



GfK NOP Social Research

DWP Department for
Work and Pensions

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The Green Paper Consultation

*No one written off – reforming welfare to
reward responsibility*

DWP Department for
Work and Pensions

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1 Executive Summary

The Green Paper stimulated debate and responses from a range of people including the general public, organisations, Jobcentre Plus staff and stakeholders. Most people welcomed welfare reform and recognised that changes needed to be made. However, the specific Green Paper proposals and consultation questions elicited a broad spectrum of opinion. These ranged from those who welcomed the reforms, those who were positive but had concerns regarding the implementation of any proposed changes, and those who rejected the reform proposals.

The overriding theme to emerge from the Green Paper consultation was that work-related activity should be meaningful; any reforms must take a personalised approach to understanding individual circumstances, and provide appropriate support. Whether commenting on 'work for your benefit', reforms to 'back-to-work action plans' or the new regime for problem drug users, there was agreement that individual circumstances should be taken into account, and should influence the individual's interaction with the system.

Many envisaged that a number of barriers to entering work needed to be addressed by the government, if the Green Paper reforms were to be implemented successfully. These included looking at barriers faced by parents such as the availability of childcare. Some organisations responding to the consultation felt that employer and Jobcentre Plus staff attitudes could sometimes be perceived to negatively impact on vulnerable groups. These organisations felt that additional training or raising awareness, for example in the particular needs of drug users or those with fluctuating or mental health conditions would be needed in taking forward these reforms. Reforms such as improvements to the Access to Work programme and doubling of the Access to Work budget were welcomed as important steps to negating some of the existing barriers.

Across the consultation, people commented on how they perceive the Green Paper will impact on vulnerable groups such as lone parents, carers and disabled people. Many of these people shared anxieties regarding sanctions and benefit conditions described in the Green Paper. It was clear that many sought further explanation about how vulnerable groups will be affected by Green Paper reforms, the advantages of the reforms and what accessible support is and will be available on the ground for these groups.

Whilst overall welfare reform was welcomed some questioned the timing of implementing any reforms given the current economic downturn and the inevitable impact on the labour market. Throughout the consultation period, but particularly towards the end, an increasing number of responses included comments regarding the economic downturn and the impact on job seekers. Some responses asserted that the Green Paper proposals could pose challenges particularly in a tighter and tougher job market. Some respondents felt that, in the current climate, employers may be less inclined to employ disabled people as some people could perceive that employing disabled people is more costly.



2 The Green Paper Consultation Process

The Green Paper entitled “No one written off – reforming welfare to reward responsibility” was published for wider consultation on 21st July 2008. The consultation lasted for 3 months and ended on 22nd October 2008. The general public, organisations and DWP and Jobcentre Plus staff were invited to respond to the proposals. There were a number of ways in which people could respond, including:

- DWP online Consultation form
- Correspondence to the Green Paper consultation team
- Letters to the Minister of State and Secretary of State
- DWP and Jobcentre Plus Policy and Strategy Forums
- Stakeholder consultation events
- Netmums forum (www.netmums.com)
- SpeakUp forums for Jobcentre Plus staff (please note that responses from Jobcentre Plus employees are expressed as personal opinions and not necessarily indicative of the view of Jobcentre Plus)
- Ministerial web forums and webchats

1,125 responses were logged from the various sources of feedback provided. A table giving breakdown of responses is provided below. This report summarises the responses received during the consultation process.

RESPONSE TYPE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
Staff responses	136
Organisations - through all sources	396*
General public - through all sources other than the House of Commons website	270
Responses from the House of Commons website	33
Captured responses from Netmums forum	290
TOTAL	1,125

* 7 organisations submitted more than one response – therefore a response was received from a total of 388 individual organisations

3 Responses to the Green Paper Consultation Questions

A total of 28 consultation questions were posed throughout the Green Paper. Responses to these are summarised below. When responding to the Green Paper people tended to either respond to one or more of these consultation questions, or respond more generally to the Green Paper measures. The illustrative responses provided in the remainder of this report include excerpts from both consultation question specific responses, and longer, more general responses discussing the Green Paper measures more widely.

3.1 'Work for your benefit'

'Work for your benefit' develops the Green Paper message that people capable of work, but who are long-term unemployed, or have not found employment at the end of the New Deal process should participate in full-time work-related activity in return for their benefits. Responses to this element of the Green Paper divided opinion. Many felt that work for your benefit was a good way to prepare for and eventually enter employment.

"The most important change you could introduce as a matter of urgency would be to work for benefits. Especially for long term unemployed people. Starting at the 6 month stage if customers are still out of work they should start on a programme of work for benefits. This would resolve a lot of problems for Jobcentre Plus Advisers when customers have large gaps in CVs. Employers do not like to employ people who have been out of the workplace for long periods of time..." (Staff)

"We welcome the concept of Work for your Benefit. We strongly believe that community and voluntary work influences and installs positive behaviour for individual change and motivates the desire to be involved in society." (Angus Knight UK Ltd)

Others were generally hostile towards it and saw it as "slave labour" and treating people like "criminals".

"Nobody should have to 'work for their benefit'. This is disgustingly coercive. People have the right to choose what work they do. If they are unable for a certain period of time to find work that they want to do, they should be supported by the state...Also, job-hunting takes time and effort - people will have less time to look for work if they are being forced to 'work for their benefit'." (General Public)

"If a person requires benefit they are presumably not in work. This means that there is not a job available that pays enough to make it worth this persons while and dignity to go to work. So either government are suggesting that all benefits claimants are scroungers who should be stripped of their dignity and put into lowly work or that the truth is that there are many suitable jobs available...Either the government agree with welfare assistance or they don't, but pretending that they do whilst punishing claimants is dishonest and degrading. So, work for benefit should not be introduced at all." (General Public)

The First Minister for Wales felt that it could be seen as another form of sanction and some others felt that 'work for your benefit' should only be used as a last resort for repeat claimants.



In relation to 'work for your benefit', the Green Paper posed three consultation questions, responses to which are summarised below.

Q1. How long should 'work for your benefit' last at different stages in the claim?

Responses from a range of organisations (including employer organisations, disability and provider organisations), the general public and staff tended to be divided on this question. Broadly the general view was that the length of time would depend on individual circumstances. Some staff gave detailed responses including a sliding scale of work for your benefit periods according to duration of unemployment.

Q1. Illustrative responses

" "Work for your Benefit" should last as long as it is needed, in relation to meeting the needs of the individual, and not just made to fit into a set of programmes parameters. It must be tailored in such a manner that it effectively meets the individual's needs in a progressive and developmental way...Dependant on the individual, 3 months may seem a very short time, yet others may see that as a considerable hurdle, but all periods have to be tailored in such a way as to positively address the problems of being unsuccessful in securing paid employment." (Leonard Cheshire Disability's – Supported Employment Service and the Highland Employment Network – a member of Scottish Union of Supported Employment (SUSE))

"The length of an employment-outcome focused programme of community work or other work-related activity should depend on the individual client and the support, skills and experience they need to move into work. At the beginning of the programme clients should agree an Action Plan, which identifies where the client is now and where they want to be...It will be critical for the client and for the organisation which is hosting the placement to have a clear timeline for the placement. The length of the placement could be determined by asking a series of simple questions at the action-planning stage: what are the constraints that the client is facing, what does the client need to gain (e.g. work experience, work habits), how long will it take to gain the relevant skills, knowledge or experience, and how can progress be verified so that it is clear that the client will be able to progress? If this work experience is to be beneficial to both the client and the organisation hosting them it is important it is of sufficient length, which will differ from person to person. The period of work placement should be sufficient to allow an individual to update skills, make new contacts and inculcate new work habits." (WorkDirections)

"There should be a six month period in which claimants can concentrate on looking for work or re-training. If, however, the application has not found employment or a suitable training course then they should be expected to work for their benefit for the remainder of the time they are claiming it." (General public)

"One week at 13 weeks duration, one month at six months, two months at twelve months, three months at 18 months and so on. This would provide an opportunity to gain up to date experience but also act as a deterrent to non genuine job seekers." (Staff)

Q2. How could capacity and capability to provide full-time work experience in the community sector be provided and incentivised to produce the best employment outcomes for participants?



A range of responses were received from provider organisations, members of the general public and staff. Many felt that it was important to provide funding and resources and to recognise the kinds of barriers that exist for some hard to reach groups, before developing work experience projects. Wider communication was considered vital in getting employers on board and ensuring the linking of work experience with vocational qualifications. Others felt that a major benefit and incentive to implementing this proposal was the potential to financially benefit Local Authorities.

Q2. Illustrative responses

"A range of Third Sector organisations (TSOs) are well placed to provide this work experience, whilst also delivering benefits to the wider community. It is important that this provision is fully resourced and that the outcomes recognise the different routes of progression individuals may need to follow – a successful initial outcome may not always be successfully finding, and remaining in, full-time work – particularly for those furthest removed from the labour market and/or for those with multiple barriers to overcome. Projects which develop communication and social skills, boost self-confidence and provide practical work experience can often be a springboard for hard to reach groups to access employment, training or education opportunities." (Ground Work)

"Launch a national campaign to promote social responsibility among employers. Unemployment is everyones responsibility. Offer financial incentives to employment mentors to look after the additional personal needs of returners. These mentors will need some mentor training, accreditation and selection." (Goals UK)

"A greater focus should be on providing greater work experience with employers. Community based work experience does however need to be relevant to the individual and must look at a range of activities which will support the development of the individual...Where possible work experience should be long enough to be linked to vocational qualifications where possible which can increase the likelihood of the client gaining full time employment. The most important aspect is that the work experience is real work...If projects are based on real work which is required in the community then there should be a greater chance that this should be able to result in long term unsubsidised work." (Northwest Regional Development Agency)

"We presently pay huge amounts for...labour - gardening, grass cutting, home help duties. These could be replaced under a voluntary work order, if Local Authorities and central government liaised and identified local needs." (Staff)

Q3. Is full-time 'work for your benefit' as an alternative to a sanction of loss of benefit for repeated non-compliance with work search requirements an effective option for some jobseekers? How should it be targeted?

Many agreed with the proposal of 'work for your benefit' as an alternative to a sanction for those who repeatedly did not comply with work search requirements. Suggestions for targeting included implementing it for those who were repeat non-compliers. As with many of the proposals within the Green Paper, people were keen to note that individual circumstances should be taken into account – particularly in relation to how this proposal might impact on disabled people.

Many felt that 'work for your benefit' should include working for charities and other similar organisations that would greatly benefit from additional workers. Some staff noted that currently, claimants are given an unlimited number of chances to find employment and queried whether this

should continue to be provided. Employer and provider organisations cautiously welcomed this with the caveat that a robust and consistent approach is required to avoid negative labelling of the scheme.

Q3. Illustrative responses

"Working may be an appropriate sanction for some individuals although...the impact someone's mental ill-health has on their ability to engage in full-time work must be taken into account. There would also need to be robust mechanisms in place to assess reasons for "non-compliance". Sanctions for those too unwell to meet work search requirements would, in effect, be punishing someone simply because they were ill." (Gofal Cymru)

"'Work for your benefit' as an alternative to a sanction of loss of benefit can be more effective for a number of reasons: it is a gain through increasing work practices and ethics, meeting potential employers, exploring self potential and social interaction. There is only a loss from sanctions for the jobseeker through, increased debt, impeding employment through affecting benefit run-ons and keeps the jobseeker inactive, negative and potentially hostile. In turn this can often drive fraudulent behaviour/crime with resultant consequences. If the jobseeker does not comply then sanction of loss of benefit is the only alternative and in line with outcome of research will, for the majority, succeed in re-engaging them in the process of securing employment' (Triage Central Ltd)

"The ideas concerning work for your benefit contravene the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as proclaimed by the United Nations to which the British Government is a signatory. Article 23 states that everybody has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and protection against unemployment. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work." (Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centres)

"The best employment outcomes would definitely be produced by this work experience being voluntary... 'Work experience' which people have been forced to do will have no value whatsoever in the eyes of a potential future employer, and the person undertaking such work experience is likely to learn little or nothing....let people choose to undertake work experience for themselves, and help them to find where to do it - but don't threaten them with withdrawal of benefits." (General Public)

"Those who are able to work should work and it should be targeted at those who consistently return to benefits as they get paid better on benefit. There are many things that need to be done and many charities could benefit from having 'voluntary' workers." (General Public)

"If somebody is a "repeated" non-complier, then their benefits should be stopped, where presently they receive untold chances and there is general unwillingness on the part of Jobcentre Plus to sanction anybody. Several reasons for this, the least of which being that the person can walk back into an un-screened environment and challenge their advisor" (Staff)

3.2 Fraud

The Green Paper puts forwards proposals for improved sanctions for those who commit benefit fraud. It proposes the development of a sanctions regime effectively to deter people from abusing the system, specifically suggesting reducing or withdrawing benefit after a first offence. Both consultation questions 4 and 5 ask for comments regarding sanctions for those who commit benefit fraud.



Q4. What penalties do you think would be most effective to deter more people from committing benefit fraud?

It was generally agreed that present penalties are not a deterrent to committing benefit fraud. Some members of the general public invited the implementation of tougher sanctions although others favoured a more light touch approach. Some organisations responded to this question by highlighting the advantages of a softer approach of working with benefit claimants to support them in finding legitimate employment. They felt that this would help reduce benefit fraud effectively and would be more productive for some groups of people when compared to imposing penalties.

Q4. Illustrative responses

"We welcome proposals to deter benefit fraud. The requirement to be much more actively and visibly engaged in jobsearch and close monitoring of compliance with agreed activity plans will flush out many of the most serious fraudulent claims. Nonetheless, we are concerned that defining benefit fraud can, in itself, pose a challenge of conscience for benefit claimants. We know that their motivation is not always to deliberately take advantage of 'honest' taxpayers, or "play" the system...Unfortunately we believe there will always be cases where an individual is working and still claiming benefit, but it is our role to identify these and take positive steps to move them into legitimate work. ." (Working Links)

"People convicted of benefit fraud should have to repay twice the amount and should not be eligible for further benefits - including tax credits - until they have. Benefit fraudsters who don't receive a custodial sentence should have to do unpaid work. Have this standard formula - an easy one to publicise widely, and one that will be easy to understand. There is no reason for taxpayers to continue to subsidise fraudsters." (General Public)

"The knowledge that doing so [committing benefit fraud], would lead to substantial penalties and affect their benefit in the future. It is very important however that we change the culture so that genuine benefit claimants are not thought of in the same way as those who commit benefit fraud. There is too much of this at the moment and is being perpetuated by the media and politicians." (General Public)

"The current sanctions regime should be reviewed and tailored more to fit 'the crime' and importantly the person and circumstances involved with greater flexibility and a greater range of Sanctions that can be applied by the FI (Fraud Investigator)..." (Staff)

"Loss of benefits forever if found committing fraud if too harsh then 6 month no award at a time for every time fraud is detected" (Staff)

Q5. Do you think it would be appropriate to reduce or withdraw entitlement to benefit after a first offence? How long should the sanction period be?

Some organisations felt that sanctions such as withdrawal or reduction of benefits would be detrimental to already vulnerable groups and would lead them in to further poverty. Others envisaged that the use of such sanctions could be unfairly punitive for those with a mental health impairment who may have misunderstood complex rules and guidelines covering benefit claims. Others questioned the effectiveness of benefit sanctions. Responses further noted the importance of taking individual circumstances into account before imposing any sanction – especially where there were dependents. Members of the general public and staff had different views and felt that sanctions were necessary in some cases.



Q5. Illustrative responses

"Those affected will normally be those who, at worst, will have committed minor frauds which will still leave them and their children in poverty. We would see financial penalties (in addition to repayment of overpaid benefit) as completely inappropriate in these cases..... many of those convicted of minor social security frauds have not done anything dishonest at all but have simply become hopelessly confused by the very complicated rules on working while claiming and have then felt unable to defend themselves when accused. " (Mind in Croydon)

"Using reductions or withdrawal of benefits as a sanction will harm the most vulnerable by pushing people deeper in to poverty and by putting their basic health and well being at risk" (Research Centre for Law, Gender and Sexuality)

"Consideration should be taken of an individuals' circumstances to ensure that neither they nor any dependents are disadvantaged" (First Minister, Welsh Assembly)

"We do not believe that withdrawing someone's benefits after a first offence is appropriate...We are concerned at the adverse effect this might have on someone's ability to look after themselves and their family, to pay their rent, bills and so on...Any moves towards greater conditionality and a tougher sanctions regime must ensure that it has sufficient safeguards to protect more vulnerable individuals from being unduly penalised." (Crisis)

"Some sanction after a first offence is certainly necessary but there should be a correlation between the penalty and the offence." (General Public).

"Yes it would be sanction minimum 6 months to indefinite dependant on type of fraud" (Staff)

3.3 A new regime for problem drug users

Proposals set out in the Green Paper include ensuring that a new regime for problem drug users is able to identify problem drug users in the benefits system. It is proposed that this is done by sharing data with other government agencies, and requiring benefit applicants to declare drug addictions. The Green Paper also outlines a rehabilitation programme for drug users to help them stabilise their drug dependences, rehabilitate and move towards finding employment. The two following questions focus on a new regime for problem drug users.

Q6. Do you agree with the proposed approach for identifying problem drug use? How should it be implemented? Do you think that everyone claiming a working-age benefit should be required to make a declaration of whether or not they use certain specified drugs?

Overall, responses to this question focused on concerns that some Jobcentre Plus staff may discriminate against problem drug users. Organisations such as West Sussex Drug and Alcohol Team welcomed proposals to improve Jobcentre Plus staff knowledge about substance abuse as they believed this would help to reduce any potential prejudice against substance misuse claimants. The Equality and Human Rights Commission raised concerns regarding the need to consider the individual's Human Rights. Some of the quotes below focus on the perceived disincentives for disclosing drug taking habits.



Q6. Illustrative responses

"The requirement of all DWP claimants to disclose drug use is worrying. There is anecdotal evidence from drug users who have done this which shows the bigoted attitudes of some staff within the DWP... There is a risk of unnecessary information being shared. Also the risk of information been given to the wrong agencies or leaked to the public domain" (Resolve Double Impact)

"We feel that this sharing of information may act as a disincentive to participation in treatment because the subject would not want this personal information passed between agencies" (First Minister, Welsh Assembly)

"The balance between rights and responsibilities for drug users should be carefully considered. The proposal to require individuals to declare their use of drugs in order to gain access to welfare support needs careful consideration in terms of the individual's Human Rights" (The Equality and Human Rights Commission)

"Asking a lone parent to declare and then address their drug dependency is not straight forward; when they fear disclosure could lead to their child being taken into care." (Working Links)

"A declaration won't work. It will discourage those that declare it now and hamper any medical intervention. If someone is a drug addict, wouldn't they be on ESA anyway as it would clearly affect their ability to work? On ESA, they would be subject to the medical regime and I totally agree that drug treatment should be a condition of them receiving their benefit with sanctions applied if they do not." (General Public)

Q7. What elements should an integrated system of drug treatment and employment support include? Do you agree that a rehabilitation plan would help recovering drug users to manage their condition and move towards employment?

Responses to this question were positive towards tackling the issue of drugs use with rehabilitation plans, but raised concerns regarding how this would be implemented. Notably, many felt that additional training would be required for Jobcentre Plus staff to ensure that they understood drug addiction. Others felt that rehabilitation plans may not work for those who are not personally committed to stopping their drugs use.

Q7. Illustrative responses

"It is of course very positive that steps are being taken to reintegrate problem drug users and offer them tailored support which recognizes the unique set of conditions they are subject to....job centre employees would need significant training in drug use and treatment to enable them to properly understand what drug addiction and recovery involve...." (Adfam)

"Based on an awareness that a client group which has been dependent on heroin and crack for a considerable time may not easily slip into employment, even once the complex issues of their substance misuse have stabilised.Integration into employment may include a recognised preliminary of time in voluntary work. This might allow people to prepare themselves for the world of work without it impacting on their benefits." (Westminster Drug Project)



"Whilst volunteering might provide valuable experience for problem drugs users and will build confidence and skills, it may not build a CV that is sufficiently credible to employers. We think it would be useful to consider investing heavily in work programmes, running as commercially viable social enterprises that would give paid employment to people in treatment, helping them to establish both skills and experience, get used to the routine of work, develop realistic expectations of the rewards, and develop a CV that would be credible to employers." (Compass)

"An integrated system of drug treatment and employment support should include close cooperation between treatment and employment service providers...substance users involved early on in employment and training support have a greater chance of being successful with their treatment programme. However an integrated system would need to be underpinned by shared processes and systems, for example assessments shared and not duplicated. There would also need to be much better links across the sectors and clear delineation of roles maintained...a rehabilitation plan would help recovering drug users manage their condition and move towards employment, particularly if it was seeking to identify a range of support needs, such as housing, education and training, finance, and caring responsibilities." (Greater London Alcohol and Drug Alliance (GLADA))

"People who are fully cooperative with a rehabilitation plan and desperately want to come off drugs are not the problem. What you need to address are people without the ability/desire to give up. For these, the only thing that will work is the carrot/stick approach. This could lead to more crime etc if drug addicts have less benefit to spend on their habit." (General Public)

3.4 Work skills

As part of improving guidance and support to individuals, training provision will be updated. The Green Paper notes the importance of people taking responsibility for engaging with these opportunities and puts forward suggestions for skills health checks to identify and training to address skills needs, where they are identified as a barrier to employment. Specifically the Green Paper asks:

Q8. When is the right time to require ESA claimants to take a skills health check?

The general feeling across the responses received for question 8 was that the right time to take a skills health check will vary depending on the individual, but that early intervention is recommended. Many felt that time frames could not be prescriptive, particularly for those with fluctuating health conditions.

Q8. Illustrative responses

"It is important that an initial skills screening is undertaken as early as possible. Those who appear to be closest to the labour market i.e. have fairly simple skills needs, should be treated in a light touch manner with follow up after a substantial period claiming benefit i.e. 6 months. For those who appear to have serious skills needs, a health check is required at the earliest opportunity." (British Chamber of Commerce)

"Clearly a check on the skills of those on JSA will be relevant as this group will be looking to re-enter the market immediately. The situation for those on ESA may be slightly different. ESA claimants should undertake a skills health check at a point nearer to them applying for jobs." (Confederation of British Industry (CBI))

"Broadly speaking, we would say that early intervention is better." (Staff)



“Some people will be ready to do this as soon as they claim for benefit, whilst others may need time for their health condition to improve before they are ready for a “skills check” or training. We do not believe however this should be an issue of compulsion. Our experience...is that most people are keen to work, but that multiple hurdles including low expectations, negative attitudes among employers and lack of the support make returning to, or entering work very challenging for them.” (United Response)

Q9. Should ESA customers be required to attend training in order to gain the identified skills they need to enter work?

There was some disagreement regarding any mandatory nature of training; while staff and provider organisations tended to agree that training should be mandatory, others felt that this should be voluntary.

Q9. Illustrative responses

“Clients with physical and mental health difficulties require encouragement and not mandation to get them to consider developing their skills. They are fearful of being forced too early into the labour market and will be more likely to exaggerate health conditions to avoid compulsion if a mandatory requirement is imposed.” (General Public)

“With the Skills Health Check, it will be necessary to ensure that customers are referred to the training they need as opposed to the training that is simply available. Training would need to be of adequate quality with relevant support provided for those individuals who need it. Proposed Mandatory Skills Training – need to take account of impact on vulnerable customers.” (Staff)

3.5 Skills for lone parents

The Government thinks that helping lone parents into work is the best way to help reduce child poverty and the Green Paper discusses a number of ways to help lone parents to prepare for and return to employment where appropriate. The Green Paper outlines proposals that require lone parents to attend a skills health check when their youngest child is five years old, and suggests a pilot to evaluate proposals for lone parents to receive a premium on top of their existing benefits entitlement if they undertake skills training, where skills gaps have been identified. Responses to questions 10 and 11 are outlined below.

Q10. In view of the need to help lone parents develop the skills they need to find work, are we right to require lone parents to have a skills health check and training as a condition of receiving benefit?

Responses to question 10 welcomed the provision of help and support for lone parents, but many had concerns regarding childcare and other barriers that lone parents may face when undertaking training or employment. Some opposed any requirement to undertake training and felt that lone parents should have a choice about whether and when to return to work.

Q10. Illustrative responses

“Lone parents need far more support than a skills health check - they would need an all encompassing assessment to ensure that all the issues within the family are at a stage where work is practical and feasible. Blanket policy cannot fit individual families! Shifting from IS to JSA also forces them into debt re crisis loan route.” (Fife Gingerbread)



"I think lone parents should have a skills health check, at possibly the six months stage of claim and then depending on age of child an expectation that lone parents will take up training in order to receive benefit." (Staff)

"Any training would have to be tailored around school attendance hours including part time attendance for first term when children start school, which appears to vary. Some customers who want cleaning work for e.g. may need no training to secure the work they wish to, so adviser discretion would be important if no training required." (Staff)

"There certainly should not be any pressure for a lone parent to find work or attend training courses until the child is settled at school and you also have to consider that jobs are difficult to find that fit with school hours and school holidays." (Staff)

Q11. Should we pilot extra benefit payments for lone parents in return for training, and if so, when the youngest child is what age?

Overall, opinion was divided on the issue of extra benefit payments with some people noting that incentivising training was a positive step, whilst others felt that sufficient benefits were already available to lone parents. Some felt that the time to enter training (based on age of the youngest child) should not be prescriptive, and that lone parents should have some choice in this.

Q11. Illustrative responses

"We believe this approach should be extended to all lone parents with children under 7. Parents should be given a choice as to when they feel it is the right time to take up training.....some lone parents prefer to postpone it until their children are older, others need more support to do it when their children are younger." (Single Parent Action Network (SPAN))

"So long as the 'extra' is not 'instead of' raising the general level of benefit, this would be a good thing. Again, the training requirement is only meaningful if the difficulties faced by lone parents with regard childcare commitments are addressed. The proposals - by gradually lowering the age of children at which conditionalities apply to parents receiving benefits - have no clear rationale and may again have the effect of discouraging engagement with services for those affected." (London Borough of Hackney)

"No, I don't think this is necessary. With Tax credits and in-work benefit I think that the 'throwing money at' lone parents has reached saturation point." (General Public)

3.6 Improving access to full time training

The Green Paper describes the ways in which the Government is improving access to full time training. This includes supporting Jobseekers to undertake employment-focused, full-time training for up to 8 weeks. The Green Paper posed the following question:

Q12. Are there any other circumstances where customers cannot get the skills they need to enter employment under present and planned arrangements?

Responses were generally positive towards improving access to full time training. However, some did feel that access to skills was currently problematic for certain groups such as students who are claimants and homeless people.



Q12. Illustrative responses

"For many people affected by homelessness it is not the education funding that raises the problems but the associated accommodation costs as they will not be entitled to housing benefit as a full time student...GHN would recommend giving consideration...to encourage people from lower income households to go to university, to amending housing benefit regulations for full time students where it is identified that this is an appropriate part of their pathway to employment and that the main barrier to entering full time education is the unaffordability of the associated housing costs." (Glasgow Homelessness Network)

"The 16-hour rule for JSA leads many students forced to take on part-time courses, when their intention is to study full-time. However the level of commitment required to leave a benefits system to which students have become accustomed and comfortable to enter a student support system requiring a student to re-apply to receive existing benefits is often too great for many potential students to undertake. However, students studying part-time on JSA are forced to accept any job they are offered, leaving their course and relinquishing their benefits, despite the fact that it is almost certainly in the best long-term interests of both the state and the individual to be in education. We...suggest that there is much to gain by extending this eight week deadline to allow for a significant improvement in employability." (Elmwood College)

3.7 Volunteering and developing skills for work

The Green Paper notes that volunteering should not be seen as an alternative to paid work, but as an activity that may help people back into employment. When thinking about benefit rules surrounding volunteering and maximising volunteering opportunities, the Green Paper asks:

Q13. How might we build on the foundations of the current rules so that they do not discourage unemployed people from volunteering as a deliberate back-to-work strategy, while retaining a clear focus on moving off welfare into paid employment?

This proposal was received very positively by all who felt that volunteering is valuable, and can act as a route to work. It was suggested that more could be done to ensure that the general public and Jobcentre Plus staff fully understood the benefit rules surrounding volunteering. People felt that this would encourage more people to become involved in volunteering activity as a route to work.

Q13. Illustrative responses

"It could be that in certain circumstances voluntary work might be best solution for some and there is a need for the right support to be in place. Welfare reform is about enabling people to be part of society, and who should not just be seen as potential economic units." (High Peak CVS)

"There needs to be comprehensive training of front line delivery staff in Job Centres so they are fully aware of the current rules and any changes to ensure that people are able to take up volunteering opportunities as a route into work." (North Tyneside Voluntary Organisations Development)

"Volunteering is a good way to bring people back into the workforce - and to encourage disabled and seriously ill people to take part in an activity when work is not feasible. Currently people are often discouraged from doing this - partly from fear of the benefit rules and often because they are frightened that it will be seen as 'they they can volunteer so they can work' - which is not always the

case. Any volunteering activity that encourages people to get out of the house and take an interest in society must benefit them and the people they are 'working' with and for.” (General Public)

3.8 Improving the focus on work

To reinforce the message that ESA is a temporary benefit for most people, the Green Paper proposes that the new Work Capability Assessment (WCA) and Work-Focused Health-Related Assessment (WFHRA) will focus on what jobs people could do in the future with the right support. The Green Paper asks:

Q14 Do you agree that the WCA and WFHRA should be re-focused to increase work-related support?

In response to this question, a number of people raised concerns and perceived that more work-focused assessments meant that more people would be forced to enter employment. People felt that personal GPs should carry out any assessments to ensure that conditions were fully understood, and that only those able to work were required to seek employment. Other comments queried how frequent assessments would be, noting that they are stressful for the individual, and potentially expensive for the DWP.

Q14. Illustrative responses

“Making sure that people remain engaged with the system is sensible; however, repeated medical assessments are clearly not a realistic mechanism for achieving this. Meetings with personal advisers, more frequent discussions between providers, individuals and Jobcentre Plus and better utilisation of the WFHRA are better ways of achieving this...medical assessments are particularly stressful and difficult for claimants, who fully recognise that their benefits are under threat every time one takes place. They are also comparatively costly and time-consuming for the DWP.” (Leonard Cheshire)

“The current timing of the WCA and WFHRA does not allow claimants time to ‘switch gear’ from the issue of eligibility to possible interventions. Only the WFHRA should consider issues of work-related support as the majority of employers would be able to provide this support...Support that is not currently available should not be taken into account when determining eligibility for benefit. We would like to see more involvement of Occupational Therapists in undertaking WFHRA as this professional group is most likely to understand the range of support available to people with disabilities and health conditions....We do believe that the WCA needs to be refocused and an evidence-based tool developed...we are not at all confident in the new assessment.” (Rethink)

“There are many reasons why disabled people are not or do not feel able to enter employment...discrimination by employers...the built environment and transport systems are often inaccessible, and the social care system and childcare provision is not always flexible enough to enable someone to fit in to set working hours. Their individual capabilities are only one of these reasons. The Work Capability Assessment and the Work Focused Health Related Assessment will both focus on individual capabilities, and we are concerned that a decision will be made on their capacity to work, and therefore whether they will be placed in the support or work related activity ESA group, will be made without considering these barriers.” (Capability Scotland)

Using Work Capability Assessment to reassess all existing claimants poses the question whether those

responsible for undertaking assessments are actually able to assess individual suitability for work. In reality, only the individual disabled person, those close to him/her, or possibly the GP, have knowledge concerning ability to work.” (Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (ASBAH))

3.9 Increasing the requirement for back to work activity

In outlining the government’s plans to offer personalised support to assist disabled people and people with health conditions in preparing to get back to work, the Green Paper asks:

Q15. What expectations should there be of people undertaking the personalised support we will now be offering in the Work Related Activity Group? Could this include specific job search?

A range of organisations responded to this question with many responses focusing on the importance of ensuring that support and expectation for employment take into account the individual’s disability or condition – noting that DWP staff may require additional training to understand the needs of disabled people. Some did feel that training and work experience is something that people within WRAG could undertake, but only where appropriate to the individual.

Q15. Illustrative responses

“We should require claimants within the WRAG to register on a programme of assistance, with those facing the more complex barriers being signposted within Jobcentre Plus to more specialist provision; undertake to improve their personal and vocational skills; agree to undergo work experience; agree to apply for suitable positions, aided by a specialist provider and agree to receive in-work visits from qualified job coaches.” (St Loye’s Foundation)

“IB/ESA claimants within the Work Related Activity Group should undergo a mandatory skills audit, and this should be carried out within three months of being identified within that Group. The audit might be carried out by specialists skilled in working with IB/ESA claimants and in assessing their competencies and skill gaps in relation to market demand.” (St Loye’s Foundation)

“There is a need for the DWP to ensure that all those involved in administering out-of-work benefits...are aware of and understand the needs of people with a learning disability.” (Mencap)

“It is important that the system isn’t used to force claimants to meet inappropriate goals, for example to apply for jobs that would leave them worse off, or which do not reflect the limitations placed by their disability or condition. Assessments should be holistic, taking into account all of the needs and abilities of the claimants, including their condition, their age, skills and experience and any caring role.” (Parkinson’s Disease Society)

“DWP staff must take much more account of the views and concerns of the claimant. They are the expert on their medical condition and disability; they live with it all day and every day. They may not be able to articulate it adequately to DWP staff and agents, and DWP staff or their agents may not be equipped or trained to comprehend their medical condition, and at worst may be misinformed to very much under estimate the pain and disability of the claimant. Consequently DWP staff must work with the claimant. Most people want to work, and would like to get back to work, but may well be very concerned about impact on their health condition and disability.” (RSI action)



“The danger of a coercive approach to “work-related activity” is that both the adviser and the individual claimant will lose their focus on how to overcome the barriers to paid employment and will instead concentrate on meeting the activity requirements to retain higher levels of benefit...Mandatory job seeking, however, is far worse. It will ensure that people with mental health problems who do not feel ready to take the risk of moving into work and off benefits will fail.” (Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health)

3.10 Increased support from Access to Work

Access to Work provides funding to help disabled people gain employment and stay in work. The Green Paper puts forward proposals to increase this funding, expanding Access to Work. This provides an opportunity to review the way in which Access to Work is delivered, and questions 16 and 17 asked for feedback regarding ways in which this could be improved.

Q16 How can we make Access to Work more responsive to the needs of claimants with fluctuating conditions - including mental health conditions?

Responses welcomed an increase to the ‘Access to Work’ budget with many providing suggestions for how the service could be enhanced to better meet individual needs. Suggestions included staff cover for those with fluctuating conditions, increased practical and ‘hands-on’ support, and more training for Access to Work staff.

Q16. Illustrative responses

“Access to Work must have an expanded remit. Money should be spent not only on “kit” like computer equipment, but also on hands-on support for people with fluctuating mental and physical health conditions/impairments, so they do not lose employment if they experience a period of ill-health. Access to Work staff must also be provided with the training, expertise and time that they need to properly support people with fluctuating conditions. Access to Work staff should also receive training on disability equality...Access to Work must also be able to speed up its response times to requests for increased support arising out of fluctuating conditions. A need for additional support may arise one week (or even day) and be gone by the next”. (Inclusion Scotland)

“Its remit should be expanded to include rights to support when needed by people with fluctuating conditions; and right to temporary staff cover, for instance for someone with a fluctuating mental health condition who needs time off. This would reduce the employer’s anxiety about taking on someone who might require above-average sickness leave.” (Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR))

“I think that we can make the Access to Work grant more responsive to customer needs by looking at the eligibility for the scheme as a whole. The intention is to help more people and especially those with short term conditions that if not carefully managed could develop into long term ones...” (Staff)

Q17.What additional flexibilities in the system or forms of support would claimants with multiple and complex problems need to enable them to meet the new work-focused requirements proposed in this Green Paper?

Responses were received from a range of organisations, the general public and staff. Additional flexibilities and support suggested included flexible timescales to take account of those with low literacy



levels, one stop assessments to simplify and speed up the provision of support, and the provision of continual support. It was also noted that employers need to be made aware of the support available to them to enable them to take on claimants with multiple and complex problems.

Q17. Illustrative response

"There has to be flexibility in time scales in order that appropriate communication support/information can be provided for deaf people. Deaf people who have additional needs, such as mental health problems...will require additional support and flexibility to enable them to meet the new requirements." (Scottish Council on deafness)

"At the moment, some disabled people are experiencing frustrating delays in getting Access To Work (ATW) support – delays that sometimes end in losing the job. Much of this delay is caused by the ATW assessment procedure and the fact that you cannot apply for ATW until you are in work. However, if the one-stop assessment looked at basic essentials for the individual, related to independent living and employment (essentials such as assisted transport, personal support, special chairs etc.) then ATW would not need to provide assessors, merely the funding - cutting costs and time in administration and staff." (Scope and Disability Awareness in Action (DAA))

"Employers remain a significant barrier to employment for people with a learning disability and should be made more aware of the support available to them in employing disabled people. This is a particular concern for people with a learning disability who may be considered to have more costly support requirements and further require support that is not always as well recognised as available through the Access to Work scheme...more needs to be done to highlight the types of support available to both employees and employers." (Mencap)

"[Information about Access to Work should be made available] online and accessible at one stop shops as well as Jobcentre Plus any local government department such as local council should have access." (Staff)

3.11 Back-to-work action plans

The Green Paper proposes that "light-touch" action plans for returning staff that are ill/ face long absences with health conditions to work should be agreed between employers and staff to help both staff and employers look forward to, and prepare to return to work. In discussing this, the Green Paper asks:

Q18. What are the key features of an action planning approach that would best support employees and employers to take the steps for the employee to make a swifter return to work?

Responses commented that 'Back-to-work action plans' need to be personalised and tailored to the individual. People felt that action plans should be written with professionals and that they should be tailored to aspirations as well as the abilities of individuals – especially taking into account the needs of those with fluctuating conditions.

Q18. Illustrative response



“Action planning needs to be personalised and recognise the needs and aspirations of each individual. It needs to be undertaken by skilled professionals, and have mechanisms in place for ensuring that action plans are transferable between services and providers” (Off the Streets and into Work (OSW))

“The key feature here is listening to the employee as they are normally the best judge of when they are ready to return to employment. Some people with conditions such as ME & CFS will need an action plan which takes in to account the fluctuating nature of their illness as well as a graded approach to return to the workplace...Some people, however, will not be able to increase their hours or be able to work outside the home and this needs to be recognised.” (Welsh Association of ME & CFS Support)

“Action planning should be developed personally in dialogue between advisers and individual customers. Action Plans should not be restricted in relation to the benefit the customer is on, but rather reflect the individual's situation and aspirations, with the range of possible support and steps to return to work available to all.” (Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR))

3.12 A more active regime for Partners

The Green Paper proposes that partners of benefit recipients – who are capable of work-, should be expected to look for work when their youngest child is seven years old, and asks the following:

Q20. What approach might be suitable to assist partners of benefit claimants who can work into employment?

Opinion was divided on this proposal. Whilst the general public and staff were positive towards partners who are capable of work entering employment, some organisations, such as Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) voiced reservations. The JRF felt that this proposal could have a potentially negative impact on children's welfare if parents were to face stronger sanctions because they cannot fulfil the new requirements. Some also noted that the government would need to adopt a sensitive approach towards this reform, taking into account cultural and religious beliefs surrounding gender roles in the home.

Q20. Illustrative responses

“One of the major barriers to insisting that those with children are available for work is the absence of comprehensive childcare services, particularly during school holidays and after school hours...a couple must both individually be available and actively seeking work if the joint claim rules are to be extended to those with children. A person must have access to other childcare outside the home or provided by another person if the couple are to satisfy the test for joint claim JSA”. (Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)).

The CPAG submission also goes on to add that the views of older white males and ethnic minority groups may have to be taken into account, as some may hold traditional views on women in the workplace and home.

“An assessment of joint claim JSA¹ as it currently applies to couples without children found that it slightly increased the chances of leaving JSA but that it faced cultural resistance from ethnic minority

¹ H Beweley, R Dorsett and A Thomas Joint Claims for JSA evaluation, DWP, 2006



customers and older white males with traditional views of the gender role and that this could lead to tensions within the couple. In the first group these attitudes were supported by religious beliefs. If the Government was to proceed with this proposal it would need to be dealt with sensitively.” (Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG))

“Clearly, if both parents in a couple families are not working, neither partner will be able to cite a lack of available childcare as a reason not to take full time work. However, there should be scope for Jobcentre advisers to take account of couple’s preferences about which partner is best suited to look after the children. Many families would prefer to have both partners working part-time and caring part time. For low income families there are marginal differences in income for the family if both parents work full time, and pay childcare costs, compared with both working part time so that there are no childcare costs.” (Working Families)

“I think the processes in the Green Paper are long over due, especially looking at what partners of our customers who may well be capable of work and the expectation that customer need to be aware that they need to contribute something in order to collect benefit.” (Staff)

“No reason why partners should not work unless they are carers for the claimants. Being a carer should count as a job in itself and care allowance (or new equivalent) should be paid direct to carer as taxable employment with credited NI contributions.” (General Public)

3.13 Right to control

An extension of the pilot individual budget programme – giving greater choice and control to disabled people - is proposed in the Green Paper. In light of this, the following question is posed:

Q21. What are the next steps in enabling disabled people, reliably and easily, to access an individual budget if they want one? Should they include legislation to give people a right to ask for a budget or will the other levers the Government has got prove sufficient? What are the safeguards that should be built in? How can this be done?

Responses were keen to note that disabled people should be given the opportunity to make decision regarding their care – some felt that this choice should be ensured through legislation. Many noted that support should be provided for some in accessing and planning individual budgets.

Q21. Illustrative responses

“Individual budgets, though seemingly appealing and offering disabled people the opportunity to make their own decisions with regard to their care, are not as simple as people would like...Most disabled applicants would not manage this system themselves, but would need considerable support from their carer or some other agency. It does, however, offer freedom of choice and allows the disabled person to get a carer who fits in with their individual requirements.....” (National Council for Women)

“Every disabled person should be given opportunity to choose. More awareness raising about individual budgets, and how to access them. Maybe at first point of contact i.e. GP or hospital.” (General Public)

“Individual budgets are a move in the right direction to empower people to take control of their situation. However, some feel that it places an extra burden on disabled people and it is hoped that they will be provided with sufficient support to manage this.” (Scottish Disability Equality Forum)



"The only way to make choice and control a reality and to secure effective implementation of individual budgets is to legislate for them. Everyone should have the right to be told the level of public funding available to them (their individual budget) and then to decide how that is going to be managed. This is rather different from a 'right to ask for a budget' – funding should be individualised for all with choice and control provided whether you opt to manage that budget yourself, with support or delegate it to a third party or want the state to manage it for you." (Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR))

"Disabled people should have access to and choice and control over local, individualised services and budgets, decided at a one-stop assessment procedure, preferably carried out by a local Centre for Independent Living in collaboration with the local health and social services. The financial responsibility must be centralised, protected, dynamic and flexible, to ensure that disabled people are not subject to local authority vagaries and cost cutting and can take their individual budgets and services with them if they wish to move." (Scope and Disability Awareness in Action (DAA))

"It is vital for people receiving long term support with their health to have the chance to take more control of this themselves through managing the budget....Support must be built in to enable individuals and their families to access their individual budgets, to plan, organise and review. Clarity must be central with regard to expectations, outcomes and success measures. Such support must be available to an individual from the start." (Foundation for People with Learning disabilities)

3.14 Working age benefits

The Green Paper proposes a streamlined benefits system, and asks for comments on how a streamlined system can meet the varied needs of individuals (question 22), and how the future abolition of IS might impact on carers (question 23).

Q22. Is a system based on a single overarching benefit the right long-term aspiration? How could a simpler system be structured so as to meet varying needs and responsibilities?

In response to question 22, there was general agreement that there should be benefit simplification as all agreed that the current system was too complex. However, many raised concerns about how the system would work in practice, given the range of needs it would need to take into account. Some envisaged that there would be a single work-age benefit that had different levels of financial support depending on peoples' circumstances and needs.

Q22. Illustrative responses

"Designing and implementing such a scheme is fraught with difficulties, due to the range of people that it will be expected to cover. Although we do not fully support the proposals put forward by the Institute of Public Policy² of a single working age benefit, we believe that this may be a good starting point." (London Advice Services Alliance)

"Eliminating one benefit will not make much difference when the total number of benefits is around 50.³ Nor will it make much dent in the 1,500 or so pages of the Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits

² One for all: active welfare and a single working age benefit – IPPR July 2007

³ Boys Smith, N., 'Reforming Welfare', Reform, November 2006, Slide 2, p.17



Handbook.⁴ ...We would support the aspiration of a single working-age benefit, although in practice it may look something like a single benefit with the amount paid varying by household composition, plus housing benefit if applicable, plus disability benefit if applicable – with a single taper rate.” (Institute of Directors (IoD))

“I’m not sure it is unless the staff who supply it are very well trained and understand implicitly that each and every person they meet has different needs and circumstances and that there is no one size fits all approach to benefits. We need to ensure a breadline benefit that can be relied upon, beyond that there are a myriad of different ways that would be appropriate to help people but no one way that would be best for all, indeed what would be seen as help to one would be a hindrance to another and vice versa.” (General Public)

“A single overarching benefit will result in exceptions, different categories etc. and it will in the end become very complex. One benefit with sub-categories? Name the benefit according to the category.” (General Public)

Q23. Would moving carers currently on IS onto JSA be a suitable way of helping them to access the support available to help combine caring with paid work or preparing for paid work?

This question was met with the greatest hostility from carers and carer organisations who felt aggrieved at the perceived undervaluing of carers’ work. However, some did see this as a way for carers to access job support if this something that they wanted to do. It was apparent that many people misunderstood this proposal, and thinking that carers claiming JSA would also be required to seek employment.

Q23. Illustrative responses

The Carers network Westminster and Carers Action Westminster gathered views from other carers and submitted this response to question 23.

“The name of the benefit ‘Job Seekers Allowance’ created the connotation that carers on this benefit would be expected to find a job...Carers...made it clear that they would need enough money to support themselves independently, but if they wanted to take up some work, they and the person they care for, could be supported appropriately...to do so and as a result of choosing to work would not be worse off financially...Carers were unclear on where they would seek advice and information about entering the work force...staff at Jobcentre Plus would need more training in regards to understanding carers situations and the support they may need in entering the workforce.” (Carers Network Westminster)

“Carers don’t want jobs, as caring is a full time job and it’s about time the government saw that. If carers are forced to claim JSA then they will be forced to actively look for work, they will also be forced to attend training schemes to get them back into work. If they don’t attend these schemes they will lose their JSA. What if the carer does get a job, who will look after the people they care for?” (General Public)

⁴ Child Poverty Action Group, ‘Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook 2007/2008’, (9th ed.), 2007



"If Government truly recognised the importance of carers' caring responsibilities the Government would consider how to support carers appropriately BEFORE abolishing Income Support. The proposal to move carers to JSA has left many carers anxious about government plans for the future of Carers Allowance. How, for example, would a single overarching benefit cater for carers who are currently eligible for CA who are not on income support." (Carer Watch)

"Carers are not job seekers, to qualify for carers allowance you must care for 35 hours or more per week therefore when could they work? Who would look after the caree if the carer was at work or training? Currently carers save central and local Government vast sums by caring rather than working. We feel this measure devalues the valuable contribution of carers to society and this will contribute to additional stress being placed on carers who just want to ensure their loved ones are cared for in the best way possible." (North Tyneside Voluntary Organisations Development)

3.15 Wider reform of the benefits system

The Green Paper proposes reforms to elements of the benefits system that have remained largely unchanged for a number of years. Specifically, the Green Paper asks – in Q24 and Q25 – how Bereavement Benefit (BB) and Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) can be reformed to ensure that they continue to support in a modern welfare state.

Q24. How might we reform Bereavement Benefit and IIDB to provide better support to help people adjust to their new circumstances while maintaining the work focus of the modern welfare state?

In response to Q24, there was a general feeling that those who have been bereaved should receive bereavement benefits for a period of time before they were ready or able to enter JSA or ESA. There was no consensus on how long this benefit should be provided.

Q24. Illustrative responses

"There is nothing wrong with providing benefits to those who have suffered a loss, and such a sensitive issue should be removed entirely from the 'work focus' of the welfare system for at least 3 years. The individual should be allowed to return to the 'standard' system if and when they are ready, and not before." (General Public)

"The benefits would be tailored to provide a level of income to give time to adjust to the level of bills - perhaps 3 months. This would be an initial period before entering JSA or ESA." (General Public)

Q25. Are lump sum payments a good way of meeting people's needs? Do they give people more choice and control? Could we make more use of them?

Lump sum payments were generally welcomed. People agreed that they were a good way of giving choice and control to those who needed it most.

Q25. Illustrative responses

"A full and final lump-sum payment has the added advantage of clarity of purpose, being fitted to a situation of state-funded no-fault compensation...Although IIDB is a 'benefit', it is not means tested and not designed as an income replacement. We imagine that financial savings would arise from moving

towards a system of lump sum payments. Administrative costs should decrease because of the reduced caseload of awards to maintain.” (Industrial Injuries Advisory Council)

“Lump sums are often a good way for disabled people to overcome many barriers, giving them more choice and control...In many cases it would be sensible to make more lump sums available for such things as: home based work (including voluntary work) and further education costs that may not be obtainable via Grants and/or Access to Work (computer and other equipment, internet connections, work stations, etc) and start up money for disabled people wishing to start their own businesses.” (Spinal Injuries Association)

“Lump sums are only useful if bills to do with bereavement or specialist disabled equipment to prevent ‘bed blocking’. They can give choice and control if applied to dealing with unforeseeable bills to provide the best provision in the individual circumstances. More use could be to give a certain level of discretion locally to deal with locally specific needs that are not covered countrywide but still must only cover the reasons.” (General Public)

“I believe that there is a need for BB, the short term financial implications of being widowed can at least be helped in part by the prompt payment of the lump sum and providing a weekly income may support to some extent the loss of a wage.” (Staff)

3.16 The ‘Right to Bid’

Provider organisations may develop new solutions for improved provision and communications. In proposing changes to contracting arrangements that will enable providers to suggest innovative ways to provide services, the Green Paper asks:

Q26. What information would providers need to make the Right to Bid effective? How would the evaluation process need to work to give providers confidence that their ideas would be evaluated fairly and effectively? How do we get the balance right between rewarding those who come up with new ideas and the obligation to tender for projects?

This proposal divided opinion. While provider employer organisations welcomed the Right to Bid for services, staff and some members of the general public were less positive about this. Employer organisations specifically mentioned that information regarding timeframes, finalised evaluation criteria as well as good communications and transparency would be needed to make ‘Right to Bid’ effective.

Q26. Illustrative responses

“It is important that providers of whatever size are given the opportunity to put in proposals and are not constrained. The proposals should be localised or be specific to certain target groups. Currently the Prime Contractor scheme has had a very negative effect on the welfare to work industry with a number of excellent providers unable to compete. So called prime contractors are merely paying lip service to working with partners, taking the bulk of the funding and paying infinitesimal amounts to organisations to deliver...it is vital that the whole commissioning policy is reviewed again. You are losing a lot of good providers; this may be a way to ensure that other providers with excellent track records unable to compete under the new commissioning regime are commissioned to deliver services.” (Prodiverse UK Ltd)



“Evidence cited in the Freud Review and elsewhere shows that bringing in outside bodies to deliver “back to work” services is successful in the UK and abroad. We hope that private and voluntary providers will not face any discrimination in the awarding of contracts and we would like the contracts to give providers as much freedom to innovate as possible.” (Institute of Directors (IoD))

“Building a sufficient timescale for organisations to develop and submit proposals for delivery will help maximise the schemes outcomes...Partnerships, linked provision and consortia are key mechanisms to deliver the vision of this strategy. Ensuring that the application timeframe is appropriate is important in this context. This will allow organisations with diverse skills, experience and capacity to develop robust partnership working arrangements and reduces the risk of service delivery failure through a lack of accountability...It is important that finalised evaluation criteria are made explicitly clear and well communicated to all applicants. Adopting this transparent approach and compact way of working will help build trust and confidence that each application will be assessed in accordance with the criteria.” (Commission for the Compact)

“In developing the process the department has to ensure that there is a clear rationale for providers, particularly smaller organisations, to invest in developing interesting and exciting proposals. Furthermore...the department may need to think about how this process will interact with other government departments and agencies as many sources of innovation and improvement lie in better joined-up working. To encourage partners and providers improve employment services through innovative ideas the department should on a quarterly basis, publish the number of right to bid submissions that it has received and the number that have been accepted.” (Reed in Partnership)

3.17 Three levels of devolution

The Green Paper outlines proposals for devolving to the right level – for example, to Local Authority – where there is a strong case for improving employment and skills outcomes in a given area. Autonomous areas will be required to meet certain criteria concerning budgets and service delivery. In relation to devolution, the Green Paper asks three questions:

Q27. What would the processes around contributing to commissioning and performance management look like in a range of different partnership areas? How might they best be managed to achieve the desired outcomes?

As with right to bid, providers were positive about proposals to devolve more power to local partnerships and providers, with staff and the general public less welcoming of these proposals. Provider organisations such as Future Builder wanted to see closer working relationships with DWP from bidding through to commissioning and beyond. Comments also mentioned the importance of ensuring that third sectors included at the bidding stage, continued to be involved in achieving outcomes, and suggested a ring-fenced approach to budgets.

Q27. Illustrative responses

“While prime providers from other sectors often include the third sector in the bidding stage to strengthen their bidding activities and demonstrate engagement with the sector and its service users – this is not always carried forward into sub-contracting if the bid is successful. A number of our investees proposed that DWP commissioning mechanisms should be strengthened to make sure the



third sector is not simply used during bidding and then discarded. This would be very helpful in ensuring that the sector's skills are appropriately used beyond the commissioning process." (Future Builder)

"It is important that local districts are given the power to commission as they are better equipped to know those providers within their area who will deliver and the needs of their particular districts. Whilst we are aware that this has occurred to a limited extent with DAF, the sums allocated are extremely small. Monies should also be ring fenced for particular groups i.e. BAME groups and providers with a track record in this area need to be used. It is also important that any commissioning which involves local authorities should be scrutinised" (Pro Diverse UK Ltd)

"All the public are expecting to see here is that you will reward these companies etc for getting people off benefit. So therefore it will be in their interest (financial) if things are done, not the claimants genuine best interest." (General Public)

Q28. How could a link be made to the radical proposals for the pilots set out in Chapter 3, which seek to reward providers for outcomes out of the benefit savings they achieve?

Again there was cynicism from general public responses to this consultation question. However, this was balanced by enthusiasm from provider organisations and some thoughts on how contracts could be better managed. Suggestions for improvements included setting performance targets and ratings around key elements such as quality of customer service.

Q28. Illustrative responses

"Providers must be able to concentrate on implementing what works for their customers in helping them move towards and into sustained employment, rather than achieving a set of processes...appropriate investment in welfare to work services is crucial to achieving outcomes for the most disadvantaged customers. Any reforms must be supported by realistic budgets otherwise they will be ineffective and will not reach the hardest to help individuals...challenging performance targets must be based upon a clear understanding of what it takes, both in terms of time and funding, to support the very furthest from work...It is vitally important too that the current economic downturn – where unemployment is rising and vacancies are reducing - is reflected in performance targets." (Employment Related Services Association)

"DWP need to ensure a perverse system is not developed and that providers cannot cream off the top of contracts and help those easiest to help. WLW would like to see a shift towards the public sector within welfare offering a quality customer service, where standards of delivery are high and the service all individuals receive is of high quality helping them to achieve sustained employment as we have offered the right intervention...quality should be measured at contract and sub-contract level and that both contractors and sub-contractors should be rewarded." (West London Working – City Strategy Pathfinder)

"This will automatically reward providers to get people off benefits regardless of claimants best interest. Look out for loads and loads of appeals work here. Imagine cost of all the appeals too. Not exactly going to give 'best value'." (Staff)

Q29. How effective are current monitoring and evaluation arrangements for City Strategies?

Responses to this question noted that the monitoring of city strategies is not seen to be particularly effective. There was generally a call for detailed local investment frameworks to further understand priorities for tackling worklessness, and a call for more guidance on outcomes and performance indicators.

Q29. Illustrative responses

“City strategies are complex in that many partners use local funding such as Working Neighbourhood Fund to tackle worklessness which can make it difficult to coordinate a truly City Wide strategy. In some cases a clear plan for activities to be delivered as part of the strategy are clear, but where detailed local investment frameworks are not available it is difficult to know whether these are the most significant priorities for tackling worklessness issues in a City region.” (Northwest Regional Development Agency)

“The CSP’s are all so different it is difficult to compare how successful each one has been to date. Self-assessment takes place and appears to be realistic and accurate although subjective. CSP’s vary from direct delivery of one project to the co-ordination of multi-million pound programmes across wide geographies....Measurement of success across these differing outcomes is complex. Comparison across pathfinders may not be possible. Development of a clear range of outcomes that CSP’s could measure themselves against would assist the formal evaluation of success. Greater information from DWP on what government ministers expect the outcomes to be would enable clarity of purpose for reporting.” (Tyne and Wear City Region CSP)

“We think that the monitoring and evaluation of Cities Strategy Pathfinders would be improved if a standard set of indicators, including of partnership working, are elaborated and used. These might link to the question of capacity to move to higher levels of devolution.” (Capital City Partnership)

4 Green Paper Reforms: Overall Themes

Section 4 of this report focuses on overall themes to emerge from the consultation with organisations, staff and the general public. Across the consultation, responses often discussed wider aspects of the Green Paper reforms including:

- Sanctions and conditionality
- Personalised support
- Tackling child poverty
- Job opportunities in the current economic climate
- Implementation and communication

4.1 Sanctions and Conditionality

The Green Paper proposes that personalised and individual support will be provided to people and in return, they should be expected to make full use of this support in preparing for, and entering employment. During the consultation period an overarching theme for discussion was the Green



Papers' proposals for new benefit conditions for engaging with this support, and the related sanctions for not complying with them.

Across the responses, there were those in favour of sanctions and conditionality, and those against. Those in favour noted that sanctions and conditionality would encourage people to find employment.

"Jobseekers need responsive providers to provide individual "back to work" support. But they may also need a friendly push to re-engage with the system...It is vital that benefits are reduced or suspended for those who do not make any effort to look for work – it is clearly a key incentive mechanism, but it is also fair both to those on benefits who are making the required effort and to taxpayers." (Institute of Directors (IoD))

"I would fully support any increase in sanctions that encourages customers to actively seeks work and apply for jobs." (Staff)

"Once someone has been unemployed for six months, benefits should cease totally unless they 'work' for their benefit. This requirement to work should continue until they move into paid employment which allows them to move off benefits/ state dependency." (General Public)

Across responses some questioned whether there is any evidence to confirm that conditionality would actually improve job outcomes and engage people in the system. Additionally, people felt that sanctions and benefit conditions could be perceived as punitive and noted that this could be balanced by highlighting or introducing more incentives for work related activity.

"The emphasis on sanctions, while understandable, perhaps needs to be balanced by a greater emphasis on incentives...One advantage of incentives is that individuals are likely to seek them out, whereas individuals are likely to attempt to avoid detection etc in the case of sanctions, thus increasing bureaucratic burdens on the department." (The Ethnic Minority Advisory Group)

Additionally, many felt that the introduction of any new sanctions and conditionality would need to be implemented carefully and consistently. Some comments sought more information about how these would work in practice and queried what would happen to people who did not meet conditions and had their benefits reduced or stopped.

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) raised concerns specifically regarding sanctions for problem drug users. They queried whether sanctions would have the desired effect and were concerned that the current success of addiction counsellors working with Jobcentre Plus staff could be damaged.

"The TUC opposes linking treatment plans for addicts with benefit sanctions. This would undermine the successful joint work of Jobcentre Plus and addiction counsellors. We are not aware of any evidence that withdrawing benefit from addicts will bring them closer to the labour market" (Trade Union Congress (TUC))

As shown below, one organisation questioned whether sanctions would put more pressure on local authorities to assist those who have had their benefits temporarily stopped.

"One direct impact on local authorities is pressure for financial assistance from people who find themselves outside of the benefit system, temporarily or until they meet the conditionality test. What appears to be an ultimate goal of the Government...is time-limited access to JSA for example, where

continued payment of benefit will depend on participation in 'voluntary' employment schemes." (Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS))

Responses from disability organisations focused on how sanctions and conditionality would impact on disabled people. Comments were often provided in response to reforms outlined in chapter 3 of the Green Paper, regarding the Work-Related Activity Group and the benefit conditions that these claimants will be required to undertake - such as engaging with personal support, back-to-work action plans and (for new customers) participation in general work related activity. People also commented on reforms to IB with some organisations feeling that whilst sanctions and benefit conditions could work to incentivise work related activity among disabled people, there was the potential for them to become counter-productive, particularly if disabled people unable to work were asked to constantly prove that they were not capable of work.

"The majority of disabled people on incapacity benefit want to work but do need the right support to do so. They also need to be confident that they will be financially better off...while sanctions may act as a helpful incentive in some cases, it is a fairly 'blunt instrument' and great care must be taken to avoid it becoming counter-productive, with people feeling they need to prove why they can't work rather than building aspirations and tackling barriers so they can work." (Papworth Trust)

Further, responses raised concerns that sanctions could be applied inappropriately to disabled people. These concerns included queries over how sanctions would take into account the individual needs of disabled people and people sought reassurances that the most appropriate way to engage with the system would be offered to these people.

"One of our major concerns is that those furthest from the system are least likely to benefit and the threat of benefit sanctions is likely to further distance those from treatment. Mental health difficulties erode confidence and self-esteem and this, in turn, can act as a barrier to individuals accessing services and facilities and compound social exclusion." (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy)

4.2 Personalised Support

Across the consultation responses, whether responding to specific consultation questions or commenting on broader elements of the Green Paper reforms, people noted the importance of personalised support provision. People felt that in order for the reforms to work in practice, peoples' individual circumstances needed to be taken into account.

For example, many talked about tailored support for disabled people – the responses below outlining the need for the benefit system to recognise individual circumstances and work with claimants.

"While we welcome the proposals to increase work-related support, it is vital that this fits properly with a person's needs...some people need to take a series of small steps on the road to work and full time work may not be a realistic option for all. Recent DWP research has confirmed this, and has also shown how the benefits system itself can act as a barrier to work⁵. We want the Government to update the earnings disregard limits so that part-time work for those who need it can become a feasible part of a longer term employment plan." (Social Firms UK)

⁵ Mental Health and Employment DWP Research Report 513 2008



'Work for your benefit' is likely to be an effective option, and a far more positive step than imposing sanctions through withdrawing benefits. It will, however, be necessary to be sensitive to an individual's 'place' in the job market and their skills. Any work should be tailored as far as possible to an individual's capabilities." (Ecas)

People felt that greater flexibilities would help to take into account individual circumstances, and therefore encourage and support people in employment:

"In the absence of the better option of a partial Incapacity Benefit, or ESA, for those whose impairment means that they can work only a few hours a week, Permitted Work and Supported Permitted Work do provide useful assistance. We hope this will not be removed with nothing better to take its place; rather we believe SPW in particular should be expanded...Some disabled people who cannot work full-time cannot work at all, as their loss of benefits has made work unaffordable." (Disability Action in Islington)

Many people commented that the Fit for Work service would provide a more personalised and flexible approach to providing support specifically for those in the early stages of sickness absence.

"We welcome the piloting...of a 'Fit for Work' service...We look forward to the government's response to the report, which we hope will be positive and ambitious in providing greater support and advice to businesses to ensure they can retain people in work." (RNIB)

However, some organisations were keen to note that quality control would be vital in ensuring that Fit for Work was successful.

"We look forward to seeing further detail from Government as to how the providers of occupational health and vocational rehabilitation services will be defined and accredited in order to ensure high standards and consistency within the service. We consider that a flexible and personalised service will be more beneficial to service users, particularly those with fluctuating mental health conditions, but we can only be confident in such a service if an appropriate standards and accreditation system is in place." (Beginnings)

"We note that communities will be able to 'choose providers' of their 'Fit for Work' services...there needs to be guidelines here on quality control issues and ensuring that services are accredited to an agreed standard" (Institution of Occupational Safety and Health)

A small number of people commented on second chance learning for vulnerable young people, and felt that this was also an opportunity for the government provide more flexibility to enable people to prepare for, and gain skills for future employment. Those who commented on this noted that they would like to see the age limit extended beyond the age of 21 to deter students from having to leave their course because they can no longer afford to study.

"For homeless young people being able to return to education at a time best suited to their needs and personal situations – when they are secure in their accommodation, have built self-esteem, overcome addictions and started to make sense of their turbulent pasts – is vital. To be unable to complete a course that could make their future is just another let down for them by people who could help." (Centrepont)

“We believe that the government should go further, by also extending the ability to study whilst claiming benefits to those in the over 21 age category who are long term unemployed or suffering from multiple disadvantage. Work to develop second chance learning opportunities should be undertaken in partnership with housing associations and community agencies to help ensure training and employment programmes reach the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups.” (Shelter)

4.3 Tackling Child Poverty

A key driver of the Green Paper reforms is to improve peoples’ “life chances, opportunities and capabilities” with an ultimate aim to end child poverty. To help achieve this the Green Paper sets out proposals to support more parents in entering employment, introducing full disregard for child maintenance payments and requiring both parents to be registered on the birth certificate where appropriate.

Across the consultation responses from organisations welcomed the focus on tackling child poverty but articulated some concerns regarding how reforms suggested by the Green Paper would take into account other barriers faced by parents and lone parents in seeking and entering employment.

Across the responses regarding tackling child poverty, the following themes emerged:

- Provision of financial support for parents including more tax credits
- Affordability and availability of childcare
- The need to encourage family friendly employers
- Using incentives to encourage parents back to work – not punitive measures
- Supporting parents in gaining employment through skills training

These are discussed in more detail below.

The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) were keen to highlight that paid work was not the only way to tackle child poverty and felt that additional support should be provided by the government.

“Tackling child poverty cannot be done through paid work alone, it needs investment in family incomes through social security to ensure the safety net lifts families out of poverty...The government must exercise its obligation to ‘support people during times of change’. A new relationship between individual and society is needed – one that recognises that the provision of support to the most disadvantaged people is a human right that may result in individuals ‘taking steps to improve their circumstances; but that that should not be a prerequisite.” (Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG))

CPAG note that the Ten Year Childcare Strategy has been built upon high levels of employment with much of the childcare being financed by the childcare element of working tax credit – and on delivery by the private and voluntary sector. Therefore, they note that to implement Green Paper reforms the government will need to manage job opportunities for families in the current economic climate and call for the Ten Year Childcare Strategy to be reviewed with child wellbeing, and not parental employment, driving an ethos of inclusion and stable delivery.

Save the Children welcomed some of the reforms in the Green Paper, noting the importance of ensuring that “responsibilities” of parents are extended and their rights and opportunities are strengthened to ensure that all children are taken out of poverty. They additionally felt that affordable

childcare and family friendly employers needed to be provided and encouraged. This sentiment was reflected in other responses from a range of people and organisations who also cited the need for the Green paper to reflect the help that families need to enter employment, specifically by providing childcare, access to qualifications and training and availability of job opportunities.

“OPFS is concerned about the lack of childcare, restricted ability to access qualifications and training under JSA and the downturn in the economy...The pressure on claimants to be available for work must be matched with better state support via childcare and with pressure on employers to be more family friendly...They need support and encouragement, not threats of further impoverishment.” (One Parent Families Scotland)

“Childcare is still an issue for parents in training due to payment limits of childcare costs not covering actual childcare cost for training; having to pay childcare costs in arrears when childcare providers want payments up front...and delays in childcare payments getting to providers...Also, there is no current facility for childcare registration fees or deposits to be paid, and this can prevent Jobcentre Plus customers taking up training opportunities.” (Staff)

People felt that the government needed to engage with employers to provide appropriate employment opportunities for people – including lone parents.

“As employees, lone parents will require particular support and flexibility to be in place to ensure that their employment is sustainable. It is vital that employers are enabled (and if necessary compelled) to meet these needs.” (One Parent Families/ Gingerbread)

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) raised concerns regarding how potential benefits sanctions could impact on child poverty.

“The TUC is opposed to the reduction of benefit by as much as 40% for lone parents on JSA and believes that the proposal to increase the length of benefit sanctions is particularly damaging. These proposals impose a financial penalty on children in poverty. We note that a small DWP study concluded that sanctions for lone parents “had little effect on labour market behaviour.”...there was clear evidence, however, that sanctions increased poverty: sanctioned parents and their children had higher levels of ill health and a greater prevalence of debt.” (Trade Union Congress (TUC))

When discussing the Green Paper proposals for Full Child Maintenance disregard, key organisational stakeholders plus many parents were in favour of single parents claiming income-related benefits being able to keep the full amount of maintenance payments.

“The proposals to ‘allow’ single parents to ‘keep’ maintenance from absent parents is a great idea and can not come soon enough. The maintenance is for the children and should not in my opinion be taken into account when calculating the resident parents income.” (General Public)

“Disability Alliance welcomes the proposals to disregard child maintenance payments completely for all out-of-work benefits from April 2010. We think this is a bold step that should produce real financial gains for parents receiving such payments and assist towards reducing the numbers of children living in poverty.” (Disability Alliance)



However, some Jobcentre Plus staff and a few members of the general public raised concerns that some lone parents could end up with a large income, which would not help to incentivise lone parents to seek employment.

"I am a lone parent advisor and I am not sure how this disregard of maintenance payments would work. I have had lone parents with large amounts of maintenance i.e. £200 a week if this was to be disregarded how are we to move customers off benefits with such a large income i.e. tax credits, child benefit, income support, rent and council tax paid, equivalent of £25K + a year...How can income support be a means tested benefit?" (Staff)

"Just how is allowing all parents to keep their child maintenance encouraging parents back to work, especially when you consider the fact that maintenance will no longer be taken into account for housing benefit?" (General Public)

Lone parents were particularly supportive of strengthening enforcement powers for ensuring that absent parents financially support their children. Most responses regarding this originated from the Netmums forums regarding work and child maintenance.

"Dads need to understand they are parents too and have responsibilities. Absent fathers / those that fail to support their children, should be penalised heavily." (General Public)

Similarly, many of the responses regarding joint birth registration originated from the Netmums forums. Views on this were mixed - those who opposed the proposal questioning whether in practice it would have any impact on fathers' responsibility. Some responses were keen to note that there would be situations where it would be against the woman's interest to enforce joint birth registration, such as in cases of domestic violence or rape.

"WBG opposes the proposal for Joint registration of births to require joint registration of children. We understand that there may be advantages in terms of helping to trace absent parents who are not paying for their children. However we believe that the disadvantages are that it forces women to identify a partner when they may not want to or it may be risky to." (Women's Budget Group)

Those who supported joint birth registration felt that fathers had a duty to be involved and that this proposal went some way to ensuring this.

"I wholeheartedly agree with the registering of fathers. In fact fathers should be involved all the way through from birth...Dad's need to understand they are parents too and have responsibilities." (General Public)

4.4 Job Opportunities in the Current Economic Climate

Towards the end of the consultation period an increasing number of responses commented on the current economic downturn. People were keen to note that, if and when implemented, many of the reforms outlined in the Green Paper would need to take into account the current economic climate. Specifically, people felt that there would be a lack of employment opportunities, and that this was something that the government would not only need to take into account, but work towards addressing.



Many people raised concerns about the availability of job opportunities.

"The one thing that worries me is the recession we are entering. If I have read the figures correctly there are currently 2.2 million unemployed in the country, by December this year the figure is expected to rise by 50% to 3.3 million. Where will all of the jobs come from for our ESA customers, and existing JSA customers in light of this?" (Staff)

Some organisations were keen to note that raising peoples' aspirations of finding employment, if realistically there were no jobs available could be detrimental to peoples' self esteem and negatively affect their motivation in seeking employment. To help alleviate the affect of the economic downturn, many felt that the government should work with employers to help people retain their jobs, and to help create new job opportunities.

"We have serious concerns that, at a time of economic downturn and consequent job losses, simply offering employment support will just set many people up to fail in the mainstream labour market... There is a real risk that thousands of people identified as eligible for ESA because of a learning disability or mental health problem will continue to be left frustrated and feeling worthless because they cannot get a job. DWP... must make more concerted and proactive efforts to generate employment for people who have the greatest problems securing and keeping a job." (Social Firms UK)

4.5 Implementation and Communication

Overall, many responses called for further information and greater clarity regarding some of the reforms outlined in the Green Paper. Members of the general public, as well as some organisations sought clarification regarding how specific reforms would work in practice. They sought reassurances regarding which groups of people would be required to enter some form of work-related activity, and - as shown in the latter example below - confirmation that reforms would not financially disadvantage any groups of people.

"Will the over 50s with disabilities that are unlikely to improve and on IB and DLA HRM be forced to take up employment? This would be extremely unfair because of obvious reasons and also people in their 50s will not have long to go until retirement when the new reforms come into force." (Local Arthritis Care Group)

"Disabled claimants moving onto JSA will face a loss of income, increased costs of seeking work (fares, clothing etc.) and a lower level of 'earning disregard', compared to their situation on Incapacity Benefit. This is likely to cause hardship and debt. There are already many disabled JSA claimants who are disabled and through decades of volunteering while claiming have improved their employability and yet have never been rewarded for doing so." (Green Party)

A number of responses focused on the ways in which Green Paper reforms would be implemented. It was apparent that many people felt that Jobcentre Plus staff and employers would need additional training to ensure that they fully understood any new rules surrounding reforms. Some perceived that Jobcentre Plus staff and employer attitudes could be a barrier for people gaining employment. Specifically, responses mentioned a need for attitudes towards drug users (as outlined in section 3.3 above), and ethnic minority groups (as outlined below) to be tackled.



“The general assumption in the Green Paper is that worklessness is largely a matter of individual characteristics (e.g. low skills or low motivation) and hence the proposals focus on increasing sanctions on individuals who refuse to take up jobs, attend for interviews etc. However, it is likely to be the case that some minority worklessness is due to discrimination (direct or indirect) by employers. There is also evidence in the recent NAO report “Increasing employment rates for ethnic minorities” that minorities receive poorer service from Jobcentre staff. There is therefore a worrying risk that minorities might be sanctioned for failings that should in fact be attributed to employers or to jobcentre staff.” (The Ethnic Minority Advisory Group)

Additionally, some felt that Jobcentre Plus had a role to play in ensuring that reforms were implemented consistently and fairly.

“When sanctions are required, these do need to be enforced by Jobcentre Plus. There is some subjective evidence that this is not always the case, and risks undermining the impact of the sanctions approach.” (Papworth Trust)

A small number of Jobcentre Plus staff were keen to note that the way in which reforms were communicated should be carefully approached. They envisaged that a positive approach, allowing time for people to become familiar with new benefit names and rules would be required.

“The working towards abolition of Income Support may be a good thing in the long run but, the right approach needs to be taken. Many long term Income Support customers will only hear “Income Support is going” and become fearful their benefit will stop. Maybe a way forward would be to change the name soon and take a gradual step towards Income Support abolition, as we still have a number of vulnerable groups within society that will never be able to work.” (Staff)

“The present drive to reduce the number of people on incapacity benefit by the more positive support of ESA is welcome, but must not be seen as hounding [people who are] sick...” (Staff)

Overall when thinking about putting the Green Paper proposals in place, people felt that appropriate and clear communication would be vital. In particular, it was considered essential that the needs of different groups of people were fully taken into account when implementing any of the proposals.