

DWP Annual Forum 2011

The Kia Oval, London

6 July 2011

Executive summary

The DWP Annual Forum for organisations that work with DWP customers took place at the Kia Oval, London on Wednesday 6 July 2011.

The event attracted an attendance of 202 representatives from organisations who work with, advise and represent our customers, mainly from the adviser world, disability lobby, and other intermediary organisations.

The format of the day included:

- an address from Lord Freud, Minister for Welfare Reform
- a Welfare Reform plenary session
- a plenary session that included short presentations from senior representatives of Jobcentre Plus and the Pension, Disability & Carers Service, followed by a question and answer session
- workshops on a variety of topical subjects
- DWP information points and external exhibition stands

Delegates were asked to evaluate the event and 91% of delegates said they were satisfied with the event. 89% said they would recommend this event to a colleague.

We will publish a progress update report in January 2012.

These events give us the opportunity to hear from you about how our services are working. Your feedback helps to improve our service in each of the key areas that are important to our customers – Right Treatment, Right Result, On Time and Easy Access. You can find out more from the DWP Customer Charter at [Directgov - Customer Charter](#).

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You may find the [DWP Adviser and Intermediaries](#) website useful in your work. The website has the latest information about services and benefits for advisers, intermediaries and other professionals who work with DWP customers.

You may also be interested in [Touchbase e-zine](#) . This monthly publication contains news about benefits, pensions and other DWP services and relevant news from other government departments and agencies.

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1. Plenary Sessions

Please contact linda.francis@dwp.gsi.gov.uk if you would like the text of the full speeches of the key speakers.

1.1 Lord Freud, Minister for Welfare Reform

Lord Freud gave an update on the progress of the Government's work on Welfare Reform over the last 12 months, the progress on the Bill and current priorities.

The biggest reform is the plan to simplify and restructure the benefit system through introduction of Universal Credit. A real-time tax and benefit system is being developed which will be far more responsive and immediate than it is now. Benefits will be withdrawn steadily, people will be able to work more hours and see rewards for doing that. We are on schedule to deliver Universal Credit in October 2013.

The same principles of clarity, consistency and fairness are at the heart of the reforms to Housing Benefit. In cash terms, Housing Benefit has doubled since 2000. In some cases, the state was supporting people to live in homes they had no realistic chance of earning enough money to live in, on an independent basis.

Steps are also being taken to tackle under-occupancy in the social rented sector. In England alone, five million people are on the waiting list for social housing and there are nearly 1 million unused bedrooms. The Housing Benefit reforms introduce a limit so the maximum that will be paid is £400 a week.

The national roll-out of the reassessment of Incapacity Benefit claimants to Employment Support Allowance is underway and we are currently contacting around 11,000 people every week. It is not acceptable to write people off to a lifetime of benefits because they have a health condition or disability. We are committed to getting the reassessment process right and have accepted in full Professor Harrington's review of the Work Capability Assessment. We will continue to provide unconditional support for those people who cannot work.

We are now taking this one step further with the Sickness Absence Review. We have asked Dame Carol Black, the director for Health and Work, and David Frost, of the British Chambers of Commerce, to have a look at what is happening with the sickness absence period and to recommend how we can improve it.

Last month we launched the Work Programme. This has a unique payment structure which recognises some people will require more help to find and stay in work and it can go much further than just tackling unemployment. We are now looking at developing interventions based around payment by results with the Work Programme at the core. We have already used the DWP framework to issue an invitation to tender for working with whole families, financed by the European Social Fund to tackle inter-generational

worklessness. This approach will focus on the most troubled families in England, those already in touch with Social Services, the police, probation services etc.

There is a lot still to do in policy areas like childcare in the Universal Credit. We are looking at reforming support for disabled people and we are looking at the introduction of the Personal Independence Payment.

Many of the organisations represented at this event have been working on this very large agenda and we are grateful for the ongoing input from everyone.

1.2 Question and Answer Session

The PAYE Real Time System will reportedly not be ready in time for 2013. Doubts have been cast over the timescales which seem aggressive and unrealistic.

We are adopting a far more reliable way of building the system by developing, testing and analysing customer insight as we go along. It is an ambitious timetable. At the moment we are on time and on budget and we are confident that we are going to be delivering to time in October 2013.

What are the Government's plans for the removal of the mobility component from DLA care?

In introducing Personal Independent Payment we are looking at the whole issue of DLA, including the issue of mobility in residential homes. There will be debate in the Lords and then in Committee. We will keep people informed as this progresses.

In the commons, the Minister for Disabled People committed to making the regulations relating to the removal of mobility from people living in residential care, subject to the affirmative procedure. Is that something the Government will be bringing forward as an amendment or in the Lords?

We will amend the Welfare Reform Bill in the House of Lords.

We need to make sure the support is in place to enable disabled people to work. I spend half my time doing ESA appeals because the medical practitioners do not know what they are talking about.

We are steadily improving the assessment process. We are making sure that decision-makers look at the assessment intelligently, and do not just take the assessment as read. That will help to drive down the discrepancy between WCA decisions and tribunal findings. The tests in PIP will be much more orientated to what people can do.

The policy intent seems to be for joined-up services, but the decision to move Council Tax Benefit to the Local Authorities seems to cut across this intent.

We are looking to localise systems where it is sensible to do so. We must optimise the inter-relationship between Universal Credit and Council Tax Benefit.

The Justice Minister is removing welfare benefits from Social Care Assessment which means that disabled people will lose legal representation. He says that

because DWP are making great changes there will not be any need for representation at tribunals.

The process of the tribunals is meant to be a relatively informal process; it should not be necessary for people to have legal representation, as opposed to other support available.

Access to Work gives people some support once they are working, but there are still issues around getting them work-ready and enabling them to stay in work.

The Sayce Review has highlighted the value of Access to Work, and how it has supported tens of thousands of adaptations and accessibility solutions so that disabled people can be supported to stay in work. We are considering what more could be achieved through Access to Work provision. Also, in the Work Programme, we are looking to ensure the provider is highly incentivised to help people who need particular support. We recognise that we need to get this right.

1.3 Neville Cavendish, DWP Universal Credit Directorate and Daniel Gieve, DWP Benefit Strategy Directorate

Neville set out the overall objectives for Universal Credit, and explained that it will replace in and out of work benefits with a simplified credit that will ensure people are better off in work. He asked delegates to answer a range of questions to test their current understanding of Universal Credit. The key facts that were highlighted were:

- there are currently 19 million benefit claims that will be migrated to the new Universal Credit
- the aim is for eight million new Household Assessment Units to be entitled to claim Universal Credit by October 2017
- the main channel of contact will be on-line and DWP has an aspiration for 75% of claimants using this method

Neville also highlighted the benefits that will be out of scope for Universal Credit:

- Disability Living Allowance
- Contributory Benefits
- Child Benefit
- Carers Allowance

Universal Credit will help move people from workless households and introduce the culture of work. Estimates show that 350,000 children should be lifted out of poverty and around 500,000 working age adults will be better off as a result of Universal Credit. The Department hopes to save around £1 billion on fraud and error through the new systems being put in place.

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Benefits will be moved into a single household payment and there will be 24/7 access through the internet to claim or report changes. Employers can also access the Real Time Earnings System to update earnings to make sure the benefits being paid are as accurate as possible month by month.

DWP are currently in the 'Agile' design phase; which means that every four months there is a full review of what has been designed and developed. In that four month period there are also fortnightly customer and stakeholder insight reviews.

We have so far built two claimant profiles to help with testing. The next phase will build on those and start to cover more complex cases. Around 260 claimant profiles will be built to reflect a wide range of different claimant circumstances.

A pathfinder will be launched in April 2013 with a six-month run to test the system. This will lead into the launch in October that year. The aim is that by October 2017, everyone will have moved from legacy benefits onto Universal Credit.

Daniel described the basic conditions and entitlements. Claimants (both members of couple) must satisfy basic conditions:

- the lower age limit is 18 – but will be 16 for groups who claim at 16 now
- there is an upper age limit – so no overlap with pension credit
- presence in Great Britain – entitled to be here and habitually resident
- not in education – but exemptions for parents/ some others (as now)
- have accepted a claimant commitment.

The **maximum amount** consists of:

- a standard allowance (separate rates singles and couples, lower rates for under 25s)
- an amount for each dependent child, with an additional amount for a disabled child on DLA (higher rate if entitled to highest DLA care component or severe visual impairment)
- a housing costs element for rent or mortgage interest
- amounts for other particular needs or circumstances - as set out in regulations

Regulations on particular needs/circumstances will cover:

- **Disability** – two rates for disabled people – based on work capability assessment, higher rate for support group
- **Carer element** – similar to existing carer premium
- **Childcare element:** a variable amount based on a percentage of actual costs paid by parents up to a specified maximum limit, with a higher maximum limit for families with 2 or more children

As part of the stakeholder engagement approach, [Policy Briefing Notes](#) have been published on aspects of Universal Credit policy.

Daniel concluded by highlighting the policy areas that are still awaiting decisions, including conditionality threshold, detailed rules on self-employment, childcare, passported benefits and carers.

1.4 Welfare Reform Question and Answer session

You said that DWP do not have many dealings with self employed people, but this is not my perception.

It is true that self-employed people who are out of work for a short period of time will be in contact with DWP, but we do not have the ongoing relationship that HMRC does through the Tax Credit system. A very detailed piece of policy work is being undertaken on this and a significant number of HMRC staff are working with us on the programme.

**Is there a policy change in the way you refer to either customers or claimants?
There is a stigma attached to the term claimant**

Ministers tend to prefer to use the word claimant but there has not been any official policy change in DWP as yet.

I am concerned that some customers will be vulnerable if housing payments are made directly to them rather than the landlord. Monthly payments were mentioned, but a number of people have weekly or fortnightly payments so this could cause difficulty.

Monthly payment is a provisional position but it is not a decision that has been made or announced. Monthly payments to customers are in line with the Minister's desire to make the receipt of Universal Credit more like the receipt of wages - 75% of people who are paid wages are paid monthly. If we do have monthly payment, we will need to think carefully about how we support people to move from weekly or fortnightly payments.

There is a misalignment between children and adults in the system meaning that children and people with children are worse off.

This has been raised a number of times. All of the money that currently goes into disability premiums in the out of work benefits and the in work credits will be recycled and used in the Universal Credit, so no money is being lost. There is a reasonable concern about the misalignment between children and adults and we have reflected this to Ministers.

Where do you see foster carers fitting in?

There is a list of outstanding policy issues including foster carers. We consider carefully how foster carers will be treated in Universal Credit. We are consulting with as many people as possible and this will be discussed at Committee stage.

For people transitioning from Working Tax Credits (WTC), what is the plan for reconciling previous WTC payments?

We are planning the transition and migration strategies very carefully, and will produce detailed proposals well in advance of the start date.

Success depends on continuous assessment, but you only have two characters in your agile build at the moment.

We are currently building in significantly more profiles. Once the baseline profiles are established, we can build much more quickly, and produce a lot more personal profiles.

Am I right in thinking that if you are on Pension Credit, you will still get Housing Benefit via the Local Authority?

No - housing support for people on Pension Credit will be provided through a Housing Credit that will be part of Pension Credit.

What about people that are receiving benefits not in scope for Universal Credit, but may who still need Housing Benefit, for example, those on contributory benefits?

Housing Benefit will be part of the Universal Credit, so people will receive the other benefit with a Universal Credit entitlement for housing costs on top of that.

Will Working Tax Credit be in addition to Universal Credit?

Universal Credit is the total in work benefit for all parts of the income spectrum so there will no longer be any Working Tax Credits.

You need to make absolutely sure that the online system is accessible for all.

It is our aspiration to have 24/7 online access and support. We will make sure that it is fully accessible and meets everyone's needs.

1.5 Isobel Stephen, Jobcentre Plus

Isobel said as part of the autumn Spending Review, DWP was asked to reduce the cost of its central functions by 40%. The premise behind this is to focus as much resource as possible on front line services, and where reductions have to be made, to make the central organisational structure as efficient as possible.

Jobcentre Plus is reviewing its network, exploring options of outreach and co-location, but remains committed to ensuring it keeps a local presence. It is also focusing more on diagnosing customer's individual needs, and on responding more flexibly.

Isobel provided information on the scale of the Jobcentre Plus operations, which has a large number of transactions every day - including over 232,000 calls; processing over 19,000 new benefit claims; taking on average over 11,000 new job vacancies; and conducting 65,000 Adviser interviews.

In the last year, the Government introduced Get Britain Working - a programme focusing more on individuals needs and responding more flexibly. Initiatives include:

- Work Clubs - the sharing of skills and experience amongst groups of people who are out of work
- Work Together - for people who are interested in volunteering rather than immediately getting a job

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- a new Enterprise Allowance, which is being piloted at the moment, and Enterprise Clubs for people who are looking to set up their own business
- sector-based Work Academies - a combination of training and work experience to try and help people back into the workplace
- the Flexible Support Fund - for local managers to use as they see fit to try and help people back into work
- Mandatory Work Activity – to help to get people back into the frame of mind of working
- the Work Programme which started to go live from 1 June.

Isobel highlighted the new joint /HMRC Fraud and Error Strategy, which involves Local Authorities as well as HMRC - the aim is to cut fraud and error by 1.4 billion by 2015.

A new performance framework was introduced from April that focuses on two outcome measures – people leaving benefit and the monetary value of fraud and error. These high level outcome measures will help to drive the right behaviours within the organisation.

National rollout of incapacity benefit reassessment started in February 2011 and is expected to take three years to complete. The whole thrust of this, and of ESA, is to focus on what people can do, and through support from Jobcentre Plus and the work programme, help them to achieve this.

In his report earlier this year, Professor Harrington recommended improvements to the Work Capability Assessment and most of the recommendations have been implemented. His second annual review is now underway.

The Sayce Review - an independent review of the specialist disability employment programmes and how they might be improved - was published early June and there is currently a consultation exercise on its proposals.

There have been changes to the Social Fund, simplifying the process and making it fairer:

- the regulated Social Fund will remain (Funeral Payments, Sure Start Maternity Grants and Cold Weather Payments)
- discretionary payments will be replaced by a combination of new local provision
- budgeting loans and crisis loans for alignment payments will be replaced by payments on account
- reforms will begin from April 2013 with the abolition of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans
- budgeting Loans will be phased out in line with the roll out of Universal Credit.

The on-line JSA service has proved very popular and there are plans to extend it to include changes of circumstances. Employers will also use an on-line channel to register vacancies.

Jobcentre Plus is looking to deliver a local presence in a more flexible way, through shared premises and outreach where possible and is also looking at how it can work better with independent or advice organisations.

The reviews of the Department's central functions will mean more integration. Terry Moran is the DWP Chief Operating Officer designate, and, from October, will be ultimately responsible for all our operational front line services, including Jobcentre Plus and PDCS, as well as the delivery of Universal Credit.

1.6 Kim Archer, PDCS

Kim outlined the key objectives for PDCS for the last 12 months and also illustrated the size of the organisation which each month answers 1.3 million telephone calls, sees over 38,000 customers face to face and expects to issue over 53,000 pension forecasts on request. This is in addition to processing thousands of claims for Attendance Allowance, Carers Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Pension Credit and State Pension.

PDCS has maintained the speed and quality of dealing with claims and this is reflected in the latest customer survey:

- 97% said staff were polite and treated people with respect
- 94% said staff listened to what they say
- 91% said they were satisfied with the service.

Of the people who are not happy, 50% say PDCS take too long and 27% say they are making the wrong decision.

PDCS has now designated Partnership Managers whose role is to provide support to partners. PDCS has served over 150,000 customers by working closely with national and local partners, and paid £214 million in extra benefits as a result. Over 120,000 customers have been referred to partner organisations for wider services, including help with home safety and security, and health and social care needs.

The Partnership and Stakeholder satisfaction survey showed high levels of partner and stakeholder satisfaction, with 84% believing that partnerships are effective and 92% that they benefit their shared customers.

The Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance adult renewal claim forms have been improved, so customers do not have to provide information which is already held about them. There have also been some very successful trials on the improved Disability Living Allowance claiming experience for parents/guardians of disabled children through user-friendly forms and improved notifications and processes.

The External Relations team has cleared 98% of the service issues that have been raised with them this year. A new complaints process has been introduced where complaints from customers are cleared more quickly, more cheaply and to the customer's satisfaction. The Combining to Care partnership initiative is targeting the poorest pensioners in Manchester. Costs are met by private sector partners and the first point of contact for customers is delivered by Age UK. PDCS are continuing to work in different ways and experimenting to see how they can work better with partners.

Kim summarised the key challenges for next year:

- preparing for Welfare Reform implementation – there is a substantial consultation exercise on the implementation of PIP, and most staff will have to learn a new benefit regime
- working effectively with the voluntary sector
- increasing performance with less staff
- maintaining the focus on accuracy and reducing error
- reducing complaints
- improving access to self service and e-channels
- providing a face-to-face service for vulnerable customers in their own home or at an accessible community location, if their business cannot be dealt with over the phone or on-line
- implementing State Pension Reform

1.7 Operations Question and Answer Session

Operationally, what are the top three areas where you are ok but could do better?

Kim said accuracy is something PDCS continues to work on. Some elements of benefits could be processed more quickly and the quality of information provided to customers to explain decisions could be improved. The introduction of PIP and Universal Credit provide a good opportunity to do this.

Isobel said that reducing official error is an area for improvement for Jobcentre Plus. Second, when talking to people about getting them into work, being really specific about the individual needs of that person and the jobs that might be suitable for them, is something that could be done better. Thirdly, letters to the Chief Executive represent cases where things have gone wrong - Jobcentre Plus needs to be better at using that information to improve customer service and policies.

Social Fund changes mean people are being denied essential things when they move to new accommodation. Why is this?

The thinking is that Community Care Grants and budgeting loans are available for items, so Crisis Loans should be focused on living expenses where people have a particular urgent need for money because of their particular circumstances at that time.

DWP intention is to join up services but this is not the case for terminally ill people on ESA and DLA. Original copies of the DS1500 forms are required by Jobcentre Plus and PDCS at the moment.

Whilst the DS1500 is an important piece of evidence, it is not the only evidence considered by decision makers in determining entitlement to DLA or ESA under 'special rules'. The policy intent for both ESA and DLA is that the DS1500 is viewed very much as a source of extra evidence, not an automatic passport to the ESA support group or the higher rates of DLA care and mobility.

For the purposes of ESA, as long as the customer has made it clear on their application that they wish to claim under Special Rules, ESA decision makers will consider any evidence passed to them from DLA colleagues. For DLA claims, staff can accept notification from ESA colleagues at any time about a claim being made under Special rules or not, or when a DS1500 has been received.

Bereaved customers are not kept informed of the progress of their claims.

The Bereavement Service allows the next of kin reporting a death of a DWP customer to contact us once by phone. The information is then shared across the Department. As part of the call, customers are offered an eligibility check to determine whether they could be entitled to DWP benefits. Where entitlement to Social Fund Funeral Payments or Bereavement Benefit is identified, a claim can be taken during the same call and passed directly to Jobcentre Plus for processing. Responsibility for ongoing communication with the customer about the outcome of the claim lies with the processing unit. The Bereavement Service should be contacted if anyone experiences any problems.

DWP are relying on advice services so is there anything factored into budgets for advice services?

Kim said that within the PIP project there is a strand of work focussing on working with the voluntary sector to help them to increase their knowledge and capability around the new benefit. Some money is available, and the project will be working with organisations to discuss what level of information is needed, for example, training, information packs, etc. The aim is to ensure that organisations have the right information to advise our customers.

Will there be compensation available for official errors?

Isobel said that currently, if DWP make a mistake and someone is financially disadvantaged as a result of the mistake, there is a provision to make a special payment to compensate them – she was unaware of any plans to change that.

If everything is on-line, how will you identify those people that are unable to use on-line services?

Isobel said that JSA on-line claim process is intended to replace the form filling for those people that could use it. Those who cannot will contact us by phone or in person, and alternative arrangements will be made. Neither will the on-line process replace the face-to-face contact that Jobcentre Plus has for talking to people about their aspirations for employment and about any barriers to work.

The number of people out of work exceeds the number of job vacancies. The private sector is supposed to be creating jobs, but do we have any evidence that this is happening?

Isobel confirmed that Jobcentre Plus takes over 11,000 vacancies every day; it is a question of finding a fit between the individual and the jobs that are available.

If the Welfare Reform Bill goes through unchanged, by 2012 contributory ESA will be time limited to 12 months and those who have already done 12 months will lose their benefit immediately. What communications are going to go alongside the legislative process?

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We have a responsibility to forewarn those who could be affected by these changes. Minister is aware of this issue and has asked Jobcentre Plus to send out a letter in September to all those customers who could be affected by the changes. More information can be found here. [Proposed changes to contributory-based Employment and Support Allowance](#)

DWP official overpayments are to become recoverable. Are there any proposals for how discretion will be handled or guidance for staff?

The Secretary of State has a duty to protect public funds, and an obligation, wherever possible, to ensure that an overpayment is recovered.

The starting point for recovering benefits will be that any payments of Universal Credit, Employment Support Allowance and Jobseeker's Allowance made in excess of entitlement will be legally considered a recoverable overpayment; this includes official error overpayments.

Although the Department must take responsibility for its mistakes, that does not give people the right to keep tax payers' money they are not entitled to. Claimants will also have a responsibility to ensure that the benefit or credit they receive is correct.

Some overpayments, however, will not lead to recovery. This could be where it would not prove value for money to enforce the recovery; where the monies were received in good faith and the claimant couldn't reasonably be expected to know they were being overpaid and recovery would cause hardship. A Code of Practice will set out these considerations and those cases where recovery would not normally be pursued.

2. Workshops

2.1 Housing Support Reforms

This workshop covered the background to the Government's housing support reforms and provided an opportunity to hear about the intentions behind these changes. Below is a summary of the key questions and comments raised.

What is a household for UC purposes? Are non-dependants part of the household?

Our current understanding is that it will be the claimant, partner and any dependants.

How will the Benefit Cap affect housing payments in UC and will there be transition?

We intend to look at how this is implemented; whether there will be transitional arrangements, or whether there are alternative options.

When will Shared Room Rate (SRR) apply to existing claimants?

Existing claims would be affected on the anniversary of their LHA (or other relevant change).

Will the exceptions to U25 rate be maintained when it increases to U35?

The intention is yes, but the detail is still being considered.

Once the Consumer Price Index (CPI) measure is implemented, will rates quickly reach cap levels in more areas?

Customers are already struggling to meet the extra non-dependant deductions. Because CPI has typically grown more slowly than market rents, the CPI measure is more likely to result in LHA rates increasing more slowly than before. We would therefore expect it to take longer for rates to reach the levels of the caps.

You are imposing a benefit cap but there are people in work with large families getting near to £32000 with the additional benefits added on to their earnings.

The benefit cap does not affect workers. The cap will result in benefit (such as HB and UC) being capped to a level that reflects average earnings so that on-one (of working age and not working 16 hours or more) receives more in benefits than an average working person receives.

Benefit Cap

- large families could end up with nothing for their rent - bringing it in before UC means that LAs will deal with the fallout
- it will affect those who are working and have never claimed HB

Direct Payments

- one Housing Association said 63% of their clients were on HB, of which 58% are in rent arrears and 40% do not have bank accounts that can accept payments

Under 35 Restriction

- the Discretionary Hardship Payment grant is insufficient to meet the restrictions that may be required for the increase in age for the SRR to 35

Social Sector Size Restriction

- foster carers are very hard to recruit and as children are already disregarded, the Social Sector size restrictions will hit them even more
- consideration should be given to those properties where money has been spent adapting them
- many HAs have a policy of not allowing transfers where someone has rent arrears; given that they will probably be in rent arrears because of the restriction, they will end up having to evict them
- the policy for U35 SRR will adversely affect absent parents where they have staying access

2.2 Implementation of the Professor Harrington Review on Work Capability Assessment

DWP published Professor Harrington's review of the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) in November 2010. Since then, Jobcentre Plus and Atos Healthcare have been working together to deliver the recommendations for year one. This workshop was an opportunity to review progress and discuss the next steps.

In general, feedback from those attending the workshop was that they had so far seen very little change for the better.

Customer Experience – recommendations 1–4

Delegates had very little knowledge of any the changes being made, and had seen little positive impact for customers. There were one or two reports of positive changes, but mostly concerns were expressed about customers with mental illness, and how well they can comply with processes, and about DWP service delivery.

ATOS – recommendations 5–9

Even though ATOS have implemented all of the recommendations given to them, there is still a great deal of negativity about ATOS, and very little perceived improvement in anything ATOS do.

Jobcentre Plus decision-makers – recommendations 10–14

Delegate recognised that a change in culture was needed, but could report only a few changes in the standards of decision making, and still perceive JcP DMs are ‘rubber stamping’ ATOS recommendations. There was overwhelming support for DWP and ATOS to put more management information in the public domain about decisions and appeals. There was also the feeling that DMs don’t request extra medical evidence and there is a perception that when extra evidence is provided, that it is not used or considered. Some representatives reported an improvement in reconsiderations, whilst others said there were still too many delays, and some were very suspicious about the close working between JcP DMs and Tribunals Service.

Next Steps

Comments, feedback, and strength of feeling from the day will be fed back into the organisations, and also used as the basis for ongoing communications on changes to service delivery as a result of Harrington recommendations.

2.3 Implementing Personal Independence Payment – the journey so far and informing next steps

DLA for working age people will be replaced by a new benefit from 2013, Personal Independence Payment.

Many current working age DLA customers have support from a customer representative organisation and we expect that this support will continue to be sought by people claiming Personal Independence Payment.

PDCS wants to work together with customer representatives so that they

- understand Personal Independence Payment rules of entitlement and the administrative process and
- can support our shared customers in understanding Personal Independence Payment and their decision to make a claim.

Delegates were invited to discuss their information and learning needs at two workshops where a wide range of topics were discussed including:

- general communications, immediate and long term
- how to support those with specific needs such as people with mental health problems
- migration and transition arrangements, what and when its going to happen, and who its going to happen to
- what type of guidance might be needed, like forms completion and how the medical assessment will work
- how information can be provided such as online toolkits and white top presentations

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PDCS received some very useful feedback as to the steps we could take to ensure that those who support our customers understand the new benefit rules and supporting processes once Personal Independence Payment is introduced in April 2013.

PDCS will consider this feedback when developing communications plans for the implementation of Personal Independence Payment.

2.4 Get Britain Working (GBW)

This workshop covered all the new sources of information available to enable advisers to explain to customers what services and support is available on the Work Programme. Key points included:

- flexibility, localism and personalised support at the heart of both the JcP offer and Work Programme, supported by GBW measures
- partnership working a key component of this development
- Work Programme payment model rewards sustainable job outcomes
- differential pricing and market share shift at customer group level reduces risk of parking.

Delegates were generally quite supportive of the changes, though had some concerns about the support available to the customer groups. Delegates had varying levels of knowledge of the changes in employment support.

Questions focused on:

- JcP specialist support for disabled customers
- the Flexible Support Fund and how delegates' organisations can access it
- the support available through GBW Measures, and how delegates' organisations can be involved
- how the system for Work Programme outcome payments was designed, and the proportion of payments passed on to subcontractors
- Work Programme supply chains
- how parking of customers *within* customer groups will be avoided – what measures are in place to monitor this and when will information be publicly available

Proposed Next Steps:

- inclusion of at least one of the groups in consultation on post Work Programme support
- representatives should be encouraged to approach Jobcentre Plus District Managers and Work Programme Providers where they feel they can provide services to improve outcomes
- to facilitate this, and promote innovation and localism, organisations would benefit from further information on the Flexible Support Fund; however, this needs to be done in such a way as to not overwhelm District Managers with proposals

- information about Work Programme prime providers and supply chains are already available, but require regular updating

2.5 Access to Work

This workshop was an opportunity to find more about and discuss the Access to Work programme. Key issues arising included:

Will Access to Work (AtW) provide support for Work Experience and volunteers?

AtW supports customers in or about to start paid employment including self-employment. We also support permitted work for up to 52 weeks to enable someone to go into open employment. We also support Jobcentre Plus work trials.

What is the process if a customer is not happy with a decision made?

The customer can request a review of a decision.

Will there be an increase of funding for mental health?

AtW has seen an increase in mental health applications and have been working closely with organisations such as MIND. We support customers who have mental health issues, especially in the area of retaining jobs and enabling a dialogue between employer and customer.

How does AtW promote service?

We visit employers and carry out presentations with various partners. Information about the programme can also be found on www.direct.gov

Why can't people doing permitted work use AtW?

We support permitted work for a period of up to 52 weeks.

If a customer moves to a different job or organisation, what happens regarding the previous equipment provided by AtW and what about assessments?

The employer has ownership of the equipment, but we can negotiate with them to allow the customer to take the equipment with them. Customers should be able to take their assessment with them, but need to remember that it may have changed since then.

Reasonable adjustments – where do we draw the line?

Only tribunals can make a decision about what is a reasonable adjustment. It may be considered reasonable for an employer to purchase office furniture.

What is reasonable? Do we have a list?

Having a list would remove flexibility from the program. Each case is looked at individually.

How will Universal Credit (UC) work with AtW?

We are currently looking at the process for UC in conjunction with AtW.

What has been done to make the paperwork easier to complete?

The new claim forms have been reduced to two pages. We are also exploring online applications, although evidence is required to ensure the payment is made accurately.

2.6 Information for Advisers

This workshop provided a forum for delegates to give their ideas and suggestions about how we can better provide information to support advisers and intermediaries in their daily dealings with our customers. Delegates understood that the strategy for providing information is electronic, the reasons for that, and were content with this approach. Specific ideas expressed are summarised below, with updates from DWP in italic.

1 Suggestions for items to be included on the Advisers & intermediaries site:

- a search facility for benefit centres that deal with postcode areas - *these are currently available on Directgov at [Contact Jobcentre Plus](#) and [Find your Pension Centre](#) – we will include links from the Advisers & Intermediaries site*
- a timetable providing information about forthcoming changes, for example, Social Fund changes, information about when we cease to do things, as well as about starting new initiatives - *we will consider whether it is possible to do this, and provide an update in our ‘mid term Forum feedback report’*
- set up an RSS facility for news items - *it is possible to set up an RSS feed to send an alert when the update page on the Advisers & intermediaries site is changed www.dwp.gov.uk/adviser/updates*
- direct links to leaflets & claim forms - *on the home page of the Advisers & intermediaries site, there is a link on the right hand side to ‘Catalogue of information products’ – this is forms and leaflets and includes details of how to order the forms and leaflets www.dwp.gov.uk/adviser*
- links to Pension Liaison Managers - *they are not currently publicised externally – we are investigating whether this is possible*
- publish a summary of queries from advisers; with a mechanism for queries to be submitted on the site – *we are currently looking at mechanisms to do this*
- better links with Rightsnet and info4local – *we are currently working with Rightsnet on this, and will then talk to info4local*
- better information about what is stopping or changing as a result of Work Programme and the Jobcentre Plus offer; specific detail about welfare to work contracts and providers, courses and colleges, contacts, etc, on a regional basis – *we will investigate what might be done on this*
- link to the benefit calculator - *the benefit calculator is available on the Directgov website; for welsh version click on ‘Cymraeg’ at the top of the screen [Do It On-line](#); we will provide a link from the advises*

2 Other suggestions:

- Provide an information line for Universal Credit, similar to BEL – *suggestion forwarded to the UC programme, for consideration*

- On calls by decision-makers on IB reassessment, appeal rights to be explained up-front – *the call is made to advise the claimant of the likely decision, then to ask if there is any other evidence we need to take into account – only after this can they be advised of the decision, at which point appeal rights are explained (and covered in the written decision)*

2.7 Personal Independence Payment – understanding the information requirements and learning needs of those who support our customers

To enable advisers to support our customers this workshop was an opportunity to understand better what the information requirements and learning needs are for the Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

DWP is preparing to implement the new benefit from April 2013, including:

- arrangements for taking new claims and reassessing existing customers
- changes to our processes and systems (including IT)
- new commercial contracts for an independent assessment supplier
- guidance and training for our staff (including Decision Makers)

DWP is committed to involving disabled people and their representatives in designing and developing the new arrangements, through customer research and with customer representatives through the PIP Implementation Development Group. Attendees of the DWP Annual Forum PIP workshop are invited to take part in these arrangements if they are interested - contact claire.debanke@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Key issues raised included:

Will the reforms apply to those over 65?

People aged 65 and over who are receiving DLA will not be affected by these changes when they are introduced in April 2013. We want to build on our experience of reassessing the working-age caseload to inform any future decisions on the treatment of this customer group. People will not be entitled to PIP after they reach age 65 or State Pension age, whichever is higher. Individuals already in receipt of the benefit before reaching this upper age limit, however, will be able to continue receiving their award for as long as their mobility and daily living needs continue in line with the eligibility criteria.

Will the £30 gift voucher offered to those individuals involved in the testing of the initial draft of the assessment criteria count towards their earnings?

Taking part in the PIP testing and receiving the £30 voucher will not affect any benefits or tax credits that an individual is claiming, now or in the future. The voucher is being given

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as a gift as a token of appreciation for volunteering to take part - individuals are not being paid or compensated for their time.

The Claim Form

Useful feedback was received about designing the new claim form which included feedback on different claiming channels; making the form simpler and easier to complete; what information should be captured in the form and what the assessor should collect.

3. Evaluation

<p>Attendance</p>	<p>202 external delegates attended (244 expected; 83% attendance); 36% had not attended before.</p> <p>Types of organisations represented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disability (23%) • LA (14%) • local support organisations (11%) • Citizens Advice service (8%) • housing (7%) • general advice services (7%) • health sector (7%) • ageing society/older people (5%) • employment & training (5%)
<p>Interactive Voting</p>	
<p><i>Aspect</i></p>	<p><i>Outcome</i></p>
<p>Overall satisfaction rating of the event</p>	<p>91%</p>
<p>Would you recommend this event to a colleague?</p>	<p>89%</p>
<p>How will you use information gained?</p>	<p>84% of the delegates will proactively use the information from the event to feed back to colleagues and inform staff training – 51% will feed back to over 20 colleagues</p>
<p>How many claimants to you deal with each week, on average?</p>	<p>87% of the delegates deal with our claimants on the front line every week, with 38% dealing with on average over 25 claimants every week</p>
<p>Comments</p> <p><i>Strengths of the event</i></p> <p>The event went very well and was well organised. Welcome opportunity to learn more about Universal Credit.</p> <p><i>Suggestions for improvement</i></p> <p>Too many workshops for one person to attend in one day. More grassroots events required to cover this very wide agenda.</p> <p><i>General</i></p> <p>Scepticism about the Government’s ability to deliver its welfare reform agenda within the timescales and about the capability of the IT. Concern that, due to the uncertain future of the advice sector, people will not be able to access the advice and support they need.</p>	

4. Delegates

Name	Organisation
Hyboh Abdi	Camden Citizens Advice Bureau
Yetunde Adeleye	Look Ahead Housing & Care
Ron Alexander	DIAL UK
Stephanie Alexander	DIAL UK
Jane Alltimes	Mencap
Alice Arrenberg	London Advice Services Alliance
Alison Ash	Nottinghamshire Deaf Society
Jo-Anne Atkinson	Richmond Aid
Ginette Austin	Birmingham Crisis Centre
Katherine Bacon	Surrey Association for Visual Impairment
Dr Mark Baker	Action on Hearing Loss
Quyen Banh	Wandsworth Carers Centres
Sheila Barnes	Voice
Ian Bell	Maitland Political
Joe Benmore	London Probation Service
Tony Benson	London Borough of Camden
Lidia Best	National Association of Deafened People
Garry Billing	QEF Vocational Services
Clare Bishop	The Chase Citizens Advice Bureau
Karin Bishop	College of Occupational Therapists
Neil Bisset	London Borough of Hounslow
Gill Bottomley	Bath Citizens Advice Bureau
Liz Boulwood	Age UK
Patricia Brennan	Ealing Council
Richard Briden	Toynbee Hall
Andy Campbell	West Kent Social Services
Claire Cannings	Royal College of Nursing
Carla Capoluongo	Macmillan
Ruth Cartwright	British Association of Social Workers
Simone Caudell	Orbit South
Anthony Chappell	Northamptonshire Teaching Primary Care Trust
Graham Clark	Brigg Carers Support Centre
Shirley Clark	Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People
Christina Connolly	Brent Irish Advisory Service
Teresa Connolly	National Probation Service
Paul Costello	Royal British Legion Industries
Tom Cottam	Macmillan Cancer Support

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Dave Coughlan	Wandsworth Recovery Centre
Hayley Cox	Southern Housing Group
Emma Cross	Southwark Citizens Advice Bureau
Sandra Cuningham	Kensington Citizens Advice Bureau
Cathy Cunningham-Elliott	Essex County Council
Alice Dair	Staffordshire County Council
Hanh Dang	Vietnamese Health Advice Drop-In Project
Lynne Davey	Housing 21
Gareth Davies	National League for Blind & Disabled
Petronella Davis	Mind-in-Enfield
Liz Dawson	Child Poverty Action Group
Marsha De Cordova	Action for Blind People
John Denore	Independent Living Funds
Nessa Dincgun	Regard
Shonagh Dodd	London Borough of Camden
Andrea Edwards	Age Concern
Paul Edwards	South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust
Philomena Eels	South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust
Philip Elmes	Hertfordshire County Council
Angie Emerson	Brighton & Hove City Council
Helen Evans	City of London Citizens Advice Bureau
Judy Evans	City of Swansea Council
Geoff Fimister	Citizens Advice
Alexander Finkenrath	Finks Media
Stephen Fisher	RSI Action
Neil Flanigan	National Pensioners Convention
David Fletcher	Welsh Assembly Government
Michael Fothergill	Crisis UK
Alison Gelder	Housing Justice
Robert Gell	Child Poverty Action Group
Lee Gorse	Remploy
Bjorn Grant	St Mungos
Brian Green	Co-operative Group Pension Fund
Mark Greenwood	Abbeyfield
Suzette Gregu	City of London Citizens Advice Bureau
Karen Grimes	Disability Information & Advice Project
Laine Hadlow	MCCCH Society
Dawn Hardingham	Age Concern
Christine Harrison	BRAME
Sally Hartle	Independent Living
Anne Marie Hayden	Southwark Council

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Kevin Hepworth	Unite Amicus
Mary Hill	Barnardos
Gary Holland	Grace Debt Advice
Carol Hughes	Lambeth Law Centre
Clare Hughes-Cross	Broadway
Antony Hunt	Disability Croydon
Jane Hunt	Association of Disabled Professionals
Petronella Hutchinson	North West Kent College
Sean Hutton	Federation of Irish Societies
Bridget Hynard	ERSA
Martin Inch	Disability Alliance
Teresa Intavarant	Haringey Irish Centre
Femi Iyoha	Mind-in-Enfield
Susan Janes	Guinness South
Elcena Jeffers	Black Disabled People's Association
Alex Johnston	Tomorrow's People
Julie Jones	EmployAbility
Pamela Jones	City & Hackney Primary Care Trust
Sue Jones	Family Mosaic
Hayley Jordan	MS Society
Christina Katic	Down's Syndrome Association
John Kell	Motor Neurone Disease Association
Judith Kerem	National Autistic Society
Isobella Kerr	The Age & Employment Network
Arlene Kilim	London Irish Womens' Centre
Ian King	Royal College of Nursing
Lisa Kinghorn	Vision Housing
Katie Lane	Citizens Advice
Austin Larvin	Professional & Executive Community CIC
Shelley Leckey	South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust
Nicola Lee	Work Injured & Disabled Nurses
Anu Leinonen	Achievement
Kevin Lewis	Northamptonshire County Council
Julie Lodder	Kensington Citizens Advice Bureau
Rev Dr Peter Long	National Rail Industry
Mike Lowis	Mole Valley Housing Association
Peter McCarthy	Motability
Maeve McGoldrick	Community Links
John McGrory	North West London Hospitals Trust
Kieran McMahan	Disability Stockport
Paul Macklin	National Deaf Children's Society

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Mandy Maddock	Disability Croydon
Mary Maguire	Haringey Irish Centre
Hena Mannan-Islam	London Borough of Camden
Alan Markey	National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers
John Martin	Disability Advice Service Lambeth
Jane Mason	Buckinghamshire Economic & Learning Partnership
Lin Mathews	Age UK Norfolk
Sally Mbewe	Changing Faces
Rachel Merkel	Sweet Charity
Clive Millman	Jesus Fellowship Church
Fiona Monroe	Citizens Advice
Stuart Moon	Glasspool
Gareth Morgan	Cymru Welfare Rights Advisers
Alison Morrey	North Norfolk District Council
Iris Morris	Staffordshire County Council
Kanti Nagda	Sangat Advice Centre
Maureen Neave	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Anh Tu Nguyen	Federation of Refugees from Vietnam in Lewisham
Stephen O'Brien	Parkinson's UK
Michael Okae	London Borough of Camden
Ike Okolo	Royal British Legion
Siobhan Oktay	South Acton Children's Centre
Ibukun Olashore	Organisation of Blind African Caribbeans
Jane Orchiston	Sleaford & District Citizens Advice
Nikki Oxford	The Chase Citizens Advice Bureau
Sharon Palmer	RNIB
Elemay Parkes	Black Country Group
Manji Patel-Vekaria	Newham Voluntary Sector Consortium
Suzannah Paterson	MyWorkSearch
Heather Patterson	Lisieux Trust
Ray Perry	Kent County Council
Sandra Pierre	London Borough of Greenwich
Sasha Pollock	TWP Solutions Ltd
Michael Posen	Aguda Israel Community Services
Jane Power	Local Authority
Asefa Qayyum	Freedom From Torture
Rebecca Rennison	Leonard Cheshire Disability
Sean Rivers	Disability Law Service
Tony Rogers	Motability
Sheila Ross	ECHG Riverside
Theresa Rowe	Richmond Aid

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Sue Royston
Lesley Ryan
Susan Ryan
David Samson
Anila Shah
Simon Shaw
Demessew Shiferaw
Linda Sian
Amena Siddiqua
Christie Silk
Kate Sing'ombe
Pamela Smart
Teresa Snowden
Liz Starling
Liz Staunton
David Sterling
John Stevens
Omotolani Sulu
Derek Sutton
Amy Swinnerton
Tony Tersigni
Sharon Timmins
Julie Tipping
Sophie Tomlinson
Chrissie Upton
Helen Waddington
Carmel Walker
Luke Warren
David Webb
Sally West
Carol Wheeler
Mary White
Lisa Williams
Carole Wingett
Katia Yiasoumi
Danielle Zeider

Officials

Kim Archer
Claire de Banke
Neville Cavendish

Citizens Advice
The London Irish Centre
Lambeth Law Centre
London Advice Services Alliance
Sangat Advice Centre
Sense
West London Mental Health Trust
Reed in Partnership
London Borough of Camden
Citizens Advice
Professionals Aid Council
Kent County Council
MCCH Society
Sarsen Housing Association Ltd
Herefordshire County Council
The Salvation Army
Frontline Debt Advice
50 Plus Employment Link
Peabody
Welfare Benefits Training
St Pancras Hospital
BSL Interpreter
Disability Solutions
Thames Reach
ESF Works
Perennial
London Borough of Enfield
Alzheimer's Society
West Hampstead CMHT
Age UK
Wiltshire Citizens Advice Bureau
Enfield Disability Action
Local Authority
Royal Brompton Hospital
University College Hospital
Macmillan

Pension, Disability & Carers Service
Pension, Disability & Carers Service
DWP Universal Credit Directorate

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Andy Chiga	DWP Ageing Society Directorate
Phil Cottam	Pension, Disability & Carers Service
Dan Donaldson	DWP Insight Division
Michael Duncan	DWP Communications
Linda Francis	DWP Communications
Lorna Fraser	DWP Disability & Carers Benefits Division
Lord Freud	Minister for Welfare Reform
Daniel Gieve	DWP Benefit Strategy Directorate
Jill Gillatt	DWP Communications
Mike Greenhalgh	DWP Information Directorate
Heather Grey	Pension, Disability & Carers Service
Ajita Hathlia	DWP Universal Credit Directorate
Sharon Hepworth	Jobcentre Plus
Reuben Holmes	DWP Jobseekers & Work Programme
Steve Hutcheon	DWP Information Directorate
Simon Innocent	DWP Communications
Craig Isherwood	Pension, Disability & Carers Service
Catherine Jones	Pension, Disability & Carers Service
Alex Kempner	DWP Communications
Janet Lambe	DWP Communications
Andy Levitt	DWP Customer Standards
Lynn Middleton	DWP Pensions, Information & Presentation Division
Graham Millward	DWP Internal Communications
Ann-Marie Mulcahy	DWP Information Directorate
Jonas Nystrom	Housing Policy Division
Rob O'Carroll	DWP Welfare & Wellbeing Group
Brian Pepper	Atos
Roger Pugh	DWP Communications
Lucie Roberts	Pension, Disability & Carers Service
Basil Rodrigues	Jobcentre Plus
Kirsty Scholefield	Jobcentre Plus
Nick Smith	DWP Disability & Carers Benefits Division
Luke Staniland	DWP Welfare Change Delivery Programme
Isobel Stephen	Jobcentre Plus
Mary Stivaros	Jobcentre Plus
Jan Sutton	DWP Pensions, Information & Presentation Division
Debbie Vials	DWP Pensions, Information & Presentation Division
Andy Vickers	DWP Welfare & Wellbeing Group
Cathy While	Pension, Disability & Carers Service
Mark Wilson	DWP Welfare & Wellbeing Group
Jennifer Witchell	DWP Ageing Society Directorate

