



Chapter 2 The case for change



Chapter Two – The case for change

Introduction

1. Chapter Two of the consultation document *Helping people achieve their full potential: Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services* set out the reasons for the proposed changes to the way that some of our specialist employment support for disabled people might be delivered in the future.
2. Drawing on the wealth of evidence from provision of services, independent research, talking to disabled people and their representatives, and from analysis by the National Audit Office (NAO), we already know that our existing specialist disability employment services have helped transform the lives of many thousands of disabled people⁴.
3. However, we also recognised there was significant scope for improvement, which included evidence from the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, NAO and the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit⁵. Additionally, with radical changes being introduced to the way the Department buys services, this was an opportunity to progress our collective aim of achieving equality in the labour market for disabled people.

The current programmes

4. The consultation document provided an analysis of our current specialist disability employment programmes and showed that they do not always focus on the needs of individual customers, are not always of a good quality and may not be available near where people need the services.
5. Currently, our Work Preparation programme can be too rigid in terms of the restrictions on what our providers are expected to deliver and the short timescales we contract for them to work with each individual. Some disabled people, for example those with moderate to severe learning disabilities, could benefit from access to services that recognise the need for a programme that is not so rigid.

⁴ Key sources: Comptroller and Auditor General, (2005). *Gaining and retaining a job: the Department for Work and Pensions' support for disabled people*. National Audit Office, HC455 Session 2005-06, 13 October 2005. Purvis, A. Lowrey, J., and Dobbs, L. 2006. *WORKSTEP evaluation case studies: Exploring the design, delivery and performance of the WORKSTEP Programme*. DWP Report Number 348, CDS.

⁵ Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (2005) *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*, Cabinet Office, January 2005.

6. Also, WORKSTEP has a strong expectation that customers entering the provision will start work within an eight week period. This expectation can be at odds with the aim of helping people who are a significant distance from the labour market. We now know that many of the customers who enter this specialist provision require more than eight weeks' support prior to finding work.
7. We proposed stopping customers from losing out due to such inflexibilities. If an individual needs, for example, an additional few weeks to find a job, we want to be more flexible in offering that help. We therefore believe that it is important that we look to create extra flexibility to cater for this in the future provision.
8. It is clear from our programme evaluations that Work Preparation (either as an assessment or job entry service) and WORKSTEP can be used together effectively to help someone gain and retain employment. However, this does not happen often enough.
9. Where a customer is likely to require both types of support we proposed that it would be more effective if this was identified early, so that their support needs could be met as part of a single cohesive package. For this reason we recognised the important role that Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentre Plus play in developing a support package at the start of the process and the benefits of introducing a single programme capable of identifying and addressing the barriers that disabled people face.
10. The consultation also identified that we have too many small and poorly performing contracts. Therefore, in line with the change to fewer, longer, larger contracts outlined in the DWP Commissioning Strategy, published February 2008⁶, and in line with NAO recommendations, we also proposed reducing the number of contracts for this provision.
11. Although our existing WORKSTEP and Access to Work provision is transforming the lives of thousands of people through delivering supported employment to help them find and stay in work that they would otherwise lose, we recognised that there is a need to ensure that all our disabled customers have opportunities to be supported to achieve their full potential.
12. Enabling more of our supported employment customers to reach a position where they can maintain their employment independently of external support forms one of the key recommendations of the *Life Chances* report and is a central part of what we believe a good supported employment service should provide. It is important because:
 - we want to enable more disabled people to live independent lives and a fundamental part of this includes helping them stay in work independently; and
 - ultimately we have limited resources – for every person who continues to receive support that they do not need, there is potentially another person who could benefit from that support but is unable to receive it.

⁶ DWP Commissioning Strategy (February 2008) can be viewed online at: www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2008/com-strategy/cs-rep-08.pdf

13. The consultation recognised that, for some of our customers, it is unrealistic to expect them to progress to unsupported 'independent' employment. However, we do expect these customers to be helped to progress as much as possible. This might involve helping them change roles within their company, seek promotion and/or develop new skills. However, we recognise that, for some people, there will be a long-term need for us to provide appropriate support.

We asked:

Question 1 – Are there any points in the evidence-base that you either strongly agree with or strongly disagree with?

You said:

In summary, there was general support for the evidence presented in the consultation document.

It was felt that there was a lack of analysis of employment by impairment group and there should have been more discussion about self-employment and retention issues within the consultation.

Specifically, you said:

"We accept that the case for change has been made."
(City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council)

"RNID believes that the current system of employment services provision for disabled people is not sufficient to meet the variety of need presented and that reform is necessary."
(RNID)

"There is widespread agreement with the need to ensure that any new programme is less prescriptive and more flexible; we especially welcome the move towards timescales that can respond to individual needs rather than the current fixed periods."
(Newcastle City Council)

"The evidence is we think both helpful and reliable; we do not see enough emphasis in the welfare reform agenda on retention."
(Access Made Easy Disability Consultants)

"ODI particularly welcomes the pan-disability approach apparent throughout the consultation and the reform plans...but give consideration to how services will be flexible enough to be tailored to support people with particular conditions."
(Office for Disability Issues – ODI)

continued

“The ‘Key Evaluation Findings’ in Box 5 (page 24) all position the individual as customer or end user in the system. Employers are only mentioned in terms of making adjustments for disabled employees. In actual fact, the employer journey starts earlier than this and EFD believes that employers must also be positioned as customers of the system that helps people into work.”

(Employers’ Forum on Disability)

“The lack of integrated planning with health and social services, with employer engagement and with the skills agenda suggests that progress is piecemeal.”

(RNID)

“We support a pan disability approach to employment support programmes only in so far as an individual is able to receive support specific to their needs.”

(RNID)

“GMB is concerned that DWP may be underestimating the difficulties of securing adequate employment in the private sector.”

(GMB union)

We asked:

Question 2 – Do you agree that disabled people should only be directed to our specialist disability employment provision where it is unlikely that our other programmes, such as the New Deals, would be effective?

You said:

In summary, general support existed around the point that disabled people should only be directed to specialist provision where it is unlikely that other programmes would be effective.

Respondents were concerned about disabled people being singled out and treated ‘differently’, while recognising that it would not be appropriate to be placed onto New Deals for some, there was a feeling that there should be a proper assessment procedure and the individual should have an input into decisions.

Specifically you said:

“Disabled people should be directed to specialist disability employment provision – new deal should be a progression opportunity.”

(Welsh Assembly)

“I would agree that disabled people should only be directed to the specialist provision only when other programmes are unlikely to be effective.”

(Individual)

continued

“There is a principle agreement that people should only be referred to Specialist Disability Employment Services where other programmes are unlikely to be effective; this approach should ensure that resources are most effectively and efficiently directed.”

(Newcastle City Council)

“Directing people to specialist disability employment provision could be advantageous to the individual however the individual should still have the choice. Some individuals may feel that by taking up specialist services they may be stigmatised and this may be detrimental to their ability to gain employment.”

(Scottish Union of Supported Employment – SUSE)

“WORKSTEP should not be seen as a last resort, providers and customers should see it as an option, a choice, and referrals should be a joint decision, made by the person with the disability and the Disability Employment Services Specialist Advisor.”

(Community)

“It should be a cohesive joined up way of dealing with the issues so that a person with a disability is able to use the service at any point of entry.”

(Communications Workers Union)

How the Government is taking this forward

14. Based on the evidence already discussed and taking into account the responses to this consultation, the recent Green Paper *No one written off: welfare to reward responsibility* announced that we are pressing ahead with the proposals outlined in the consultation. We will be expanding our supported employment budget to help with the introduction of the new service and will be doubling the Access to Work budget, enabling us to help more disabled people get and keep a job.