

Prime Minister's foreword



A fair society is built on a shared understanding of what each of us can expect from the other, which is why we have put not just rights but the responsibilities that match them at the heart of our welfare reforms.

Since we published our Green Paper earlier this year the global economic climate has undergone considerable change, with the employment market getting tougher and many people understandably worried about their futures and their jobs.

In today's turbulent times, it is more important than ever for the government to provide real help for those who need it, when they need it – whether they are facing redundancy or need support and advice to help them get back into work.

But in return, it is right to expect people to play their part by taking up the support that is offered to them and doing their best to get themselves ready for work. Too many of our communities still bear the scars of previous downturns, never having recovered from the scandal of millions pushed into a benefits system that too often trapped its recipients rather than supporting them back into work. As a Government we will learn the lessons of these past mistakes, doing everything we can during these difficult times to help people through the downturn fairly and to put them and their families in the best possible position to benefit from the economic recovery.

This White Paper marks the next stage in our welfare reforms – moving towards a system that offers more support but that expects more in return. I believe this is the right approach – helping people to develop their skills, make the most of their talents and build a better life for themselves, their families and their communities. And it is also the right approach for Britain – the key to becoming a fairer, more prosperous and more aspirational nation.

Bold, imaginative and tailored to people's personal needs, these changes will deliver fairness for taxpayers and benefit claimants alike – and in the face of challenging economic circumstances they will bring the advantages of work to more people than ever before.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gordon Brown".

Gordon Brown
The Prime Minister

Ministerial foreword



This White Paper aims to improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Keeping people engaged with the labour market will help them to take advantage of employment opportunities, make them better off and enable them to contribute to their community through employment. Our goals of ending child poverty and achieving equality for disabled people would be within reach.

That is the point of welfare reform: transforming lives and healing the scars left by previous recessions.

But it also helps people through today's economic downturn. Welfare reform is about making sure people take up the support that we know works. It is never about punishing people if they do not find work, despite their best efforts. In previous recessions, governments made the mistake of shuffling people on to inactive benefits, and then trapping them there.

As a consequence, when we came to power, the number of people on incapacity benefits had tripled and Britain had nearly a million lone parents out of work.

Some people say we should slow down welfare reform because we are entering a recession. The Government believes that we should do the opposite – we should increase the pace, because that means offering more support to people and matching it with the expectation that they should not fall out of touch with the world of work.

That is how we avoid the mistakes of the past. We help as many people as possible to find work now, and prepare everyone else to find work in the upturn, so that today's job losses do not become tomorrow's scars on our communities.

We inherited a welfare state that offered neither enough support nor asked enough of benefit recipients. Only around 30 per cent of recipients of key working-age benefits had to do anything in return for their benefits and the Government did little to make work pay.

This government set about putting that right in three phases of welfare reform.

First, we **deepened the obligation to work**, by introducing the New Deal and creating Jobcentre Plus out of the merger of the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service. These reforms meant that people signed up for work when they signed on for benefits – and introduced the principle that there was no 'fifth option' to avoid preparing for work within the New Deal. We matched those obligations with higher support, including by making work pay through the National Minimum Wage and the Working Tax Credit.

Second, we **widened the obligation to work**. We piloted the New Deal for Disabled People and Pathways to Work, the first employment programmes to help people on incapacity benefits get to a stage where they can find work. The New Deal for Lone Parents was introduced on a voluntary basis. That support worked,

but we wanted more people to benefit. So we are now replacing incapacity benefits with the Employment and Support Allowance, and from April this year all new claimants have been required to go through Pathways to Work, apart from those with the most severe conditions. From this November, we are requiring lone parents to look for work from when their youngest child reaches 12 years old, moving down to seven years old from 2010.

This White Paper implements the third phase of this reform programme. It is based on a simple idea: that **no one should be left behind**, that virtually everyone should be required to take up the support that we know helps people to overcome barriers to work. It draws on international experience, particular from Scandinavia and the Netherlands, where they have welfare systems that have generous support, but also high expectations that people who can find work will do so.

It is built on the recommendations of two independent reviews: the Freud Report and Gregg Review. It confirms that we will implement the Freud Report in full, including piloting his 'invest to save' proposal, where private and voluntary providers use future benefit spending to fund more up front investment to get more people back to work.

Professor Paul Gregg's Review was published last week. This White Paper confirms our support for his vision of a welfare state where virtually everyone is either looking for work or preparing for work – instead of just a third of benefit claimants having obligations. It sets out how we will legislate for that vision and pilot his recommendations, as we have with previous reforms.

These reforms will be based on giving people more power over their lives. Our Green Paper committed us to simplifying the benefits system. This paper takes important steps towards the goal of a simpler more effective system. Instead of treating claimants according to the group they are in, we will personalise the support they get to the barriers they face. They will be responsible for devising their action plan to prepare for work, in partnership with their adviser. Disabled people will be given a right to control the support that they get so they can decide how it is spent, with trailblazers in selected areas giving them power to overcome the discrimination from society which too many still face.

These reforms offer a vision of a fairer welfare system where truly no one is written off, where nearly everyone is preparing or looking for work, where everyone is treated as an individual and gets the support they need.

More importantly these reforms point the way to a fairer society where children don't grow up in poverty, where disabled people enjoy real equality, and everyone is given real help to overcome the barriers to achieving their full potential.



James Purnell
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions