



BRIEFING PAPER

Number 7845, 22 December 2016

Work and Health Programme

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Summary

The Work and Health Programme is a welfare-to-work programme which will be launched in autumn 2017. The Work and Health Programme will provide specialised support for those unemployed for over two years and, on a voluntary basis, to those with health conditions or disabilities. The Programme will be run by service providers awarded contracts by the government.

The Programme will target people who with specialist support are likely to be able to find work within 12 months. It takes the place of two existing welfare-to-work schemes, the [Work Programme](#) and [Work Choice](#), although many jobseekers who would previously have been supported by the Work Programme will now receive support directly through Jobcentre Plus rather than the Work and Health Programme.

Funding for the Work and Health Programme will be £130 million a year by 2019/20, including funds devolved to Scotland. Aspects of the Programme will also be devolved to local areas.

The Programme forms part of a wider package of employment support for people with disabilities, as outlined in the Government's [Work, Health and Disability Green Paper: Improving Lives](#), published in October 2016. The Green Paper also includes proposals to increase the level of employment support provided to disabled people through the Jobcentre Plus network.

1. Background

The Work and Health Programme is a welfare-to-work programme and is expected to be launched in autumn 2017.¹ It will provide specialised support for those unemployed for over two years² and to those with health conditions or disabilities on a voluntary basis.³ The Programme will be run by service providers awarded contracts by the government.

The Programme will be targeted at people who with specialist support are likely to be able to find work within 12 months.⁴ The Government expects the majority of those referred to the scheme to be disabled.⁵

Referrals to the current [Work Programme](#) and [Work Choice](#) schemes are due to end in April 2017.⁶ It was announced in the [2015 Autumn Statement](#) that both schemes would be replaced by a single Work and Health Programme.⁷ A smaller population will be eligible for the Work and Health Programme than for the Work Programme, as people claiming unemployment benefits are only referred to the Work and Health Programme after claiming for two years (claimants are referred to the Work Programme after claiming for up to one year, and in some cases much sooner).

Initially the Government announced that it would publish proposals to improve support for people with health conditions and disabilities in a [White Paper](#),⁸ but later committed to publishing a [Green Paper](#) instead. On 11 May 2016 the then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Stephen Crabb, told the Work and Pensions Select Committee:

... For me, coming in fresh to this Department, rather than rushing towards a White Paper, I think there is a need to take a step back and I think that's consistent with what I told the House on that first Monday after I was appointed, about wanting to restart the conversation with disability organisations and disabled people themselves about how best we—as a Government—can work with them to close the disability employment gap, and support people who have sicknesses and other conditions into employment. So **I won't be rushing towards a White Paper with firm legislative proposals; I want to take a step back and have a much more discursive Green Paper** that starts to reframe the issue and points the way towards more meaningful, long-term reform.⁹

The [Work, Health and Disability Green Paper: Improving Lives](#) was published in October 2016 and is covered further in Section 4 of this briefing paper.

¹ Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Department of Health (DoH), [The Work, Health and Disability Green Paper: Improving Lives](#), October 2016, p86

² HM Treasury, [Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015](#), November 2015, p37

³ DWP and DoH, [Improving Lives: The Work, Health and Disability Green Paper](#), October 2016, p27

⁴ Ibid, p32

⁵ PQ [HL3190](#), 15 November 2016

⁶ Work and Pensions Committee, [The future of Jobcentre Plus](#), 2 November 2016, p7

⁷ HM Treasury, [Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015](#), p89

⁸ [PO 16955 \(Employment: disability\)](#), 30 November 2015

⁹ [Oral evidence to the Work and Pensions Committee](#), 11 May 2016 [Q15, Stephen Crabb]

2. Budget and procurement

2.1 Budget

The [2015 Spending Review](#) announced that funding for the Work and Health Programme would be £130 million a year by 2019/20. This includes funding to be devolved to Scotland.¹⁰

The Work and Health Programme will be part of a wider support package for disabled people, outlined in [Work, Health and Disability Green Paper: Improving Lives](#) (see Section 4 of this briefing paper). [The Department for Work and Pensions' settlement at the 2015 Spending Review](#) included a "real terms increase in funding to help those with disabilities and health conditions to return to, and remain in, work".

After referrals to the Work Programme end in April 2017, more employment support will be delivered through the Jobcentre Plus network than is currently the case. Employment support which is contracted out to service providers (for example, schemes such as the Work and Health Programme) will be "refocused" to cover a smaller population.¹¹

However, the Work and Pensions Committee has expressed its concern "that the resources allocated to the [Work and Health Programme] do not match its ambition":

The DWP's Employment and Health Related Services "Umbrella Agreement", through which prospective Work and Health Programme providers are required to bid, has a total contract value of £1.77 billion. Not all of this will go to the Work and Health Programme, however. The Umbrella Agreement suggests that it will have a budget of £554 million over its lifetime. This is a manifold reduction compared to what it will replace. In comparison, the DWP states that £492 million in total has been spent on Work Choice up to 2015–16 alone, and £2.2 billion had been paid to Work Programme providers as of December 2015. The Department states that it is not possible to calculate the proportion of Work Programme's budget spent on disabled people specifically over the programme's lifetime. External analysis, however, suggests that combined Work Choice and Work Programme spending on disabled people has been approximately £1 billion since 2010.¹²

¹⁰ PQ [HL3190](#), 15 November 2016

¹¹ PQ [50117](#), 25 October 2016

¹² Work and Pensions Committee, [The future of Jobcentre Plus](#), 2 November 2016, p26

2.2 Procurement

The Work and Health Programme is being procured in two stages.

Stage 1

The Department for Work and Pensions started the procurement process on 6 October 2016 for “a multi-supplier Umbrella Agreement for the provision of Employment and Health Related Services”. The Umbrella Agreement can be used to deliver various programmes providing employment and health-related support services, including the Work and Health Programme.¹³

Organisations wishing to deliver the Work and Health Programme must first be accepted on to the Umbrella Agreement. Only those organisations accepted on to the Umbrella Agreement will be able to bid for the Work and Health Programme contracts.

The Specification for the Umbrella Agreement suggested that the suppliers accepted on to the Umbrella Agreement would be announced during December 2016.

Stage 2

The “Umbrella Agreement” will include several suppliers for each of six broad geographical areas in England and Wales, based on (but not coterminous with) current Jobcentre Plus groups (Central England, North East England, North West England, Southern England, Home Counties and Wales).

Suppliers in each area will then have to take part in “mini-competitions” to win work. The mini-competition for the Work and Health Programme is expected in January 2017.

¹³ The Umbrella Agreement and process for awarding contracts is explained in a DWP specification document, [*Umbrella Agreement for the provision of Employment and Health Related Services \(UAEHRS\) Specification and Supporting Information*](#), 8 October 2016

3. Devolution

Scotland

The [Scotland Act 2016](#) transferred certain welfare powers to the Scottish Parliament.¹⁴ As noted in Section 2 of this briefing paper part of the overall budget for the Work and Health Programme is devolved to Scotland. The first two programmes delivered in Scotland under the new powers ('Work First Scotland' and 'Work Able Scotland') will begin in April 2017.¹⁵

Local Enterprise Partnerships and City Regions

As well as devolved funding for Scotland for the Work and Health Programme, through the [Devolution Deal process](#) the Government has agreed to "co-design" the Work and Health Programme with Local Enterprise Partnerships and City Regions.¹⁶ These include:

- The Tees Valley
- East Anglia
- Sheffield City Region
- The West of England
- West Midlands
- Liverpool City Region
- Cardiff Capital Region

Locally designed support is currently available for residents leaving the Work Programme and claiming Employment and Support Allowance in:

- Greater Manchester¹⁷
- London¹⁸
- Glasgow and the Clyde Valley¹⁹

The Government is "also working with London and Greater Manchester to not only co-design the programme with them but also ensure that they can jointly shape every element of the commissioning process, from strategy to service design, managing provider relationships and reviewing service provision."²⁰

¹⁴ Scotland Office, [New Welfare Powers Transferred to the Scottish Parliament](#), 5 September 2016

¹⁵ Scottish Government, [Employment support programmes from April 2017](#), 8 September 2016

¹⁶ DWP and DoH, [Improving Lives: The Work, Health and Disability Green Paper](#), October 2016, pp 32

¹⁷ Manchester City Council, [New scheme will get 5,000 Working Well in Greater Manchester](#), 15 April 2014

¹⁸ London Councils, [Getting London Working](#), April 2013

¹⁹ Gov.uk, [Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal](#), 4 July 2014

²⁰ DWP and DoH, [Improving Lives: The Work, Health and Disability Green Paper](#), October 2016, pp 32

4. Proposals in the Work, Health and Disability Green Paper: Improving Lives

The Work and Health Programme is part of the wider package of support outlined in the Government's [Work, Health and Disability Green Paper: Improving Lives](#), published in October 2016.

The main policies and proposals relating to employment support are explained in brief below, although this is not an exhaustive list. In addition to those relating to employment support, other announcements in the Green Paper include:²¹

- a review of Statutory Sick Pay and GP fit notes to support workers back into their jobs faster and for longer
- a consultation on reform of the Work Capability Assessment (the process for assessing Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Universal Credit claimants' capability for work)
- encouraging employers to work with their employees with long-term health conditions to stop them from falling out of work
- starting a wide-ranging debate about recognising the value of work as a health outcome, to change perceptions and culture around health, work and disability.

Personal Support Package

One of the key announcements in the Green Paper was a new Personal Support Package for people claiming ESA (or the equivalent Universal Credit claimant group), consisting of more tailored employment support from Jobcentre Plus.²² The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Damian Green MP, explained in an Oral Statement:

We will also introduce a new personal support package for disabled people, providing better tailored support, including a new health and work conversation between someone on ESA and their work coach, focusing on what they can do, rather than on what they cannot do. We will recruit around 200 community partners into jobcentres, to bring in expertise from the voluntary sector, and we will give young people with limited capability for work the opportunity to get valuable work experience with employers.²³

The Green Paper states the Government will "continue to build and develop the capability of our work coaches" (who are front-line support staff in Jobcentre Plus), who will be supported by a greater number of specialist Disability Employment Advisers. 'Community partners' from

²¹ As described in a Government press release, [Work and health plan to help disabled people into employment](#), 31 October 2016

²² DWP and DoH, [Improving Lives: The Work, Health and Disability Green Paper](#), October 2016, pp26-7

²³ Statement on *Improving Lives: Work, Health and Disability Green Paper*, [HC Deb 31 Oct 2016 c667](#)

the voluntary sector will be able to identify what support there is locally as well as to engage with local employers:

... We have introduced an accredited learning journey for work coaches, which includes additional mandatory training in supporting those with physical and mental health conditions. From 2017, we will introduce an enhanced training offer which better enables work coaches to support people with mental health conditions and more confidently engage with employers on the issue of mental health.

Work coaches will be supported by specialist Disability Employment Advisers. We are currently recruiting up to 300 more Disability Employment Advisers, taking the total to over 500. These advisers will work alongside work coaches to provide additional professional expertise and local knowledge on health issues, particularly around mental health conditions. The role will have a much stronger focus on coaching work coaches to help build their confidence and expertise in supporting individuals with a health condition or disability.

... We will recruit around 200 Community Partners across Jobcentre Plus. These will be people with personal and professional experience of disability and many will be seconded from a Disabled People's User-Led Organisation or disability charity. From next year, Community Partners will be working with Jobcentre Plus staff, to build their capability and provide valuable first-hand insight into the issues individuals with a health condition or disability face in securing and sustaining employment. Drawing on their local knowledge, they will identify more tailored local provision to ensure individuals with health conditions can benefit from the full range of support and expertise available. Community Partners will also engage with local employers to help improve the recruitment and retention of disabled people and people with health conditions.²⁴

More complex needs

From 2017, all new ESA claimants in the Work-Related Activity Group (and the equivalent group of Universal Credit claimants) who wish to volunteer and are eligible will be offered a place on either Work Choice or the Work and Health Programme.

However, the Green Paper notes that the Work and Health Programme will not be suitable for some people with more complex needs and that the Government is considering how to provide employment support to this group in the future. Currently, support is delivered through the Department for Work and Pensions' [Specialist Employability Support](#) programme.²⁵

Young people

Proposals in the Green Paper specifically targeted at young people include:

- Adjusting maths and English requirements in apprenticeships for people with learning disabilities.

²⁴ Work, Health and Disability Green Paper, p29

²⁵ Ibid, p32

- Testing a voluntary supported work experience programme for young people with a limited capability for work.
- Increasing the number of supported internships by helping employers to link up with schools.²⁶

Engaging claimants in the ESA Support Group

Some of the proposals in the Green Paper specifically relate to ESA claimants in the Work-Related Activity Group only (or the equivalent Universal Credit claimant group). The Green Paper also discusses how best to help claimants in the ESA Support Group, who are likely to be severely limited in what they can do as a consequence of their illness or disability, noting that very few people in this group have volunteered for employment support in the past.

The Government therefore plans to “undertake comprehensive research to better understand how best to engage with people in the Support Group and those found to have limited capability for work and work-related activity in Universal Credit, and what interventions are needed to support them effectively.” The Green Paper also seeks views on how Jobcentre Plus might maintain contact with people in the Support Group.²⁷

Continuing schemes

Existing employment schemes and initiatives which will continue to operate include:

- [Disability Confident](#)
- [Access to Work](#) (see also the [Library briefing paper](#))
- [Fit for Work](#)
- [New Enterprise Allowance](#) (see also the [Library briefing paper](#))

²⁶ Ibid, pp34-5 (more information on the current supported internship scheme is available from Department for Education, [Supported internships](#), December 2014)

²⁷ Ibid, p37

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