

Chapter 4 – Helping people prepare for work

Summary

- Supporting people who are out of work to prepare for a return to employment is vital to achieving our aspiration of an 80 per cent employment rate. But many people face difficulties preparing for work.
- Over the past 12 years we have systematically strengthened the support and assistance we provide to help people get into or back to work. In return, we have placed higher expectations on individuals to take up the support on offer. This chapter sets out how we will continue to push ahead with these reforms, providing personalised help to support people to meet their challenges in moving into work and ensure that most people are on a journey towards sustained employment.
- We will roll-out plans for new requirements on benefit claimants to seek work or prepare for work in the future, and we will **accelerate our plans to require the partners of people on benefits to look for work**.
- To make it easier for people to get the skills they need to get into work, in England we will:
 - offer **skills accounts** – a personalised, online account that will bring together all the skills training that an individual will be able to access in their local area, as set out in *Skills for Growth*;
 - **help individuals find worthwhile training that will help them into work**. Jobcentre Plus will provide improved advice to help people on out-of-work benefits make informed choices about training which will address their needs and help them find sustained work; and
 - take steps to ensure that the right training is available and delivered in a more effective way. We will join up existing funding to create a **new skills purse** which we expect to be worth around £250 million a year, to deliver a simpler and more flexible system for people out of work.
- We will do more to help parents and carers find work that fits with their family and caring responsibilities. We will:
 - provide more outreach support and advice through schools and Children’s Centres;



- ensure that new support and requirements for lone parents are family friendly, for example allowing lone parents with children aged 7–12 to look for part-time work that fits with school hours;
 - **introduce new legislation which will allow lone parents who have a youngest child aged under 16 and who are engaged in full-time study or training to claim Income Support in the summer period, instead of Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA);**
 - **trial a low cost loan scheme** – providing parents with affordable loans to cover the upfront costs of childcare, and promote more flexible childcare;
 - promote more flexible job opportunities through Jobcentre Plus and Local Employment Partnerships;
 - develop the National Care Service to help support those with caring responsibilities; and
 - carry out a consultation on how we can help people meet their caring responsibilities while remaining in work.
- For disabled people and those with a health condition we will:
 - continue the roll out of the new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Work Capability Assessment (WCA) for new and existing claimants;
 - review the **Pathways to Work programme and the support we provide for people with health needs or disabilities who receive JSA;**
 - expand our specialist disability employment programmes – Access to Work and Work Choice – to help those with the greatest needs into work; and
 - **provide extra help for people with a mental health condition to get back into work.**

Introduction

1. We want the welfare system to provide tailored help to people who are out of work so that they are ready to get a job. Some people simply need help with active job search. Others need stronger support, perhaps to get more up-to-date skills, to manage health conditions or find childcare. Our active labour market policies are designed to help people overcome the barriers they face in getting work.

2. We want to help both those who are on JSA and others who are out-of-work or on benefits. Many people are able to work or seek work now. Others may not currently be able to work because they have young children, caring responsibilities or serious health conditions. However, we believe it is right to give them help to stay in touch with the labour market so they can prepare for work in the future.
3. Alongside the extra support, we are putting in place stronger obligations to take up the help on offer. As we roll out the changes in the Welfare Reform Act 2008, the vast majority of working-age people on benefit will be expected either to be seeking work now or preparing for work in the future, as a condition of receiving benefits.
4. Already we have introduced greater support and obligations through the New Deals, Pathways to Work, increased training, and support for childcare and flexible working. As a result, before the recession started we had seen a big drop in the number of long-term unemployed, a steady fall in the number of workless households, with more lone parents and second earners going out to work, more disabled people in employment and the first sustained falls in the number of people on sickness benefits for 30 years.
5. This chapter sets out how we will continue to strengthen and personalise the support we provide, focusing on:
 - rolling out stronger requirements to take up help that is available to prepare for work;
 - increased help with skills and training;
 - more support for parents and carers; and
 - more support for disabled people and people with a health condition.

Greater support, greater responsibility

6. Our welfare system is characterised by increasing personalised support to help people move into work while raising our expectations of individuals to take up the help on offer. We want almost everyone to be on a journey back to work – either looking for work or taking steps to prepare to return to work in the future.
7. We will continue to increase support to tackle worklessness, with extra help matched by extra obligations to take up the help that is on offer. This includes:
 - Continuing the roll out of the WCA for those where health or disability is a challenge.
 - From October 2010, beginning a reassessment of all customers receiving Incapacity Benefit or Income Support on the grounds of disability for ESA.
 - Introducing job seeking requirements and extra help for lone parents with children over 7 while ensuring they can restrict their hours to school hours or family-friendly working, so they can combine work and parental responsibilities.

- Developing new help and new requirements for lone parents with children at nursery or school to start preparing for work, for example taking up training, during school or nursery hours.
 - Developing new help and new requirements for people on ESA who are assessed as able to prepare for work to take up work related activity that could help them keep in touch with the labour market or prepare for work in future.
8. It remains an anomaly that partners of benefit recipients can claim benefits through their partner even if they are able to work and do not have caring responsibilities. In line with our approach to ensure that almost everyone is on a journey back to work, we will now accelerate our plans to place similar requirements on any partners of those on benefits, provided that they are fit for work and do not have caring responsibilities which prevent them from taking-up employment. **From autumn 2011, for all new claims where at least one member of the couple is capable of work, income-related support will be available only through JSA – meaning at least one member of the couple must be looking for work.** These changes will be phased in for existing customers from April 2012.

Help with skills training

9. For people out of work, the skills they have to offer employers are critical to their chances of finding a new job. There is a direct relationship between how good a person's skills are and what their prospects are for employment. The employment rate of those with level 2 qualifications or above is around 20 percentage points higher than those with qualifications below level 2 or with no qualifications.⁴
10. **We want to support individuals to get the skills that will help them get a job, stay in work and progress in their career.** This will increase social mobility and help people realise their longer-term career goals. And, of course, helping people get the right skills has wider benefits for business and the economy.
11. To achieve this, it is essential that the employment system and the skills system work together towards common goals. Much has already been done and this chapter sets out the next steps in England.

Progress on bringing together employment and skills

12. In December 2006, the final report of the Leitch Review of Skills made a compelling case for bringing the employment and skills systems closer together. That analysis underpinned the proposals that the Government published last year in *Work Skills*⁵, recognising that a more integrated approach brings benefits for both individuals and employers.

⁴ Analysis of Labour Force Survey (2009, Q3) – in England the employment rate for those with qualifications below Level 2 or with no qualifications is 58.7 per cent and for those with Level 2 qualifications or above the employment rate is 78.6 per cent.

⁵ Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, 2008, *Work Skills*, Cm 7415, TSO.

13. Since the publication of *Work Skills*, our policy approach has been to move towards better integration of the employment and skills systems. To that end we have run trials of an Integrated Employment and Skills service in 12 areas of England⁶. The evaluation of the first phase will be published shortly.
14. Since summer 2008, the recession has required even more urgent joint action by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. We have provided new pre-employment training programmes and increased funding for apprenticeships. The new pre-employment training programmes are a great example of the employment and skills systems working together to better help people who are unemployed. They also help employers who want to recruit people with the right skills.
15. Indeed, improving the way we work with employers – understanding what skills they need and providing relevant training to job seekers – has been a key aspect of our approach. We have brought together – through the Integrated Employer Offer – Jobcentre Plus’ vacancy advertising and recruitment support with Business Link’s wider skills and business support. This has enabled us to provide a single offer to employers grouped around three key components: recruitment; planning for growth; and support for redundancy. And for large national employers we now provide an integrated account management service.

More to do

16. It is clear, however, that there is still much to do. This section sets out how we will build on the progress already made to deliver a joined-up system which makes it easier for people to:
 - identify their skills needs;
 - identify available training; and
 - get the right training that meets those needs, helping them find a job and progress in work.
17. Chapter 6 sets out how we will improve the skills support that is available once people move into work.

Identifying skills needs – better support

18. We will provide more support to people who are out of work to help them make informed decisions about training so that they choose courses that will address their needs and help them move into sustained employment and develop their skills.

⁶ Scotland has also been running Integrated Employment and Skills trials, but no trials have been established in Wales yet.

19. The role of Jobcentre Plus advisers will be critical here. Throughout the duration of an individual's claim, advisers will help the customer to accurately assess their skills needs and understand what skills are in demand in the local labour market. Based on this information, the adviser will steer and guide the individual to identify the right training for them. This support will include helping individuals to make informed decisions about any course at a college or other provider funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills or the Learning and Skills Council, including that for which there is fee remission because the individual is unemployed. The support will help ensure that our expenditure on skills in England is targeted as effectively as possible to help people find work and progress.
20. The adult advancement and careers service will also be part of this approach. In England, everyone reaching six months of unemployment with an identified skills need will be referred to the adult advancement and careers service for a formal skills assessment to help identify any extra support they need to move into work. In addition, the service will be signposted from day one and Jobcentre Plus advisers will be able to make referrals earlier than six months if they think it necessary.
21. We will develop the capability and capacity of Jobcentre Plus advisers to have a consistent and meaningful discussion about skills and to review the skills needs of people on benefits. We will consider what training and guidance might be needed to better equip advisers to perform this role. In addition, to ensure advisers have the ability to effectively assess customers' skills needs, we will develop appropriate support tools which take account of the skills diagnostic tool already being developed for the adult advancement and careers service. In screening and assessing customers, Jobcentre Plus advisers will need to work closely with providers and with the adult advancement and careers service to ensure the most appropriate person undertakes each intervention and that the services complement each other.

Identifying available training – skills accounts

22. We want everybody to be aware of the full range of skills provision they can access – be that the provision we have made available for unemployed people or wider mainstream training at a college or other provider, funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.
23. For those who want to have them, we will use the new skills accounts to do this. The introduction of skills accounts in England was announced in *Skills for Growth – The National Skills Strategy*. They will be a personal online account through which individuals will be able to see the skills training they can access in their local area. It will set out a record of the qualifications that individuals gain and, over time, will allow the individual to build up a portfolio of their skills and learning.
24. The Government is also encouraging local authorities and their partners, including skills providers, to develop work and skills plans. These plans will bring transparency to how local resources are being used to best effect in addressing worklessness and raising skills levels.

Getting the right training – a new approach

25. We also need to ensure that the right training is provided. This means quality courses that are focused on helping people get a job, stay in work and progress in their career by giving them the skills employers want.
26. Much high-quality provision currently exists. But the pre-employment offer is targeted at different groups, with different eligibility criteria and a different focus to each element. This can be confusing for advisers looking to make appropriate referrals, and for customers who need to know what options they have. It also makes it more difficult for providers to bid for contracts and play to their strengths.
27. **We will introduce a new, single purse in England, jointly owned and funded by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.** From 2011, we will bring together money currently spent by both the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to help people who are on out-of-work benefits, primarily those on JSA, gain the skills they need to get a job they can progress in. Subject to the next spending review, we expect this new single purse to be worth around £250 million a year. It will be used to purchase a range of different training opportunities and wider support. The contracting will be overseen by a joint commissioning board, to ensure that the right suite of provision is available and that there is no duplication across contracts.
28. We will run this new purse to help deliver a set of objectives agreed by the two Departments (see box) and will use it to purchase training that is specifically designed to get people a job, to stay in work and progress in work. We will engage key local partners in the development of this provision to ensure that we are providing training relevant to the labour market and local economic development planning.

Shared objectives for provision

For individuals

Individuals have access to the training they need and get skills which help them find sustained work as quickly as possible.

Individuals stay in work, and do not move in and out of the benefits system.

Individuals progress in work and, where they can, achieve vocational qualifications.

Employers

They have a greater say in the type of training provided.

They get people with the skills needed for their vacancies, and jobs emerging.

They get a simpler system – making it easier for them to get the support they need.

29. Through the single purse we will develop a new training offer, specifically designed for people who are unemployed in England to get them into work and start them on a longer learning journey. The purse will provide a training package which meets individual needs and is relevant to the needs of the local labour market and employers. It is likely to include:
- sector-specific pre-employment training – giving a grounding in the skills needed to enter a specific sector, such as hospitality, leisure or social care;
 - CV writing, job search support and interview preparation;
 - employability skills;
 - other training which helps people get skills to secure employment; and
 - literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages.
30. The training provided through this new purse will be tailored to people who are on out-of-work benefits to help them secure employment. We will aim to ensure that the right training will be available to people at the most appropriate time. Generally, this is likely to be from the six-month point of a claim for JSA, but whenever a skills need is identified which is a barrier to people getting a job – particularly if it relates to basic skills or employability or where there is a history of repeated unemployment – we want to have the flexibility to refer people to the necessary training as quickly as possible. There will also be provision to support those at risk of redundancy or who are newly redundant to help them move quickly back into sustainable employment.
31. In addition, whilst we expect the typical course to be part time, we want to maintain the flexibility to move people onto full-time courses for up to eight weeks at the six-month point of the claim, supported by a training allowance where that is the most appropriate way forward.
32. And we will ensure that training purchased through the new purse will reward providers for getting people into sustained employment with progression. In developing this portfolio of provision, we will look to design success measures and incentives that further encourage this.

Supporting people to take up training

33. We know that some people who are out of work face specific barriers to taking up training and improving their skills. Particular barriers include the cost of paying for travel to take up training, or childcare costs while training. **So, in Great Britain, at any point up to when an individual is referred to Flexible New Deal (FND), JSA customers going into part-time training with the agreement of their personal adviser will be able to have their travel and childcare costs paid.** This will ensure consistency with measures currently available to people accessing full-time training.
34. In addition in England, the adult advancement and careers service will provide access to a wide range of advice and support on tackling the barriers people can face in taking up training, including understanding employment rights, getting advice on housing and health, and finding suitable childcare.

Help for parents and carers

35. We know that the surest way to address child poverty is to support more parents into work; work which pays and work that enables parents to manage the careful balance between employment and family life.
36. But if work is to be sustainable for parents, allowing them to manage their employment and family responsibilities, we need to do more to help parents work flexibly and get the childcare, help and support they need.
37. Recent research on lone parents in work⁷ and non-working parents in couples⁸, for example, points to the priority that parents place on working hours that suit their needs, including those which are compatible with school hours and so minimise the need for paid childcare.
38. Living in an ageing society can bring additional caring responsibilities to families. We need to ensure that balancing paid work with care is a real choice for as many carers as possible and that the rising demand for care does not reduce the number of people active in the labour market.
39. In addition to the action taken to improve the gains to work (set out in Chapter 5) the Government has done much to support parents at work, promote flexible working and increase childcare provision:
 - We have invested well over £25 billion in childcare and many more families are now benefiting from new rights and services. These include the introduction of over 3,000 new Sure Start Children's Centres, an entitlement to free childcare for all 3–4-year-olds and doubling the number of childcare places.
 - We introduced the New Deal for Lone Parents in 1998 and 980,000 people have received help from the programme. More than 638,000 have moved into work as a result.
 - We have significantly improved maternity and paternity arrangements and introduced a right to request flexible working for parents of children aged 16 and under or whose child is disabled.
40. The lone parent employment rate has increased by over 12 percentage points since 1997, an increase of 365,000 lone parents in work.
41. We have also taken action to help carers:
 - In 2008, we published *Carers at the heart of 21st century families and communities: a caring system on your side, a life of your own*. This announced ambitious plans to support carers and families in England. By 2011, the Department of Health will have invested over £1.7 billion for councils to use to support carers through the Annual Carers Grant.

⁷ Ridge T and Millar J, 2008, *Work and well-being over time: lone mothers and their children*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No 536.

⁸ Collard S and Atkinson A, 2009, *Making decisions about work in one-earner couple households*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No 560.

- We are investing up to £38 million to help carers move into paid work through Jobcentre Plus carer specific commitments. Since the beginning of December, Replacement Care has been available to support carers to make the transition back into work. Replacement Care pays for care when the carer is undertaking an activity such as Jobcentre Plus approved training; attending interviews; and going to meetings to secure care services.

42. This section sets out how we will build on these measures by:

- tailoring our services and the benefits regime to the needs of parents;
- promoting family-friendly working practices;
- improving arrangements for carers; and
- providing additional support with childcare.

43. Further measures are set out in Chapter 5 which explains how we will provide the right financial support to help people make the move into work. Chapter 6 sets out proposals to encourage more high-quality jobs on a flexible and part-time basis, alongside measures to improve in-work support and to promote a labour market that is free from discrimination.

Tailoring our services and the benefits regime to the needs of parents

44. Through the School Gates Employment Initiative, local authorities in 25 areas are working with Regional Development Agencies and Jobcentre Plus to provide employment and enterprise support to parents in and around their child's school. Through reaching out to parents, and providing a co-ordinated package of support, tailored to their needs and in a setting where they feel comfortable with, we are able to engage and support those parents who might not traditionally engage with mainstream employment services. Outreach services are already operating in Children's Centres to help parents of young children.
45. We will expand outreach services to reach more parents, particularly mothers, who might not otherwise be reached by traditional job centre services, including through support linked to schools for parents of older children.
46. To ensure that lone parents on JSA can seek work for the hours that fit best with family life, we will allow lone parents with a youngest child aged 12 and under at school the right to restrict availability for employment to hours that reflect the child's normal term-time school hours. We also intend to provide additional support to help lone parents moving onto JSA to balance their work and family life by ensuring that all lone parents have the opportunity to meet with a lone parent adviser within the first two weeks of their claim to discuss what extra support they need, notably through the New Deal for Lone Parents. Support for partners of benefit claimants will be provided through the New Deal for Partners.
47. Lone parents with older children who are studying full time and receiving non-benefit-related funding like a student grant may need to claim benefits in the summer vacation period. **We will introduce new legislation which will allow lone parents who have a youngest child aged under 16 and are engaged in full-time study or training to claim Income Support in the summer period, instead of JSA.**

Promoting family-friendly working practices

48. We believe that encouraging flexible and family-friendly employment opportunities is good for individuals, families, employers, and the wider economy. Offering employees the opportunity to work flexibly can raise their productivity, and encourage more people to enter and stay in work, contributing to tackling child poverty and meeting the challenges of an ageing society. It also supports individuals' and families' well-being, enabling families to spend time together.
49. Since 1997, we have significantly improved maternity and paternity arrangements and want to continue to extend parental support, particularly for families with young children. We have also recently established a new right for employees to request time to train. These measures are set out in more detail in Chapter 6, alongside the announcement of a new taskforce on family-friendly working hours to focus on the quality and accessibility of part-time work and flexible working patterns.
50. There are a number of steps we can take to encourage a family-friendly labour market. As well as supporting employers to manage diverse working practices and encouraging more of those who are eligible to feel able to request flexible working, we will encourage the sharing of best practice between employers, helping them to see the benefits and assisting them with the practicalities of speculative flexible applications.
51. Before any period of employment starts, during the advertising and application process, anyone can ask – if it is not already set out in the job description – whether an employer would consider flexible working patterns. Many employers already operate this way and do come to arrangements with applicants before contracts are signed. It is this behaviour of **pre-work enquiry and consideration that we wish to promote, and will make a real difference to those requiring flexible employment to enable them to work.**
52. In line with this, Chapter 6 sets out our proposals to improve our IT systems to better help people find jobs with opportunities for flexible working and to help facilitate job share arrangements. Jobcentre Plus will continue to encourage employers to advertise vacancies as part-time or suitable for flexible working wherever this is appropriate. (These types of vacancies currently make up about one in three of those offered through Jobcentre Plus.) And the Cabinet Office has a programme to encourage understanding of best practice in recruitment, further helping to increase the number of vacancies advertised on a part-time or flexible basis.
53. In addition, many small and medium-sized enterprises already operate informal flexible arrangements with their staff, but may not recognise or refer to them as family-friendly or flexible-working practices. We want to encourage these employers and recognise the need for more support for those employers who have no experience of flexible working and who want to implement practices that meet both the needs of their business and their staff.

Improved arrangements for carers

54. When trying to balance employment with caring responsibilities, many people tell us that a particular difficulty is that they currently have to shape their lives around the care system when it should be the other way round.
55. **We will carry out a consultation on how we can help individuals meet their caring responsibilities while remaining in employment.** This might include additional unpaid leave for planned responsibilities, such as hospital visits, and for carers of someone with a terminal illness.
56. In July 2009, we published *Shaping the Future of Care Together* which sets out a vision for a new care and support system in England, including a National Care Service that is fair, simple and affordable for everyone. We will bring forward detailed plans for the National Care Service in 2010.

What people can expect from a National Care Service

1. Prevention services

The right support to help you stay independent and well for as long as possible, and to stop your care and support needs getting worse.

2. National assessment

Wherever you are in England, you will have the right to have your care needs assessed in the same way. You will have a right to have the same proportion of your care and support costs paid for wherever you live. You will be able to take your needs assessment with you wherever you go in England, enabling you to live the life you want wherever you want.

3. A joined-up service

All the services that you need will work together smoothly, particularly when your needs are assessed. You will only need to have one assessment of your needs to gain access to a whole range of care and support services.

4. Information and advice

When you need care and support, or are preparing for it, you will find it easy to get information about who can help you, what care you can expect and how quickly you can get it.

5. Personalised care and support

Your care and support will be designed and delivered around your individual needs. As part of your care and support plan, you will have much greater choice over how and where you receive support, and the possibility of controlling your own budget wherever appropriate.

6. Fair funding

Your money will be spent wisely and everyone who qualifies for care and support from the state will get some help meeting the cost of their care and support needs.

Additional support with childcare

57. Despite the progress we have made, childcare is still sometimes cited by out-of-work parents as a reason for not working. According to the *Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents* in 2008, just over half of mothers not working (52 per cent) agreed with the statement that if they could find good quality, convenient, reliable and affordable childcare, they would prefer to go out to work.⁹

How do we meet the challenges?

58. We are seeking to embed an extended, more flexible, free entitlement to early learning and childcare, which supports employment, better suits families' needs and promotes take-up. In the *Ten-Year Childcare Strategy* (2004), we announced our intention to extend the entitlement to free childcare for all 3–4-year-olds from 12.5 hours a week to 15 hours across 38 weeks and increase its flexibility within the week according to parental demand. We are now implementing this requirement. All local authorities should now be offering the new flexible offer to 25 per cent of the most disadvantaged 3–4-year-olds – and to all 3–4-year-olds by September 2010. Early evidence from the pathfinder authorities trialling the new flexible 15-hour offer is that longer and more flexible provision significantly increases participation, particularly from currently under-represented groups.
59. The new Code of Practice for local authorities on provision of the 3–4-year-olds' entitlement has been published in draft for consultation, to come into force in September 2010. The Code sets out new responsibilities for local authorities to drive up quality and to work in partnership with a range of providers to secure an entitlement which balances parental demand with what providers can supply.

Extended services attached to schools

By 2010, all maintained schools will be offering access to extended services, two elements of which are childcare and a varied menu of activities. At Sir Thomas Boteler School in Warrington, young people use The Boiler Room as a place after school to relax, do their homework, and use as a base between their after-school activities. The young people themselves say that they appreciate being somewhere where they can be with their friends before going home; their parents know they are in safe, supervised surroundings which fit in with working hours.

60. We will investigate how Children's Centres can link with schools more effectively to ensure that their childcare arrangements are convenient for families. We will also explore how childminder networks and other partners in the private, voluntary and independent sector, working alongside Children's Centres, can contribute to making childcare arrangements, where families use a mixture of provision, as integrated and seamless as possible. The Government will develop this option further in the forthcoming Green Paper on families and relationships.

⁹ Speight S, Smith R, La Valle I, Schneider V, and Perry J, 2009 *Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2008*, Research Report DCSF-RR136.

Case study

Coin Street Family and Children's Centre serves an area on the border between the London Boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark. During term time, the centre runs a breakfast and after-school club service for children aged 4 to 11 years. The breakfast club service runs from 7:30am until the start of school – children can enjoy a light nutritious breakfast, play quiet games or finish homework. The after-school club runs from 4:00pm to 6:00pm – programmes are developed through child observation and include a variety of fun, varied, educational and well-structured activities, including gardening, cooking, arts and crafts, imaginative play, free play, outdoor play, plus sports and group games and mentoring by 14–15-year-old students from City of London Boys School. The centre offers a walking bus service to ensure that children arrive safely and punctually. Parents drop the children off at the centre for the morning breakfast club, then they are escorted to school safely by the walking bus which covers six local schools – there is a ratio of 1:8 (staff:children). In the evening, centre staff collect children from their schools and walk them back to the centre for the after-school club; a light tasty healthy snack is also provided. The parents then pick their children up from the centre.

61. Building on the significant progress to date, the Government will explore further how effectively families are supported in their efforts to balance work and childcare, including how to help families take full advantage of their entitlement to free childcare and support through the Working Tax Credit system.
62. The requirement to pay childcare costs upfront (including fees in advance, deposits and retainers) may also create a significant barrier to starting or returning to work. Since April 2008, Jobcentre Plus has been piloting a scheme in London which provides financial support for upfront childcare costs for qualifying lone parents. One of the Childcare Affordability Pilots which is testing the payment of the actual costs of monthly childcare (as opposed to a monthly payment of parents' average childcare costs across the year which is the current system) gives parents an option of accessing a transitional payment of up to £500 to cover the first four weeks of their childcare costs. The Government will use the evaluation of these pilots to test and strengthen the evidence base about the barriers that parents face to entering work. In addition, we will **trial a low cost loan scheme** – providing parents with affordable loans to cover upfront costs – so that we can understand the effectiveness of this alternative approach.
63. We also want to ensure that parents are not disadvantaged by their childcare requirements in terms of their ability to take up training to improve their skills and move into or progress in work. Currently, funding for childcare support for parents undertaking training is administered in a number of ways. Earlier in this chapter, we set out proposals to support Jobcentre Plus customers to take up part-time training. In addition, as part of the forthcoming Green Paper on families and relationships, we will consider how far we can simplify the system to ensure that parents have a clear offer of support. We are also exploring the feasibility of allowing people to check their entitlements to childcare through skills accounts.

Health and disability

64. Too many disabled people and people with a health condition are out of work. Around 2.6 million people are receiving incapacity-related benefits. Over half have been receiving these benefits for over five years.¹⁰ And the problem does not stop there – other people claim JSA, or lone parent benefits – but also have a health condition or a disability.
65. It is vital that we do more to help these people get into or back into work. It is vital for the individuals concerned – **we know that work is generally good for people whether they are disabled or not**. Work promotes better physical and mental health, increases happiness and life satisfaction, and improves financial security. And it is also vital if we are to reach our goal of full employment.
66. In the past, if a person had a health condition or a disability, they were often written off: many people made an automatic assumption that you could not work, and, all too often, never would again. But we know this is not true: where someone with a particular disability or condition is not employed, others with similar conditions will be working. This tells us something very important. It is not only, or often even primarily, a person's condition which defines whether they can work: it is so often more about people being given the opportunities and support they need; or about barriers being put in their way, from understandable fear of the unknown to outright discrimination.

Providing opportunities and support; removing the barriers – progress so far

67. We have already introduced major reforms to the benefits system to strengthen the focus on work rather than, as in the past, consigning people to a lifetime of 'incapacity'. We have:
 - introduced, in October 2008, ESA, a new benefit regime for people claiming out-of-work benefits because of sickness or disability. Together with a new WCA, the new system focuses on what people can do rather than what they cannot do, and ensures that everyone who is able to prepare for a return to work in future receives the support they need;
 - provided extra help for those who are disabled or have health conditions. In particular, we introduced Pathways to Work, a programme providing a single gateway to a range of support and advice with a personal adviser helping each individual consider their options and needs; and
 - for people who require more intensive support – for example, some people with a mental health condition, some people with a learning disability and those experiencing multiple disadvantages – we have introduced a range of specialist support. Disability Employment Advisers, WORKSTEP and Work Preparation are three of the key components of this support and together have helped 17,000 people into supported employment and 1,500 into open employment in 2008/09.

¹⁰ DWP Information Directorate: 100 per cent. Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study – February 2009.

Pathways to Work

Caroline was living with severe depression. She said: “I was feeling in utter despair, I had no self-esteem and felt worthless. When I received a letter from Jobcentre Plus asking me to attend a work-focused interview, I really had to ask myself what was the point?”

However, Caroline’s fears were soon put to rest when she met her Pathways to Work adviser, who suggested that she attend the Condition Management Programme, run in conjunction with the NHS. After six months of this and of seeing her personal adviser, Caroline felt well enough to consider looking for work. With the help of Jobcentre Plus, she prepared a CV, applied for jobs, had advice and practice with interview techniques, and undertook some work experience.

Caroline was successful in finding work as an employment adviser which she describes as “a job that I love ... where I can make a difference to someone’s life”.

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a job that I love ... where I can make a difference to someone’s life.



68. And, as we provide more help and support, it is right that we expect more in return. On all out-of-work benefits the majority of our customers, including those with a health condition or disability, are now expected to engage with us in their journey back to work.
69. The disability employment rate now stands at 48 per cent compared to 42 per cent 10 years ago, with the gap between the overall employment rate and the disability rate narrowing significantly¹¹. But we need to go much further.

Reforming the system – next steps

70. At the moment, support is too predicated on which benefit you claim, and how you ‘reach’ us through the system. We want a system where ultimately, each individual gets the help they need, tailored around them. To do this, we need to provide services focused on each individual, to provide greater personalisation and control, and ensure our services help more of the people who need them the most.

¹¹ Ridge T and Millar J, 2008, *Work and well-being over time: lone mothers and their children*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No 536.

Rolling out a new benefit regime

71. From October 2010, we will begin reassessing all customers receiving Incapacity Benefit or Income Support on the grounds of disability to move them onto Employment and Support Allowance, so that by 2013/14, everyone who is able to work will have access to greater support to help them back into work, or to prepare for work in the future.

Renewing employment support for disabled people and those with a health condition

72. Pathways to Work was originally developed to help disabled people and people with health conditions on old-style incapacity benefits. The programme's early performance was very encouraging, but more recently the evidence has been mixed. Customers continue to provide positive feedback on the support they have received, but when Pathways to Work was extended to new areas, following the initial pilots, no employment impact was found. And the early performance of the private and voluntary sector in delivering Pathways to Work has been disappointing.
73. We are taking practical steps to improve performance and use resources better. For example, in many places, Jobcentre Plus advisers now conduct the first work-focused interviews on provider premises, making a simpler journey for the customer. But we want to see a real step change in performance.
74. **We will, therefore, take forward a review of the support we offer to people claiming out-of-work benefits because of a health condition or disability, or who are managing a health condition while actively looking for work.** This review will consider the Pathways to Work programme, but also how we can strengthen support for customers regardless of what benefit they are on – including support for people on JSA with a health condition or disability. The review will also look at whether the support we have in place to help people manage their condition in the workplace – currently delivered through the Condition Management Programme – remains right.

Work Preparation

Michael is 46 and has not worked for over six years, due to suffering from an extreme fear of socialising and a downward spiral of depression. Michael's condition ruled his life and made normal everyday events that other people take for granted very daunting. Combined with other personal problems, Michael started to spend more and more time alone, draining him of his self-esteem, confidence and general positivity.

Jobcentre Plus put Michael in touch with a local company who, after assessing Michael's needs, arranged a work placement through the Work Preparation programme at a local kennels, where he would not have to come into contact with many people.

Michael was supposed to start by doing a few hours a day, but not only did he work full time he volunteered to do extra shifts and nothing was too much trouble for him. His efforts were rewarded because his employer was so impressed with his work and enthusiasm that he offered him full-time employment working 45 hours a week.

75. Our four key principles – for customers on whatever benefit – for future reform are:
- The customer journey should be clear and easy to understand. This will allow both customers and advisers to focus on the most important issue – the journey back to work.
 - The support on offer should be flexible, specific to the customer’s individual circumstances, including their skills level and their training needs, and be offered in a way to best meet customer need, regardless of what out-of-work benefit they are claiming. We should trust advisers more to work with customers to establish the package that will work best for them. In doing so, we must ensure that our advisers have the skills and tools to support them to identify the help that customers need.
 - Rights and responsibilities should remain at the heart of the relationship between the customer and personal adviser. Customers able to prepare to return to work will be expected to engage at different stages throughout their benefit claim. However, the nature of this engagement should change, as the customer’s needs change and the longer they remain on benefit.
 - Ensure, as we do with all our programmes, that employment support for disabled people and those with health conditions provides good value for money.
76. We will be working over the coming months with interested stakeholders to develop more detailed proposals. **We will bring forward proposals in the spring.**

Helping those who need it the most

77. We will increase funding for our specialist disability employment programmes, supporting those with the greatest needs into work. Chapter 6 sets out our plans for increasing the support that the Access to Work programme provides, enabling us to help more disabled people get and keep jobs. And we will look, with stakeholders, at the relationship between Access to Work and the Disability Living Allowance to see if there are other ways to improve support for work.
78. We are also taking action to simplify and streamline the support on offer, to make it easier to understand, easier to access and to help more people reach open employment. Work Choice will replace WORKSTEP, Work Preparation and the Job Introduction Scheme. The new programme will be modular and will be designed to provide a flexible support service. It will be focused on helping those disabled people who face more complex barriers to accessing and remaining in work, who could not obtain sufficient help through other Department for Work and Pensions programmes. We are particularly keen to ensure that the programme contributes to an increased level of employment for customers with learning disabilities and mental health conditions.

More support for people with a mental health condition

79. Over a million people on benefits have a mental health condition. Around 42 per cent of the 2.6 million people currently on out-of-work health-related benefits are claiming primarily because of diagnosed mental health conditions – up from 28 per cent in 1976. In addition, there is evidence suggesting that people with a mental health condition will remain out of work for longer. Eighty-six per cent of people who are on out-of-work health-related benefits due to a mental health condition remain on these benefits for more than three months, compared to 76 per cent for all other people claiming the benefits.¹²
80. Given this, it is clear we need to do more. The first National Mental Health and Employment Strategy *Working our way to better mental health: a framework for action*¹³ was published on 7 December. This document sets out a strong framework, looking at people with mental health conditions in employment through to those out of work. It calls for action across all Government departments, the wider public sector, employers and individuals to promote the value of employment for people who have mental health conditions, to tackle stigma and discrimination and to improve well-being at work for all.
81. As part of the development of this framework, we launched an independent review to examine how we could better support more people with mental health conditions who are workless back to work. This review, led by Rachel Perkins of SW London and St Georges Mental Health Trust, also reported on 7 December¹⁴.
82. We welcome this important review, which sets a wide-reaching and ambitious vision for change across Government. *Work Recovery and Inclusion*¹⁵, also published on 7 December, sets out in detail the Government's response to the review across employment and health services. As part of our response, the Department for Work and Pensions will:
- improve and expand the Access to Work scheme so that it can better support employers, especially small and medium-sized employers; and meet the needs of people with mental health conditions, as well as other under-represented groups – more details are set out in Chapter 6;
 - double the capacity of the Jobcentre Plus mental health co-ordinators to ensure appropriate support and signposting is put in place for customers with a mental health condition;
 - ensure greater join up between employment advisers, whether from Jobcentre Plus or employment programme providers, and local health and social care provision; and
 - pilot the provision of time-limited internships for people with a disability or health condition who have been out of work for a long period, or who have never worked.

¹² Health, Work and Well-being Programme, 2009, *Working our way to better mental health: a framework for action*, Cm 7756, TSO, pg 7.

¹³ Health, Work and Well-being Programme, 2009, *Working our way to better mental health: a framework for action*, Cm 7756, TSO, pg 7.

¹⁴ Perkins R, et al, 2009, *Realising ambitions: Better employment support for people with a mental health condition*, Cm 7742, TSO.

¹⁵ HM Government, 2009, *Work, Recovery and Inclusion: Employment support for people in contact with secondary care mental health services*, HM Government.

Conclusion

83. We have clearly demonstrated that we have robust plans to overcome the obstacles that many people face in looking for work.
84. We now turn to how the benefits system needs to be adjusted to ease the movement off benefit into work and to make work pay.