



Chapter 3

Integrated, flexible support for customers

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Introduction

1. This Chapter sets out what the consultation proposed in terms of a new programme and how we intend to take things forward.
2. We proposed the replacement of the current Work Preparation, WORKSTEP and the Job Introduction Scheme by combining this provision into a single integrated programme with three clear support functions, offering a more integrated support package that can be more easily tailored to meet the needs of our customers.
3. This approach would help ensure that:
 - the high levels of expertise and dedication frequently demonstrated by our Jobcentre Plus staff and external public, private and third sector providers can be focused on meeting the needs of individual customers rather than navigating the current system; and
 - we open up the number, scope and quality of jobs available and thereby improve the opportunities available to disabled people, and improve the ability of employers to utilise a significant proportion of the labour force that is often overlooked.

Principles for the new programme

4. The main principles for the new programme will be to:
 - improve the customer experience and be able to provide a more personalised service that helps customers move into, and then progress in, work; and
 - ensure the right customers can access the new programme.
5. To do this we intend to:
 - ensure that support is reserved for those disabled people who are unlikely to receive sufficient support from our wider employment services, e.g. the Flexible New Deal programme or Pathways to Work;
 - combine the current Work Preparation, WORKSTEP and the Job Introduction Scheme into a new single modular programme so that customers receive the right support;

- ensure the service provided is capable of delivering support that is tailored to the needs of each individual customer and, throughout a customer's time on the programme, the support is:
 - continuously focused on enabling the individual to progress out of the programme;
 - changed as the individual's circumstances change;
 - reviewed at regular intervals by customers, the service provider and the employer; and
 - from the outset, agreed on the basis that the support will be regularly reviewed and is likely to be withdrawn over time – the timescale for this will depend, largely, on the progress that the customer is making in their workplace;
 - recognise that the programme will continue to be available for individuals who have longer-term support needs. However, these needs will also be reviewed at regular intervals and support will be changed – decreased or increased – when appropriate;
 - ensure that all support provided to individuals has a clear focus on enabling that individual to progress towards unsupported employment;
 - improve the relationships between this employment-focused provision and other organisations that support customers who have complex barriers to employment, e.g. social care, NHS Trusts and education establishments; and
 - work with employers to enable more disabled people with complex barriers to enter and progress in work.
6. As with WORKSTEP, the new programme will be available to disabled customers irrespective of which benefit they claim.
7. We also recognise that:
- we need to be clear about the role within a single programme, of supported businesses;
 - the changes may have an impact on existing WORKSTEP customers who either work in supported businesses or with other employers. We will be putting in place and communicating appropriate transitional arrangements to ensure that these individuals can continue to receive the support they require to maintain their employment and, where appropriate, progress into unsupported employment.

We asked:

Question 3 – Are there points of our overall proposal to replace the Job Introduction Scheme (JIS), Work Preparation and WORKSTEP with a single programme that you either strongly agree with or strongly disagree with?

You said:

In summary, there was strong overall support for the proposal to have a single programme with very little disagreement, with the proviso that any new programme must be flexible enough to cater for individual customer needs.

The majority of respondents were happy that the Job Introduction Scheme (JIS) would disappear. Comments were made that the scheme is bureaucratic and in some instances embarrassing to offer to potential employers. Only a handful of respondents felt it was a useful tool to use with employers to encourage them to employ disabled people.

Specifically you said:

“A single programme will support progression and facilitate a more client centred approach.”
(Welsh Assembly)

“RBLI believes that the new programme should place greater focus on helping customers progress off the programme provided it is in the best interests of the individual customer and is not detrimental to the provider in terms of maintenance of the programme.”
(Royal British Legion Industries – RBLI)

“The general agreement among members is that the proposal to merge the three programmes into one would be beneficial to customers and will offer continuity and clarity about services available.”
(Scottish Union of Supported Employment – SUSE)

“I strongly agree with the concept of a single programme, if only because it is the fragmented nature of the current pattern that has failed my son so badly.”
(Individual)

“We believe the introduction of a single programme would represent a better use of public investment.”
(RNID)

“Large and small employers find the range of nationally and locally delivered initiatives confusing and EFD welcomes DWP’s effort to better join up locally delivered services and partnerships with national programmes.”
(Employers’ Forum on Disability)

continued

"We have observed that currently services are too segregated and overly complex... We agree that there should be a clearer, more flexible, single programme."
(*Social Security Advisory Committee – SSAC*)

"We agree with this proposal and welcome the increased flexibility and potential for tailoring support to individual needs. We also agree with the focus on those who need most support."
(*Mind*)

"Scope agrees with the development of a single programme, on condition that this programme is flexible and not a one size fits all approach."
(*Scope*)

"JIS money would be better spent on employing interpreters at work experience events."
(*Consultation Event Delegates – Birmingham Deaf Centre*)

"We agree that the use of a short-term employer subsidy should only be considered where it is linked to a direct adjustment and tied to more practical 'hands-on' support. An important part of the proposed role of each provider would therefore be to help employers to make adjustments and agree an appropriate level of support that is tailored to both the needs of the individual, their employer and the working environment."
(*Trade Union Disability Alliance*)

How the Government is taking this forward

8. In light of the positive response we have received, we intend to introduce the proposed new, single programme that will replace the existing Work Preparation, WORKSTEP and the Job Introduction Scheme programmes from October 2010, as announced in the Green Paper *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility* (July 2008).
9. The new programme will:
 - ensure that customers receive the right level of support and the support is regularly reviewed;
 - better meet the needs of individual disabled customers by providing tailored support for them to prepare for, start and retain paid employment;
 - support our customers to live more independently;
 - improve the support so that our customers can achieve their full employment potential; and
 - better encourage and enable disabled customers to move towards and, where an individual is able, into unsupported employment. We recognise that for some customers, longer-term support will continue to be required.

The modular approach

10. The consultation proposed a modular approach for the new programme. This approach is intended to help service providers and customers ensure that the right level and type of support is provided throughout an individual's time on the programme.
11. In summary the modules are:
 - **Module 1** – Work Entry. This module will provide customers with intensive support to help them move into employment.
 - **Module 2** – Transitional Supported Employment. This is a time-limited module that recognises customers will need a relatively high level of support when they first enter employment, but the expectation should always be that this support will, with agreement between the individual, their employer and the service provider, be reduced and withdrawn over an agreed period of time.
 - **Module 3** – Longer Term Support. This module recognises that some customers will need longer-term support, possibly lasting all their working lives, to enable them to remain in employment. However, from the outset and throughout their time on the programme, all customers should be encouraged to move towards unsupported employment. For some this may take several years and be dependent on the right job becoming available.
12. In addition to the modules, we recognise that some disabled customers – because of their particular disability or fluctuating condition, or because of a change to their job role may need to return to the new specialist programme having progressed into unsupported work. We want to enable people to fulfil their potential by facilitating a return for support if they get into difficulties and will be discussing how this process might work during a series of events with customers, employers, providers and representative organisations over the next few months.
13. We also recognise the importance of supporting people who become disabled to retain their employment, so they and their employer have access to advice and support.
14. Also, for many disabled people the option to be self-employed is a realistic alternative to becoming an employee. We intend to seek ways in which the services we offer can also support self-employed disabled people.

We asked:

Question 4 – For the Work Entry element of the proposed new programme – how could we best ensure that our providers focus their efforts on all their customers and not just those most likely to get a job?

Question 5 – For the Transitional Supported Employment element of the proposed new programme – is it right that we should introduce a greater focus on helping people progress off the provision and what safeguards and flexibilities would you like to see included?

Question 6 – For the Longer-Term Supported Employment element of the proposed new programme – how can we best ensure that providers work closely with employers and individual disabled people to help them develop in their job whilst on the provision?

You said:

In summary, respondents were supportive of the desire to focus on moving people through the provision and into unsupported employment. There was an overwhelming desire that there should be flexibility over the two year length of the transitional supported employment element.

Also many respondents recognised there should be safeguards that allow customers to return to the programme, provision for support available after moving off the programme, and assessment during this period to allow movement between different programme elements.

Specifically you said:

“We welcome the principle of ‘transitional supported employment’. However, flexibility must be built into the programme to ensure disabled people can access support when needed, rather than return to benefits.”

(Equality 2025)

“The safeguard must be that if it is found that the individual was removed too soon or that their circumstances have changed then they must be reinstated on the scheme immediately.”

(GMB union)

continued

“More focus was needed on aftercare service to ensure job sustainability. This needed to link to improved tracking systems which were auditable, accountable and transparent.”

(Equal Access to Employment Glasgow)

“Some disabled people are likely to benefit from being able to contact their WORKSTEP provider for advice and support on an ad hoc basis when needed, rather than having to be re-referred back to their original provider.”

(Scope)

“Yes, safeguards being that there is ongoing consultation with the employer and employee, and an ‘open door’ policy for any needs for assistance during say the next 6 months.”

(Individual)

“Often people are willing to progress off supported employment however they and their employer often want to have the security of knowing that someone can be contacted if issues arise.”

(Scottish Union of Supported Employment – SUSE)

“Any individual making this transition must be confident that they can continue to access in-work support from transitional agencies...Similarly, work must be undertaken with employers to build their capacity and awareness as well as that of other employees.”

(RNID)

How the Government is taking this forward

15. We intend designing the new programme with a strong emphasis on the needs of individual customers who have complex barriers to prepare for, find, start and progress in work. In other words, to better support our customers to achieve their full in-work potential.
16. We will consider the appropriate maximum period of time that an individual can remain on Module 1. However, unlike the existing Work Preparation programme (which restricts customers to a maximum of 13 weeks), we plan to introduce a far more appropriate maximum period with safeguards should an individual need more time to find employment. This change recognises that customers who have complex barriers to work can need intensive support before they are able to start paid employment.
17. We will consider how our service providers should work with organisations such as colleges, social care providers and Jobcentre Plus, to identify customers who could benefit from this new work-focused programme. Proactive engagement with employers will also be important so that customers who start the programme can be helped to focus on realistic job opportunities.

18. Module 2 of the programme is to be time limited, i.e. up to two years. However, we will need to identify how customers can benefit from this provision by ensuring that each customer has an agreed action plan, which is reviewed at regular intervals, and associated support is provided. Such support will need to be clearly focused on helping the individual customer gain in confidence and develop their skills so that, for many, the service provider is able to withdraw their support and leave the customer in paid employment. For the vast majority of customers we expect the support of the service provider to end ahead of the two year point.
19. Where, either during the first module or at an early point in Module 2, there are longer-term support needs identified, the service provider should consider whether to move the customer into Module 3 or seek support from Access to Work.
20. We will be discussing the design of the new programme in more detail during a series of events with customers, employers, providers and representative organisations over the next few months.

Monitoring and quality standards

21. The consultation said that there is significant scope to improve our existing specialist disability employment services that help our disabled customers achieve their full employment potential. For example, we need to have more consistency across all our service providers; this can be achieved by introducing service-wide quality standards that enable our customers to achieve their full employment potential regardless of the area in which the customer lives.
22. Because of their unique position we also said we would consider giving our Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) in Jobcentre Plus a clearer role as a contact point for our customers to feedback their experiences. This approach does already happen, but not in a consistent way. We recognise that our current customers do not always know how to feedback, or even that they have a right to do so. Further information about the proposed role of the DEA is in Chapter Four.

We asked:

Question 7 – What should we do to ensure that consistently high standards are delivered?

You said:

There was a strong emphasis on the importance of strong monitoring and inspection systems with a Quality Standards framework in place.

Many disability organisations were clear about the need for disabled people to be involved in the process and to have their views accounted for in feedback. There was strong support for DEA involvement in the monitoring process.

continued

Specifically you said:

“Robust Quality Assurance mechanisms are required to ensure that the implementation of the proposed programme is effective and consistent across the provision.”

(Newcastle City Council)

“Ofsted and Estyn inspections of the Workstep programme, gave clear benchmarks for Providers to compare their performance against others, with standards that were objectively assessed.”

(WISE Ltd)

“Ensure that prime contractors are governed by a code of practice and binding legal framework.”

(Access Made Easy Disability Consultants)

“The invitation to tender should clearly state the specification and the service being required. There needs to be robust contracting, monitoring, QA methods, practices and procedures; and evidence-based methods used to evaluate the tender documents.”

(DWP staff member)

“A more flexible approach to the current 8 week target to find work should be taken however; providers should be set clear challenging goals which are reviewed via a robust quality standards regime.”

(Derbyshire Employment and Skills Board)

“Regular quality monitoring based on the Common Inspection Framework will allow quality of provision across the country to be tested.”

(Employment Related Services Association – ERSA)

“Clients should be continuously monitored and the DEA should be able to move clients from one area of service to another.”

(Bridge Employment)

“Perhaps the planning stage need to be a cooperative phase involving the DEA, the provider concerned, possibly the Further Education Service and a potential employer.”

(Individual)

How the Government is taking this forward

23. We will look at the best practices that are currently being applied and identify ways in which we can further improve the quality standards to ensure that the new programme is focused on the needs of individual disabled people, to support them to achieve their full employment potential.

Commissioning the new programme

24. The consultation said that we plan to conduct an open competitive tender with the public, private and third sectors. This will take on board lessons learnt from existing provision and embrace the key principles outlined in our new commissioning strategy. We will ensure the new programme adopts these new measures while continuing to strongly encourage the use of sub-contractors to help ensure that our customers are offered a diverse service and that the expertise of some of our more successful smaller providers continues to be utilised.

We asked:

Question 8 – What else can we do to improve the way in which DWP's supported employment services for disabled people are delivered?

Question 12 – We are considering holding an open competitive tender for contracts. For some of our current WORKSTEP customers this could mean their employment support transferring to another provider. What would we need to consider and what actions do you think we would need to take to help make any such transfers a success?

Question 14 – Are there other specific issues that we would need to consider in moving to a competitive tender for this provision?

You said:

Many current providers and their representative organisations felt that the DWP Commissioning Strategy framework and Code of Conduct should not apply to this specialist provision. These concerns were based on some recent experiences of contracting for DWP business.

There was also concern that larger organisations would be less able than smaller providers to build relationships with providers of social care, schools and colleges. Additionally, the loss of the specialist knowledge that current providers bring could be detrimental to the effectiveness of the new programme.

Some providers also expressed concern that some good providers who only did Work Preparation or WORKSTEP would be penalised because they did not currently offer the full range of provision.

continued

Specifically you said:

“We are not convinced that competitive tendering is the right approach to dealing with disabled peoples’ needs. Disabled people need stability and a consistent approach to their problems. Many of them find change difficult to deal with and this can affect how they perform at work.”

(GMB union)

“TUPE regulations may mean that the service change perceived by the customer is not so acute. DWP should ensure that the statements on TUPE made in the Commissioning Strategy are upheld in tendering for specialist disability services.”

(Employment Related Services Association – ERSA)

“Providing the incoming provider has a good understanding of this customer group and a commitment to address progression along with the implications of this, transferring to another provider should not present any problems.”

(Royal British Legion Industries – RBLI)

“A structured handover with a period of introduction would assist with the transfer from one provider to another. However, this would require a period where there were effectively two providers working with a participant and would have resource implications.”

(Newcastle City Council)

“All changes must be communicated clearly and openly to all existing customers. Transitional arrangements will need to be put in place to ensure a smooth handover of responsibility to the new provider and avoid any delays or breaks in support offered to customers.”

(Scope)

“Handover period of couple of months between new provider and old. Ensure ‘old’ provider has up to date development plans drawn up for all customers.”

(Individual)

We asked:

Question 13 – How do you think we could best ensure that we retain the skills of smaller and specialist providers in the proposed open competitive tender of this new programme?

You said:

A major concern of smaller providers who responded was that prime providers would top-slice funding for administrative/management costs leaving inadequate funds for the smaller/specialist organisations. There were also concerns that contracts would have to be ‘tight’ to ensure prime providers do not simply ‘cherry-pick’ the people easiest to help for themselves.

continued

Specifically you said:

"We are concerned that contracts will be given to national providers, particularly in the private sector, who will initially need to 'top slice' funding to set up large administrative systems."
(*WISE Ltd*)

"The commissioning strategy outlines a market of large generic prime contractors; we consider that this would lead to funding being diverted from service delivery to management and administration costs."
(*Newcastle City Council*)

"The prime contractor model may result in money being used for admin responsibilities i.e. budget management etc. due to the size of contracts being issued, therefore money filtering down to sub-contractors reduces accordingly. It was also suggested that Prime Contractors may take away individual choice to those using the services."
(*Scottish Executive*)

"The funding system needs to clearly show how payments would be cascaded from the main contractor to smaller partners."
(*Equality 2025*)

"The new arrangements needed to ensure that smaller providers did not lose out in the new contracting processes. There was some concern that prime/main contractors may not share service delivery with others, and that in particular specialist service provision would suffer. Linked to this were some doubts on the capacity of single providers to deliver the entire service. Some form of 'safety net' for sub contractors should be considered."
(*Equal Access to Employment Glasgow*)

"Commercial employment-type organisations may be attracted by the recently announced higher payments for progressions to sustainable employment. There is a great danger that these commercial groups may see this as an opportunity for 'cherry-picking' from their base of customers and fail to sufficiently plan for the more expensive elements of this type of service."
(*Shaw Trust*)

How the Government is taking this forward

25. We plan to start the new programme from October 2010 and we will be using the DWP Commissioning Strategy to procure the new programme. The DWP Commissioning Strategy and Code of Conduct were published in February 2008. They set out our aims to achieve a step-change in the way we deliver welfare reform programmes. It outlines our plans to introduce longer, larger contracts, with more outcome-based funding, which offer better value for money for the taxpayer and offer contractors the opportunity to be more flexible in the way they engage with customers.

26. The main aim of the Strategy is to bring a distinctive, flexible approach to service delivery based on specialist knowledge, skills and experience using the private, public and third sectors, building on the significant proportion of the help and support available to jobless people already delivered under contract by providers. We want to develop a consistent base of providers who we will encourage to use their initiative and innovation to deliver services, and linking into the appropriate local delivery infrastructure that best delivers sustained jobs.
27. Following this consultation, we are assessing the appropriate size of contracts and how the principles outlined in the Commissioning Strategy can be applied to this service. We will be undertaking further consultation on the commissioning and commercial aspects over the next few months and envisage these issues will be finalised early in 2009.
28. We are aware of the concerns expressed by some current service providers, both in this consultation and through other forums about the future of third sector and specialist providers, however we will need to ensure that the Commissioning Strategy is central to the way in which the new programme is commissioned. We therefore will:
 - commission the new programme in accordance with the principles set out in the DWP's Commissioning Strategy published in February 2008;
 - openly discuss and debate with as many representative organisations as possible, for example DWP Provider Forum, Office for the Third Sector, ACEVO, Disability Forum, to discuss ways in which we can ensure that current service providers can engage with the commissioning process;
 - use lessons learnt in engaging with providers during the Flexible New Deal tendering process;
 - take steps to encourage our current specialist service providers, where they wish to engage with the Commissioning Strategy; and
 - give sufficient time between the award of contracts and the start of the new programme for transitional arrangements to be put in place that recognise the current WORKSTEP customers who will move across to the new programme.
29. Annex B provides further information about the Commissioning Strategy framework and Code of Conduct, and indicates how DWP will seek to apply it to the new programme. We are continuing to discuss ways in which we can encourage our existing and potential service providers to fully participate in the competitive tendering for the new programme.
30. For more detailed information on the DWP Commissioning Strategy, please go to: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2008/com-strategy/cs-rep-08.pdf>

The future role of supported businesses

31. The consultation said "Following discussions with the British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) and Community union, we are considering giving some contractual protection to the approximately 3,000 supported business (e.g. factories and workshops) places that are currently in use within the WORKSTEP programme. This could, for example, take the form of guaranteeing a level of funding for each of the places over the course of the contract."

We asked:

Question 9 – What role do you think supported businesses/factories should have in providing employment for disabled people?

You said:

There was a range of opinion surrounding the future role of supported businesses/factories. Some individuals and organisations felt there was no role for them, that they 'ghettoised' disabled people and had no role in modern Britain.

Other organisations, mainly those providers with supported businesses/factories and employees within those businesses, were at the opposite end of the spectrum feeling they have an important and continuing role to play in giving employment and opportunity to those disabled people who would never be in a position to maintain unsupported employment.

The majority of respondents recognised that while the move away from supported employment/factories is the correct one for many customers, there will always be a need for supported businesses, for those people furthest away from open employment.

The most common suggestions were for supported businesses to be used more for training and work placement purposes and for them to restructure to a Social Firms model.

Specifically you said:

"There is no evidence that sheltered work experience helps people move into open employment – often the reverse, with people becoming 'institutionalised' in sheltered environments...We broadly welcome the Government's direction of travel on this issue. The maintenance of too large a sheltered employment sector is not cost effective and reinforces the view that many disabled people are unable to work in mainstream employment."

(RADAR)

"Bridge staff felt that supported business do not have a role in supporting people with disabilities into work in a society where enough support is provided to support people into open employment."

(Bridge Employment)

continued

“Supported businesses/factories do not enthuse me greatly unless they are an instrument for getting people into mainstream employment. I do not believe that disabled people really want or need to be ‘ghettoised’ unless there are clearly stated reasons for doing so.”

(Individual)

“There will always be a small percentage of people who are very difficult to place in mainstream employment without a large package of support and a very understanding employer. For this small percentage, supported businesses/factories will always be essential to enable the person make a valuable contribution and to promote social inclusion for all.”

(Scottish Union of Supported Employment – SUSE)

“It is our belief that modernised Supported Business provision should have a role in providing all aspects of the proposed programme.”

(Newcastle City Council)

“We feel that disabled people should not be encouraged or required to enter segregated/sheltered factories and businesses and that those who currently work in them should be supported to pursue mainstream employment opportunities. In the short-medium term existing sheltered factories and businesses may provide useful training or work experience opportunities for those who lack the soft skills necessary for work but Scope is clear that sheltered employment should not be considered an acceptable alternative to mainstream employment.”

(Scope)

“Social Enterprises provide an excellent opportunity for training and development of those furthest from the labour market as a stepping stone to mainstream employment and could be explored as an alternative to supported businesses/factories.”

(Royal British Legion Industries – RBLI)

We asked:

Question 10 – If we go ahead with these reforms, do you believe we should offer some protection to supported businesses when we tender for the new programme? If so, what form should this protection take and how long should it last for?

You said:

There was unanimous support for protection to be offered to such businesses with suggestions ranging from one year to 10 years (two to five years being the most common range). Most suggestions followed the pattern that there should be protection with the proviso of the development of agreed modernisation plans for each business/factory.

continued

Specifically you said:

“Rather than forcing ‘bad’ supported businesses to shut down, we should seek ways of improving them, so as to provide stability for their employees.”

(Individual)

“We are pleased that the Department are considering offering some protection for workers in supported factories, but concerned that the plans seem to extend no further than the lifetime of their current contracts. The evidence does not indicate that there are fundamental problems with delivery by the public sector.”

(TUC)

“Factories should work in partnership with supported employment agencies, to progress their workers, with their willing consent, and that referrals to factories by DEAs should be tapered away, as the only way to ensure their discontinuation.”

(WISE Ltd)

“BASE notes the intention to continue discussions around the future of factory based provision. Modernisation is a priority and some temporary protection would allow for managed changes as long as providers produce robust change plans.”

(British Association for Supported Employment – BASE)

“The supported factories can play a vital role in the pre-employment phase by providing a work based learning place for a range of disabilities.”

(Merthyr Tydfil Institute for the Blind)

“Protection should be conditional on the businesses achieving set quality standards by which their effectiveness can be measured.”

(Pluss)

“Yes we believe there does need to be protection for supported businesses but only after the creation of an agreed strategy for change.”

(Azure Charitable Enterprises)

“If this provision is not protected what will happen to the people who are unable to sustain employment in mainstream regardless of support. Supported businesses/factories should be offered protection to assist in developing provision for the future.”

(Community)

“We feel that the suggested contractual protection for Supported Businesses will be essential in order to allow a period of modernisation. Without additional support, it is our belief that Supported Businesses throughout the country would be at severe risk and that this would result in a negative impact for all concerned, especially participants.”

(Newcastle City Council)

How the Government is taking this forward

32. Following the consultation we have held discussions with the British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) and Community union, to consider how we can give some contractual protection to the supported business places.
33. We are looking towards some form of protection for the participant places in the supported businesses. We will be discussing arrangements further during a series of events with providers, customers, employers and disability representative groups over the next few months.
34. We were clear in the consultation that if we do offer some protection to these businesses, it is not necessarily because we are satisfied with the current overall performance. Any protection would be in respect of the unique historical position of supported businesses, the position of their disabled employees and the particular difficulties they face in reforming in a short timeframe.

Transitions to new programme

35. The consultation document recognised that a vital consideration in merging these programmes is the transition of existing WORKSTEP customers to the new programme, when the new arrangements commence.
36. There will need to be clear requirements for providers of the new programme to take responsibility for supporting existing WORKSTEP customers. How this will be done will vary depending on whether the customer:
 - works in a supported business;
 - is directly employed by one of our current providers; or
 - as in the majority of cases, works for an external employer.
37. All our current and new providers will need to work together to ensure the transition is successfully completed for all customers.
38. Providers who are successful in attaining contracts for the new provision will first have to deliver on the immediate support needs of all existing customers and their employers. Following this they will be required to work closely with each individual to ensure they have an up-to-date development plan which should include, where appropriate to the individual, the support necessary for them to move into unsupported employment.
39. We will continue to discuss transition issues with representative organisations. We recognise that many of the issues to be addressed are sensitive to both WORKSTEP participants and employees. Appropriate arrangements will need to be clearly communicated to individuals and organisations to ensure a smooth transition to the new programme is achieved.

40. We intend to have a six month period between announcing the outcome of the competitive tendering exercise and the start of the new programme. This should give sufficient time for the resolution of transitional issues.

Factory Support Grant

41. Currently, the Factory Support Grant provides funding for supported businesses to, for example, buy new machinery or modernise the services they offer. We proposed that all our funding should be directed at individual customers. The consultation proposed discontinuing the Factory Support Grant, with the money going to help more people onto the proposed new programme.
42. As an interim step, we proposed that it would help the existing supported businesses to modernise if we stipulated that any future requests for Factory Support Grant funding were focused on ways to modernise the businesses to produce greater numbers of progressions to unsupported employment and to produce a greater quality of service for people progressing within the support.

We asked:

Question 11 – We are proposing to initially transform the WORKSTEP Factory Support Grant (FSG) to focus on modernising services to deliver better progressions within and outside the programme. This would be instead of, for example, buying new factory equipment. Eventually we would like to spend this money directly on helping more individuals onto the proposed new programme. What are your views on this proposal?

You said:

In summary, responses could be split along the lines of whether the responder was from a provider with a supported business/factory. If this was the case they were more likely to support the maintenance of the FSG in its present form.

Other responders tended to be very supportive of the transformation of the FSG into something that was spent on the individual and followed the individual through the programme.

Specifically you said:

“RNIB does not subscribe to the view that the only choice available ought to be between supporting individuals or supporting the procurement of new factory equipment.”

(RNIB)

continued

“Scope strongly supports the proposal to direct funding towards individuals to help them secure meaningful and rewarding employment in the mainstream labour market.”

(Scope)

“In principle we agree with the intention to move towards the Factory Support Grant being focussed on delivering progressions.”

(Newcastle City Council)

“The money should be targeted at increasing the skills base of people making the transitions between supported and unsupported employment to ensure that this transition is lasting.”

(RNID)

“Focus on service improvement as opposed to providing funds for capital equipment seems to be a good way forward.”

(A4e – Action for Employment)

“We believe that there is likely to be a continuing need for a mechanism analogous to the existing FSG scheme to provide funding support to the employment of people with disabilities...the use of a modernised FSG for the purchase of equipment should not be ruled out.”

(City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council – Skills for Work Service)

How the Government is taking this forward

43. Although we recognise that many supported businesses considered that we should continue to fund equipment etc, overall we believe that we are not best placed to agree or disagree with such purchases. Primarily, DWP funding should be spent on modernising supported businesses in a way that will encourage more of our customers to move towards and, for many, into unsupported employment.
44. We intend to look at how we might use the funding currently provided through the Factory Support Grant in developing arrangements for the new programme.

Monitoring and assessing the progress of individual customers

45. The ‘distance travelled’ pilots are due to end later this year. We will then consider the outcomes from these pilots and identify whether this tool or something similar, would benefit customers, their employers and our service providers. This will help us ensure that the focus for longer-term customers of the new programme remains, as developing their skills, knowledge and confidence in a way that could, over time, enable the customer to move into unsupported employment.