

Touchbase

April 2011

Welcome to your monthly e-zine!

More than 170 organisations have bid to deliver the Work Programme. Successful organisations have recently been announced – further details are available on page 2. As part of Get Britain Working, we have an article on the Jobcentre Plus flexible advisory services – see page 3.

On page 6, there is some important information for organisations in Wales who order DLA claim packs. If you are based in Wales and order these forms, please read this article.

Please encourage tax credit customers to renew their tax credits. The deadline is 31 July 2011 – see page 6 for further details. In March, the DWP Bereavement Service was fully rolled out – further details are on page 7.

Touchbase is available on the [DWP Adviser and Intermediaries website](#). From here you can register to receive an RSS feed to alert you when each edition is published. We hope you find this e-zine useful, and value your feedback, suggestions and improvements. Email me if you have any suggestions for future editions.



To provide feedback on the e-zine email paula.young@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

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Delivering the new work programme



On 1 April 2011, the Government took another major step forward in its delivery of the most sweeping welfare reforms for 60 years, announcing preferred bidders for the 40 contracts to deliver the Work Programme.

The Work Programme will be the biggest payment by results employment programme in UK history and the first to link payments to providers to the benefit savings they help to realise when they support people into sustained employment.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) expects the programme to help 2.4 million people with all customer groups able to access it at some point in their claim. Support will be tailored to individual need, and providers will be paid more to help those customers furthest

from the labour market.

Competition for contracts was intense, with 174 bids submitted by 30 organisations. The list of preferred bidders consists of nearly 300 voluntary sector organisations involved in delivery of the Work Programme as sub-contractors, and two as prime contractors. Voluntary sector organisations also make up a substantial proportion of prime contractors' supply chains – in some cases over 50%.

From April, DWP will also be introducing a more flexible advisory service in Jobcentre Plus, giving local offices more freedom to respond to their local customers' needs.

For a list of preferred bidders, please visit the [DWP web site](#).



Please direct any comments or questions to: theworkprogramme.external@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Incapacity Benefits reassessment update

In April, a major milestone in the Government's plans for welfare reform will be reached when the full, national roll-out of Incapacity Benefit Reassessment starts. Jobcentre Plus will be assessing around 7,000 customers on incapacity benefits a week, to see if they are ready and fit for work. From May, this will increase to around 11,000 cases a week.

This reassessment will help people focus on what they can do, rather than on what they cannot do and is based on the belief that generally, appropriate work is good for most people's physical and mental health and well being. It will ensure people get the benefits and support to which they are entitled.

Many people with health conditions are able to sustain and progress in employment.

DWP have developed information that customers and stakeholders can access direct. This includes a page on [Directgov website](#) or [Directgov for Welsh speaking customers](#) and information on the [DWP Adviser and Intermediaries website](#).



“Many people with health conditions are able to sustain and progress in employment.”

Jobcentre Plus Flexible advisory services

One of Ministers' key priorities is to Get Britain Working.

Jobcentre Plus will be at the heart of this effort, coming together in local communities with all our partners - service providers, local authorities and employers - to find new and innovative ways to support people back to work.

From April, District Managers will make more decisions locally on how to help people into work, and Jobcentre staff will have more discretion to respond to the needs of individuals and the labour market. While every new Jobseeker's Allowance customer will have an initial interview and regular jobsearch reviews, our Advisers will have the flexibility to deliver more personalised support to help all individual customers find work.

Advisers will assess individual customer's needs and identify the most suitable support, tailored to the individual and targeted at the most appropriate stage in the customer's claim. This includes the amount of adviser intervention they are likely to need and whether they would benefit from the menu of additional support on offer.

District management teams will work with local stakeholders to source effective support for our customers, including using a local Flexible Fund for provision. This will include skills provision from local colleges.



“Advisers will have the flexibility to deliver more personalised support to help individual customers find work.”

Changes to Social Fund crisis loans



Changes to the Crisis Loan rules are being introduced. These will help to control expenditure, reduce abuse of the system, and ensure funds are available for Budgeting Loans throughout the year.

The three planned changes to the Crisis Loan system which take effect on 4 April 2011 are:

- Crisis Loans will no longer be paid for items in an emergency. Crisis Loans will still be available for items in the event of a disaster. They will also be available in an emergency or disaster for living expenses, rent in advance, board and lodging charges, residential

charges for hostels, emergency travel when stranded away from home, and the cost of repaying emergency credit on a pre-payment meter.

- We will reduce the maximum rate paid for living expenses from 75 per cent down to 60 per cent of benefit rate.
- We will restrict Crisis Loan awards for living expenses, in a rolling twelve month period, to a maximum of three.

The Community Care Grant and Budgeting Loan schemes remain unchanged.



For further information see the [Social Fund Guide](#)

Pathways to Work



New Deal for Disabled People, Jobcentre Plus Led and Phase 1 of Provider Led Pathways to Work provision, ended on 31 March 2011. Phase 2 Provider Led Pathways ends on 27 April 2011.

In the old Jobcentre Plus Led and Phase 1 Provider Led Pathways areas, we have already put in place a whole new system of flexible and personalised support. This

is delivered by Jobcentre Plus advisers who will support customers according to their individual needs rather than the benefit they receive.

Customers who were previously supported by Pathways to Work will be able to access support from Jobcentre Plus or the Work Programme once established, where appropriate.



For more information visit [Pathways to Work \(DWP website\)](#) or [Pathways to Work - Disabled People \(Directgov website\)](#)

Pathfinders



The Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) Partnership team are pleased to continue to update partners and stakeholders about the work currently being undertaking. We are now reaching critical stages for pathfinder 1 and 2, (Newcastle, Brent and Buckinghamshire respectively). While working closely with Local Authorities and stakeholders on pathfinders 3 and 4 (Lincolnshire and Tameside).

Pathfinder one

We have initiated stage two of the programme. Currently working with key partners to quantify levels of customer groups and highlight any potential impact on PDCS businesses.

Pathfinder two

Stage two was also initiated with two successful workshops held with partners. This included presenting a suite of products developed from the information gained from partners at stage one. These products will be tested with several partner

organisations over the coming months to check for usability, suitability and quality.

Pathfinder three

Sampling of the current Local Service visits was captured during February. The results from this sampling exercise will allow us to determine who is accessing services and whether this is the correct channel for their interaction. Efficiency and customer service satisfaction testing will take place April to June 2011.

Pathfinder Four

We are continuing to working in conjunction with the local authority and key partners. Looking identify opportunities for improving delivery across the partnership and stakeholder network.

Findings for all of the pathfinders and opportunities identified will be available summer 2011

For further information please contact Anne McNee on 01786 432699

Combining to Care in Manchester



Combining to Care is a pilot project in Manchester. It is aimed at improving the lives of older people.

This pilot was launched in November 2010 by the Pension, Disability and Carers Service and a number of public, private and voluntary organisations, and will run until June 2011. Organisations include, British Gas, The Post Office, Manchester City Council, Npower, NHS, Awarm, the Department of Work and Pensions, Age UK and Care and Repair.

As part of Combining to Care, a number of initiatives are taking place. We have already launched the “stay warm and well” message on pharmacy bags in the Manchester area. The message on the bag encouraged pensioners to ‘stay warm and well’ and to ring Age UK advice line or call into their local Age UK outlet, to see if there was any help available with their fuel bills.

One of the current initiatives may be of particular interest to you or someone you know. Please pass the message on.

Services and Benefits

We encourage you to find out about all the services, benefits and help available to you in Manchester. Don't discount yourself, you may be pleasantly surprised.

Check out [MyManchester](#) services website which is run by Manchester City Council, to see what is happening in your area. In addition, Age UK can provide information on benefits available to you and may help you to put more money in your pocket.

“One of the current initiatives may be of particular interest to you or someone you know. Please pass the message on.”



For more information call Age UK Advice on 0800 169 65 65 or visit your local Age UK.

Volunteering



One of Combining to Care aims is to help voluntary organisations in the Manchester area to fill their volunteer placements. This can be a very rewarding experience.

The opportunities available vary widely. For example, some are aimed at befriending an older person and visiting them on a regular basis, some involve helping at regular clubs and others involve learning how to give therapeutic massage to people to help relieve pain.

There are two sorts of volunteers

needed:

- Short term ‘one off’ opportunities e.g. helping out at a Bring and Buy sale;
- Longer term opportunities. This is where the volunteer will have some training and really be able to become involved with the organisation they are volunteering for, and help older people in many different ways.

If you would like to know more about the volunteering opportunities available or Combining to Care please contact Lesleyjane Clifford via email: lesleyjane.clifford@thepensionservice.gsi.gov.uk

Changes to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claim packs

A message for partner organisations in Wales

Currently when you, as a partner organisation in Wales, order DLA and AA claim packs you have to order dual language, i.e. Welsh and English versions. From 11 April 2011, there will be separate Welsh and English versions of DLA claim packs. These can be ordered from 17 March to ensure you have the new DLA claim packs in time. The dual language versions you already have, can be used up to and including 8 April 2011, either as a pack or split to provide the claim pack in the language choice of the customer.



“AA claim forms will continue to be dual language until later in the year.”

Due to changes in legislation, you should start to see the new versions of the DLA claim packs showing February 2011 from 11 April 2011. Please ensure pre-February 2011 versions are destroyed at that time and disposed of in an environmentally sympathetic manner by recycling them.

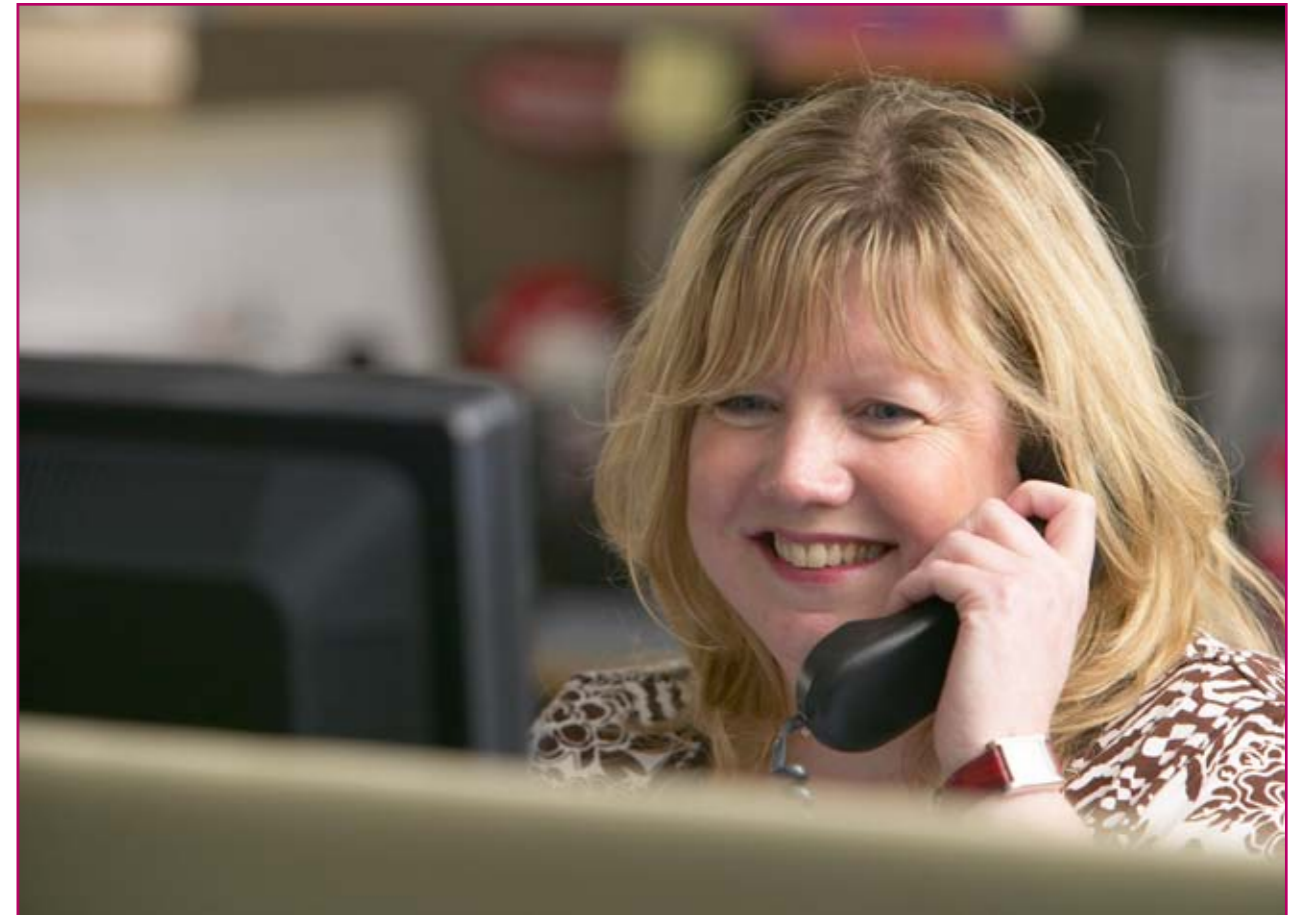
Under the Welsh Language Act, DWP has a responsibility to offer customers in Wales a choice of English and Welsh language claim packs. As you are offering customers forms on behalf of DWP, it would be appreciated if you would ensure you have stocks of claim packs in both languages and offer the customer the option, to ensure compliance.

To order the single language claim packs, you can either fax your order to iON on 0845 850 0479 or email ion-pass@xerox.com. If you have any questions about ordering the new form, please telephone the iON Contact Centre on 0845 850 0475. You should continue to order business reply envelopes and DCS CIL1/DCS CIL1W as you do now. The Welsh versions of the DLA claim packs are now available in units of 1. However, the DCS CIL1/DCS CIL1W, which has to be issued with every claim pack, is available in units of 50 so only order these when stocks are running low. As the units of issue are subject to change, please check before ordering.

If you have any questions regarding this new process, please contact the Infrastructure & Commercial Services Team on 01253 337052.

Further information about ordering DWP products is available on the [DWP website Catalogue of DWP products](#)

Renewing Tax Credits




We need to encourage tax credits customers to renew their tax credits before the deadline of 31 July 2011. If customers do not renew by this date their money may stop. Renewing as soon as possible makes sure that we can maintain customer payments and avoid overpayments.

This year we are introducing a new way of renewing customers who have been in receipt of Income Support, income based Jobseekers Allowance/Employment and Support Allowance or Pension Credit, for all of the 2010/11 tax year. In previous years they have had to check the information we hold on them is correct and fill in a declaration. Now they just need to check

the information. Unless they let us know of any change we will ‘auto renew’ them and they will not receive any further award notices.

The tax credits Renewal Packs will be sent out to customers between April and July 2011.

Customers can renew by completing the form in the pack and posting it back to us, alternatively renew over the phone by calling the tax credits helpline number on 0845 300 3900 or textphone 0845 300 3909.

 For further information about [tax credits](#) visit the [Directgov website](#)

DWP bereavement service

In March 2011, the DWP Bereavement Service was fully rolled-out in England, Wales and Scotland.

As well as allowing customers to report a death, they can also check their eligibility for a number of benefits and make claims for Funeral Payment or bereavement benefits, in a single phone call.

Over 60% of Bereavement Service cases involve DWP customers who get more than one benefit. In 40% of cases, there is a surviving husband, wife or civil partner.

Customers have told us:

'I was impressed that it was all done in one call, it was a huge sigh of relief for me.'

'It was so simple, at a time when you have fifty other things to do.'

Customers can contact the DWP Bereavement Service by calling:

Phone 0845 606 0265

Phone (Welsh) 0845 606 0275

Textphone 0845 606 0285

Textphone (Welsh) 0845 606 0295

“I was impressed that it was all done in one call, it was a huge sigh of relief for me.”



This phone line is run by The Pension Service, but deals with calls about bereavement from people of all ages.

Later this year, the service will be linked to the cross-government Tell us Once service. Customers who choose to report a death this way will be signposted to the Bereavement Service for the extra help on offer.



For further information visit the Directgov site (www.direct.gov.uk/death)

Other news in brief...

Changes to State Pension deferral rules for people getting Pension Credit, Income Support, JSA(IB) and ESA(IR).

From 6 April 2011, customers in receipt of Pension Credit, Income Support, JSA(IB) or ESA(IR) whilst putting off (deferring) their State Pension claim, will not qualify for a deferral reward for the days they or, if a member of a couple, their partner receive these benefits. To find out more people should contact their Pension Centre.

DWP Annual Forum

The DWP Annual Forum will take place in London Wednesday 6 July. The Forum is aimed at all advisers, intermediaries and other professionals that work with our customers. It aims to provide information about DWP and its Agencies, to consult on new initiatives, and to hear your feedback about how we are doing. If you would like to attend please let us know at corporate.stakeholders@dwp.gsi.gov.uk. If you would like to view reports of previous forums please visit [DWP Adviser website - Forum Reports](#)

DWP-related consultation exercises

Public consultations provide the Department with feedback on proposals for legislative changes and other initiatives. They play an important part in policy development and in the Government's decision-making process. All DWP-related consultation exercises are available on the [DWP Consultations](#) pages of the website. Latest consultation responses are also published on the same pages.

Benefits Rates 2011

The annual uprating of benefits will take place for most benefits in the first full week of the tax year. In 2011, this will be the

week beginning 11 April. The full details of [benefit rates for 2011](#) can be found on DWP website.

DWP Welfare Reform events

DWP organised a series of events to provide information about our welfare reform programme. The events proved to be extremely popular and we apologise as we have been unable to accommodate everyone. Presentations from the events are now available on the [DWP Adviser and Intermediaries](#) website.

Access to Elected Office consultation – closes 11 May

The Access to Elected Office consultation was published on 16 February 2011. The document sets out policy proposals for increasing access to elected office by disabled people. The closing date for responses to the consultation is 11 May 2011. The Government Equalities Office (GEO), Cabinet Office and Office for Disability Issues have worked with Equality 2025 and disabled people's organisations to co-produce the proposals and draft the consultation paper. [Access to Elected Office consultation](#) (GEO website)

Disability Living Allowance Adult claim forms

An error has been identified in the February 2011 DLA Adult claim form. At Question 37 the second bullet point reads: "I have difficulty or need help - with my incontinence needs." It should say: "I have difficulty or need help - getting in and out of the bath." We have corrected the versions on Directgov and are correcting the clerical forms. Please be assured customers will not be disadvantaged.

