



## Chapter 3

## Local Employment Partnerships



# Chapter three – Local Employment Partnerships

## Introduction

1. We believe that we need to tackle the challenges in achieving full employment through principled reform based on our values.
2. The principles that will guide us are:
  - **a balance of rights and responsibilities:** many people who can work need help in looking for work and overcoming barriers. They also need financial support while they are out of work. In return we should expect people receiving benefit to do all they can to help themselves get into work;
  - **a personalised and responsive approach:** the system should tailor support to meet individual needs, including help with skills, health, childcare, financial support and accessing appropriate training;
  - **retention and progression, not just job entry:** the system must do more to help people stay in work and move up the ladder through better in-work support – through advice, financial incentives and training;
  - **working in partnership:** it is important to make the best use of expertise across the public, private and third sectors. The resources of each should be focused on where they can add the greatest value, in the context of a clear strategy and set of required outcomes; and
  - **devolution and local empowerment:** all regions and countries of the United Kingdom, cities and localities can play an important role in identifying strategic priorities and delivering solutions, and this should be recognised.
3. At the heart of our reforms must be the assurance that people who are willing and able to work will get a job. In this chapter, we set out our plans for a new 'Jobs Pledge', which will offer a quarter of a million job opportunities across the public and private sectors to people who have been on benefit for a long period.
4. In Chapter four we set out how we plan to reform our employment programmes to ensure that people facing the biggest challenges in getting work are in the best possible position to benefit from the 'Jobs Pledge'.
5. Chapter five considers how we will deliver these changes through partnership across the public, private and third sectors and through devolution to local areas.

## Jobs Pledge

6. Working in partnership with employers is crucial in meeting the challenge of welfare reform and essential to fulfilling the demand side of our strategy. Employers can offer jobs to the hundreds of thousands of people who face disadvantages in the labour market. Jobcentre Plus, working in England with the Learning and Skills Council and other providers, can ensure disadvantaged people are able to access these jobs by preparing people for specific roles and delivering to employers the trained candidates they need. Jobcentre Plus will also work with the Scottish Executive and Welsh Assembly Government to develop an equivalent approach for Scotland and Wales.
7. This forms the core of rights and responsibilities in the welfare to work system. We expect individuals to take advantage of all the opportunities open to them to prepare themselves for work. This may mean undertaking short, work-focused skills training to improve their employability. It may mean engaging with the menu of support on offer, and in job search. It may mean taking part in work trials and considering suitable jobs.
8. In return individuals can expect to be helped to prepare for and find appropriate jobs. Help and support will particularly be targeted at those people with the greatest disadvantage in the labour market. This will include lone parents, disabled people and those with long-term health conditions, and the lowest qualified.
9. We would like employers to consider disadvantaged customers for their vacancies and in return they will get help in identifying and preparing the right people for those vacancies. This might mean committing to work trials; providing suitable induction and technical training for individuals without the appropriate work experience; and considering employee mentoring. Those who successfully complete a pre-employment programme would be guaranteed job opportunities. We may also ask employers to review their job application processes and flexibility of employment, to support fairer and more inclusive recruitment practices. Employers can then ensure that their processes do not inadvertently exclude people by asking for unnecessary qualifications or involve unnecessary complications or restrictions.
10. Jobcentre Plus already works with 400,000 employers every year and takes over 10,000 new vacancies every working day. We want to build on this engagement with employers to enhance the service that we offer both to them and to our individual customers to make quicker and more effective progress with our welfare to work agenda.

11. In the 2007 Budget statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the introduction of new Local Employment Partnerships, initially with a focus on the retail sector. These partnerships provide a fresh approach to the work that Jobcentre Plus does with employers, building on the work done with employers under the New Deal. They are designed to help ensure that the support for long-term unemployed people and other priority groups prepares them for the world of work, providing them with the skills and motivation they need to meet employers' expectations.
12. We have already made significant progress with the first five retail companies to sign up following the Budget announcement and in other examples of working with employers (see box below). These five companies have been quickly followed by further retail companies and companies across other sectors including security, hospitality and facilities management.

### Examples of working in partnerships with employers

**Tesco** has embraced Local Employment Partnerships with clear targets for work trials and expected job outcomes. They have implemented measures for a new Tesco Extra in Failsworth, near Oldham, where they have just finished recruiting for around 400 jobs. A fifth of new jobs have been filled by long-term benefit customers. Tesco has set itself a challenge of extending the work they have done in Failsworth to provide job guarantees for a proportion of all newly created jobs.

**Marks and Spencer** have already implemented Local Employment Partnerships via their Marks and Start programme which is aimed at lone parents, homeless people, people with disabilities and young unemployed people. Over 250 people who successfully completed the programme were recruited either by Marks and Spencer themselves, or by other retail companies. Jobcentre Plus is now discussing extending the programme to support the company's further recruitment plans.

**B&Q:** Jobcentre Plus and B&Q have just reached agreement to work together to fill up to 300 vacancies at a new warehouse store in Edinburgh. Opportunities will be open to people looking to develop a career in retail, regardless of their age or experience. Jobcentre Plus will hold a series of recruitment events throughout the city in the coming weeks to establish the scale of interest and how best to support recruitment.

**HBOS:** Jobcentre Plus have been working closely with the finance sector to break down some of the barriers that job seekers face in finding employment. HBOS (Halifax Bank of Scotland) are keen to work proactively to recruit from our priority customers. A pre-recruitment course entitled 'Job Fit' run by Action

for Employment has been introduced. It is a voluntary programme offering 13 weeks of support tailored to ensure customers are confident and able to communicate their skills at interview. First Direct as well as HBOS will use the course and also offer flexibilities and adjustments in their recruitment process.

**Salford Royal Hospital NHS Trust** has developed ways for our priority customers to apply for vacancies within the Trust. These have included monthly 'jobshops' supported by the local Jobcentre. Applications are taken and assessed on the day and anyone who it is felt would benefit from training is referred to a pre-recruitment training course which includes work tasters. The courses are run three times a year for ten people and have a 70 per cent success rate. As a result of these initiatives, priority customers are now working at the Trust and the Trust is saving £300,000 on its advertising budget.

**BUPA:** Partnership between Jobcentre Plus, BUPA and Fair Cities in Birmingham resulted in a pre-recruitment course aimed at filling care assistants' vacancies in a care home in Birmingham. It was a one week course aimed at ethnic minorities. Help was on hand from both BUPA and outreach workers to prepare the applicants for the recruitment process as well as provide valuable information on what the duties entailed. As a result, 28 people were placed on the course with 50 per cent receiving job offers. Plans are underway to continue with this activity in Birmingham on a monthly basis and to roll it out to Brent and Bradford.

**London Underground** *Fair Cities* has been commissioned to recruit 200 Customer Service Assistants for London Underground Limited from people living in disadvantaged wards in Brent. A pre-employment programme was designed to build confidence and improve basic skills for workless people from disadvantaged areas. It included basic skills assessments, an individual training plan to improve literacy and numeracy skills, motivation training and competency-based interview training.

Around two-thirds (68.6 per cent) of candidates were from the most disadvantaged wards in Brent and 85 per cent were from ethnic minorities. The London Employer Coalition is currently working with *Fair Cities* to roll out the programme across London through Jobcentre Plus.

13. Now we need to build momentum. We will create a new 'Jobs Pledge' under which we are aiming for major employers, in both the private and public sectors, to offer a quarter of a million job opportunities. These opportunities will be for people who are at a disadvantage in the labour market – such as lone parents and those on incapacity benefits – so long as they engage with the support available and are ready, willing and able to work. We believe that this new national commitment will give these individuals more chance of competing for the 600,000 vacancies that come up in the labour market each and every month. Because we are giving individuals much greater support to gain the necessary skills required to take up these jobs, we should, in return, expect them to take on greater responsibility themselves for finding work.
14. This pledge will involve close working between Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council and other providers to support employers as essential partners in meeting the welfare to work challenge. This will be a key example of a more integrated system for skills and employment as recommended in the Leitch review. The 'Jobs Pledge' will 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 (as a minimum this means supporting literacy and numeracy qualifications, and work towards achieving first full level 2 qualifications).
15. Jobcentre Plus can offer employers a service which matches the right potential candidates to their vacancies and can, in conjunction with the Learning and Skills Council and local providers, organise tailored pre-recruitment assessment and training. Then employers can be confident that the people they are recruiting have the skills they need to do the jobs. Jobcentre Plus advisers will work actively with disadvantaged groups to assess their needs and encourage them to look at these vacancies. This approach, together with the integrated employment and skills system proposed in Chapter four, provides Jobcentre Plus advisers with a comprehensive tool to help the lowest skilled access sustainable employment.
16. Depending on the needs of the employer and the individual, Jobcentre Plus, with the Learning and Skills Council and other providers, could provide a variety of support including:
  - working with individuals to diagnose their needs to enable a return to employment and help them address any barriers to employment, including skills and motivation;
  - pre-employment training to prepare people for particular sorts of jobs and an explanation of the ongoing skills advice available through the Adult Careers Service;
  - the design and delivery of training so that individuals have the employability skills needed for available jobs;

- arranging and supporting work trials, so that the individual and the employer can confirm a proper match for the job before committing themselves on a permanent basis;
- supporting individuals in the transition from benefit to work;
- matching individuals with employers to ensure a good fit;
- working with employers to understand their employment and skill needs and helping them adapt their recruitment policies and processes to make available more vacancies for local disadvantaged people in target groups such as lone parents;
- putting in place new Local Employment Partnership managers to ensure the jobs committed by employers are filled quickly and effectively with suitable candidates through liaison with personal advisers; and
- working with employers to deliver in-work training through Train to Gain<sup>7</sup> so that new recruits continue to develop their skills and careers in work.

17. In addition, Jobcentre Plus’ employer account managers will work through recruitment plans with employers locally to establish how best to support them. Centrally, Jobcentre Plus will also work with the Adult Careers Service, the Learning and Skills Council and Sector Skills Councils to design pre-employment training packages. These will be coupled with work trials, guaranteed interviews and job opportunities for benefit customers.

18. Since the original Budget announcement we have already signed up over 20 more companies and extended the sectors to finance, hospitality, facilities management, security and the public sector. Some examples of companies in these sectors are:

Finance	Royal Bank of Scotland
Hospitality	Intercontinental Hotel Group and JD Wetherspoons
Facilities management	Carillion and City Facilities Management
Security	OCS
Public sector	Somerset County Council

Additional companies from the retail sector include Debenhams and Wilkinsons.

19. Jobcentre Plus account managers are working every day to sign up more employers and to pin down the specific locations and volumes of jobs with the employers who have signed up already. With the size of the task the Government faces in terms of building new houses and constructing the site of the 2012 Olympic Games, we will also want to talk to employers in the construction sector.

<sup>7</sup> Train to Gain is a service to help businesses get the training they need to succeed. It offers a free skills brokerage service for employers, fully subsidised training for low skilled employees up to a first full level 2 qualification and free information, advice and guidance.

20. The publication of this Green Paper will signal the increased momentum behind this employer engagement activity. We intend to continue to engage employers at a senior level to secure their support and will also be working with government departments and local authorities to ensure that the pledge is met in the public as well as the private sector. In City Strategy areas we will be asking Consortia to support this initiative. And Jobcentre Plus will continue to work with the National Employment Panel and its successor, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, in order to engage local employer bodies in the regional recruitment of employers.

