

NEWSouthern England Group

jobcentreplus

Department for
Work and Pensions

Update 7

Contents

Welfare Reform Update

- Personal Independence Payment

Get Britain Working Update

- Supporting people with disability and health problems
- National Audit Office – Report on Introduction of the Work Programme
- New Work Programme webpage
- Youth Contract
- Building Engagement, Building Futures

DWP Digital Services

- New online webpage for Jobseekers Allowance Service
- UK Online January Campaign

Working Past Retirement Age

Other News in Brief

- Pilot to test direct payments of Housing cost support
- Sick Absence Review
- Benefit Up-rating
- Mortgage Support Consultation
- Benefit information for people who are deaf or hard of hearing
- New Disability Strategy

Welcome to the SEVENTH edition of NEWS.

Welcome to the this first edition of NEWS in 2012.

We start the year with the continued focus on helping and supporting young people back in to work. The Youth Agenda is one of the key priorities for all our Districts within the Southern Group and they are all involved in developing and implementing a *Youth Action Plan*. More information on the Government's strategy including the Youth Contract can be found in this update. We will be continuing to work with employers across the Southern Group to encourage and support them in signing up to the Youth Contract Pledge.

In this publication, we have included progress on the Welfare Reform Bill and information on the additional specialist support Jobcentre Plus can provide for those customers with disability and health issues to help them get back in to employment.

Also, following on from a very successful Digital December we have included a short update about the ongoing activities to support the Digital agenda and to which we are encouraging all our partners to promote to customers on our behalf.

The challenges of working in the current economic climate will continue in this coming year and I hope we can build on our excellent partnership work which we have established across Southern England.

I hope you find this update informative and as ever, I am always happy to receive any comments and suggestions you may want to make for future issues.

Lynda Jones
Group Partnership Manager
Southern England Group
January 2012

Welfare Reform Update

Progress of the Welfare Reform Bill

The Welfare Reform Bill is currently progressing through the various stages required before becoming law. The **final reading** in the House of Lords is **scheduled** to take place on **31 January 2012** before the Bill is returned to the Commons.

The following **amendments** to the bill have been made for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) :

- There will be a 3-month qualifying period and the health condition or disability must be expected to last for a further 9 months.
- People in care homes will be entitled to the mobility component so long as they satisfy the qualifying conditions.
- Two independent reports will be now be conducted; at two years and four years.

When will Personal Independence Payment roll out?

Ministers have now agreed the Implementation plans for Personal Independence Payment. Initially, processes will be tested on a few thousand new Personal Independence Payment claims from April 2013. Once tested, the new processes and systems will be introduced to all new claims around **June 2013**.

Any existing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) recipients who report a change in their condition from Autumn 2013 will be reassessed for entitlement to Personal Independence Payment. This will also apply to claimants whose DLA award is due to be renewed from autumn 2013.

On 16 January, more details on the **second draft** of the PIP assessment criteria was published. Further views are now being sought from disabled people and their organisations to ensure that assessment criteria is right. The **consultation** is being run for 15 weeks, from 16 January to 30 April 2012.

The DWP has set up a **Personal Independence Payment Implementation Development Group (IDG)** comprising people from over 50 disabled peoples organisations. The IDG will work with DWP to inform delivery arrangements for the new benefit. The Group will help to shape delivery arrangements for the new benefit which will complement other research activity They have been involved in developing a **Frequently Asked Questions** document which is published on the DWP web site.

What is in the Welfare Reform Bill ?

Information on what is included in the Welfare Bill can be found via the following link:

[Welfare Reform Bill](#)

Information on the Personal Independence Payment including the FAQ page can be found via the following link:

[Personal Independence Payment - DWP](#)

Get Britain Working Update

Specialist Disability Employment Support

Ensuring equality for disabled people is a key priority for the Government and they have set an ambitious programme of employment support to ensure that people disadvantaged in the labour market will get the help they need to find and keep jobs. They recognise that many customers have complex disability - related barriers to finding work and may require specialist help.

In December 2010, Ministers asked for an independent review to look at employment support available for disabled people , specifically Reemploy, Residential Training Colleges and the Access to Work programme.

Findings of the review were subsequently published in a report , “**Getting in , staying in and getting on**”, on June 2011. The Government’s response to the review was then published in July 2011 and further work and consultation has been taking place since then to carefully consider the implications for future policy.

What extra support is available ?

Customers working with Jobcentre Plus have access to a range of help and support through the **Jobcentre Plus Offer**, and this is tailored to their own individual circumstances. This help and support is available **prior** to entry to the **Work Programme (diagram on page 5 illustrates)** . The specialist disability employment support which is available along side the Get Britain Working measures include :

- Access to a Disability Employment Adviser
- Work Choice
- Access to Work
- Residential Training

Disability Employment Adviser :

The Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) works with customers facing **complex** employment situations because of their disability or health condition who may need additional help with finding or retaining employment.

The Government’s response to the Sayce review was published in July 2011:

[Sayce Response](#)

Get Britain Working Update

Work Choice:

Work Choice provides disabled people with more complex barriers to employment and more intensive support needs with a seamless service covering all stages of the journey into work. It is delivered through a network of private providers and has a modular approach and includes the following :

- Finding a job and preparing to enter work (**Module One**)
- Short to medium term in work support or longer term in work support (**Modules Two and Three**) and;
- Progression in to open unsupported employment , where it is appropriate for the individual.

The primary referral route into Work Choice is through Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers.

Access to Work:

Access to Work (AtW) has an important role to play in supporting disabled people to get and keep jobs.

- AtW is a programme open to anyone already in **paid** employment or about to start a new job who has a long term health condition or disability that affects them in work. AtW is not available to people doing voluntary unpaid work .
- AtW can cover the costs of having specialised workplace assessments completed and following the assessment, it may be possible for AtW to contribute financially towards the purchase of specialised equipment required as a result of an employee's condition.
- AtW can provide assistance in a variety of ways that can allow an employee to be able to do their job without the adverse effects of their condition being a barrier to them.
- AtW can also, where appropriate consider 100% of the funding towards supplying a support worker for the employee and for travelling to work where a person is unable to get there independently.

Residential Training:

- Residential Training for adults with disabilities provides a service to customers whose needs cannot be met through other government work related programmes . It is delivered through 9 Residential Training Colleges across England and is tailored to individual needs.

Referral can only be made by Disability Employment Advisers.

Work Choice is delivered in Southern England by the following prime providers:

- Working Links
- Shaw Trust
- The Pluss Organisation
- CDG- WISE Ability Ltd
- Remploy

For more information on how Access to Work can help and how to apply :

[Access to Work](#)

To note :
Contracts with the Residential Training Colleges cease on 31 March 2012. DWP is negotiating continuity of this provision beyond that date , pending any decisions following the public consultation on the Sayce recommendations.

Customer Journey

Jobcentre Plus Offer

- New Jobseeker Interview
- Flexible Adviser Support
- Jobsearch Support
- Flexible Support Fund -inc Support Contracts
- Support for drug or alcohol dependency
- Health Related Support
- Mandatory Work Activity
- Skills Provision
- DEA including Work Choice
- Access to Work

- Get Britain Working Measures:-
 - Work Clubs
 - Work Together
 - Work Experience
 - New Enterprise Allowance
 - Enterprise Clubs
 - Sector based work academies

Work Programme

Access and referral point to Work Programme Provider depends on individual circumstances.

Post-Work Programme

[Plans to be developed and implemented 2013]

Work Programme

National Audit Office report on the Work Programme

The National Audit Office (NAO) issued a report 24 January which assessed how the Department managed **risks to value for money** in introducing the Work Programme. The report does not fully assess the delivery of the Work Programme as there is not yet reliable data on how successful it is in getting people into work. The NAO have found that the quality of decisions made at the early stage of major programmes are often highly predictive of future success, or otherwise.

Link to report : [The introduction of the Work Programme](#)

DWP have made an initial response to the report in a recent press release and are pleased that the report recognises the extent of the Department's achievement in introducing the Work Programme so quickly .

Link to response : [DWP Response to NAO Report on the Work Programme](#)

Get Britain Working Update

Work Programme – contd

A new **Work Programme web page** have been created for stakeholders on the DWP website . The site brings together all the relevant information relating to the Work Programme, with links to useful documents and sites, news and real life stories.

The site will be useful if you or your organisation are interested in getting involved in helping to deliver the Work Programme, if you are an employer wanting to find your local provider contact details, or if you are simply looking for more information on the Work Programme.

Youth Contract

The Youth Contract is the Government's response to the challenge of youth unemployment. Over three years from April 2012 the Youth Contract will provide will provide at least 410,000 new work places for 18-24 year olds. It will also increase the support and help available to young people through the Work Programme, Jobcentre Plus and sector-based work academies. This offer includes :

Work Experience

Offering eligible unemployed young people between 2 and 8 weeks work experience, with an optional extension up to 12 weeks if the employer decides they would like to offer the participant an apprenticeship and that offer is accepted.

Wage Subsidies

Encouraging employers to give young people a chance to prove themselves and to reduce the cost of taking on new employees, 160,000 wage subsidies worth up to £2,275 are being made available to employers who recruit an 18 - 24 year old through the Work Programme. The amounts offered will more than cover the employer's National Insurance contributions for a year.

Apprenticeships

There will be additional funding available to support the growth of 16 – 24 apprenticeships, including providing at least 20,000 additional **incentive payments** to support employers in creating apprenticeship places for 16 – 24 year olds. Each incentive is worth £1500 to an employer. This takes the total number of incentive places available during 2012 to 40,000.

Link to web page:

[The Work Programme](#)

Link to Youth Contract:

[Youth Contract](#)

Get Britain Working Update

Youth Contract – contd

How do employers' sign up to support the Youth Contract ?

The Youth Contract which begins in April this year and aims to ensure every young person is either earning or learning, has been formally backed by Britain's **four biggest employer organisations** - The Confederation of British Industry, British Chambers of Commerce, British Retail Consortium and Federation of Small Businesses .

Employers can find out more and **pledge** their support on the DWP website .Participating employers will be **kept informed** of how they can benefit from Youth Contract and how to get involved. There has already been considerable interest from employers and we will also be contacting employers by letter throughout the Southern Group to encourage them to sign up to this pledge over the coming months.

Building Engagement, Building Futures

The Government has recently published their strategy to help maximise the participation of 16-24 year olds in education, training and work.

“Building Engagement, Building Futures “

Increasing the participation of 16-24 year olds in learning and employment not only makes a lasting difference to their individual lives, but is central to the Government's ambitions to improve social mobility and stimulate economic growth. The strategy has been developed jointly by DWP, the Department for Education, and the Department for Business Innovation and Skills. It sets out how reforms to schools, vocational education, skills and welfare provision will all make a significant difference to young peoples' opportunities and support. The Government's existing reforms and this additional support (which includes the **Youth Contract**) will help to ensure that all young people can develop skills, qualifications and experience they need to succeed in their careers and make a positive contribution to our society and economy.

The strategy document, further information and relevant links can be found on the DWP website.

Youth Contract

Employer's Pledge:

[Youth Contract Pledge](#)

Link to strategy report:

[Building Engagement, Building Futures](#)

DWP Digital Services

DWP is fully behind the governments vision to make the UK the first nation in the world where everyone can use the web. As part of the pledge, Jobcentre Plus has established over **800 Digital Champions** in local Jobcentres across Great Britain. The digital champions play key roles in acting as ambassadors for digital services, working with other customer-facing staff to promote digital services to customers and improve their confidence.

Jobcentre Plus will continue to build partnerships with national and local partners, such as UK online and Learn Direct. Jobcentre staff are working locally to **signpost customers** to the free or low cost support that these partners provide. Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisers already explore digital skills with customers looking for work and are considering how to embed consideration of digital skills into advisory interviews for all customers.

Over the next **three to six months internet access devices will be made available to the Jobcentre network**. This will be a great opportunity to support our customers and claimants in accessing job search and our online services.

A new web page went live on Directgov on 11 January for our Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) Online service. This was designed to provide quicker and simpler access, and to offer additional benefits for users. We are working towards a target of 50% of all JSA claims being made online by the end of March 2012.

UK online centres are running a campaign called '**New Year, new online you!**' which will run from 23 January until the 17 February and aims to inspire and encourage people to access some of the great services available online to help find jobs, discover more about pensions and learn more about health services.

You can **find out more** about the campaign and how to take part by visiting the UK Online web site which will give advice about how to take part.

Working past retirement age

The removal of the Default Retirement Age means that most people can now choose when they want to retire.

To help people to understand their options, there is a information on Directgov, providing new information and case studies. The updated pages include advice on working for longer, tax relief, and how to approach employers about flexible working.

There is also a toolkit on the Business Link website for small and medium employers.

Link to :

[Jobseeker's Allowance Online](#)

Link to:

[New year, new online you](#)

Links to:

[Working past State Pension age](#)

[Do you have to retire](#)

[A guide to working longer](#)

Other News In Brief

Pilot areas for volunteer authorities and Housing Associations to test direct payments of Housing cost support

Local authority and housing association partnerships have been announced as the successful volunteers who have been chosen by the Government to work on pioneering demonstration projects that will see claimants in the social rented sector directly receiving monthly housing benefit payments and paying rent to landlords themselves for the first time.

The demonstration projects, which will take place from June 2012 until June 2013, will test how claimants can manage housing benefit monthly payments ahead of the introduction of Universal Credit from October 2013.

The projects will also look at the appropriate level of safeguards needed to help secure landlord income streams if tenants fall behind on their rent.

In **Southern England**, Oxford City Council and Oxford Citizens, part of the Greensquare Group have been chosen.

Each partnership will be involved in testing out different elements of the project, including testing different trigger points when social landlords should receive direct payments if tenants fall into specified levels of arrears. The projects will also inform how best to communicate the changes to claimants, provide assistance with budgeting to successfully pay their rent, and support claimants and landlords experiencing financial difficulties.

Alongside this measure, Ministers are working with the banking sector, credit unions, supermarket financial services and the Post Office to explore opportunities to develop cost-effective budgeting accounts for claimants moving onto direct payments.

Benefit Up-rating – April 2012

The benefit rates for 2012/13 have now been published in full on the Department's website.

Link to :

[Pilot of housing cost support](#)

Link to;

[Benefit Rates 2012](#)

Other News In Brief

Sick Absence Review

Earlier this year, the Government called for a major review of the sickness absence system in Great Britain. The findings of the review were published on 21 November 2011.

The review presents an important analysis of the:

- Sickness absence system in the UK.
- Impact of sickness absence on employers, the State and individuals
- Factors which cause and prolong sickness absence and which, in too many cases, mean that employees move out of work entirely and on to benefits.

The review provides a critique of the current system and the roles that healthcare professionals, employers and government services play. The Government will respond in 2012.

DWP Consultation – Mortgage Support – call for evidence

This call for evidence sets out the Government's ideas on simplifying the help provided towards mortgage interest payments for working age and pensioner home owners, and considers potential future changes in line with Universal Credit principles, and fairness to taxpayers. It **seeks responses** to a number of questions and other comments that respondents may wish to make about the options in the document or other potential options.

Who this call for evidence is aimed at ?

The call for evidence is aimed primarily at stakeholders who have an interest in housing and social security policy, and members of the public who wish to contribute to the debate on potential future changes to support for mortgage interest in light of the introduction of Universal Credit. *Closing date 27 February 2012.*

All current live DWP consultations and the latest published consultation responses are available on the consultation pages of the DWP website

Link to :
[Sickness absence review](#)

DWP Consultation:
[Support for mortgage interest](#)

DWP Consultations:
[Consultations - DWP](#)

Other News In Brief

Benefit information for people who are deaf or hard of hearing

DWP have produced a set of films in British Sign Language for people who are deaf or hard of hearing giving basic information about different benefits available – The first four films will give basic information about different benefits, and the final one will explain how to make a claim if eligible.

The link to the films can be found here:

[Video: benefits information if you are deaf or hard of hearing](#)

The New Disability Strategy

Disabled people, and the organisations that support them, have been invited to contribute directly to a new cross-Government disability strategy.

The new strategy aims to give renewed impetus to the Government's commitment to disability equality. A discussion document, published on 1 December, asks for practical suggestions that will make a real difference to the lives of disabled people. Organisations with expertise in supporting disabled people can submit examples of good practice or untested and innovative ideas.

In order to take part **visit the Office for Disability Issues website** to download the document and find out about hosting your own discussion event.

Any ideas need to be **submitted by 9 March 2012.**

Link to Office for Disability Issues below:

[Fulfilling potential: Office for Disability](#)

Useful websites

Direct Gov contains information about all Jobcentre Plus services and future changes.

The DWP website contains general information about the Government's Welfare Reform Agenda.

[Direct Gov website](#)

[DWP Adviser](#)

[Welfare Reform Bill 2011 - DWP](#)

Tell us what you think

If you have any comments regarding this update or indeed would like to raise any issues please contact:

South East – Ailsa Rose

Ailsa.rose@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

South West – Gaynor Clarke

Gaynor.clarke1@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk

If you do not wish to receive this update or you would like it forwarded to an alternative address , please us know.