



Get East Midlands Working Plan 2025–2035

East Midlands Combined County Authority



CLAIRE WARD
MAYOR OF THE
EAST MIDLANDS



East Midlands
Combined County
Authority



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Foreword

The East Midlands is a region full of potential. But to unlock that potential, we need to work together to face our challenges and invest in our strengths: our people, our communities and our industries. One of our challenges is one shared with the rest of the country: ensuring that people are in good work, the bedrock of thriving communities.

The Get East Midlands Working Plan is our collective response to these challenges. Developed by a strong partnership from the East Midlands Combined County Authority, its constituent Local Authorities, the Department for Work and Pensions, our two NHS Integrated Care Boards, the Federation of Small Businesses, and Further Education and voluntary sector partners this plan sets out a bold, place-based strategy to increase employment, reduce economic inactivity, and improve job quality across our region.

Aligned with the East Midlands Growth Plan, this plan puts people at the heart of our economic mission. It recognises that inclusive growth is not just about creating jobs, it's about ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, postcode, or circumstance, has the opportunity to thrive. It's about integrating health, skills, and employment support to tackle the root causes of inactivity and unlock the full potential of our communities.

This is why we fully support the Government's ambition to help more people into work, and the

East Midlands will play its part in reaching an 80% employment rate by 2035. But to do this we must invest in our people, our places, and our partnerships. This means supporting those furthest from the labour market, retaining and upskilling our current workforce, preparing the next generation for the future of work and working with employers to create good jobs, improve progression, and match local talent to local opportunity. It means integrating health and employment and skills support, tackling inequalities, and creating opportunities for everyone—regardless of background, postcode, or circumstance.

This plan is underpinned by strong governance, robust evidence, and a commitment to collaborative delivery. It builds on the strengths of our Get East Midlands Working Partnership and together, we will create a more inclusive, healthier, and prosperous East Midlands.

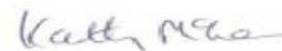
This plan is about creating a fairer system where health, skills and employment opportunity come together, ensuring that everyone who wants to live, work and learn

in the East Midlands can do so with pride and confidence. Few things are more important than this.


This is just the beginning. The Get East Midlands Working Plan is a blueprint for action, and we invite all partners to join us in delivering it. Together, we will Get the East Midlands Working.



Claire Ward
Mayor of the East Midlands
Combined County Authority



Dr Kathy McLean
Chair, NHS Derby and Derbyshire
Integrated Care Board and NHS
Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
Integrated Care Board



Laura Moig
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Executive Summary 2025–2035

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Executive Summary

The Get East Midlands Working Plan (2025–2035) sets out a bold, evidence-led ambition to raise employment and incomes in our region. Developed collaboratively by the Get East Midlands Working Partnership, it sets out the route towards an inclusive, resilient labour market across Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, and Nottinghamshire, tackling persistent barriers to work while supporting inclusive economic growth. This is our response to the government's call to action in the Get Britain Working white paper.

Our vision: To build an integrated employment system in Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, and Nottinghamshire for everyone that connects health, skills, housing and support services and ensures that every individual, regardless of background or circumstance, can access good work, improve their wellbeing and contribute to a thriving, inclusive regional economy.

By 2035, the Get East Midlands Working Partnership and this Plan aim to:

- Increase the regional employment rate to 80%, bringing an additional 60,000 people into work.
- Narrowing the regional earnings gap with the national average.

Strategic Priorities

Delivering the vision requires system change built around three priorities:

- **Priority 1: Effective training and employment support** - We will connect residents to sustainable jobs through easy-to-access, targeted health and employment support and jobs-focused skills

development so that everyone can get into work and progress.

- **Priority 2: A joined-up system** - We will work better together as partners, strengthening governance and integration to ensure clear leadership, coordinated action and accountable delivery across the employment, health and skills system

- **Priority 3: Overcoming wider barriers** We will tackle structural barriers that stop people getting into work, including transport, housing and health access. This will unlock inclusive, long-term employment opportunities and build a more resilient workforce.

Tackling barriers

The Plan will address the big challenges that hold our region back:

- **Access to high-quality jobs:** There are currently 40,000 job vacancies. Even if every job was filled today, we still would not hit the 80% employment rate target set out in the Get Britain Working White Paper. Of those vacancies, many are concentrated in low-pay, low-progression roles. Employers

report persistent skill shortages, particularly in digital, technical, and customer-facing roles, constraining growth. We will align with our East Midlands Growth Plan to create high-paying jobs that are accessible to local people, embedding the Opportunity Escalator across both our economic and skills development programmes.

- **Tackling barriers to employment:** Almost 278,000 working-age residents are economically inactive. Nearly one in five of those say they want a job. Inactivity is highest within urban areas such as Derby and Nottingham. Poor health is a dominant driver, with mental health, musculoskeletal and other long-term conditions also barriers to work. Caring responsibilities impact over 40,000 people, mostly women. A higher proportion of young people are not engaged in employment or training compared to the national average, while individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds, ex-offenders, refugees, and those living in disadvantaged areas continue to face systemic barriers. Low qualifications and poor confidence further limit access

to work, creating overlapping barriers that require tailored, coordinated support beyond mainstream provision. We will join up programmes across the health, work, and skills system to provide personalised support while continuing to test and learn new approaches so we can scale what works.

- **Removing the barriers to 'getting on':** Poor public transport connectivity restricts mobility, particularly in rural areas, while insecure or unaffordable housing undermines stability for those seeking jobs. We will work across the East Midlands and our partners to tackle these barriers so people can get 'on' the Opportunity Escalator.

Delivering inclusive growth

The East Midlands is bursting with growth opportunities in sectors like clean energy, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, and logistics, with the potential to create 100,000 jobs in the next 10 years as outlined in EMCCA's Vision for Growth (2024). Initiatives like the East Midlands Freeport and the East Midlands Investment Zone along with new development across the Trent Arc and Supercluster, amongst many others, will create outstanding opportunities for people in the region. The Plan support the core mission of enabling inclusive growth and opportunity as et out

in the East Midlands Inclusive Growth Framework and the East Midlands Growth Plan. In line with the independent Inclusive Growth Commission for the East Midlands, we will develop an Opportunity Escalator approach that will not only support people into work but also enable them to progress, train and retrain, to access higher-paid, higher-quality jobs over time.

A living partnership

The Plan reflects the joint efforts of partners across the East Midlands, including the East Midlands Combined County Authority, its constituent Local Authorities, DWP, two NHS Integrated Care Boards, the Federation of Small Businesses, and Further Education and voluntary sector partners. The success of its delivery will be determined by our collective ability to make the best use of our resources and relationships to provide the best support possible to residents. The Plan is not a fixed blueprint but a live document. It will change and adapt as circumstances change and as we learn more about what works in delivery. Through collaboration and shared ambition, the Partnership will turn the Plan into action, driving real change for residents and employers alike.





Introduction

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The Get East Midlands Working Plan (2025–2035) sets out an ambitious agenda to unlock opportunity, raise employment, and boost incomes across Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, and Nottinghamshire.

Developed by the Get East Midlands Working Partnership in response to the UK Government's Get Britain Working White Paper¹, the Plan charts a route to an inclusive, resilient labour market by tackling barriers to work, improving skills and health, and enabling more people to thrive in meaningful employment.

Focused on the East Midlands Combined County Authority area, the Plan aligns with national and regional ambitions, including raising the employment rate to 80%, improving productivity, and building healthier, more inclusive economies. The Plan complements the East Midlands Inclusive Growth Framework and the East Midlands Growth Plan and supports ambitions under the East Midlands devolution deal and existing local investment and growth plans.

Alongside a summary of current employment support, the Plan provides detailed labour market analysis, defines the roles of key partners, and highlights where fresh approaches are needed. Above all, it shows how collective action across employment, health, and skills will deliver lasting change for every community.

The Plan is a “live” document and is intended to respond to economic, social, organisational and policy changes. The document will be reviewed regularly.

1.1 Steps taken to develop the Plan

The Plan has been developed collaboratively with local partners through the Get East Midlands Working Partnership. The Partnership membership includes representatives from EMCCA, the four constituent local authorities of Derby City Council, Derbyshire County Council, Nottingham City Council, and Nottinghamshire County Council, alongside the Department for Work and Pensions, Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board (ICB), Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB, the Federation of Small Businesses, FE Colleges and the voluntary sector.

Organisations and groups engaged as part of the Plan are listed in Appendix A.

Alongside the Partnership, the Plan development has involved engagement with local employment service providers, education and training providers, residents, further education institutions, voluntary, community, and representatives from the voluntary and social

enterprise sector, and district local authorities within Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire County borders.

The Plan has been shaped through a combination of stakeholder workshops, one-to-one discussions with key stakeholders, resident panel survey, in-depth consultations with residents, secondary data analysis and existing research. Whilst wide ranging this engagement is not the final position.

The engagement so far provides a strong foundation and a clear direction for how the Partnership will engage and work with communities and partners as the Plan is delivered.

Further detail on our ongoing engagement and governance approach is set out in Section 7 & 8.

The Plan represents the start of a new phase of partnership working and collaboration across employment, skills and health within the EMCCA area. As such, it is a live document that will continue to be reviewed and updated as the social, economic, organisational and policy context changes. The Plan includes actions for immediate delivery over the next 12 to 24 months, to achieve the aims and priorities (Section 7).

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-britain-working-white-paper/get-britain-working-white-paper>



1.2 Plan structure

The Plan is structured in eight sections:

- **Section 2: Plan context** - Sets the strategic context for The Plan, outlining its purpose, scope, and alignment with national and local priorities.
- **Section 3: Labour market analysis** - Provides a detailed examination of labour market conditions, identifying participation challenges, progression barriers, and disparities across groups and places.
- **Section 4: Ecosystem mapping and existing provision** - Maps the current landscape of employment and support services, highlighting key providers, existing interventions, and gaps in provision.
- **Section 5: Partner collaboration and opportunities** - Explores how local partners can work together more effectively, identifying opportunities for joint action and aligned delivery.
- **Section 6: System analysis** - Analyses the structural and systemic factors affecting employment outcomes, including capacity, accessibility, and service coherence.
- **Section 7: Framework for change** - Sets out the proposed priorities, actions, and outcome indicators to drive progress over the next 12–24 months.
- **Section 8: Governance** - Describes the local governance arrangements, stakeholder engagement processes, and mechanisms for monitoring and updating The Plan.



Plan Context

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This section outlines the strategic and conceptual framework of the Plan, highlights opportunities for economic growth and establishes the foundation for the analysis and priorities presented in the subsequent sections.

2.1 Get Britain Working

The Get Britain Working White Paper² sets out the UK Government's ambition to build a fairer labour market by helping more people into secure, good-quality jobs. The main goal is to increase the employment rate to 80%, which the Learning and Work Institute estimates could add 1.7 million jobs nationally and boost the economy by £23.1 billion annually.³

To achieve this economic boost, the White Paper focuses on tackling six barriers:

- 1. Labour market exclusion: Too many people are excluded from the labour market, especially those with health conditions, caring responsibilities or lower skill levels.**
- 2. Youth Unemployment: Too many young people are leaving school without essential skills or access to high-quality further learning, apprenticeship or support to work.**
- 3. Insecure, low-quality, and poorly paid work: Too many people are stuck in insecure, poor-quality and low-paying jobs, affecting their health and well-being.**
- 4. Challenges for women: Women who care for their families face challenges in staying and progressing in work.**

5. Employer vacancies: Employers struggle to fill vacancies due to labour and skills shortages, impacting economic growth and living standards.

6. Disparities in labour market outcomes: There are significant disparities in labour market outcomes between different places and groups of people.

Sub-regional areas have been asked to develop local Get Britain Working Plans that identify local challenges, strengthen support systems, and set ambitious targets, ensuring coordinated, evidence-based action. Together, these local and national efforts aim to create a dynamic labour market where everyone has the opportunity to work, progress, and contribute to growth.

2.2 Foundations of employment system design

The Plan's analysis is built on the understanding of the components and drivers of inclusive labour supply and demand systems (Figure 2.1). Labour supply includes the availability, readiness, and characteristics of people who could feasibly work, shaped by factors such as skills, health, care responsibilities, and access to transport. Labour demand reflects the quantity and quality of jobs offered by employers, including pay, conditions, progression routes, and recruitment practices. This understanding provides a framework for our analysis, helping to identify the scale and causes of participation gaps and the structural barriers to accessing good work.

Figure 2.1: Inclusive labour market: supply and demand



² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-britain-working-white-paper>

³ Towards full employment - Learning and Work Institute

2.3 The link between health inequalities and work

Health and work are inextricably linked. 'Good work'⁴ is positively associated with improved physical and mental wellbeing, while being out of work, or trapped in poor quality, low-paid, and insecure work, harms health and increases the risk of socioeconomic deprivation. Ill physical and mental health, in turn, make it harder to gain or sustain employment, creating a cycle that increases risk of socio-economic deprivation.

The opportunity to live a healthy life is unevenly distributed across society, a pattern known as health inequality. According to the King's Fund⁵, health inequalities are avoidable, unfair, and systematic differences in health between groups of people. They can be seen in higher rates of illness or mortality, or in unequal access to and experiences of health services. Such inequalities are shaped less by healthcare itself and more by the broader conditions in which people live, work and socialise, often referred to as the wider determinants of health (see Figure 2.2).

These inequalities can be compounded by socioeconomic disadvantage. People in poorer health may face barriers to good quality, well paid and secure

work, which in turn limits their opportunities for progression and wellbeing. Their families may also be affected, especially where caring responsibilities are involved.

'Good work' is a vital determinant of health because it not only enables economic participation but also supports physical and mental health and overall wellbeing.

Figure 2.2. Rainbow framework of the wider determinants of health



Source: Dahlgren and Whitehead (1991)⁶

2.4 East Midlands County Combined Authority (EMCCA) area

The Plan covers 2.2 million residents in the areas of Derbyshire County, Nottinghamshire County, Derby City, and Nottingham City. EMCCA is led by Mayor Claire Ward in partnership with the constituent councils, Derbyshire County Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, Derby City Council, and Nottingham City Council.

Through the East Midlands Devolution Deal, it has powers over economic development, transport, skills, housing, and the environment, driving investment, better connectivity, affordable housing, cleaner energy, and opportunities for people and businesses across the area.

The East Midlands Inclusive Growth Framework sets out EMCCA's core mission and six ambitions for the region to 2040. The Framework is designed as call for action to enable EMCCA to work with partners, including those that have developed this Get East Midlands Working Plan, towards shared goals. It sets out a core mission that:

"By 2040, every resident will be proud to call the East Midlands home. All young people will have a fair start and a clear path to

⁴ See https://www.health.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-03/190325_THF_Infographic_No.9_Work_AW03.pdf

⁵ Kings Fund (2025) "What are health inequalities?" Available at: [What Are Health Inequalities?](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/what-are-health-inequalities/) | The King's Fund.

⁶ The Dahlgren-Whitehead rainbow (1991). Available at: <https://www.pslhub.org/learn/improving-patient-safety/health-inequalities/the-dahlgren-whitehead-rainbow-1991-r5870/>

progress. A thriving, green and inclusive economy will improve health and wellbeing, widen opportunity regardless of postcode, and empower all residents to shape their places and future”

Of particular importance to the Get East Midlands Working Plan, it sets out targeted ambitions on growth and opportunity, skills for good work and health, wellbeing and belonging.

Growth and Opportunity: By 2040, the East Midlands will be one of the fastest growing regional economies in the UK. People across the region will have better access to opportunity and be in good, secure and rewarding work. This will be enabled by innovation rooted in our strengths in making, producing and movement, establishing the East Midlands as a leading destination for business investment.

Skills for Good Work: By 2040, the East Midlands will be a place where people can gain the skills, they need for the jobs they want, with high-quality local training, better pay, and clear routes to progress. From first steps into work to careers at the forefront of industry, everyone will have the chance to realise their potential, and more jobs will offer security, purpose and pride.

Health, Wellbeing and Belonging:

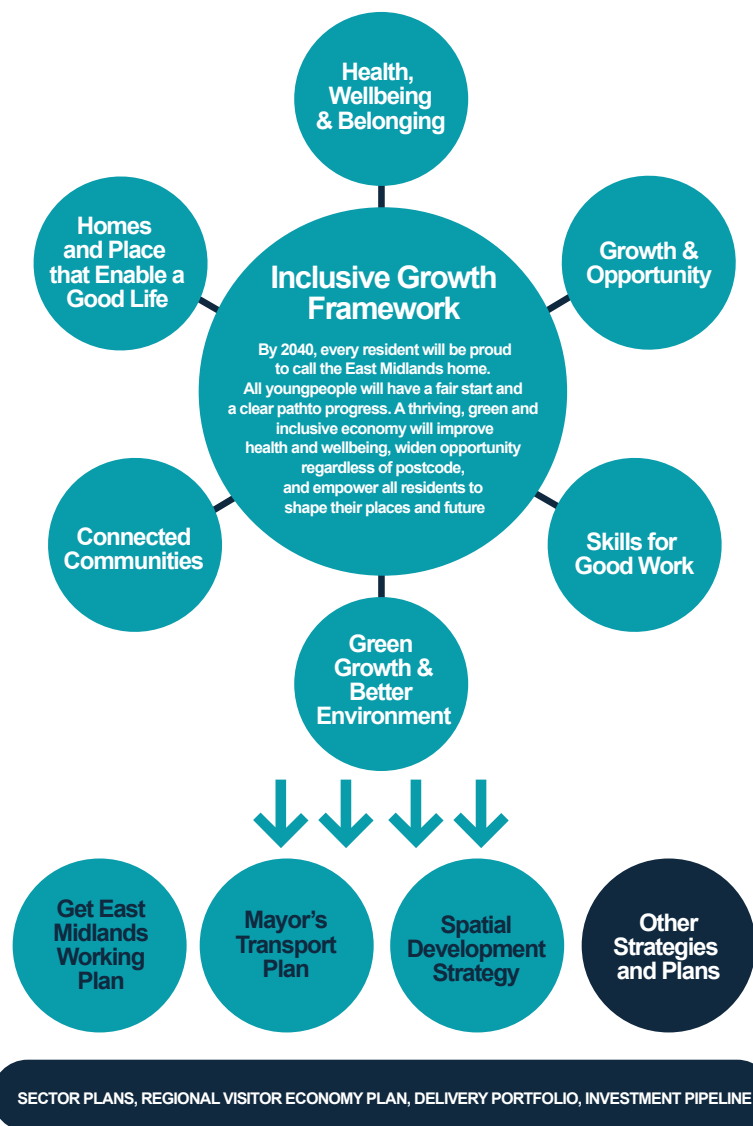
By 2040, we will significantly reduce the gap in healthy life expectancy between our most and least advantaged communities and improve health and wellbeing for all residents by focusing on prevention, treatment, and support, enabling people to participate fully in their communities and benefit from opportunities around them.

2.5 Aligning strategic priorities

2.5.1 Strategic alignment

Alongside the Get Britain Working White Paper, the Plan aligns with a range of national and local strategies (Figure 2.3). Several key local and regional strategic documents have been developed at the same time as the Plan.

Figure 2.3: Strategic Alignment



Source: EMCCA 2025

⁴ See https://www.health.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-03/190325_THF_Infographic_No.9_Work_AW03.pdf

⁵ Kings Fund (2025) "What are health inequalities?" Available at: What Are Health Inequalities? | The King's Fund.

Critically, the Plan aligns with a range of existing local economic, skills and employment strategies developed across Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. These include the Inclusive Growth Framework, East Midlands Growth Plan, Local Skills Improvement Plan, wider employment and skills initiatives, and inclusive economy strategies led by the constituent councils and local partners. Many of these strategies and plans share the common priorities of supporting economic growth, improving inclusion, and connecting people and businesses to opportunity.

The Plan builds on these foundations, helping to align investment and action across systems to deliver shared outcomes. Appendix E provides a breakdown of the relevant national and regional strategies and policies.

“There are big differences in life expectancy and life chance across this region, and we need to tackle that to create a healthier population where more people are able to work.”

Dr Andy Haynes, former Executive Lead for Nottinghamshire’s Integrated Care System (as quoted from East Midlands Inclusive Growth Commission events in July).

The East Midlands Inclusive Growth Commission (launched in September 2024 and reported in September 2025) was an independent commission convened by Mayor Claire Ward and chaired by Andy Haldane, which established a strategic, evidence-based framework for achieving inclusive growth.

The Opportunity Escalator, from the East Midlands Inclusive Growth Commission, connects people to jobs and supports progression so they can step in to work and step up to better opportunities.

- **Step On:** Accessible entry points into employment or training for all communities.
- **Step Up:** Clear routes for advancement into higher-value, better-paid roles.

The Commission’s independent report offers an assessment of the region’s economic potential and identifies practical steps to ensure that growth benefits every community. By analysing structural challenges, identifying high-potential sectors, and drawing upon concepts tools such as the Opportunity Escalator, the Commission sets out how the East Midlands can align investment, skills development, and infrastructure improvements to deliver growth that is both sustainable and inclusive.

Inclusive growth refers to economic progress that creates opportunities for all segments of society and distributes the benefits of prosperity more equitably. It seeks to reduce inequalities in areas such as income, employment, skills, housing, and health while strengthening the overall economy. Inclusive growth is particularly important given the East Midlands’ diverse mix of urban, rural, and former industrial areas, where economic opportunities and social outcomes have historically been uneven.

EMCCA’s has built on the work of the Inclusive Growth Commission by developing an Inclusive Growth Framework. The Framework is a call to action for partners to work with EMCCA to deliver our core mission and six targeted ambitions for inclusive growth. The plan identifies productivity growth, earnings growth.

2.5.3 Changes on the horizon

The Get East Midlands Working Plan is being developed at a time of significant change in the EMCCA area, with local government reorganisation and NHS reforms reshaping responsibilities for employment, health, and skills. These shifts will affect both the Partnership and its wider stakeholders. The Plan, therefore, aims to provide a clear vision and a sense of stability through this transition, while remaining flexible. It will be regularly monitored and updated to reflect evolving institutions, policy priorities, and the regional devolution context.



Labour market analysis

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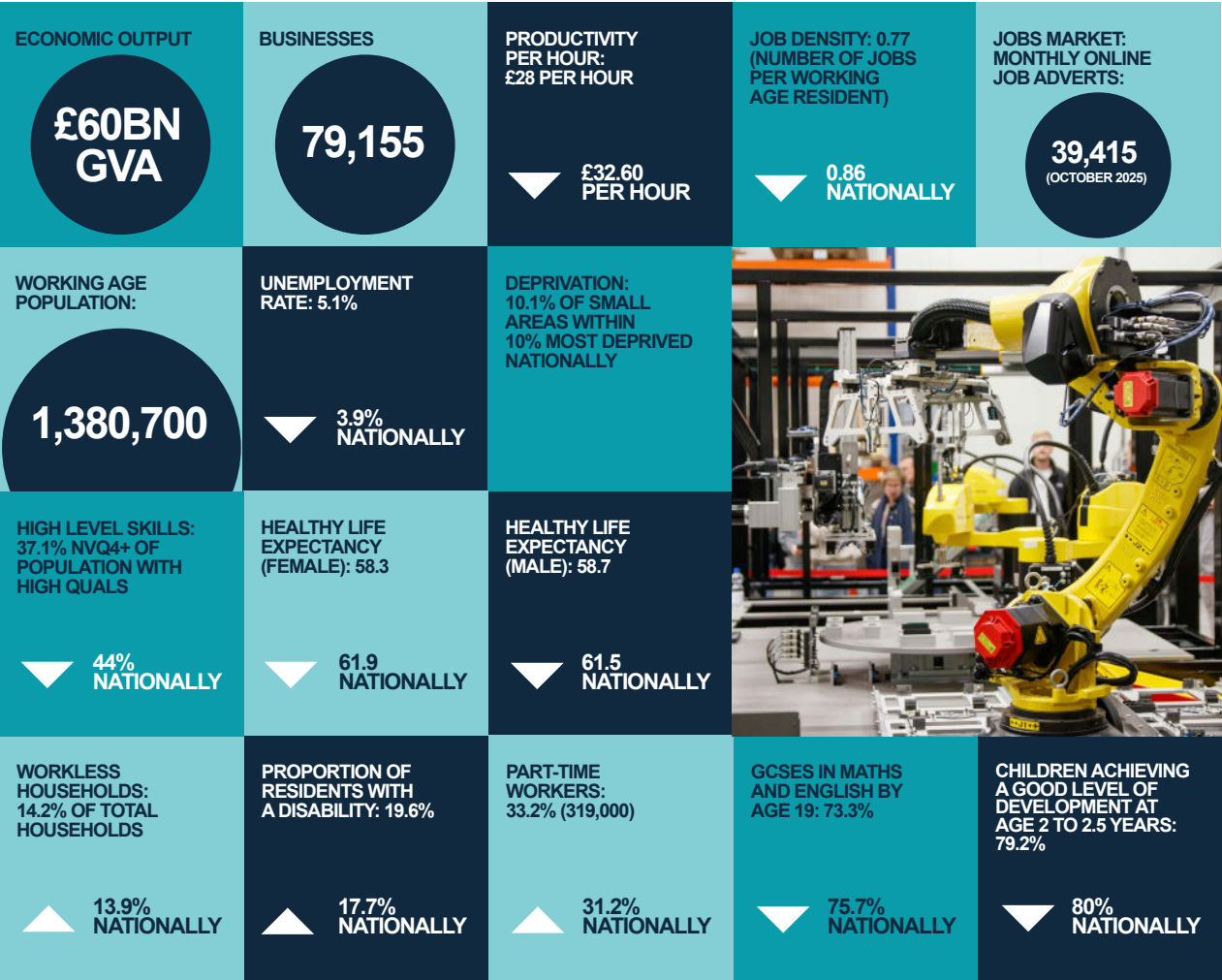
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Key metrics connected to the labour market across the East Midlands help identify key supply and demand issues and progression challenges. A detailed data analysis is available in Appendix B.

3.1 Context

Figure 3.1 below provides an overview of the current economic and social context in the East Midlands. Alongside the Inclusive Growth Commission and the East Midlands Growth Plan, it provides a snapshot of the East Midland’s position, highlighting challenges and opportunities that are both contextual and important to the local labour market.

Figure 3.1: Overview of EMCCA area (2025)

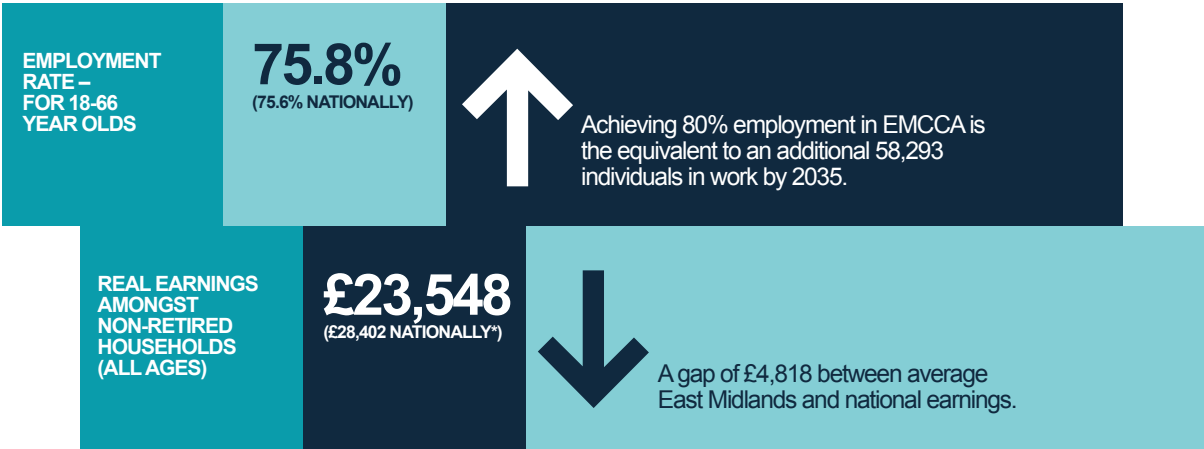


Sources: ONS GVA and Productivity Estimates, CPI, IDBR, LightCast 2025, PHE FingerTips, DfE Local Skills Tool and ONS Annual Population Survey

3.2 Key and intermediate outcomes metrics

The Get Britain Working White Paper identifies two key outcome metrics and six intermediate outcomes metrics for local Get Britain Working Plans to contribute to.

Key Outcome Metrics: The Plan is aimed at supporting the realisation of two key outcomes which are stated in the Get Britain Working White Paper⁷:



*All national figures are for England.

** Household work data has been utilised as a proxy figure due to the lack of local data on the parental employment rate.

Sources: ONS Annual Population Survey and ONS Gross Disposable Household Incomes 2025

⁷ Get Britain Working outcomes - GOV.UK

Intermediate Outcomes Metrics:

In addition to the two long-term outcomes, a series of intermediate outcomes are also identified⁴. These include:



* Nationally refers to the average across England.
*Household worklessness has been utilised as a proxy for employment among parents due to a lack of suitable local level data.

Sources: Annual Population Survey 2025; Department for Education, 2024; Department for Work and Pensions 2024.

Sitting beneath the headline metrics, analysis of the labour market identifies a series of more granular data-led insights that help explain the region's labour market performance. These findings are grouped into two categories; supply and demand to highlight the factors shaping people's ability to access work and the nature of the opportunities available. A full analysis, including regional variations in outcome metrics where available, is provided in Appendix B.

3.3 Demand-side

The demand for labour represents the quantity, quality, and structure of employment opportunities available across the East Midlands, driven by business growth, sector composition, and investment patterns.

Enterprise opportunity:

Self-employment provides a vital alternative route into work by enabling individuals to create their own opportunities, particularly where vacancies are scarce, and to avoid the pitfalls of low-quality or mismatched employment. In the East Midlands, only 7.6% of people are self-employed compared to the national average of 9.4%, suggesting significant untapped potential to expand this pathway as part of a broader employment approach.

Shortage of vacancies to meet the 80% target:

In August 2025, there were just 39,400 job postings across the East Midlands, a fall of 13.5% since 2021⁸. With 1.8 unemployed people for each vacancy, the region faces a clear shortfall in labour demand⁹. This imbalance makes it harder to reach the 80% employment rate target.

Dominance of low-paid, entry-level roles:

The job market is heavily weighted towards low-pay, low-skill roles. Of the 20 most common job titles advertised, 15 offered median salaries below the national average (£32,188), and five were below £25,000. Roles such as care assistants, cleaners, and warehouse operatives dominate demand. By contrast, high-skill roles such as project managers and quantity surveyors are fewer in number, though they offer significantly higher pay (£50,000+).¹⁰

Challenge of insecure work:

Poor quality, insecure jobs, often low-paid and unstable, harm health, increasing risks of stress, depression, cardiovascular disease, and other conditions. Evidence from the Trade Union Congress suggests that up to 1 in 8 jobs in the East Midlands are insecure (low paid with variable hours and no employment protections)¹¹. Such 'precarious' work is more common in deprived areas, compounding inequalities.¹²

Skills gaps and mismatched demand:

Employers report persistent gaps between available skills and those needed in the workplace. Key sectors have been identified as facing challenges¹³. A lack of formal qualifications and softer skills limits opportunities. 37% of economically inactive adults in EMCCA have no formal qualifications.¹⁴ Soft skills, especially communication and customer service; dominate recruitment advertisements. The Local Skills Improvement Plan¹⁵ also highlights technical gaps, including significant digital skills shortages, with 21% of East Midlands residents lacking basic digital literacy¹⁶. This mismatch risks locking many residents out of jobs, limits employers' ability to fill roles, and ability to become self-employed.

Concerns over young people's work readiness:

Employers highlight that the education system could better prepare young people for employment. Issues raised include poor communication, lack of punctuality, and limited understanding of professional conduct. National surveys show that 44% of employers believe school leavers are not work-ready, a challenge echoed strongly across the East Midlands.¹⁷

Inclusive hiring remains underdeveloped:

Despite widespread recognition of its importance, inclusive recruitment practices remain patchy. A 2024 national survey by the Recruitment and Employment Confederation found that 62% of employers lack diverse interview panels.¹⁸ Local consultations confirm the same pattern in the East Midlands: many businesses aspire to be more inclusive but lack the guidance, capacity, and systems to deliver change. Feedback from consultations shows that recruitment processes remain inaccessible, and there are few clear routes to advancement.

⁸ ONS Labour demand volumes by Standard Occupation Classification (SOC 2020), UK (2025, August)

⁹ Annual Population Survey, 2025

¹⁰ Lightcast, 2025.

¹¹ <https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/midlands/1-8-workers-east-midlands-insecure-work-tuc-warns>

¹² Brunner EJ, Marmot MG, Nanchahal K et al. (1997) Social inequality in coronary risk: Central obesity and the metabolic syndrome. Evidence from the Whitehall II study. *Diabetologia* 40:1341-49.

¹³ Existing and forthcoming LSIP evidence 2023-2025

¹⁴ Lightcast, 2025

¹⁵ Federation of Small Business (2024) Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire LSIP. Available at: <https://www.fsb.org.uk/local-government/derbyshire-and-nottinghamshire-lsip>

¹⁶ Independent Advisor's Broadband Department, 2024

¹⁷ CBI (2019) Getting young people 'work ready'.

Artificial Intelligence is changing labour demand: The rise of AI threatens entry-level administrative roles, which have already shown a decline since 2022. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity for building a fairer labour market.¹⁹

3.4 Supply-side

The supply side of the labour market reflects the availability, skills, and characteristics of the working-age population, as well as the barriers and enablers that shape participation and employability across the East Midlands.

Scale of inactivity: In the East Midlands, around 278,400 people of working age are economically inactive, with nearly 54,500 (19.6%) saying they would like a job if the right support were available. The picture of inactivity varies across the East Midland. Areas including Nottingham, Derby and Ashfield have higher unemployment and economic inactivity rates, falling well below the 80% employment benchmark, which points to deeper labour market challenges. In contrast, Chesterfield, Rushcliffe and South Derbyshire exceed an 80% employment rate.²⁰

Health-related economic inactivity is a significant problem and increasing: One-third of the inactive population are out of work due to sickness, with long-term health-related inactivity rising. Mental health is the most common cause of GP Fit Notes, with 12,000 issued in 2024.²¹ Within EMCCA psychiatric conditions²² (43%), musculoskeletal disorders (30%), neurological conditions (12%), and respiratory diseases (3%) were the most common conditions among Personal Independence Payments (PIP) claimants. National data highlights that often people have multiple conditions.²³ Consultations with representatives from ICBs highlighted that many of the available jobs (e.g., many in care, warehouse roles) may be unsuitable for people with poor or fluctuating health.

Linked to increasing rates of long-term illness are the number of people with caring responsibilities. Care responsibilities keep over 45,000 adults out of the labour market (of which 38,000 are women). These figures likely under-estimate there are many people providing informal or unpaid care who are not known to the system but whose ability to work is being impacted. Caring itself can be considered a social

determinant of health. Beyond the financial impacts of being unable to work, caregiving can take a negative toll on carers' physical and mental wellbeing. This, combined with the fact that care is disproportionately provided by women compounds existing inequalities in health and labour market access.²⁴

Low motivation and confidence are major hurdles: A survey of 255 East Midlands' residents found that 52% of unemployed residents rate their motivation to work at 4/10 or lower, while 17% cited lack of confidence.²⁵ National research has found that amongst young people, over 40% doubt their ability to write a good CV.²⁶

Demographic disparities persist: Female employment rate is 5.7% lower than men in the East Midlands. Ethnic minority groups have an average employment rate 5.3% lower than white people within the East Midlands, with mixed and other ethnic groups the lowest.²⁷

Young people at risk of long-term exclusion: 14.7% of 16 to 24 year olds are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET)²⁸, above the national average, with many reporting health conditions or learning difficulties.

This indicates a growing need for targeted youth support.

Specific groups face acute challenges: Consultations with Partnership members and service providers highlighted additional barriers for specific groups such as homeless people, people with convictions, refugees and migrant communities. Within East Midlands, there are an estimated 146 rough sleepers, 8,000 refugees, 30,000 people who struggle with English language proficiency, and a 59% unemployment rate for ex-offenders.²⁹ Derby has the highest percentage of people who use British Sign Language as their main language with England and Wales, 0.2% of the population compared to 0.04% nationally.³⁰

Infrastructure barriers affect access to jobs: Poor transport is a structural constraint, particularly in rural areas. The resident survey undertaken highlighted that 20% of residents report difficulty travelling to jobs or training. Consultations with the DWP also highlighted transport as a challenge for Job centre Plus customers searching for employment.

¹⁸ Recruitment and Employment Confederation (2024): Employers losing focus on inclusive hiring, suggests annual survey of employers :: The REC

¹⁹ McKinsey and Company (2025) Not yet productive, already disruptive: AI's uneven effects on UK jobs and talent

²⁰ AMION estimates using ONS Annual Population Survey (2025). A rolling average of October 2023 – September 2024, January 2024– December 2024, and April 2024 to March 2025.

²¹ NHS England Digital (2025). Fit Notes Issued by GP Practices, England, December 2024 <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/fit-notes-issued-by-gp-practices/december-2024#>

²² Psychiatric conditions covers a broad range of disorders including anxiety disorder, mood disorder (depression, bipolar), post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, eating disorders, schizophrenia, and personality disorder. Available at: [https://www.homecare.co.uk/advice/top-5-conditions-that-make-you-eligible-for-pip#:~:text=Psychiatric%20disorders%20are%20mental%20health,Musculoskeletal%20conditions%20\(regional\)](https://www.homecare.co.uk/advice/top-5-conditions-that-make-you-eligible-for-pip#:~:text=Psychiatric%20disorders%20are%20mental%20health,Musculoskeletal%20conditions%20(regional))

²³ ONS (2023). Rising ill-health and economic inactivity because of long-term sickness, UK: 2019 to 2023. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/longtermconditions/articles/risingillhealthandeconomicinactivitybecauseoflongtermsicknessuk2019to2023>

²⁴ Public Health England (2021) Caring as a social determinant of health. Available at: [Caring as a social determinant of health](https://www.phe.org.uk/publications/caring-as-a-social-determinant-of-health)

²⁵ Online panel survey conducted by AMION Consulting on behalf of EMCCA as part of the research for the Plan.

²⁶ Youth Employment UK, Youth Voice Census 2024. 2024-Youth-Voice-Census-Report-1-1.pdf

²⁷ Annual Population Survey (2025)

²⁸ Government NEET and Participation data 2025

²⁹ ONS and Local Authority provided Data 2025

³⁰ ONS (2021): "Census 2021: Language, England and WALES."

Groups facing deep and overlapping disadvantages:

Certain groups in the East Midlands face deep and overlapping disadvantages that make entering work particularly challenging. Homeless people, ex-offenders, refugees, and those living in deprived neighbourhoods often encounter multiple barriers at once, including poor health, lack of stable housing, and limited access to skills or networks. For example, only 21.4% of ex-offenders in the region are in work six months after release. Addressing these challenges requires tailored, resource-intensive support that goes beyond mainstream employment programmes.

3.6 A growing economy

The East Midlands is a region with rich industrial heritage and bold ambition, strategically located it is at the heart of the UK's transport and logistics networks. It is home to nationally significant strengths in advanced manufacturing, clean energy, logistics, life sciences, agri-tech, and creative industries. The East Midlands Vision for Growth sets out ambitions to create 100,000 new jobs, through job creation opportunities linked to clean energy (and STEP Energy Fusion), advanced manufacturing, logistics, construction, and the visitor economy over the next decade. It will deliver 52,000 new homes, and add £4 billion to the economy over the next 10 years, making the region a leader in inclusive and sustainable growth. These initiatives strengthen the demand side of the labour market by creating more high-quality jobs

EMCCA's spatial vision highlights seven strategic development areas: the Trent Arc, Canal Corridor, Supercluster, Derwent Valley Mills, Peaks and Dales, Heartlands, and The Loop. These locations, alongside major regeneration projects across the region are expected to unlock billions in private investment and generate thousands of new jobs by 2030.

Connectivity and talent underpin the region's competitiveness. With more than £2 billion investment over the coming years in transport, connectivity will be strengthened, improving market access for residents and businesses. The Higher Education sector, alongside a strong Further Education sector, provide a pipeline of skills for growth industries.

The new East Midlands Growth Plan sets out the region's longer-term ambitions to sustain and expand economic growth.

3.7 Growing an inclusive economy

The labour market analysis illustrates the interlinked nature of supply-side, demand-side, and systemic challenges. It also helps to highlight some key messages:

More high-quality job opportunities are required to achieve an 80% employment rate and an increase in real earnings.

To reach an 80% employment rate by 2035, around 60,000 more people need to be in work. Yet there are currently only 40,000 vacancies. Increasing the number of well-paid roles is critical to raising real earnings and meeting this target. Local growth opportunities are anticipated to create 100,000 jobs over the next decade.

Work needs to be a viable, accessible and attractive option for more people.

More economically inactive people currently not seeking work (over 234,000 people) need to be supported to view employment as a realistic and attractive option. This requires changes in the employment system and workplace practices to make work more accessible, flexible, and rewarding.



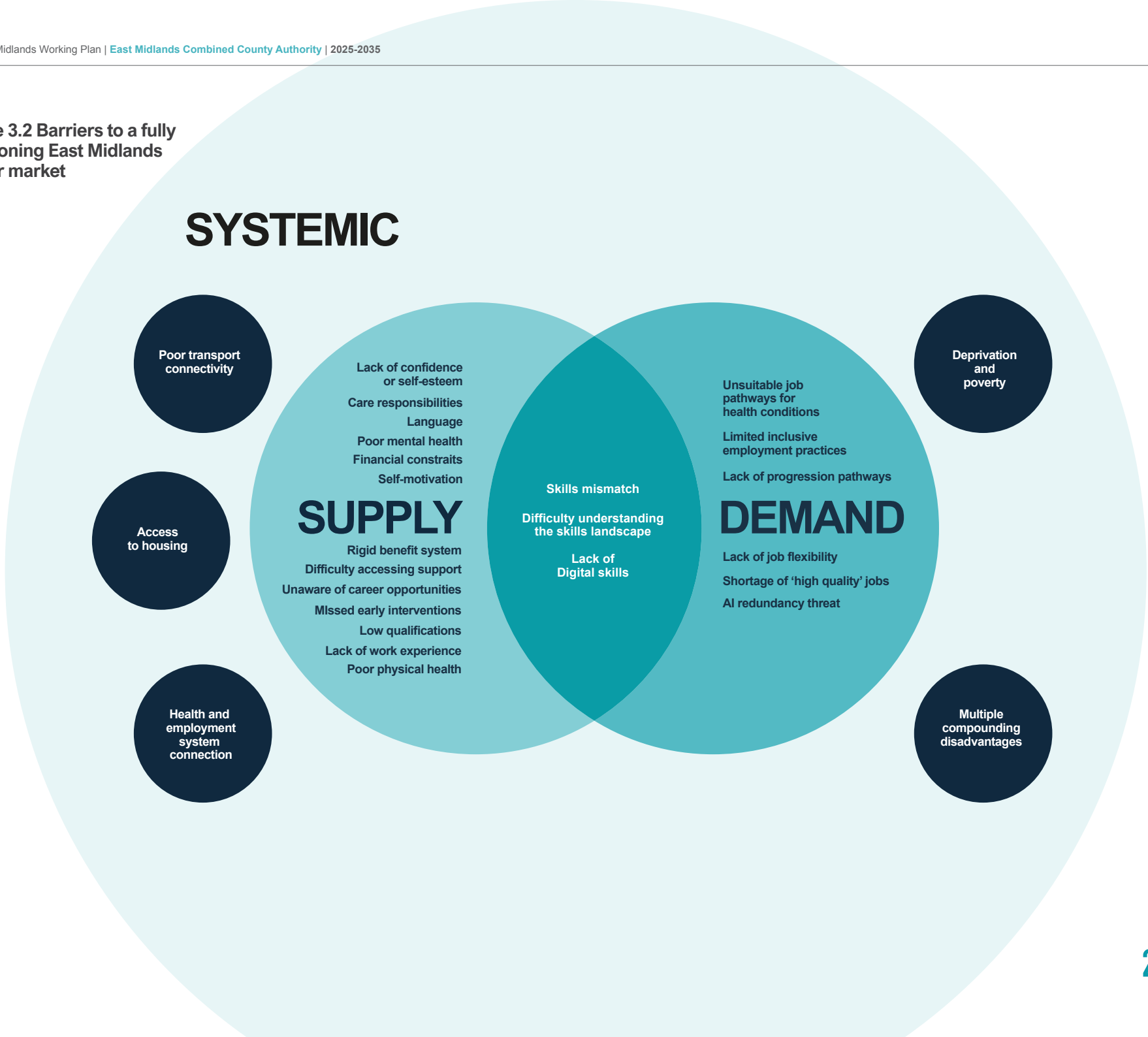
Key areas and cohorts require targeted and preventative support to build resilience, overcome barriers, and sustain employment

- Residents with health conditions: One third of the economically inactive are due to long-term sickness (around 92,600 people).
- Disabled residents: The disabled residents face a 28% employment gap compared to non-disabled residents.
- Carers: 45,000 adults are kept out of the labour market by caring responsibilities, including 38,000 women.
- Young people: 14.7% of 18-24-year-olds are NEET, leaving 88,000 at risk of long-term exclusion within the East Midlands.
- Deprived communities: unemployment and inactivity are concentrated in urban areas with high concentrations of deprived neighbourhoods such as Nottingham, Derby and Ashfield, which fall well below the 80% mark.

Systemic challenges require systemic solutions.

Barriers to work are overlapping and interdependent. Supply and demand cannot be treated separately. Poor public transport (systemic) limits access to flexible jobs (demand) and compounds the effects of poor health or disability as a barrier to work(supply). Addressing these issues through an integrated, system-wide response will enable the East Midlands to tackle root causes and create sustained access to good work.

Figure 3.2 Barriers to a fully functioning East Midlands labour market





Ecosystem mapping and existing provision

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The existing landscape of support services is complex. A mapping³¹ exercise was undertaken by AMION Consulting in development of the Plan to provide an overview of employment, health, and training support and advice provision across Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, and Nottinghamshire. It highlights strong local practice, but also points to opportunities for greater coordination and strategic alignment across the region.

Midlands are already working collaboratively, the full potential lies in connecting these efforts through a more integrated approach. This section illustrates both the strengths and gaps in the current landscape, offering a foundation for future partnership and improvement.

4.1 Current services

Current provision of employment support services has been mapped to:

- understand what provision is available, for whom and where
- understand access to the system from both stakeholders and residents; and
- start to identify and map gaps or challenges with the current system.

Provision has been classified into national (procured at a national basis and available across the whole region or delivered directly by Jobcentre Plus (JCP)), regional (commissioned at a regional level, usually available across the whole region), local (provision available in specific localities and normally commissioned locally but could have been funded by a national governmental department).

See Appendix C for full outline of the current provision.

Across the East Midlands region, the employment landscape is shaped by a diverse mix of provision, commissioned and procured at national, regional, and local levels. The mapping identified 32 employment services, projects and programmes at the time of writing (August - September 2025). This complex ecosystem includes services for individuals seeking employment and employers looking to recruit and develop talent.

Provision broadly falls into three interrelated areas:

1. Employment and Skills

Services – The mapping identifies six services delivered by a range of education and training providers, including further education colleges, Local Authorities, independent training organisations, universities, and employer-led programmes. These services span entry-level to advanced skills development and are key to supporting both career starters and those looking to upskill or retrain.

2. Employability and wraparound Support

– Critical for enabling access to and sustainability of employment. Over 20 services, projects and programmes included personalised support such as careers advice, in-work mentoring, mental health and wellbeing services, childcare provision, housing support, and placement services. Access to these services often determines whether individuals can take up and maintain employment opportunities.

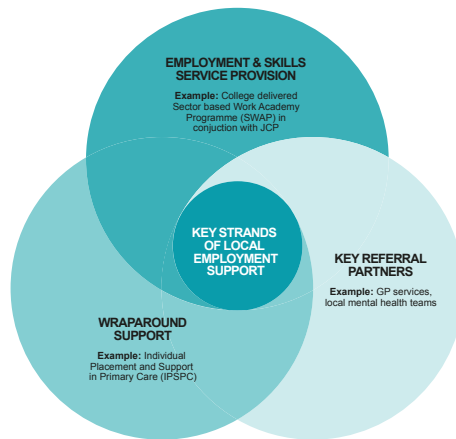
3. Referral and Access Partners

– A network of over 6-10³² organisations and services that connect individuals to the right support at the right time. These include Jobcentre Plus, the constituent councils, local authorities, GP services (for social prescribing and mental health referrals), community and voluntary sector organisations, social housing providers, and employment hubs.

The diagram (Figure 4.1) below illustrates how these elements work together.

³¹ More detail on the methodological approach is outlined in Appendix C

³² This totals over 32 due to some initiatives covering all categories.

Figure 4.1: Overview of Provision

Source: AMION 2025

This is a fluid and evolving picture, with national and local reforms continually working towards improving services for residents. For example, March 2025's announcement that the East Midlands will be a Youth Guarantee Trailblazer and developments around the Jobs and Careers Pathfinder.

4.2 System complexities

A provision mapping exercise and qualitative insights from stakeholder and resident surveys and consultations highlight a fragmented and evolving landscape of support programmes. Services are commissioned and funded by various bodies, including central government, the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA), and individual constituent councils. Provision varies widely across the East Midlands, reflecting differences in eligibility criteria, programme aims, and delivery models depending on the commissioning body rather than need.

Complexity in the system

Feedback from stakeholders shows that there is a lack of coherence in provision. This is also compounded by similar-sounding programme names (e.g. Working Well and Work Your Way) which contribute to misunderstandings among both service users and referring professionals. At its worst it can also lead to duplication. Access to support is not uniform across the East Midlands, resulting in geographical inequalities and service inconsistencies.

Inconsistent funding and the requirement to procure funding are driving factors behind this complexity. The need to compete for limited funds means new names are required for each tender to differentiate from what has been awarded previously, or from competitors or from national government schemes.

Stakeholders also reported issues around the referral processes. Uncertainty persists about whether programmes are still operational, who will receive the referral, and whether the support offered is effective. Consultations also highlighted how many economically inactive individuals do not know where to start in accessing employment support. This has been supported by research with inactive individuals undertaken by Nottingham City Council (2025, forthcoming).

Among surveyed residents that have received employment support, satisfaction was moderate; over 37% scored it 5 or below, suggesting clear room for improvement.

Barriers to collaborative and long-term working

While there is a clear appetite for integrated, cross-sector collaboration; systemic challenges hinder progress. The prevalence of short-term funding cycles disrupts continuity and makes long-term strategic and shared planning difficult. This is further complicated by conflicting priorities across bodies and within sectors, which can limit engagement and sustained partnership working.

Gaps in provision and unmet needs

Beyond nationally or regionally procured services, much of the current provision is narrowly targeted (e.g. supporting individuals with mental health needs, physical disabilities, or substance misuse issues). Broader support for economically inactive individuals, such as unpaid carers or those with temporary illnesses, is notably limited. There is also an absence of dedicated support for individuals with prevalent health conditions such as musculoskeletal (MSK) disorders, respiratory illnesses, and diabetes.

Underutilising local assets

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) faces challenges in visibility and funding around employment support. Stakeholders have highlighted concerns about the sustainability of provision when large external organisations exit at the end of contracts, which can leave gaps in local infrastructure. Strengthening involvement of and integration across the VCS, local authorities, and local providers would support a more resilient and collaborative delivery model, ensuring continuity and long-term impact for communities.

Support for young people

Young people remain a local priority, with initiatives such as Youth Hubs, Derby Promise and the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer gaining momentum. Nonetheless, stakeholders emphasise the importance of securing sustainable funding to avoid delays and ensure the continuity of these promising developments. Embedding early intervention and preventative approaches for those at risk of becoming NEET is viewed as essential to long-term impact.

Monitoring, outcomes, and evidence gaps

Across the region, there is a widespread lack of understanding regarding the effectiveness and impact of existing provision as previous data collection mechanisms were either absent or inconsistent. This challenge is made more complex by the devolution of new funding streams and introduction of new programmes. There is not a collective or unified performance framework or outcomes tracker in the East Midlands, making it difficult for stakeholders to assess what works, for whom, and under what circumstances.

“We were talking to a major employer (in the East Midlands) that had morning shift patterns which started 20minutes before the bus arrived from the nearest community”

Employment support service provider.

Employer engagement and support

Although some employer-focused support exists, it remains fragmented and under-promoted. Many self-employed individuals and businesses are unaware of the assistance available or the potential benefits to their operations. The business support landscape continues to undergo change but awareness raising, signposting, diversifying support offer, and referrals for employers via existing structures such as the EMCCA Growth Hub and other business adviser networks remains an opportunity to build upon.

Recognising this challenge, anchor organisations in Derby and Derbyshire are already working to develop a strategic approach to inclusive employment and skills strategy. This includes the use of innovative social value in procurement clauses and innovative ways of ensuring that planning application and contract allocations are aligned with inclusive employment principles.

4.3 Case Studies

The case studies below illustrate the diversity of support available. They demonstrate how flexible provision is effectively connecting individuals to sustainable employment across the region. The following section summarises case studies that highlight effective provision and valuable learning, with the full case studies included in Appendix F. (to be developed visually in final version)

Case Study 1: Working Well East Midlands:

Working Well East Midlands, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and commissioned by Nottingham City Council, provides tailored employment and wellbeing support to residents across Derby, Nottingham, and Nottinghamshire aged 18+ with health conditions or disabilities. The evidence based individual placement and support model includes one-to-one guidance from employment specialists, help with job searching, staying in work, managing finances, and accessing benefits. Unemployed participants can engage for up to 12 months, while those already employed receive four months of in-work support. Employers also benefit from free training, health advice, and resources to create healthier workplaces.

Case Study 2: Youth Employment Support (YES) Derbyshire

The YES project in Derbyshire, run in partnership with the DWP, supports young people aged 16 to 24 through dedicated Youth Hubs that offer an approachable alternative to Jobcentre Plus. One example is Oliver, a 17-year-old seeking an apprenticeship, who received career guidance, CV support, and training opportunities from the Hub team. After gaining qualifications through a 'Step into Construction' course and applying his skills in temporary work, Oliver was successfully guided toward a Landscape Maintenance apprenticeship. His journey highlights how the Hub's practical support and personal encouragement can help young people progress into sustainable training and employment.

Case Study 3: Derby Journey to Work (J2W)

Derby Youth Guarantee target groups SEND, Care Experienced and communities with high levels of socio-economic deprivation.

Journey to Work sits alongside a suite of programmes under Employment and Skills in Derby. Championing a bold, modern employment and skills offer for Derby residents across all ages to maximise economic growth opportunities.

Journey to Work (J2W) in Derby offers five-week work placements, tailored support, and confidence building to help young people into employment. Harry, a 20-year-old with autism, wanted to work in Early Years education but lacked practical experience. With guidance from his employment officer and J2W's Business Engagement Manager, he undertook a nursery placement where he thrived and impressed staff. This boosted his confidence and led to a Level 1 Apprenticeship in Early Years at The Old Forge Nursery. Harry's success demonstrates the transformative power of coordinated support and real-world experience in turning aspirations into employment outcomes.

Case Study 4: Greggs

Since 2022, Greggs has partnered with New Path to Employment, Nottingham Recovery Network, and Clean Slate through its Fresh Start programme to provide inclusive employment opportunities. By engaging directly with individuals in recovery and those facing barriers such as addiction and long-term unemployment, Greggs has created pathways to stability and self-worth. The collaboration not only inspires candidates and support workers but also benefits Greggs by connecting them with resilient and motivated employees. This partnership illustrates how businesses can make a tangible social impact while strengthening their workforce through inclusive hiring.



Partnership working

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The Get East Midlands Working Partnership, formed to develop the Plan, is a strong foundation towards greater collaboration and collective action on the region's employment challenges. The Partnership has further opportunities to develop and embed this way of working, explored below.

“This is the first time I've been in a room with local authorities, DWP, education and training providers, the ICB, and business representative bodies. It's encouraging to see all the key players coming together to have a shared conversation about how we can better connect people to opportunities and support them into work.”

Partnership Member

5.1 Collaboration across the system

Delivering a successful employment and health support system across the East Midlands requires a broad coalition of partners.

The Get East Midlands Working Plan has surfaced a clear opportunity to build on existing partnership strengths through more formalised and better integrated cross-sector collaboration. Each partner has a distinct but interconnected role in helping individuals and employers overcome barriers to work:

- **EMCCA and Local Authorities to play a central role.** East Midlands County Combined Authority has devolved powers over skills and hosts key functions within the employment ecosystem. Local authority teams working in economic development, employment, skills, and public health shape local priorities. Councils across the East Midlands are already collaborating to better connect services and improve outcomes.
- **Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) have a role in linking employment, skills, and health** by promoting inclusive recruitment, apprenticeships, and career development across the health and care system. ICBs commission services that can help prevent avoidable job loss by signposting

individuals with health needs to employment support and in recognising the role of good work in improving wellbeing³³. These efforts align with ICBs' wider purpose to improve population health, reduce inequalities, and support local economic growth through joined-up, preventative approaches.

- **The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), through Jobcentre Plus and commissioned services (such as Restart and Access to Work),** continues to provide essential frontline employment support at scale. They help people access benefits, jobs, and training. Closer working and co-location with local partners has improved coordination of employment support in some areas.
- **Education and training providers are key to developing skills for individuals and supporting businesses with their needs.** Better alignment between training offers and local employer needs strengthens the labour market and the economy.
- **The business base is an essential part of the solution.** As key drivers of local growth, employers and employer representative bodies play a vital role in shaping the region's employment and skills system.

- **The Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector plays an important role in engaging people and building trust.** Community organisations often work with those who are hardest to reach. Their local knowledge and person-centred support add value across the system.

The region's success in improving employment outcomes relies on the interplay between these organisations and more. Each organisation has distinct priorities, but their ability to deliver meaningful change depends on collaboration.

5.2 System opportunities and interdependencies

Governance reform creates opportunities

Many relationships, pathways, and funding models are in transition. Governance reforms, including the creation of EMCCA, restructuring within constituent councils and district local authorities, and the clustering of Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), are reshaping institutional roles and boundaries. While these shifts create uncertainty, they also present new opportunities for integration and system leadership. ICBs' core purpose is well understood but they are still defining their roles around employment. Key partners such as Jobcentre Plus,

³³ See Appendix C for more information.

further education providers, local authority employment and skills services, and the voluntary sector are progressing their own strategic agendas.

As EMCCA continues to mature, it is well placed to act as a convening force, helping to align efforts and connect the dots across the evolving landscape. The Plan is a key mechanism to align all partners around clear and common objectives.

Positive progress is already emerging

Despite these system challenges, the Get East Midlands Working Partnership have identified several positive developments emerging. Partners are increasingly connecting through local networks, and in some cases, services are co-located (e.g. DWP and Derby City Council). Others have adopted shared referral pathways or are utilising common digital tools. These arrangements are making a difference by reducing duplication and creating a more seamless experience for individuals and businesses navigating the support network. They are also helping to foster mutual understanding among providers and build the trust, systems, and processes necessary for deeper collaboration.

Devolution brings new levers for local tailoring.

Additional opportunities are arising for the Partnership and EMCCA including current and future devolution. The current devolved powers around skills, Youth Guarantee Trailblazer, and Connect to Work enable more local power to tailor and connect programmes to existing provision.

Towards a community and prevention-focused health system.

The NHS 10-year plan outlines a vision for the future of the NHS based on three 'shifts' in the way of working:

1. Hospital to community;
2. Treatment to prevention; and,
3. Analogue to digital.

The first two of these are overly aligned to the Plan and provide opportunities for the Partnership. Prevention requires health and non-health partners to work together to reduce the socio-economic determinants of poor health, including work, through alignment of governance and data systems. A move towards neighbourhood health, provides opportunities for a new way of working for not only health but also local government, social care and community partners in which "integration is the norm

and not an exception". This way of working provides clear opportunities for integrated, person-centred employment support models where health, care and work needs can all be considered together.

Towards a more mature partnership model.

To take this partnership working further, there is a need to move beyond informal cooperation to a more formal and strategic partnership model. This includes joint data, shared performance measures, coordinated commissioning, networks and pooled resources to support common objectives. A more mature model of partnership working will create a system that is more straightforward for users and more effective in changing lives. With the right structures in place, partnership working can become a powerful driver of inclusion, ensuring that more people have the support they need to move into and move on to meaningful and sustainable employment.



Building blocks for system change

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The aim is to build a more effective and responsive local infrastructure to support people to enter and thrive in employment. This is not a definitive system blueprint, but an assessment of the challenges, and opportunities, and what successful system change would look like. It is structured around three areas:

- 1. Building an effective training and employment support system**
- 2. Creating a joined-up system.**
- 3. Overcoming wider structural barriers.**

Creating an effective employment and skills system that reaches those furthest from the labour market and supports residents to gain and progress in employment.

Challenge: Navigating employment support is complex, with fragmented entry points and little integration across health, skills, and employment services. Support is often short-term or condition-specific, leaving groups such as carers, young adults, and people with common health conditions (e.g. Musculo skeletal and respiratory) with inconsistent help. This is one factor in rising long-term unemployment and ill health.

While many employers aspire to be inclusive, they often lack the knowledge to make changes or the capacity to act. At the same time, progress is limited without enough good-quality jobs that match local skills. Vacancies in growth sectors such as health, care, and clean energy remain unfilled, while employers themselves struggle to navigate complex training and funding support.

Opportunity: Support that integrates health and employment has the potential to reach a broader range of people, shift the focus to prevention, and improve outcomes whilst reducing pressure on public services. The Public sector, as a major employer, can lead by example through inclusive recruitment and procurement, cascading good practice across supply chains. At the same time, aligning education, career advice, and training with employer demand while expanding lifelong guidance for adults will help residents access opportunities to get on and progress up the Opportunity Escalator.

What does success look like?

A system that is simple to navigate, with clear entry routes, seamless referrals, and automatic triage to the right support. Key cohorts (e.g. carers, and those with complex health and/or social challenges) are identified early, offered tailored help, and connected to meaningful training and work. The East Midlands becomes recognised as a pioneer of inclusive employment, where public services and local employers champion diversity and fairness, unlocking talent and meeting business needs. Alongside this, residents can progress through access training linked to new job creation, while employers are confident they can recruit, retain, and grow the workforce they need.

Integrated governance, funding and accountability

Challenge: Addressing employment and health outcomes in a systematic and coordinated way is vital but remains difficult. Despite recognition of the need for joined-up approaches, collaboration across institutions and sectors is still hampered by structural and operational barriers such as a focus upon single project outputs or short-term funding which limits development planning and a longer-term outcomes approach.

Opportunity: There is evidence that integrated service models with integrated governance and funding have proven effective in improving access and outcomes for those facing complex work barriers, as set out in Section 4 above and the Get Britain Working White Paper.

What does success look like?

When employment and health systems operate through shared governance, funding, and accountability, they deliver seamless support for individuals with complex barriers to work. This requires strong partnership working and integrated governance to embed more consistent and effective employment support.

Maximising enablers and addressing systemic barriers.

Challenge: Wider enablers such as transport and housing remain stubborn barriers that block access to jobs. Limited routes and irregular services cut residents off from opportunities, while no or insecure housing undermines employability and job retention.

Opportunity: Integrate employment with transport and housing strategies, planning and services so that jobs, skills, and infrastructure work together. Engaging employers to contribute to removing systemic barriers can also help broaden access, such as aligning shift patterns with public transport timetables, remote work options, and shuttle services.

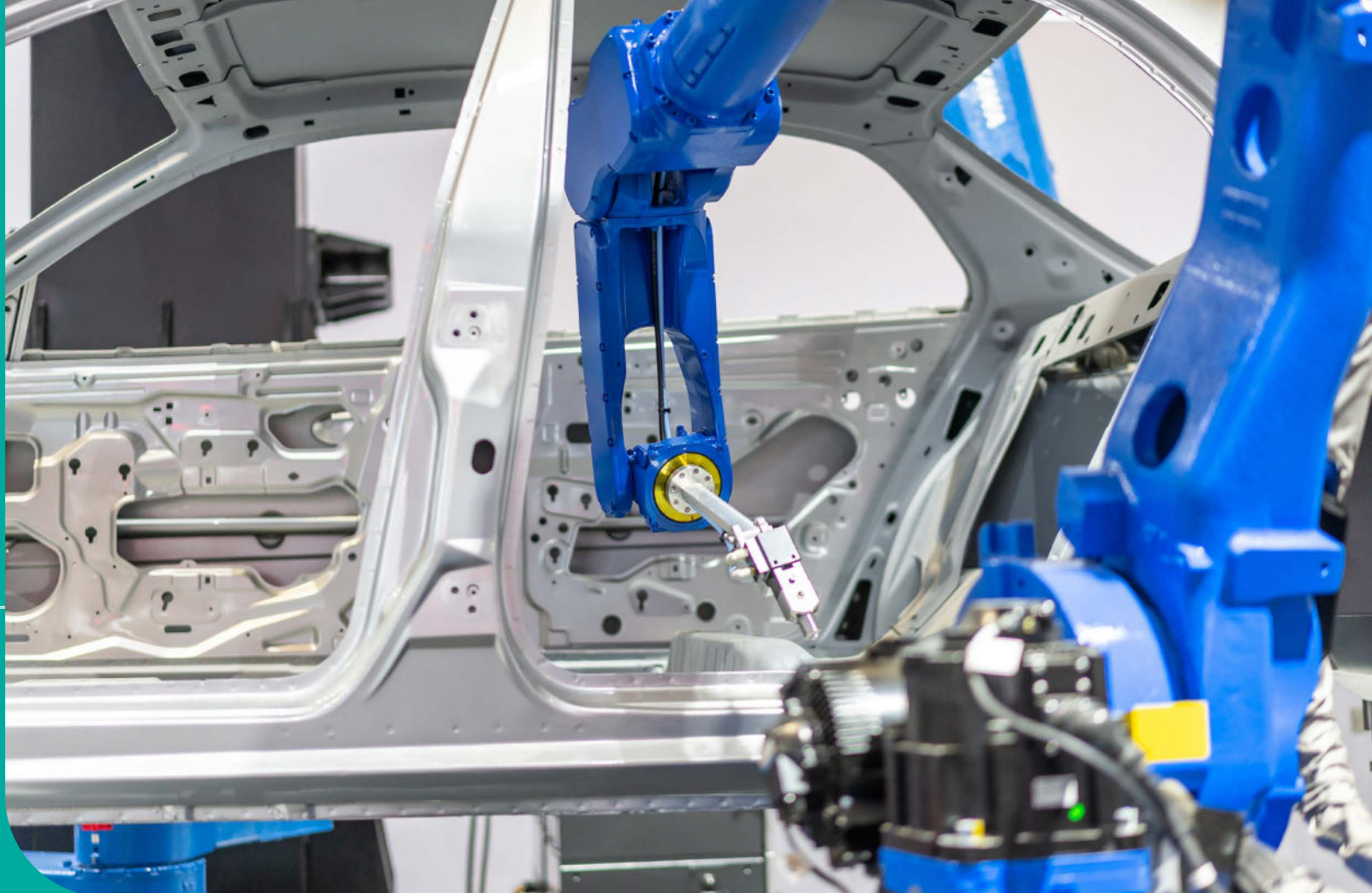
What does success look like?

A system where good transport, stable housing, and fair employment opportunities are effective enablers of work, ensuring no community is left disconnected.

Building momentum

These elements of system change highlight both the scale of the challenge and the opportunity to reshape employment support into a system that is fairer, more integrated, and better aligned with people's lives. Building on these foundations requires a clear vision and decisive actions to turn ambition into impact.





Framework for Change

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Boosting employment and reducing economic inactivity at the national level depends on strong, locally driven action. The Get East Midlands Working Plan responds to this ambition by aligning priorities with integrated, place-based approaches.

This section outlines the vision, core objectives, and key actions that local partners will jointly pursue, aligning with wider strategic ambitions to grow the regional economy.

7.1 Vision

Figure 7.1: Vision for Get EM Working Plan



7.2 Aims

The ultimate aims of the Plan, in line with the White Paper, are to:

- Increase the employment rate to 80% across the East Midlands area. Given population increase projections this is the equivalent of an additional 60,000 people in employment across the EMCCA areas.
- Increase earnings up to national averages across the East Midlands area:
- Average earnings, as measured by Gross Domestic Household Income, in the East Midlands are £23,584 compared with £28,402 nationally. This is a 20% gap (or £4,818). Over the next 10 years we aim to raise local earnings to narrow the gap.

7.3 Priorities

To achieve these aims, create the system change that is required and to tackle underlying issues laid out in the Get Britain Working White Paper, the following three priorities have been identified (drawing upon Section 6):

Priority 1: Effective training and employment support

We will connect residents to sustainable jobs through easy-to-access, targeted health and employment support and jobs-focused skills development so that everyone can get into work and progress.

Priority 2: A joined-up system

We will work better together as partners, strengthening governance and integration to ensure clear leadership, coordinated action and accountable delivery across the employment, health and skills system

Priority 3: Overcoming wider barriers

We will tackle structural barriers that stop people getting into work, including transport, housing and health access. This will unlock inclusive, long-term employment opportunities and build a more resilient workforce.

³³ See Appendix C for more information.

7.4 Action Framework

This section contains actions identified in the Plan development. These are grouped across all of the priorities although some also deliver multiple objectives.

Action #	Action	Action Lead	Timeline	Intended Impact	Success Measures (+ improvements)
Priority 1: Effective training and employment support					
1	Partnership working with the DWP to test, develop and design all elements of the Jobs and Careers Service and future pilots or programmes (e.g. Pathfinder).	EMCCA/DWP/Partnership	Up to 18 months	More responsive, tailored services that help people into sustainable work	Improves employment rates, local variation, reduces health-related inactivity, and supports female participation.
2	Design and deliver the DWP Youth Guarantee Trailblazer, capturing learning, and securing sustainability for the intervention that are successful.	EMCCA/DWP	Up to 18 months	More responsive, tailored services that help people into sustainable work	Direct focus on young people entering work and reducing NEET.
3	Mobilise and deliver a more integrated support service through the Connect to Work Programme.	EMCCA	Up to 12 months	More responsive, tailored services that help people into sustainable work	Tackles disability gap, lone-parent participation, and women's employment.
4	Support the delivery of EMCCA's Inclusive Growth Framework.	EMCCA/ Partnership	Up to 18 months	More responsive, tailored services that help people into sustainable work	Broad impact on inclusive participation and family work gaps.
5	Partner with DWP to co-design and co-commission innovative employment support beyond core Jobcentre Plus provision.	EMCCA/DWP + Partnership	Up to 18 months	More responsive, tailored services that help people into sustainable work	Increases employment and earnings; targets inactive groups.

Action #	Action	Action Lead	Timeline	Intended Impact	Success Measures (+ improvements)
Priority 1: Effective training and employment support					
6	Building on existing employer and accreditation schemes, develop and deliver a region-wide Good Employment Charter	EMCCA + Partnership	Up to 2 years	More responsive, tailored services that help people into sustainable work	Promotes fair wages, inclusive practices, and gender/disability equality.
7	Link skills, health and employment opportunities to regional growth initiatives (Investment Zone, Freeport, Super Cluster).	EMCCA + LA + FE + HE	Up to 18 months	More responsive, tailored services that help people into sustainable work	Ensures regional growth improves earnings and female employment.
8	Help residents navigate the employment and skills system through the Opportunity Escalator with clear entry points, simple pathways, and trusted guidance.	Partnership (with Local Authorities, VCSE, and front-line services)	Up to 18 months	Residents experience a joined-up system that is easy to use, reducing drop-out and confusion.	Supports lone parents and women; improves access to work.
9	Develop and deliver EMCCA Youth Ambition, including putting youth leadership at the heart of decision-making.	EMCCA	Up to 18 months	A skills system that is responsive to the needs of young people	Youth-focused, addressing NEET and lone-parent gaps.
10	Co-design and deliver place-based interventions for people at risk of leaving the workforce due to ill health or newly unemployed.	Partnership (with IICBs and employers)	Up to 2 years	Improve employment outcomes for residents with health-related barriers by delivering timely, targeted support and connecting them to inclusive training and job opportunities.	Reduces health-related inactivity and disability gap.
11	Review all devolved skills funding (ASF, FCFJ, Bootcamps) and make data-driven changes to provision to maximise learner outcomes and meet business need.	EMCCA	Up to 2 years	Relevant devolved funding offer aligned to local opportunities	Aligns provision to labour needs, improving employment and earnings.

Priority 2: A joined-up system					
12	Systematically review and align all current and future national and local employment programmes/funding.	Partnership	Up to 18 months	More responsive, tailored services that help people into sustainable work	Ensures efficient use of resources to boost employment/earnings.
13	Work closer together on nationally contracted programmes and DWP led employment support provision.	Partnership + DWP	Up to 12 Months (Ongoing)	Continue existing delivery and integrate and learn across the system	Enhances coordination to reduce local disparities.
14	Systematically review, identify gaps and align all skills programmes to align with employer regional need and the inclusive growth framework.	Partnership	Up to 18 months	£ savings or reinvestment achieved Duplicated programmes removed	Improves skills relevance for earnings and employment.
15	Review and strengthen East Midlands' Skills, Health, and Employment System governance, building on and embedding the Get East Midlands Working Partnership.	Partnership	Up to 18 months	Connected delivery and oversight, sharing of data	Better leadership and data use reduce disparities.
16	Explore a leading data integration framework and partner data-sharing agreements.	Partnership	Up to 18 months	Single view of delivery, referrals, and outcomes	Data-led insights address local variation and inactivity.
17	Collaborate with Government and to drive further devolution of powers and funding on employment and skills, enabling stronger local integration	EMCCA	Up to 18 months	More responsive, tailored services that help people into sustainable work	Aligns regional efforts to improve jobs and pay.
18	Explore how public sector procurement and social value can support targeted employment solutions.	Partnership	Up to 18 months	More responsive, tailored services that help people into sustainable work	Supports local jobs, fair pay, and female participation.
19	Leading by example across 'good employment' through encouraging anchor organisations to create skills and employment opportunities.	Partnership	Up to 18 months	Measures linked to jobs and progression	Influences inclusive hiring and wage practices.
20	Establish a cross-organisational resident and business engagement framework that puts their voice at the heart of design and delivery of programmes in the East Midlands area.	EMCCA + Federation of Small Businesses + Partnership	Up to 2 years	Streamlined engagement, reduced duplication	Ensures local voices shape employment strategies.

21	Embed evaluation, outcomes monitoring, and impact assessment in commissioning. Share insights, analysis and learnings across the Partnership.	EMCCA + Funders	Up to 18 months	Evidence-led investment decisions	Ensures improvements in employment and earnings are evidenced.
22	Refresh and implement the region's Local Skills Improvement Plan to ensure skills system meets the evolving needs of learners and employers.	Federation of Small Businesses + EMCCA	Up to 2 years (and beyond for implementation)	A skills system that is responsive to the needs to the local area	Aligns skills to employer needs, improving earnings and local rates.
Priority 3: Overcoming wider barriers					
23	Use EMCCA's role as a system convener to align Employment, Health, and Skills Investment with Transport, Housing, and Health.	EMCCA/ICBs/LAs	Up to 18 months	More responsive, tailored services that help people into sustainable work	Tackles structural barriers for inactive populations and families.
24	Work with partners to identify opportunities for reducing transport barriers to employment.	EMCCA + Partnership	Up to 18 months	Integrated jobs, skills, and transport system	Better access to jobs for parents, women, and low-income groups.
25	Develop an all-age careers strategy.	EMCCA + DWP.	Up to 18 months	A relevant Careers Offer aligned to regional employment opportunities. Links to schools, FE, and employers	Reduces NEET, supports older workers and women.

The Partnership will develop structured Delivery Action Plans aligned to these actions, clearly setting out roles, responsibilities, decision-making processes, and mechanisms for accountability and monitoring. The Action Plans will be reviewed regularly to account for contextual economic and policy changes.

East Midlands Combined County Authority

A key enabler for the delivery of the Plan's aims is the ability of partners across the region to continue to work closely together on strategic and operational workstreams.

The East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) is the lead agency accountable for the Plan. EMCCA will continue to convene the Get East Midlands Working Partnership. The Partnership has developed the Plan and will support its implementation, including monitoring and review over its 10-year time horizon (2025-2035). The Partnership composition will evolve in line with the progress of Local Government Reorganisation and changes to Integrated Care Boards.

Figure 8.1 sets out the governance model for The Plan delivery, acknowledging that several organisations within it are in the process of change. The Partnership will formally report into EMCCA's Skills & Employment Committee. It will also communicate to DWP regional team and the Integrated Care Boards to ensure ongoing shared objectives and commitment to joint working. The four constituent local authorities are represented through the EMCCA Board and the Skills and Employment Committee, with district authorities feeding in via the D2 and N2 groupings³⁴.

Figure 8.1:
Current partnership model



³⁴ All Derby and Derbyshire (D2) and Nottingham and Nottinghamshire (N2) district authorities.

8.1 Working together and not “reinventing the wheel”

The governance structure for Get East Midlands Working Plan is designed to ensure delivery is shaped by strong collaboration and under the joint leadership of partners. A partnership-based approach reflects a commitment to shared ownership, local accountability, and coordinated delivery. Where appropriate, existing structures, such as the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Partnership (ICP), the Derby and Derbyshire ICP, and local authority employment and skills partnerships will be used to support implementation and oversight.

This model also anticipates future developments in governance under the East Midlands devolution deal. As the East Midlands moves toward greater local leadership over skills, employment, and public service integration, the Plan provides a flexible platform for alignment with evolving regional structures.

8.2.1 Principles of working

Partnership members have agreed to a set of shared principles to guide collaboration and ensure consistent ways of working across the system:

- **Shared purpose:** Working towards a common goal of achieving an 80% employment rate and increased learning alongside improved employment, health, and skills outcomes for communities across the region.
- **Collaboration and co-production:** Designing and delivering activity jointly, ensuring that all partners have an active role.
- **Transparency and trust:** Sharing information, insights, and challenges openly to support learning and build trust between partners.
- **Place-based delivery:** Recognising the diversity of local needs across the East Midlands and supporting flexible approaches that are tailored to specific geographies and communities.
- **Equity and inclusion:** Prioritising those furthest from the labour market and ensuring that all voices are heard in shaping delivery.

- **Evidence-informed and outcome-focused:** Using data and local insight to inform decision-making, monitor progress, and adapt delivery to achieve meaningful impact.

These principles provide the foundation for how partners will work together throughout the life of the Plan, supporting shared goals, accountability, and a culture of continuous improvement.

8.2 Funding and decision making

There is a clear and shared commitment among partners to work closely together on the future funding of the Plan. This collaborative approach is essential to ensure that resources are aligned, duplication is avoided, and outcomes are maximised for the communities we serve.

At the same time, we call on the government to support and back the Plan in a coherent and coordinated way. Well-structured funding has the power to unlock change and deliver meaningful results. A unified approach will strengthen delivery while providing clarity and confidence for those responsible for implementation.

8.3 Communications and continued engagement

Open, ongoing communication and meaningful engagement will be central to the success of the Plan. Three areas will be the focus of communications and future engagement:

Communicating delivery

Effective and transparent communication about delivery will be essential in maintaining momentum and public trust. Regular updates will demonstrate progress, showcase impact, and highlight good practice. A central, accessible information repository will support alignment, enabling stakeholders to see what is being delivered, where, and how it contributes to wider objectives.

Ongoing co-design with residents

The Partnership will continue to engage residents, service users, and local partners in shaping the development and delivery of proposals. This collaborative approach ensures that the Plan is rooted in lived experience, responds to real needs, and embeds a shared sense of ownership. The Plan starts on the right foot; but sustained engagement will be key to refining it over time.

Engagement with Employers

Employer engagement is a central priority for driving more responsive and effective employment and skills strategies. Existing mechanisms such as the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), Inclusive Growth Plan and business support programmes already provide important channels for dialogue with employers, Business Advisory Board and employer representative bodies. Developing a more coherent employer engagement approach will help ensure that employer voice is embedded in the design and delivery of employment and skills provision.

Together, these strands of engagement will strengthen the region's employment ecosystem – ensuring it is adaptive, person-centred, and fit for the future.

8.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

A robust evaluation approach is therefore essential, ensuring that the impact of interventions is both measurable and meaningful.

Key and intermediate outcome indicators have already been identified by Get Britain Working Plan White Paper within Section 3 of the Plan. These indicators³⁵ provide a focused lens through which to assess overall progress.

The below expanded indicators are intended to capture broader system-level changes and contextual factors, offering a deeper understanding of impact.

This is highlighted below in Table 8.1:

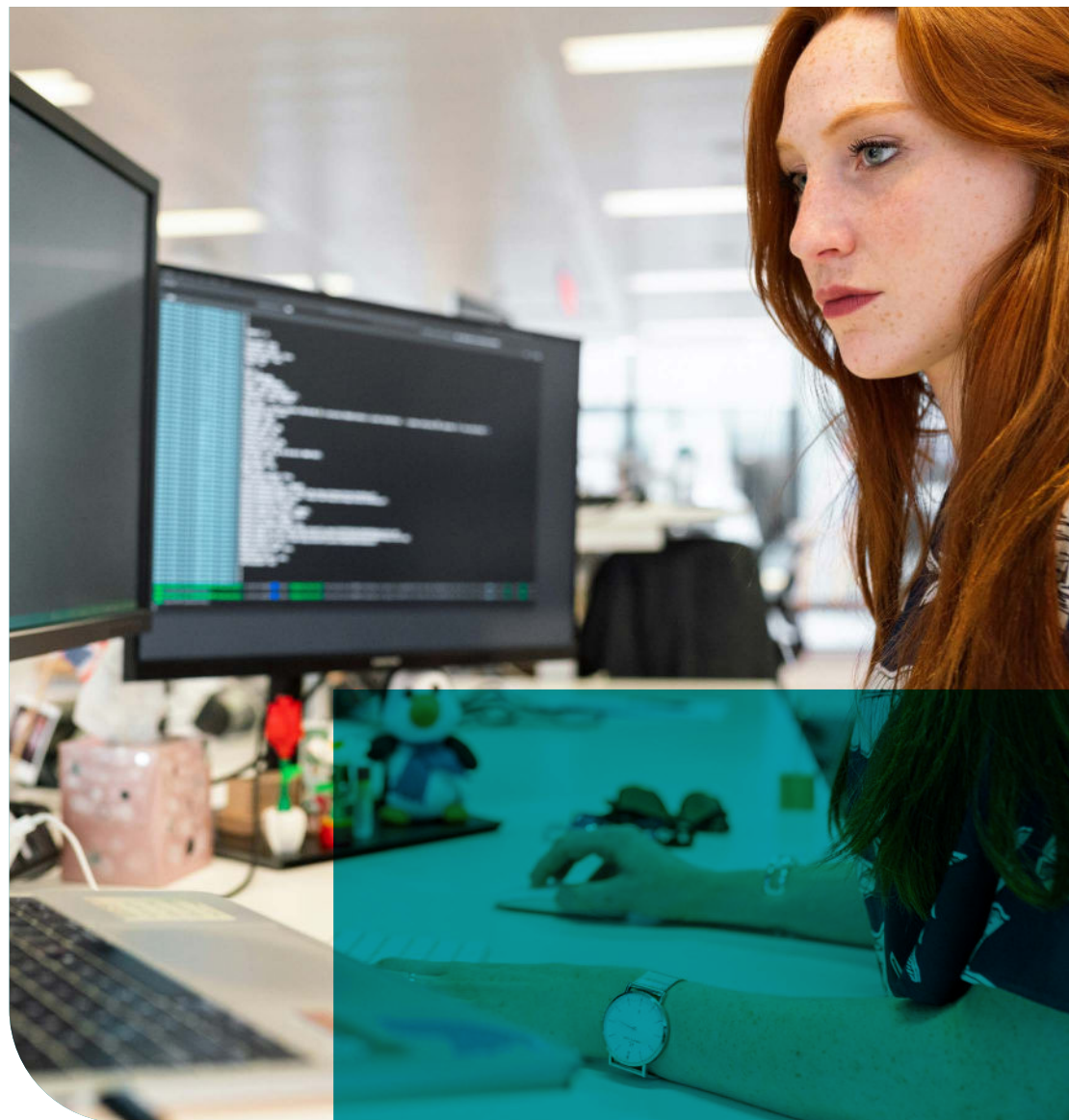


Table 8.1: Evaluation Indicators

Category	Metric	Measure	Baseline value(s)	Source & Year
Key Outcome Metrics	Employment rate	Number of employed individuals / working age population	75.8%	Annual Population Survey, ONS, 2025
	Resident and Household earnings	Earnings difference to national average	£23,584	ONS Gross Domestic Household Incomes, 2025.
Intermediate Metrics	Local variation in employment rates	Employment rate in specific localities vs EMCCA and national averages	Lowest: 70.5% (Nottingham)	ONS/Local Authority datasets, 2025.
	Health-related economic inactivity rate	Number of economically inactive due to health as % working age population	6.7% (92,633 people)	ONS Annual Population Survey, 2025.
	Disability employment rate gap	Employment rate among disabled vs non-disabled people	28.4%	ONS Labour Force Survey, 2024.
	Proportion of 18 to 24-year-olds NEET	Percentage of 16 to 24-year-olds not in employment, education or training	14.7%	Department for Education/ONS, 2024.
	Workless households	Number and % of Workless Households	14.1%	ONS Labour Market Statistics, 2025.
	Female employment rate	Number of employed women / total working age women	71.6%	Annual Population Survey, ONS, 2025.
Wider Outcome Metrics	Proportion of economically inactive people who want a job	Economically inactive people aged 16 to 64 who want a job, divided by the total economically inactive population.	19.6% (54,467)	Annual Population Survey, ONS, 2025.
	Universal Credit claimants not in employment	Claimants of Universal Credit who are not in employment, divided by total Universal Credit claimants.	64.8% (165,070 people)	DWP Stat-Xplore, 2025.
	Long-term sickness economic inactivity rate	People economically inactive due to long-term sickness, divided by the total working-age population.	6.4% (88,433)	Annual Population Survey, ONS, 2025.

Category	Metric	Measure	Baseline value(s)	Source & Year
Wider Outcome Metrics	Proportion of 16–24 NEETs with a health condition	NEETs aged 16 to 24 who report a health condition, divided by total NEETs in that age group.	51.3% (National data)	ONS (or bespoke) NEET and Health Survey, 2024
	Job density	Total number of filled jobs in an area divided by the resident population	0.77	ONS Job Density, 2025.
	Employment demand within areas	Qualitative and quantitative assessment of job demand	N/A	Lightcast/DfE/Local Skills Profiles/LSIP, 2025.
	Vacancies available (including part-time and flexible)	Number and type of vacancies listed (including flexible/part-time)	39,415	
	Skill shortage areas	Vacancy rates in sectors with known skills shortages	Support workers, teaching assistants, care assistants, cleaners and warehouse operatives were the roles with the highest vacancy postings.	Lightcast/DfE Local Skills Profiles/LSIP, 2024 & 2025.
Assessment of which groups are disadvantaged	Assessment of which groups are disadvantaged	Demographic and socio-economic profiling of disadvantaged groups	<p>The following groups had lower economic activity rates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled • Ethnic minorities • Women • Young people • Homeless • People with convictions • Refugees and asylum seekers. 	Census, ONS, local authority data, Annual Population Survey, ONS, 2021, 2025.
	Geographical areas with specific employment and economic challenges	Employment and economic data mapped to geographic areas	N/A	Indices of Deprivation (2025 forthcoming)

The Partnership will conduct an evaluation two years after launch. Actions will be reviewed annually. This timeline will allow for the implementation of activities and the delivery of measurable outcomes. We will evaluate the Plan's priorities over two-year period.

Action evaluation

The Partnership will develop a common evaluation framework. The Partnership will coordinate evaluation design, data collection, analysis, and reporting to ensure a consistent and rigorous approach. Evaluation will promote alignment between delivery partners and support the development of evidence-based recommendations.

8.5 Future iterations of the Plan

Future iterations of the Plan will be developed through ongoing collaboration with key stakeholders. An annual review of progress will be shared with EMCCA's Skills and Employment Committee. This will focus upon progress, respond to changing local needs, and incorporate new data and insight.

Through collective commitment and adaptive governance, the East Midlands can ensure that inclusive growth is both measurable and sustainable over the next decade.

