

Chapter 6 – Better, more fulfilling work

Summary

- The challenge we face is not solely about helping people back into work. It is also about helping people progress in work, develop careers and effectively balance their work and family lives.
- For a start, that means helping people get the skills and qualifications to progress in work.
- To address this, we will provide **in-work skills support and advice in England** through the new adult advancement and careers service that will offer personalised information, advice and guidance.
- For **disabled people and people with a health condition** we will do more to help them retain their jobs and progress in work by supporting early intervention, piloting **the new Fit for Work service**, and **improving the Access to Work programme**.
- We will do more to promote a labour market that is **free from discrimination** by promoting the **Know Yourself** tool with employers.
- To help carers, parents and others struggling to balance work with other commitments, we will work with employers to **promote flexible working practices**. Our long-term ambition is to ensure that flexible working practices are embedded in all businesses across the UK, so that all employees are able to discuss opportunities for flexible working with their employer from day one of employment, or even pre-employment.
- Achieving this will raise the employment rate and productivity as well as improve the quality of life of employees.



Introduction

1. A return to full employment means helping as many people as possible make the journey back into work.
2. However, it is not enough to simply move people into a short-term job. We need to support people into lasting employment, with the opportunity to progress in work and to find fulfilling employment that is compatible with the responsibilities of modern family life.
3. Some people take several spells in and out of work before finding a job that suits them and offers them the right opportunities to remain in work and progress. Other people are trapped in low-paid jobs below their skill level, often because they cannot find quality work that is compatible with their out-of-work commitments, such as caring or childcare.
4. This chapter looks at the ways in which the Government plans to help ensure that the labour market reflects the needs of the modern family and enables people to stay in work and, where possible, to progress to better work.

Helping those with a history of repeat spells on benefit

5. While for many people taking several spells in and out of work before finding a suitable job is a natural occurrence that does not damage their longer-term prospects, for some cycling between work and benefit does become a problem and can harm the individual's ability to find a sustainable job.
6. Evidence shows that a pattern of repeat claiming can be problematic for those with existing poor work histories, those with no qualifications or a lack of key work skills, and some young people. We also know that people can face challenges in keeping a job through life events such as the development or worsening of a health condition or disability, or a change in circumstance, such as a caring responsibility which has made full-time work impossible.
7. To help combat this we already fast-track those with significant disadvantages and those with a recent history of benefit receipt to a point where they receive greater support with their jobsearch. We will review this practice to ensure it captures as many as possible of the people most at risk from repeated cycling between work and benefit. And, as set out in Chapter 2, we will, in particular, fast-track more young people to the support available at six months and give Jobcentre Plus advisers the discretion to fast-track people over 50 to the same point.
8. In addition, as set out below, we are aligning our Jobcentre Plus services with the new adult advancement and careers service in England.

Skills support for people in work

9. Getting a job is a good start, but while most people expect to progress in work, many lack the skills or the help to do so. The adult advancement and careers service, which from August 2010 replaces *nextstep* and the Careers Advice Service in England, will provide independent and impartial information, advice and guidance to help people assess their skills and make choices about training and career paths. This advice will be provided face to face, by telephone or online, to meet the needs of the individual.
10. To provide a seamless service to help people get, keep and progress in a job, in England the adult advancement and careers service will work closely – and co-locate where possible – with Jobcentre Plus. Jobcentre Plus and existing *nextstep* careers advisory services are already testing this approach in 12 areas.
11. In England, all customers leaving Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) will receive a letter informing them how to access support from the adult advancement and careers service.
12. We want to target this support at those who are more likely to cycle in and out of work. Therefore, from April 2011, all customers who enter work after claiming JSA for between 6 and 12 months will be encouraged to make contact by telephone with the adult advancement and careers service.
13. Anyone moving into work after receiving JSA for more than 12 months will receive ongoing support from the Flexible New Deal provider that helped them into work. Our services for disabled people or people with a health condition, Pathways to Work and Work Choice (from October 2010), also provide a follow-up service when people need extra support once they have left the programme.
14. As described in Chapter 4, the new skills accounts in England will be a valuable part of this new system of support. They will provide a personal online account that will enable an individual to see the skills training they can access in their 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.
15. We also want to support and encourage employers to improve the skills of their employees. Through Business Link, employers in England can access advice about the Government support that is available, including tailored advice about training. The Train to Gain service provides Government funding, especially for those with basic skills needs or without formal qualifications, to complement employers' investment. We also want to encourage as many employers as possible to take on apprentices. Apprenticeships are an effective means of improving skills, combining a mixture of work-based training and theoretical learning. The Government supports the costs of training – in some cases covering these costs completely – and we have published ambitious plans for future growth.

In-work support for disabled people and people with a health condition

16. Many disabled people and people with health conditions are flourishing in work. But too many people continue to fall needlessly out of work, so it is vital that we provide better support to help them retain and sustain work, as well as to gain a job.

Retaining work

17. **When someone in work develops a disability or their health deteriorates, the priority must be to help them manage their condition and retain their job.** Evidence shows that personalised support for the individual and their line manager can make the difference in reducing preventable health-related job loss and on-flow to benefits.
18. Our strategy has three key elements:
 - changing the culture by giving consistent messages across the health and welfare systems about the value of work;
 - supporting early intervention; and
 - achieving a new balance of responsibilities between Government, employers and individuals.

Culture change

19. Too often employment support and health services have operated separately. If we are to help more people retain work we must provide a coherent, personalised service and offer consistent messages.
20. We have started this culture change. Many of our employment initiatives are jointly led with the Department of Health and the health departments of the Welsh Assembly Government and Scottish Government, and focus on identifying what people can do, not what they cannot do.
21. Underpinning this, we are introducing a new statement of fitness to work, or '**fit note**' to replace the old fashioned 'sick note'. This helps GPs facilitate return-to-work discussions for people off sick. It will also:
 - help inform discussions between individuals and their employers about whether there are changes to the employee's work environment or job role which could help in achieving an early return to work;
 - help employers in retaining staff and their skills;
 - provide individuals with information about steps they can take which will help them towards an early return to work; and
 - promote a positive attitude to the role of work in aiding recovery.

Supporting early intervention

22. Early intervention is key to helping an individual who is struggling in work due to disability or a health condition. Good healthcare and workplace management, together with extra help for those who need it, could reduce long-term sickness absence and the numbers of workers going onto incapacity benefits by up to 60 per cent.²⁹ Yet services have often lacked the flexibility or co-ordination to provide early support.

²⁹ Waddell G, Burton AK, and Kendall N, 2008, *Vocational Rehabilitation: what works, for whom and when?*, p.43.

23. We are changing this by testing early intervention services, such as the Fit for Work Services, with people who have a job and have been on sickness absence for around a month.
24. **In addition, a number of psychological therapy services across Britain are embedding employment advisers and a work focus in their services.** This will test how co-ordinated mental health and employment support can best improve job retention and reduce health-related job loss for the estimated one in six people who experience mild to moderate mental health conditions. They are already delivering positive results.

A new balance of responsibilities between Government, employers and individuals

25. The employer's role is crucial in helping people stay in work and it is in their business interest to do so, but the balance of responsibilities between state, employers and individuals is not clear, and the current system does little to prompt early action by employers.
26. Small businesses often lack access to occupational health services which can make it difficult to respond effectively when an employee has a health condition and difficulties arise at work. We are piloting an **occupational health adviceline** to provide advice and support to address specific health problems that individuals face in the workplace. We are also making funding available through the **Health Work and Well-being Challenge Fund** to encourage small employers and local partnerships to implement innovative health and well-being initiatives for their employees.
27. The costs of ill health and the business case for employing and supporting a diverse workforce are often not well understood by employers. We are redesigning our **business healthcheck** online tool to help business quantify the cost of ill health and promote simple ways of reducing costs and encouraging well-being at work.

Sustaining work

Clear responsibilities and support for employers

28. Employers have a responsibility enshrined in the Disability Discrimination Act to make reasonable adjustments to help disabled people work. Many adjustments do not cost anything at all. In other cases there may be a need to spend money on adjustments

Examples of success: The NHS and employers working together to co-ordinate mental health and employment support

Margaret was an experienced teacher who recently returned to work after being off with panic attacks and anxiety for seven months. In conjunction with NHS talking therapy, Margaret received an assessment and agreed a return to work plan.

This plan enabled Margaret's employer to make reasonable adjustments to support her return to work. She was offered the chance to re-familiarise herself with her work and was able to successfully undertake a phased return to work.

but employers will only be required to pay for these where the adjustments needed are reasonable in light of the resources available to the employer. In cases where it would not be reasonable for employers to pay for adjustments, programmes like Access to Work can provide assistance.

Access to Work

29. Access to Work is a specialist disability programme that helps disabled people overcome work-related obstacles. It is flexible, easy to access and shows high levels of satisfaction from disabled people and their employers. It is recognised by the National Audit Office as highly cost-effective, and so we committed in December 2008 to doubling the budget to £138 million by 2013/14.
30. As well as increasing the budget for Access to Work from April 2010, we have been working to improve the programme. We are taking forward the proposals of the Perkins Review to ensure the programme helps people with mental health conditions more effectively. We have also developed a range of improvements that will improve its focus and value. These include:
 - asking larger employers to make a more substantial contribution towards aids or equipment to help their disabled workers, in line with their responsibility under the Disability Discrimination Act. We will consult stakeholders on the appropriate amount. This will free up resources which can go to those working for smaller employers;
 - enabling customers to have an even more personalised package of support, with an individual action plan to help them overcome their particular difficulties, more frequent reviews, and more intensive discussion about building independence and self-reliance;
 - offering a 'pre-certificate' which job seekers could present to employers to demonstrate they would, in principle, be eligible for Access to Work assistance (although the actual support offered would remain firmly linked to a specific job offer);
 - trialling part funding the replacement cover for workers temporarily unable to work due to mental health or other fluctuating conditions;
 - extending support for job coaches, likely to particularly help people with learning disabilities, enabling support for longer periods and at different points as they settle into their new job; and
 - focused marketing, including joint campaigns with mental health, learning disability and ethnic minority-focused charities, to ensure that disabled people who need help from Access to Work know it is available.
31. We will discuss these proposed improvements with stakeholders early in 2010, with the intention of beginning implementation from April 2010.

Encouraging quality work

32. The ways employers go about recruiting people and the terms and conditions on which they are employed can act as a deterrent to people getting a job and then making a success of it³⁰. For example, back-to-work pilots targeted at people claiming health-related benefits found that customers aged 50 and over identified age discrimination by employers and the need for part-time work as the main issues that prevented them from returning to work.
33. Yet good employment practices, with fair recruitment, flexible working arrangements and support for workers with health conditions, provide clear benefits for workers and their employers.
34. **For the benefit of business and the people they employ, and to encourage higher levels of labour market participation and a family-friendly labour market, we want to do more to improve employment practices and encourage quality work.**

Tackling discrimination

- Data from the Citizenship Survey shows that 7 per cent of the working population have experienced discrimination in relation to getting or progressing in a job in the past five years.
- Our recent research report *A test for racial discrimination in recruitment practice*³¹, supports this finding, and revealed that there is significant discrimination in recruitment against candidates with ethnic minority names.
- Employers across all sectors need to capture the best talent to make a significant contribution to the economic stability of the UK. In the current economic climate this needs to be at a minimal cost to employers.
- We will work with those involved in recruitment to help them learn to recognise and address any biases and prejudices they may have. To achieve this we have developed, with Ernst & Young, an online tool called Know Yourself³² that employers can use.

(continued)

Examples of success: Access to Work

Robert has been partially sighted for the past eight years. Following a period out of work, Robert got a job at a small company that provides precision instruments for the oil industry.

Robert's new employer invited Robert to come in and identify any difficulties he had with the machinery. Working with the employer, Access to Work funded a new digital display that Robert would be able to read with ease. This display means there is no task that Robert is unable to undertake.

³⁰ Wood M *et al*, 2009, *A test for racial discrimination in recruitment practice in British cities*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No 607.

³¹ *ibid*.

³² Annex 1 Employer Engagement Project Group Campaign.

- This is part of a five-point approach to tackling discrimination:
 - Know why it matters: not to overlook any demographic groups, to protect your business from discrimination cases, win government contracts and know where to find out more information.
 - Get to know your workforce: through good communication, effective data collection and collation, and sharing of results.
 - Know yourself: take the online bias test and evaluate the results before asking five colleagues to do it too, until all managers and supervisors 'know themselves'.
 - Know your colleagues: talk to five people and find out five new things about each of them; ask questions and build relationships.
 - Know what to do: ensure fair and open recruitment, instigate networking events, share good practice, and engage and enthuse all employees.

The Equality Bill: working to tackle discrimination

The Equality Bill, which is currently going through Parliament, will:

- streamline existing equality law, helping people understand their rights and helping businesses comply with the law, by replacing nine major pieces of anti-discrimination legislation;
- introduce a new duty on public sector bodies to consider reducing socio-economic inequalities which will affect how public bodies make strategic decisions about spending and service delivery;
- put a new Equality Duty on public bodies to promote equality, eliminate discrimination, and advance equality of opportunity;
- ensure that public bodies focus on public procurement as a possible means of improving equality;
- provide a power to require gender pay reports, initially just in the public sector with extension to the private sector in 2013 if insufficient voluntary progress is made in the meantime. This will help to make pay in workplaces more transparent, alongside a ban on secrecy clauses that prevent employees discussing their pay with colleagues; and
- extend the scope to use positive action, by giving employers the choice to make their workforce more diverse when selecting between two job candidates who are equally suitable.

Flexible working

35. We believe that encouraging flexible working 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.

Benefits for individuals and families

36. There are clear benefits for individuals when flexible working is promoted in the workplace. Flexible working enables more people to move into and do well in work, and improve their quality of life. And it can encourage people to apply for jobs who would not otherwise have done so.
37. By helping people – for example, those with caring responsibilities – to better balance the competing demands of their home and working life, flexible working can significantly improve their quality of life and support family relationships. For example, it can help parents to balance the responsibilities of work and parenting, and to spend more quality time together as a family and to engage in their children’s learning.

Benefits for employers

38. Flexible working also delivers significant benefits for employers, including increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, improved morale, increased retention of skilled and experienced staff, and an associated reduction in recruitment costs. Recent evidence showed that nearly eight out of ten people said that it was either quite important or very important that any job offered included flexible working.³³
39. By promoting flexible working and combating discrimination, employers are likely to be able to attract a more diverse workforce, which gives organisations a greater range of expertise to draw on and can lead to greater understanding of the needs of their customers.

Learning lessons from the recession

In response to the current recession, many employers opted to offer opportunities for flexible working to their staff for the first time, keeping in place the skills and expertise that will be vital for when business picks up.

A recent survey conducted by the Confederation of British Industry showed that in the current recession almost two out of three employers introduced, or considered introducing, changes to working patterns.

In the majority of these cases, changes have proved successful and popular. For example, since KPMG offered employees the option of working four days a week in response to the current recession, 85 per cent of employees have applied to do so³⁴.

It is vital that we take the opportunity to encourage employers to embed these new working practices so they are kept in place during the upturn.

Benefits for the economy: supporting older workers

40. That we are living longer is something we should celebrate, but it also raises challenges for individuals and for society. In 2007, for the first time in the UK, there were more people over State Pension age than children. A key part of our response to these challenges must be enabling and encouraging people to work longer. Higher employment rates will sustain national wealth, while longer working provides a greater opportunity for people to build provision for their retirement through private saving.

³³ Internal DWP analysis of the Caring and Flexible Working Module on the BMRB omnibus survey June 2008.

³⁴ EHRC report, October 2009.

41. Encouraging more flexible working and better employment practices is part of the support that can help older workers remain in work. Indeed, half of those who retired between 50 and 69 reported they would have worked longer if they could have accessed flexible working³⁵.
42. We have said, since we introduced the Default Retirement Age (DRA), that our long-term aim was to move away from the use of fixed retirement ages. We announced in *Building a society for all ages* that, in response to changing economic circumstances, we would be bringing forward the review of the DRA, originally set for 2011, to 2010. The Department's **Age Positive** initiative continues to encourage employers to recruit, train and retain older workers.

Age Positive

Age Positive is a Government initiative working with employers and leading business organisations. It shares the business benefits that employers have found from employing older workers, offering flexible working and ending compulsory retirement ages.

Progress made so far: Increasing rights, promoting opportunities

43. Since 1997, we have led the way in driving fairness, flexibility and effective employer-employee partnerships to achieve productivity and competitiveness.
44. We have taken steps to define workers' contractual rights and have promoted flexible working by introducing the right to request flexible working for parents of children aged 16 and under or whose child is disabled, as well as for the 80 per cent of carers who care for relatives or where the person cared for lives in the same house as the carer.

We have job-sharing, flexible retirement and part-time working, helping us to attract and retain staff. Quite simply, employing older people makes good business sense to our company.

Glynis Frew
HR Director at
Hunters Estate
Agents, Age Positive
Employer Champion



³⁵ McNair S, et al, (2004). *Changing Work in Later Life: A Study of Job Transitions*, Centre for Research into the Older Workforce, University of Surrey.

45. We have recently extended the right to request flexible working to an additional 4.5 million parents, taking the total to over 10 million employees who have the right to make this request.
46. Jobcentre Plus encourages 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 the vacancies offered through Jobcentre Plus – higher than the number of people working this way in the economy as a whole.

Promoting improved employment practices

47. The evidence suggests that progress has been made. But, if we want to create a family-friendly labour market, raise employment levels and help reduce child poverty, there is still more we can do to **raise awareness of existing rights and to promote the benefits of flexible working to employers.**

Awareness of flexible working

New research from the Government Equalities Office³⁶ which will be published shortly found that:

- Just under two-thirds of working parents are aware of the right to work flexibly, as introduced in 2003, and only 12 per cent of working parents are aware that the right to request flexible working has been extended to all parents of children aged 0–16.
- Three in ten working parents have made a request to work flexibly and 81 per cent of those requests have been granted.
- One in ten working parents have made a request to work flexibly in the last six months.
- Just over a third (34 per cent) of working parents are likely to make a request to work flexibly, or more flexibly, in the next 12 months.
- Working parents perceive requesting to work flexibly could have negative consequences. A third (33 per cent) were concerned it would mark them out as uncommitted to their job.
- Fifteen per cent of working parents have heard about flexible working in the media in the last six months. Of those parents who have heard about flexible working in the media, half of them mentioned they had heard flexible working mentioned on the television.

Family Friendly Working Hours Taskforce

48. We have established a **Taskforce on family-friendly working hours**, to focus on the quality and accessibility of part-time work. We know that many parents, particularly mothers, wish to undertake part-time work, but that the positions available on a part-time basis tend to be in lower paid and less skilled occupations than full-time positions. Increasing the supply of quality part-time work could help these parents to increase their family income, and so the recommendations of the Taskforce will feed directly into our child poverty strategy.

³⁶ Online survey with a representative sample of 1,004 working parents of children aged 0–16 in Great Britain, who use the Internet.

49. The Taskforce is bringing together employers and organisations that act on behalf of employers. It will provide **published recommendations** in the spring on how to **encourage and support more employers to implement flexible working practices that benefit both business and employees**. As part of this we will ask the Taskforce to consider how employers can be helped to provide more flexible working opportunities, job design, recruitment and workforce management.
50. The Taskforce will be jointly chaired by Emma Stewart of 'Women Like Us' and Amanda Rowlatt from the Department for Work and Pensions.
51. The Taskforce's report will support an ongoing piece of work that Emma Stewart is leading on for Government about improving part-time work opportunities in London. Both pieces of work will report early in the New Year.

Further steps to improve opportunities for flexible working

52. A number of independently developed standards already exist to promote business best practice. We are keen to explore how these could be used to promote flexible working, and to **highlight those employers with exemplar flexible working practices**. We are already considering, and recently consulted on, developing a voluntary National Equality Standard kitemark. Depending on the outcome of the consultation we will explore including a **family-friendly flexible working strand** in this kitemark. From April 2010, we will also work with the UK Commission for Employment and Skills to evaluate the case for developing a family-friendly flexible working strand to the current Investors in People standard.
53. **We will use improved Government IT and develop online media to explore opportunities to promote and enable flexible working.** Existing jobsearch sites, such as LinkedIn and Women Like Us, already put people in contact with employers who have jobs with opportunities for flexible working. The Jobcentre Plus vacancy database can also be searched for part-time or flexible hours jobs. We will use these developing online media, and the next generation of Jobcentre Plus IT, **to offer 'job-brokering' services** that will help people to find **the right job and help job-share arrangements**.

Case study

Promoting Parents is Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council's Local Authority Innovation Pilot to tackle child poverty, funded by the Department for Children Schools and Families. A key element of the pilot is the development and implementation of a 'Promoting Parents' kitemark to recognise an employer's commitment to – and progression towards – developing family-friendly policies and procedures for its workforce. It will cover elements such as flexible working arrangements, family-friendly policies, staff and workforce development, and health promotion, for example supporting returning mothers or green transport and travel. The kitemark will recognise and complement other local and national initiatives on work-life balance and become an asset for both the employer and the workforce.

We will work with Sefton when developing our plans nationally.

54. Research shows that many of the vacancies currently advertised as full time would be suitable for people working part time or on a flexible basis. We will work closely with employers to encourage them to consider the opportunities to advertise vacancies on a part-time or flexible basis. **To support this, the Cabinet Office has a programme to encourage understanding of best practice in recruitment.**
55. **We will also introduce a new National Guidance Initiative to help employers create new job opportunities for older workers.** This new initiative will provide each of the main occupational sectors with dedicated contracted resources, for sector leaders working in partnership with Government, to open up more flexible working opportunities that meet the needs of older workers and businesses alike. With over half of people aged 60 to 64 not working nor looking for work, our aim is to enable those who need flexible or part-time work to be able to have it, so they can stay in work longer or return to work. We will particularly focus on helping employers to maximise the business benefits they can gain from an ageing workforce and address employer questions on workforce management without fixed retirement ages, 'gearing down', productivity and fair dismissal, with sector-specific solutions.
56. We have asked for evidence to inform a review of the default retirement age next year, including businesses' experience of operating without a set retirement age. We are particularly interested to learn from the flexible approaches to retirement adopted by some businesses, such as the offer of more flexible or reduced hours for workers staying on past 65. As part of the review of the DRA we will examine how Government can provide better support for those approaching retirement.
57. As set out in Chapter 4, to improve arrangements for carers we will carry out a broad consultation on how we can help individuals meet their caring responsibilities while remaining in employment, and next year we will bring forward detailed plans for the National Care Service in 2010.

Improved family leave arrangements

58. Since 1997, we have significantly improved maternity and paternity arrangements through, for example, increasing Statutory Maternity Leave and Statutory Maternity Pay and introducing paid paternity leave to enable parents to take time off around a child's birth.
59. We want to continue to extend parental support, particularly for families with young children, and have announced the introduction from April 2011 of Additional Paternity Leave and Pay for fathers, which will allow parents to share a period of paid leave in the child's first year.

Requesting time to train

60. As was set out in the *Skills for Growth* White Paper, we will work with business to ensure a smooth introduction of the recently established new right for employees to request time to train. The new right will apply to the 11 million employees working in businesses with 250 or more employees in Great Britain from April 2010, and to all employees from April 2011. The right will generally be open to employees who have worked for their employer for 26 weeks or more, including part-time employees.

Conclusion

61. In this White Paper so far we have set out a wide range of coherent measures that will help as many people as possible to find and keep jobs that make them clearly better off than they would be on benefits.
62. In the final chapter we concentrate on modernising and improving our services to deliver these policies.