

# Work and Pensions Committee

## Oral evidence: Future of Jobcentre Plus, HC 57-ii

Monday 11 July 2016

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Watch the meeting

Members present: John Glen (Chair); Heidi Allen; Ms Karen Buck; Neil Coyle; Richard Graham; Craig Williams.

Questions 68 - 118

### Witnesses

I: Helen Milner OBE, Chief Executive, Tinder Foundation, Cathy Corcoran OBE, Chief Executive, Cardinal Hume Centre and Tom Hadley, Director of Policy, Recruitment and Employment Confederation.

II: Matthew Green, Director of Birmingham Skylight Centre, Crisis, Keith Faulkner CBE, Chair, Twin Group and Board Member, Institute of Employability Professionals, Brian Bell, Managing Director for Employability, Working Links and Nicola Whiteman, Senior Policy Officer, Papworth Trust.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Helen Milner, Tinder Foundation](#)
- [Cathy Corcoran, Cardinal Hume Centre](#)
- [Tom Hadley, Recruitment and Employment Confederation](#)
- [Matthew Green, Crisis](#)
- [Keith Faulkner, Institute of Employability Professionals](#)
- [Brian Bell, Working Links](#)

## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Helen Milner, Cathy Corcoran, and Tom Hadley.

**Q68 Chair:** Good afternoon. Welcome to the DWP Select Committee. This is the second of three evidence sessions on the future of Jobcentre Plus, as I am sure you know. We may have some of our members coming in and out over the course of the next hour, so apologies for that. Perhaps if I could start by inviting you to introduce yourself and the organisation you represent. Then we will go ahead with the questions.

**Helen Milner:** I am Helen Milner. I am the Chief Executive of Tinder Foundation. We are a big digital inclusion charity.

**Cathy Corcoran:** I am Cathy Corcoran, Chief Executive of the Cardinal Hume Centre. I am also here for the Caritas Social Action Network.

**Tom Hadley:** I am Tom Hadley, Director of Policy at the Recruitment and Employment Confederation. We are the professional body for the UK recruitment sector. We have about 3,500 members. We have a formal partnership agreement with DWP, which I will come on to.

**Q69 Chair:** A general question. To what extent do you think that Jobcentre Plus needs to change its traditional channels of communication with claimants?

The background to this is there is obviously a change in the base of the claimants and their needs. We are trying to anticipate some of the changes the Government might bring forward and come up with a few ourselves. We are very keen to hear from you. Anyone can start.

**Cathy Corcoran:** Lots of clients who come to the Cardinal Hume Centre are simply not computer literate. The whole world of digital inclusion has caught up with Jobcentre Plus, who might be using traditional methods, and with us, and we have people for whom the claim system, indeed the whole system, is not suited. One size does not fit all by any means so people are excluded almost from first base. Jobcentre Plus does refer people in that position to us and a lot of the work we do at the Centre is to start them at square one: this is a computer; this is how you open an account; this is how you deal with the tools that Jobcentre Plus is going to ask you to deal with. The traditional methods are not working.

**Q70 Chair:** Have you seen a lack of willingness on the part of Jobcentre Plus to recognise that group? Presumably that group has always existed. What has been the story to this point and what would you like to see?

**Cathy Corcoran:** First, we have sympathy with the Jobcentre Plus staff. We work very closely with our local and district branches. We know the pressures they are under. I would not like this to be a blame game at all. It is about common aims, getting people into jobs. I do not think it has increased but the digitalisation of the processes is obviously increasing exponentially compared to people's grasp of how to use computers.

**Chair:** It has widened.

**Cathy Corcoran:** Yes.

**Helen Milner:** I think what we see across the country is that it is very inconsistent. Of course there are some Jobcentre Plus advisers who are brilliant and get it and there are other areas where there is a lot of breakdown between the claimants and the advisers.

One thing we see quite commonly is that advisers often underestimate how difficult it is for somebody who does not know how to use the internet to use it and to use a service like Universal Jobmatch. I have met somebody in a UK online centre in Southwark—just to make it clear, we have 5,000 local partners around the country, in libraries and community centres, social housing, churches, schools, GP practices, a fish and chip shop, buses, a real variety out there in the community, and the evidence I am giving you today is from talking to all those organisations we work with in that hyperlocal way but co-ordinated by us. I sat in a homeless hostel with a lady who had been to the local Jobcentre; the Jobcentre adviser had given her an email address, had made it for her, put her on the Universal Jobmatch and sent her away. She did not even know what the internet was, let alone what an email was. The assumption was that if someone just had an email address and got logged on to Universal Jobmatch then everything would be fine. There was a breakdown in communication in that instance with the expectation on that individual and what were the steps that person needed to go through to get to a place where they could then function, using the services the adviser wanted them to use.

**Tom Hadley:** A quick point. We all face a communication challenge in current society. In an age of massive over-communication how do you get messages across to anybody? It is not easy. What we know is that you have to use as many channels as you can. They were good examples that you mentioned. Certainly within our industry what we are trying to do is make sure our members who are recruitment agencies have enough information to be able to impart it. We have had lots of people coming in who still are not sure about the 16-hour rule and how that has changed. Some people will access information digitally; other people will not. The more we can spread the word and the more channels we can use, the better. Certainly in our sector we are really keen. Part of the work we do with DWP and with Jobcentres is to make sure our members have enough information, that if somebody comes in they can inform them about Universal Credit and so on. The best we can do in an age of massive over-communication is try to hit as many channels as we can and galvanise employers and businesses like ours to help play a role.

**Q71 Ms Buck:** I want to follow up with Helen and Cathy. The example you just gave, is the reason for it that the Jobcentre staff did not have enough time, or that there is not a checklist of questions to establish people's competence, or they have established people's competence but there is nowhere to go to provide client management, particularly for people with chaotic experiences or chaotic personal styles? What does cause that falling through the net to happen?

**Helen Milner:** One thing I know you are looking at for the future of Jobcentre Plus is cultural change and I think the incentivisation has been all wrong for the advisers. It could be that the adviser does not have enough time—I am not an expert on the Jobcentre Plus end of this argument—but I think they are incentivised to say they must be on Universal Jobmatch, they must be doing X number of job searches a week on the internet, and that will then lead them to getting a job. There is no understanding of whether or not they are job-ready, what their basic digital skills are to start with. There is a massive misunderstanding about whether or not somebody having access to the internet is the same as being able to use it. There is a lack of understanding about that digitally excluded population. I am sure the problem is partly lack of time but I think the incentives are wrong. If you are looking to change the culture within the Jobcentre you will need to think about how you measure those outcomes and what the incentives are for the people working at the local level to help people to go on the right journey for them; to get the right outcome for them. The incentives to date have been wrong.

**Cathy Corcoran:** You are right. It is certainly time and assessment. It is 10 minutes to get to the root of somebody's issues and find out what their barriers are and this is taking place in an open environment where there is no confidentiality and where people might be feeling both unaware of the lack of skills and also embarrassed about them.

Then assessment: we have an assessment tool here that we go through face to face that takes 30 to 40 minutes, but it works. It is successful. So, it is the target-driven time against "We need to get this person into work". It is a payoff between time and assessment. However, we are successful in getting people into work.

Q72 **Heidi Allen:** Cathy, I will come to you in a second. I am interested in what you just said about the physical environment.

First, Helen: you mentioned this variability up and down the country. That is life, is it not, the skills of different people? Are you able to discern any difference in the skills of the staff in Jobcentres where there are work coaches, they have Universal Credit, where it is this brave new world? Are you able to pick up any differences there in terms of the skills and how they are helping?

**Helen Milner:** To be fair we do not have that level of detail. I could tell you where we think there is good practice but at the moment it feels it is much more good practice where the relationship between the local Jobcentre and the local UK online centre is working well and where that is a solid and mutually supportive relationship. It is about that on-the-ground relationship building. We are also aware that there are a number of Jobcentre staff who lack basic digital skills, so we are asking them to support people to go on a journey where they themselves are not confident about their own digital skills, let alone helping people to assess whether or not they have the digital skills. I do not know if the newly-trained employees have a different set of skills.

**Q73 Heidi Allen:** Do any of you have a view on that? That is essentially what this inquiry is about. We are trying to ascertain whether the Jobcentre—not just the building but the people in it—are fit for everything that Universal Credit and the work coach model are hoping to be. Cathy or Tom?

**Tom Hadley:** There are interesting parallels. I think you are hearing afterwards from other organisations that do have work coaches. There is a lot we can do to learn from what is already in place. We represent the private sector recruitment industry. One of the biggest challenges for our members is recruiting into their own business. It is not easy to find people. Many people do not realise what the jobs are. It is not obvious where you go to attract the right staff for jobs in the employment-related arena. Yes, you can come with a lot of training. The qualifications training agenda that is linked to work coaches is really positive—that is fine—but a lot of it is about whether we are bringing the right people in in the first place. A good thing to know is what makes a good work coach—we have done a lot of work about what makes a good recruiter, for example—then you are pretty clear about the sort of person you need to bring in. Then you can build up their skills, experience, and knowledge subsequently. The point I would make on this is that anything lives and dies on the quality of the people you are bringing in. That is an area to really think about. It could work fantastically; it could fall apart because we do not have the people. It is the people, isn't it? That is massive.

**Q74 Heidi Allen:** Do you want to add to that, Cathy?

**Cathy Corcoran:** CSAN has 44 members around the country and I know their experience varies, both in terms of the culture of the local Jobcentre and the skill set, but we are asking a lot of the staff. The changes that are coming through on benefits are quite massive, quite wide-ranging, so much so that we had to make a new appointment some two years ago of a specialist in welfare benefits. They also are helpful with the Jobcentre Plus staff when they get lost in the complexities.

I am not sure if it is just training and whether a culture change also is possible. What we can do is offer the model that we and other agencies have, which is working together with Jobcentre Plus. We are set up to give people the time to do that kind of assessment and also to do job brokerage, which we have been particularly successful with. Maybe it is our geography—we are only 10 minutes away from the House—but we can work with employers, asking them what their jobs are and who would suit them, do some trial runs, do some work experience. It works. I think the way forward is more of a partnership with the voluntary sector, which does have those skills.

**Q75 Heidi Allen:** Following on from the other point you made about the physical space—and it is something that has occurred to me, again as you are talking about cultural change, is the grey, 1960s cold-war block that was the Jobcentre, the concrete hideous structure where you went because you had to, to sign up—what is your view on the physical environment of the Jobcentre: whether it works, does not work, and what improvements do

you think would be useful? Starting with Cathy, perhaps?

**Cathy Corcoran:** Certainly when the clients find us, come to us or are referred to us from Jobcentre Plus, there is almost a sigh of relief because our principle is to treat each person as an individual human being, not a number and not a target. They say it is the first time someone has looked them in the face rather than having to look at the computer and put their details in. It is almost that first base, that you are an individual, we are going to treat you as an individual and work with you about what the barriers are to your employment and what your aspirations are. So, there is that but also we have confidential places where people can feel safe to disclose what they are ashamed or embarrassed about. Sometimes they are illiterate and it is not just computer literacy. There are many barriers that are very hard to disclose when someone is not catching your eye, you are in an open environment and you are feeling that at any moment the time limit is going to be up, your benefit is going to be delayed if you cannot prove to them that you are doing a job search. It is all set up to make people feel they are going to fail.

**Heidi Allen:** That is interesting. Helen?

**Helen Milner:** We have not seen any marked improvement since all Jobcentres have had wifi or broadband. The Jobcentres where we know the relationships between UK online centres and Jobcentre Plus work well are those where they have a dedicated training room. They have a space where people can go and spend as much time as they like and they work with some of our community partners, who will then send volunteers or even trained tutors in to support people to do the learning within that space.

Some good practice where we have worked with others such as local authorities and social housing providers is having floor walkers with iPads so they can show people. For example, within Tinder Foundation we have a map where you can find your closest UK online centre where they can be referred to have more holistic and longer-time support. We also have an online learning package called Learn My Way. That is dedicated, free, training material for anyone who wants to learn how to use the internet but also how to use Universal Jobmatch, Universal Credit, how to search for work online. That is free. That could be loaded on all the devices within the Jobcentres.

One of the negatives we have heard about the current environment: terminals where they do not have a chair, so people are expected to stand and to do a lot of job searching.

**Heidi Allen:** Really?

**Helen Milner:** Yes.

**Heidi Allen:** You will have to tell us where that is.

**Helen Milner:** So that idea, back again to that sort of quick fix, kiosk mentality, where you can just stand there and do it and off you will go. I



am sure we all have in our minds super-supportive, confidential spaces, training rooms, but much more like the classic Apple shop, where people can walk in, feel welcomed. I think co-location is a good idea. However, I would say that—Cathy has explained her organisation really well—referral out to other organisations is also a very good thing; that there are plenty of third sector organisations in local communities that can support people. The idea that the Jobcentre has to be an island alone where they are going to do it all themselves—they can do better and they can do more within the Jobcentre but referring out to organisations where they can get longer, more holistic, more personalised support around all their other needs, as well as digital inclusion, is also a good idea. The Jobcentre does not have to fix all ills. It can refer to others.

**Tom Hadley:** It is important to make the point that we have made progress. Some of our members had not been into a Jobcentre for 20-odd years and it was interesting to get their feedback. When we do these regional round tables between private sector agencies and Jobcentre colleagues it tends to be hosted in the Jobcentre. Bringing more businesses into Jobcentres I think helps and brings people up to speed that there has been tangible progress.

That leads me to the other point I would make about the physical space; it depends who is there. I like the idea of Jobcentres as a hub where we are bringing people in. Some Jobcentres have started doing that, opening up, bringing in, say, a specialist recruitment agency that is doing a drive in a particular sector—it might be hospitality or industrial—to take a bit of the space so it is a living and breathing space. It works. The feedback from members who have taken up those opportunities has been very positive and has resulted in people getting into work.

**Q76 Richard Graham:** Tom, let me come in on that last point on the idea of the Jobcentre Plus being a sort of community centre almost, where businesses come in and so on. Just to play devil's advocate, with local councils mostly having had to implement cuts and reduce staff there is quite a lot of extra space in those offices and would that not be more like a one-stop service where you can have housing, JCP, businesses and local officers all in the same building? Would it not make more sense to do that rather than trying the reverse—

**Tom Hadley:** Possibly. At the moment it is quite ad hoc, to be fair. The invitation will go out to our members asking whether they would like to come in and spend a Friday interviewing staff. I think you could formalise it a bit more, especially if it is cost effective for businesses. If I am a small, three- to four-person recruitment business I might say I could co-locate and do some work like that. It is an interesting thing to consider.

**Q77 Richard Graham:** How do you find jobs fairs? A lot of us did a lot of organising of jobs fairs, particularly between 2010 and 2015, until the unemployed numbers came down quite sharply. By the end of that process I was finding that in my constituency, in Gloucester, employers were saying to me, "We are no longer getting great numbers of people. We are tending

to see the same old figures recycling themselves". Do you think that is something that works for employers as a way of putting people face to face?

**Tom Hadley:** It can do. We are certainly very supportive of the reverse jobs fairs that Justin Tomlinson has been driving because they have a particular focus. That has helped. One of the challenges we see is while employers recognise that it is not easy to find staff and we perhaps need to do something differently, while employers also recognise that we could probably do more to reach out and bring under-represented groups into our workplaces, there is an aspiration that is not always met by reality. We find that a lot of the companies' hiring procedures and criteria have not changed much. It links in with your question. Employers might have a desire to do things differently and reach out and give an opportunity to people who perhaps might be difficult to employ but on the ground it is not happening as much as we would like. Part of what we are trying to do is drive the debate around what is good recruitment—can we challenge ourselves, can we shake things up a little bit?

**Q78 Richard Graham:** This is going slightly off piste and the Chair may rein me back in. One of the things I have been floating with DWP Ministers is using national insurance or tax incentives in the same way that the US, the Netherlands and Ireland use them in order to effectively encourage SMEs to see abilities as well as disabilities and bring more people with disabilities into work. Do you think that could work?

**Tom Hadley:** It is potentially part of the solution. A lot of feedback from employers is that essentially they just want people who can do the job. Incentives can help but it is also about redefining—

**Richard Graham:** It worked for apprentices, did it not?

**Tom Hadley:** Yes, it did. It is definitely worth considering and reaching into the SME community. A lot of the work we have done around the inclusion debate, you go to lots of events, I am sure you have too, where it is big corporations. So how do we reach in to the SME community? We are trying to work with more with the FSB and other organisations. It is not always easy.

**Q79 Richard Graham:** Coming back on piste, Chairman, Helen and Cathy this is for you. In terms of what the frontline JCP advisers are doing at the moment and what we all hope the work coaches will do in the future, this army of 11,000 supported by whatever it is, 3,000 executive officers: what would you like to see them do that is not being done now?

**Cathy Corcoran:** I would like them to acknowledge, and be helped to acknowledge, that one size simply does not fit all and that the system is dug in, there are so many people now who are excluded from first base—to accept that and to be encouraged to give them more time or to refer again to people like us who are trying to get down to individual people's needs, what the barriers are keeping him or her from employment and how we can broker that both with Jobcentre Plus and with local employers.

**Q80 Richard Graham:** At what stage are you coming into it? This is always one of the interesting things.

**Cathy Corcoran:** One point is that people have come to us under their own volition looking for work. They have come to us. They are not being forced to do that. So, we can start at first base with them and get the assessment right. If you do not get the assessment right, it will not work.

**Q81 Richard Graham:** Are you able to assess what sort of sectors they might be best suited for?

**Cathy Corcoran:** Yes. It is not always successful. I have some case studies here, real people, real lives, who after two months with us, and 10 months with Jobcentre Plus, are into their dream job. Yet the other side of that is a 63-year-old woman who, when she went to the Jobcentre the first time, they said, "Do you have the internet at home?" She said yes and an assumption was made from that point that she was computer literate—she could not switch the computer on because it was her son's—but the system just took off. She answered, "Yes" so therefore that was it.

**Q82 Richard Graham:** Seems to be a coaching opportunity for the son there. But, Helen, what do you think needs to change? What would the work coaches do?

**Helen Milner:** Focusing on basic digital skills, I think some kind of assessment upfront is a good idea. I also think the work coaches should not just assess people upfront but also have checkpoints and milestones throughout their relationship with them about how they are developing those skills.

**Q83 Richard Graham:** Is that not happening at the moment?

**Helen Milner:** No, because a bit like Cathy was saying, it is, "Have you got the internet?"—tick—"Have you got a Universal Jobmatch account?"—tick. It does not really matter who set that up for you or whether or not somebody else is doing it for you. I talk about skills. Within the UK online centre network last year we had 65,000 people referred to us from the Jobcentre. In some places that referral mechanism is obviously working well. Over the year we have supported 89,000 who are unemployed and looking for work so 24,000 people came without that referral. What is really important about the model is that they get holistic support. It is not just about developing those basic digital skills. It is about helping them to create that confidence and self-esteem, that behaviour change and that resilience. What the work coaches need to be doing is helping them with their skills journey. We also have people in our network—

**Q84 Richard Graham:** Sorry to interrupt; they would be helping refer them to people like you and Cathy, would they not?

**Helen Milner:** Indeed. So to make sure they are really getting under the skin of what skills they have and how their confidence, self-esteem and resilience is. What is their self-efficacy? How is that going up?

**Q85 Richard Graham:** If I could ask one last question, Chair. Can you both measure that? I always think this is one of the most interesting things. When I go in, for example, to the local office of Plus and I meet some of their candidates for jobs, I do not think it is presumptuous to say that within a very short space of time you get an idea of whether someone has some natural confidence and is going to interview well. Once you see that you know that the opportunity is there and it is probably going to happen but how do you measure getting someone from a position of no self-confidence at all to that position where you can feel confident that they are going to get a job?

**Helen Milner:** We measure on three spectrums. We have data. Learn My Way, because it is a learning platform, has data and measurement built into it. That is why we have such good data. We also have surveys. We survey people upfront and then we do something called a progression survey six to 12 weeks after they have started. That is done by telephone in case they have gone offline. We want to know if we did not work so we cannot just survey them online. We also do deep-dive evaluation.

**Q86 Richard Graham:** Cathy, do you do something similar?

**Cathy Corcoran:** Yes. At the Cardinal Hume Centre we have both jobs clubs and workshops. If somebody is starting from zero in terms of computer literacy you can easily measure their competency and they can self-measure, which I think is even more important. You can watch someone who comes either with no confidence to start with or who has been completely overwhelmed and demoralised by the system of trying to get into work. You have two different starting points but, yes, you can measure that. Just to repeat that: I think the client's self-assessment of their skills is crucial and therefore the self-assessment of how much more confident they are feeling the more you are working with them.

**Helen Milner:** I would like to say one more thing about work coaches. Something that would be critical in the model moving forward would be the relationship between the work coach and others that they have referred to. We have a really good referral mechanism in some places, some of the time. They talk to each other about who they are helping and what they are doing. If the work coach has the commitment, the obligation, the responsibility to look after that person—not just referring but almost written into their job description that they need to have a dialogue with those third sector organisations who are providing them with that other support—I think it would significantly help that journey to self-efficacy.

**Q87 Heidi Allen:** We have been focusing pretty much so far on the job search part of Jobcentre and your roles with that. Of course the other big thing the Jobcentre does is benefit delivery. How do you see the behaviour and success of claimants as they pass through your hands, the difference when benefit claims are right and on time and when they are not? Helen, do you want to start?

**Helen Milner:** Within the network we have experienced people being sanctioned because they lack basic digital skills. We typically pick people up at the back end; that is what we hear. Because we are a digital inclusion organisation it is much more about "help me". Either upfront, "Help me, I have been told I have to use Universal Jobmatch" or, "Help me, my benefits have been stopped because I haven't been using Universal Jobmatch". Our local centres will often then help those people. We have quite a large number of people with English as a second language so we will help them go through that appeals process. So, our experience is much more picking it up once a mistake has been made, if you like, at the Jobcentre end. That is really our experience.

We created the Universal Jobmatch online course within five weeks, as soon as we heard that there was an issue in our network. We then co-created it with some claimants on the ground. Within two weeks of its being live, 5,000 people had used it. That is the benefit of digital, where you can identify a problem, co-create really quickly, and deliver that.

Just to be clear: our funding is 80% Government; most of that comes through BIS. We also get HMRC funding and DCRG funding to help English language. We have also had NHS funding but we do not have DWP funding to do this. We do this because of the needs of the people in those communities. We do not have a formal relationship with DWP.

**Cathy Corcoran:** In terms of benefits delays, a lot of our work is advocacy. I talked about the specialist post, that we try to spot something that is going to happen and we will call the local Jobcentre Plus or whoever in the system.

Just on that, a discrete line for intermediaries like us would be inordinately helpful, rather than being put through to a call centre, which does not really help us or the client.

We try to avoid crises but we do have some real-life cases. For example, we are one of the biggest referrers to the local food bank. The substantive percentage of people we refer is because of delays in benefits because, simply, there is no money left. We have had people who have been hospitalised because they can't have the kind of healthy diet they need as a diabetic, people losing their jobs because they have no travel costs to get to their work. Whatever the reason for the delay, or the extreme, the sanction, the human story behind it needs to be heard as well.

Q88 **Ms Buck:** Do you have much experience of using the local support payment system?

**Cathy Corcoran:** I think we used to do that but I don't have that information at my fingertips, I am afraid.

**Ms Buck:** But interestingly, it is not something that springs to mind.

**Cathy Corcoran:** No, and it has not come through any of the examples that either staff or clients have given me for today's hearing.

**Ms Buck:** That is quite interesting in itself.

**Cathy Corcoran:** It probably is, isn't it?

Q89 **Ms Buck:** Is that not part of what was meant to be the safeguard in those kinds of cases?

**Cathy Corcoran:** On that issue of income, 60% to 65% of our income is from voluntary sources. We have had three contracts with the Department for Work and Pensions but not for a lot of the work we are doing. We choose to do the advocacy work, the rest of the support work, the digital inclusion, English for speakers of other languages; we want to offer that holistic support package because that is what works.

Q90 **Ms Buck:** I am going to ask you a question that is impossible to answer.

**Cathy Corcoran:** Is this where we leave the room?

**Ms Buck:** I should declare an interest, really; I have had clients of yours and over time you have taken my constituents with some of the problems they have had. We know that your organisations are picking up clients who have fallen through the holes in the net, who are digitally excluded or have complex problems. For each of the ones you pick up, there will be—question mark—how many people who are not identified who then in some cases, though not all, will fall foul of sanctions or benefit delays, will not have credit on their phones, will not have money to travel, will not be able to get themselves even to the first base in terms of being able to interact with the system. Do we have any sense of how many people who would need support are not getting it?

**Cathy Corcoran:** It is the same as the bigger question that people ask: how many people are homeless? No one has those statistics. You can take the street count of who is sleeping rough, you can take the long-term hostel dwellers but you cannot know how many people are hidden homeless, who are sofa surfing, in overcrowded accommodation. I think the same is true in the job market for those who are not getting any nearer.

Q91 **Ms Buck:** Then the question is, is there roughly within the constraints of the existing system—assuming there is not going to be a vast increase in the time that can be spent with each claimant—something that can be done to improve the identification of people at risk? What would that be?

**Cathy Corcoran:** You were talking about co-location earlier on, there is even less joined-up working and thinking in statutory services. Westminster as we know is now going to get another 50% cut for example in social services. That has an impact. If you have nobody picking somebody up at the point of real vulnerability then they are not being fed in to the rest of the statutory services and to organisations like ours. What would be extremely helpful is some point of reference where we bring together services to give a package of support around those who we can all spot are the most vulnerable.

Q92 **Ms Buck:** What might be doable within Jobcentre Plus, knowing that there

is no point in our asking for hundreds more staff and five times the length of an initial interview, or whatever? What, if anything, might be doable just to improve that early identification and signposting or drawing in other services?

**Helen Milner:** I do think there has to be something done about the initial conversation at the Jobcentre, or ongoing conversations at the Jobcentre.

On the scale of the problem, we have centres in our network that are still saying that people are being sanctioned for not being able to use the internet weekly and are coming to them. These are centres that only support a couple of thousand people a year. So it is still a problem. Obviously those individuals will have complex needs but they perceive that the reason for sanctions is that they are not able to use the internet. Therefore I think it is really important that the questions advisers are asking people right now are better questions, not, "Have you got the internet at home?", not, "Do you know how to use the internet?" but, "Are you confident to use the internet, to use Universal Jobmatch, by yourself? Do you think you will be able to do this several times a week by yourself?" The people who are really falling foul that we are seeing are those who would say no, no and no to those questions but might say yes to, "Do you have the internet on your phone?" for example.

Q93 **Ms Buck:** Does either of you have an idea of what those questions might be? If not, could you write them? Could you write six questions, fairly short, that might guide the Committee to say that this would be an improved means of identifying people's capability and where the risks might lie?

**Helen Milner:** Absolutely.

**Cathy Corcoran:** Very happy to do that.

**Chair:** We would welcome receiving that. That is a very good suggestion, Karen. Neil, did you want to come in on that?

Q94 **Neil Coyle:** I did want to come in and it is linked to that point but goes slightly further. The Minister for Employment said that work coaches should be able to do some of that identification of needs as well as skills and skills gaps but also expand their role into how to engage better with the private sector recruitment in particular. What engagement have you had to date with the Department for Work and Pensions in terms of guiding them on how to shape the role of the work coach? We are expecting to see the training and so on that work coaches are expected to have undergone. Have you been involved in shaping that? Is there an ongoing system of engagement with all three of you and the Department?

**Tom Hadley:** Certainly from our perspective we are happy to share. Within the REC we run an institute of recruitment professionals. A lot of the skills we provide to our individual members are quite transferable. We have a pilot scheme; 20 members of Jobcentres are members of the institute just to see what sort of linkages we can make there. We are more than happy to share that information. I guess then it is ongoing. We produce a

lot of jobs-market data, which we try to regionalise now—people have that in front of them—and these are where the jobs seem to be coming. That is part of where we can help upskill.

There is another area we are keen to contribute more to. Our industry is increasingly specialised; we run 19 sector groups within REC—technology, hospitality and so on—to get very specialised recruitment professionals. The more Jobcentres can tap into that, to understand where the jobs are, what is changing, it will help to build their knowledge and awareness and perhaps help them to build little networks of people they can go to on specific sectors they want to get more information on. It is an ongoing part of the partnership agreement we have with DWP and it is something we are keen to continue doing more on.

**Q95 Neil Coyle:** In my constituency that would include the construction and tourism sectors for example. But specifically, has DWP engaged you in shaping the work coach role or not?

**Tom Hadley:** They have engaged us in providing them with regular information; whether they channel that down to work coaches I am not 100% sure. We do have regular meetings and regular opportunities for us to provide information, not just on sectors but also ways of working: so on entrepreneurship, on how to take on flexible jobs, and so on, and good practice around that. We send lots of information. We have an account manager within the DWP, which is working quite well. Whether that is trickling down at the moment I am not sure but it is getting better. There has certainly been a lot more interaction. We go and speak to events where there are Jobcentre district managers in the room. That would never have happened five or 10 years ago. I think there has been real progress made in some of that connectivity although there is perhaps more to be done.

**Cathy Corcoran:** We enjoy good relationships with different aspects of DWP, including with their digital services division. For example, we have been doing some trialling of new claimant forms for people on ESA. We are happy to do that and model, bring in real people to say this is working, this is not working, this is why it is not working, this is what good practice looks like. We would be more than happy to continue to do that within our capacity.

**Q96 Neil Coyle:** But again, specifically on work coaches and what is planned, nothing to date. Useful, thank you.

**Helen Milner:** So, specifically, nothing to date. We provide DWP with a quarterly report through our relationship with BIS, our BIS contract. We are supporting a million people to cross the digital divide at £15 per person. All of those referrals, the 65,000 people a year who are being referred from Jobcentres to UK online centres, are through that BIS contract. So, they get a quarterly report from us but they have not approached us to help them with work coach development. We would, again, have a lot of insight and would be willing to provide a lot of help.

**Q97 Neil Coyle:** When you have highlighted the cases you have mentioned—around not having digital skills but there being big assumptions—do you feel that your feedback is being taken into account anywhere and used to shape other cases? Or are you seeing repeat instances of the same problem?

**Helen Milner:** It is important to say that there are some very good people working at DWP—

**Neil Coyle:** Of course. Absolutely.

**Helen Milner:** And at Jobcentres, on the ground. However, I believe there is a refusal to accept that there is this incredible inconsistency happening right now. When there is discussion about a cultural change, it needs to be clear that that is not just about work coaches, it has to come top down and it has to be about incentives, it has to be about being much clearer about what the outcomes are, about what good looks like. I see it time and time again; there is money, there is wifi, there is equipment, but we are still continuously seeing these problems. Without proper acknowledgement that there are problems currently in the system—and, yes, we could fix it a little bit with six better questions—that cultural change really needs to come from the top. Just employing more work coaches and having a different type of adviser at that local level is not going to make the change I think is needed.

**Tom Hadley:** From a private sector perspective, it is interesting that when we do the rounds, go and do the regional round tables, sometimes we get some fantastic examples of where we are working in genuine partnership with Jobcentre and it is helping everybody; in other regions it is not the case at all. There is unevenness, which is perhaps to be expected.

One example in terms of things we have shared is a document we produced around seven secrets of success for recruiters. A lot of that was quite relevant to work coaching; it was how you build a relationship with your candidates; how you give people confidence to apply for jobs; how you build links with employers, and so on. Things are starting to happen but we definitely need to do more.

**Chair:** Great. Thank you very much indeed. It has been very useful. Thank you.

## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Matthew Green, Keith Faulkner, Brian Bell, Nicola Whiteman.

**Q98 Chair:** Good afternoon. It is good to have you here. We are going to start now. We have a bit of a time pressure, unfortunately. We are aiming to finish a few minutes before 5.00 pm so will try to move swiftly to take your evidence. Thank you very much for joining us. Before I turn to Craig to ask the first question, could you just briefly introduce yourselves and say who you represent? That would be helpful. Keith, would you like to start,

please?

**Keith Faulkner:** Keith Faulkner, Deputy Chair of the Institute of Employability Professionals, which is an institute that was formed just a while ago, in 2012.

**Matthew Green:** I am Matthew Green, Director of Crisis Skylight in Birmingham, Coventry and Warwickshire, part of Crisis UK.

**Nicola Whiteman:** Nicola Whiteman, Senior Policy Officer at Papworth Trust. We are a disability charity in the eastern region and a work programme provider. We support about 10,000 disabled people a year.

**Brian Bell:** Brian Bell. I am the Managing Director for the Employability Division of Working Links. We have delivered services to Jobcentre Plus and DWP for 16 years. Prior to that I spent 15 years in Jobcentre Plus.

**Chair:** Thank you very much. Craig, would you like to start for us?

Q99 **Craig Williams:** You would have heard in the last session that our focus is on work coaches. Can I draw out your views on what kinds of skills you think are essential for the work coaches to get the long-term unemployed claimants into work?

**Keith Faulkner:** If I can move slightly away from skills, looking at the job description for work coaches, I think there is a great emphasis in there on knowledge and hard skills. I would echo something that Tom Hadley said. Part of the recruitment process has to deal with personal values and attitudes. One of the things we believe in very strongly at the institute is that people who regard themselves as professionals in this field must have a real passion. Given the time limitations, can I just recommend one of the DWP's own reports, the final evaluation of the Working Neighbourhoods pilot? It is a little while ago now but they have some very good analysis of what created success and they list 15 areas, very few of which are in the work coach's job description. If I could just quickly pick out half a dozen of them: the ability to use initiative and think on their feet; the ability to work flexibly and be prepared to work out of hours, and I know hours have been discussed in a previous session; a willingness to do things differently; being a team player; being emphatic and non-judgmental; being able to relate to the circumstances of target groups, again going back to the previous session; having local knowledge; and, interestingly, being trusted by the community. A lot of focus is on the individual job seeker but they belong to a family unit and a street and a neighbourhood and you have to understand all of that to give the right sort of help.

Q100 **Craig Williams:** Given that, before you move on, do you think the accreditation process for the work programmes would fulfil what you have just set out?

**Keith Faulkner:** The accreditation process?

**Craig Williams:** The process for work coaches, DWP's accreditation process.



**Keith Faulkner:** Here we come back to the last question to the previous group. The IEP started a very fruitful discussion with the DWP at the very end of the coalition Government about working together on establishing a qualification, skills and attributes framework. At that time the feeling was that the work coaches were going to be so innovative and so far ahead of what was being currently done that it was inappropriate for us to participate in that. We are still pressing but we really have not made progress since then in sharing it. We and our members, which include Working Links, are doing a lot of work on exactly what is required and how you establish continued professional development, which is also an important part of this. We know that similar work is being done but we are just not pooling that knowledge and experience. Through the evidence we are giving today we would like to press for better and closer co-operation. We do not want them to be joining up to the institute but we want the collaboration that means that when we produce standards they are compatible and as people move—because public servants do go into the voluntary and private sectors and they go in the other direction too—we have a common view of the skills and attributes we are looking for.

**Brian Bell:** This is not just about managing a process, which Jobcentre Plus are exceptional at—a huge number of people flow through Jobcentre Plus every month—it is about building relationships with people and getting out and understanding them. Some of that is a learned skill. Some of it is about understanding people, communication skills and so on, but a lot of it is time. I think there was a question asked earlier about how much time you can spend with people and how much flexibility you have around managing that time. If it is three minutes once a fortnight, or whatever, it is a problem to keep on building that relationship. If Jobcentre Plus struggle to keep staff—you are talking about differences in geography and there are high turnovers—that presents another challenge. Probably the accreditation system is fine but it is what sits around that, what the environment around that looks like, how the culture works, and how the resources are targeted.

I was interested in one other thing in the conversation before, which was about how Jobcentre Plus can manage data. Much of the provider base out there has a lot of data now about some of the things that stop people moving into work, what the indicators are. When you starting looking at the data one of them very clearly is what their functional maths and English look like, what their basic skills levels look like. If you can start thinking about that and then building relationships with people instead of running a process, you have a much better chance of getting to know people.

**Nicola Whiteman:** The key things Papworth Trust looks for when looking at employment advisers are things like having empathy and being creative, being innovative, because sometimes finding the right job for somebody might require thinking outside the box. We want to treat people as people and not as numbers. We need to work with them, build a relationship, build trust. As Brian just said, those things take time. You also need to set things in context for people. When people come to you the idea of having a job may be as far away as possible to them so you need to set kind of short-

term goals as well, recognise what their situation is now, what their circumstances are and what the future can look like for them.

**Matthew Green:** From our point of view—Crisis is an organisation that works with single homeless people primarily—we use coaching as a tool to work with homeless people who are members. As we have said before in a previous hearing, it is about trust, confidence, being able to live with that personalised support, being able to take the barriers away from engagement with other institutions that they have had poor experience of before.

Our guys, the people that we engage with—our clients—quite often get sanctioned a lot. Homeless people are twice as likely to get sanctioned or have a sanction because of their conditionality, because it doesn't work for them, and that cannot be right. So there is something around supporting a coaching environment about getting that personalised support, that work coach, understanding the need of a vulnerable claimant—who could be homeless, could be whatever really.

**Chair:** Okay, thank you. Richard?

Q101 **Richard Graham:** Nicola, I am interested in what the Papworth Trust is doing, because you have a huge amount of experience of bringing people with disabilities back into work. I was just listening to you earlier and we can all sign up to the general thing where everybody is an individual and not a number and so on. What in practice would you really like to see differently that would help people with disabilities get a job?

**Nicola Whiteman:** Well, first and foremost I guess treating them as individuals. If I can just give some examples around what we have done that is particularly innovative in terms of getting people in to work. So for example—

**Richard Graham:** Something you have done and the JCP does not do would be interesting.

**Nicola Whiteman:** Yes. So one of the benefits of us being a charity is that we can do the innovative creative thinking. So something that we did last summer was we banned the words “finding work” from our employment services for two months.

In our Cambridge centre we set up a floristry course. It was a six-week floristry course—entirely voluntary, but one of the things it did was that it got people through the door because often one of the biggest barriers for disabled people in finding work is actually the fear of the establishment trying to force them into work. Once we had got them through the door and put them on the course they then built up this peer-to-peer support recognising that there were other people in similar positions. They could talk to each other about setting up their CV and what their worries were about finding work, and hopefully overcome them.

It is minimal numbers but by the end of the course there were eight people that had been on it, four people that found work and two people that found

permitted work. These are people who are very far away from the labour market.

Q102 **Richard Graham:** As florists or something totally different?

**Nicola Whiteman:** Yes.

**Richard Graham:** As florists?

**Nicola Whiteman:** No. Sorry. As in other—

**Richard Graham:** As something totally different. It was the confidence thing then?

**Nicola Whiteman:** It was the confidence thing. We also have examples in Peterborough where we have set up an allotment called, "Peterborough Patch". It is donated to us by Peterborough City Council and the people on the work programme fundraise for it. So they obviously maintain the allotment but they also acquire other skills by going out to local businesses seeing what they will donate and that kind of thing. So it is just where they can acquire other skills but not necessarily in the traditional finding way.

Q103 **Richard Graham:** That is really helpful. That is an example of the innovative way. The other part of the question really is all about delays in benefit payments. I have had slightly mixed experience of this but I do understand that when it happens and where it happens it can have a huge impact on the claimant many of whom do not really have any savings, if you like, to see them through that "Mind the gap" problem. What impact does it have in your experience, any of you really, in terms of their relationship with the JCP and the whole business of getting back into work?

**Matthew Green:** I think from my point of view it is the extremes we work with among homeless people. So the extreme and the consequence is that people become homeless because, as you quite rightly said, there are no savings, but there is not even that, really, so they are relying from fortnight to fortnight.

Q104 **Richard Graham:** You are saying that people are actually becoming homeless?

**Matthew Green:** Certainly in Birmingham, the highest reason for people becoming homeless is the end of a private rented tenancy. So that could be for a variety of reasons, but obviously a big reason for that is non-payment of rent. So if you are a landlord, the reason that you have heard I'm sure a lot is that these guys need their rent, it's their business. There is no buffer for these people and so a gap—

Q105 **Richard Graham:** You are seeing quite a lot of people are losing where they are living as a result of that?

**Matthew Green:** Yes, and that is why we employ housing coaches across the country now in our projects.

**Richard Graham:** Brian is nodding, are you seeing that too?

**Brian Bell:** We are starting to see it more socially. We run a supply chain of organisations that we work closely with. So we work with organisations that we refer people to and when I look at which organisations we are working with now, the number of people that we need to refer for accommodation support has gone up. Just one other thing on the whole—

**Richard Graham:** Just on that one, Brian.

**Brian Bell:** Sorry, yes.

Q106 **Richard Graham:** So they are not paying their rent because the housing benefit is not coming through? Tell me how this process—

**Matthew Green:** That is one of the things that would be really good to tell this Committee.

Q107 **Richard Graham:** Or is the money being spent on something else?

**Matthew Green:** Sanctions are common for someone on JSA, for example. That cannot and should not affect their housing benefit but it does, they should be separate, and that has happened—

Q108 **Richard Graham:** You are not trying to make the argument that sanctions are an evil idea and that everybody should be able to not follow up on the commitment that they signed?

**Matthew Green:** They don't work for homeless people because of the complexities of what people go through, of what the most vulnerable people need to go through. Sanctions don't work and it is proven, the research has shown that homeless people are twice as likely to become sanctioned. So that can't be right, the welfare system needs to be a safety net.

Q109 **Richard Graham:** That completely contradicts what we are hearing from JCP and others, but, anyway, that is a separate issue, Chairman. Anyone else want to comment on this business of the delays in benefit? Nicola, yes?

**Nicola Whiteman:** So just in terms of Universal Credit at the moment, what we are seeing is it is so far working positively for our customers although to bear in mind that obviously it is the easiest of cases as such.

There is this five to six week delay in first payment but there is also something called an advance payment, which I am not sure if you are aware of, where people can get their first month's rent up front and then have a reduced claim for three to 12 months after that.

It is the least complex cases so far and so these are not people that are claiming housing costs at the moment. So while it is working for that group of people once there is the complexity of the housing costs, having to support a family and so on, then we might see more issues.

Q110 **Richard Graham:** Are you implying that the old system of taking money out of the benefit to pay for the housing is easier for the claimant?

**Nicola Whiteman:** Sorry, can you repeat the question?

**Richard Graham:** So under the old system the housing benefit was deducted at source.

**Nicola Whiteman:** Sorry, yes.

**Richard Graham:** Are you in favour of that? Do you think that is better for the claimant?

**Nicola Whiteman:** Yes, and I think there should definitely be a way that they can at least decide if they want their housing benefit to go straight to landlords. Give them the choice because lots of people don't want to have the money because then they don't spend it, there is not that risk.

Q111 **Chair:** But that is not true for everyone, is it?

**Nicola Whiteman:** No, that is what I mean, as in an opt-in system.

**Matthew Green:** I would agree with that. I think a lot less people would become homeless or default on their rent if they had that option to do that because of the skills they have to manage money or because they are not coping, and that is where work coaches come in to support that process as well.

Q112 **Neil Coyle:** That is right. Do you operate in any Universal Credit trial areas and what has been the impact? My own constituency, Southwark, was one where Universal Credit rollout had the effect that almost 100% of those in the trial ended up in rent arrears.

**Nicola Whiteman:** I don't have that level of detail, sorry.

Q113 **Neil Coyle:** Is it too small a sample on Universal Credit for you to know?

**Nicola Whiteman:** Yes.

**Neil Coyle:** Okay, interesting.

**Nicola Whiteman:** Thinking about it logically, if they don't have the housing part of their Universal Credit then I will not have seen that part yet coming through.

Q114 **Heidi Allen:** The heart of our inquiry really is about this brave new world of Universal Credit and the work coach and how the Jobcentre and the new work coach skills might need to evolve as a consequence. So drawing on all your expertise of the different, innovative, alternative ways that you have helped people, and perhaps also thinking about where in the work programme in the past we have had different third parties involved in the process of helping people, could you describe utopia for me? How do you think the way that Jobcentre gives advice needs to change or how would you redesign it? Keith?

**Keith Faulkner:** I think for us it has to become a much more collaborative environment. We have heard so many times this afternoon this does vary a great deal across the country but we have plenty of examples where Jobcentre Plus has played a leadership role. It has sat down with a local authority, it has sat down with prominent local businesses and with

voluntary and often private sector organisations and said, “How do we tackle these problems, how do we fund it, how do we work together?”

Now that works at two levels. First, it makes the use of increasing limited resources to provide the network of support an individual wants. So it is not just advice and help towards a job, there are a lot of other things they need to give them the sense of security to move forward, but it is also providing a network for the advisers themselves. One of the great advantages that we find for our members within the institute is we run networking events so that they can get together and share experiences with people from other organisations.

Again, in your utopia—and again we have seen it happening—where Jobcentre Plus advisers by having close contact with a number of other organisations and sharing issues and challenges not only does it produce more innovative solutions but it reduces stress levels and I think we have talked about that in a previous hearing. This is a very stressful job to be in, it is a very difficult one to do well, you need what is an unloading and part of that within any profession, whether you are a surgeon or a fire fighter or a policeman, is to sit down with other people tackling the same issues and share those problems. We are not seeing that happen widely enough.

**Nicola Whiteman:** Could I just make three points of what needs to change? We need to go beyond the failings of the past system whereby an “any job will do” attitude will suffice; instead we find roles that are right and appropriate for the individual and they now have greater longevity in that job. We need a sophisticated assessment tool that is enough to pinpoint a person’s barriers to work rather than simply obviously the benefit that they are on.

Q115 **Heidi Allen:** Can I just ask you on that, Nicola?

**Nicola Whiteman:** Sorry, yes.

**Heidi Allen:** Tools, so how would you visualise that? Is that a glorified checklist? I personally worry about the skills—these work coaches are going to have to be the Messiah, they are going to be mental health experts, disability experts, all of it. So are you talking a physical tick list, something so they don’t have to have all those skills?

**Nicola Whiteman:** Part of it as well is having the knowledge to know where they are out of their depth and who to refer that person on to or what training is available or support is out there. Having those local connections that they can find—

**Heidi Allen:** All right, thank you.

**Brian Bell:** Can I just come in on that quickly? We have built with Sheffield Hallam University an online assessment tool that people, with the help of the equivalent of work coaches and Working Links, can work with that assesses the key barriers like the skills level, like the stability of their life, whether they are homeless, what their health condition is like, how they handle change and so on. The important thing is if you are going to do an

intervention then you have to keep reassessing them and it is all to do with their ability to take on a job and hold down a job. So it brings in factors like not just any job.

The big thing in this utopian world is how do you get employers involved in this? Because at the end of it is them that are going to kind of fix the problem really and it is going to be complicated with Universal Credit because if we want people to increase their ability to earn they have to do it one of three ways. They are going to leave that employer and go on to another one, so that is complicated, as how would you build a relationship with that employer if you are going to get people who leave and go to another one? Or they are going to get more hours or get promoted, so how do you facilitate that discussion to get more hours early on in somebody's career? Or they are going to be better being self-employed. So it is quite a complex relationship then.

**Chair:** Matthew, did you want to say something?

**Matthew Green:** Yes, just a really quick point just to kind of back up what was said around partnership. I think partnership is really key. You talked about mental health specialists, housing specialists. I don't believe they need to have that because coaching doesn't ask for that, it asks about that facilitation of the process. So that joint agreement at the start about what is needed and what the plan is going to be going forward. For me the final comment would be organisations like Nicola's and ours that partnership work is that in the Jobcentre every adviser knows about Crisis or another disability organisation or what-have-you and that can work in partnership for the best outcome for that person. That is where you start getting personalisation from, it is about that collaborative working.

Q116 **Heidi Allen:** Can I just check one assumption from all of you? Presumably this would happen at the beginning, not after two years when the person had been kicked around the Jobcentre and ended up on the work—

**Matthew Green:** Initial assessment.

**Nicola Whiteman:** Yes, absolutely.

**Brian Bell:** You can predict that early on if you keep data.

**Matthew Green:** If you do an assessment at the start and you look at what the outcome is and work backwards then that person is on the right journey and pathway.

**Heidi Allen:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Neil, the last question.

Q117 **Neil Coyle:** You define the complexities of the coaching role, but is there an additional complexity or challenge in terms of having both a coaching role and a compliance role for work coaches and how could that be addressed?

**Brian Bell:** It is tough because the compliance role, it is the balance of what is driving the culture, and if there is a compliance culture—a lot of

other organisations who work in this arena are measured on people going into jobs not off benefit, they are two very different things. So it is about what becomes the dominant culture I guess really, and I think that needs to be looked at and could take time.

I can go back 20 years, when I worked in Jobcentres when there was a benefit regime and a jobs regime, so there were two separate organisations within the whole Jobcentre set up and I don't know if that is the answer or not but certainly part of the answer is, if there is one bit of the organisation dealing with the benefits there has to be a bit of the organisation that, I think, has to go out into communities and deal with people out in their environment. But it is who is going to drive the dominant culture that becomes the question.

**Keith Faulkner:** First, as far as the coaching compliance role is concerned, just to share a very good example from a period when I sat on the Social Security Advisory Committee, we visited a South London Jobcentre and there, where some freedoms had been given, they set up a workshop that was a compulsory workshop for all new claimants that explained and answered challenges to the whole sanction regime, how they could comply with it and how they could avoid sanctions. Because I think the experience is—certainly ours has been—that often when someone is sanctioned they don't really understand and they didn't genuinely expect to be sanctioned, which leads to all sort of problems and a breakdown in the relationship. So I think there are innovative ideas involving Jobcentre Plus and I would say that would be the first thing.

The second thing, which we have not touched on at all today, is the emphasis now on work progression and the work coach's role in that. I think there is a much more serious problem there with compliance because you have the employer now involved as well. There is a whole environment that is much harder to handle and that is an area where really a lot more work has to be done before there is implementation.

**Nicola Whiteman:** Just to say that it is a question of trust and how can you, as a job coach, build that trust up that you need to support somebody into work when you are also sanctioning them, or potentially sanctioning them.

Q118 **Neil Coyle:** So going back to the utopia, would the workloads then be not Jobcentre Plus, it would be in a private or voluntary sector provision?

**Nicola Whiteman:** Yes. Certainly we would ask that people are not languishing in the Jobcentre for two years and that they are referred on to the work and health programme at a much earlier stage where employment support providers can give more dedicated time and support to them.

**Chair:** I will bring this session to a close. I would just like to thank all of you for giving your evidence. We may have some additional questions that we may write to you about if that is okay. As you will appreciate it is quite a fluid time in politics for all sides of the House and we have to rush off to other things. Thank you very much indeed. Please do not feel that the slim



HOUSE OF COMMONS

attendance at this session reflects how seriously we are taking this matter because it is something that is at the top of our agenda. Thank you.