking for work.
- Within this group, **26,900 want a job** (20.5% of economically inactive people), slightly above the national average of 19.7%.
- Within the same group, **26,800 are long term sick**. The total number of sick notes issued annually across Surrey Heartlands between 2019 and 2023 has consistently ranged between 104,151 and 130,370, demonstrating the population level need for support. Mental health and musculoskeletal issues are common reasons.
- **17,800 on Employment Support Allowance** (half the national average but rising since 2022)
- There is a **significant untapped workforce** in the economically inactive group who want to work. System partners can identify the enablers and barriers to entering in and remaining in the workforce and support these residents to enter employment.
- **Health-related economic inactivity** is a concern because it contributes to rising demand for health and care services and puts pressure on the labour market. This emphasises the need for both **targeted support** and **preventative measures**.
- **Residents without formal qualifications** are disproportionately likely to be economically inactive (63%) than comparator areas (CIPFA 52% and UK 55%, 2021).
- **Residents with physical or mental health conditions** are less likely to be employed compared to the general population with an employment gap of 6.4%, lower than national (10.4%) and South East (9.4%) (2022/23).
- **Residents with learning disabilities** are significantly less likely to be employed. In 2022/23, Surrey's employment gap was 68.2%, better than the national (70.9%) and South East (71.4%) averages. However, only 11.8% of supported working-age adults in Surrey were in employment or volunteering, well below the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework target of 19%.
- Adults in contact with secondary mental health services have an employment gap of 78.2% in Surrey, compared with 70.1% in South East and 69.4% nationally. This means that fewer than 1 in 4 adults in contact with secondary mental health services are in employment. Cross-sector working through evidence-based approaches will be critical to ensuring these residents are not left behind.
- Although Surrey outperforms comparators, the **employment rate for people with learning disabilities has decreased** from 13.4% in 2019/20 to 11.8% in 2022/23.

Issue 2 - Young people without skills or access to further learning

- Averages for combined **NEET and Not Known in Surrey are now at 4.5%**, below both South East at 6.2% and national at 5.2%.
- **2.86% Youth unemployment** (18-24 receiving Job Seekers Allowance or Universal credit). Lowest - Guildford (1.66%) / highest – Spelthorne (4.9%).
- In 2024, reports show a similar proportion of male (8.7%) and female (8%) 16- and 17-year-olds were recorded as not in education, employment or training or their activity was not known.
- 2,945 unemployment claimants in Surrey were aged between 16 and 24 (Sep. 2025). Higher youth unemployment in certain areas indicates **place-based inequalities**.

Issue 3 - Insecure, poor quality, low-paying work

- **One in ten Surrey residents** in full-time employment are estimated to earn less than £24,615 a year (2024).
- The estimated **median annual wage for residents** in full-time employment in 2024 is **higher in Surrey at £45,831** compared to the South East (£40,339) and England (£37,617).
- Housing affordability ratio stands at 10.8 times the median salary to afford a median priced home.
- **Jobs density of 0.88** (88 jobs per 100 Surrey residents aged 16-64).
- 25,950 Surrey residents in work on Universal Credit, signifying residents on lower income require support for living costs.

Issue 4 - Women caring for families experiencing challenges staying in or progressing in work

- **The employment rate is higher for male Surrey residents at 83% compared to women at 77%**; This is because female Surrey residents are more likely to be economically inactive (20.8%) than their male counterparts (14.8%) – data 12 months ending Q2 2025.
- The proportion of those that are economically inactive who want a job in Surrey is higher for females at 23.0% than males at 16.9% (12 months ending Q2 2025).
- **Male residents of Surrey are more likely to be in high-skilled occupations** like managers and directors, while female residents are more likely to be in lower-skilled occupations like caring, leisure, and other service occupations.
- **Surrey has a higher gender pay gap than comparators**; the difference in male and female resident's earnings is 25.1% in Surrey (21.8% in CIPFA and 18.3% in the UK). Workplace earnings reflect a similar pay gap (Surrey 25.7%, CIPFA 22.3% and UK 18.3%).
- Women in Surrey are **less likely to be employed** (77% vs 83% for men) and, when they are, they are **paid significantly less** and more likely to be in less-secure roles.

Issue 5 - Employers unable to fill vacancies due to labour and skills shortages

- **Health and social care**, Surrey's largest employment sector, faces persistent recruitment and skills development challenges.
- **High-skilled sectors** like automotive and technology also face difficulties in attracting qualified candidates.
- **Public sector recruitment** is hampered by Surrey's high cost of living, which affects job attractiveness and retention.
- Lightcast data gives insights into job postings. **Over the period of June 2024 to June 2025:**

Top 10 job titles listed by hiring employers were:

- Teaching assistants
- Support Workers
- Learning Support Assistants
- SEN Teaching Assistants
- Primary Teachers
- Care Assistants
- Cleaners
- Supply Teachers
- Nursery Practitioners
- Administrators

Top 10 specialised skills listed by hiring employers were:

- Auditing
- Finance
- Working with children
- Project Management
- Marketing
- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Mental Health
- Accounting
- Invoicing
- Personal Care

Issue 6 - Disparity in labour market between different places and groups

- **West Surrey's** economy is disproportionately **more productive** than East Surrey's.
- Geographic discrepancies exist between full-time average weekly workplace wages across different districts and boroughs, with Guildford's average in 2024 significantly higher at £847 compared to £722.60 in Tandridge.
- **Pockets of deprivation** are **more prevalent in the education, skills and training** domain, with some neighbourhoods falling amongst the worst 10% nationally. The list ranking an overall deprivation place of 10th or higher across 'employment' include: Hooley, Merstham & Netherne, Bellfields and Slyfield, Dorking South, Tattenham Corner and Preston, Goldsworth Park, Farham Heath, Godalming Central and Ockford, Walton North. Others show instead high deprivation ranking on 'education, skills, training', including: Old Dean, Cobham & Downside, Ash Wharf, Horley Central & South, Englefield Green West, Westborough, & Canalside.
- Among working age people from ethnically diverse backgrounds (excluding white ethnic minorities), 71.8% are in work, with 23% economically inactive. This means that **6.7% of people from ethnic minority backgrounds are unemployed**, or 1 in 15 people, **more than double the rate of the general population** (2.8%).

Annex 2 - Provision in Surrey

Below is an initial list of key providers with a specific focus in the Surrey geography. They are currently searchable and accessible via the provider directory on the new STEP Surrey website, and they are part of the tailored response offered to residents seeking support via our single gateway portal.

This is not an exhaustive list, and we will continually review and expand the content, in partnership with local and national organisations, including direct connections to job centre employment support through specialist roles such as advisers, champions and work coaches.

Name	Type	Audience	Age	Location	Website
Jobcentre Plus + Flexible Fund + work coaches (prison, family and community, youth employability and pathways to work), school advisers, and Armed Forces Champions	Employment support	Individuals; Businesses	18+	Nationwide	https://www.jobhelp.campaign.gov.uk
WorkWell	Employment support	Individuals	16+	Countywide	WorkWell - free coaching if you have a health issue or disability - Surrey County Council
Connect to Work	Employment support	Individuals	18+	Countywide	Connect to work - STEP Surrey
Surrey NHS Talking Therapies	Therapy	Individuals	17+	Countywide and Nationwide offer	ieso Online Therapy Surrey
The Workshop	Employment support	Individuals; Businesses	18+	Surrey Heath; Camberley	https://www.surreyheat.h.gov.uk/theworkshop
Camberley Job Club	Employment support	Individuals	18+	Camberley; Surrey Heath	https://www.camberleydistrictjobclub.com/
Fedcap	Employment support	Individuals	18+	Nationwide	https://fedcap.org.uk/
Restart	Employment support	Individuals	18+	Countywide	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/restart-scheme
The Forces Charity	Employment support	Ex-Forces	18+	Countywide	https://www.forcesemployment.org.uk/

Name	Type	Audience	Age	Location	Website
NCS	Employment skills	Individuals	16-17	Nationwide	https://wearencs.com/
NACRO	Employment support	Individuals	16+	Nationwide	https://www.nacro.org.uk/
Carers UK	Employment support	Carers	18+	Nationwide	https://www.carersuk.org/
Rethink	Employment support	Individuals	18+	Nationwide	https://www.rethink.org/
Skills for Work with Adult learning	Employment support	Individuals	18+	Countywide	https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/adult-learning/courses/computing
Henrietta Parker Trust	Employment support	Individuals with an additional need or disability	18+	North Surrey; Elmbridge	https://www.henriettaparkertrust.com
Employment Works for Autism - Surrey Choices	Employment support	Individuals with an additional need or disability	18+	Countywide	https://www.surreychoices.com/what-surrey-choices-does/employment-and-learning/employment-works-for-autism/
Surrey Choices Employability	Employment support	Individuals with an additional need or disability	18+	Countywide	https://www.surreychoices.com/what-surrey-choices-does/employment-and-learning/employability/
East Surrey Pathway to Employment - Raven Housing Trust	Employment support	Individuals	18+	East Surrey	https://www.ravenht.org.uk/communities/support-services/improving-skills-for-life-and-work/east-surrey-pathway-to-employment/
Active Prospects supported internship and employability	Employment support	Individuals with an additional need or disability	17-24	East Surrey	https://activeprospects.org.uk/our-services/skills-for-work-and-

Name	Type	Audience	Age	Location	Website
					life/supported-internship-programme/
Richmond Fellowship Mid and West Employment Service	Employment support	Individuals	18+	Mid Surrey; West Surrey	https://www.richmondfellowship.org.uk/services/mid-and-west-surrey-employment-service/
Oakleaf Enterprise	Training	Individuals	18+	South West Surrey	https://www.oakleaf-enterprise.org
Halow Project	Training	Individuals with an additional need or disability	18-25	Guildford; Woking	https://www.halowproject.org.uk/building-futures/
Surrey Care Trust Steps 2 Work	Training	Individuals with an additional need or disability	18-25	Woking; Reigate; Stanwell	https://www.surreycaretrust.org.uk/how-we-can-help/help-if-youre-unemployed/
The Change Foundation Street Elite	Training	Individuals	18-25	Countywide	https://www.thechange-foundation.org.uk
Orchard Hill College Work start traineeship into work supported internship	Work experience	Individuals with an additional need or disability	16+	Sutton; Uxbridge; New Malden	http://workstart.me.uk/
Princes Trust	Training	Individuals	16+	Countywide	https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/help-for-young-people/get-job
Headway Surrey	Mentoring	Individuals	18+	Countywide	https://www.headwaysurrey.org/
The Grange Centre	Training; Work experience;	Individuals with an additional need or disability	18+	Bookham; Mid Surrey	https://www.grangecentre.org.uk/skills-for-life/
The Sunnybank Trust Futures Programme	Employment support	Individuals with an additional need or disability	18+	Mid Surrey	https://www.sunnybanktrust.org/futures
Disability Initiative	Training; Employment support	Individuals with an additional need or disability	18+	North Surrey; Camberley; Surrey Heath	https://www.disabilityinitiative.org.uk/pre-vocational/

Name	Type	Audience	Age	Location	Website
Downs Syndrome Association	Employment support	Individuals with an additional need or disability	18+	Countywide	https://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/about-dsa/who-we-are/what-we-do/
Reigate and Banstead Worker Scheme	Work experience; Employment support	Individuals	18+	Reigate and Banstead	https://www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/info/20044/your_council/915/working_here/6
Leonard Cheshire Can do Programme	Training; Employment support	Individuals with an additional need or disability	18+	Countywide	https://www.leonardcheshire.org/get-support/learning/can-do
Thomas Pocklington Trust Works For Me employment programme	Employment support; Training	Individuals	18+	Countywide	https://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk/employment/works-for-me-employment-programme/
Elmbridge and Runnymede Youth Hub	Training; Employment support		18-24	North Surrey; Runnymede; Elmbridge	https://www.brooklands.ac.uk/youthhub/
Start	Employment support; Work experience; Placements; Jobs	Individuals; Individuals with an additional need or disability	16+	East Surrey; Reigate and Banstead	https://rb.startprofile.com/page/home-page
Reigate and Banstead Works	Employment support; Work experience; Placements; Jobs	Individuals; Individuals with an additional need or disability	18+	East Surrey; Reigate and Banstead	https://rb-works.co.uk/
Include.org	Employment support	Individuals with an additional need or disability	18+	East Surrey; Reigate and Banstead	https://include.org/
AS Mentoring	Employment support; Work experience; Placements; Jobs	Individuals with an additional need or disability	18+	Countywide	https://asmentoring.co.uk/

Name	Type	Audience	Age	Location	Website
Naturally Talented Me	Employment support; Jobs	Individuals; Businesses	18+	Countywide	https://naturallytalentedme.co.uk/
East Surrey College (Multiply)	Training	Individuals; Individuals with an additional need or disability; Businesses	18+	Countywide; East Surrey	https://www.esc.ac.uk/part-time/multiply
Activate Learning	Training; Apprenticeships	Individuals; Individuals with an additional need or disability	18+	Countywide;	https://www.activatelearning.ac.uk/
Brooklands College	Training	Individuals; Individuals with an additional need or disability; Businesses	18+	Countywide; Weybridge	https://www.brooklands.ac.uk/adults/skills-for-life/
Surrey Adult Learning (Multiply)	Training	Individuals; Individuals with an additional need or disability; Businesses	18+	Countywide	https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/adult-learning
Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership	Training; Employment support	Individuals; Individuals with an additional need or disability	18+	Countywide	https://www.surreyllp.org.uk/learning-in-community/
Surrey Choices	Employment support	Individuals; Individuals with an additional need or disability	18+	Countywide	https://www.surreychoices.com/what-surrey-choices-does/employment-and-learning/
Surrey Care Trust	Employment support; Mentoring; Training	Individuals; Individuals with an additional need or disability	14+	Woking; Stanwell; Reigate; Spelthorne	https://www.surreycaretrust.org.uk/

Name	Type	Audience	Age	Location	Website
Maybury and Sheerwater Community Trust	Employment support	Individuals; Individuals with an additional need or disability		Canalside; Maybury; Sheerwater; Woking	https://mascotwoking.org.uk/
Mole Valley Employment and Skills Hub	Employment support; Apprenticeships	Individuals	18+	Mole Valley	https://molevalleytogether.co.uk/community/mvhub/
Spelthorne Jobs and Skills Hub	Employment support; Training	Individuals	16-24; 25+	Spelthorne	https://spelthornejobsandskills.com
Stoneleigh Job Club	Employment support; Mentoring	Individuals; Individuals with an additional need or disability;	18+	Stoneleigh; Epsom and Ewell	Job coaching, help and advice for everybody, preparing you for work - Stoneleigh Job Club
Surrey Care Trust Steps2Work Wellbeing	Employment support; Mental health support	Individuals; Individuals with an additional need or disability; People with drug and alcohol problems; People experiencing domestic abuse	18+	Woking; Stanwell; Reigate; Spelthorne	https://www.surreycaretrust.org.uk/how-we-can-help/mental-health-and-wellbeing/steps2work-wellbeing/
Oxted and District Job Club	Employment support; Training	Individuals; Individuals with an additional need or disability;	18+	Tandridge; Oxted:	jobcluboxteddistrict@gmail.com
Refugee Employability Programme	Employment support: ESOL support;	Individuals; Businesses; Individuals with an additional need or disability; Refugees	18+	Countywide	https://repsoutheast.co.uk/
Step8Up	Employment support; Training	Businesses	18+	Countywide	Step8Up Business Growth

Annex 3 – Sources

- [Economic-Strategy-Priority-one-skills.pdf](#)
- [Economic-Strategy-Priority-two-businesses.pdf](#)
- [Economic-Strategy-Priority-three-infrastructure.pdf](#)
- [Economy | Surrey-i](#)
- [Explore data | LG Inform](#)
- [Home | Surrey-i](#)
- [JSNA Economy | Tableau Public](#)
- [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics](#)