



Chapter 1 How we consulted

Chapter One – How we consulted

1. Stakeholders were consulted using a wide range of mechanisms in order to get a wide range of views.

Formal consultation

2. The formal consultation period for the *Helping people achieve their full potential: Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services* public consultation began on Monday 3 December 2007 and ended on Monday 10 March 2008. People could respond by post and through a dedicated email address.
3. The consultation document was made available in different formats and appeared on several accessible websites. In addition, written articles, both internally within government and externally, helped tell people about the consultation, as did the numerous workshops, public consultation events, meetings and discussions that took place both before and during the 14 week consultation period.
4. A landline Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) telephone number and email address were publicised and available throughout the consultation period for people seeking printed copies and alternative formats of the consultation.
5. We received formal responses from:
 - 122 individuals, including service users, carers and professionals;
 - 248 organisations, including trades unions, public bodies, voluntary organisations, providers and employers; and
 - 88 DWP/Jobcentre Plus staff.
6. A list of organisations who responded is shown at Annex A.

Consultation events, workshops and discussions

7. The consultation was launched on Monday 3 December 2007 by Rt Hon Anne McGuire MP, Minister for Disabled People, during a visit to Mitchell and Cooper, international manufacturers of catering equipment in Uckfield, East Sussex.
8. During the consultation period, Ministers publicised the consultation and the proposals at appropriate events they attended and during visits they made.

9. The Minister for Disabled People also gave the keynote address at a large public consultation event in Scotland, the first of four such DWP led events covering England, Scotland and Wales, which were attended by over 500 people from a range of backgrounds, including disabled people, representatives from disability organisations, employers, service providers from the private and third sector and Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers.
10. The four DWP-led public consultation events were held in:
 - Edinburgh – in the Heriot Watt Conference Centre at Edinburgh University on 21 January 2008;
 - London – at The Oval on 24 January 2008;
 - Manchester – at the Museum of Science and Industry on 30 January 2008; and
 - Cardiff – at The Future Inn on 12 February 2008.
11. In addition, there were a number of other events, meetings and workshops attended by DWP officials around the country, where other people were given and took the opportunity to be involved in the consultation including:
 - a jointly led Scottish Executive and Council of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) event in Glasgow on 4 February 2008, for senior managers within those organisations; and
 - a joint British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) and Community union event for their members at Loughborough University on 21 February 2008. The Minister for Disabled People gave a keynote address by video-link at this event.
12. DWP officials also had face-to-face meetings to discuss the reform proposals before and during the consultation period with:
 - members of the Disability Employment Advisory Committee (DEAC);
 - a number of Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers;
 - the Local Government Association (LGA);
 - Mencap;
 - Scope;
 - Mind;
 - RNID;
 - RNIB;
 - RADAR; and
 - the Leonard Cheshire Foundation.

Online consultation

13. We wanted to reach as many people as possible and make it easy for them to respond to the consultation and so we placed the consultation document on our own consultation page on the DWP website from where it could be downloaded.
14. In addition, other organisations provided links to it from their own websites.

Distribution of printed copies and alternative formats of the consultation

15. The consultation document was also made available in a variety of printed and alternative formats, and we distributed around 2,500 copies in total.

Reaching those people whose first language is British Sign Language

16. During the consultation period it became clear that some members of the deaf community, whose first language is British Sign Language (BSL), felt they were excluded from the consultation process, as a BSL version of the consultation had not been produced. This decision had been taken at the outset, as there had previously been little or no demand for this format for other DWP consultations.
17. As there was insufficient time left during the consultation period to produce a BSL version, DWP officials went out to the deaf community across the country and delivered bespoke events/workshops using qualified BSL interpreters, particularly for this client group, ensuring they could fully engage in the consultation process.
18. These included events in:
 - Nottingham – at the Nottinghamshire Deaf Society on 11 February 2008;
 - Birmingham – at the Birmingham Deaf Cultural Centre on 26 February 2008; and
 - Newcastle – at the Newcastle Deaf Centre on 29 February 2008.
19. We have listened to the accessibility concerns from this client group and are now taking their needs into account when producing future DWP publications. As a result, a BSL DVD of the Summary from the recent Green Paper *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility* published in July 2008 is also available.
20. A link to the summary version of this document in BSL is available at www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/des-consultation.asp and has also been produced in BSL DVD format which is available from the address on the back cover of this document.