



Local London

London Borough of Redbridge
7th Floor Lynton House
255-259 High Road
Ilford
Essex IG1 1NN

Friday, 02 October 2026

Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Malvern

Minister of State

Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

Dear Secretary of State and Minister,

Re: Continuation Funding for Trailblazers post March 2027

On behalf of the Local London sub-regional partnership, we would like to congratulate you on being re-appointed as Secretary of State and Minister of State in the Department for Work and Pensions and look forward to continuing working with you to deliver the Government's ambition to Get Britain Working.

We are writing to request early confirmation of continuation funding for the Trailblazer programmes beyond March 2027. As these programmes enter a critical stage of delivery, certainty about future investment is now needed to protect the significant progress made to date, safeguard the Government's investment, and ensure that effective local delivery models can continue supporting residents into employment, education and training.

Without clarity on funding beyond March 2027, there is a real risk that specialist staff, local partnerships, referral networks and delivery infrastructure developed through Trailblazers will be lost. These relationships and systems have taken considerable time and public investment to establish and would be both costly and time-consuming to rebuild. Early certainty would enable us to retain expertise, maintain momentum and maximise the long-term value of the Government's investment.

We welcome the Government's commitment to devolving power, reforming public services and enabling local leaders to design solutions that respond to the needs of their communities. The Trailblazer



programme demonstrates the value of this approach in practice, allowing local areas to test innovative responses to economic inactivity and youth disengagement while generating valuable evidence about what works.

Local London is one of four borough-led sub-regional partnerships in the capital, representing the nine north-east and south-east London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Bromley, Enfield, Greenwich, Havering, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest. Together, our boroughs are home to 2.7 million residents and more than 100,000 businesses.

While our sub-region has significant economic strengths, many communities continue to experience persistent deprivation, economic inactivity and barriers to employment. Through strong partnerships with Jobcentre Plus, the Greater London Authority, employers, education providers and community organisations, we are helping residents access the support, skills and opportunities they need to participate in and contribute to the economy.

Through our Economic Inactivity Trailblazer, more than 1,500 residents facing significant barriers to work, including parents, carers and people with disabilities or health conditions, have received tailored support to improve confidence and wellbeing, overcome barriers such as childcare, and move closer to employment, self-employment and economic participation.

Our Youth Trailblazer programme is helping young people before they become NEET by providing targeted interventions at an earlier stage. Since April 2026, more than 300 young people identified by schools as being at risk of becoming NEET have been referred into support designed to improve their transition into post-16 education, employment and training. Alongside this, our Youth Integration Network is ensuring that young people help shape local services, while our Careers Hub is strengthening collaboration between schools, local authorities, employers and skills providers.

One of the programme's greatest strengths has been its devolved, test-and-learn approach. The flexibility provided through Trailblazers has enabled boroughs and delivery partners to tailor support to local labour market conditions and community need, ensuring that resources are directed where they can have the greatest impact. This model is generating valuable evidence about effective approaches for engaging and supporting residents who are often not reached through mainstream provision.

As the Government develops its approach to increasing labour market participation and considers the recommendations emerging from the Milburn Review, Trailblazers provide a proven mechanism for testing, refining and scaling locally led approaches to employment support. Our experience strongly reinforces the case for long-term, locally tailored interventions delivered through trusted partnerships.

This is consistent with the rationale underpinning the longer-term funding model adopted for Connect to Work. Multi-year investment enables strategic planning, workforce stability, employer engagement,

partnership development and robust evaluation. The evidence emerging from both programmes indicates that sustainable employment outcomes are most likely to be achieved through long-term investment and locally designed solutions.

To maintain progress and protect the benefits already achieved through the Government's investment, we therefore respectfully request confirmation that multi-year funding will be made available beyond March 2027, together with an indication of the anticipated timetable for decision-making.

Early certainty would allow us to retain skilled delivery teams, sustain support for residents facing the greatest barriers to participation, continue generating evidence on effective practice and avoid the costs and inefficiencies associated with dismantling and rebuilding successful delivery infrastructure.

We would be delighted to welcome you to one of our boroughs to meet residents, employers and delivery partners and to see first-hand the impact that Trailblazer programmes are having in our communities. Moreover, given the Prime Minister's statements about devolution, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you the approach that the Government is looking to take in respect of employment and skills and how we may be able to contribute to it given our strong record of delivery and outcomes.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Education, the Greater London Authority and other partners to deliver lasting improvements in employment, economic participation and opportunities for young people.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Kam Rai, Leader of the London Borough of Redbridge and Chair of Local London



Cllr David Leaf, Leader of the London Borough of Bexley and Deputy Chair of Local London