

NEWSouthern England Group

jobcentreplus

Department for
Work and Pensions

Update 4

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Welcome to the FOURTH edition of NEWS.

In this edition you will find information about the changes to Employment and Support Allowance and the introduction of the New Enterprise Allowance and Sector Based Work Academies, which will both become part of the Get Britain Working measures.

With the Government's current focus on supporting young people we have been actively promoting Work Experience to employers across the Southern Group. At a national level Jobcentre Plus has been working with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development to develop and publish some joint work experience guidance for employers. This, we hope will help employers plan and design work experience placements that have real benefits for themselves and the individuals.

I have also included a brief update on the changes to the European Social Fund programme, which will be in place by the end of the year.

Many of you have already said how useful you find the updates, so I will be capitalising on this in the next few weeks by inviting you to complete a **separate questionnaire** so that I can gather your views and seek to continuously improve the newsletter to meet your needs. I would be grateful if you would take the time to complete this.

I look forward to hearing your feedback.

Lynda Jones
Southern England Group Senior Partnerships Manager
September 2011

Welfare Reform Update

Changes to contributory Employment and Support Allowance.

The Welfare Reform Bill currently going through Parliament is proposing two changes to contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) :

- To limit the amount of time that people in the Work Related Activity Group can receive contribution-based ESA to 12 months
- To remove the special contribution conditions for ESA “youth “

If passed by Parliament these changes will be introduced in Spring 2012.

Although these measures have not yet received Royal Assent, given the potential impact we have decided to write to claimants to prepare them in advance for these changes. Therefore, starting on the 19 September for a period of 4 weeks, we will be sending letters to all customers currently receiving contribution-based ESA in the Work Related Activity Group to forewarn them of these changes.

If this change is introduced, people affected by the introduction of a time-limit may be able to receive income-related ESA. Those in the Support Group will not be affected by this change.

Skills Conditionality

Since 5 August, claimants in England lacking in certain skills which prevent them from moving into employment are required to address those needs or face losing their benefits.

The changes apply to all Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) claimants.

Under the Skills Conditionality scheme, referrals to the nextstep service for careers advice, an initial interview with a skills training provider and subsequent referral to skills training, **will all become mandatory.**

Decisions to mandate customers to training will include consideration of the customers' needs and individual circumstances, employer demand, and the offer of a fully funded place by the skills provider. All mandated claimants will receive help with travel and childcare costs where appropriate, from Jobcentre Plus.

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](#)

We have also published information for external stakeholders, which is available at the following link on the DWP Adviser web pages :

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

Welfare Reform Update continued

Skills Conditionality continued:

Skills Conditionality aims to :

- Increase attendance at skills provision interviews.
- Improve starts and attendance on skills provision.
- Increase achievement of relevant units on the Qualification and Credit Framework.
- Increase the number of customers with the skills that recruiting employers require .

Discussions are ongoing with Devolved Administrations about introducing Skills Conditionality in Scotland and Wales.

Get Britain Working Update

Get Britain Working includes a number of measures to support Jobcentre Plus customers, including the Work Programme.

The Work Programme

Work Programme Providers within the Southern England Group have started delivering the Work Programme and are receiving referrals from Jobcentres across the group.

Once referred, a claimant will stay on the Work Programme for two years; the length of support on offer gives the provider a real chance to invest in the individual and make a significant difference to their chances of finding employment .

Once in a job, the provider is incentivised to maintain the relationship with the individual and help them sustain work in order to generate an outcome payment, therefore further supporting the individual and making a long-term difference.

The payment model is sophisticated and incentives have been built in to ensure that help is given to those who most need it - not just to those that are easiest to help. More details about the payment model can be found by following this link:

Ministers are determined to get value for money from the Work Programme, so the emphasis is very much on payment for getting people into jobs, and moreover, jobs that last.

What if claimants fail to comply with the new Skills Conditionality requirements? ?

JSA claimants will lose all of their benefits or training allowance for two, four or upto 26 weeks.

ESA WRAG claimants will lose 50 per cent of the work – related activity component for the first four weeks and then 100 percent, until they comply with the requirement placed upon them.

Information on the release of statistics on new Employment Programme support can be found in the following link:

[statistics](#)

The following providers will be delivering the Work Programme in the Southern Group :

A4E
Maximus
Avanta
G4S
Prospects
Working Links
JHP
Rehab – Jobfit

A summary of the possible payments to providers can be found in the following link:

[Work ProgrammeIT](#)

Get Britain Working

Update continued

The New Enterprise Allowance

From 1 August the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) was rolled out **nationally** following the trail blazer in Merseyside which started in January 2011 and a further staged approach in 17 selected Districts throughout April to June. It will help unemployed people who want to start their own business.

Who will be eligible ?

NEA will be available to Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) customers who have been claiming for 26 weeks or more .

This is because the majority of people find work or move in to self employment within the first six months of becoming unemployed . Therefore the Department needs to target its limited resources on those who have been unemployed longer and who are actively seeking work.

Self employment can be a route off benefits for people on Income Support and Incapacity Benefits. Other sources of support, such as Enterprise Clubs, may be available for them. In addition, self employment support may be available through Work Choice and Work Programme providers.

What support will be offered ?

Participants will get **access to a volunteer business mentor** who will provide guidance and support as they develop their business plan and through the early months of trading.

Once a customer can demonstrate they have a viable business proposition with the potential for growth in the future, they will be able to access financial support. This will consist of :

- **A weekly allowance** worth £1,274 over 26 weeks, paid at £65 a week for the first 13 weeks and £33 a week for a further 13 weeks, and
- **Access to a loan** up to £1,000 to help with start up costs.

By 2013 it is hoped that the New Enterprise Allowance will help up to 40,000 unemployed people start up a business as part of the Government's plans to promote growth and enterprise.

The successful applicants for funding to help deliver NEA in the Jobcentre Plus Districts within the Southern Group are :

Devon & Cornwall –
West Devon BIP Ltd

Gloucestershire & West
of England –
Gloucestershire
Enterprises Ltd

Hampshire & Isle of
Wight – Enterprise First
(Southern) Ltd

Surrey & Sussex –
Ten Sixty Six Enterprise

Thames Valley – TBC

Wessex - Outset

Get Britain Working continued

Sector-based work academies were introduced in England only from 1 August.

Who are these aimed at ?

Sector-based work academies are aimed at people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Employment Support Allowance (ESA) in the Work Related Activity Group. They will offer support to people who are almost ready for work but need a bit of extra help to improve their work skills.

What will they consist of?

They will last for up to **six weeks** and will include :

- Pre-employment training of up to 30 hours per week
- A Work Experience placement
- A Guaranteed Job Interview linked to a genuine vacancy.

Jobcentre Plus Districts will work with employers and training providers to provide support that meets the needs of the local labour market.

Volunteering

Customers and volunteering organisations have expressed concerns that the advice we give to customers on the impact of voluntary work on their benefits is not always accurate and consistent. This is being addressed through improved guidance to staff and through the revised customer leaflet :

Volunteering While Getting Benefits - DWP 1023

This leaflet can be obtained from Jobcentres or ordered via the DWP internet site. We are also improving the information on volunteering on the Directgov internet site to highlight its value and signpost people to appropriate routes into voluntary work.

The **Working Together** element of the Get Britain Working measures encourages Advisers to signpost customers to volunteering opportunities in their area.

In DWP we also operate a **staff volunteering programme-Community 10000** – so if any voluntary or community organisations are interested in offering suitable Volunteering Opportunities to our staff please contact our Group **Volunteer Managers**.

A sector- based work academies guide for employers is available on the Business Link website :

[Sector-based work academies | Business Link](#)

Link to Volunteering leaflet :

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/dwp1023.pdf>

Volunteer Managers

South East – Ailsa Rose
01243 846460

South West – Gaynor Clarke
01823 349514

European Social Fund Update

ESF Provision 2011 – 2013

25% of the ESF funding available for the second half of this programme has been allocated to The Work Programme. This applies in the Convergence Area (Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly) and in the Competitiveness Areas of the South East and the South West. Eligible participants are those who are in receipt of Income Support and/or Incapacity Benefit.

Participation in The Work Programme is entirely voluntary for this customer group.

The remainder of the money is to be used to fund provision for Families with Multiple Problems. The tendering round has just been completed and those providers who are on the DWP Framework were invited to submit a bid. Provision is expected to start in December 2011.

The successful providers will be expected to work closely with Local Authorities to both identify and support these families.

There is one Contract Package Area for each of the three areas; Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, the remainder of the South West and the South East including Kent. As yet we do not know the geographical areas which will be covered by this provision. This will be influenced by the providers working closely with the Local Authorities.

More information can be obtained by following this link

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/supplying%2Ddwp/what%2Dwe%2Dbuy/welfare%2Dto%2Dwork%2Dservices/european%2Dsoci al%2Dfund/>

Other News in Brief

Employer Led Disability Campaign

As part of the Disability Employer Engagement Steering Group the Minister for Disabled People has commissioned a campaign to promote wider employer support for recruiting and retaining disabled workers. This is an employer led, business to business campaign which has the support of DWP and underpins the Big Society aim of encouraging employers to inspire other employers.

The focus of the campaign is to drive employers to use the free online disability **Clearkit** and encourage best practice to remove barriers for disabled talent, using the experience of the best exemplar companies.

Link to : [Clearkit](#)

Introduction of a national food bank referral service

Following a successful pilot with the Trussell Trust food bank organisation earlier this year the Secretary of State has given his approval for the national introduction of a referral service to food bank organisations. The service is planned to be introduced nationally from September 2011.

The referral service will be part of the Advice Support and Help process and offered to any claimant who enquires about further assistance.

The claimant will be issued a referral slip, confirming their benefit status. They will then take the slip to the local Trussell Trust, or other food bank, who will decide whether or not to issue a food parcel.

In all cases Jobcentre Plus will act as a referral service only and will not be involved in the decision to award any goods or services.

Pension and Disability and Carers Service Telephony

DWP will be testing the joining up of benefit enquiries for Jobcentre Plus and Pension and Disability and Carers Service from 14 September 2011.

The new joined up service line will be sited and managed within the Jobcentre Plus Contact Centre Directorate. Approximately 8,000 calls a week currently undertaken by PDCS on the Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance and Carers Allowance helplines will be handled in Jobcentre Plus Contact Centres.

The evaluation will run for six weeks and depending on what this tells us, this means we could move quickly to join up our telephony service across DWP.

Other News in Brief continued

Skills Funding Agency (SFA) support for the unemployed - changes to the full fee remission for people on benefits.

The Skills Minister, John Hayes has announced a change to the full fee remission criteria for the unemployed. He confirmed that from the 2011/2012 academic year, full fee remission will cover benefit claimants on Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment Support Allowance (Work Related Activity Group) who are required to seek work as a condition of receiving benefits.

But also, to enable colleges to meet local demand for the skills that lead to employment and growth, FE providers will also be given some local discretion to provide fully subsidised courses for people on a wider range of benefits.

Online Services for customers

Jobcentre Plus is providing more and more of its services online, and our goal is for digital to be the customer's channel of choice when doing business with us.

Delivering services online will also allow us to focus resources on those customers most in need of our help.

By automating the straightforward processes, we can concentrate on supporting vulnerable customers who are unable to access our services online or untangling complex cases.

Current online services include:

- Jobseeker's Allowance on line via [Directgov](#)
- Benefits Adviser on the [Benefits Adviser site](#)

Future digital services will include :

- Automated Service Delivery for Jobseeker's Allowance – currently being trialled in North East and North West England – this will enable customers to tell us about changes of address, work status or method of payment, and later improvements will cover more changes of circumstances and booking appointments online.
- From spring 2012 customers will be able to use the online Benefits Update Service to report changes to their method of payment and address. The Benefit Enquiry Service will also provide customers with online information about six different benefits and answer many questions.

These developments will pave the way for the introduction of Universal Credit in 2013 where digital will be the primary customer contact channel.

Useful websites

Right click on link and select "open hyperlink"

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](#)

The DWP monthly electronic newsletter Touch Base e-zine is available – to access right click on the link below and select open hyperlink

[Keeping in Touch](#)

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.