

	Officer Key Decision
	Report to the Corporate Director Finance and Resources
	Lead Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Jobs and Skills
Authority to enter into an Agreement with the DWP in relation to Connect to Work Grant Funding	
Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key Decision
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	Appendix 1 - DWP Side Letter
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Name: Jim Jessop Job Title: Employment Strategy and Delivery Senior Manager Email: Jim.Jessop@Brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report requests Corporate Director, Finance and Resources approval to enter into an Agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) relating to grant funding received by Ealing Council as the Lead Authority on behalf of the West London Alliance (WLA) for the funding and delivery of Connect to Work services. The provision is part of the Government's national flagship Get Britain Working suite of initiatives.
- 1.2 The total value of the Connect to Work Grant across the 7 WLA boroughs is £43.2m, for delivery of the programme from 1st April 2025-March 2030. This will finance 10,800 places for residents of the WLA boroughs. It is estimated that this will provide Connect to Work employability support provision for 2,700 Brent residents over 5 years.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That the Corporate Director, Finance and Resources:

- 2.1 Notes that Brent Council in association with 6 other West London Alliance boroughs has been successful in an application for Connect to Work Grant funding from the DWP in the sum of £43.2M across the 7 WLA boroughs for the period April 2025 – March 2030.

- 2.2 Approves Brent Council entering into an Agreement with the DWP to access Connect to Work Grant funding by signing the “Side Letter” set out at Appendix 1.

3.0 Detail

Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 3.1 Approval to enter into the Agreement with the DWP will enable the Council to access Connect to Work Grant funding. This funding will support Brent Strategic Priority 1. Prosperity and Stability in Brent.
- 3.2 Connect to Work Grant funding will support:
- Easing the cost-of-living crisis – by supporting substantial numbers of Brent residents off of benefits and into sustainable employment.
 - Deliver more Brent residents into jobs - by cross-borough collaboration on employability training, support and development

Background

- 3.3 The DWP is responsible for the delivery of the government’s flagship Connect to Work programme (formerly known as Universal Support), part of the governments suite of Getting Britain Working initiatives announced in the Autumn Statement of 2024. The DWP invited bids for Connect to Work Grant funding from relevant organisations.
- 3.4 The West London Alliance (WLA) sub-regional partnership, of which Brent is one of 7 member boroughs, discussed making application for Connect to Work Grant funding. Chief Executives of the WLA boroughs agreed to submit a joint bid for the WLA Delivery Area and that this bid would be led by Ealing Council, with support from the other boroughs.
- 3.5 The WLA bid has been successful and the value of the funding is £43.2m across the 7 boroughs from April 2025 to March 2030. It will fund support provision for 10,800 WLA borough residents over this period.
- 3.6 Though no notional financial proportion of the Connect to Work Grant funding allocation has been ascribed to Brent individually, based on the comparative concentration of residents eligible for the programme across the 7 boroughs, 25% of the funded programme places are allocated to Brent residents. This gives a notional equivalent value to Brent in excess of £10m.
- 3.7 As Ealing Council led on the grant application, it will enter into the Connect to Work Grant with the DWP and has sought and obtained Cabinet approval to do this. Under the Connect to Work Grant, Brent and the other 5 supporting boroughs are described as Additional Delivery Area Members for the WLA Delivery Area and have been requested to sign an Agreement with the DWP in the form of a Side Letter at Appendix 1. This Side Letter ensures that the DWP has a Direct relationship with Brent and sets out which provisions of the Connect to Work Grant will be directly enforceable by the DWP.

3.8 Officers have reviewed the Connect to Work Grant and Side Letter and confirm the objectives of this **revenue funding** are consistent with Brent Council's objectives and priorities as further set out in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2..

3.9 A paper was presented to the WLA CEOs on the delivery options for Connect to Work, and there was agreement to the proposed commissioning approach. This approach involves commissioning Shaw Trust, a trusted and high-performing provider, to deliver the programme.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 As a national government programme commissioned and delivered through Mayoral authorities and sub-regional partnerships (including the WLA) the council did not undertake specific stakeholder consultation on this programme which would have been done at a different spatial level.

4.2 WLA CEOs were consulted on the delivery options for Connect to Work and agreed this approach. In Brent, Officers also facilitated DWP and WLA presentations to borough stakeholders as part of the Brent Employment Strategy Stakeholder Consultation event in January this year, with no objections being raised or notified.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 All funding flows to Ealing council as the accountable body for WLA and they and WLA are responsible for all procurement/commissioning and day-to-day management of the project.

5.2 No funding is passed on to Brent who are not sub-contractors in this sense and there are no financial demands on Brent as part of the programme. Officer resource for partnership liaison is already funded and covered within existing officer roles within the Employment Services Team

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 Approval is sought for the Council to enter into an agreement with the DWP in relation to the Connect to Work Grant. The Council's power to apply for grant funding and enter into a Grant and associated agreements can be found under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, or under the power of general competence set out in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

6.2 The Agreement with the DWP is a "Side Letter" associated to the Connect to Work Grant between Ealing Council and the DWP. A copy of the Side Letter is attached as Appendix 1. The terms of this letter requires the Council to be bound by certain provisions in the Connect to Work Grant between Ealing Council and the DWP as set out in Paragraph 7 of the Side Letter, which relates particularly to Data Protection and Public Procurement requirements.

- 6.3 Legal Services have reviewed the “Side Letter” and Grant Funding Agreement and can confirm that it is legally permissible for the Council to enter into the Agreement with the DWP.
- 6.4 The Corporate Director, Finance and Resources, has delegated authority pursuant to paragraph 9.5 of Part 3 of the Constitution and Financial Regulation 8.2.2 of Part 2 of the Constitution to enter grant funding arrangements. In doing so, the Corporate Director must ensure that the objectives of the grant agreement are consistent with the Council objectives and priorities in accordance with Financial Regulation 9.1.2. The Corporate Director is referred to paragraph 3.8 in this regard.
- 6.5 Any grant funding received will be subject to certain conditions. Failure to adhere to such conditions could require the Council to refund some or all of the grant received and be liable for any breaches relevant to the applicable provisions identified at Paragraph 7 of the grant conditions.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 7.1 The proposals in this report have been subject to screening and officers believe that there are no adverse equality implications.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 8.1 N/A

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

- 9.1 N/A

10.0 Communication Considerations

- 10.1 N/A

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel
Corporate Director of Finance and Resources