

Report subject	Get Dorset & BCP Working Plan - GD&BCPWP
Meeting date	1 October 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>'Get Britain Working' is a national initiative from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The 'Get Britain Working White Paper' (Nov 2024), seeks to promote higher employment and reduced economic inactivity, whilst supporting individuals to enhance and improve their skills to transition into higher quality jobs.</p> <p>All areas of England must develop local 'Get Britain Working' plans. Dorset Council, as Accountable Body, must deliver the plan across the Dorset Council (DC) and Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) geographies in partnership with BCP Council, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Integrated Care Board (ICB).</p> <p>This Cabinet report seeks approval of the draft GD&BCPWP (see Appendix 1) for publication.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Approves the draft 'Get Dorset & BCP Working Plan' (GD&BCPWP) for publication (b) Delegates authority to the Director, Investment and Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure & Commercial Operations, to undertake any minor changes to the Working Plan that are identified by Cabinet (c) Delegates authority to the Director, Investment and Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure & Commercial Operations, to assign any remaining funding from the Government allocation to deliver projects identified in the Plan
Reason for recommendations	<p>The draft Get Dorset & BCP Working Plan (GD&BCPWP) will enable BCP Council to help address the challenges related to labour market participation and progression. As such, the GD&BCPWP will help deliver the Council's Corporate Strategy and wider economic and social objectives.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills are continually developed, and people can access lifelong learning• Employment is available for everyone and helps create value in our communities• Those who need support receive it when and where they need it• High quality of life for all, where people can be active, healthy and independent• Our inclusive, vibrant and sustainable economy supports our communities to thrive
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Portfolio Holder(s):	Lead Portfolio Holder Councillor Rich Herrett – Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure & Commercial Operations Councillor David Brown – Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing Councillor Richard Burton - Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Education and Skills
Corporate Director	Glynn Barton, Chief Operations Officer
Report Authors	Amy Walton, Economic Development Officer Matthew Robson, Senior Economic Development Officer
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. 'Get Britain Working' is a national initiative from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The 'Get Britain Working White Paper' (Nov 2024), seeks to promote higher employment and reduced economic inactivity, whilst supporting individuals to enhance and improve their skills to transition into higher quality jobs. This further supports the Government's goal of achieving an 80 per cent employment rate across the UK.
2. Specifically, the White Paper addresses six key issues:
 - exclusion from the labour market - including those with health conditions and/or caring responsibilities or lower skill levels
 - young people leaving school lacking essential skills and opportunities for further education or apprenticeships
 - people trapped in insecure and poor-quality jobs that harm both the economy and their well-being
 - women with caring responsibilities finding it difficult to stay and advance at work
 - employers struggling to fill vacancies due to labour and skills shortages
 - significant regional and demographic disparities in labour market outcomes
3. A key component of Get Britain Working is the voluntary "[Connect to Work](#)" program, which provides tailored support to help individuals facing barriers to employment to find and maintain work.
4. All areas of England must develop local 'Get Britain Working' plans, which will operate over strategic geographies consisting of strategic authorities or 'Connect to Work' delivery areas.

5. For Get Britain Working Plans, local areas should take a system-wide view of employment and labour market issues. This requires working across local Government, the NHS (Integrated Care Board) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Jobcentre Plus (JCP).
6. In the case of BCP Council, the GBW plan area is Dorset Council and BCP Council combined (county of Dorset), with Dorset Council as the Accountable Body. The Government has provided Dorset Council with £125k to oversee this programme of work. Proposed projects within the plan will need to be funded by other funding streams or future UK Government funding. Further information is provided in the financial implications section.
7. Where feasible, local Get Britain Working plans could have been published by July 2025. Where this was not possible, an initial summary (outline plan) of the proposal had to be submitted to DWP by 27 June 2025. The full plan must be submitted and published by September 2025.
8. Dorset Council, BCP Council and partners submitted the summary plan on 27 June 2025 and will formally approve and publish the Working Plan following relevant Cabinet meetings (Dorset Council Cabinet is 9 October 2025). Get Britain Working national team have noted that GD&BCPWP will publish after the Cabinet approvals in October.

Governance and Stakeholders

9. The Dorset Skills Board was a subcommittee of the former Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (DLEP) until March 2025. It was also the Steering Group for the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) led by Dorset Chamber. The Membership (see Appendix 3) agreed the Board should be maintained by Dorset Chamber until March 2026 at the earliest in the absence of an alternative Board.
10. The Skills Board ToR, were expanded to provide governance of the Get Britain Working Plan, and the Group has been renamed the 'Dorset Skills and Workforce Development Board'. The Chair and Deputy remain the same as well as the Board - including a representative from DWP. The key stakeholders are also the same. A subgroup was created to focus on the GBW (similar to the LSIP).
11. A Working Group was also established, comprising BCP Council, Dorset Council, Dorset Chamber, Skills & Learning (delivering the associated 'Connect to Work'), DWP and the ICB. This group has engaged with local key stakeholders from the third sector, business groups and education and skills providers such as BCP Homewards, Community Action Network and Citizens Advice.
12. Get Britain Working will be presented to the BCP Business Growth Board on 17 September 2025.

Draft Get Dorset & Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Working Plan (GD&BCPWP)

13. The draft Working Plan report can be viewed in Appendix 1.
14. There is no set format for Working Plans and areas have the flexibility to develop these in a way which will have the maximum impact in their localities. However, there are some core elements which will be expected in all plans:

- Labour market analysis (key challenges across participation and progression)
- Drivers and causes of supply and demand side labour market issues
- Current system and offer (including Health service, Job Centre plus etc)
- Working with Partners (levers that stakeholders can apply to address challenges)
- Systematic changes (what is required to improve outcomes)
- Priority Actions and Longer-term goals (12-24 months including outcomes and 10-year ambition)
- Governance, local engagement, and future iterations

15. The draft plan sets out the joint commitment to ensuring every resident of working age has access to the right support to begin, sustain, or return to a fulfilling career. By enabling more people across the county to thrive in work, it strengthens families, communities, and the local economy. The plan further seeks to maximise the impact of existing resources while responding to the distinct needs of local communities and employers.

16. Key findings from the labour market analysis in the draft plan include:

- a. The number of economically active people (aged 16+) has been slowly increasing since 2004 and now stands at 383,900. This growth reflects the growing population, an increase in the proportion of people aged over 65 who are continuing to work, as well as a growing proportion of women working. The size of the workforce has increased faster in BCP than within the DC area.
- b. The workforce has an older demographic profile than nationally, with 38% of all economically active people aged over 50, compared to 32% for the UK, which has implications for replacement demand.
- c. The employment rate in the county of Dorset area has consistently exceeded the national rate over the long term and may be approaching the concept of 'full employment'.
- d. The area has a higher proportion of self-employment than the UK average and men are more likely to be self-employed than women.
- e. The area has a higher proportion of people working part-time than the UK average, and women were much more likely to be working part-time than men.
- f. Whilst the occupational profile is similar to the national picture, the county of Dorset area has a lower proportion of people employed in professional, associate professional and process, plant and machine operative occupations and higher proportions employed in sales and customer service and caring, leisure and other service occupations. The occupational profile differs between BCP and DC with the BCP area having a higher proportion of employment in management and professional occupations

- g. There is a pay gap between full time workers in the county of Dorset area and those in the rest of the UK, which is more pronounced in the DC area.
 - h. Approximately 39,000 jobs pay below the 'Real Living Wage', and these are most likely to be part time workers and women.
 - i. Over the last 20 years, unemployment rates in county of Dorset area have usually been lower than the national average, but post pandemic, rates have exceeded the national average within the BCP area. The unemployment rate has been falling in all areas since 2021 and in December 2023 stood at 2.8%.
 - j. Claimant count data suggests that unemployment rates are currently higher amongst men, people under 40 and people in the BCP area.
 - k. Economic inactivity rates have been consistently lower than the national average in the long term, but post pandemic the county of Dorset area appears to have had a steeper rise in inactivity rates, which peaked in September 2022. As of the end of December 2023, 84,600 people (18.9% of people aged 16-64) were inactive in the county of Dorset area.
 - l. The reasons why people are inactive differ across the two local authority areas. In the DC area, (early) retirement is the most significant reason, whereas in the BCP area, long-term sickness or being a student are the most significant reasons.
17. The draft plan identifies that there is a comprehensive offer of services supporting residents into employment in Dorset, but the challenge lies in fragmentation. Services are numerous but not always coordinated, meaning residents, employers and partners can experience duplication, confusion and missed opportunities. To create systemic change, interventions that alter how the system is designed, coordinated and incentivised are required. This requires close collaboration with Jobcentre Plus and the Department for Work and Pensions, the Integrated Care Board and NHS local services, as well as alignment with Department for Education priorities through the Local Skills Improvement Plan and Adult Education funding.
18. The draft plan proposes the following systemic changes to address these issues:
- a. Creating a single front door & shared triage to overcome multiple entry points
 - b. A joint pan Dorset governance and outcomes framework (new Work and Health Board)
 - c. Embed Work in Health & Care Pathways
 - d. A unified employer gateway
 - e. Place-based integration in high-need areas
 - f. Sector pipelines aligned to priorities
 - g. Use flexible funds as glue
19. The draft plan sets out a clear framework for how residents will be supported into sustainable employment, improve skills, and strengthen local economic resilience. With ongoing economic challenges and changes in the labour market,

it is vital that a proactive, coordinated approach to reducing unemployment, supporting workers in the workforce and creating new opportunities for growth is taken.

20. As part of the draft plan, an action plan outlines the priorities, partnerships, and practical steps that will ensure individuals have access to the right training, guidance, and support to move into work. It also highlights the role of local employers, voluntary organisations, and public services in creating a more inclusive and dynamic labour market.
21. To ensure the plan delivers meaningful change, key outcome priorities for Dorset & BCP have been developed to:
 - Reduce local variations in employment rates (people aged 18–66)
 - Reduce health-related economic inactivity (people aged 18–66)
 - Narrow the disability employment gap (people aged 18–66)
 - Reduce the proportion of young people (18–24) not in education, employment or training (NEET)
 - Reduce the employment rate gap between lone parents and parents in couples (people aged 18–66)
 - Reduce the percentage of couple households where at least one parent is out of work (people aged 18–66)
 - Increase the employment rate of women (people aged 18–66)
22. Dorset Council as Accountable Body for the draft plan will oversee the implementation of the actions. Monitoring will be conducted on a quarterly basis for the first 24 months following the plans publication. The frequency of monitoring will be reviewed and adjusted as appropriate. The monitoring report will be shared with the stakeholders via Dorset Skills and Workforce Board.

Options Appraisal

23. All areas of England must develop local 'Get Britain Working' plans. To support the recommendations and approve the GD&BCPWP would enable BCP Council to help address the challenges related to labour market participation and progression. As such, the GD&BCPWP will help deliver the Council's Corporate Strategy and wider economic and social objectives.
24. To not submit a plan has been discounted as all areas must deliver a plan as required by UK Government.

Summary of financial implications

25. The Government has provided Dorset Council, as Accountable Body, with £125k to deliver this work across Dorset Council and BCP Geographies. Of this, c£50k will be paid to Dorset Chamber to complete the outline and full plan. Dorset Chamber will also undertake all data gathering, analysis and engagement for Dorset Council.
26. BCP Council has the resources and expertise to provide some of this support. Between June – September (4 months), this is anticipated to require 3 days per

week from the ED Sector Lead for Skills and at least 1 day per week for other support from I&D. With on-costs, this is estimated to be c£25k, which will be recovered from Dorset Council and ringfenced for skills initiatives.

27. The Council's finance team would expect BCP Council to receive written agreement from Dorset Council to fund the £25k for the ED officer time. Dorset Council has confirmed this in writing and advised that the transfer will also be included in Dorset Council's GD&BCPWP Cabinet paper, which is being presented on 9 October 2025.
28. During the development of the plan(s), additional work may be needed from the Chamber that wasn't envisaged in the original scope. This will be taken from the remaining £50k. The Council's finance team has advised that assurance is required that if Dorset Chamber work costs more than £50k it will not affect the BCP revenue budget and that the remaining funds will be covered from the remaining balance of the grant that Dorset hold. Dorset Council has provided this assurance in writing.
29. Any final remaining amount could be used to deliver projects/initiatives identified in the Plan (subject to confirmation from Government). This could potentially be split equally between Dorset and BCP Council. The Director, Investment and Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure & Commercial Operations, would assign any remaining funding from the Government allocation to deliver projects identified in the Plan.
30. There are no other financial implications for this work. By producing the plan, the Council will not be committing to deliver any further projects or result in any financial liabilities for the Council. Proposed projects within the plan will need to be funded by other funding streams or future UK Government funding.
31. There may not be officer support post March 2026, as the Economic Development team is only funded until this date.

Summary of legal implications

32. There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report. However, there may be a need for legal advice to support the delivery of the local GBW plan, specifically if there is a requirement to enter into an agreement with Dorset Council, who are the lead Accountable Body. This agreement would govern accountabilities and responsibilities. The Council has the power under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything that individuals generally may do (general power of competence), which includes the ability to enter into such agreements.

Summary of human resources implications

33. The approval of the GD&BCPWP will not result in any change of personnel in the Council. Officer support for GBW may cease in March 2026 when funding for the ED team currently ceases.

Summary of sustainability impact

34. A full Decision Impact Assessment (DIA) was undertaken for this project. There have been no adverse comments from colleagues to the DIA. This programme is a real positive for sustainability and links to the following SDG goals:

SDG 2 – Zero Hunger

SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being

SDG 4 – Quality Education

SDG 5 – Gender Equality

SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities

SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals

Summary of public health implications

35. The GD&BCPWP will have a significant positive impact on the health and well-being of our residents through seeking to address exclusion from the labour market - including those with health conditions and/or caring responsibilities or lower skill levels, young people (and NEETs) without essential skills and people trapped in insecure and poor quality jobs.

Summary of equality implications

36. An EIA conversation/screening document has been completed (See Appendix 2) and has been approved by the EIA team, subject to an updated EIA being provided, once the plan is finalised.

Summary of risk assessment

37. The risks have been considered and addressed in the report above.

Background papers

[Get Britain Working White Paper](#)

[Guidance for Developing local Get Britain Working plans \(England\)](#)

[Connect to Work](#)

Appendix 2 – EIA Conversation / Screening

Equality Impact Assessment: Conversation Screening Tool

[Use this form to prompt an EIA conversation and capture the discussion. This completed form or if needed, a full EIA report (form 3) will be published as part of the decision-making process ***Please delete prompts before publishing**]

The Council is legally required by the Equality Act 2010 to evidence how it has considered its equality duties in its decision-making process.

The Council must have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to -

- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

A link to the full text of [s149 of the Equality Act 2010](#) which must be considered when making decisions.

1	What is being reviewed?	Creation of a Pan Dorset 'Get Britain Working Plan'
2	What changes are being made?	N/A
3	Service Unit:	Investment and Development
4	Participants in the conversation:	Amy Walton EDO Skills, Matt Robson EDO UKSPF, Ruth Spencer SMART Places, Stakeholders: Dorset Chamber, Dorset Council
5	Conversation date/s:	03/07/25, 08/07/25, 09/07/25, 10/07/25
6	Do you know your current or potential client base? Who are the key stakeholders?	<p>BCP Council will not solely be delivering this plan, but we will be required to report on the delivery by other organisations (for up to 2 years initially), and to be part of systemic change to broaden workforce participation over a 10-year period.</p> <p>Client Base - Residents Those with income deprivation</p>

		<p>Employment deprivation Education, Skills and training deprivation Health deprivation and disability.</p> <p>Key Stakeholders: Dorset Council, ICB and JCP/DWP BCP Homewards Partnership in the BCP Council area Community Action Network across the county Active Dorset Citizens Advice Bureau Third sector organisations Priority sector groups SMEs and business leaders</p>
7	<p>Do different groups have different needs or experiences? age (young/old), disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, members of the armed forces community, any other factors/groups e.g. socioeconomic status, carers, human rights.</p>	<p>BCP Council is fully committed to responding to the needs of different groups including those with protected characteristics through this. These comprise: Different Ages - the elderly or children and young people; Current/Previous members of the Armed Forces; Those with caring responsibilities; Those with physical disabilities; Those with mental disabilities; Different genders; Those who identify as trans; Those who are pregnant/on maternity; Those who are married/in a civil partnership; People from different ethnic groups; People with different religions or beliefs; People with different sexual orientations; People with different socio-economic status; and, Any human rights issues. The proposed plan will benefit all members of the community (including those with protected characteristics) and will help improve equality in line with the 6 EHRC domains of areas of life that can impact equality - education; work; living standards; health; justice and personal security; and participation.</p>
8	Will this change affect any service users?	As above
9	<p>[If the answer to any of the questions above is 'don't know' then you need to gather more evidence. The best way to do this is to use forms 2 and 3. *Please delete prompts before publishing]</p>	

Form Version 1.2

10	<p>What are the benefits or positive equality impacts of the change on current or potential users?</p>	<p>Under Get Britain Working we will seek to find ways to help those want to work have clear pathways and supported opportunities to start or continue their careers. As part of creating the plan, we will undertake some specific analysis of data and contextual information</p>
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		<p>relating to those who are in the categories of health and disability, disadvantage and young people (16-24).</p> <p>To deliver this, we hope to transform the system so that there is better:</p> <p>support for people to get back into work if they are outside the workforce (and help to stay in employment if they have a health condition)</p> <p>access to training, an apprenticeship, or help to find work for young people (including help to avoid losing touch with the workforce at a young age)</p> <p>help for people to get a job, upskill, and get on in their career, whether they are unemployed or in employment, alongside clear obligations on people to take up support and do in return everything they can to work</p> <p>support for employers to recruit, retain and develop staff.</p>
11	What are the negative impacts of the change on current or potential users?	Contextual data and Labour Market Information shows consistent and embedded challenges that would include those with protected characteristics, however, there are no foreseen negative impacts for potential users.
12	Will the change affect employees?	<p>This is not specifically targeted at BCP employees.</p> <p>1. A key part of this government's mission to kick-start growth is our commitment to building an inclusive and thriving labour market where everyone has the opportunity of good work, and the chance to get on at work. This will improve living standards and ensure we can fund vital public services. It is also central to delivering on our missions to break down barriers to opportunity, and to improve the health of the nation.</p> <p>2. That is why the government has set a long-term ambition to achieve an 80% employment rate. This would place the UK among the highest performing countries in the world, with the equivalent of over 2 million more people in work.[footnote 4] Our approach is based on 3 pillars:</p> <p>a modern Industrial Strategy and Local Growth Plans – to create more good jobs in every part of the country</p>

		<p>improving the quality and security of work through the Plan to Make Work Pay</p> <p>the biggest reforms to employment support for a generation, bringing together skills and health to get more people into work and to get on in work</p> <p>3. This third pillar is the focus for this White Paper: to Get Britain Working, as part of a system based on mutual obligations, where those who can work, do work, and where support is matched by the requirement for jobseekers to take it up.</p>
13	Will the change affect the wider community?	<p>To deliver this, the fundamental reforms will transform the system so that there is better:</p> <p>support for people to get back into work if they are outside the workforce (and help to stay in employment if they have a health condition)</p> <p>access to training, an apprenticeship, or help to find work for young people (including help to avoid losing touch with the workforce at a young age)</p> <p>help for people to get a job, upskill, and get on in their career, whether they are unemployed or in employment, alongside clear obligations on people to take up support and do in return everything they can to work</p> <p>support for employers to recruit, retain and develop staff.</p>
14	What mitigating actions are planned or already in place for those negatively affected by this change?	<p>There is no one negatively impacted by this proposal.</p>
15	Summary of Equality Implications:	<p>Poor workforce health imposes large costs on employers, especially from sickness absence and turnover, while also making it harder for them to find the talent they need to grow and thrive. There is also compelling evidence about the value of helping people with a health condition or disability to stay in work, including to prevent them becoming economically inactive. In response, the review Get BCP and Dorset Working will consider what more can be done to enable employers to:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the recruitment and retention of disabled people and those with a health condition, including via the new jobs and careers service • prevent people becoming unwell at work and promote good, healthy workplaces • undertake early intervention for sickness absence and increase returns to work <p>The detailed project of the 'Get BCP and Dorset Working' will benefit all members of the community (including those with protected characteristics) and will help improve equality - in line with the 6 domains of areas of life that can impact equality - education; work; living standards; health; justice and personal security; and participation. Examples include better access to employability support, better targeted community awareness for return-to-work support, improved community interaction and participation around health and wellbeing at work and into work, improved education and skills support for businesses to upskill existing staff but to also build disability confidence in employing future talent. As a result, this should support economic growth and encourage more business start-ups and growth.</p>
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Appendix 3 - Dorset Skills and Workforce Development Group Membership

Chair	Nicola Newman
Secretariat	Dorset Chamber funded by LSIP
Air Bearing Solutions	Hugh Joseph
Adult Skills and Learning	Sarah Rice
AUB	Lisa Mann
BCP Council ED	Ruth Spencer
BCP Council Skills	Amy Walton
Bournemouth and Poole College	Phil Sayles/Anthony Carr
Bournemouth University	Phil Sewell
Careers Hub Chair and Industry Representative	David Matthews
Dorset Chamber/LSIP	Rosie Knapper
Dorset Council ED	Jon Bird
Dorset Careers Hub/NEETs	Simon Fraiz–Brown/Helen Stevenson
Dorset Digital Skills Partnership	Penny Syddall
DSTPN	Rod Davies
DWP	Karen Taylor
National Careers Service	Cheryl Cole
HSU	Lesley Haig/Clare Nadaf
ICB/NHS	Eleanor Parson
Weymouth and Kingston Maurwood College (now Coastland College)	Kate Wills/Tom Hallam
Yeovil College	Alex Clancy