

# Summary of Responses

Helping people achieve  
their full potential:

## Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services

large print



**DWP**

Department for  
Work and Pensions

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# Ministerial foreword



Having recently accepted the appointment of Minister for Disabled People I am pleased to be able to present the summary of responses we received to the consultation *Helping people achieve their full potential: Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services*<sup>1</sup>, which ended earlier this year.

We believe the consultation proposals offer a greater clarity of service and support for disabled people, and are clear that the proposed new specialist disability employment programme must meet the specific needs of those disabled people who are furthest from the labour market.

We received over 450 responses to the consultation proposals, from a wide range of people and organisations, which were overwhelmingly positive. In light of this strong support, the recent Green Paper *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility* published in July 2008<sup>2</sup> announced our intention to press ahead with implementation and delivery.

The reform proposals are all about making our services more flexible and more personalised, in other words moving away from the 'one size fits all' idea and with a greater emphasis on moving into unsupported employment, where appropriate. We believe

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<sup>1</sup> DWP. 2007. *Helping people achieve their full potential: Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services* public consultation. ISBN 978-1-84763-177-0.

<sup>2</sup> *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility* Green Paper consultation. 2008, TSO (The Stationery Office). Can be accessed online at: [www.dwp.gov.uk/noonewrittenoff](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/noonewrittenoff) – see Chapter Three pages 74-79.

that no-one should be left behind and we will provide personalised support to everyone who needs it, to ensure they have the opportunity to get into and remain in work.

We know that aspects of these reforms may bring challenges, but our goals are equally challenging – an 80 per cent employment rate, and opportunity for all, including the most disabled, to find and keep a fulfilling job. For some, these opportunities have never been available.

Taking into account the need for time to prepare for the forthcoming changes, we intend to start the new programme in 2010 and will be discussing arrangements with key stakeholders in the next few months. It is important that we involve as many of you as possible, both at national and local levels, in taking forward the new programme. We believe, that alongside proposals set out in the Green Paper earlier this year, this new programme will help more disabled people into work and into unsupported employment and so realise their full potential.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Shaw', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Jonathan Shaw**

Minister for Disabled People

# Summary

1. The public consultation *Helping people achieve their full potential: Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services* was launched on Monday 3 December 2007 and ended on Monday 10 March 2008.
2. It set out and sought views on proposed reforms to:
  - three national (England, Scotland and Wales) specialist disability employment programmes (i.e. Work Preparation, WORKSTEP and the Job Introduction Scheme); and
  - the way that Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) in Jobcentre Plus work in relation to these programmes.
3. In addition, we asked how we might further improve Access to Work.
4. The consultation put forward a number of questions to help respondents shape and prepare their responses. This summary captures the key issues and ideas that have been raised in response to the consultation. There were other areas where stakeholders wanted to comment and these are also reflected.
5. We received over 450 responses to the consultation which were overwhelmingly positive, particularly around our proposals to replace our existing specialist disability employment programmes (ie Work Preparation, WORKSTEP and the Job Introduction Scheme) with a new programme. Responses reinforced our belief that Access to Work was a popular and effective programme.

6. As a result, the Green Paper *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility* published on 21 July 2008 announced our intention to press ahead with the reform proposals outlined in the consultation. In addition, the Green Paper announced our intention to double the Access to Work budget by 2013/2014, together with an expansion of the supported employment budget for the proposed new programme.
7. These reforms will ensure that we help those disabled people who are furthest from the labour market to get and keep a job, where appropriate, and at the same time help drive progress towards a number of government priorities, including the Public Service Agreement on adults at risk of social exclusion<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Public Service Agreements (PSAs) – information available at: [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk)

# Chapter One – How we consulted

1. Stakeholders were consulted using a wide range of mechanisms in order to get a wide range of views.

## Formal consultation

2. The formal consultation period for the *Helping people achieve their full potential: Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services* public consultation began on Monday 3 December 2007 and ended on Monday 10 March 2008. People could respond by post and through a dedicated email address.
3. The consultation document was made available in different formats and appeared on several accessible websites. In addition, written articles, both internally within government and externally, helped tell people about the consultation, as did the numerous workshops, public consultation events, meetings and discussions that took place both before and during the 14 week consultation period.
4. A landline Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) telephone number and email address were publicised and available throughout the consultation period for people seeking printed copies and alternative formats of the consultation.

5. We received formal responses from:
  - 122 individuals, including service users, carers and professionals;
  - 248 organisations, including trades unions, public bodies, voluntary organisations, providers and employers; and
  - 88 DWP/Jobcentre Plus staff.
6. A list of organisations who responded is shown at Annex A.

### **Consultation events, workshops and discussions**

7. The consultation was launched on Monday 3 December 2007 by Rt Hon Anne McGuire MP, Minister for Disabled People, during a visit to Mitchell and Cooper, international manufacturers of catering equipment in Uckfield, East Sussex.
8. During the consultation period, Ministers publicised the consultation and the proposals at appropriate events they attended and during visits they made.
9. The Minister for Disabled People also gave the keynote address at a large public consultation event in Scotland, the first of four such DWP led events covering England, Scotland and Wales, which were attended by over 500 people from a range of backgrounds, including disabled people, representatives from disability organisations, employers, service providers from the private and third sector and Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers.

10. The four DWP-led public consultation events were held in:
  - Edinburgh – in the Heriot Watt Conference Centre at Edinburgh University on 21 January 2008;
  - London – at The Oval on 24 January 2008;
  - Manchester – at the Museum of Science and Industry on 30 January 2008; and
  - Cardiff – at The Future Inn on 12 February 2008.
  
11. In addition, there were a number of other events, meetings and workshops attended by DWP officials around the country, where other people were given and took the opportunity to be involved in the consultation including:
  - a jointly led Scottish Executive and Council of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) event in Glasgow on 4 February 2008, for senior managers within those organisations; and
  - a joint British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) and Community union event for their members at Loughborough University on 21 February 2008. The Minister for Disabled People gave a keynote address by video-link at this event.

12. DWP officials also had face-to-face meetings to discuss the reform proposals before and during the consultation period with:
- members of the Disability Employment Advisory Committee (DEAC);
  - a number of Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers;
  - the Local Government Association (LGA);
  - Mencap;
  - Scope;
  - Mind;
  - RNID;
  - RNIB;
  - RADAR; and
  - the Leonard Cheshire Foundation.

### **Online consultation**

13. We wanted to reach as many people as possible and make it easy for them to respond to the consultation and so we placed the consultation document on our own consultation page on the DWP website from where it could be downloaded.
14. In addition, other organisations provided links to it from their own websites.

## **Distribution of printed copies and alternative formats of the consultation**

15. The consultation document was also made available in a variety of printed and alternative formats, and we distributed around 2,500 copies in total.

## **Reaching those people whose first language is British Sign Language**

16. During the consultation period it became clear that some members of the deaf community, whose first language is British Sign Language (BSL), felt they were excluded from the consultation process, as a BSL version of the consultation had not been produced. This decision had been taken at the outset, as there had previously been little or no demand for this format for other DWP consultations.
17. As there was insufficient time left during the consultation period to produce a BSL version, DWP officials went out to the deaf community across the country and delivered bespoke events/workshops using qualified BSL interpreters, particularly for this client group, ensuring they could fully engage in the consultation process.
18. These included events in:
  - Nottingham – at the Nottinghamshire Deaf Society on 11 February 2008;
  - Birmingham – at the Birmingham Deaf Cultural Centre on 26 February 2008; and
  - Newcastle – at the Newcastle Deaf Centre on 29 February 2008.

19. We have listened to the accessibility concerns from this client group and are now taking their needs into account when producing future DWP publications. As a result, a BSL DVD of the Summary from the recent Green Paper *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility* published in July 2008 is also available.
20. A link to the summary version of this document in BSL is available at [www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/des-consultation.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/des-consultation.asp) and has also been produced in BSL DVD format which is available from the address on the back cover of this document.

# Chapter Two – The case for change

## Introduction

1. Chapter Two of the consultation document *Helping people achieve their full potential: Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services* set out the reasons for the proposed changes to the way that some of our specialist employment support for disabled people might be delivered in the future.
2. Drawing on the wealth of evidence from provision of services, independent research, talking to disabled people and their representatives, and from analysis by the National Audit Office (NAO), we already know that our existing specialist disability employment services have helped transform the lives of many thousands of disabled people<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Key sources: Comptroller and Auditor General, (2005). *Gaining and retaining a job: the Department for Work and Pensions' support for disabled people*. National Audit Office, HC455 Session 2005-06, 13 October 2005. Purvis, A. Lowrey, J., and Dobbs, L. 2006. *WORKSTEP evaluation case studies: Exploring the design, delivery and performance of the WORKSTEP Programme*. DWP Report Number 348, CDS.

3. However, we also recognised there was significant scope for improvement, which included evidence from the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, NAO and the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, with radical changes being introduced to the way the Department buys services, this was an opportunity to progress our collective aim of achieving equality in the labour market for disabled people.

## The current programmes

4. The consultation document provided an analysis of our current specialist disability employment programmes and showed that they do not always focus on the needs of individual customers, are not always of a good quality and may not be available near where people need the services.
5. Currently, our Work Preparation programme can be too rigid in terms of the restrictions on what our providers are expected to deliver and the short timescales we contract for them to work with each individual. Some disabled people, for example those with moderate to severe learning disabilities, could benefit from access to services that recognise the need for a programme that is not so rigid.

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<sup>5</sup> Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (2005) *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*, Cabinet Office, January 2005.

6. Also, WORKSTEP has a strong expectation that customers entering the provision will start work within an eight week period. This expectation can be at odds with the aim of helping people who are a significant distance from the labour market. We now know that many of the customers who enter this specialist provision require more than eight weeks' support prior to finding work.
7. We proposed stopping customers from losing out due to such inflexibilities. If an individual needs, for example, an additional few weeks to find a job, we want to be more flexible in offering that help. We therefore believe that it is important that we look to create extra flexibility to cater for this in the future provision.
8. It is clear from our programme evaluations that Work Preparation (either as an assessment or job entry service) and WORKSTEP can be used together effectively to help someone gain and retain employment. However, this does not happen often enough.
9. Where a customer is likely to require both types of support we proposed that it would be more effective if this was identified early, so that their support needs could be met as part of a single cohesive package. For this reason we recognised the important role that Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentre Plus play in developing a support package at the start of the process and the benefits of introducing a single programme capable of identifying and addressing the barriers that disabled people face.

10. The consultation also identified that we have too many small and poorly performing contracts. Therefore, in line with the change to fewer, longer, larger contracts outlined in the DWP Commissioning Strategy, published February 2008<sup>6</sup>, and in line with NAO recommendations, we also proposed reducing the number of contracts for this provision.
11. Although our existing WORKSTEP and Access to Work provision is transforming the lives of thousands of people through delivering supported employment to help them find and stay in work that they would otherwise lose, we recognised that there is a need to ensure that all our disabled customers have opportunities to be supported to achieve their full potential.
12. Enabling more of our supported employment customers to reach a position where they can maintain their employment independently of external support forms one of the key recommendations of the *Life Chances* report and is a central part of what we believe a good supported employment service should provide. It is important because:
  - we want to enable more disabled people to live independent lives and a fundamental part of this includes helping them stay in work independently; and
  - ultimately we have limited resources – for every person who continues to receive support that they do not need, there is potentially another person who could benefit from that support but is unable to receive it.

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<sup>6</sup> DWP Commissioning Strategy (February 2008) can be viewed online at: [www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2008/com-strategy/cs-rep-08.pdf](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2008/com-strategy/cs-rep-08.pdf)

13. The consultation recognised that, for some of our customers, it is unrealistic to expect them to progress to unsupported 'independent' employment. However, we do expect these customers to be helped to progress as much as possible. This might involve helping them change roles within their company, seek promotion and/or develop new skills. However, we recognise that, for some people, there will be a long-term need for us to provide appropriate support.

**We asked:**

Question 1 – Are there any points in the evidence-base that you either strongly agree with or strongly disagree with?

**You said:**

In summary, there was general support for the evidence presented in the consultation document.

It was felt that there was a lack of analysis of employment by impairment group and there should have been more discussion about self-employment and retention issues within the consultation.

**Specifically you said:**

"We accept that the case for change has been made."  
*(City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council)*

"RNID believes that the current system of employment services provision for disabled people is not sufficient to meet the variety of need presented and that reform is necessary."  
*(RNID)*

continued

“There is widespread agreement with the need to ensure that any new programme is less prescriptive and more flexible; we especially welcome the move towards timescales that can respond to individual needs rather than the current fixed periods.”

*(Newcastle City Council)*

“The evidence is we think both helpful and reliable; we do not see enough emphasis in the welfare reform agenda on retention.”

*(Access Made Easy Disability Consultants)*

“ODI particularly welcomes the pan-disability approach apparent throughout the consultation and the reform plans...but give consideration to how services will be flexible enough to be tailored to support people with particular conditions.”

*(Office for Disability Issues – ODI)*

“The ‘Key Evaluation Findings’ in Box 5 (page 24) all position the individual as customer or end user in the system. Employers are only mentioned in terms of making adjustments for disabled employees. In actual fact, the employer journey starts earlier than this and EFD believes that employers must also be positioned as customers of the system that helps people into work.”

*(Employers’ Forum on Disability)*

“The lack of integrated planning with health and social services, with employer engagement and with the skills agenda suggests that progress is piecemeal.”

*(RNID)*

continued

“We support a pan disability approach to employment support programmes only in so far as an individual is able to receive support specific to their needs.”

*(RNID)*

“GMB is concerned that DWP may be underestimating the difficulties of securing adequate employment in the private sector.”

*(GMB union)*

**We asked:**

Question 2 – Do you agree that disabled people should only be directed to our specialist disability employment provision where it is unlikely that our other programmes, such as the New Deals, would be effective?

**You said:**

In summary, general support existed around the point that disabled people should only be directed to specialist provision where it is unlikely that other programmes would be effective.

Respondents were concerned about disabled people being singled out and treated ‘differently’, while recognising that it would not be appropriate to be placed onto New Deals for some, there was a feeling that there should be a proper assessment procedure and the individual should have an input into decisions.

continued

**Specifically you said:**

“Disabled people should be directed to specialist disability employment provision – new deal should be a progression opportunity.”

*(Welsh Assembly)*

“I would agree that disabled people should only be directed to the specialist provision only when other programmes are unlikely to be effective.”

*(Individual)*

“There is a principle agreement that people should only be referred to Specialist Disability Employment Services where other programmes are unlikely to be effective; this approach should ensure that resources are most effectively and efficiently directed.”

*(Newcastle City Council)*

“Directing people to specialist disability employment provision could be advantageous to the individual however the individual should still have the choice. Some individuals may feel that by taking up specialist services they may be stigmatised and this may be detrimental to their ability to gain employment.”

*(Scottish Union of Supported Employment – SUSE)*

“WORKSTEP should not be seen as a last resort, providers and customers should see it as an option, a choice, and referrals should be a joint decision, made by the person with the disability and the Disability Employment Services Specialist Advisor.”

*(Community)*

“It should be a cohesive joined up way of dealing with the issues so that a person with a disability is able to use the service at any point of entry.”

*(Communications Workers Union)*

## **How the Government is taking this forward**

14. Based on the evidence already discussed and taking into account the responses to this consultation, the recent Green Paper *No one written off: welfare to reward responsibility* announced that we are pressing ahead with the proposals outlined in the consultation. We will be expanding our supported employment budget to help with the introduction of the new service and will be doubling the Access to Work budget, enabling us to help more disabled people get and keep a job.

# Chapter Three – Integrated, flexible support for customers

## Introduction

1. This Chapter sets out what the consultation proposed in terms of a new programme and how we intend to take things forward.
2. We proposed the replacement of the current Work Preparation, WORKSTEP and the Job Introduction Scheme by combining this provision into a single integrated programme with three clear support functions, offering a more integrated support package that can be more easily tailored to meet the needs of our customers.
3. This approach would help ensure that:
  - the high levels of expertise and dedication frequently demonstrated by our Jobcentre Plus staff and external public, private and third sector providers can be focused on meeting the needs of individual customers rather than navigating the current system; and
  - we open up the number, scope and quality of jobs available and thereby improve the opportunities available to disabled people, and improve the ability of employers to utilise a significant proportion of the labour force that is often overlooked.

## Principles for the new programme

4. The main principles for the new programme will be to:
  - improve the customer experience and be able to provide a more personalised service that helps customers move into, and then progress in, work; and
  - ensure the right customers can access the new programme.
5. To do this we intend to:
  - ensure that support is reserved for those disabled people who are unlikely to receive sufficient support from our wider employment services, e.g. the Flexible New Deal programme or Pathways to Work;
  - combine the current Work Preparation, WORKSTEP and the Job Introduction Scheme into a new single modular programme so that customers receive the right support;
  - ensure the service provided is capable of delivering support that is tailored to the needs of each individual customer and, throughout a customer's time on the programme, the support is:
    - continuously focused on enabling the individual to progress out of the programme;
    - changed as the individual's circumstances change;
    - reviewed at regular intervals by customers, the service provider and the employer; and

- from the outset, agreed on the basis that the support will be regularly reviewed and is likely to be withdrawn over time – the timescale for this will depend, largely, on the progress that the customer is making in their workplace;
  - recognise that the programme will continue to be available for individuals who have longer-term support needs. However, these needs will also be reviewed at regular intervals and support will be changed – decreased or increased – when appropriate;
  - ensure that all support provided to individuals has a clear focus on enabling that individual to progress towards unsupported employment;
  - improve the relationships between this employment-focused provision and other organisations that support customers who have complex barriers to employment, e.g. social care, NHS Trusts and education establishments; and
  - work with employers to enable more disabled people with complex barriers to enter and progress in work.
6. As with WORKSTEP, the new programme will be available to disabled customers irrespective of which benefit they claim.

7. We also recognise that:

- we need to be clear about the role within a single programme, of supported businesses;
- the changes may have an impact on existing WORKSTEP customers who either work in supported businesses or with other employers. We will be putting in place and communicating appropriate transitional arrangements to ensure that these individuals can continue to receive the support they require to maintain their employment and, where appropriate, progress into unsupported employment.

**We asked:**

Question 3 – Are there points of our overall proposal to replace the Job Introduction Scheme (JIS), Work Preparation and WORKSTEP with a single programme that you either strongly agree with or strongly disagree with?

**You said:**

In summary, there was strong overall support for the proposal to have a single programme with very little disagreement, with the proviso that any new programme must be flexible enough to cater for individual customer needs.

The majority of respondents were happy that the Job Introduction Scheme (JIS) would disappear. Comments were made that the scheme is bureaucratic and in some instances embarrassing to offer to potential employers. Only a handful of respondents felt it was a useful tool to use with employers to encourage them to employ disabled people.

continued

**Specifically you said:**

“A single programme will support progression and facilitate a more client centred approach.”

*(Welsh Assembly)*

“RBLI believes that the new programme should place greater focus on helping customers progress off the programme provided it is in the best interests of the individual customer and is not detrimental to the provider in terms of maintenance of the programme.”

*(Royal British Legion Industries – RBLI)*

“The general agreement among members is that the proposal to merge the three programmes into one would be beneficial to customers and will offer continuity and clarity about services available.”

*(Scottish Union of Supported Employment – SUSE)*

“I strongly agree with the concept of a single programme, if only because it is the fragmented nature of the current pattern that has failed my son so badly.”

*(Individual)*

“We believe the introduction of a single programme would represent a better use of public investment.”

*(RNID)*

“Large and small employers find the range of nationally and locally delivered initiatives confusing and EFD welcomes DWP’s effort to better join up locally delivered services and partnerships with national programmes.”

*(Employers’ Forum on Disability)*

continued

“We have observed that currently services are too segregated and overly complex...We agree that there should be a clearer, more flexible, single programme.”

*(Social Security Advisory Committee – SSAC)*

“We agree with this proposal and welcome the increased flexibility and potential for tailoring support to individual needs. We also agree with the focus on those who need most support.”

*(Mind)*

“Scope agrees with the development of a single programme, on condition that this programme is flexible and not a one size fits all approach.”

*(Scope)*

“JIS money would be better spent on employing interpreters at work experience events.”

*(Consultation Event Delegates – Birmingham Deaf Centre)*

“We agree that the use of a short-term employer subsidy should only be considered where it is linked to a direct adjustment and tied to more practical ‘hands-on’ support. An important part of the proposed role of each provider would therefore be to help employers to make adjustments and agree an appropriate level of support that is tailored to both the needs of the individual, their employer and the working environment.”

*(Trade Union Disability Alliance)*

## How the Government is taking this forward

8. In light of the positive response we have received, we intend to introduce the proposed new, single programme that will replace the existing Work Preparation, WORKSTEP and the Job Introduction Scheme programmes from October 2010, as announced in the Green Paper *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility* (July 2008).
9. The new programme will:
  - ensure that customers receive the right level of support and the support is regularly reviewed;
  - better meet the needs of individual disabled customers by providing tailored support for them to prepare for, start and retain paid employment;
  - support our customers to live more independently;
  - improve the support so that our customers can achieve their full employment potential; and
  - better encourage and enable disabled customers to move towards and, where an individual is able, into unsupported employment. We recognise that for some customers, longer-term support will continue to be required.

## The modular approach

10. The consultation proposed a modular approach for the new programme. This approach is intended to help service providers and customers ensure that the right level and type of support is provided throughout an individual's time on the programme.
11. In summary the modules are:
  - **Module 1** – Work Entry. This module will provide customers with intensive support to help them move into employment.
  - **Module 2** – Transitional Supported Employment. This is a time-limited module that recognises customers will need a relatively high level of support when they first enter employment, but the expectation should always be that this support will, with agreement between the individual, their employer and the service provider, be reduced and withdrawn over an agreed period of time.
  - **Module 3** – Longer Term Support. This module recognises that some customers will need longer-term support, possibly lasting all their working lives, to enable them to remain in employment. However, from the outset and throughout their time on the programme, all customers should be encouraged to move towards unsupported employment. For some this may take several years and be dependent on the right job becoming available.

12. In addition to the modules, we recognise that some disabled customers – because of their particular disability or fluctuating condition, or because of a change to their job role may need to return to the new specialist programme having progressed into unsupported work. We want to enable people to fulfil their potential by facilitating a return for support if they get into difficulties and will be discussing how this process might work during a series of events with customers, employers, providers and representative organisations over the next few months.
13. We also recognise the importance of supporting people who become disabled to retain their employment, so they and their employer have access to advice and support.
14. Also, for many disabled people the option to be self-employed is a realistic alternative to becoming an employee. We intend to seek ways in which the services we offer can also support self-employed disabled people.

**We asked:**

Question 4 – For the Work Entry element of the proposed new programme – how could we best ensure that our providers focus their efforts on all their customers and not just those most likely to get a job?

Question 5 – For the Transitional Supported Employment element of the proposed new programme – is it right that we should introduce a greater focus on helping people progress off the provision and what safeguards and flexibilities would you like to see included?

continued

Question 6 – For the Longer-Term Supported Employment element of the proposed new programme – how can we best ensure that providers work closely with employers and individual disabled people to help them develop in their job whilst on the provision?

**You said:**

In summary, respondents were supportive of the desire to focus on moving people through the provision and into unsupported employment. There was an overwhelming desire that there should be flexibility over the two year length of the transitional supported employment element.

Also many respondents recognised there should be safeguards that allow customers to return to the programme, provision for support available after moving off the programme, and assessment during this period to allow movement between different programme elements.

**Specifically you said:**

“We welcome the principle of ‘transitional supported employment’. However, flexibility must be built into the programme to ensure disabled people can access support when needed, rather than return to benefits.”

*(Equality 2025)*

“The safeguard must be that if it is found that the individual was removed too soon or that their circumstances have changed then they must be reinstated on the scheme immediately.”

*(GMB union)*

continued

“More focus was needed on aftercare service to ensure job sustainability. This needed to link to improved tracking systems which were auditable, accountable and transparent.”

*(Equal Access to Employment Glasgow)*

“Some disabled people are likely to benefit from being able to contact their WORKSTEP provider for advice and support on an ad hoc basis when needed, rather than having to be re-referred back to their original provider.”

*(Scope)*

“Yes, safeguards being that there is ongoing consultation with the employer and employee, and an ‘open door’ policy for any needs for assistance during say the next 6 months.”

*(Individual)*

“Often people are willing to progress off supported employment however they and their employer often want to have the security of knowing that someone can be contacted if issues arise.”

*(Scottish Union of Supported Employment – SUSE)*

“Any individual making this transition must be confident that they can continue to access in-work support from transitional agencies...Similarly, work must be undertaken with employers to build their capacity and awareness as well as that of other employees.”

*(RNID)*

## How the Government is taking this forward

15. We intend designing the new programme with a strong emphasis on the needs of individual customers who have complex barriers to prepare for, find, start and progress in work. In other words, to better support our customers to achieve their full in-work potential.
16. We will consider the appropriate maximum period of time that an individual can remain on Module 1. However, unlike the existing Work Preparation programme (which restricts customers to a maximum of 13 weeks), we plan to introduce a far more appropriate maximum period with safeguards should an individual need more time to find employment. This change recognises that customers who have complex barriers to work can need intensive support before they are able to start paid employment.
17. We will consider how our service providers should work with organisations such as colleges, social care providers and Jobcentre Plus, to identify customers who could benefit from this new work-focused programme. Proactive engagement with employers will also be important so that customers who start the programme can be helped to focus on realistic job opportunities.
18. Module 2 of the programme is to be time limited, i.e. up to two years. However, we will need to identify how customers can benefit from this provision by ensuring that each customer has an agreed action plan, which is reviewed at regular intervals, and associated support is provided. Such support will need to be clearly focused on helping the individual customer gain in confidence and develop their skills so that, for many, the service provider is able to withdraw

their support and leave the customer in paid employment. For the vast majority of customers we expect the support of the service provider to end ahead of the two year point.

19. Where, either during the first module or at an early point in Module 2, there are longer-term support needs identified, the service provider should consider whether to move the customer into Module 3 or seek support from Access to Work.
20. We will be discussing the design of the new programme in more detail during a series of events with customers, employers, providers and representative organisations over the next few months.

## **Monitoring and quality standards**

21. The consultation said that there is significant scope to improve our existing specialist disability employment services that help our disabled customers achieve their full employment potential. For example, we need to have more consistency across all our service providers; this can be achieved by introducing service-wide quality standards that enable our customers to achieve their full employment potential regardless of the area in which the customer lives.
22. Because of their unique position we also said we would consider giving our Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) in Jobcentre Plus a clearer role as a contact point for our customers to feedback their experiences. This approach does already happen, but not in a consistent way. We recognise that our current customers do not always know how to feedback, or even that they have a right to do so. Further information about the proposed role of the DEA is in Chapter Four.

**We asked:**

Question 7 – What should we do to ensure that consistently high standards are delivered?

**You said:**

There was a strong emphasis on the importance of strong monitoring and inspection systems with a Quality Standards framework in place.

Many disability organisations were clear about the need for disabled people to be involved in the process and to have their views accounted for in feedback. There was strong support for DEA involvement in the monitoring process.

**Specifically you said:**

“Robust Quality Assurance mechanisms are required to ensure that the implementation of the proposed programme is effective and consistent across the provision.”

*(Newcastle City Council)*

“Ofsted and Estyn inspections of the Workstep programme, gave clear benchmarks for Providers to compare their performance against others, with standards that were objectively assessed.”

*(WISE Ltd)*

“Ensure that prime contractors are governed by a code of practice and binding legal framework.”

*(Access Made Easy Disability Consultants)*

continued

“The invitation to tender should clearly state the specification and the service being required. There needs to be robust contracting, monitoring, QA methods, practices and procedures; and evidence-based methods used to evaluate the tender documents.”

*(DWP staff member)*

“A more flexible approach to the current 8 week target to find work should be taken however; providers should be set clear challenging goals which are reviewed via a robust quality standards regime.”

*(Derbyshire Employment and Skills Board)*

“Regular quality monitoring based on the Common Inspection Framework will allow quality of provision across the country to be tested.”

*(Employment Related Services Association – ERSA)*

“Clients should be continuously monitored and the DEA should be able to move clients from one area of service to another.”

*(Bridge Employment)*

“Perhaps the planning stage need to be a cooperative phase involving the DEA, the provider concerned, possibly the Further Education Service and a potential employer.”

*(Individual)*

## **How the Government is taking this forward**

23. We will look at the best practices that are currently being applied and identify ways in which we can further improve the quality standards to ensure that the new programme is focused on the needs of individual disabled people, to support them to achieve their full employment potential.

## **Commissioning the new programme**

24. The consultation said that we plan to conduct an open competitive tender with the public, private and third sectors. This will take on board lessons learnt from existing provision and embrace the key principles outlined in our new commissioning strategy. We will ensure the new programme adopts these new measures while continuing to strongly encourage the use of sub-contractors to help ensure that our customers are offered a diverse service and that the expertise of some of our more successful smaller providers continues to be utilised.

**We asked:**

Question 8 – What else can we do to improve the way in which DWP's supported employment services for disabled people are delivered?

Question 12 – We are considering holding an open competitive tender for contracts. For some of our current WORKSTEP customers this could mean their employment support transferring to another provider. What would we need to consider and what actions do you think we would need to take to help make any such transfers a success?

Question 14 – Are there other specific issues that we would need to consider in moving to a competitive tender for this provision?

**You said:**

Many current providers and their representative organisations felt that the DWP Commissioning Strategy framework and Code of Conduct should not apply to this specialist provision. These concerns were based on some recent experiences of contracting for DWP business.

There was also concern that larger organisations would be less able than smaller providers to build relationships with providers of social care, schools and colleges. Additionally, the loss of the specialist knowledge that current providers bring could be detrimental to the effectiveness of the new programme.

Some providers also expressed concern that some good providers who only did Work Preparation or WORKSTEP would be penalised because they did not currently offer the full range of provision.

continued

**Specifically you said:**

“We are not convinced that competitive tendering is the right approach to dealing with disabled peoples’ needs. Disabled people need stability and a consistent approach to their problems. Many of them find change difficult to deal with and this can affect how they perform at work.”

*(GMB union)*

“TUPE regulations may mean that the service change perceived by the customer is not so acute. DWP should ensure that the statements on TUPE made in the Commissioning Strategy are upheld in tendering for specialist disability services.”

*(Employment Related Services Association – ERSA)*

“Providing the incoming provider has a good understanding of this customer group and a commitment to address progression along with the implications of this, transferring to another provider should not present any problems.”

*(Royal British Legion Industries – RBLI)*

“A structured handover with a period of introduction would assist with the transfer from one provider to another. However, this would require a period where there were effectively two providers working with a participant and would have resource implications.”

*(Newcastle City Council)*

continued

“All changes must be communicated clearly and openly to all existing customers. Transitional arrangements will need to be put in place to ensure a smooth handover of responsibility to the new provider and avoid any delays or breaks in support offered to customers.”

*(Scope)*

“Handover period of couple of months between new provider and old. Ensure ‘old’ provider has up to date development plans drawn up for all customers.”

*(Individual)*

**We asked:**

Question 13 – How do you think we could best ensure that we retain the skills of smaller and specialist providers in the proposed open competitive tender of this new programme?

**You said:**

A major concern of smaller providers who responded was that prime providers would top-slice funding for administrative/management costs leaving inadequate funds for the smaller/specialist organisations. There were also concerns that contracts would have to be ‘tight’ to ensure prime providers do not simply ‘cherry-pick’ the people easiest to help for themselves.

continued

**Specifically you said:**

“We are concerned that contracts will be given to national providers, particularly in the private sector, who will initially need to ‘top slice’ funding to set up large administrative systems.”

*(WISE Ltd)*

“The commissioning strategy outlines a market of large generic prime contractors; we consider that this would lead to funding being diverted from service delivery to management and administration costs.”

*(Newcastle City Council)*

“The prime contractor model may result in money being used for admin responsibilities i.e. budget management etc. due to the size of contracts being issued, therefore money filtering down to sub-contractors reduces accordingly. It was also suggested that Prime Contractors may take away individual choice to those using the services.”

*(Scottish Executive)*

“The funding system needs to clearly show how payments would be cascaded from the main contractor to smaller partners.”

*(Equality 2025)*

continued

“The new arrangements needed to ensure that smaller providers did not lose out in the new contracting processes. There was some concern that prime/main contractors may not share service delivery with others, and that in particular specialist service provision would suffer. Linked to this were some doubts on the capacity of single providers to deliver the entire service. Some form of ‘safety net’ for sub contractors should be considered.”

*(Equal Access to Employment Glasgow)*

“Commercial employment-type organisations may be attracted by the recently announced higher payments for progressions to sustainable employment. There is a great danger that these commercial groups may see this as an opportunity for ‘cherry-picking’ from their base of customers and fail to sufficiently plan for the more expensive elements of this type of service.”

*(Shaw Trust)*

## How the Government is taking this forward

25. We plan to start the new programme from October 2010 and we will be using the DWP Commissioning Strategy to procure the new programme. The DWP Commissioning Strategy and Code of Conduct were published in February 2008. They set out our aims to achieve a step-change in the way we deliver welfare reform programmes. It outlines our plans to introduce longer, larger contracts, with more outcome-based funding, which offer better value for money for the taxpayer and offer contractors the opportunity to be more flexible in the way they engage with customers.
26. The main aim of the Strategy is to bring a distinctive, flexible approach to service delivery based on specialist knowledge, skills and experience using the private, public and third sectors, building on the significant proportion of the help and support available to jobless people already delivered under contract by providers. We want to develop a consistent base of providers who we will encourage to use their initiative and innovation to deliver services, and linking into the appropriate local delivery infrastructure that best delivers sustained jobs.
27. Following this consultation, we are assessing the appropriate size of contracts and how the principles outlined in the Commissioning Strategy can be applied to this service. We will be undertaking further consultation on the commissioning and commercial aspects over the next few months and envisage these issues will be finalised early in 2009.

28. We are aware of the concerns expressed by some current service providers, both in this consultation and through other forums about the future of third sector and specialist providers, however we will need to ensure that the Commissioning Strategy is central to the way in which the new programme is commissioned. We therefore will:
- commission the new programme in accordance with the principles set out in the DWP's Commissioning Strategy published in February 2008;
  - openly discuss and debate with as many representative organisations as possible, for example DWP Provider Forum, Office for the Third Sector, ACEVO, Disability Forum, to discuss ways in which we can ensure that current service providers can engage with the commissioning process;
  - use lessons learnt in engaging with providers during the Flexible New Deal tendering process;
  - take steps to encourage our current specialist service providers, where they wish to engage with the Commissioning Strategy; and
  - give sufficient time between the award of contracts and the start of the new programme for transitional arrangements to be put in place that recognise the current WORKSTEP customers who will move across to the new programme.

29. Annex B provides further information about the Commissioning Strategy framework and Code of Conduct, and indicates how DWP will seek to apply it to the new programme. We are continuing to discuss ways in which we can encourage our existing and potential service providers to fully participate in the competitive tendering for the new programme.
30. For more detailed information on the DWP Commissioning Strategy, please go to: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2008/com-strategy/cs-rep-08.pdf>

## **The future role of supported businesses**

31. The consultation said “Following discussions with the British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) and Community union, we are considering giving some contractual protection to the approximately 3,000 supported business (e.g. factories and workshops) places that are currently in use within the WORKSTEP programme. This could, for example, take the form of guaranteeing a level of funding for each of the places over the course of the contract.”

**We asked:**

Question 9 – What role do you think supported businesses/factories should have in providing employment for disabled people?

**You said:**

There was a range of opinion surrounding the future role of supported businesses/factories. Some individuals and organisations felt there was no role for them, that they 'ghettoised' disabled people and had no role in modern Britain.

Other organisations, mainly those providers with supported businesses/factories and employees within those businesses, were at the opposite end of the spectrum feeling they have an important and continuing role to play in giving employment and opportunity to those disabled people who would never be in a position to maintain unsupported employment.

The majority of respondents recognised that while the move away from supported employment/factories is the correct one for many customers, there will always be a need for supported businesses, for those people furthest away from open employment.

The most common suggestions were for supported businesses to be used more for training and work placement purposes and for them to restructure to a Social Firms model.

continued

**Specifically you said:**

“There is no evidence that sheltered work experience helps people move into open employment – often the reverse, with people becoming ‘institutionalised’ in sheltered environments...We broadly welcome the Government’s direction of travel on this issue. The maintenance of too large a sheltered employment sector is not cost effective and reinforces the view that many disabled people are unable to work in mainstream employment.”

*(RADAR)*

“Bridge staff felt that supported business do not have a role in supporting people with disabilities into work in a society where enough support is provided to support people into open employment.”

*(Bridge Employment)*

“Supported businesses/factories do not enthuse me greatly unless they are an instrument for getting people into mainstream employment. I do not believe that disabled people really want or need to be ‘ghettoised’ unless there are clearly stated reasons for doing so.”

*(Individual)*

“There will always be a small percentage of people who are very difficult to place in mainstream employment without a large package of support and a very understanding employer. For this small percentage, supported businesses/factories will always be essential to enable the person make a valuable contribution and to promote social inclusion for all.”

*(Scottish Union of Supported Employment – SUSE)*

continued

“It is our belief that modernised Supported Business provision should have a role in providing all aspects of the proposed programme.”

*(Newcastle City Council)*

“We feel that disabled people should not be encouraged or required to enter segregated/sheltered factories and businesses and that those who currently work in them should be supported to pursue mainstream employment opportunities. In the short-medium term existing sheltered factories and businesses may provide useful training or work experience opportunities for those who lack the soft skills necessary for work but Scope is clear that sheltered employment should not be considered an acceptable alternative to mainstream employment.”

*(Scope)*

“Social Enterprises provide an excellent opportunity for training and development of those furthest from the labour market as a stepping stone to mainstream employment and could be explored as an alternative to supported businesses/factories.”

*(Royal British Legion Industries – RBLI)*

**We asked:**

Question 10 – If we go ahead with these reforms, do you believe we should offer some protection to supported businesses when we tender for the new programme? If so, what form should this protection take and how long should it last for?

**You said:**

There was unanimous support for protection to be offered to such businesses with suggestions ranging from one year to 10 years (two to five years being the most common range). Most suggestions followed the pattern that there should be protection with the proviso of the development of agreed modernisation plans for each business/factory.

**Specifically you said:**

“Rather than forcing ‘bad’ supported businesses to shut down, we should seek ways of improving them, so as to provide stability for their employees.”

*(Individual)*

“We are pleased that the Department are considering offering some protection for workers in supported factories, but concerned that the plans seem to extend no further than the lifetime of their current contracts. The evidence does not indicate that there are fundamental problems with delivery by the public sector.”

*(TUC)*

continued

“Factories should work in partnership with supported employment agencies, to progress their workers, with their willing consent, and that referrals to factories by DEAs should be tapered away, as the only way to ensure their discontinuation.”

*(WISE Ltd)*

“BASE notes the intention to continue discussions around the future of factory based provision. Modernisation is a priority and some temporary protection would allow for managed changes as long as providers produce robust change plans.”

*(British Association for Supported Employment – BASE)*

“The supported factories can play a vital role in the pre-employment phase by providing a work based learning place for a range of disabilities.”

*(Merthyr Tydfil Institute for the Blind)*

“Protection should be conditional on the businesses achieving set quality standards by which their effectiveness can be measured.”

*(Pluss)*

“Yes we believe there does need to be protection for supported businesses but only after the creation of an agreed strategy for change.”

*(Azure Charitable Enterprises)*

continued

“If this provision is not protected what will happen to the people who are unable to sustain employment in mainstream regardless of support. Supported businesses/factories should be offered protection to assist in developing provision for the future.”

*(Community)*

“We feel that the suggested contractual protection for Supported Businesses will be essential in order to allow a period of modernisation. Without additional support, it is our belief that Supported Businesses throughout the country would be at severe risk and that this would result in a negative impact for all concerned, especially participants.”

*(Newcastle City Council)*

## How the Government is taking this forward

32. Following the consultation we have held discussions with the British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) and Community union, to consider how we can give some contractual protection to the supported business places.
33. We are looking towards some form of protection for the participant places in the supported businesses. We will be discussing arrangements further during a series of events with providers, customers, employers and disability representative groups over the next few months.

34. We were clear in the consultation that if we do offer some protection to these businesses, it is not necessarily because we are satisfied with the current overall performance. Any protection would be in respect of the unique historical position of supported businesses, the position of their disabled employees and the particular difficulties they face in reforming in a short timeframe.

## **Transitions to new programme**

35. The consultation document recognised that a vital consideration in merging these programmes is the transition of existing WORKSTEP customers to the new programme, when the new arrangements commence.
36. There will need to be clear requirements for providers of the new programme to take responsibility for supporting existing WORKSTEP customers. How this will be done will vary depending on whether the customer:
- works in a supported business;
  - is directly employed by one of our current providers; or
  - as in the majority of cases, works for an external employer.
37. All our current and new providers will need to work together to ensure the transition is successfully completed for all customers.

38. Providers who are successful in attaining contracts for the new provision will first have to deliver on the immediate support needs of all existing customers and their employers. Following this they will be required to work closely with each individual to ensure they have an up-to-date development plan which should include, where appropriate to the individual, the support necessary for them to move into unsupported employment.
39. We will continue to discuss transition issues with representative organisations. We recognise that many of the issues to be addressed are sensitive to both WORKSTEP participants and employees. Appropriate arrangements will need to be clearly communicated to individuals and organisations to ensure a smooth transition to the new programme is achieved.
40. We intend to have a six month period between announcing the outcome of the competitive tendering exercise and the start of the new programme. This should give sufficient time for the resolution of transitional issues.

## **Factory Support Grant**

41. Currently, the Factory Support Grant provides funding for supported businesses to, for example, buy new machinery or modernise the services they offer. We proposed that all our funding should be directed at individual customers. The consultation proposed discontinuing the Factory Support Grant, with the money going to help more people onto the proposed new programme.

42. As an interim step, we proposed that it would help the existing supported businesses to modernise if we stipulated that any future requests for Factory Support Grant funding were focused on ways to modernise the businesses to produce greater numbers of progressions to unsupported employment and to produce a greater quality of service for people progressing within the support.

**We asked:**

Question 11 – We are proposing to initially transform the WORKSTEP Factory Support Grant (FSG) to focus on modernising services to deliver better progressions within and outside the programme. This would be instead of, for example, buying new factory equipment. Eventually we would like to spend this money directly on helping more individuals onto the proposed new programme. What are your views on this proposal?

**You said:**

In summary, responses could be split along the lines of whether the responder was from a provider with a supported business/factory. If this was the case they were more likely to support the maintenance of the FSG in its present form.

Other responders tended to be very supportive of the transformation of the FSG into something that was spent on the individual and followed the individual through the programme.

continued

**Specifically you said:**

“RNIB does not subscribe to the view that the only choice available ought to be between supporting individuals or supporting the procurement of new factory equipment.”  
(RNIB)

“Scope strongly supports the proposal to direct funding towards individuals to help them secure meaningful and rewarding employment in the mainstream labour market.”  
(Scope)

“In principle we agree with the intention to move towards the Factory Support Grant being focussed on delivering progressions.”  
(Newcastle City Council)

“The money should be targeted at increasing the skills base of people making the transitions between supported and unsupported employment to ensure that this transition is lasting.”  
(RNID)

“Focus on service improvement as opposed to providing funds for capital equipment seems to be a good way forward.”  
(A4e – Action for Employment)

“We believe that there is likely to be a continuing need for a mechanism analogous to the existing FSG scheme to provide funding support to the employment of people with disabilities...the use of a modernised FSG for the purchase of equipment should not be ruled out.”

(City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council – Skills for Work Service)

## **How the Government is taking this forward**

43. Although we recognise that many supported businesses considered that we should continue to fund equipment etc, overall we believe that we are not best placed to agree or disagree with such purchases. Primarily, DWP funding should be spent on modernising supported businesses in a way that will encourage more of our customers to move towards and, for many, into unsupported employment.
44. We intend to look at how we might use the funding currently provided through the Factory Support Grant in developing arrangements for the new programme.

## **Monitoring and assessing the progress of individual customers**

45. The 'distance travelled' pilots are due to end later this year. We will then consider the outcomes from these pilots and identify whether this tool or something similar, would benefit customers, their employers and our service providers. This will help us ensure that the focus for longer-term customers of the new programme remains, as developing their skills, knowledge and confidence in a way that could, over time, enable the customer to move into unsupported employment.

# Chapter Four – The Disability Employment Adviser role

## Introduction

1. Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) in Jobcentre Plus currently act as a gateway to some of our specialist disability services, for example, Work Preparation and Residential Training Colleges, to help ensure this provision is targeted at those customers who would benefit most.
2. However, on WORKSTEP we allow a range of providers to carry out the eligibility process on their own behalf, in addition to accepting eligible people referred by the DEA. This arrangement was introduced at a time when Jobcentre Plus was much less engaged with this customer group and the programme was failing to meet potential demand.
3. While this direct route onto our services has its advantages, it has also raised some questions around whether customers facing the greatest barriers are being adequately prioritised. The consultation considered the appropriateness of reaffirming the DEA role of ensuring that our specialist disability employment services, including supported employment, are only available to individuals who need them.

## Reviewing the need for support

4. We are also aware from our research that many people stay on our supported employment provision longer than is necessary for them and their employer to reach a position where they can sustain their employment independently. In respect of this we are looking at how DEAs could work with our customers and providers to ensure that the support given is still appropriate to the customer's employment needs.
5. DEAs are extremely well placed to look at the totality of support that a disabled person may need to enter and retain employment; the consultation proposed making better use of this position, by giving greater emphasis to the role DEAs have to develop, with their customers, high-level action plans that identify key goals and the main elements of support that a customer can use to get into and retain employment.

## Preparation of action plans

6. We proposed making action plans in partnership with support from social services and education and training programmes where appropriate. This support may be a mix of specialist and/or mainstream support, internal Jobcentre Plus support or external provider-based support.
7. For example, the consultation proposed that the DEA may determine that a customer requires specialist work entry support and is highly likely to require some transitional supported employment and an ongoing Access to Work adjustment. This package could then be conveyed to the customer, provider and, when appropriate, an employer. It would be the responsibility of the provider, customer and the employer to develop a more detailed employment plan.

8. Such involvement of the DEA in the development of a personalised broader upfront understanding of this potential package should help ease the transition into work and help the customer achieve their full employment potential.
9. In recognition that a person's life circumstances can change, even in a relatively short period of time, we believe it would be important that these plans are not 'set in stone'. For most developments the discussions between a provider, customer and possibly an employer would be sufficient. A DEA would only need to become involved if the changes impacted on the overall nature of the support delivered, for example if a customer's health condition significantly deteriorated and it became evident that they would not be able to progress to fully independent working in the timescales that had previously been agreed.

## **In summary**

10. From the outset, DEAs would prioritise drawing together a more comprehensive support package – thinking more actively about the full range of support needed to help a customer into sustainable employment. Rather than a fundamental change, this would put in place as a standard feature best practice that is already practiced by many DEAs.

**We asked:**

Question 15 – We are proposing that only Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) would be able to refer individuals to the proposed new programme. What are your views on this proposal?

Question 16 – Do you believe that DEAs should have a higher profile role for people to feedback on the support they receive from our externally provided provision?

Question 17 – If you have used the Jobcentre Plus DEA service to help you find or retain suitable employment, what aspects of the service do you like and are there aspects that you think could be improved?

Question 18 – As an employer or provider of our services, in what ways, if any, do you currently use the Jobcentre Plus DEA service to help you employ or retain disabled people in employment? What aspects of the service do you like and are there aspects that you think could be improved?

**You said:**

There was a mixed response to whether only DEAs should be able to refer individuals to the new programme. Jobcentre Plus DEAs who responded to the consultation were overwhelmingly supportive of this, whereas responses from individuals tended to be more mixed, with their views influenced by their experiences of previous dealings with DEAs.

continued

Also the views of current service providers tended to be more mixed with many feeling that while DEAs could monitor referrals there should not be a blanket removal of the facility to self-refer and for providers to refer. Many were also supportive of other organisations such as Social Services, NHS services and specialist disability organisations being able to refer. This was more pronounced from those working with people with mental health disabilities, who suggested that many would not go to/contact a Jobcentre Plus office and therefore would not come into contact with DEA services.

The vast majority of responses highlighted that even if they supported the DEA as the only referrer, this would only work if there was an increase in the number of DEAs, if they were given improved training and there was a change in the way DEAs were valued within the Jobcentre Plus business. There was a feeling that DEAs should have a higher profile and more rewarded career structure to reflect the importance of their role.

These points were also reflected in responses to whether the DEA should have a higher profile for people to feed back their experiences of the new provision. The majority were supportive of this suggestion while highlighting the resource implications and concerns over their independence. Some people would not feel comfortable feeding back criticism of Jobcentre Plus or DWP via such a route.

continued

In responding to the questions on the previous use of DEA services, there were both positive and negative examples. These highlighted once again concerns over the resource implications of the proposals and this affected whether responders were positive or negative about the suggestions.

**Specifically you said:**

“There are benefits to this in terms of oversight of the programme and ensuring that providers take people on appropriately. However, we would have concerns about individuals being able to access provision only via the DEA. People find services by different routes and third sector providers, for example, may be better at reaching some people than DEAs – it is essential that the DEA not become a barrier to accessing the service. Perhaps the DEA could approve entry to the programme, though it would be important not to require any more assessment or bureaucracy than necessary.”

*(Mind)*

“Mencap would agree with the principle of the DEA acting as the ‘gatekeeper’ for referrals, although there are some real issues of capacity...Many people with a learning disability will not access Jobcentre Plus and in turn a DEA. When we consulted with people with a learning disability using Mencap’s employment services, over half said they had not gone to their local jobcentre to look for a job before approaching Mencap. Currently, if individuals directly approach one of our employment services, Mencap makes contact with the relevant DEA. There should be scope for providers to be able to continue doing this or risk individuals being excluded by this move.”

*(Mencap)*

continued

“Mencap supports the proposal for a higher profile role for DEAs. However, there is a significant capacity issue if no further resources are to be invested in the role. There is a need for increased investment in terms of addressing issues around limited staff numbers and training.”

*(Mencap)*

“DEAs should continue to approve eligibility for the majority of new referrals. However, a percentage of referrals should be available for direct referral through local health and social care pathways.”

*(British Association for Supported Employment – BASE)*

“DEAs could provide a very useful first port of all feedback on the experiences of clients. Any feedback would have to be undertaken under conditions of the strictest confidence with clear guidelines.”

*(RNID)*

“Ensuring everyone can access the appropriate services for their needs is a vital part of this reform, but the key role of DEA in providing focused support to those who require it will need to be maintained, and adequately resourced and supported.”

*(Office for Disability Issues – ODI)*

“The choice of the referral and the provider must be down to the individual disabled person with advice from the DEA.”

*(Scottish Union of Supported Employment – SUSE)*

continued

“ERSA has concerns about this proposal. Although the DEA provides a valuable role in identifying appropriate provision, they are also a gateway to services. Members have highlighted that DEAs in some areas work only on a part-time and term-time only basis and that often there is no holiday or sick leave cover. In some areas there is up to 8 weeks waiting time for a DEA appointment, and due to their pressures of work they are often unable to answer telephone calls.”

*(Employment Related Services Association – ERSA)*

“DWP should develop an online and paper based feedback system where customers can report their views on the service they receive. The DEA could make the customer aware of these other feedback routes if they were not willing to do this in person.”

*(Employment Related Services Association – ERSA)*

“RNIB are supportive of the role but only if there is a formal inspection regime as well to back this up.”

*(RNIB)*

“This would be a very effective way of independently monitoring the performance of providers at a local level.”

*(Scope)*

“Leonard Cheshire Disability is supportive of the enhanced role for DEAs as envisaged, but for this role to work DEAs will need of information, very extensive training and for all facilities and systems to be fully accessible to all disabled people.”

*(Leonard Cheshire Disability)*

## **How the Government is taking this forward**

11. One of the goals of the new programme is to ensure that only those who need the provision can gain access to it. We are considering the views from the consultation regarding referral mechanisms and will be discussing arrangements during a series of events with customers, employers, providers and disability representative organisations over the next few months.

# Chapter Five – Access to Work

## Introduction

1. The consultation recognised that Access to Work is one of our most popular and successful labour market programmes. Alongside an independent evaluation of the programme, we sought views on how it might be improved still further.

## Current position

2. The Access to Work programme aims to reduce inequalities between disabled people and non-disabled people by removing practical barriers to work.
3. The four main elements of support available under Access to Work are:
  - specialist aids and equipment;
  - adaptations to premises and equipment;
  - support workers/communication support at interview; and
  - travel to work, which can include help with taxi fares.

4. The consultation recognised that Access to Work is recognised as having a range of strengths that enables the programme to provide support to disabled customers, these include:
  - tailored support – each support package is tailored to the specific requirements of each customer and their employer;
  - flexible support – the support packages are complementary to our other provision, able to adapt to changing circumstances and suitable for disabled people and/or jobs that require fluctuating or sporadic use of the support;
  - expert advice – for many employers the availability of expert advice on making workplace adjustments for their disabled staff represents the most valuable feature of the programme; and
  - no monetary upper limit on individual support packages.
5. However, there have been some concerns raised by customers and their representatives over the performance of Access to Work. Primarily these concerns have been in relation to frontline delivery, including the:
  - speed at which people are accepted to receive support;
  - speed at which support is delivered;
  - consistency of decision-making across the country; and
  - reach of the provision – i.e. awareness levels and can we help more people?

6. The consultation recognised that Jobcentre Plus was already implementing a series of positive incremental reforms to improve service delivery, including since late 2006, the appointment of a National Access to Work Delivery Manager. We believe that these reforms have already improved the speed, quality and consistency of service that people receive and we expect this to continue.

**We asked:**

Question 19 – If you have recent experience of our Access to Work provision, what aspects did you like the most and do you have any suggestions for improving the service?

Question 20 – What can we do to ensure Access to Work is used more effectively to meet the needs of individuals?

Question 21 – How would you try to better balance the need for consistency of decision-making in Access to Work across the country with benefits of local flexibility?

Question 22 – How can we more effectively focus Access to Work on adjustments/support beyond that which an employer should make as a reasonable adjustment under the Disability Discrimination Act?

Question 23 – Do you believe that we should increase employer contributions to Access to Work adjustments as long as the savings are reinvested in the programme?

Question 24 – Are there more innovative ways in which we could make better use of the private and third sectors in delivering Access to Work?

continued

**You said:**

There was overwhelming support for the Access to Work programme, with many examples of individual respondents saying it had transformed their lives.

While appreciating the support it gives, there were criticisms and suggestions on how it could be improved. Many felt the process for obtaining help was too lengthy and bureaucratic with suggestions to cut paperwork, allow employers or advocates to apply rather than the individual, and to allow application before employment started so assistance would be in place from day one. Many also wanted Access to Work to be extended to include voluntary work, work trials/ experience, job interviews and applications, and for those working less than 16 hours a week.

Other suggestions tended to be impairment specific, about specific equipment and needs of the particular impairment group. There was a concern that budgets meant the cheapest equipment, rather than the best or most appropriate equipment, for the individuals' needs was supplied, or the most appropriately qualified support.

The other major suggestion to improve the programme was to publicise it properly so that employers and the public are aware of it.

continued

There was a general recognition of the need for better consistency across the country and local flexibility. Recognition of the contradictory nature of this made it difficult for respondents to come up with firm practical solutions. Suggestions to help this were for the production of best practice guidance and examples and a regional/ district manager to oversee and ensure consistency, while managing and understanding local needs.

There was a feeling that the Department could work better with employers to promote and train them on what is a reasonable adjustment under the Disability Discrimination Act. The Department would be in the best position to collect examples of best practice and provide guidance material for employers. Other suggestions were for roadshows to employers around the country and for a dedicated staff resource to promote the programme to employers.

**Specifically you said:**

“The Access to Work scheme has been described by the British Chamber of Commerce as ‘one of the best kept secrets in Government.’ Funds for Access to Work should be increased with a view to providing more routes to employment for people with a learning disability, particularly given the Government policy of moving 1 million disabled people into work.”

*(Mencap)*

continued

“DEAC continues to recommend that AtW be extended to disabled people participating in voluntary work, particularly as volunteering has been identified as an important route into employment for people with learning disabilities.”

*(Disability Employment Advisory Committee)*

“The new programme should value voluntary work or less than part-time work (less than 16 hours per week) as a valid outcome.”

*(RADAR)*

“Support should be provided to employers to understand what employer responsibility is under the DDA and what Access to Work will fund...DWP should recognise good employers as ‘champions’ in best practice.”

*(Mencap)*

“Access to Work could be improved by being more widely advertised, especially to disabled people and small and medium sized businesses. Reducing waiting times for assessments and provision and ensuring that Access to Work assessments are carried out before someone starts work so they can have the support, equipment or adjustments they need from day one which would also make it more effective.”

*(Scope)*

continued

“Access to Work is a scheme that enjoys an almost unprecedented level of support from across different sectors. It is certainly valued by those that benefit from it directly, and from businesses who are able to better support their employees through the scheme. It is consistently commended by disability organisations, who whilst recognising that there are always areas for potential improvement, also recognise the vital support that it can offer.”

*(Leonard Cheshire Disability)*

“A number of organisations have produced guidance for employers and businesses about DDA responsibilities. But whilst there is guidance and information available it might be worth the DWP investigating whether some of this information could be centrally collected and coordinated to produce an over-arching ‘toolkit’ that could offer clear advice to employers.”

*(Leonard Cheshire Disability)*

“RNID believes that the Access to Work (AtW) scheme is the most successful current intervention in allowing disabled people to gain and retain paid work, and would like to see greater investment in a programme that has been proved to be of net benefit to the UK economy...the AtW programme would benefit from adopting a more person-centred approach, where the provision of support follows the individual.”

*(RNID)*

continued

“RNID believes that there is a role here for the Office of Disability Issues to promote greater understanding of employers’ responsibilities and duties under existing legislation, as well as a role for the EHRC in issuing proceedings where employers have failed to meet them.”  
(RNID)

“There is a deep sense of admiration for the principles enshrined within the Access to Work programme: its flexibility, its responsiveness to a client’s individual needs, its contribution to overcoming discrimination in the employment of disabled people and that its budget has expanded in response to identified need.”  
(RNIB)

“RNIB has thus been seeking to widen the eligibility criteria of Access to Work to take in people with sight loss who are engaged in volunteering...RNIB recommends that the eligibility criteria be widened to include people doing at least 16 hours a week voluntary work for a minimum for six months. This desired widening of the eligibility criteria should also be applied to the employers providing 13 week placement or work trials opportunities through the JCP Local Employment Partnerships.”  
(RNIB)

**We asked:**

Question 25 – Ministerial Government Departments are now directly funding Access to Work adjustments for their disabled staff. What are your views on other public sector organisations paying for such adjustments if any savings were reinvested in the programme?

**You said:**

The majority of responders do not believe that we should increase employer contributions to Access to Work funding and an even higher majority do not support taking away Access to Work funding from public sector organisations. While there is a degree of support for the principle, the overwhelming feeling is that any increased financial burden on employers will negatively impact on the employment of disabled people and will be used as an excuse by employers (indirectly) for not employing people.

The feeling was that if we do follow the route of increasing contributions from employers there would need to be tapering or flexible contribution levels depending either on the size or the turnover of the organisation. If Access to Work funding is going to be further withdrawn from public sector organisations, respondents felt money to provide the same level of support would have to be ring fenced, and they would still want Access to Work advice services to be available.

continued

There was support for the involvement of private and third sector organisations in delivering Access to Work, more specifically in carrying out assessments and in being able to be more responsive at a local level. However, this support was not unanimous with some respondents concerned about increasing involvement from profit making organisations.

There was strong support to promote Access to Work by building links with local organisations, such as Local Strategic Partnerships, Learning and Skills Councils, local disability forums, employers' forums etc.

**Specifically you said:**

“DEAC believes increased employer AtW contributions would act as a disincentive for most employers. Therefore research on the impact of the employment of disabled people in Ministerial Departments (who are no longer eligible for AtW) should be taken into consideration.”  
*(Disability Employment Advisory Committee)*

“RADAR does not support the raising of the employer Access to Work contribution threshold beyond inflation. We believe that this may provide a disincentive to employing people with significant support needs or costs. Neither does RADAR support extending the removal of Access to Work funding to the wider public sector or large private sector employers.”  
*(RADAR)*

continued

“Third sector organisations acting as support agencies may be well placed to deliver assessments and source personal assistants, interpreters and emergency cover for disabled employees.”

(Scope)

“More work could be undertaken with local groups of disabled people and with Local Strategic Partnerships to promote Access to Work. There are also obvious links through regional Pathways to Work and NDDP contracts as well as through City Strategies to raise awareness amongst disabled people, employers and service providers alike. There are also opportunities to work with local business and Chambers of Commerce to educate employers about the programme.”

(RNID)

## How the Government is taking this forward

7. The recently published Green Paper *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility* announced that the Access to Work budget would be doubled. The budget will be steadily increased, (although the start date for the additional funding has yet to be confirmed) and will be £138m by 2013/2014.
8. This will enable us to expand the reach of the programme, enabling us to reassure employers, benefit claimants and people seeking help to retain their jobs, that support will be available to all those who need it. As well as helping more people, the extra resource also provides an opportunity to improve the way the Access to Work support is delivered.

9. In addition to the responses we received to this consultation, an independent evaluation of the programme is due to report by the end of this year, and we will use these findings and the responses we receive to the consultation questions about Access to Work in the recent Green Paper, *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility*, to make sure the additional funding is spent in the most effective way. This will include a close look at the delivery of the provision to ensure that it is delivered in a personalised, flexible and timely way for our customers and employers.
10. The Green Paper also announced our intention to give disabled people the right to control their lives and provide them with the support they need to live independently. We will consider how the new right might improve the employment experiences of customers who use the specialist disability employment services, including Access to Work.

## Chapter Six – Other issues

### **We asked:**

Question 26 – How do you feel we can improve the way these services work with other locally delivered services and/or local partnership arrangements?

Question 27 – We are committed to producing a full Equality Impact Assessment on the final proposals and would value your input in this area. Do you have any specific comments on the impact of the proposals put forward in this consultation on particular individuals or groups?

Question 28 – Please let us know your views about any other aspect of this consultation?

### **You said:**

Specific groups/individuals that were highlighted by respondents for the Equality Impact Assessment were, in the vast majority, specific impairments/disabilities. Other groups that were highlighted (apart from the normal categories of gender, age, and ethnicity) were the self-employed, part-time workers and those in supported businesses/factories.

continued

Overall the response to the consultation was positive and respondents were pleased to have had the opportunity to contribute. A number of respondents felt that the consultation failed to deal with a number of areas: self-employment as an option, the importance of retention, work with employers, the link with other programmes New Deal and Incapacity Benefit Pilots, and specific impairment group issues.

There were also a number of responses highlighting the need for greater links with health and social care services, and also better links with education services (LSE and Connexions) to assist the 16-19 age group. The use of individualised budgets was also picked up on by a number of respondents.

A lot of respondents also felt that there should have been more about removing the 16 hour rule, and the restrictions on obtaining Access to Work for voluntary work and work trials.

The largest amount of disquiet was about the re-contracting and the move to larger pan disability providers covering districts and sub-contracting to smaller providers. Specialist disability groups in particular were very concerned about the implications.

continued

**Specifically you said:**

“The role of Specialist Disability Employment Services should include enhanced responsibilities for working with employers to open up more and better employment opportunities for disabled people.”

*(Social Security Advisory Committee)*

“WORKSTEP is only available to people in paid work of sixteen hours a week or more, which excludes large numbers of people with a severe learning disability who may not be able to work this amount of hours or who may need a ‘stepping stone’ to full time employment...Mencap would like assurance that this issue will be addressed to ensure that those with more severe learning disabilities are not excluded from the new provision.”

*(Mencap)*

“DWP must consider how the new provision will cater for customers with high support needs who are unable to work for more than 16 hours per week. ERSA would recommend that the new provision is open to customers able to work eight hours or more per week and requiring in-work support to include them within the specialist provision.”

*(Employment Related Services Association – ERSA)*

continued

“DWP must also focus on job retention as a preventative measure to stop individuals coming out of the labour market in the first place by providing support to them and their employer.”

*(Employment Related Services Association – ERSA)*

“WORKSTEP is currently only available to disabled people in paid employment of 16 hours a week or more, which excludes large numbers of disabled people...Scope would urge DWP to ensure that even more disabled people can benefit from WORKSTEP by reducing the minimum hours per week worked.”

*(Scope)*

“Ensuring that disabled people are supported not only to gain employment, but to retain it, is a vital part of an effective supported employment service. Action to reduce the number of people who fall out of employment is vital if we are to avoid disabled people being recycled through JIS, Work Preparation and WORKSTEP over and over again.”

*(Scope)*

“We are concerned that little attention is given to support for disabled people when leaving education and moving to employment.”

*(Equality 2025)*

## **How the Government is taking this forward**

1. Respondents have provided a lot of very helpful suggestions about how our services for disabled people who experience barriers to entering and progressing in work can be improved.
2. A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be available online shortly at [www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/des-consultation.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/des-consultation.asp)
3. We will continue to work across government, with devolved administrations, providers, customers, employers and disability representative groups, to further develop our ability to meet the needs and aspirations of disabled people. Indeed, we are planning to run a series of events over the next few months with these groups of people, to consult further on the design of the new programme, in particular.

# Conclusion

## The conclusion

1. In summary, we want to reach a position where all our disabled customers have access to the right level of support to help them prepare for, enter and/or retain employment. As part of this we want to:
  - improve the capability of our provision to help disabled people into sustainable employment;
  - ensure that our specialist disability provision is reserved for those whose support needs are not met by our other provision;
  - ensure that our programmes are better targeted on the individual needs of disabled people and employers, to improve our ability to help disabled people live fulfilling and independent lives; and
  - deliver a programme that will support and complement non-specialist services such as Pathways to Work and Flexible New Deal, providing security for existing long-term customers and help people with more severe/complex disabilities into sustainable employment.

# Annexes

## Annex A – List of organisations who responded

A4E Action for Employment

Aberdeen City Council Neighbourhood Services (South) Care

Access Association

Access Made Easy Disability Consultants

Acquired Brain Injury Education Centre: Evesham and Malvern Hills College

Action for Blind People

Adult Dyslexia Organisation

Andover and District Mencap

Association of Disabled Professionals

Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Service

Association of Sign Language Interpreters

Azure Charitable Enterprises

Barking and Dagenham Centre for Independent, Integrated, Inclusive Living Consortium

Beacon Employment

Bentley Day Centre – Surrey County Council

Best Ltd

BID Services for Deaf People

Birmingham City University – Human Resources

Bloomsbury Colleges

Bognor and Chichester Voice Self Advocacy Group for People with Learning Difficulties

Breakaway Supported Employment Service Lewes

Breakthrough

Bridge Employment

Bridge the Gap

British Association for Supported Employment – BASE

British Broadcasting Company – Diversity Centre

British Society of Rehabilitation Medicine

Business Ability Ltd

Business, Employment and Disability Consultancy

Canterbury Christ Church University

Cardiff University

Care Services Improvement Partnership

Careers Scotland

CEiS

CIFAS

Citizens Advice: Disability and Older People's Benefits and the Social Fund

City and County of Swansea

City Lit

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council – Skills for Work Service

City of Edinburgh Council: Supported Employment Team, Health and Social Care

City of York

City Parochial Foundation

City University London

Civil Service Disability Network

Clarity Employment for Blind People

Clear Links Support Ltd

Communication Workers Union

Community Care Providers Scotland

Community Head Injury Service 'Working Out' – Buckinghamshire  
Primary Care Trust

Community union

Cornwall Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Cornwall County Council

Coventry University

Crispin Consultancy

Deaf Children's Society

Deafness Cognition and Language Research Centre – University  
College London

Deafness Support Network

Denbighshire County Council (Workstep provider for)

Derbyshire Welfare to Work Sub-Group of the Employment and  
Skills Board

Dering Employment Services Ltd

Devon County Council

Disability Action

Disability Alliance

Disability Employment Advisory Committee

Disabled Motorist Federation

Doncaster NHS: Pathways to Work Steering Group

Dorset County Council – Vocational Services

Down's Syndrome Association

Durham County Council Adult and Community Services Social Inclusion Section

Edge Hill University Ormskirk – Human Resources

Employers' Forum on Disability

Employment Opportunities

Employment Related Services Association – ERSA

Employment Support and Retraining Agency Ltd

ENABLE Scotland

Enham

Enterprise Mentoring Ltd

Epilepsy Action

Epilepsy Scotland

Equal Ability CIC

Equal Access to Employment Glasgow

Equality 2025

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Equality Challenge Unit

Erskine – Caring for ex-Service men and women

Fife Council Social Work Service – Fife Employability Team

Fife Employability Network – Fife Council Community Services

Finchale Training College

Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities

Glasgow City Council

Gloucestershire Industrial Services – Gloucestershire County Council

GMB union

Gofal Cymru

Group for Solicitors with Disabilities

Hampshire County Council

Hansel Alliance

Headway UK

Highland Blindcraft Workstep Consortium

Highland Council

Hull Learning Disability Partnership Board

Institute of Employment Studies

Islington Deaf Campaign

John Wheatley College

Joint East Midlands Higher Education Institutes

Kent Adult Social Services

Key4Learning Ltd

KeyRing

KMG Health Partners

Lancashire County Council Employment Support Service

Lancashire Local Partnership Boards/Task Groups Chorley/  
South Ribble and West Lancashire

Learning and Skills Council

Learning Disability Partnership – Cambridgeshire

Learning Disability Task Force

Leeds Involvement Project

Leicester City Council Day Services (via Mencap)

Leonard Cheshire Disability

Leonard Cheshire Disability (Scotland)

Lincolnshire County Council

Liverpool John Moores University

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

London Development Agency: Independent Disability  
Equality Group

London Employer Accord

Low Incomes Tax Reform Group

Lowestoft College

Make your Mark Campaign

MCCH Society Ltd

Mencap

Meridian East

Merthyr Tydfil Institute for the Blind

Mind

MS Trust

NASUWT The Teachers Union

National Association of Deafened People

National Association of Disability Practitioners

National Autistic Society

National Social Inclusion Programme

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

New Directions Salford Task Group

Newcastle City Council – Adult Services

Newco Products and Newco Employment and Training

NHS Employers

NIACE

North Somerset Council – Adult Social Services & Housing

North Yorkshire County Council

Nottinghamshire County Council – Adult Social Care and Health Department

Nottinghamshire Deaf Society

Office for Disability Issues – ODI

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council – Training into Employment

Open Assembly @ Genesis, Leicester City Mental Health Service User Forum

Open University – Human Resources

Osel Enterprises Ltd

Papworth Trust

Parkinsons Disease Society

Passionate about BSL

PCS Equality, Health and Safety Department

Pertemps People Development Group

Pluss

Progress Recruitment Ltd

Quarriers Voluntary Support Organisation

Quest Employment Agency

RADAR

Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication: Human Resources

RCT People First

Reed in Partnership

REMPLOY

Rethink

RH Consulting

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council

Richmond Fellowship

RNIB

RNID

Royal Blind

Royal British Legion Industries – RBLI

Rugby Disability Forum

Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health

Salford Supported Employment

Scope

Scottish National Federation for the Welfare Of The Blind

Scottish Union of Supported Employment – SUSE

Sefton Equalities Partnership

Sense

Shaw Trust

Sign Translate Ltd

Signalong

Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities

Skillnet Group

Social Firms UK

Social Security Advisory Committee

Society of Visually Impaired Lawyers

Somerset County Council

South Wales Consortium of Supported Employment Agencies

Speaking Up Group – Tunbridge Wells

Spinal Injuries Association

Staffordshire County Council

Stoke on Trent City Council: Supported Placement and Supported Employment Services

Strathclyde Fire and Rescue

Surrey Coalition of Disabled People

Surrey Supported Employment Ltd

Swansea Council for Voluntary Service

Terence Higgins Trust

The Action Group

The Centre for Public Policy – Northumbria University

The Invisible Workforce

The Stroke Association

The University and College Union

Thera Group of Companies: The Quality Company

Trade Union Disability Alliance

Trafford Council

Transition Information Network

Treloar College

TUC

UNISON

United Response

Universities and Colleges Employers Association

University of Bolton – Human Resources

University of Central Lancashire

University of Dundee

University of Exeter – Occupational Health Unit

University of Glasgow

University of Gloucestershire

University of Hertfordshire

University of Hull

University of Leeds

University of Manchester

University of Oxford – Personnel and Equal Opportunities

University of Plymouth

University of St Andrews

University of Wales – Human Resources

University of Wolverhampton

Valuing People Partnership Board East Riding of Yorkshire

Veterans of Scotland

Vocational Rehabilitation Association

Voluntary Action Leicester

Warwickshire County Council Workstep Team

Ways to Work

We Think (via Mencap)

Welsh Initiative for Supported Employment

Wessex Autistic Society

Westcombe Employment Service

Whitehouse Enterprises: Suffolk County Council

Wise Group

Wokingham Employment Support Service

Work Fit

Workline Supported Employment Service – Sunderland City Council

WorkWAYS

Workwise – Calderdale Council

Yorkshire and Humberside Disability Consulting Group

Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Partnership

## **Annex B – The DWP Commissioning Strategy – encouraging the market**

### **Background**

1. The DWP Commissioning Strategy and Code of Conduct were published in February 2008. They set out our aims to achieve a step-change in the way we deliver welfare reform programmes. They outline our plans to introduce longer, larger contracts, with more outcome-based funding, which offer better value for money for the taxpayer and offer contractors the opportunity to be more flexible in the way they engage with customers.
2. The strategy was published following wide-ranging consultation with existing and potential providers, with other parts of government, with representative groups, employer organisations and other stakeholders, as well as taking on board recommendations from Freud, Leitch and other key papers including the responses to the consultation exercise. It also considered best practice gathered internationally from the United States, Australia and the Netherlands.
3. Currently, the Department spends nearly £1 billion buying employment provision and, in England, the European Social Fund (ESF) finances further provision. This generates a patchwork of provision which consists of contracts of different size and structures and which are both costly and time consuming to run. DWP recognised the need to spend the money cost-effectively to get the best result for every customer and to increase the number of people going into sustained work.

4. It is hoped the Commissioning Strategy will set in place a set of principles which will be flexible enough to adapt to the differences in the type of provision we offer and which we will be able to develop and modify to cover the needs of future provision. Our ambition is to make DWP provision a beacon for the Government's aim of becoming a world leader in skills and in tackling concentrations of worklessness at a local level.

### **Next steps**

5. The Commissioning Strategy represents a major milestone in our welfare reform programme and provides a comprehensive and compelling vision of radical change in the way we will work with providers. It will give us a strong platform on which we will be able to build, in the future, a more integrated approach to commissioning and delivering employability and skills support.
6. It is an integral part of the welfare reform agenda and, in particular, of meeting the significant challenges of achieving full employment in a generation and the eradication of child poverty.
7. Essentially, the Strategy describes:
  - the market we want to do business with;
  - how we specify what we want to buy;
  - the purchasing process; and
  - performance management and the ongoing relationship.

8. It sets out the seven component parts of the Strategy and their underpinning principles. Together, they describe the direction we believe we must travel to achieve the required improvement in performance and signal the changes that all parts of the commissioning system will need to make for this to happen. It also describes what we need to do over time to get to that position where it does not exist at present. The seven key messages are:

- **Market structure:** We want a stronger, more consistent base of top-tier providers who can work closely with regional and sub-regional partners to deliver sustainable jobs for unemployed people.
- **Market development and stewardship:** We will play an active and transparent role to ensure that smaller, local providers, who have the capabilities we need and who perform well, can flourish and develop.
- **Provider capabilities:** We will spell out the specific capabilities and requirements that make up a high-performing supply chain and an effective first-tier provider. We will contract, inspect, manage and intervene on the basis of these capabilities and requirements.
- **Commercial strategy:** We will build a competitive market with larger and longer contracts, rewarding providers for sustained outcomes and significantly reducing costs, using competition on a continuing basis as the spur to greater effectiveness.

- **Performance management:** We will move to a single, integrated, shared and transparent approach to the measurement and management of provider performance that enables a 'like-for-like' analysis of performance.
  - **DWP capability:** We will build our own skill base so that we make a positive contribution to business partnership – doing the best job to support providers in securing sustained job outcomes for our customers.
  - **Customer experience:** Customer experience will play an important part in the commissioning of provision, how it is delivered and how it is improved.
9. The main aim of the Strategy is to bring a distinctive, flexible approach to service delivery, based on specialist knowledge, skills and experience using the private, public and third sectors, building on the significant proportion of the help and support available to jobless people already delivered under contract by providers. We want to develop a consistent base of providers who we will encourage to use their initiative and innovation to deliver services, and linking into the appropriate local delivery infrastructure that best delivers sustained jobs.
10. To encourage our existing providers, along with any other organisations who may not have previously delivered this service, we will:
- run briefing events before and during the procurement exercise, involving both potential prime contractors and smaller organisations who may wish to be involved as sub-contractors. We will publicise these widely, including local, national and specialist publications and on our website;

- implement arrangements to facilitate the ongoing exchange of information between potential prime contractors and potential sub-contractors;
  - work with the Office for the Third Sector and third sector representative organisations to ensure that there is an ongoing communication process with third sector organisations throughout the procurement exercise;
  - ensure that bidders receive information on the specific local requirements in each contract areas and are given opportunities to interact with key local stakeholders; and
  - provide specialist support to organisations in the forming of joint ventures.
11. The Department will need to play an active role here in ensuring that smaller, local partners can flourish and develop, provided they perform well and have the capabilities we need. We will support the entry of new providers to the market and are committed to ensuring that high performing third sector providers can continue to play their valuable role in provision.
12. For more detailed information on the DWP Commissioning Strategy, please go to: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2008/com-strategy/cs-rep-08.pdf>

The English, Welsh and Easy Read (English) versions of this Summary of Responses document are available online at

**[www.dwp.gov.uk/  
resourcecentre/des-  
consultation.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/des-consultation.asp)**

as is a link to the British Sign Language (BSL) summary version.

Copies of this document are also available in Welsh, Braille, Easy Read, English and Welsh large print formats, on Audio CD and a summary version in BSL on DVD, free of charge from:

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