

A photograph of a middle-aged man with a beard, wearing an orange high-visibility shirt, sitting in the operator's seat of a forklift. He is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred industrial setting.

# WorkWell Partnership Programme

Case Study

## Executive summary

The **GM WorkWell Partnership Programme** is part of a £64 million national pilot funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), with Greater Manchester being one of the 15 areas delivering the programme. The initiative aims to improve health and employment outcomes by addressing the growing impact of health-related barriers to work.

The programme responds to a significant challenge across Greater Manchester: only 72% of economically active residents are in employment, with 30% of economic inactivity attributing to long-term sickness (ONS, 2025). The impact of this challenges varies, affecting certain demographic groups more than others.

Through **GM WorkWell, Greater Manchester is testing new ways of strengthening the integration of work and health services**. The programme supports a coordinated, locally responsive approach to addressing health-related barriers to sustainable employment.

## What did we do?

We introduced the GM WorkWell Partnership Programme to provide tailored support for residents whose health is affecting their ability to work. As part of the £64 million national programme from DWP and DHSC, WorkWell was established in Greater Manchester to respond to the significant number of people struggling to stay in work or return to employment due to health issues or disabilities. This includes supporting groups who face additional barriers linked to protected characteristics, neurodiversity, veteran status and wider socioeconomic disadvantage.

To address these challenges, we developed a personalised, coach-led model which helped individuals overcome barriers to work, improve their wellbeing and job prospects, and access the right services, including referrals to healthcare professionals for physical and mental health support, such as MSK conditions and anxiety. The programme was designed to be adaptable to local needs, leading onto how it was carried out.



# How did we do it?

GM WorkWell is delivered in partnership by NHS Greater Manchester (NHS GM), the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), local authorities, health organisations, and community organisations. Creating a partnership with these organisations enabled us to make important steps towards the integration of work and health services and to create the best outcomes for our participants.

A central project team was formed between the NHS GM Population Health team and the GMCA Education, Work and Skills Directorate to manage the programme, bringing together expertise in health and employment. It was decided that each of the ten Greater Manchester localities would be given the opportunity to develop their own WorkWell delivery models, with support from the central team.

Whilst this approach was complex and time-intensive, it proved to be the most effective and appropriate way to address the distinct needs of each locality's population, rather than adopting a single GM-wide approach.

Twenty two co-design workshops were held across 10 localities with a wide range of system partners, including those with lived experience, to help plan the GM offer and the WorkWell services. Regular steering group and locality leads meetings also took place throughout the implementation phase to further enhance partnership working and they continue through delivery of the programme.



## What did we find?

Although the programme has only been in delivery for just over 12 months, promising outcomes have been reported from the ten localities. **Nearly 5000 GM residents have been supported by WorkWell in the last 12 months** since the programme began and satisfaction has been high.

Case studies explain the impact of the programme on participants' health and how providing holistic support enabled them to move back towards or stay in work.



### Claire's story:

*Claire reached out to WorkWell Bolton after being off work for over six months due to poor mental health. WorkWell provided funding to cover travel expenses until Claire received her first full month's pay and explored flexible work options to ease her transition. The work and health coach helped Claire talk to her employer about a phased return and possible workplace adjustments, while also exploring additional support through the Government Access to Work scheme. WorkWell also supported her with personal challenges, benefit advice and referrals that boosted confidence.*

### Craig's story:

*Craig was referred via a Long Covid Clinic due to fatigue impacting his ability to work full-time. The WorkWell coach connected him with employment support, financial advice, carers support and workplace adjustments. Craig shared:*

***"I felt so lost and didn't know where to turn. But I felt listened to and supported... now, I feel free from financial stress".***

# Key challenges & lessons learned

## 1. Standing up the programme at pace

The programme needed to go live within five months, despite localities being at different levels of readiness, four areas launched in October 2024, with the rest by January 2025. Although this affected early targets and funding, prioritising quality and strong working relationships enabled over 1,000 residents to be supported by the end of 2024/25.

## 2. Coordination across ten delivery models

With ten different local models, GM WorkWell is the most complex of the national vanguards. Coordination is challenging but beneficial, supported through regular performance meetings, shared learning events and forums to exchange practice and improve outcomes.

## 3. Information governance requirements

Agreeing information governance (IG) across ten local authorities, GMCA and NHS GM took longer than expected. Success required persistence and ongoing engagement with IG experts. Key learning: start IG discussions early to avoid delays.

To find out more please visit [Workwell – Greater Manchester Combined Authority](#)

