Report to Place, Economic Growth and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Get Oldham Working – Performance and Funding Review

Officer Contact: Deputy Chief Executive (Place)

Report Author: Jonathan Phillips - Head of Employment and Skills
Email: jonathan.phillips@oldham.gov.uk

5th November 2025.

Reason for Briefing

To provide Members with an overview of Get Oldham Working (GOW), including its role, performance, current funding arrangements, future priorities and key risks within the changing employment and skills landscape.

Recommendations

To note and discuss the information presented at the meeting

Get Oldham Working – Performance and Funding ReviewBackground

1.1 Get Oldham Working (GOW) was established in 2013 as Oldham Council's employment and skills service. Since its inception, the service has evolved into a comprehensive employment, careers, skills, wellbeing and employer engagement service supporting residents and businesses across the borough.

1.2 The service supports unemployed and economically inactive residents, young people, individuals facing barriers to work, and residents looking to progress within employment. The service also works extensively with employers to support recruitment, workforce development and access to local talent.

1.3 Since April 2026, Get Oldham Working has formed part of the Economy and Skills Division alongside the Lifelong Learning Service, Business Growth and Investment Team and Strategic Partnerships function. Together these services support Oldham's ambitions for inclusive economic growth, workforce development and reducing economic inactivity.

1.4 The service delivers a broad range of support including:
- Employment support;
- Careers information, advice and guidance;
- Skills and training provision
- Apprenticeship support
- Employer engagement and recruitment
- Digital inclusion programmes
- Health and Wellbeing support
- Specialist programmes for targeted groups

2 Current Position

2.1 Contracts and Funding

2.1.1 Get Oldham Working is 100% externally funded and operates within a complex funding environment and currently delivers a number of externally funded programmes including:
- Restart.
- Work Well Vanguard.
- Support to Succeed.
- National Careers Service.
- Careers Advancement Service.
- Digital Inclusion and Removing Barriers.
- Trailblazer.
- GOW Healthy.

2.1.2 Current core income exceeds £1.6m per annum, with a wider funding position exceeding £2.4m through additional grant funding and commissioned activity.

2.2 Performance

2.2.1 Performance during 2026/27 has remained strong and includes:
- 1,850 jobs created.

- 1,399 vacancies filled.
- 8,400 residents engaged.
- More than 40,000 appointments delivered.
- £3.5m contracts delivered.
- 1,120 economically inactive residents supported towards employment.
- Launch of the Employment and Skills Plan.
- £1.43m Integrated Settlement Employment Support funding secured.

2.3 Careers and Employment Support Changes

2.3.1 The National Careers Service (NCS) has historically formed an important part of the Get Oldham Working offer. National changes are expected to see careers activity transition towards a broader Jobs and Careers model through the Department for Work and Pensions.

2.3.2 From the 1 October 2026, the NCS team has transferred over to DWP management and oversight (4 staff transferred under TUPE conditions). Whilst this presents opportunities for closer integration between employment and careers support, there is a potential risk that future provision may focus primarily on unemployed residents and reduce the offer for those in work to progress in their careers and could reduce the support for acquiring vocational and technical skills. Consequently, work is being undertaken to understand how local provision can continue to support:

- Residents already in work seeking progression.
- Residents requiring retraining or career change support.
- Careers education activity.
- Young people requiring careers guidance.

2.4 Youth Hub Development

2.4.1 The Youth Hub continues to experience increasing demand and has become a significant component of the wider Get Oldham Working offer.

2.4.2 Activity supports young people into education, employment and training and aligns closely with Greater Manchester Youth Guarantee ambitions.

2.5 **Accommodation Review**

2.5.1 Get Oldham Working currently operates from a number of locations including:
- First Choice Homes Oldham, Union Street.
- Spindles Level 8.
- Youth Hub Shop, Spindles.

2.5.2 Opportunities are currently being explored to develop a more integrated accommodation model that would bring together employment, skills, careers, youth and employer support functions within a central location, creating a more accessible and visible service offer.

3 Future Direction

3.1 The service will continue to develop and strengthen its contribution to Oldham's employment and skills ambitions through:
- Increased investment in Youth Hub activity.
- Greater focus on employer engagement for young people.

- Enhanced support for residents with SEND and learning disabilities.
- Increased apprenticeship and work experience opportunities.
- Continued delivery of Youth Guarantee ambitions.

3.2 The service will continue to improve customer experience through:
- Improved triage arrangements.
- Enhanced front-of-house services.
- Streamlined customer journeys.
- Greater integration of service offers.

3.3 Innovation and digital transformation will remain a priority, including exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence and related technologies to improve productivity, efficiency and service effectiveness.

3.4 The service will continue to pursue external funding opportunities and investment, including emerging innovation programmes and future employment and skills funding rounds.

3.5 Further development of holistic support services will continue, including employment-related wellbeing support through initiatives such as GOW Therapy.

4 Risks and Challenges

4.1 The principal risks facing the service remain:

- Reliance on short-term contracts and grant funding.
- Potential funding gaps between programmes.
- National policy and commissioning changes.
- Workforce uncertainty linked to funding cycles.
- Maintaining continuity of support during programme transitions.

4.2 A particular area of uncertainty relates to the future of the Restart Programme. Delivery has been paused by the Department for Work and Pensions and it is anticipated that future employment support provision will sit within Greater Manchester Integrated Settlement arrangements.

4.3 Whilst this presents opportunities for greater local integration, uncertainty remains around future delivery models, funding allocations and implementation timescales.

5 Recommendations

5.1 To note and discuss the information presented at the meeting.