

## DWP Stakeholder Bulletin – September 2011

Welcome to the September 2011 issue of the DWP Stakeholder Bulletin – an e-newsletter to let you know what is happening in the Department for Work and Pensions.

If you have a comment or feedback about this bulletin, please email [corporate.stakeholders@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:corporate.stakeholders@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

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### Notifications issued to ESA (C) claimants in the Work Related Activity Group

We have started to write out to claimants who may be affected by the proposed changes to contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance. The proposal is to limit the amount of time people in the Work Related Activity Group can receive contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance to 12 months. We started to issue letters to existing claimants on 19 September, and these letters will be issued over a four week period. New claimants will also be informed.

We have provided information for external advisers and intermediaries in case they receive any queries. We have also made a copy of the letter being issued to claimants available for information.

- [Proposed changes to contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance \(DWP website\)](#)

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### Universal Credit Briefing notes

DWP has recently published a series of short briefing notes, which support the Welfare Reform Bill and offer detail on the shape of Universal Credit. These

follow on from notes previously published in this series in May. The notes published focus on:

- Additions for longer durations on Universal Credit (updated)
- The payment proposal (updated)
- Treatment of Capital (updated)
- Carers (new)
- Foster carers (new)

➤ [Universal Credit briefing notes \(DWP website\)](#)

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## **Default Retirement Age**

1 October 2011 is a milestone in removing the Default Retirement Age (DRA). From this date, employers can no longer force employees to retire just because they reach the arbitrary age of 65. This means that most people will be able to retire at a time which is right for them. Without the DRA, employers can only set retirement ages where it can be objectively justified in their particular circumstances - but this is open to challenge at Tribunal.

Through its Age Positive initiative, the DWP has published three key publications to provide information for employers.

- [Workforce management without a fixed retirement age \(DWP website\)](#)
- [Answers to employer questions on older workers and retirement \(DWP website\)](#)
- [Managing without a fixed retirement age: Good practice case studies \(DWP website\)](#)

The Business Link website also gives further information about employing older workers.

- [Employing older workers \(Business Link website\)](#)

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## **The Innovation Fund**

On 12 May 2011, the Government announced a package of measures to help address youth unemployment. These included a new 'Innovation Fund' of up to £30 million over three years, for social investment projects to support disadvantaged young people, and those at risk of disadvantage, aged 14 years and over.

The Innovation Fund will test new and innovative delivery models aimed at supporting the most disadvantaged young people, in order to help them achieve educational and ultimately employment outcomes. Working with investors and/or intermediaries, the Delivery organisations will receive up-front

funding to deliver their expert services, without taking on any financial risk to their organisation. Payment to investors/intermediaries will be based on the outcomes achieved. This will enable DWP to test the extent to which the Innovation Fund generates AME savings, as well as other wider fiscal and social benefits.

The Innovation Fund will be commissioned over two rounds. The first round has resulted in approximately 23 organisations being invited to tender. Successful bidders will be notified by the end of the year, with delivery starting in early 2012. The second stage will be launched in the autumn, with delivery starting in mid-2012.

- [DWP Innovation Fund \(DWP website\)](#)

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## **2<sup>nd</sup> Reading of the Welfare Reform Bill**

The Welfare Reform Bill, introduced in the Commons on 16 February 2011, enables the most fundamental reforms to the social security system for 60 years. It is aimed at delivering a system that is simpler, fairer and ensures that work always pays. The Bill completed its Commons stages on 15 June 2011. It had its Second Reading in the House of Lords on 13 September 2011.

- [Progress of the Welfare Reform Bill \(UK Parliament website\)](#)

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## **European Social Fund Supporting Families**

DWP invited Framework Providers to tender for European Social Fund contracts to deliver employment related provision. The provision is aimed at families with multiple problems as identified by Local Authorities, and aims to move family members closer to employment or into work. The tendering closed on 30 August 2011, and tenders are now being evaluated. Preferred bidders are expected to be announced towards late October with contacts being signed for delivery to commence in December 2011.

- [European Social Fund \(DWP website\)](#)

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## **Making Open Data Real – Cabinet Office consultation**

The Cabinet Office recently launched a public consultation on 'Making Open Data Real', which is open until 27 October 2011. This was one of the commitments outlined in the Prime Minister's letter on transparency to his Cabinet colleagues on 7 July.

Through this consultation, we are inviting views from the public and interested parties on a number of policy challenge areas, and on how else we could make open data real.

The Cabinet Office Transparency Team is inviting interested stakeholders to submit a formal response to the consultation before the closing date of 27 October 2011. This can be done in one of three ways:

Online at [Open data consultation \(HM Government website\)](#)

By email [opendataconsultation@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:opendataconsultation@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk)

By post to the "Open Data Consultation", Transparency Team, Cabinet Office, 1 Horse Guards Road, London SW1A 2HQ

- [Prime Minister's letter to Cabinet Ministers on government transparency and open data \(No10 website\)](#)

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## **DWP consultations**

There are no new DWP-related consultations launched since the last Stakeholder bulletin was issued. However, a number of consultation exercises are due to close in the next couple of weeks which you can find below.

- [Housing Benefit Reform – Supported Housing \(DWP website\)](#) closing date 9 October.
- [Workplace pension reform: consultation on draft regulations and guidance \(DWP website\)](#) closing date 11 October.
- [Localising support for council tax in England \(Department for Communities and Local Government website\)](#) closing date 14 October.
- [Specialist disability employment programmes \(DWP website\)](#) closing date 17 October.
- [The Occupational Pension Schemes \(Contracting-out and Modification of Schemes\) \(amendment\) Regulations 2012 \(DWP website\)](#) closing date 6 November.

All current live DWP consultations and the latest published consultation responses are on the DWP website.

- [Consultations \(DWP website\)](#)

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