



Chapter 1 Introduction and overview

What do we do?

The Department for Work and Pensions provides opportunities for millions of people.

We help people to find jobs, help children out of poverty, support those out of work, provide security in retirement, strive to advance the rights of disabled people and improve health and safety in the workplace.

Here are a few examples of what we have been doing to meet our objectives in 2007–08.



Our objective

“Promote work as the best form of welfare for people of working age, while protecting those in greatest need.”

Key events

- The Welfare Reform Act 2007 received Royal Assent, enabling:
 - the replacement of incapacity benefits with the Employment and Support Allowance from autumn 2008. This provides new opportunities for people with a health condition or disability; and
 - the national rollout of Local Housing Allowance in April 2008. This allowance makes housing support simpler for customers to understand and easier for local authorities to deliver.
- In December 2007, *Ready for work: full employment in our generation* was published. This paper sets out the steps the Government will take to reach the goals of an 80 per cent employment rate and working people with world class skills.
- In January 2008, the Prime Minister set out plans for a major expansion of apprenticeships and how employers, unions and the Government can work together to deliver the skills agenda.



Children

“Since 1998–99 600,000 children have been lifted out of poverty”

Our objective

“Ensure the best start for all children and end child poverty by 2020.”

Key events

- A joint Child Poverty Unit was established in November 2007, bringing together people from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Department for Children, Schools and Families and other organisations to provide an integrated approach across government to tackling child poverty.
- The process of establishing a new Non-Departmental Public Body, the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (C-MEC), to replace the present Child Support Agency is underway. The Chair and Commissioner Designate of C-MEC were appointed in November 2007 and January 2008 respectively.
- The Department published its refreshed child poverty strategy *Working for Children* in March 2007. Increasing the family focus of employment programmes is a key theme of the strategy.



Pensions

“More than 3 million pensioners now benefit from Pension Credit”

Our objective

“Combat poverty and promote security and independence in retirement for today’s and tomorrow’s pensioners.”

Key events

- The Pensions Act 2007 was passed, setting out reforms to make the State Pension fairer, simpler, more generous and more widely available.
- The current Pensions Bill was introduced to Parliament, to enable and encourage more people to build up a private pension income.
- The Financial Assistance Scheme was extended. New measures include a guaranteed 90 per cent of accrued pension for scheme members at the date their scheme began wind-up, subject to a cap of £26,000.
- The Personal Accounts Delivery Authority (PADA) was established. A Consumer Representative Committee, which will work with PADA, gives consumer groups a key role in advising on plans for the personal accounts scheme to help millions of people save for retirement for the first time.



Disability

“The Department, which hosts the Government’s Office for Disability Issues, has continued to work towards equality for disabled people”

Our objective

“Improve rights and opportunities for disabled people in a fair and inclusive society”

Key events

- Equality 2025, the UK Advisory Network on Disability Equality, held its first public meeting in November 2007.
- *The Independent Living Strategy* was published in February 2008. The strategy brings together recent government initiatives on employment, housing and social care to remove barriers and to improve access to services.
- To enhance our service to customers, a new Agency was created in April 2008 which brings together The Pension Service and the Disability and Carers Service. The new Pension, Disability and Carers Service will serve around 17 million customers in Great Britain and abroad.



Fraud and error

"No ifs, no buts."

Our objective

"Ensure customers receive a high quality service, including levels of accuracy."

Key events

- In its January 2008 report *Progress in Tackling Benefit Fraud*, the National Audit Office concluded that good progress has been made in reducing fraud.
- The commencement of a national implementation of the use of credit reference agency data and trials of Voice Risk Analysis technology.
- On track to substantially exceed the target for reducing Housing Benefit processing times – average times reduced by four weeks and by eight weeks for the worst performers by April 2008.
- Under the Welfare Reform Act 2007, local authorities are able to investigate and prosecute fraud against certain national benefits from April 2008.



Health and Safety

“HSE’s vision is to achieve a record of workplace health and safety that leads the world”

Our objective

“By 2008 improve health and safety outcomes in Great Britain through progressive improvement in the control of risk in the workplace”

Key events

- **Merger** of the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) successfully passed through the Lords’ Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee.

Our Information Technology

We make the best use of technology to deliver our services...

- DWP's new Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephony and increased network capacity is the first major UK application of VoIP technology supporting more than 40 networked contact centres in the new contact centre network, enabling the Department to respond to the increasing demands of its huge customer base.
- Staff have been provided with 135,000 new desktop PCs and encrypted laptops and nearly 70,000 new Internet Protocol telephones.
- The Customer Management System (CMS) provides staff with on-screen information and guidance. It enables data to be gathered and transferred electronically to benefits payment systems, reducing the use of paper.
- www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk – handles more than four million job searches every week, making it the UK's number one recruitment website.
- Ninety-eight per cent of benefit payments now go directly into our customers' bank or building society accounts meaning reduced fraud and lower cost to the taxpayer.

Our People

“I was on New Deal eight years ago and found it fantastic. I was put forward for voluntary job placements and gained office and customer service experience. Eventually I was successful in gaining a job within the Department. New Deal was a great way for me to gain the skills and confidence to get back into work.”

Allan Jones, Administrative Assistant at Jobcentre Plus in Birkenhead.

“Older people seem to really appreciate our visits because they get to speak to someone face-to-face – sometimes we’re the only people they talk to that day. The best thing about my job is the level of satisfaction you feel when you’ve helped somebody make a successful claim.”

Maria Davey, Customer Liaison Manager at The Pension Service in Bromley, Kent

“I made a list of all the financial help a customer can get if they go into work – many can’t believe the support that’s out there. One customer showed the list to her mum, who came straight down to the Jobcentre. She had been unemployed for a long time and didn’t realise she could get any help.”

Roshney Mistry, a Lone Parent Adviser with Jobcentre Plus in Edgware, London

Our Values



We aim to deliver the best possible service for the people who rely on us. That's why our four values are: achieving the best, making a difference, respecting people and looking outwards.

But what do the people we help think of our work?

"I knew I had to support my daughter, but didn't know where to turn to look for a job. My adviser listened to every problem I had and, step-by-step, we overcame a lot. I achieved my goal of getting a job with their help and support."

Jan, Liverpool

"My adviser was a credit to the system and it was great to deal with someone who knew their job so well and worked with such competence. I knew the day would come when I would be able to come off benefits and support my family as a single working mum."

Karen, London

"After seven years of suffering domestic violence, my self-esteem was shattered and I just could not see a way out for me and my children. But the fantastic help I received from Jobcentre Plus and Jericho [a community project] shows that there is help for other women who are victims of domestic violence."

Sevil, Birmingham

Moving forward

But we know there is more that we can do. Future plans include:

- Extend Pathways to Work through contracts with external provider organisations.
- From 2009, expand mandatory Pathways to Work to existing Incapacity Benefit customers starting with the under 25s.
- Prepare for the delivery of the new Employment and Support Allowance in October 2008, supporting people with a health condition or disability.
- Continue to tackle child poverty by, for example, extending our personal adviser support to more lone parents, offering advice on formal childcare, and introducing extended in-work financial support.
- Deliver the Integrated Employment and Skills Service recommended by the Leitch Review.
- Implement a more personalised, flexible New Deal, delivering support which is right for the individual.
- Promote the benefits of employers and workers working together to manage health and safety sensibly.
- Explore how we can simplify the benefits system.

Improving performance, adding value

We have pledged to deliver an annual five per cent real-terms budget reduction from 2008–09 to 2010–11

- We have already made excellent progress, surpassing our March 2008 efficiency target of £960 million. This puts us in a strong position as we make the transition into the next spending review period.
- We will continue to implement our Skills Strategy, developing a capable and flexible workforce with the skills and abilities to meet current and future business requirements.
- We will develop leadership capabilities resulting in inspirational and effective leaders with the ability and confidence to lead through transformational change.
- We will continue with our flexible retirement policy, having become the first Government Department to remove an upper retirement age for its staff.