

Public consultation

Helping people achieve their full potential:

Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services

large print



Contents

Ministerial Foreword		3
Preface – Summary of Proposals		5
Chapter One	Introduction and Context for Reform	9
	Chapter One introduces the employment support currently provided by the Department for Work and Pensions to disabled people and outlines the context in which the reforms proposed in this public consultation are set.	
Chapter Two	The Case for Change	25
	Chapter Two sets out the reasons why we are proposing changes to the way that some of our specialist employment support for disabled people is delivered. The chapter covers much of the evidence base for reform and the basis of the key concepts for designing proposed new provision.	
Chapter Three	Integrated, Flexible Support	43
	Chapter Three outlines the key features of a new programme that we are proposing to replace the current Job Introduction Scheme, Work Preparation and WORKSTEP. The intention is to create an integrated support package that can be more easily tailored to meet the needs of our customers.	

Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services

Chapter Four	The Disability Employment Adviser role	59
	Chapter Four sets out our proposals for how we believe our Disability Employment Advisers could be enabled to work more effectively in relation to our specialist disability employment programmes and therein offer a better service to our disabled customers.	
Chapter Five	Access to Work	69
	Access to Work is one of our most popular and successful labour market programmes. However, we are not complacent about Access to Work and have commissioned an independent evaluation to look at its delivery. Alongside this evaluation we are using this consultation to seek your views on some key Access to Work issues	
Conclusion		79
Consultation Arrangements		81
Annex A	Consultation Questions	87
Annex B	Department for Work and Pensions Commissioning Strategy	93
Annex C	Our current disability employment services	95
	Part A: Current services available to support disabled people who have the most complex issues to finding, entering or staying in employment and which are included in this consultation.	
	Part B: Disability employment provision directly related to, but not covered by this consultation	
Annex D	Research Report Bibliography	103

Ministerial Foreword



Work matters. People in work are generally better off financially and better off in terms of their health and wellbeing, their self-esteem and the future prospects for them and their families. Disabled people must get the same opportunities to benefit from work as everyone else.

Over the last ten years this Government has built a strong foundation for economic success. This foundation, combined with the biggest extension of disability civil rights this country has ever seen, our progressive employment policies, and the efforts of individual disabled people, employers and our external delivery partners has helped transform the opportunities for disabled people to gain and retain employment.

Since 1997 we have introduced a range of new provision, such as the New Deal for Disabled People and the Pathways to Work initiative, which help disabled people enter sustainable employment. We have also invested significantly in our existing specialist disability employment services, such as Access to Work which has seen its budget increase more than fourfold over the last ten years. All of this provision cannot operate successfully without the continued help and partnership of a wide range of external organisations, including employers and our delivery partners in the public, private and third sectors.

Whilst we have helped narrow the employment gap between disabled people and the overall population we still have a long way to go before we achieve our vision that: 'any disabled person who wants a job and needs support to get and keep a job anywhere in the country should, wherever possible, be able

Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services

to do so.¹ Our recently published Public Service Agreements encapsulate our desire to maximise employment opportunities for all, including a renewed emphasis on those people who are particularly disadvantaged in the labour market.

We believe that if we are to achieve our vision of helping more disabled people lead fulfilling lives, we must improve our existing specialist employment services so they better equip disabled people to get into work and get on at work.

The proposals contained in this document take account of the views expressed to us by a wide cross-section of stakeholders, particularly those of disabled people.

The proposals are designed to create a more flexible, easy to use, service that is better at enabling Jobcentre Plus frontline staff and our external partners to meet the needs of individual disabled people and their employers.

I hope that you will take this opportunity to share your views with us to help shape the future of the support that is available to disabled people who need our specialist services, to enable them to find, retain and progress in work.



Anne McGuire
Minister for Disabled People

1 See the 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People' report at www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy

Preface – Summary of Proposals

1. This consultation outlines proposals to improve the effectiveness of some of the specialist support the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provides to help disabled people enter and/or retain employment.
2. The proposed reforms are designed to complement our wider Welfare to Work reforms, including the national rollout of Pathways to Work, our plans to introduce a more flexible New Deal and closer working that we are continuing to develop with other government departments and external organisations.
3. The reforms focus on the following suite of support:
 - access for disabled people to all DWP employment services;
 - Job Introduction Scheme;
 - Work Preparation;
 - WORKSTEP;
 - the role of the Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Adviser; and
 - Access to Work.

4. We are proposing:

Area of consultation	Summary of goals
<p>A new programme to replace the Job Introduction Scheme, Work Preparation and WORKSTEP.</p>	<p>To provide customers, who have complex disability related barriers to work, with a more personalised and seamless service that can cover more of their employment support needs. The programme would be delivered by the public, private and voluntary sectors and cover pre-employment support right through to job retention and long-term supported employment for those who require it.</p>
<p>To clarify and enhance the role of Jobcentre Plus' Disability Employment Advisers in relation to our specialist disability employment programmes.</p>	<p>To ensure that disabled people get an employment support package that is appropriate to their individual needs and that it is delivered appropriately.</p>

<p>Where next for Access to Work?</p>	<p>Alongside an external independent evaluation we want to use responses to consultation questions on Access to Work to explore ways in which we can further improve the service – whilst retaining the successful elements of the current programme.</p>
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What disability-focused employment services are not covered by this consultation?

5. This consultation refers to, but does not directly cover:
 - Pathways to Work;
 - New Deal for Disabled People;
 - Remploy; and
 - Residential Training Colleges.
6. Please see Annex C, part B, for additional details on these services.

When would the changes be introduced?

7. Subject to the consultation responses and to allow for an external contracting process, the earliest we would look to introduce significant changes to the Job Introduction Scheme, Work Preparation and WORKSTEP is October 2009

Equality Impact Assessment

8. This consultation is fundamental to enabling us to undertake a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).

We will produce this assessment covering the changes we are proposing to take forward, following our analysis of the responses to this consultation.

A copy of the 'screening' exercise will be obtainable shortly from: **www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/des-consultation.asp**

How do I respond to the consultation?

9. Details on how to respond to this consultation are provided in 'Consultation Arrangements, page 81.

Are there formal consultation questions?

10. Set questions related to this consultation are shown at the end of each relevant chapter and listed all together in Annex A. We welcome any other comments on the proposals too.

Chapter One

Introduction and Context for Reform

This chapter introduces the employment support currently provided by the Department for Work and Pensions to disabled people and outlines the context in which the reforms proposed in this public consultation are set.

Context

1. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) directly serves many millions of disabled people and carers of disabled people each year through its range of welfare provision – including such support as Disability Living Allowance, Carer’s Allowance, Incapacity Benefit payments and a range of employment programmes.
2. Since 1997 over 200,000 disabled people from different backgrounds and on a range of benefits have been helped into employment by DWP’s other employment services, such as the New Deal for Young People and the New Deal for Lone Parents. This is a significant achievement and one that we will continue to build upon, for example, through developing a more flexible New Deal to improve the ability of our services to help disabled people into work.
3. We have also created a range of successful provision to help people on incapacity and related benefits into employment, such as the New Deal for Disabled People and Pathways to Work. For example, the New Deal for Disabled People has helped over 150,000 people to take up work since it was created in 2001.

Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services

4. In addition we have a range of specialist disability employment provision that is designed to help people with higher support needs or who, for example, need longer-term support whilst they are in work.
5. These specialist disability employment services are delivered through Jobcentre Plus and service providers from the public, private and voluntary sectors. They already enable many thousands of disabled people to lead fulfilling working lives – people who may otherwise be excluded from the workplace. This consultation is primarily concerned with this important area of specialist support.
6. The consultation covers proposed reforms to four national specialist disability employment programmes – the Job Introduction Scheme, WORKSTEP, Work Preparation and Access to Work – and the way that Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentre Plus work in relation to these programmes. A brief outline of this support is provided in Box 1: Outline of programmes covered in this consultation, below, and in Annex C, part A.

Box 1: Outline of programmes covered in this consultation

Job Introduction Scheme

The Job Introduction Scheme can pay a wage subsidy of £75 per week to an employer for up to thirteen weeks when they employ a disabled person.

Work Preparation

Work Preparation helps disabled people to address employment-related issues associated with their disability and prepare to enter work. This might include confidence-building, identification of suitable types of work and work experience.

WORKSTEP

WORKSTEP provides support for disabled people who face complex issues in finding and/or keeping a paid job, but who, with the right support for them and their employer (such as mentoring or job coaching) can develop a successful career. The programme also aims to help participants and their employers progress to a stage where WORKSTEP support can be reduced/withdrawn over time.

Access to Work

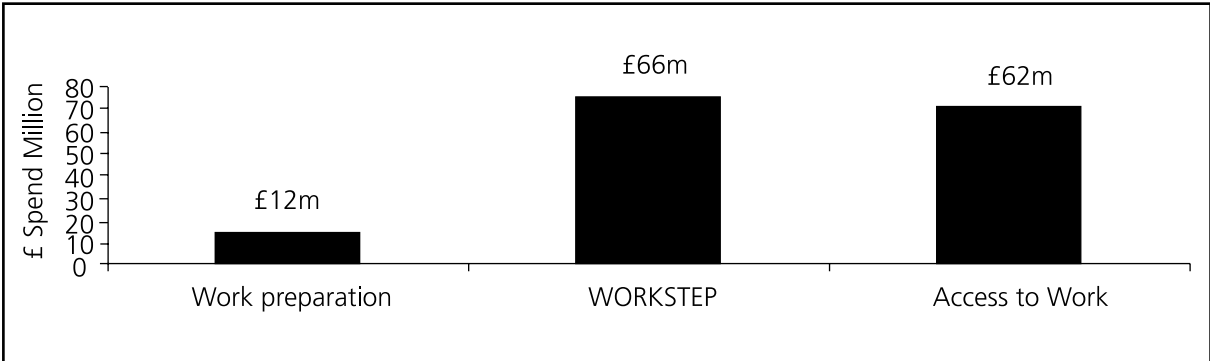
Access to Work can fund work-based support or adaptations to enable disabled people to start and/or retain paid employment.

Disability Employment Advisers

Disability Employment Advisers are based in Jobcentre Plus offices and have specialist knowledge and experience of the issues some disabled people face in trying to find and/or keep a job. They provide a range of services, including in-depth job seeking advice, referrals to job support, and advice to employers.

7. Over the course of the 2006/07 financial year DWP's budget was around £140m in total for the Job Introduction Scheme (approximately half a million pounds spend), Work Preparation, WORKSTEP and Access to Work. (See Figure 1: Programme Budgets 2006/07.)

Figure 1: Programme Budgets 2006/07

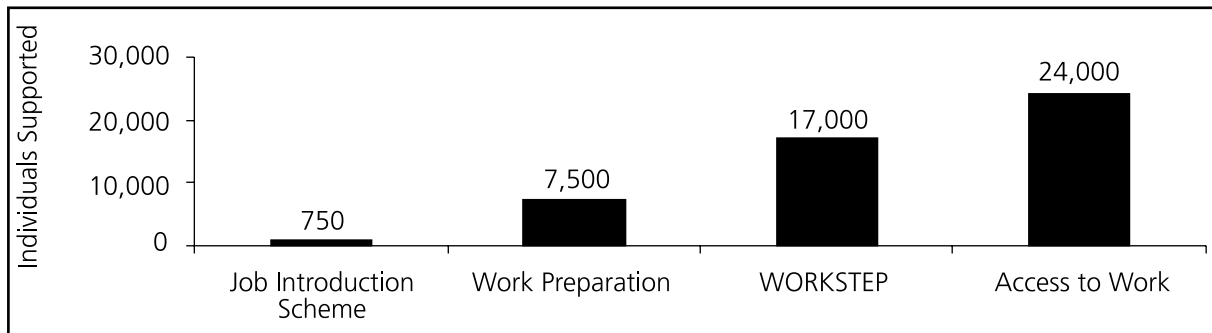


8. We have significantly improved the resources available to our employment services over recent years, with the launch and expansion of programmes such as the New Deal for Disabled People and Pathways to Work. Access to Work funding, for example, increased from £15m in 1997/98 to a planned £66m next year.

9. In our current Spending Review we will not have significant additional resources to invest. However, we have built an evidence-base that clearly highlights the scope for improving our current services within these resource constraints (see Chapter Two). We therefore believe reforms are essential if we are to improve employment outcomes for disabled people.

10. During 2006 these programmes supported thousands of people to move towards employment and/or retain a job that they would otherwise be at risk of losing because of their disability. (See Figure 2: Individuals Supported 2006/07.)

Figure 2: Individuals Supported 2006/07

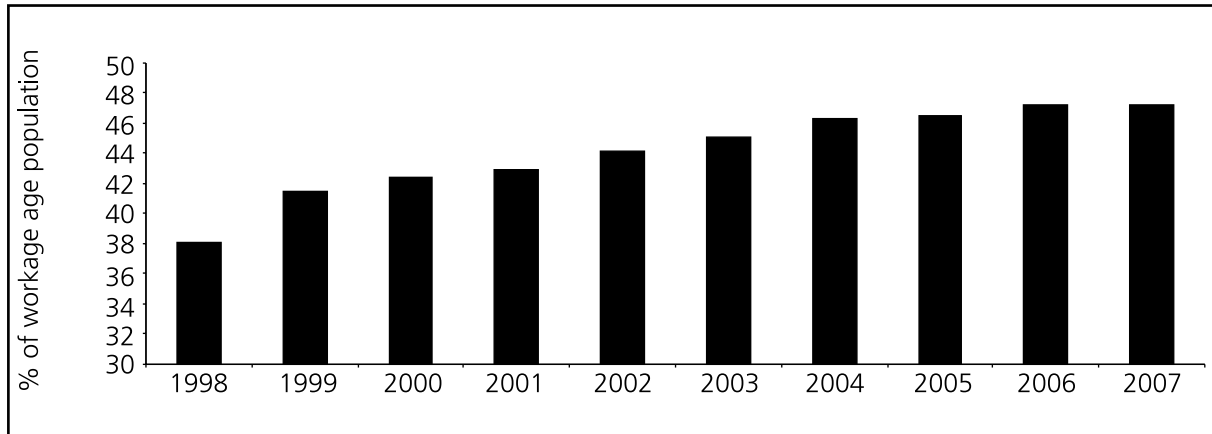


*All figures are approximate.

Jobcentre Plus do not collect hard data on the Job Introduction Scheme, the figures are estimated from a total annual expenditure and an assumption of nine weeks average duration. For Access to Work, support was directly provided to approximately 24,000 individuals within 2006/07, however we estimate a further 16,000 people are continuing to directly benefit from support provided in the previous two years under the Special Aids and Equipment element.

11. The overall employment rate for disabled people has improved significantly over the past decade – from just 38% in 1998 to around 47% today (see Figure 3: Percentage of Working Age Disabled People in Employment). This improvement is partly due to DWP's employment programmes and wider factors such as the Disability Discrimination Act, changing attitudes in society and the strong foundation for economic growth that we have created.

Figure 3: Percentage of Working Age Disabled People in Employment



“Future Government policy should be designed to ensure that in twenty years time any disabled person who wants a job and needs support to get and keep a job anywhere in the country should, wherever possible, be able to do so. Any employer wanting to employ a disabled person should be able to find the right person and the right support.”

12. This progress has closed the gap between the employment rates for disabled people and the overall working age employment rate (which currently stands at 74%). However, we still have a long way to go before disabled people could be considered to have true equality in the labour market and we know that some groups continue to be particularly disadvantaged. For example, it is estimated that for people with a learning disability or mental health condition, fewer than one in five are in employment.
13. We therefore clearly need to do more if we are to meet the vision set out in the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit Report (January 2005), ‘Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People’, that:

“Future Government policy should be designed to ensure that in twenty years time any disabled person who wants a job and needs support to get and keep a job anywhere in the country should, wherever possible, be able to do so. Any employer wanting to employ a disabled person should be able to find the right person and the right support.”²

14. To achieve this vision the Government has taken action/is acting in a number of areas, including:
- reforming the welfare system;
 - developing stronger disability rights;
 - health, work and wellbeing;
 - working more closely with employers;
 - personalising services;
 - working across organisations to achieve common goals; and
 - Public Service Agreements.
15. Each of these areas is discussed under the headings overleaf.

Reforming the welfare system

16. Since 1997, the Government has embarked on a series of radical reforms to the welfare state designed to improve the opportunities, incentives and support available to help people into work. This includes ongoing reforms to incapacity benefits; the national introduction of Pathways to Work

2 Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit ‘Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People’, Cabinet Office January 2005.

and a new Employment and Support Allowance replacing incapacity benefits for new customers from 2008.

17. Building on the measures in this year's Welfare Reform Act, the recently published Green Papers 'In work, better off: Next steps to full employment' (July 2007) and 'World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England' (July 2007) the Government is delivering a step change in the employment and skills support available to those who are most disadvantaged in the labour market. We want to ensure that people with health conditions and impairments are never again written off.

Developing stronger disability rights

18. The Government has transformed civil rights for disabled people and is committed to transforming the life chances of disabled people.
19. As part of this drive the Government created the Office for Disability Issues to work to bring government departments together to ensure a joined up and strategic approach to disability-related issues. The Government has also recently launched the advisory body 'Equality 2025: the United Kingdom Advisory Network on Disability Equality'. 'Equality 2025' provides disabled people with a voice on policy right at the heart of Government.
20. Further, the Disability Equality Duty (DED) was introduced in December 2006 and the Government is working towards ratification of a new United Nations convention which will, for the first time, set out human rights standards for disabled people. The DED aims to bring about changes in the way our society views and treats disabled people. The DED ensures all public bodies, such as central or local government, schools,

health trusts and emergency services, pay 'due regard' to the promotion of equality for disabled people in every area of their work.

"Some employers have misconceptions about the difficulties of employing disabled people. Research in 2004 suggested that one-third of employers considered employing a disabled person is a major risk."

Health, work and wellbeing

21. The strategy document 'Health, Work and Well-being – Caring for our Future' was published in October 2005 by DWP, the Department of Health (DH) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).
22. In partnership with employers, employees, GPs and other health professionals a range of initiatives is being developed to improve knowledge and understanding, change perceptions and improve workplace health. We feel it is essential that positive links between work and health are understood and maintained.

Working more closely with employers

23. The House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (January 2007) reported³:

"Some employers have misconceptions about the difficulties of employing disabled people. Research in 2004 suggested that one-third of employers considered employing a disabled person is a major risk."

3 House of Commons, Committee of Public Accounts 'Gaining and retaining a job: the Department for Work and Pensions' support for disabled people', January 2007.

24. These misconceptions can result in:
- too much focus on a person's disability – too often this means that employers base their recruiting decisions on their perception of the disability rather than making an informed decision on the abilities of the individual;
 - unhelpful restrictions often under the guise of equality, health and safety issues or pre-conceived perceptions about disabled people; and
 - rigid recruitment systems that can prevent some disabled people from adequately presenting their skills and abilities.
25. Many employers have taken positive steps towards the employment of disabled people. However, many do need to be encouraged to develop recruitment policies that focus on an individual's capabilities and potential rather than their disability.
26. DWP is therefore working with disabled people and employer organisations to build an employer-led campaign with the purpose of increasing job opportunities for disabled people. This involves:
- working with the National Employment Panel, Jobcentre Plus and other key partners to deliver a demand-led 'Able to Work' pilot to test how we can better engage employers at a local level;
 - engaging with other organisations including the Employers' Forum on Disability, the Disability Employment Advisory Committee (DEAC), other disability organisations and involving large private sector, public sector, small, medium and voluntary sector employers; and

- delivering communications to encourage positive employer attitudes.
27. All these initiatives are building on the work that Jobcentre Plus and our service providers are doing to identify job opportunities and to help disabled people find and retain employment, in particular through Local Employment Partnerships. We are signing partnerships with employers, tailored to their individual needs. These partnerships will give employers the access to people who are eager to work and have the skills that they need.

Personalising services

28. A key focus of our Welfare Reform approach is the desire to offer more flexible and personalised support that more directly meets the employment needs of each individual. This focus is reinforced by the approach taken in this consultation document.

Working across organisations to achieve common goals

29. We know that difficulties can arise when individuals try to access services from a range of public sector organisations. For example, on each occasion the individual may need to be re-assessed to identify their needs and delays can arise while each organisation's procedures are followed. 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People'⁴ sets out some significant cross-government themes for improving services, these include:
- independent living through initiatives such as Individual Budgets;

4 The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2005.

Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services

- improved support for families with young disabled children;
 - eliminating service gaps and facilitating the transition between childhood and adulthood;
 - improved support and incentives for getting and staying in employment; and
 - providing a more strategic focus on disability issues within government.
30. In response, we are working with other public, private and voluntary sector organisations, including the devolved administrations to implement service improvements. Our aims are to:
- more effectively link the employment-focused services that are delivered by different organisations;
 - help disabled people more easily access the right range of services regardless of which public sector organisation funds the service; and
 - ensure that there are fewer obstacles and delays to disabled people gaining access to the right range of employment-focused services.
31. As part of your response to the consultation we would value your opinion on how the services covered by this consultation could provide a better fit with other locally delivered services and local partnership arrangements.
32. The following two examples on the Individual Budget pilots (Box 2) and learning disability initiatives (Box 3) are just two of a range of areas that we are currently working on with other organisations and government departments

to improve the delivery of services to disabled people. See Box 2: Individual Budget pilots and Box 3: Improving the employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities.

Box 2: Individual Budget Pilots

- In England, the Individual Budget pilots are a Department of Health led initiative to support the Government's commitment to give disabled people needing social care and associated services more choice and control over care services that they need.
- Thirteen English local authorities are currently piloting the approach. Department of Health are leading on the Individual Budget project and working jointly with DWP, Office for Disability Issues, and the Department for Communities and Local Government to take this work forward.
- We are striving to give a greater profile to employment options for the customers in the pilots. This approach reinforces our belief, for those who can, that paid employment is the best way to prevent poverty, promote social inclusion and support families.
- An evaluation of the pilots is due to be completed by April 2008 to inform a decision on whether to roll out Individual Budgets to other locations.

Box 3: Improving the employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities

- Employment levels for people with learning disabilities have increased slightly over the last decade, but remain disappointingly low. Indeed, different surveys give figures of between just 5% and 17% of people with learning disabilities being in work.
- In respect of this, DWP are jointly funding a project with the Government's Valuing People Support Team. This Newham-based project aims to improve support for people wishing to move out of day services into paid work, or for those choosing paid employment over day services at the time of transition from children's services.
- Importantly this project is looking to maximise the opportunities that are available across a wide-range of organisations rather than just focusing on one particular service delivered by one government department.
- Other partners include Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, Newham Social Services, Care Services Improvement Partnership, the Learning Disabilities Partnership and local employers.
- A report of the project's findings is planned for publication in Autumn 2008. We expect that the findings will be of benefit to practitioners and policy-makers interested in this area across Great Britain – even where services have different delivery structures, such as in Scotland.

- Earlier this year, the former Department for Education and Skills, Department of Health and DWP published a joint strategy paper called 'Progression through Partnership' on working together to help people with learning disabilities lead more integrated and fulfilling lives.
- Crucially, whilst these initiatives are focused on people with learning disabilities we believe that the lessons learnt will be applicable across a wide-range of disabilities, particularly where employment levels are low – such as for people with sensory impairments or mental health conditions.

Public Service Agreements

33. The proposals in this consultation have been developed as part of a government- wide commitment to build services around the needs of citizens and businesses and will also contribute to the achievement of recently published Public Service Agreements published by HM Treasury. These Agreements set out explicit aims, objectives and targets for relevant government departments to achieve, in return for funding provided as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007.
34. The proposals in this public consultation would particularly contribute to the achievement of the Government's Public Service Agreements 8, 15 and 16 '*fairness and opportunity for all*' by:
 - helping to maximise employment opportunity for all – towards the long-term aspiration of an employment rate equivalent to 80% of the working age population (PSA8);
 - addressing the disadvantage that individuals experience because of their disability (PSA15); and

Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services

- supporting adults who are at risk of social exclusion, particularly those with mental health and learning difficulties and/or disabilities (PSA16).
35. More detailed information on Public Service Agreements can be found on the HM Treasury website – **www.hm-treasury.gov.uk**

Chapter Two

The Case for Change

This chapter sets out the reasons why we are proposing changes to the way that some of our specialist employment support for disabled people is delivered. The chapter covers much of the evidence base for reform and the basis of the key concepts for designing proposed new provision.

Introduction

1. We know that Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) employment services help transform the lives of many thousands of disabled people every day and that our provision has improved significantly over the last decade. We know this from our experience of providing the services, from independent research, from talking to disabled people and their representatives, and from analysis by the National Audit Office (NAO).
2. However, we also know from these sources that there remains significant scope to improve what we currently offer. It is vital that we act on this evidence if we are to progress our collective aim of achieving equality in the labour market for disabled people. Evidence for change
3. Over the last few years there have been several public reports that have identified the need for improvements to our disability employment provision, including from the House of

Commons Committee of Public Accounts⁵, NAO⁶ and the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit.⁷ Examples of the NAO findings are covered in Box 4, opposite.

Box 4: Examples of NAO Findings

The NAO recommended that we should:

- consider rationalising our specialist disability employment programmes to provide a more flexible modular approach – to offer a better customer experience and increase efficiencies;
- look at how to drive up quality standards and achieve better consistency – including gaining improved efficiency through better contracting;
- improve the referral of customers to the most appropriate provision;
- ensure individuals continue to progress and receive a quality service whilst on our programmes;
- place more emphasis within the WORKSTEP supported employment provision on progression to unsupported employment;

5 House of Commons, Committee of Public Accounts (2007) 'Gaining and retaining a job: the Department for Work and Pensions' support for disabled people', January 2007.

6 National Audit Office (2005) 'Gaining and retaining a job: the Department for Work and Pensions' support for disabled people' Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC 455 Session 2005-6, 13 October 2005.

7 Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (2005) 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People', Cabinet Office, January 2005.

- offer a clear point of contact back to the Department for our customers;
- ensure that Disability Employment Advisers are given the right level of support and training to enable them to carry out their important role of helping disabled people find and retain employment;
- review the costs of support under the Access to Work programme and also examine whether high levels of public sector use are appropriate; and
- engage more effectively with employers to help more disabled people enter and retain employment.

4. We have also commissioned a wide range of formal independent evaluations of the support we offer to disabled people – in which the views of thousands of disabled people have been central.
5. Alongside traditional questions on our programmes' effectiveness, disabled people have been asked what more they want from our services, their personal goals and aspirations. This has helped us assess how well the service people are currently getting fits with the service they want.
6. Other interview participants have included a wide range of employers, service provider staff and advisers who work for Jobcentre Plus (see Annex D for a bibliography of related reports).
7. The findings, some of which are covered in brief in Box 5 have been instrumental in developing the reforms we are proposing.

Box 5: Key Evaluation Findings⁸

- Service provider staff are generally motivated to do the best job possible within their resources and display a high level of commitment to helping disabled people gain and retain employment.
- Some providers do not always take enough time to make their support match the aspirations and capabilities of disabled customers.
- Some elements of our provision enable a highly flexible personalised service to be delivered and these elements should be valued.
- Currently some people appear to access specialist disability provision who could be helped effectively by our other employment services.
- Substantial evidence exists that our current services are too segregated and overly complex. This is the case from customer, employer, provider and front-line Jobcentre Plus staff perspectives. Complexity can lead to:

8 Key sources: National Audit Office (2005) 'Gaining and retaining a job: the Department for Work and Pensions' support for disabled people' Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC 455 Session 2005-6, 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.

- some customers failing to access the services they need;
- some customers experiencing unhelpful breaks in their support package; and
- effort being invested in working around a system that could otherwise be invested in directly supporting disabled people into employment.
- Employers benefit from 'hands on' support to help them make adjustments for disabled employees.
- The shift away from the culture of wage subsidies has made it easier for WORKSTEP customers to progress into unsupported employment.
- A rationalisation of our current provision could offer a clearer more flexible approach that providers could deliver in a more seamless way under one programme. Such a programme may provide:
 - pre-employment support;
 - help to find and secure the right employment for the individual;
 - short-to-medium term in-employment support for those who require initial assistance when they commence work; or
 - longer-term in-employment support for those who require it.

Key concepts for designing future provision

8. From these reports, evaluations and our own analysis, we have decided that our future provision should be built around the following key concepts:

Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services

- a greater focus on those who need specialist support;
- less prescription and greater flexibility;
- better links between elements of provision;
- better consistency and quality of provision;
- provision for all types of disability;
- a greater focus on job entries;
- improved support for people in work;
- improved progression to unsupported employment; and
- improved progression within longer-term supported employment.

9. Each of these areas is discussed under the headings below.

A greater focus on those who need specialist support

10. Currently some customers appear to access specialist disability provision when their needs could be met through one of our other employment services e.g. one of the New Deals.
11. The Disability Employment Advisory Committee (DEAC), amongst others, have asked in the interests of equality and social inclusion that we should examine what more can be done to ensure greater numbers of disabled people can benefit from these other services. This would also enable us to focus our 'specialist' disability resource on those with more substantial barriers to the labour market.
12. Whilst many disabled customers already benefit from the full-range of our employment programmes there is more that can be done. We will therefore:

- ensure that disabled people's views are considered from the outset as we design all of our future services, such as the proposed more flexible New Deal highlighted in the 'In work, better off' Green Paper;⁹
 - continue to review the training and guidance for all of our staff so that they are better able to make referrals that are appropriate to the individual. We will not automatically refer people to specialist disability provision just because they have a disability or health condition; and
 - consider making arrangements for Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentre Plus offices to be the single point of contact for referring customers to our specialist disability employment provision – this is examined in further detail in Chapter Four.
13. 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 retain employment. We must therefore strive to ensure that **all** our provision is better able to help disabled people alongside reforming our specialist disability provision.
14. Making these proposed changes a success will depend on our ability to make better links through to other organisations so that, for example, we are better able to help people as they prepare to make the transition from education to employment or from elements of social services provision to employment.

9 DWP (2007) 'In work, better off: next steps to full employment', 18 July 2007.

Less prescription and greater flexibility

15. We know from some of our other programmes that they can be very effective when we set clear desired outcomes, but leave it largely to our providers and customers to determine the exact nature and duration of the support that is delivered. The New Deal for Disabled People, for example, follows this formula.
16. In contrast, our current **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.
17. Although Work Preparation can be linked to other support the courses are generally time limited to six weeks. Whilst this is suitable for some customers, we believe that such limits can restrict the ability of our providers to help people who have more profound and long standing disability-related barriers to employment.
18. Equally, **WORKSTEP** has a strong expectation that customers entering the provision will enter 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.¹⁰ We now know that many of the customers who enter this specialist provision require more than eight weeks support prior to finding work.
19. We want to stop customers from losing out due to such inflexibilities. If an individual needs, for example, an

10 Purvis, A., Lowrey, J., and Dobbs, L. (2006) WORKSTEP evaluation case studies: Exploring the design, delivery and performance of the WORKSTEP programme. DWP Research Report Number 348, CDS.

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.

20. The **Job Introduction Scheme** offers a small, time limited subsidy from Jobcentre Plus to employers,¹¹ which helps towards the additional cost of employing someone who has a disability. However, our research indicates that our providers deliver more effective support when they actively work with individuals and their employer, rather than only providing a wage subsidy.
21. Specifically, we want to encourage providers to agree an appropriate plan of action that recognises the practical needs of the employee and the employer. Working together helps ensure that the employee is given the opportunity to achieve their full employment potential.
22. We therefore believe 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.

Better links between elements of provision

23. 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

11 £75 per week for six weeks – extendible to thirteen weeks in some cases.

not happen frequently enough. Problems can include a lack of consistency and communication between different local contractors and difficulties in co-ordinating a smooth and timely transfer of a customer from one support to the other.

24. Where a customer is likely to require both types of support we believe 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 are looking to enhance the role Disability Employment Advisers play in developing a support package at the start of the process and to merge Work Preparation and WORKSTEP type support under one contract to further help avoid unnecessary delays and breaks in provision.
25. Equally we need to ensure that our service providers are more aware of the positive benefits that can be gained from Access to Work being paired with the full range of our employment programmes – specialist disability and others – to enable them to help even more disabled people get and/or keep a paid job.

Better consistency and quality of provision

26. With greater flexibility for our providers it will be important that we set clear challenging goals and expectations and ensure that a robust quality standards regime is in place.
27. There have been significant improvements in this area since WORKSTEP was introduced in 2001 and many of our current providers deliver an excellent service. However, the variation of performance and quality between our providers remains wide, with some in need of significant improvement. For example, the NAO highlighted that between April 2001 and

October 2005 one third of our WORKSTEP providers did not progress a single person to open unsupported employment.¹² On Work Preparation we have a range of complex contracts with significant variations in the quality of service being delivered and job outcomes achieved.

28. We recognise that part of what can appear to be poor performance in the number of people getting a job or progressing to unsupported employment can be explained by some providers specialising in customers with more complex employment issues. However, overall, we are clear from our evaluations and from inspection findings that we need to do more to push up standards across all these programmes.
29. We also have too many small and poorly performing contracts. We are therefore considering reducing the number of contracts that we manage in line with NAO recommendations. This could free up more of our contract managers time to focus on the consistency and quality of provision. Annex B outlines the DWP Commissioning Strategy.
30. In addition to improved contract management and contracting arrangements we believe it is important that customers and their representatives have clear channels through which to feed back their views about the quality of the provision. We will be looking at ways to enable this to happen (see Chapter Four).

12 National Audit Office (2005) *Gaining and retaining a job: the Department for Work and Pensions' support for disabled people*, Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC 455 Session 2005-6, 13 October 2005. Paragraph 4.13.

Provision for all types of disability

31. We want to ensure that more of our specialist provision is better able to support customers across the full range of disabilities including customers with multiple disabilities. Although the vast majority of this provision is currently delivered by contracts covering all disabilities, some of our contracts in some areas of the country focus on specific impairments such as traumatic brain injury, autism or visual impairments.
32. Whilst we recognise and value the contribution these contracts presently add, we believe that the services proposed in Chapter Three would best be delivered within a contract that is not limited to a single disability because:
- we want a more inclusive approach that does not unnecessarily segregate people by their 'type' of impairment;
 - many of our customers have multiple disabilities and we want to ensure that where possible their employment issues are addressed with this in mind; and
 - we want to be able to offer a better and more consistent service across the whole of England, Scotland and Wales.
33. In moving to contracts covering all disabilities we want to ensure two main features:
- that we get genuine coverage of all types of disability, including those with greater support needs; and
 - that we do not lose the expertise of our smaller disability-specific provider base.

34. As we are proposing to make these features a key part of the procurement process we would like hear your views on the approach and your advice on how we could make this work effectively – particularly for those people with greater support needs.

A greater focus on job entries

35. Of the approximately 7,500 people a year that Work Preparation supports, only around 1,600 enter employment within six months and the job entry performance within this varies significantly across contracts and from region to region.¹³ Variations are due in part to the:
- different types of contracts that are currently let in different areas leading to different types of service (some contracts focus more on assessment and pre-employment progression rather than job entry); and
 - varying performances of existing providers.
36. Whilst progression towards work can be a positive for all, we need to ensure that this progression translates into an actual job in more cases. We therefore want to both increase levels of consistency across the country and increase overall job entry performance.
37. Where an individual is likely to require supported employment, we believe that it would help significantly in their journey back to work if this could be identified at an early stage. This is one of the reasons that we want Work

13 Employment based on P45/46 data from HMRC. This data will miss most employment below the tax threshold, and the data quality of some records is insufficient to allow matching to other data sources.

Preparation type job entry support to be better integrated with support to help people keep their jobs. This should enable the individual, their provider and potential employers to open up more job opportunities.

Improved support for people in work

38. WORKSTEP provision is currently transforming the lives of thousands of people through delivering supported employment to help them find and stay in employment that they would otherwise lose. However, our evidence-base shows that we can do more to enable people to achieve their full employment potential in two major areas:
- progression to independent (unsupported) employment; and
 - progression within longer-term supported employment.
39. Please note that the in-work support delivered by Access to Work is covered separately in Chapter Five.

Improved progression to unsupported employment

40. 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' report¹⁴ and is a central part of what we believe a good supported employment service should provide. It is important because:

14 Recommendation 7.13, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (2005) *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*, Cabinet Office January 2005.

- we want to enable more disabled people to live independent lives and a fundamental part of this includes helping them sustain 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.
41. The concept of progression to unsupported ‘independent’ working was introduced as a main feature of our supported employment provision with the creation of WORKSTEP in 2001. However, progression rates off WORKSTEP to open unsupported employment are not high enough – indeed less than one in ten of the people on the programme in any given year are likely to progress into independent working – and performance from provider to provider varies significantly.
42. Recent WORKSTEP customers are likely to do much better, for example, around 18% of the people who joined the programme in 2004/05 progressed to sustainable unsupported employment within a two-year period – but this is still below what we believe is possible. Whilst some providers are putting a clear focus on progression to independent working, there is a significant element who are not and have only progressed small numbers or in too many cases have not progressed a single person since the programme was established.
43. We know we can, and must, do better. A recent evaluation of WORKSTEP raised several areas for improvement¹⁵, including:

15 Purvis, A., Lowrey, J., and Dobbs, L. ‘WORKSTEP evaluation case studies: Exploring the design, delivery and performance of the WORKSTEP programme’. 2006, Report Number 348, CDS.

- many people, both WORKSTEP participants and the staff who are employed to support them were unaware of the progression aim of the programme and were therefore often not working towards this goal; and
- the programme lacks financial incentives for providers to progress people towards independent working – indeed the funding system is seen by some as working against such progressions.

44. We need to help our service providers to implement better ways of enabling independent working where this is right for the individual customer.

Improved progression within longer-term supported employment

45. We recognise 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.
46. Many of our customers receive help to progress within their job and within WORKSTEP currently, but for some the service is patchy and not adequately implemented. For example, under WORKSTEP all customers should have a clear development plan covering goals and skills development, but the evidence from our independent evaluations indicates that does not always happen.
47. WORKSTEP helps a wide range of people in supported employment who start off with different needs and with different goals. This makes it hard to measure how much progress any particular individual has made. We are therefore

currently developing and piloting a **Distance Travelled** tool to help our providers and customers keep track of their goals and their progress in meeting them. If the results of this work are positive we will look at ways in which the findings can be used to the advantage of our customers, such as making the tool freely available to our providers.

Summary of evidence – meeting our customer needs

48. In summary, the evidence tells us there is significant scope to improve our employment services to help our disabled customers achieve their full employment potential. We can achieve this by making these services:
- clearer to understand – with better information for disabled people and employers about the services on offer;
 - more flexible – so the services can be more personalised to meet the needs of individual disabled people and employers;
 - more joined up and cohesive – easier to use and move through the range of support offered, including better links to services offered by other public sector bodies (e.g. education, training, social services);
 - better at addressing the issues that employers identify as barriers to employing disabled people;
 - better at helping individuals progress off the provision and retain their employment independently;
 - better at helping people develop their skills whilst on our provision, particularly for those who require long-term support; and

- more consistent, by introducing service-wide quality standards that support all customers to achieve their full employment potential regardless of the area in which the customer lives.
49. If we are successful we will be able to achieve better value for money to enable us to help more people more effectively.
50. The following chapter explains the main external provision proposals in this document, covering in more practical terms how we intend to achieve some of these goals.

Consultation Questions

No.	Question
1	Are there any points in the evidence-base that you either strongly agree with or strongly disagree with?
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?

Chapter Three

Integrated, Flexible Support

Based on the evidence set out in Chapter Two, this chapter outlines the key features of a new programme that we are proposing to replace the current Job Introduction Scheme, Work Preparation and WORKSTEP. The intention is to create an integrated support package that can be more easily tailored to meet the needs of our customers.

Introduction

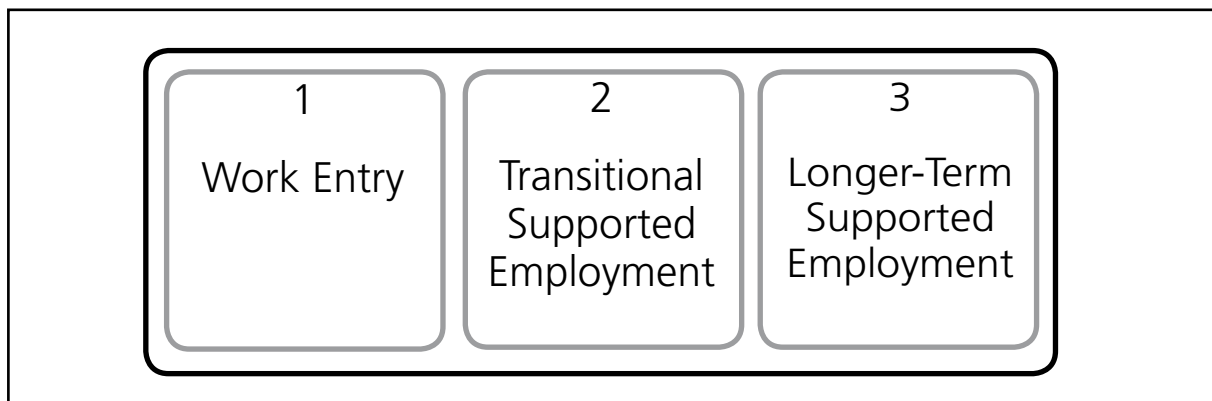
1. This chapter focuses on our proposals to replace the current Job Introduction Scheme, Work Preparation and WORKSTEP (an outline of this existing provision is provided in Annex C part A).
2. We are proposing to combine this provision into a single integrated programme with three clear support functions offering a more integrated support package that can be more easily tailored to meet the needs of our customers. This would help ensure that:
 - the high levels of expertise and dedication frequently demonstrated by our Jobcentre Plus staff and external public, private and voluntary sector providers can be focused on meeting the needs of individual customers rather than making the current system work;
 - our customers, employers and external providers can more easily work together to support the common goal of ensuring that disabled people are able to achieve their full employment potential; 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.

Proposed future programme

3. As highlighted in Chapter Two, we want to ensure that this support is reserved for those disabled people who are unlikely to receive sufficient support from our wider employment services. It will be available to customers irrespective of which benefit they claim.
4. We considered the possibility of establishing a fixed definition of who should go onto this provision, including the possibility of a 'points system' to establish a sufficient level of support requirement for each customer. However, we believe that such a system would be ineffective in determining suitability, particularly in relation to supported employment needs. Therefore we believe a more personalised system is required.
5. Chapter Four sets out proposals for Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) to establish suitability for this provision. DEAs would have the responsibility, in consultation with the customer, to identify an initial package of support covering one or a combination of the proposed programme's three main elements (as depicted in Figure 4: Main Support Elements, on the opposite page):

Figure 4: Main Support Elements



6. Examples of how these arrangements would work include:
- a customer who required intensive support to prepare for and get a job and would most likely require some transitional supported employment would be signed-up for the first and second elements of support; and
 - a customer with a long-term deteriorating condition who required intensive support to prepare for and get a job and would require longer-term supported employment would be signed-up for the first and third elements of support. The customer would then have this package of supported employment delivered by a public, private or voluntary sector provider.
7. Crucially, each customer would experience the service as a single package not as a movement from one programme to another with the potential associated problems and delays outlined in Chapter Two.
8. We recognise that because circumstances can change we cannot expect to get every package right at the start. We would therefore need to build in flexibility for adjustments to be made. However the overall goal is for a much more consistent and concerted effort to be made to establish an individual's full support needs right from the start and for these to be provided in a better co-ordinated package.

9. The following sections outline what we would expect each element of support to deliver.

1 Work Entry

10. We would expect our providers to offer a range of services to help people enter paid employment. In assessing contract tenders we would look at the diversity of provision on offer and the extent to which it is able to cater for all disabled people.
11. Whilst a wide range of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) other employment services already offer some of this support, the difference here will be in the level of specialist disability understanding and the focus on resolving disability-related issues to help a customer find a job. Examples of such services may include:
 - vocational guidance and action planning, tailored help to identify job goals and barriers (disability-related or otherwise), and how to address them;
 - confidence building, personal and job skills support (through individual coaching or group work) and capacity building;
 - job search advice and job matching of individuals to identified vacancies;
 - job application support in handling the recruitment process, managing disclosure of health/disability information, CV and interview preparation and skills development, with advocacy to the employer if needed;
 - job retention skills, training and some job skills help through the use of work trials or voluntary placements;

- working closely with employers to help them see beyond perceptions of a person's disability and help them focus on abilities and strengths; and
 - acting as a broker with an employer to explain the types of adjustment that would be appropriate and the wider support available for these customers from DWP and beyond. This includes analysing (with the individual) the support they need prior to it being put in place.
12. For all customers entering a job, we will expect our service providers to:
- check the individual has settled into their work place;
 - ensure that their transport arrangements are working;
 - ensure the individual is receiving appropriate benefits advice;
 - put in place, with the help of the individual and their employer, an agreed support plan that indicates how the support they are able to give will change over time;
 - help the employer to make independent adjustments for the individual and where appropriate offer advice to the employer and work colleagues; and
 - be available for advice and support where, for example, an unexpected issue arises.
13. If we focus specialist services on those with more complex disability-related needs then, over time, the majority of customers for this provision are likely to require some form of more intensive supported employment. This is where our work entry support will link straight through to the supported employment elements.

Supported Employment

14. As noted in the previous chapter, our analysis of WORKSTEP and that of our independent evaluators suggests that the programme should be re-focused to better serve the needs of disabled people who can progress to sustained unsupported employment and that we improve the service for those likely to require longer-term support.
15. We therefore propose our future supported employment provision will have two main strands:
 - **transitional supported employment** – with a clear focus on enabling customers to reach a point where they can work without ongoing support; and
 - **longer-term supported employment** – with a clear focus on the ongoing development of customers through their career, where working without support is unlikely to be a realistic option.
16. Under both types of support we would expect to see close working between the provider, the disabled person, their employer and in many cases, their co-workers.
17. As noted previously, we do not want to rule out cash incentives being used with employers but the evidence tells us that a direct ‘hands-on’ support approach is effective. Where cash incentives are applied we therefore believe they should be both time-limited and clearly linked to an agreed support plan that demonstrates how the employee will be supported by the payment.
18. Plans agreed between the employee, employer and our service provider should show how support will be organised and indicate how the employee will be supported to achieve

their potential. Key types of support that we would envisage a provider delivering include:

- taking on a job coach role, for example, to help a person with a learning disability adapt to new work tasks;
- delivering disability awareness training to an employer and co-workers to help them understand how everyone can contribute to a successful workplace, for example, explaining how to overcome some of the communication and social issues that may arise from working with someone with a moderate to severe form of autism;
- working with the employer and co-workers so that they become skilled in adapting tasks or training procedures to facilitate employing people with more significant disabilities; and
- helping an individual with an aspect of their home life that is adversely affecting their ability to do their job.

2 Transitional Supported Employment

19. In terms of the **transitional supported employment** strand we propose that customers who are likely to be able to progress to unsupported employment are given a service that lasts up to two years. This support would require close working between the provider, the individual, their employer and, where appropriate, their co-workers.
20. We believe, from our evidence-base and discussions with providers that two years is sufficient time to enable all parties to maintain a strong focus on progression to independent working and that a clear distinction between this and long-term support will help participants focus on clear job goals.

21. As life circumstances, including impairments can change over time, some people are likely to start off receiving transitional support – because at the time unsupported employment looked an achievable goal – and end up requiring longer-term supported employment. In such circumstances we would expect the provider and/or customer to discuss their changing needs at the earliest possible opportunity with the Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Adviser so a change in the support package can be approved. A change could occur because it has become clear that the need for support is likely to be ongoing, or because the move to unsupported employment, whilst still achievable, is likely to take longer than two years.
22. We have recognised that one of the greatest barriers to people progressing to unsupported employment is the perception that once they have left the provision they will find it difficult to get back on again, should they need it. We therefore want to give people the confidence to fulfil their potential by ensuring they are aware they can return for support if they get into difficulties.

3 Longer-Term Supported Employment

23. The **longer-term supported employment** strand would focus on helping provide a stable working environment and helping the individual develop their career.
24. For some customers it will be clear that they are likely to need longer-term employment support from the outset. Where this is the case, we propose they move directly to the longer-term support strand so we do not build in unhelpful pressures on either the individual or their employer. In some cases, where the need is for a very specific type of support – sign language interpretation for instance – it may be

more appropriate to provide that through Access to Work. We envisage that the Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Adviser will seek to identify, at the outset, the appropriate combination of services.

25. We do not want to limit the prospects of anyone on this provision, so we feel it is important that alongside the goal of helping people maintain their employment and progress within their job, the aspiration of independent working is there for all. But for those needing longer-term support we would not expect this to be a primary focus.
26. As part of the longer-term service we propose to introduce regular checks to ensure that our customers are receiving a quality service and that the support they are continuing to receive remains appropriate (see Chapter Four). Close co-operation between the individual, the service provider and the employer is critical if customers are to be enabled to develop to their full employment potential.

Who will deliver the programme?

27. We plan to conduct an open competitive tender with the public, private and voluntary sectors for the delivery of this programme. We have not finalised the tendering process yet and want to feed in responses to this consultation before we do so. However, the key issues on which we would welcome your views – with reference to the impact on individual customers – are:
 - the preferred size of each contract area; and
 - the preferred length of contracts.

28. Within this tender we would 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. (Further details can be found in Annex B.)

Role of Supported Businesses

29. 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.
30. We are clear that if we do offer some protection to these businesses it is not necessarily because we are satisfied with the current overall performance. Whilst there have been significant improvements in the services offered in some of the businesses, progressions off WORKSTEP are generally low or non-existent.¹⁶ There is also little evidence that these businesses are taking on people with higher support needs than those who are being found mainstream jobs.
31. Rather, this protection would be in respect of their unique historical position, the position of their disabled employees

16 Note, progression from supported to unsupported employment can take place **within** one of these businesses under current rules with the WORKSTEP customer moving off the support over time whilst remaining an employee of the same business.

and the particular difficulties they face in reforming in a short timeframe.

32. In examining how this could work we want to take forward discussions with the supported businesses and other providers, with BASE, the disabled people in those businesses and their union representatives. Key to these discussions would be an examination of how we could ensure that reforms on job outputs and quality standards are implemented during a transitional period leading up to a future round of competitive tendering towards the middle of the next decade.
33. WORKSTEP also has a Factory Support Grant with a budget of approximately £1m per year – the Factory Support Grant provides funding for supported businesses to, for example, buy new machinery or modernise the services they offer. We believe that in the future all our funding should be directed at individual customers and that DWP staff are not best placed to make judgements on what is/is not a sound business investment. In respect of this we would like to discontinue the Factory Support Grant with the money going to help more people onto the proposed new programme.
34. As an interim step, we believe 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. This change could be introduced during the first half of 2008 and we would welcome your views on this.

Transitions to new arrangements

35. A vital consideration in merging these programmes is the transition of customers to the new provision. The relatively short duration of the Job Introduction Scheme and Work Preparation mean that existing customers would be able to finish their existing period of support. However, the vast majority of WORKSTEP customers would want to transfer across to the new provision and we would support them in this process.
36. In respect of this there would be an absolute requirement 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 (see previous paragraphs on the position of supported businesses in future provision), directly for one of our current providers or, as in the majority of cases, works for an external employer. Current and future providers will need to work together to ensure the transition is successful.
37. 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 independently sustained employment.

Summary

38. In summary, we are proposing to combine WORKSTEP, Work Preparation and the Job Introduction Scheme 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.

Consultation Questions

No.	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?
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?
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?
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?

Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services

No.	Question
7	What should we do to ensure that consistently high quality standards are delivered?
8	What else can we do to improve the way in which DWP's supported employment services for disabled people are delivered?
9	What role do you think supported businesses/factories should have in providing employment for disabled people?
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?
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?
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?

No.	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 programme?
14	Are there other specific issues that we would need to consider in moving to a competitive tender for this provision?

Chapter Four

The Disability Employment Adviser role

This chapter sets out our proposals for how we believe our Disability Employment Advisers could be enabled to work more effectively in relation to our specialist disability employment programmes and therein offer a better service to our disabled customers.

Current position

1. A recent National Audit Office (NAO) report recognised the central role Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) can hold in helping disabled people to find and retain employment. In terms of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) external provision they stated: “Disability Employment Advisers are vital to the effective delivery of the Department’s employment programmes”.¹⁷ They went on to highlight that many DEAs have a detailed understanding of the issues customers face and have good links with local employers as well as voluntary and community organisations.
2. The DEA can, amongst a range of services:
 - use their specialist knowledge of disability-related issues to help disabled people find and stay in work;

17 National Audit Office ‘Gaining and retaining a job: the Department for Work and Pensions’ support for disabled people’, Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC 455 Session 2005-6, 13 October 2005, page 35

Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services

- assist disabled people (and their employers) to keep their job where a disability is impacting on their work;
 - ensure that disabled customers are provided with information and advice on available support;
 - assess a customer's employment needs to ensure they are eligible to any employment support they are referred to, and that the support is suitable for them;
 - actively engage with employers on matters relating to employing disabled people; and
 - provide specialist advice and support within the community to support disabled people who are seeking to enter employment.
3. Jobcentre Plus has other employment advisers who also undertake a highly valuable job in serving the majority of our disabled customers. Over the last few years we have significantly improved the capacity of our advisers to recognise and assist with many of the disability-related issues that our customers face, for example through the expansion of the Incapacity Benefit Personal Adviser (IBPA) role.
 4. Additionally, DEAs are currently supported in their work by Work Psychologists (see Annex C part B for more detailed description of their role). Both support our front-line staff in helping disabled people meet their employment goals. These services are key to ensuring that disabled people are supported by our other employment services wherever possible, i.e. ensuring that disabled people are not directed to specialist support just because of a 'disability' label.
 5. DEAs already make a positive difference to the lives of thousands of disabled people every year. However, feedback

from our customers, our staff, the NAO and from our independent evaluations indicates that we can do much better in supporting them in achieving their job goals. Areas for concern that have been raised include the:

- variable levels of training Jobcentre Plus DEAs have received over recent years;
 - variable quality of guidance available to DEAs on what our existing disability specialist and other provision (such as the New Deals) are able to offer at a local level to disabled customers – this has restricted the ability of some DEAs to make appropriate referrals;
 - variable levels of oversight by DEAs on people moving onto, and staying on, WORKSTEP; and
 - the lack of an effective direct feedback loop for DEAs to pass their experiences of local provision to our contract managers.
6. Jobcentre Plus has already taken steps to improve the training available to DEAs, for example, taking the best elements of our Pathways to Work training packages and building in additional, more intensive, disability-specific training. Whilst the new DEA training package has improved levels of understanding of the employment issues disabled people can face, they remain, to some extent, hampered by the variable quality of information available on what our externally delivered programmes offer at a local level.
7. We have a limited DEA resource – it is therefore important that we target the resource where it can have the most impact. We are considering improving the focus of DEAs in the following areas and would value your opinion on the approaches outlined.

Ensuring the support goes to those who will benefit most

8. DEAs currently act as a gateway to some of our specialist disability services, for example, Work Preparation and Residential Training Colleges, to help ensure that this provision is targeted at those customers who would benefit most.
9. 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 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. Whilst 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. We are therefore considering reaffirming the DEA role of ensuring that our specialist disability employment services, including supported employment, are only available to individuals who need them.
10. 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.¹⁸ In respect of this we are looking at how our DEAs could work with our customers and providers to ensure that the support given is still appropriate to the customer's employment needs.

18 Purvis, A., Lowrey, J., and Dobbs, L. 'WORKSTEP evaluation case studies: Exploring the design, delivery and performance of the WORKSTEP programme', 2006, Report Number 348, CDS.

Overview and guidance

11. DEAs are extremely well placed to look at the totality of support that a disabled person may need to enter and retain employment and we believe we can make better use of this position.
12. We are therefore considering giving greater emphasis to the role DEAs have in developing, 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 work. Action plans should be made 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.
13. For example, 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. We believe a broader upfront understanding of this potential package should help ease the transition into work and help the customer achieve their full employment potential.
14. 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.

15. In summary, 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 already exists.

Maintaining momentum

16. DEAs will have a role in ensuring that customers are receiving the appropriate help to progress their employment goals. To avoid creating unnecessary checks this would only be at key stages on a work plan. For example, for those:
 - not yet in work, after a significant period of time has passed after they started receiving support (e.g. six months), a DEA could check that the provision is still appropriate to their needs;
 - who have recently entered work and are receiving transitional supported employment to help them reach a position where they can maintain their job independently, a DEA could check that a gradual reduction in support is planned; and
 - receiving longer-term support, a DEA could ensure that the support they are getting is still appropriate and helping them develop within their job.

Feedback and quality

17. Because of their unique position we are considering giving our DEAs a clearer role as a contact point for our customers to feedback their experiences.
18. This does already happen, but not in a consistent way. We recognise that our customers do not always know how to feedback, or even that they have a right to feedback – particularly when they have been on a programme for a long time. We would therefore look to ensure that all customers on our provision continue to be aware of the DEA role and their right to discuss the service/support they are receiving. Some people will need proactive support to give them the opportunity to feedback about the support they receive.
19. Additionally DEAs are, as a result of their contact with customers and providers, in an ideal position to provide their own feedback on the quality and effectiveness of our external services to our contract managers. We are therefore looking to open a more formal channel of communication so that the expertise and knowledge of our DEAs is utilised to a greater degree in quality assurance.

Other DEA responsibilities

20. The options for enhancing the DEA role covered above do not require a significant shift in their overall role. Many of our DEAs are already undertaking much of this today. If we move ahead with these enhancements across the country, we would need to consider the impact on the range of work currently undertaken.

21. We would want Jobcentre Plus to ensure that DEA workloads allow them to focus their expertise on customers who have complex needs to finding, entering or retaining employment. We need to allow DEAs sufficient time to perform the 'quality assurance' role outlined above, but this should not be at the expense of their other core roles. We would not, for example, like to see a reduction in the role that DEAs play in advising employers on how to make reasonable workplace adjustments for their disabled employees.

Summary

22. We will continue to improve the capacity of our full range of advisers in dealing with disability-related employment issues. However, we firmly believe that DEAs have a distinct and important role to play alongside other advisers in offering specialist advice and support.
23. We are therefore considering enhancing the DEA role to ensure disabled people are more able to benefit from the expertise on offer and access the right range of specialist employment services at the right time. The improvements we are proposing include:
 - enhancing the oversight role DEAs have in ensuring that our specialist provision goes to those who require it most;
 - giving DEAs a clearer role in monitoring the progress of customers receiving support (particularly long-term) on our specialist services; and
 - giving DEAs clear opportunities to provide feedback on the quality of provision to both providers and contract managers in a way that supports contract managers.

24. In keeping with the principle of disabled people accessing support available to all our customers (wherever possible), DEAs, along with Work Psychologists, will continue to play an important part in supporting other advisers through general advice and case-conferencing to help disabled customers to find and retain employment.

Consultation Questions

No.	Question
15	We are proposing that only Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) would be able to refer individuals to the proposed new programme (see Chapter Three). What are your views on this proposal?
16	Do you believe that DEAs should have a higher profile role for people to feedback on the support they receive from our externally delivered provision?
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?
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?

Chapter Five

Access to Work

Access to Work is one of our most popular and successful labour market programmes. However, we are not complacent about Access to Work and have commissioned an independent evaluation to look at its delivery. Alongside this evaluation we are using this consultation to seek your views on some key Access to Work issues.

Current position

1. The Access to Work programme aims to reduce inequalities between disabled people and non-disabled people by removing practical barriers to work. In 2006/07 we spent around £60 million on Access to Work support, helping over 24,000 disabled people to take up and/or remain in employment by providing funding for one-off and ongoing workplace adjustments. Additionally, we estimate a further 16,000 people are continuing to directly benefit from support provided in the previous two years under the Special Aids and Equipment element.
2. The four main elements of support are as follows:
 - 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.

3. Unlike in the other areas of this consultation document, where there is an extensive evidence base pointing to the need for significant change, we do not consider that there is a clear case for major changes to Access to Work. We do believe however that there is scope to improve it further, and we have already set in hand additional work to identify ways in which we can do this.
4. Access to Work is currently managed through Jobcentre Plus which is responsible for agreeing an individually tailored support package for every customer. To do this they:
 - determine eligibility for support from the programme;
 - agree with the customer what support can be provided;
 - contract locally for individually tailored support designed to overcome disability-related barriers to finding, entering and staying in work;
 - negotiate with the employer for financial contributions above current required levels;
 - arrange for providers to be paid, either direct or through another company;
 - provide information and advice to disabled people and their employers, carers and other representatives; and
 - undertake follow-up action, including a formal review process, to determine whether the support originally agreed is still appropriate.
5. The actual support and/or adjustments are procured directly from the external public, private and voluntary sectors, by or on behalf of, the customer. So the management of the programme is held with Jobcentre Plus whilst the front-line

delivery of adjustments is contracted out on a case-by-case basis to the public, private and voluntary sectors.

6. Strengths of Access to Work that are frequently highlighted by disabled people and their representatives and groups such as the Disability Employment Advisory Committee (DEAC) 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.

7. However, against these real positives, 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?

8. Jobcentre Plus is 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.
9. In order to get a better view of how widespread concerns on performance are, how valid they are, and, if valid, how to address them, we have decided to combine two main approaches:
 - firstly, in recognition that we need to strengthen the evidence-base on Access to Work we recently commissioned an external research organisation to conduct a thorough evaluation of the programme's delivery. We expect to receive interim findings in the Spring of 2008; and
 - secondly, we want to take the opportunity of this consultation to ask for views about Access to Work from a wide range of stakeholders, including disabled people, Access to Work recipients and employers.
10. The evaluation report and the responses to this consultation will help determine the future delivery methods for this provision. The following section covers some of the key issues, describes what is already being done and offers some options on what could be done to help inform your answers to the questions at the end of this chapter. Please note that these are initial thoughts rather than firm proposals and they are being raised at this early stage to gather your opinions.

Customer experience

Speed of delivery

11. Until recently Access to Work had two key delivery benchmarks. These were a) for an individual to be informed whether they were eligible for support within 10 working days of applying for the provision; and b) for first help support to be in place within 60 working days of receiving the customer's signed application.
12. Over the last year Jobcentre Plus has made a concerted effort to improve its performance against these targets and during the last quarter of 2006/07 the first of these benchmarks was reached in 99.6% of cases and the second benchmark was attained in over 92% of cases.
13. The process of putting support in place can involve a range of factors outside Jobcentre Plus' control (e.g. the time it can take for architects and builders to complete an adjustment to premises varies). We therefore believe these figures represent a good success story overall. However, we also believe there is room for improvement and in recognition of this, Jobcentre Plus introduced new, more challenging benchmarks for getting support in place earlier this year.

14. The new benchmarks in 2007/08 are broken down by elements and also the benchmark is for the support package to be in place. It measures the total customer experience rather than just when they get their first piece of kit.

Access to Work element	Working days	% support in place
Communication Support at Interview	5	90
Travel to Work	20	85
Support Workers	30	85
Special Aids and Equipment	40	75
Adaptations to Premises and Equipment	60	70
Miscellaneous	25	85

Consistency of decision-making – national standards and flexibility

- 15. Access to Work faces a fine balancing act between applying national standards of provision and allowing for a good degree of local flexibility, and tailoring for individual needs.
- 16. We strongly believe in the benefits of local flexibility, particularly as we are dealing with a unique set of circumstances for every support decision. A particular strength of the programme is that each and every adjustment made is specific to the individual requiring support and their employer/employment circumstances.

17. The programme's flexibility has also, in some parts of the country, led to positive innovations such as the development of quick access to short periods of assistance for people with fluctuating mental health conditions who don't require ongoing WORKSTEP support.
18. However, we also recognise a need to ensure there is a strong degree of consistency across the country and that the type of support an individual may receive is not dependent on where they happen to live. We would welcome your views on how best to balance the need for national standards whilst allowing for local flexibility.

Reaching more customers

19. The Access to Work budget has increased from £15m in 1997/98 to a projected £66m for 2007/08. We believe that there is still scope to help more people. Part of ensuring that we can do this will mean maximising the returns on our current spending.

Employer contributions

20. Access to Work funds could help more people if we increased the current level of employer contributions. We might also want to encourage the largest employers to pay the entire cost of some or all of the workplace adjustments of their staff.
21. Employers currently pay a minimum of the first £300 plus 20% of the approved costs between £300 and £10,000 of implementing Special Aids and Equipment and Adaptations to Premises and Equipment adjustments where the employee has been in the job for at least six weeks. Access to Work pays for 100% of all approved costs for self-employed people.

22. Cost sharing was introduced in 1996. However the £300 level has remained unchanged resulting in a real terms erosion by inflation. This is despite a growing acceptance by employers of their moral and legal (Disability Discrimination Act) obligations to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people. If we were to increase the employer contribution it would enable us to invest the additional money to support more disabled people. We would welcome your views on whether the employer contribution should increase to allow us to help even greater numbers of people with the given budget.

Public sector use of Access to Work

23. In line with the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit Report 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People' (2005), the Government decided that from October 2006 all Ministerial Government Departments would fund the disability adjustments required by their staff from their general running costs rather than using Access to Work funds. Managers and staff working in these Departments continue to use the expertise of the Access to Work Business Centres to determine appropriate adjustments.
24. This step was taken in the belief that the public sector must strive to be exemplar employers of disabled people and that Ministerial Government Departments should therefore take direct responsibility for funding workplace disability adjustments for their staff. Any money 'saved' from Access to Work expenditure by the move has been reinvested to help others on the programme.

25. The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit Report 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People' (2005) recommends that we should consider extending this change to all central government departments and the wider public sector. As part of the Access to Work evaluation we will look at the funding change for Ministerial Government Departments before considering any further extension. We would at this early stage welcome your views on this issue which we will consider alongside the evaluation evidence.

Summary

26. Alongside an external independent evaluation, we want to use responses to questions on Access to Work to explore ways in which we can further improve the service – whilst retaining the successful features of the current programme.

Consultation Questions

No.	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?
20	What can we do to ensure Access to Work is used more effectively to meet the needs of individuals?
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?
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?

Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services

No.	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?
24	Are there more innovative ways in which we could make better use of the private and third sectors in delivering Access to Work?
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?

Conclusion

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 all 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; and
- 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.

Consultation Questions

No.	Question
26	How do you feel we can improve the way these services work with other locally delivered services and/or local partnership arrangements?
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?
28	Please let us know your views about any other aspect of this consultation.

Consultation Arrangements

Responding to this consultation

1. Publication of this document signals the start of a formal public consultation period in line with the best practice guidance in the Cabinet Office's Code of Practice on Consultation (see page 71 for further details on the Code of Practice). **The formal consultation period will last for 14 weeks from Monday 03 December 2007, responses must be received by close of business on Monday 10 March 2008.**

Who is encouraged to respond to this consultation?

2. We welcome responses from anyone with personal experience of, or an interest in, employment services for disabled people, particularly:
 - disabled people, their colleagues, friends, families and carers;
 - disabled people looking to make the transition from education to employment;
 - disabled employees who have received or are receiving employment support, or who may need employment support in the future;
 - employers and their representative organisations;
 - trade unions;
 - organisations delivering existing employment services and those who may be interested in providing such services in the future;
 - organisations run by or for disabled people; and

- any other people or organisations with an interest in our employment services for disabled people.

What questions should you answer?

3. Annex A contains all of the questions that you may wish to answer about this consultation. You can answer some or all of the questions about any of the sections. If you have any further points to make that are not covered in your answers, please include these at the end of your response.

Where to send your response

4. Your response must be submitted by close of business on Monday 10 March 2008 and may be sent to us by:

Post (letter or audio)	Disability Employment Consultation Disability & Work Division Department for Work and Pensions Level W10D Moorfoot Sheffield S1 4PQ
Email:	sheffieldmoorfoot.desconsultation@dwp. gsi.gov.uk
Fax:	0114 267 7215

Freedom of Information Act

5. In line with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, all information contained in your response, including personal information may be subject to publication or disclosure. By providing personal information for the purpose of the public consultation exercise, it is understood that you consent to its disclosure and publication. If this is not the case, you should limit any personal information that is provided, or remove it completely.

6. If you want the information in your response to the consultation to be kept confidential, you should explain why as part of your response, although we cannot guarantee to do this. We also cannot guarantee confidentiality of electronic responses.
7. If you want to ask any questions about the general principles of the Freedom of Information Act, please contact:

By post (letter or audio)	Charles Cushing Department for Work and Pensions Adjudication and Constitutional Issues Information Policy Division Freedom of Information Unit The Adelphi 1–11 John Adam Street London WC2N 6HT
Email	Charles.cushing@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
Telephone	0207 962 8581
Textphone	You can make a call through TextDirect by dialling prefix 18001 before the telephone number you want.

8. More information about the Freedom of Information Act can be found on these websites:
 - Department for Work and Pensions – www.dwp.gov.uk/pub_scheme/scheme.asp
 - Department for Constitutional Affairs - www.dca.gov.uk/foi/guidance/exguide/index.htm

What will happen to the replies we receive?

9. All responses will be fully considered. However, we are unable to provide a personal reply to specific questions or issues raised by individual respondents.
10. When the consultation is complete and the findings have been analysed, we will publish a summary of the outcomes, and information on what happens next. The summary will be available on the DWP website (www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/des-consultation.asp).

The Cabinet Office Code of Practice on Consultation

11. This consultation is being conducted following the criteria laid down in the Cabinet Office Code of Practice on Consultation.
12. The criteria are listed below. The full version of the Code of Practice can be viewed on: www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Code.htm
13. It is centred around six key consultation criteria as follows:
 - consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy;
 - be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses;
 - ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible;
 - give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy;

- monitor your Department’s effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated Consultation Co-ordinator; and
- ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.

Can feedback be provided about the consultation process?

14. If you have any comments on how this consultation has been carried out (as opposed to the proposals/issues raised), please contact the Department for Work and Pensions consultation co-ordinator. In particular, please tell us if you feel that the consultation does not satisfy the criteria listed on the previous page. You are also welcome to make any suggestions as to how the process of consultation could be improved further. Please contact:

By post (letter or audio)	Roger Pugh Consultation Co-ordinator Department for Work and Pensions Room 2A Britannia House 2 Ferensway Hull HU2 8NF
Email:	Roger.pugh@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
Telephone:	01482 609571

Annex A

Consultation Questions

1. Chapters One, Two, Three, Four and Five of this consultation contain our analysis of the current position and our proposals for reform of our specialist disability employment services.
2. To help us obtain feedback to this consultation, we have set a number of questions for everyone reading this document to consider. We have included questions to get information about specific things we are interested in and some general questions. Although some of the questions are aimed at particular audiences (e.g. employers), anyone is welcome to answer some or all of the questions. Alternatively you may wish to simply make any general points about any of the proposals included in this consultation.
3. Please include the question number in your response to specific questions. This will help us to keep track of all the responses.
4. Where possible, it would be helpful if you could provide examples or evidence to support the points you make.

About you

5. When responding, please indicate whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If responding on behalf of an organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were collected.

Consultation period

6. The consultation period starts on Monday 03 December 2007 and finishes on Monday 10 March 2008. All responses should be received no later than the last date of the consultation. Please see Consultation Arrangements (pages 67–72) for more information.

No.	Question
1	Are there any points in the evidence-base that you either strongly agree with or strongly disagree with?
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?
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?
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?
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?

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?
7	What should we do to ensure that consistently high quality standards are delivered?
8	What else can we do to improve the way in which DWP’s supported employment services for disabled people are delivered?
9	What role do you think supported businesses/factories should have in providing employment for disabled people?
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?
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?

Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services

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?
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 programme?
14	Are there other specific issues that we would need to consider in moving to a competitive tender for this provision?
15	We are proposing that only Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) would be able to refer individuals to the proposed new programme (see Chapter Three). What are your views on this proposal?
16	Do you believe that DEAs should have a higher profile role for people to feedback on the support they receive from our externally delivered provision?
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?
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?

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?
20	What can we do to ensure Access to Work is used more effectively to meet the needs of individuals?
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?
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?
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?
24	Are there more innovative ways in which we could make better use of the private and third sectors in delivering Access to Work?
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?
26	How do you feel we can improve the way these services work with other locally delivered services and/or local partnership arrangements?

Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services

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

Annex B

Department for Work and Pensions Commissioning Strategy

The Green Paper 'In work, better off: next steps to full employment' spoke of an aspiration of unlocking the best value from resources through targeting efforts and expertise appropriately on disadvantaged customers. We believe that private and third sector organisations have a key role to play in delivering this more specialised support.

The Green Paper outlined four key principles behind our contracting approach: quality provision, competition to drive value, outcome-based contracts with increased flexibility for providers, and minimum standards for all.

We published our emerging thoughts on the commissioning strategy on the 27 November 2007.

There are seven key messages on which we will build our strategy. These are:

1. 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.
2. We will play an active and transparent role to ensure that smaller, local partners, who have the capabilities we need and who perform well, can flourish and develop.
3. We will move to a single, integrated, shared and transparent approach to the measurement and management of provider performance that enables a "like to like" analysis of performance.

Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services

4. We will build a competitive market with larger and longer contracts, rewarding providers for sustained outcomes and significantly reducing costs.
5. We will move to a single, integrated, shared and transparent approach to the measurement and management of provider performance.
6. We will build our own skill base so that we are a value-adding business partner – doing the best job to secure sustained outcomes for our customers.
7. Customer experience will play an important part in the commissioning of provision, how it is delivered, and how it is improved.

Within this framework, we envisage that smaller providers will mainly act as sub-contractors. But we are equally clear that we do want high quality, high performing smaller and specialist providers involved in our contracts and we will take steps to ensure that they can flourish and develop.

Equally, we envisage that top-tier providers will work closely with regional and sub-regional partners to deliver sustainable jobs for unemployed people and be capable of delivering multiple contracts across the country to a high standard on a consistent basis. We are committed to ensuring excellent sub contractual relationships with high performing third sector and other organisations.

Full details of the emerging findings can be found on **www.dwp.gov.uk/supplyingdwp/news**. Further consultation is now underway and we expect to publish the final strategy document at the end of February 2008.

Annex C

Our current disability employment services

Part A: Current services available to support disabled people who have the most complex issues to finding, entering or staying in employment and **which are included in this consultation:**

Job Introduction Scheme

The Job Introduction Scheme can pay a wage subsidy of £75 per week to an employer for the first six or thirteen weeks that they employ a disabled person.

To qualify under the Job Introduction Scheme rules, the job can be full or part-time, but must be expected to last for at least six months. Disability Employment Advisers decide on eligibility for the Job Introduction Scheme and manage the scheme.

In 2006/07 around half a million pounds was spent on the Job Introduction Scheme to support around 750 disabled people during their first six or thirteen weeks of employment.¹⁹

Work Preparation

Work Preparation helps disabled people to address employment-related issues associated with their disability and prepare to enter work. This might include confidence-building, identification of suitable types of work and work experience.

¹⁹ Job Introduction Scheme figures are estimated from an total annual expenditure and an assumption of nine weeks average duration.

Participation in the programme is dependant on the individual's needs and can last for a matter of hours, on an increasing hours basis, or full time for a number of weeks. The average length of participation is six weeks and does not usually exceed thirteen weeks. Most Work Preparation courses involve a period of unpaid work experience with an employer.

In 2006/07 Work Preparation had a budget of £12m and had 8,000 programme starts supporting nearly 7,500 disabled individuals (some individuals accessed the programme more than once).

WORKSTEP

WORKSTEP provides support for disabled people who face complex issues in finding and/or keeping a paid job, but who, with the right support for them and their employer (such as mentoring or job coaching) can develop a successful career. The programme aims to help people develop their skills and abilities whilst on the programme and to help people progress off the support wherever this is appropriate for the individual.

WORKSTEP is open to all disabled people, as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, who can demonstrate they require additional support in order to work effectively in a job and who could not do so without this support.

The Department for Work and Pensions contracts with WORKSTEP providers from the private, public and voluntary sectors to prepare participants for supported employment and supporting individuals in that employment.

In 2006/07 WORKSTEP had a budget of £66m which supported over 17,000 people during the year – at any one time there are approximately 14,000 people on the programme.

The WORKSTEP Factory Support Grant is a discretionary grant available to businesses contracted to provide employment for disabled people under the WORKSTEP programme. The grant is intended to help provide long-term improvements to the commercial viability of businesses that will in turn increase the employment and personal development opportunities for WORKSTEP employees.

In 2006/07 approximately £600,000 worth of grants were agreed.

Remploy provides a proportion of the WORKSTEP provision though is currently subject to a separate consultation (see 'Remploy' paragraph on page 99).

Disability Employment Advisers

Disability Employment Advisers are based in Jobcentre Plus offices and have specialist knowledge and experience of the complex issues some disabled people face in trying to find and/or keep a job. They provide a range of services, including in-depth job seeking advice, referrals to job support and advice to employers

Access to Work

Access to Work is used to fund support or adaptations to enable disabled people to start and/or retain a job. It is open to disabled people resident in Great Britain in or about to start paid work, including self-employment.

Access to Work support was directly provided to approximately 24,000 individuals within 2006/07, however we estimate a further 16,000 people are continuing to directly benefit from support provided in the previous two years under the Special Aids and Equipment element.

Part B: The following disability employment provision is directly related to, **but not covered by this consultation:**

Pathways To Work

Pathways to Work is an initiative to provide extra support and opportunities to people with health problems and disabilities, so helping them get work. In doing so it will help lift more individuals and families out of poverty and help towards achieving the Government's aim of reducing the number of people who depend on incapacity benefits by a million by 2015.

Delivery of the Pathways service began as a small number of pilots in October 2003, and since December 2006, Jobcentre Plus has been delivering Pathways support across 18 Districts to 40% of new and repeat Incapacity Benefit customers.

On the back of the success of the Pathways to Work pilots this provision will be extended to the remaining 60% of new and repeat Incapacity Benefit customers by April 2008, through contracts with external provider organisations.

New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP)

NDDP is dedicated to helping people on Incapacity Benefit and associated benefits enter sustained employment. It is delivered by public, private and voluntary sector providers and is one of our most effective labour market programmes. For example, we know that it is very effective in helping move people not just into work, but also into longer-term sustained work.

Based on positive evaluation findings we have decided to continue to provide NDDP as an integral part of the Provider-led Pathways to Work approach, and are re-contracting the provision in the rest of the country as part of the 'Choices' package within Jobcentre

Plus-led Pathways to Work areas. We are, of course, building on lessons learned from our extensive evaluation of NDDP, but at this stage we do not propose any fundamental reforms.

Remploy

Remploy is the largest employer of disabled people in the United Kingdom and is the largest provider of the WORKSTEP programme. Remploy is also a provider of NDDP and Work Preparation.

At the time of going to print the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions was carefully considering modernisation proposals submitted by the Remploy board and an alternative plan put forward by the trade union consortium.

More information on Remploy can be obtained at **www.rempLOY.co.uk**

Residential Training Colleges

Residential Training for disabled people offers a service very different from our other programmes both in the length of courses and in the approach taken – however the ultimate goal of this provision is the same – to enable more disabled people to gain and retain employment.

We recently commissioned an independent evaluation of Residential Training. The findings from the report indicate that some aspects of the provision are working well, however there are significant areas that require improvement. With this in mind, new contracts were introduced in April 2007 to provide a greater focus on employment outcomes and we will continue to work closely with the providers to examine the case for further reform.

Work Psychologists

Work Psychologists are based in Jobcentre Plus offices and work closely with Disability Employment Advisers. They are specialists in employment including the impact of unemployment and employment on disability and health. Work Psychologists help people to return to work by:

- engaging directly with customers by providing interventions to identify work solutions to complex employment scenarios;
- engaging indirectly with customers to:
 - help advisers with specific back-to-work issues in complex situations; and
 - lead solution orientated case conferences;
- engaging with employers to negotiate, explore and implement effective work solutions in the workplace;
- engaging with advisers to enhance their:
 - skills – through developing learning programmes and by coaching; and
 - understanding of the psychology of work and disadvantage; and
- introducing new methods such as case conferences and improving guidance notes.

Other non-disability specific employment services

In line with our responsibilities under the Disability Equality Duty, we are committed to improving access for disabled people to our other employment services. We will continue to:

Our current disability employment services

- review training and guidance for all our staff, so they are able to guide customers to the most appropriate provision;
- work with all our providers to increase the accessibility of provision (e.g. the New Deals) to all of our customers, including those with health conditions and disabilities; and
- consult on all major changes to this provision as recently demonstrated in our 'In work, better off: next steps to full employment' consultation document.

Annex D

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

www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/des-consultation.asp

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

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