

Wellbeing Board

Date	6 March 2024
Report title	Thrive Programmes: Update
Portfolio Lead	Wellbeing - Councillor Izzi Seccombe,
Accountable Chief Executive	Laura Shoaf, West Midlands Combined Authority e-mail: Laura.Shoaf@wmca.org.uk
Accountable Employee	Dr Tatum Matharu, Strategic Lead for Health, Employment and Economy e-mail: Tatum.Matharu@wmca.org.uk
Report has been considered by	WMCA Investment Board

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- (1) Note the recent and forthcoming changes to the Thrive into Work and Thrive at Work programmes.
- (2) Provide any recommendations and / or strategic steer for future developments on either or both Thrive programmes.

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to bring a fuller account of recent and forthcoming changes on each of the Thrive programmes (than is possible in the regular high level deliverables update paper) to the Wellbeing Board.

2. Background

2.1. Thrive into Work

2.1.1. Overview (background and current position):

Thrive into Work is an intensive employment support programme based on the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model being brought into Primary Care through the West Midlands Combined Authority's previous trial (2018-2020), post-trial service (2020-23) and now continuing over the financial years 2023-2024 and 2024-2025.

It is currently funded via the Department for Work & Pension's Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care programme; the West Midlands Combined Authority has secured £7.9m to support 3474 people with health barriers to employment, converting (at a targeted 40% conversion rate) to 1570 positive employment outcomes (primarily new jobs starts but also job retentions for those in-work at the point of referral and assessment). A rag-rated snapshot of current programme performance for this financial year (to the end of the third quarter) is as follows:

KPI Targets	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4		
	Total	Forecast	Actual	Forecast	Actual	Forecast	Actual	Forecast	
Engagements (Out of Work)	1343	386	430	409	496	423	417	423	N/A
Engagements (In Work)	412	128	141	137	133	141	138	141	N/A
New Employment Starts	313	60	107	142	107	156	99	156	N/A
Existing Employment Retentions	186	26	39	63	70	72	77	72	N/A

Over the next financial year, data relating to participants' ability to better manage their health condition(s) will also be collated and tracked (internally) as a milestone for the high level deliverable target that covers the Thrive into Work programme.

2.1.2. Structural changes to programme operations (recently implemented):

Grant funding agreements: In its previous guises, the Thrive into Work programme structure had required programme funding to be held by a health partner, namely the Black Country Integrated Care Board (the Clinical Commissioning Group previously). Now, through IPSPC, the West Midlands Combined Authority has a grant agreement directly with the Department for Work & Pensions and has issued back-to-back grant agreements with the two Activity Delivery Partners (ADPs): Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and Shaw Trust. This has been appraised through the West Midlands Combined Authority's Single Assurance Framework and a Single Assurance Framework 'health check' process, which both also covered the full programme background and current detail because internal assurance processes were not in place at the time Thrive into Work was originally set up. The Single Assurance Framework change request was approved by the West Midlands Combined Authority Investment Board on 12 February (paper for which are attached as Appendix A).

Finances: Current finances are on track, covering West Midlands Combined Authority operational costs, delivery by the Thrive into Work ADPs (as 90% block payments and 10% payment-by-results, on a quarterly basis), ADP support costs (e.g. education / training and marketing / communications) and developmental costs (e.g. pathway development and programme evaluation). There is also an underspend from previous delivery that is being utilised primarily for pilot activity with General Practitioner's in collaboration with the Department for Work & Pensions (see below in section 2.1.3).

Governance: The Thrive into Work programme no longer has a dedicated programme board, in line with other governance changes across the West Midlands Combined Authority (regarding delegated sign-off processes / related); performance is tracked and managed as part of ESHC Directorate processes, and programme outcomes and impacts are assessed alongside all ESHC initiatives at quarterly Performance Panel meetings. However, given forthcoming changes across the landscape (see below in section 2.1.3), the West Midlands Combined Authority are developing an expert advisory group focused on health, employment and labour market participation, which will cover the Thrive into Work programme and report upwards into both the Wellbeing Board and the Skills Advisory Board.

2.1.3. Current projects / developments:

There are a number of developments on the horizon, linked to the Government's Back to Work Plan announced as part of the 2023 Autumn Statement, that are relevant for the Thrive into Work programme and its future.

GP pilot(s): Ahead of the Back to Work plan, and in line with previous developmental activity within Thrive into Work (noting that the IPS model, at peak fidelity, requires co-location in primary care facilities), the West Midlands Combined Authority developed a General Practitioner fit note trial with a number of practices across the Black Country, through which a Thrive into Work delivery partner works with General Practitioner practice staff to review patient data and identify potential participants for the Thrive into Work service. This is focused on patients being issued fit notes (enabling them time off work as sick leave) of 4 weeks or more, with health conditions that could potentially be managed through / in work. It also aims to encourage cultural change at General Practitioner level, with General Practitioner's moving towards flagging employment support as fit notes are issued. Co-ordinating with this is a Department for Work & Pensions pilot (focused initially in Tipton) testing a 'Community Connector' model in General Practitioner practices (or nearby if facilities do not allow), who can flag patients to different services depending on needs.

WorkWell Partnerships: Related to the latter point above, there is much policy thinking around the concept of ‘triaging’ for employment support, depending on needs or level of intensity of that support. The Government’s Back to Work plan included a new initiative – WorkWell Partnerships – to provide low intensity support for those with health barriers to employment and triaging onto more intense services as required. WorkWell aims to increase capacity within the health and social care sector to that aim, with Integrated Care Boards receiving funding to enhance their leadership capacity on work and health (as interrelated issues). Each of the 3 Integrated Care Boards within the West Midlands Combined Authority area have submitted Expressions of Interest to become one 15 vanguard sites to be operational over the next two financial years (2024-25 and 2025-26). The West Midlands Combined Authority and the Mayor have provided letters of support for each of these bids. It is expected that there will be at least one vanguard site per region, possibly two; and selected sites should be notified in mid- / late March so as to start a six-month mobilisation period from April (with subsequently 18 months programme delivery).

Universal Support: The IPSPC programme is being seen as a ‘trailblazer’ for Universal Support, which will bring together key features of IPS (such as relatively low caseloads to ensure the intensity of support) with Work and Health Programme Pioneer Support (which places participants into work at the earliest opportunity after an initial work assessment and then provides them with wraparound in-work support from a personal advisor). West Midlands Combined Authority colleagues are influencing the design and development of Universal Support, which is expected to be implemented from autumn 2024.

2.2. Thrive at Work

2.2.1. Overview (background and current position):

Thrive at Work is an employer accreditation programme focused on workforce wellbeing. The West Midlands Combined Authority’s team of advisors support local / regional employers to implement and improve their policies, procedures and employee offers to support the health and wellbeing of their workforces, thereby protecting and enhancing their organisation’s productivity.

The programme is currently grant funded as part of the Mental Health Productivity Pilot led by Coventry University. The broader Mental Health Productivity Pilot programme is, however, ending; Thrive at Work delivery was due to finish at the end of December 2023 but has been extended (via underspend) to the end of the financial year 2023-24, enabling contracted targets to be met. There remains a shortfall in one of the 4 key performance indicator’s (3 have been delivered), though funders have agreed not to recover costs and, in fact, have generously allowed programme underspend to be utilised for related enhancement activity around workforce wellbeing (set out below in 2.2.3.).

A rag-rated snapshot of current programme performance for this financial year (to the end of the third quarter) is as follows:

KPI Targets	KPI Tot	FY23-24 baseline	Q1 (FY23-24)		Q2 (FY23-24)		Q3 (FY23-24)		Q4 (FY23-24)		Jul 22 – Mar24
			Forecast	Actual	Forecast	Actual	Forecast	Actual	Forecast	Actual	Cum. tot
Sign-ups	126	54	+21	+14	+21	+24	+21	+22	As left	(+12 to Feb)	126
Accreditations	126	42	+21	+12	+21	+15	+21	+22	As left	(+3 to Feb)	94
Engagements	900	1548	+150	+229	+150	+804	+150	+1209	As left	(TBC)	3790
Case studies	12	6	+2	+3	+2	+1	+2	+3	As left	(TBC)	13

Programme continuation funds have since been secured. The following section sets out plans for Thrive at Work delivery across the 2024-25 financial year.

2.2.2. Structural changes to programme operations (forthcoming):

Funding: The Thrive at Work programme will continue over the next financial year through better integration into a wider, more formalised structure around business support, namely Business Growth West Midlands, as a custom health and wellbeing offer. This business support function will be funded through a small proportion of the West Midlands Combined Authority allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, as the funding for Thrive at Work is significantly limited compared to previous years, the delivery team will be streamlined accordingly.

Business Growth West Midlands: Business Growth West Midlands brings together the various government-funded offers available to businesses across the West Midlands Combined Authority area under one umbrella so that its team of advisors can signpost and support businesses, ultimately, to achieve growth. The Thrive at Work programme is already flagged within Business Growth West Midlands currently, however the operational relationship will now be strengthened, with the integration of workforce wellbeing issues within Business Growth West Midlands' initial diagnostic tool and alignment of metrics for example.

Thrive at Work revisions: Learning from previous years' work as part of the Mental Health Productivity Pilot partnership as well as responding to the post-Covid world of work and current economic climate, the Thrive at Work framework and associated toolkit will be modernised and a modular design will be developed so as to enable clients to follow a more tailored approach for their business operations and workforce composition. Through this modular approach, clients may also be able to complete modules on a 'standalone' basis, enabling a non-accreditation route should still result in positively improving workforce wellbeing.

2.2.3. Current projects / pilots:

Three rapid pilots, designed to complement the Thrive at Work programmes and generate learnings, are now being undertaken in the final quarter of the 2023-24 financial year (alongside the main Thrive at Work programme delivery), as follows:

Empowering workforces through behaviour change: Focused on psychological / cognitive-behavioural therapy interventions, this series of workshops, webinars and 1-2-1 training aims to empower employees and leaders to support their own health and resilience in the workplace. A provider, The Wellbeing Project, has been procured for this activity and delivery has commenced. Performance and impact will be monitored internally and reported to the Wellbeing Board within the high level deliverables update paper for the next meeting.

'Black Thrive': This project aims to provide culturally sensitive mental workplace mental health support to employees, especially catered for those employees from ethnic minority backgrounds (but open to all employees). A provider, Happiworkers, has been procured for this activity and delivery has commenced. Performance and impact will be monitored internally and reported to the Wellbeing Board within the high level deliverables update paper for the next meeting.

'Thrive at Night': Replicating a Bristol-based initiative, this project aims to improve understanding of workforce mental health and business practices relating staff specifically in the night-time economy. A provider, The Drinks Trust, has been procured for this activity and delivery has commenced. Performance and impact will be monitored internally and reported to the Wellbeing Board within the high level deliverables update paper for the next meeting.

3.0 Strategic Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 Both the Thrive programmes align to the West Midlands Combined Authority's Strategic Aim 1 – to promote inclusive economic growth in every corner of the region and stimulate the creation of good jobs. Thrive at Work, by encouraging employers to take greater responsibility over the health and wellbeing of their employees, creates better quality employment (i.e. good jobs). Thrive into Work encourages greater inclusiveness of economic growth by supporting people with health barriers to employment (those relatively vulnerable people excluded from or at risk of being excluded from jobs) into productivity economic activity.
- 3.2 The West Midlands Combined Authority's Employment and Skills Strategy, recently approved by the West Midlands Combined Authority Board, reinforces these aims; its key areas of delivery include:
- (2) Moving residents into good jobs – to which Thrive at Work contributes (as above), as well as Thrive into Work, through moving people into jobs; and
 - (4) Supporting our communities to be stronger and benefit from inclusive growth – to which both Thrive programmes contribute (as above).

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct funding implications from this paper, as the West Midlands Combined Authority will only be providing support from existing budgets and resource for the three programmes; Thrive into Work, the current Thrive at Work programme and new Thrive at work through Business Growth West Midlands, where the West Midlands Combined Authority are the accountable body.
- 4.2 Should any future financial implications arise; they will be resolved through the West Midlands Combined Authority governance routes and demonstrate value for money.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

6.0 Single Assurance Framework Implications

6.1 As stated above, the Thrive into Work programme has recently been through a Single Assurance Framework 'health check' and had a change request, covering full programme details beyond recent programme structural changes, fully appraised through the Single Assurance Framework process and subsequently approved by Investment Board.

7.0 Equalities Implications

7.1 Thrive at Work is a universal offer and therefore the impact on people due to one or more of their protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act is likely to be neutral. The programme's aim supports equalities to be recognised and respected in clients' workplaces as part of wider health and wellbeing efforts.

7.2 Thrive into Work is targeted at those with health barriers to employment, thereby improving equity for vulnerable people. Demographic data will be reviewed as part of programme evaluation, which will enable more precise analysis of equalities implications and comparison against the health and equity impact assessment in due course.

8.0 Inclusive Growth Implications

8.1 The Thrive programmes cut across and contribute to a number of the Inclusive Growth Framework Fundamentals, as follows:

- Health and wellbeing – both Thrive programmes have, at their core, aims to improve the health and wellbeing of residents across the West Midlands Combined Authority area.
- Inclusive economy – both Thrive programmes contribute to this fundamental as per the commentary above in Section 3 (Strategic Aims and Objectives).
- Power and participation – both Thrive programmes contribute towards empowering residents and enabling them to better participate in their workplace and wider economy.
- Education and learning – both Thrive programmes contribute towards employers' learning about the importance of the health and wellbeing of their employees and how to adjust workplaces to accommodate this priority.
- Equality – both Thrive programmes contribute to this fundamental as per the commentary above in Section 7 (Equalities Implications).

9.0 Geographical Area of Report's Implications

9.1 Thrive into Work covers the whole West Midlands Combined Authority geography (and beyond – incl. Warwickshire).

9.2 Thrive at Work covers the whole WMCA geography (and beyond – currently incl. the Midlands Engine footprint as part of Mental Health Productivity Pilot).

10.0 Other Implications

- 10.1 There are Human Resource implications of the developments / future funding arrangements relating to Thrive at Work described above, namely that there will be staff redundancies as a result.

11.0 Schedule of Background Papers

- 11.1 Thrive into Work: Investment Board cover report, appraised Single Assurance Framework Change request and Single Assurance Framework health check documentation – attached as Appendix A.

12.0 Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix A – Thrive Programmes Update