

Department for Work and Pensions

Ready for work: full employment in our generation

Cm 7290

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CORRECTIONS

Page 134 Column 1, insert new, additional line after 2nd line

Text should read:

A4e

Page 136 Column 1, insert new, additional line after 16th line

Text should read:

National Youth Agency

Page 137 Column 2, insert new, additional line after 23rd line

Text should read:

Young Scot

Back cover second column, line 15

Text should read:

Telephone: 020 7962 8383

Back cover second column, line 19

Text should read:

020 7962 8380

December 2007

London: The Stationery Office



Annex A

Summary of consultation responses

Annex A – Summary of consultation responses

Introduction

The Green Paper, *In work better off: next steps to full employment*, was published on 18 July 2007. The Green Paper was designed to deliver a step change in the employment and skills support we offer to those who are most disadvantaged in the labour market.

The Green Paper set out proposals to:

- help lone parents to move out of poverty through employment. This means matching increased support with additional responsibility to look for work, starting in the first instance with lone parents whose youngest child is at least 12;
- build on the success of the New Deal. The new programme will be more flexible, responsive and personally tailored, with fast-tracked support for those who have previously struggled to find a stable pattern of work;
- better integrate employment and skills services, responding to the challenges set by the Leitch report on skills;
- strengthen Jobcentre Plus' role at the heart of the system of help and support, particularly early on in a benefit claim;
- make better use of specialist support for more disadvantaged customers, at an appropriate point in their claim, through contracted provision with public, private or third sector bodies; and
- improve value for money through more outcome focused and less prescriptive specialist support, building on the work done by the Freud review.

The Government recognises the importance of listening to, and engaging with, stakeholders in order to benefit from their expertise and experience.

This annex captures the key issues and ideas that have been raised in response to the Green Paper. The Green Paper put forward a number of questions to help respondents shape and prepare their responses. Inevitably, there were many other areas where stakeholders wanted to comment and these are also reflected. This annex summarises how the comments and suggestions have influenced our proposals and how we intend to take them forward. It does not include every point raised or every quote from each organisation, but we have read and considered every response to ensure that this report provides a fair representation of the feedback.

During the consultation period, the House of Commons' Work and Pensions Select Committee also conducted an inquiry into the proposals contained in the Green Paper and the Leitch Report. The Select Committee's report, which put forward a total of 15 recommendations, was published on 30 October 2007. The Government's response to the Select Committee has been sent to the committee to coincide with the publication of this document.

How we consulted

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

Formal consultation

The formal consultation period for the Green Paper began on 18 July 2007 and ended on 31 October 2007. People could respond by post and by e-mail, through a dedicated e-mail address.

We received formal responses from 191 organisations (including trades unions, public bodies, voluntary organisations, providers etc), 104 individuals (including customers) and 174 members of Jobcentre Plus staff. A breakdown is provided in Table 1.1. The list of organisations that responded is at the end of this annex.

Table 1.1 Volume of responses

Voluntary organisations	76
Government/public bodies	53
Social firms	21
Other organisations	41
Jobcentre Plus employees	174
Individuals	104

Events, seminars and discussions

In addition to the formal consultation, Ministers attended around 40 consultation events around the country with a range of stakeholders including customers, employers, MPs, lone parents and third sector organisations. These included: a visit to the Yvonne Carr Children's Centre in Lambeth to meet lone parents; a visit to Liverpool for the launch of EmployAbility; a visit to the Everton Children's and Family Centre and; in Yorkshire & Humber, a visit to a Sure Start Centre and a Local Employment Partnership event.

Some key events were:

- A consultation event in Cardiff on 7 September 2007. The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Rt Hon Peter Hain MP, met long-term unemployed people, customer representatives groups such as Citizens Advice Bureau and Jobcentre Plus staff to obtain their views on the Green Paper. He also signed a Local Employment Partnership agreement with North Glamorgan Health Trust and visited Dash Training to see the work they do to help long-term unemployed people back into work.
- Consultation events in Glasgow on 12 and 13 September 2007. The Secretary of State attended a Local Employment Partnership event where he met with a group of employers from across the city to discuss their views on the proposals, and met with the recently launched Glasgow Works, the consortia that will deliver the City Strategy in Glasgow.
- A Citizens' Summit, *Closing the gaps*, held by the Ethnic Minority Employment Taskforce, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Department for Work and Pensions at the O₂ arena on 22 September 2007. The event, attended by ethnic minority women, employers, observers from Government and other public bodies and the Minister for Employment and Welfare Reform, Caroline Flint MP, was an opportunity for both women and employers to have an honest and open debate about the barriers to increasing ethnic minority women's employment.
- A stakeholder event held at the Work Foundation on 21 November 2007. The Secretary of State opened the event, which was also attended by the Minister for Employment and Welfare Reform, Will Hutton and David Freud. The key objective of the event was to debate the challenging questions that emerged from the consultation.

Ministers also toured the country to hold discussions on the Green Paper proposals with staff from Jobcentre Plus offices and contact centres, including Dumfries, Caerphilly, Peterborough, Sheffield, Coventry, Bristol, Hendon, South Tyneside and Cardiff. Staff were also invited to submit comments via the Department's Intranet.

Online consultation

We wanted to ensure that we captured the views of as many parents as possible. Therefore, in addition to the formal consultation process we decided for the first time for a Department for Work and Pensions Green Paper consultation to consult via web discussion forums. We focused on two websites to get the views of lone parents and two-parent families, receiving over 2,000 posts:

- ParentsCentre¹ – the consultation ran from 2-31 October 2007. The Minister for Employment and Welfare Reform also ran a live webchat on 15 October 2007. Participants were able to ask questions that had been raised in the forum.
- Netmums² – the consultation ran from 15-31 October 2007. Netmums supplemented their discussion forum with an online survey, attracting 3,510 responses which they submitted as an official response to the consultation.

In addition, the Secretary of State held a live webchat on 9 October 2007 on the 10 Downing Street website. He focused on the Green Paper proposals but also took questions on other issues, including pensions.

Green Paper distribution

The *In work, better off* Green Paper was available in a number of formats, as was the accompanying Impact Assessment. We distributed around 4,000 copies and the Green Paper could also be downloaded directly from our website.

¹ ParentsCentre (www.parentscentre.org.uk) is run by the Department for Children, Schools and Families providing advice and support for parents.

² Netmums.com is a family of local websites set up and run by mothers to provide local information on issues such as places to go, things to do, education, childcare, and community, social and employment issues.

What you told us

Stakeholders provided a wide range of views on the Green Paper proposals.

- Overall, stakeholders welcomed additional support for those most disadvantaged in the labour market.
- There was strong support for encouraging lone parents to work, but this was conditional on there being good quality, affordable childcare provision and suitable, flexible and quality employment opportunities available locally. There were concerns that conditionality could potentially increase child poverty, either by increasing in work poverty or through sanctioning.
- On entitlement to Income Support, many wanted no change, some supported reducing the age of the youngest child to 12 but many felt age seven was too young. However, for many respondents, the key issue was not the age of the youngest child but the availability of tailored individualised support that is flexible enough to deal with individual families' needs.
- A key theme running across many of the responses was that every family was different; and that the individual should be able to decide what is best for their family and have that decision respected and supported.
- There was strong support for the principles of the flexible New Deal.
- There was strong support for Local Employment Partnerships and the Jobs Pledge, but there was some concern that the range of sectors signed up so far is narrow and that there is no mention of part-time jobs or flexible working.
- The acknowledgement of ethnic minority discrimination in the Green Paper was welcomed, but there was some disappointment at the lack of proposals to deal with employer discrimination. Training, including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), was seen as central to the ethnic minority agenda.
- On commissioning, larger providers were particularly supportive of additional flexibility and the sense of focus on outcomes for our customers. Smaller providers expressed concern about their ability to enter and participate in the market.

The following sections discuss these themes, and other issues, in more detail.

Section 1: Lone parents

What we asked

Question 1: At the moment, lone parents are entitled to Income Support until their youngest child is 16. Is it right that this age should be reduced?

Question 2: What would the minimum age be?

Question 3: Should we do more to ensure that our support for lone parents is accessible and useful for all groups, in particular those with disabled children and those from certain disadvantaged groups and areas?

Question 4: More frequent Work Focused Interviews are currently offered to lone parents in the two years before their eligibility to Income Support is lost. As the age of the youngest child is reduced, should other forms of support be provided, and over what period prior to loss of eligibility?

Question 5: For lone parents who move onto Jobseeker's Allowance when they lose Income Support eligibility, what forms of support (in addition to those provided to Jobseeker's Allowance claimants who are not lone parents) should be available, and over what timescale?

Question 6: Jobseeker's Allowance recipients can, in certain circumstances, restrict their search for work to a minimum of 16 hours per week. Should additional flexibilities be available if the proposed changes are made?

Question 7: What form might a 'better off in work' assurance for lone parents take?

Question 8: Are any special provisions required for lone parents who move onto benefits other than Jobseeker's Allowance (for example, Employment and Support Allowance or Carer's Allowance)?

Question 9: In addition to the improvements in childcare provision and the right to request flexible working, is there further support that should be provided to help lone parents into work and support them whilst there?

What you said

There was strong support for enabling lone parents to work, but this was conditional on there being quality, affordable childcare and flexible, local employment. Many questioned the existence of evidence to underpin the introduction of conditionality for lone parents and how old the youngest child should be if it is brought in.

“A condition of this age limit adjustment is that excellent support to find work is available and appropriate. Easy access to a variety of high quality and flexible childcare options is required.”

Work Directions

“For some lone parents it will be appropriate to work full time, but we think it is right that they should have a choice. If this minimum age is to be reduced we think it is essential to allow some flexibility...”

London Borough of Newham

“The success of the proposed changes in entitlement to lone parents of children aged 12 in 2008 and over seven in 2010 rely on as yet unfulfilled targets regarding childcare sufficiency and extended schools.”

4Children

“We are concerned that the Green paper proposes greater responsibility upon claimants without balancing proposals for how the rights of claimants will be enhanced...”

Social Security Advisory Committee

“Even with children in school, most working parents find that school holiday and half term care is a costly and worrying minefield that has to be re-negotiated each holiday and half term.”

Individual

“I would like someone to explain who looks after the 11-14 year olds. Childminders are an option but very few and far between.”

Individual, online consultation

“The government will also need to work with employers to encourage them to ensure they will provide greater flexibility to enable lone parents remain in work.”

London Borough of Greenwich

A number of individuals did not agree with the focus of the proposals; they felt that it was their right to choose if and when to work. Some respondents were concerned about the impact of the proposals on the child's well-being and behaviour. Some also felt that the proposals contradicted other Government policy.

"Lone parents' situations are diverse and complex, and their decision about how best to put their children first must be respected."

One Parent Families|Gingerbread

"I think the main reason children in the UK behave so badly is because they do not have a parent at home taking care of them."

Individual

"I want to raise a healthy, balanced child, not a 12 year old latchkey kid who does not see enough of his mother and consequently turns to delinquency, drugs, gangs in the absence of good parenting."

Individual

"There is a concern over the problems of antisocial behaviour, which with children require parental input. Compulsion could mean that unacceptable behaviour involving children may increase as parental control could be lessened."

Durham County Council

"It needs to be ensured that parents are not being encouraged or expected to use grandparental care for their children in order for them to return to paid work particularly if this is going to have a detrimental impact on the employment of the grandparents."

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Some respondents were concerned that the Jobseeker's Allowance regime was not appropriate for lone parents and that the proposals could potentially increase child poverty, by increasing in work poverty or through sanctions.

"We do not believe this is appropriate because many lone parents face difficult and uncertain circumstances that are incompatible with the conditionality regime of jobseekers allowance."

Citizens Advice Scotland

"..the government has a balancing responsibility to ensure that we do not create 'in work poor'..."

Carter and Carter

"If we start to punish for example, single parents with reductions in benefits etc it is the children who will suffer as a result of the actions of their parents. At a time when child poverty etc is high on the agenda this approach will not help."

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

For many respondents the age of the child was not the key issue in deciding when lone parents should work, but flexible local support tailored to individual circumstances was. Others felt strongly that the age limit should remain at 16, the age they thought children were old enough to look after themselves. On the other hand, there was some support for reducing the age of the youngest child to 12 years but less for seven years.

“The specific age of the child should be irrelevant providing that proper employment support and the infrastructure to enable the lone parent to take up employment is in place.”

Employment Related Services Association

“16 seems a reasonable age to me. It is the age at which children are generally considered to be able to care for themselves for short lengths of time.”

Individual

“In conclusion, there is overwhelming agreement that the majority of parents, single or not should be working as their child grows older. Three quarters were in favour of expecting single parents to be working when their children were aged 12, although a majority were against lowering this to age 7.”

Netmums: survey of 3,510 members

“I don’t think the new proposals are unfair, they are phasing it in slowly with the 2 age stages so that people can plan accordingly. 7 years paid benefits is very generous, after all they are only meant to be a stop gap and not a lifestyle choice.”

Individual, online consultation

“Yes, this age should be reduced, albeit on a gradual scale. Reducing the age limit at national policy level will necessitate the provision of more comprehensive support to enable parents to move into employment at a local level.”

Routes to Inclusion Group

“Although there may be a case for encouraging parents whose youngest child is over 12 to take up work, we would absolutely oppose the reduction to 7.”

Wheatsheaf Trust

There was a strong feeling that the system should not penalise those who have a genuine need to stay at home and care for their children, regardless of their age.

There was a strong sense that support was needed long before entitlement to Income Support ceased. Support should be flexible enough to deal with changes of circumstances and individual families’ needs, and focused on progression and training as well as retention.

“Effective advice and guidance and the opportunity and encouragement to develop economically valuable skills should be available for lone parents. It is essential to take a holistic and medium/long term view of the individual and their family circumstances.”

Learning and Skills Council

“...if welfare reform is to have an impact on child poverty levels, lone parents must also be given both pre work and in work support to improve their skills levels.”

Glasgow Works

“I think it’s also extremely important to offer education and training for all parents before returning to work, otherwise they just end up stuck in unskilled, low wage jobs with few prospects.”

Individual, online consultation

It was felt that lone parents needed support to navigate the benefits system and the interactions with tax credits, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

“A stronger input from Jobcentre Plus (or their delivery partners) explaining in-work benefits and tax credits will be needed. JCP will need the expertise to identify those parents who need much higher earnings to be better off (e.g. those with mortgages) and also should be able to offer assistance in completing forms to ensure legitimate claims are made.”

London Borough of Hounslow

“There also seems to be barriers to take up of benefits by those in work (see e.g. the Harker Report) and more could be done to bring about higher take up of, for example, council tax benefit, by those in low paid work.”

Citizens Advice

There was some concern that lone parents would be required to take low paid jobs. On the form a better off in work assurance could take, respondents stressed that lone parents needed to be genuinely better off working and that emotional as well as financial well-being should be taken into account.

“The assurance that if they were not ‘better off’ in work they wouldn’t be forced into it.”

Individual

“They should be truly better off in the long term. The real costs of being in work should be taken into account and not just bus travel costs...Loss of passported benefits like free school meals and free prescriptions and dentist treatment also need to be taken into account.”

UKgateway

“The assurance should be that they and their children will be truly better off and I am not just talking about financially but emotionally as well...”

Individual

It was strongly felt that increased conditionality was not appropriate for:

- parents with disabled children or whose children had additional needs;
- carers of both disabled children and adults;
- mothers fleeing domestic violence; and
- parents who choose to home educate.

“We support the aspirations of many mothers of disabled children to return to work. However, there are structural problems and barriers to overcome in order to turn this aspiration into a reality. And some parents, particularly those whose child will have a limited life span, may choose to be at home with their child rather than in employment.”

Contact a Family

“Many parents of disabled children, including mothers, want to work, but face additional barriers doing so compared to parents of non-disabled children. In recognition of these barriers, Every Disabled Child Matters opposes any extension of conditionality to parents of disabled children, and in particular, lone parents.”

Every Disabled Child Matters (National Children’s Bureau)

“When working women leave a violent man, it is often the case that they also have to leave their place of work or risk being followed by their partner as they leave the workplace – something which results in their new whereabouts being discovered and the risk of further violence. For this reason, women staying in refuges are strongly discouraged from working after they have escaped domestic violence both for their own safety and for the safety of fellow residents.”

Refuge

“It also has to be noted that some parents do not send their children to school and in fact home educate them. In these cases parents are not able to work and should not be forced to do so.”

Individual

The Green Paper also asked

Question 10: What more could we do to help working families – especially those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds – improve their earnings and lift themselves out of poverty?

Many of the responses to this question echo the suggestions made in response to the proposals for lone parents: improved childcare provision (through increased availability and subsidies) and more opportunities for flexible employment (through employer engagement). Many felt that more in work support was essential in order to lift families out of poverty. Suggestions included improved support for skills and training to aid progression, and financial support such as earnings disregards, more flexibility in the tax credit system and running-on passported benefits.

How the Government is taking this forward

- The Government is a strong advocate of the importance of good parenting, and understands the differing circumstances of lone parents. However, clear evidence shows that as children get older, families are better off when parents are in work.
- This is why, from October 2008, the Government will expect those lone parents who are able to work and are claiming benefits to look for work when their youngest child reaches 12, with this age reduced to 10 from 2009 then seven from 2010.
- It is still understood that lone parents often have complex needs and that each of their individual situations needs to be considered.
- The Government has invested significantly in childcare in recent years and has committed to improving childcare availability to meet the needs of working parents. The Scottish Government also share this commitment.
- Legislation will be changed to give advisers extra discretion, so that a lone parent who is claiming Jobseeker's Allowance will not be penalised if they leave a job, or fail to take up a job, because appropriate, affordable childcare is genuinely not available.
- The Government has established an independent review to determine how the current right to request flexible working can be extended to parents of older children.
- The Government will continue to make sure that Jobcentre Plus personal advisers receive training and guidance on the needs of lone parents. Service providers will also be responsive to the needs of lone parents.
- The Government has announced a range of pre-employment skills and retention measures that will ensure lone parents have access to the services, financial support and ongoing assistance they need to get and retain a job and a career.
- These arrangements will only apply to lone parents who are able to work. Lone parents who also have other reasons for claiming Income Support, for example if they have children for whom the middle or highest rate care component of Disability Living Allowance is payable or they claim Carer's Allowance, or are fostering, will continue to be eligible to claim Income Support.

Section 2: Flexible New Deal

What we asked

Question 12: In exchange for more specialist support, are we right to ask more of those who have been unemployed and receiving benefit the longest?

Question 13: Should there be any exceptions to this approach of increased conditionality and increased support?

Question 14: Is a structured, progressive regime of support and conditionality at fixed intervals the right approach?

Question 15: Should some people be enabled or required to enter the Gateway stage more quickly than others, taking account of their employment history or needs? Which groups should be 'fast-tracked'?

Question 16: Should we require a period of work experience from those who do not succeed in getting work after benefiting from a more intensive level of help from specialist providers? How can we best ensure that this work experience is beneficial?

What you said

There was strong support for the flexible New Deal.

"The first need is flexibility tailored to the individual."

Individual

"The TUC has argued for a more flexible New Deal since the programme was designed."

Trades Union Congress

"Flexible New Deal is a necessary step towards simplifying the range of programmes currently operating."

Employment Related Services Association

Responses to the Green Paper's theme of rights and responsibilities were generally positive. Using the expertise in the public, private and third sectors to deliver specialist back to work provision was also broadly welcomed, with many people believing that this provision should be available from day one.

The emphasis on skills was also welcomed. Many respondents believed that fundamental skills needs, such as basic literacy and numeracy, needed to be addressed right at the beginning of the process. Some also thought that this should include even more rudimentary soft skills which many people take for granted, such as effective communication, team-working and time-keeping skills.

The general view was that offering more support and asking more from customers in exchange was perfectly acceptable as long as it was fair. The issue of benefit sanctions was raised and often criticised, though many respondents appeared to be under the impression that sanctions are used far more widely than they are. In fact, just four per cent of all Jobseeker's Allowance and New Deal customers are sanctioned. A recent Department for Work and Pensions survey noted that three-quarters of respondents thought it was fair to stop or reduce someone's benefit if they did not stick to the rules for claiming Jobseeker's Allowance and around two-fifths of those affected thought that their own sanction was fair.³

A number of respondents thought that the current rules for Jobseeker's Allowance were too rigid and suggested a variety of changes. The current rules which prevent Jobseeker's Allowance customers from studying for more than 16 hours per week, for more than two weeks per year, came in for particular criticism.

“Young people living in Foyers are encouraged to participate in a range of lifeskills courses and other activity that helps them to develop the confidence, skills and experience they need to enter sustainable employment. We believe it is crucial that Jobcentre Plus advisers be given discretion to allow young people to participate in such courses while claiming JSA.”

Foyer Federation

Responses to the proposed progressive regime of support and conditionality were mixed. Many believed that the extra help should be available on demand, rather than at a specific point in a person's benefit claim. Some questioned the role of Jobcentre Plus personal advisers and whether they had the expertise necessary to help the more disadvantaged jobseekers. Others believed staff would not be given enough interview time to adequately serve customers' needs and feared that the new arrangements would put unrealistic expectations upon them.

“Stop thinking one size fits all as it clearly doesn't. Allow the advisers to get to know the customers (this takes time) give them the tools to do the job and allow them to find out what motivates the customers and then listen and act.”

Jobcentre Plus employee

Many respondents believed that as many people as possible should start at the Gateway, with some proposing that those in need of the most help should be fast-tracked straight to the flexible New Deal. In particular, the consensus was that people who have multiple barriers to work and young people not in education, employment or training should be given priority.

³ Peters, M. and Joyce, L., 2006. *A review of the JSA sanctions regime: Summary research findings*. DWP Research Report No 313.

Many commented upon the proposals to use a person's benefit history to determine eligibility for fast-tracking, suggesting instead that some sort of profiling tool could be developed to identify all those who needed help.

The proposal for work experience was generally welcomed. It was widely recognised that work experience is a valuable asset when seeking employment, particularly for those who have been out of work for a long time. However, many thought it should be voluntary rather than mandatory.

"I can say that the principle behind the document seems to be sound, but the implementation of such a policy needs to be studied for a period before launch and there needs to be sufficient safeguards to make sure that such a policy is not abused."

Jobseeker's Allowance customer

There were also concerns that mandatory work experience placements would take away proper jobs in the community. Some also thought that the proposals were at odds with the philosophy of the National Minimum Wage or the role fulfilled by existing volunteers.

On the flexible New Deal itself, the proposals for giving providers more flexibility to develop back to work programmes was welcomed. Some commented that this stage of support needed to be longer than 12 months for those who would benefit from more time with a specialist provider. There were also concerns that small-scale specialist providers in the third sector may lose out to big private sector contractors.

How the Government is taking this forward

- The Government is pressing ahead with the implementation of the flexible New Deal.
- The recently published, *Opportunity, Employment and Progression: making skills work*⁴, a joint Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills document, announced measures to improve access to skills and training.
- In the future, customers who have been claiming Jobseeker's Allowance for six months or more will be able to undertake full-time training for up to eight weeks – and receive a training allowance rather than Jobseeker's Allowance – provided that the training is focused on a return to work.

⁴ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/welfarereform/making-skills-work.pdf>

- Furthermore, in recognition of the particular challenges faced by some vulnerable groups who require Housing Benefit whilst undertaking necessary full-time training, the Department will consider whether it might be practicable to define limited exemptions from the 16 hour rule for specific groups – such as young people living in supported accommodation.
- On fast-tracking and the suggested use of profiling tools, evidence collected by the Department suggests that it is difficult at the outset to identify accurately those who need additional support to find employment. The best indicator of labour market disadvantage appears to be a jobseeker's benefit history. The Government is therefore proposing fast-tracking jobseekers with long benefit histories to the Gateway to give them immediate and more intensive support than they would otherwise receive.
- The Government believes that a period of full-time work experience could be beneficial to individuals who have little or no experience of work. It will also give providers another valuable tool they can use to engage with harder to help customers. The Government proposes that mandatory work experience will be part of the plan at the most appropriate stage in the 12 month period with a provider, and expects that no customer who completes this period without moving into work could do so without having undertaken four weeks of full-time activity.
- The services delivered by service providers under flexible New Deal will be responsive to the individual needs of jobseekers, including lone parents and other disadvantaged people.
- Finally, on the use of public, private and third sector providers, the Department has recently published its initial findings following consultations with service providers and will be publishing a formal strategy document in the first part of 2008. The Government is committed to giving providers in every sector a chance to deliver services.

Section 3: Tackling ethnic minority disadvantage

What we asked

Question 11: What more could we do to help ethnic minority women, particularly of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, overcome specific barriers they face?

What you said

It was welcomed that ethnic minority discrimination was acknowledged in the Green Paper, but there was disappointment that the paper contained few proposals to deal with employer discrimination or the structural causes of labour market disadvantage.

“The department should prioritise the implementation of equality legislation to ensure that employers do not have discriminatory attitudes, policies and practices towards ethnic minority groups.”

Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS)

“We would have liked to see more detailed proposals as to how this discrimination is to be tackled. Without clear policy objectives and targets to deal with this we are concerned that people from minority ethnic groups may suffer disproportionately from the conditionality being placed upon claimants.”

Child Poverty Action Group

“We would...suggest that public sector employers should lead the way as exemplar employers, with a commitment to remove barriers from existing recruitment and selection practices.”

Greater Manchester City Strategy Consortium

“Government should explore offering preferred contractor status to organisations with exceptional records in providing sustainable employment opportunities within their own organisations to the target groups outlined in the Green Paper.”

Equality and Human Rights Commission

The lack of availability of culturally sensitive, flexible childcare was identified as a key barrier to ethnic minority women entering employment. However, many respondents felt that ethnic minority women should be allowed to stay at home with their children if that is what they wanted.

“This is likely to be a particular problem for parents of disabled children and members of cultural and religious minorities, who are more likely to have requirements that mainstream providers will have difficulty meeting.”

Social Security Advisory Committee

“Recommendations from our Listening to BME parents about childcare research included: encouraging children’s centres and other childcare providers to create more innovative ways of engaging the local BME community and prioritise outreach; making base-line training in race equality and race/cultural awareness compulsory for all childcare training courses for all staff; conducting local recruitment campaigns to encourage BME groups to consider childcare as a career option...”

Daycare Trust

“...allow them the dignity to decide for themselves whether they want to accept the supposed benefits of working, or whether they feel they can make a better life for their children by being there for them.”

Individual

Training, especially including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), was seen as central to the ethnic minority agenda.

“For many, ESOL is the primary barrier they need to overcome before they can enter the labour market. Tuition should incorporate quality childcare.”

Avanta

“It is crucial that vocational English language training is provided alongside other forms of training for both men and women.”

Mayor of London

How the Government is taking this forward

- Jobcentre Plus will continue to make every effort to ensure that people from ethnic minorities achieve the best outcomes.
- In addition, the City Strategy will tailor approaches to ethnic minority disadvantage within local communities; including ESOL for Parents in London. The new Working Neighbourhoods Fund will also be available in many of the wards where the most employment-deprived ethnic minority people live.
- In the 2005 Pre-Budget Report, the Chancellor of the Exchequer commissioned a Business Commission on Race Equality in the Workplace, including senior leaders from major private and public sector employers. The Business Commission reported in October 2007, identifying a number of recommendations focused on tackling discrimination and misconceptions in the workplace, in order to close the ethnic minority employment gap. The Government will carefully consider the views of business leaders on how best to support employers to tackle misconceptions and promote equality in the workplace.

Section 4: Local Employment Partnerships and the Jobs Pledge

What we proposed

The Green Paper expanded on the retail based Local Employment Partnerships in the 2007 Budget by creating a new Jobs Pledge under which major employers, in both the private and public sectors, would offer a quarter of a million job opportunities for people who are at a disadvantage in the labour market so long as they engage with the support available and are ready, willing and able to work.

The Jobs Pledge would complement the Government's existing Skills Pledge in England, through which employers commit to support their employees and new recruits to improve their skills and become better qualified while in work.

What you said

There was strong support for the Jobs Pledge, with benefits seen for the business involved as well as for jobseekers.

"Participating members believe their involvement helps meet business objectives, creating a diverse and dedicated workforce, reflecting their customer base, and meeting their corporate social responsibility goals. Some have already noted real benefits as a result of their participation, helping to improve ties with their local communities and winning added commitment from staff."

Confederation of British Industry (CBI)

It was strongly felt that employers making a Jobs Pledge should be required to offer training and clear progression routes, and be required to provide opportunities for flexible and part-time work. Many also thought Local Employment Partnerships should cover a wider range of sectors, including small and medium-sized employers.

"To avoid the danger of reinforcing current patterns of disadvantage and placing groups such as lone parents and those on incapacity benefits, into poor quality jobs, employers making jobs pledge should be required to include in their pledge clear progression routes through to management roles."

Equality and Human Rights Commission

"Making offers of training and flexible working should be part of the requirement placed on employers before they can enter the Local Employment Partnerships."

Barnado's

“The examples of the employers taking part in the Job Pledge are extremely limited and we would question whether amongst them all employers are family friendly. We would propose that before an employer is signed up to the Jobs Pledge there should be a charter mark ‘family friendly’ assessment made of their employment practices.”

Child Poverty Action Group

“...the list of organisations signed up to the pledge is telling: almost all are national or international organisations in the retail, hospitality and catering industries. This fails to recognise that not everyone wants to work in service industries.”

Mind

Avoiding duplication and reducing complexity or business overlap for employers was important to partner organisations.

“LEPs and jobs pledge need to be integrated in existing local arrangements and would like assurances that employers would not be overwhelmed by proposals.”

London Development Agency

How the Government is taking this forward

- Jobcentre Plus will continue to establish Local Employment Partnership agreements with employers. So far over 250 employers have committed to Local Employment Partnerships, and we are on course to exceed 300 employers by the end of March 2008.
- As more and more employers sign up, the range, type and variety of job opportunities being obtained is increasing – ensuring that the jobs on offer accurately reflect labour market and priority customer needs.
- Jobcentre Plus will develop closer working with the Learning and Skills Council and other key partners to develop jobs and skills offers that meet the needs of employers. The Government recently published plans for how the skills and employment agenda will be taken forward in the recently published, *Opportunity, Employment and Progression: making skills work*, a joint Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills document.

- In addition, City Strategy pathfinders offer the opportunity for more people to transform their lives through a job. Working together to combine and align efforts will deliver a real improvement in the employment rate of those often overlooked in the labour market. Local Employment Partnerships can bring in additional resources to help tackle the localised pockets of worklessness in the towns and cities that the pathfinders are operating in.
- The success of Local Employment Partnerships will depend in part on the ability to make best use of all the existing support available, maximise the flexibility that already exists within existing programme contracts, and ensure the help and support on offer is work-focused and accessible to priority clients.

Section 5: Commissioning strategy

What we proposed

To deliver new support in more effective ways, we proposed simplifying and rationalising our existing set of contracts over time and taking a more strategic approach to the commissioning of employment programmes. We proposed four key principles – quality provision; competition to drive value; outcome based contracts with increased flexibility for providers; and minimum standards of support for all.

We asked for views on the size and shape of the market; risk and reward structures; the role of small, specialist providers; drivers for innovation and investment; integration with local and area initiatives; and making the customer a more active participant.

What you said

Larger stakeholders on the whole were very supportive of the proposal to move to larger contracts. Smaller organisations, particularly third sector organisations, were concerned that they would be unable to enter or compete in this market.

“The CBI believes the length, size and scale of contracts must be sufficient to encourage providers into the market.”

Confederation of British Industry (CBI)

“OSW has concerns that the recent round of contract letting by DWP resulted in the 15 Pathways to Work contracts being let to five private sector companies, and only one to the voluntary sector.”

Off the Streets and Into Work

Many stakeholders stated that the Department should take a more active role in developing and managing the market, especially in supporting smaller providers. Smaller stakeholders felt that the Department should provide protection for sub-contractors in order to ensure fair and equitable treatment.

“Government should provide protection against misuse of subcontractors via specific clauses in headline contracts and via the requirement of prime contractors to adhere to [a] Code of Conduct.”

Tomorrow’s People

The ability to deliver a personalised service – and to see customers as individuals – was important to all stakeholders.

“The many small and sometimes intangible aspects of good service, contributing to people’s willingness to engage and get a job provide critically important performance information.”

Work Directions

Partnership working at a local level was seen as critical to successful delivery and some stakeholders were concerned about the ability of very large organisations to operate at neighbourhood level.

“...the use of large outcome based contracts may result in the loss of local knowledge and expertise if smaller, local service providers are not engaged in delivery. Our experience suggests a localised and flexible structure is crucial.”

London Borough of Greenwich

Many respondents were concerned that contractors would cherry pick the people easiest to help at the expense of the most disadvantaged groups.

“There are references in the document to providers of support being paid according to the numbers of people they support to gain employment. In terms of disability this inevitably leads to the concern that providers will “cherry pick” and assist those who it will be easy to find employment for. There must be some recognition through some calculation of “added value” for those providers who work with people with more complex needs and the progression those people towards or into employment.”

Individual

“It is believed that large contracts will enable large providers to cherry pick the easy hits – we need to move away from this.”

Halton Borough Council

How the Government is taking this forward

- The *DWP Commissioning Strategy – interim report* was published on 27 November 2007 and has been received positively across the sector. Larger providers are particularly supportive of additional flexibility and the focus on outcomes for our customers. Smaller providers, who had expressed concern about their position in a restructured market, have welcomed the Department's intent to be active in ensuring that smaller local partners can flourish and develop.
- The Government will undertake a further period of consultation and a final strategy will be published at the end of February 2008. The strategy will drive our approach to commissioning and delivering the flexible New Deal.

Section 6: Benefit issues

There were no specific proposals on benefit reform in the Green Paper, but many respondents commented on it.

What you said

A strong theme was the complexity of the benefits system, which was seen by many as a barrier to moving into and staying in employment. Some respondents said they would support the introduction of a single benefit for working age people.

“The current system is complex and creates false distinctions between claimants, which in some cases only helps to entrench their out of work status.”

British Chambers of Commerce

“The introduction of a single benefit for working age people will help deliver more flexible support for welfare to work clients and will be complementary to the Flexible New Deal...will send out a message to all claimants that work is the best route out of poverty and, for many more disadvantaged clients, can form part of their recovery process.”

Employment Related Services Association

The structure of support for people moving into work was seen as a particular issue.

“The complexity of benefits and financial support mechanisms for those in work still lead to many of those in the benefits system wrongly believing that they will be worse off if they take work.”

PS Plus

“Other major barriers to work include:

- *Housing costs – whether the cliff edge loss of mortgage interest or the steep tapers in Housing/Council Tax Benefits. Marginal tax rates close to or over 100% should be as unacceptable for poorer citizens as it is for richer ones.*
- *Tax credits – complications, error, confusion, the HMRC culture and ultimately the unpredictability of payments or the fear of demands for repayment can be barriers to take-up and their effectiveness in support for work.*
- *Loss of free school meals – a big additional cost which can adversely affect child health, parental income and the funding of local authority services (which might otherwise be available to support lone parents into work).”*

National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers

How the Government is taking this forward

- The Government continues to simplify the system wherever possible and intends to reform current working age benefits in accordance with clear principles and guided by the model of a single system.
- The Government will be introducing a new credit which will do more to ensure that customers will be better off in work.

Section 7: Next steps

Our commitment to working together

Much remains to be done in the development and delivery of these proposals. We are all motivated to implement a system that works, and we will continue to work closely with stakeholders on an ongoing basis to ensure that the proposals deliver the outcomes we want for those most disadvantaged in the labour market.

For example, a further consultation exercise will take place on whether the Skills Health Check for lone parents should be mandatory, and consultation has already begun on the commissioning strategy.

Legislation

Some of the proposals in this document require secondary legislation to implement, particularly those for lone parents. We will discuss with lone parent groups how best to develop the regulations and guidance around the provisions, and draft regulations will also be referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee, the main UK advisory body on social security matters, for their consideration and recommendations.

Further detail on the timetable for implementation can be found in **Annex B**.

The organisations that responded to the Green Paper consultation

The following organisations provided responses to the consultation:

157 Group	Carter & Carter Group PLC
4Children	Centrepont
Acceptable Enterprises (Larne) Ltd	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
ACEVO	Chasing Rainbows
Action for Home Education	CHESS
Adam Smith Institute	Child Poverty Action Group
Advice NI	Children's Rights Alliance for England
Age Concern	Citizens Advice
Association of Charity Officers	Citizens Advice Scotland
Avanta	City & Guilds
Barnardo's	City and County of Swansea
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	Commission for the Compact
Beginnings	Community Links
Birmingham City Council	Confederation of British Industry
Brain and Spinal Injury Centre	Connexions Kent and Medway
Bristol Council Welfare Rights Service	Connexions Tyne and Wear, Gateshead
British Association for Supported Employment	Contact a Family
British Chambers of Commerce	CraigOwl Communities
British Youth Council	CREATE Consortium
Bury Employment Support and Training	Crisis
Capital City Partnership, Edinburgh	Daycare Trust
Carers UK	Derbyshire Association for the Blind

Derbyshire County Council	Granton Information Centre
Disability Agenda Scotland	Halton Borough Council
Disability Alliance	Innovative Enterprise Action
Disability Employment Advisory Committee	Kent County Council
Disability Group, Education Otherwise	Lancashire County Council's Adult and Community Services Directorate
Dundee Partnership	Launchpad Training & Enterprise
Durham County Council	Learning and Skills Council
East Ayrshire Childcare Partnership	Leicestershire County Council
East London City Strategy Pathfinder	Leonard Cheshire Disability
East Locality Social Firm, Glasgow	LinksUK
Education Otherwise	London Borough of Greenwich
Employability Forum	London Borough of Haringey
Employers' Forum on Disability	London Borough of Hounslow
Employment Related Services Association	London Borough of Lambeth
ENABLE Scotland	London Borough of Newham
Equal Access	London Borough of Wandsworth
Equality and Human Rights Commission	London Development Agency
Fairbridge	Low Incomes Tax Reform Group (of the Chartered Institute of Taxation)
Family and Parenting Institute	Macmillan Cancer Support
Family Welfare Association	Make Your Mark
Forth Sector	Manchester Enterprises
Foyer Federation	MAXIMUS
Gateshead Council	Mayor of London
Glasgow City Council	Mencap
Glasgow Works	Mentorme

Middlesbrough Council's Local Employment Initiatives Team	PRIME (the Prince's Initiative for Mature Enterprise)
Mind	Prospects Services Ltd
Mind in Croydon	PS Plus
Nacro	Public and Commercial Services Union
National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers	Quarriers
National Autistic Society	Rag Tag 'n' Textile
National Children's Bureau	Recruitment and Employment Confederation
National Delivery Group for Workforce Plus: the Employability Framework for Scotland	Reform
National Institute of Careers Education and Counselling	Refuge
National Social Inclusion Programme	Refugee Council
National Union of Students	Remploy
NCVYS	Rethink
Netmums	Richmond Fellowship
New Dimensions Group	RL Glasspool Charity Trust
New Economics Foundation	RNID
North Ayrshire Council	Rotherham Welfare Rights Service
Northern Housing Consortium	Rotherham Women's Network
Northwest Development Agency	Rotherham Women's Refuge
Off the Streets and into Work	Routes to Inclusion Group
One Parent Families Scotland	Royal British Legion
One Parent Families Gingerbread	Royal British Legion Industries
Pluss	Royal College of Psychiatrists
Plymouth & District Mind Association	Royal National Institute of Blind People
Policy Studies Institute	Salford City Council
	Save the Children

Schoolhouse Home Education Association	The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health
Scotland's Trade Union Centre	The Shaw Trust
Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform	The Wise Group
Scottish Council for Single Homeless and Scottish Homelessness Employability Network	Tomorrows People
Scottish Council on Deafness	Trades Union Congress
Scottish Enterprise	Transition Information Network
Single Parent Action Network	Travel Matters Enterprises Ltd
Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities	Turning Point
Skillsmart Retail Limited	Tyne and Wear City Region Employment Consortium
Slivers of Time	Ufi Ltd
Social Enterprise Coalition	Unite – the Union, T&G Section
Social Firms Scotland	Weavers Café
Social Firms UK	Welfare Rights Advisers Cymru
Social Security Advisory Committee	Welsh Language Board
Solstice Nurseries	Wheatsheaf Trust
St. Mungos	Whitehouse Enterprises
The Age and Employment Network	Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
The Association of Directors of Children's Services	Women Like Us
The bread maker	Work Directions
The Fostering Network	Working Families
The National Youth Agency	Working Links
The Papworth Trust	Wycombe District Council
The Prince's Trust	Youth Access
	YWCA