

Work and Pensions Committee

Oral evidence: The future of Jobcentre Plus, HC 57-iii

Monday 10 October 2016

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Frank Field (Chair); Heidi Allen; Ms Karen Buck; Neil Coyle.

Questions 119-177

Witnesses

Damian Hinds MP, Minister for Employment, Department for Work and Pensions; Paul Williams, Labour Market Operations Director, Department for Work and Pensions; and Iain Walsh, Director Labour Market Strategy, Department for Work and Pensions.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [The Department for Work and Pensions \(FJP0087\)](#)
- [The Department for Work and Pensions \(FJP0075\)](#)
- [The Department for Work and Pensions \(FJP0064\)](#)



Examination of Witnesses

Damian Hinds MP, Minister for Employment, Department for Work and Pensions; Paul Williams, Labour Market Operations Director, Department for Work and Pensions; and Iain Walsh, Director Labour Market Strategy, Department for Work and Pensions.

Q119 **Chair:** Minister, might you introduce yourself and your team or they introduce themselves?

Damian Hinds: If we go individually, I am Damian Hinds. I am Minister for Employment.

Iain Walsh: I am Iain Walsh and I am the Labour Market Strategy Director in DWP.

Paul Williams: I am Paul Williams, Labour Market Operations Director for Jobcentre Plus and I major on resources, planning and the DWP home visiting service.

Q120 **Chair:** Damian, this will be one of three visits we have planned between now and Christmas. We hope the Christmas spirit of increasing intensity will apply to this Committee, so welcome.

Damian Hinds: Thank you.

Chair: Could I ask you to open up—and please bring in your colleagues as you wish—on what you see as the biggest challenges for Jobcentre Plus as the service changes?

Damian Hinds: Well, Chairman, as you know, we are on a journey of expanding what we do into new areas. We have an overall mission to make the labour market work in all its parts and to work well for everybody, sentiments that the Prime Minister has been emphasising recently. A big part of that is about moving from just helping people to get into work to being concerned about the sustainability of that employment and ultimately to progression, but that is not the only part of it. There are other aspects as well about making it easier for some groups to come into the labour market who have found it more difficult in the past.

Of course, alongside all this, and enabling it in part, is this enormous change of moving from the legacy benefit systems to Universal Credit. There is a wide number of things that we are doing and that we are doing more. Probably the biggest single shift is to focusing on people who are already in work of some sort, whether it is as an employee or as a self-employed person, and about the sustainability and the sustainment of that employment and ultimately about the progression.

Q121 **Chair:** How would you, Damian, counter the charge that some make that you will increasingly be bringing in people with specialisms but you are placing them in contracts that are generic, about the skills of the people



who will be offering those services?

Damian Hinds: You are talking about our staff, the suggestion that we are moving to a more specialist model?

Chair: Yes.

Damian Hinds: Chairman, the model that we are moving to—and we have done some of this movement already and there is more still to do—is a model that absolutely has the work coach at the centre of it. It is a work coach with more training and development behind them and accreditation of that role. They are generalists in the sense that they have a wide and mixed caseload, but they are supported by people with specialisations. The biggest group would be the disability employment advisers, whose own role is changing from what it was before of having their own dedicated caseloads to being more of a coach to the work coach around supporting people with disabilities into employment. There are other support functions as well, like work psychologists, and we are open to thinking about whether we need other specialisations, for example in self-employment, but those latter ones are open questions at the moment. Absolutely at the heart of this approach is what we call the work coach delivery model, which has a mixed caseload and then draws on the specialists in particular functions.

Q122 **Ms Karen Buck:** Pursuant to that, can I ask you a little bit about capacity within the service to meet the pattern of changing needs? Can you give us an idea of where the human resources have gone to over recent years and what that implies for caseload and where you see that going in the near future?

Damian Hinds: Sure. You have a number of different things going on. There is the overall change in the headcount. Then within that there is the FTE levels of staffing, but then within that you have a changing grade mix. You have a changing function of work coaches as the central customer-facing role. Then you have the support functions and so on that I am talking about.

In terms of the specific numbers of staff, if you add together work coaches on the current job description and assistant work coaches, which was a lower grade position, that number has come down overall from 17,750 in 2011-2012 to 13,230 right now. We are currently recruiting, though, for more work coaches.

Q123 **Ms Karen Buck:** Does that mirror the fall in caseload of people who are on JSA?

Damian Hinds: I was just coming on to that. No, the fall in the caseload, if you talk about people on JSA and, therefore, on the full conditionality system, has been faster. In fact, the ratio or the caseload of the number of claimants, number of people on JSA subject to conditionality, per work coach has come down very substantially. There is capacity from that point of view.



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It is also just worth mentioning in a little more detail a couple of the other effects that are going on. I mentioned the change in the grade mix. You are more likely more often to be seeing somebody at EO grade, in civil service parlance, rather than seeing somebody at AO grade part of the time previously. They are able to draw on the specialisation of the disability employment adviser but also the external provision, which there is much more of now and is much more readily accessible. The pure numbers alone do not tell the full story, but the capacity is there.

We also have the flexibility in future, of course. It is not an absolutely immutable model. The flexibility is there to make sure that we can adjust in order to be able to do these critical things that we know we have to do.

Q124 **Ms Karen Buck:** Accepting the point about case mix—and I understand that complicates it slightly—the average caseload has fallen, has it, for a work coach?

Damian Hinds: It has fallen, yes.

Q125 **Ms Karen Buck:** Taking that forward over each of the next two or three years, will that increase per job coach?

Damian Hinds: We are currently recruiting for work coaches. The background to all this is, of course, we—

Ms Karen Buck: But that is a slightly different point.

Damian Hinds: It is a different point, but we are doing more. It is not an entirely like-for-like comparison to talk about the number of claimants per work coach because we are going to be asking people to do more in Jobcentres to support people in work and to do more work in groups that are harder to reach and so on.

Q126 **Ms Karen Buck:** I completely accept that, but it would be helpful to know whether the Department is projecting forward what the caseload is going to be.

Damian Hinds: Well, we are projecting forward the resource, the number of people that we need to recruit, but that is to do additional things. We are obviously not doing that in the expectation of a particular number of people who are on JSA at one time because that is not the key sole driver of what we need in order to be able to do this work that we need to do.

Ms Karen Buck: I accept that, but I still—

Damian Hinds: In simple terms, the total number of households that come into scope, into orbit, if you like, of Jobcentre Plus and the Department for Work and Pensions under Universal Credit is considerably bigger than under the legacy benefit system.

Q127 **Ms Karen Buck:** I completely accept that, but despite that and allowing for the fact that you will be dealing with a number of different groups, in-work and JSA and so forth, you presumably must be modelling what the



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workload is going to be of your work coaches going forward.

Damian Hinds: Sorry, did you want to come in, Paul?

Paul Williams: Yes. We certainly are, but it is based on assumptions that we are making. On Jobseeker's Allowance we are pretty clear that going forward an average caseload size of somewhere between 90 and 120 is where we expect to be. On Universal Credit we do not have that degree of certainty yet. We are still going through test and learn and establishing what the correct sized caseload is.

Q128 **Ms Karen Buck:** Thank you. Are you, as an underpinning assumption of that, projecting an increase in JSA caseload over the course of the next, say, three years?

Damian Hinds: I am not making that projection.

Q129 **Chair:** But on that point, Damian Green has said how he sees Universal Credit rolling out or not rolling out, so shouldn't that make that calculation rather easy?

Damian Hinds: Chairman, which calculation?

Chair: The calculation about the progression, if we can call it that, of rolling out Universal Credit.

Damian Hinds: We do have a timeline for the rollout of Universal Credit and the rollout of the full service system. You will have seen those numbers in the recent written ministerial statement.

Chair: Which is putting it practically on hold.

Damian Hinds: The reason why I think it is perhaps a tiny bit more—I am not going to say complicated but it is a richer picture is because the system itself is becoming richer. I am not sure in the future it makes sense to speak in a like-for-like sense of, "In the past there were this many people per work coach; in the future there will be this many people". Under Universal Credit, although 7 million households in steady state will come into the scope of Universal Credit, some of them will have no conditionality applied to them whatsoever and will not need to visit Jobcentres. Others will be on a light touch regime or a much more intensive regime, and there will be others who are out of work and, in the traditional JSA sense, are unemployed customers who need all that extra focus to get into work. It is not quite as simple as being able to say in the past there were this many people to this many work coaches and in the future there will be this many.

Q130 **Chair:** When you gave Karen answers earlier, your model was taking into account this richer picture?

Damian Hinds: The answer I gave earlier about the ratio was taking us effectively to today where obviously there are some people who have moved on to Universal Credit, but it is a relatively small part of the total.



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Paul Williams: If I may as well, I guess we could make some macro assumptions, given forecasts and numbers of claimants and work coaches, about the size of the caseload, but for Universal Credit as we go through test and learn we are looking at what is reasonable for a work coach to do and the number of claimants that it is reasonable for a work coach to support given the very different caseload that they are dealing with. I think there will be an element of bottom-up learning, top-down business case parameters and hopefully we will fit in a good place.

Q131 **Ms Karen Buck:** You are planning to recruit an extra 3,000 staff; is that right?

Damian Hinds: Yes, 3,000 work coaches.

Ms Karen Buck: 3,000 work coaches, full-time equivalent?

Damian Hinds: Yes.

Paul Williams: In 2016-2017.

Ms Karen Buck: In 2016-2017?

Damian Hinds: Yes.

Q132 **Ms Karen Buck:** How do you know you need 3,000 then if you do not have a caseload?

Damian Hinds: We know there are a range of extra things we need to do. There is some flex, Ms Buck, in the future. To give one really important aspect to that, we have a large test, randomised control trial. I do not know whether you can call that a pilot or a test, but it is a big study going on at the moment of different approaches to in-work conditionality and whether a more intensive, more frequent contact or a slightly less frequent contact is the most beneficial. The results of that RCT trial will obviously have an effect on the resourcing and the way the whole system works in future, but if the answer is that it is sensible, helpful to the individual and value creative in an economic sense to do more, then we have the flexibility to work out how we do more.

Q133 **Ms Karen Buck:** Do you have the budget flexibility to take on more people if you need to?

Damian Hinds: We have a system across Government where we present, and other Government Departments present, the case for doing things that have costs attached to them, and where that is a sensible use of resourcing given other competing priorities, then it is on occasion possible to do it. There are plenty of examples of that in terms of what DWP does, including recently the frequency of seeing our client base.

Q134 **Neil Coyle:** How many of the proposed new work coaches will be retrained existing Jobcentre employees, do you estimate?

Damian Hinds: I think I am right in saying—I will be corrected by these gentlemen if I am wrong—that the 3,000 are new hires.



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Q135 **Chair:** So it is a gross increase, not a net growth?

Damian Hinds: Correct. I do not know if we will get a chance, Chairman, to come on to talk about professional development of our team. For the new work coaches—

Chair: I think Heidi is quite interested in that.

Damian Hinds: Okay. Well, I do not know if this is an appropriate time to go down this road—

Chair: We will touch on it.

Damian Hinds: —but for the new work coaches coming in, they will start on our new learning and development and accreditation programme, which will get them in their first year to a level 3 qualification, and they will then go on to work towards a level 4 qualification. For existing work coaches, they are obviously at a different stage of development already and we are currently working through the options for how to move to the level 4 qualification for those existing coaches. We are upskilling everybody. We are recruiting quite a lot of new people, but for the existing team base there is also this development and accreditation programme.

Q136 **Ms Karen Buck:** Are you making any assumptions about opening outside traditional office hours?

Chair: Are you making plans for a seven days a week service?

Damian Hinds: We have a thing called the employee deal, which you will be familiar with, and through that, through a new arrangement with staff, there is the flexibility to be able to open in the evenings and, indeed, on Saturdays in future to the extent that that is the sensible thing to do. Obviously, we are getting into a world of working with people already in work, so a natural question is: if you are working with people in work, how are you going to make sure you are available at times when those people are able to talk to you? I think it is important from that point of view to have the flexibility. There are other reasons to want to do that as well, but the employee deal gives us that flexibility. Exactly how that flexibility is used is for future determination.

Q137 **Neil Coyle:** Linked to that is in 2017 all the Jobcentre Plus office space contracts are coming up and things. How would co-location of services, maybe Jobcentres being in a library or council office, affect that availability or potential availability outside work hours for those who are in work?

Damian Hinds: The leases come up in 2018 on the bulk of the estate and negotiations over those are ongoing. It would not be appropriate for me to go into detail—I am sure, Mr Coyle, you are not trying to take me down this road—on individual locations, but you will know that we do think there is an important role for co-location, for joining up with other services, with local government and, indeed, with others. We do a whole



range of models of co-location, what we call inward and outward co-location, having organisations come into Jobcentres but also having Jobcentre staff go to third-party premises.

One of the models is working with and in local authorities and there are good examples of where that takes place. I think the Committee might have visited Flintshire Jobcentre, or perhaps not, but that is an example that springs to mind. All considerations, including access in its widest sense, have to be taken into consideration. That includes things like precisely where offices are located, how walk-in friendly they are, and so on.

Q138 Neil Coyle: Can I ask another follow-up about the 3,000 work coaches? You must have some estimate of what is a reasonable caseload for each of those workers. Is it that you just do not want to tell us how many people you expect to be on Universal Credit because former targets have been missed so disastrously?

Damian Hinds: Indeed not. In fact, I have told you how many people will be on Universal Credit: 7 million households in steady state and in broad terms—

Chair: We know will be; we have heard that before.

Damian Hinds: —by the maturity of the programme, Chairman. You have seen the rollout schedule. I think the rollout schedule is progressing at a sensible pace. It includes firebreak periods to be able to have contingency built into the plan, which I think is a very important thing. It is being rolled out now. There are new sites being rolled out all the time.

It is not just a question of how many people there will be on Universal Credit or how many people there will be on JSA. As it says in the terms of reference for this inquiry, as you set out yourselves, there are a range of things that the Department is seeking to do, including working more with people in work, working more with the self-employed, with Jobcentre Plus in schools trying to smooth the transition from school to work. We have the youth obligation. We have more frequent attendance in the early part of claims. There are quite a number of different things going on. It is not just as simple as the total number of people who will be coming through the door or the total number of people who will be on a benefit. I repeat, as I said to Ms Buck earlier, it is the case that if you take the ratio of work coaches to claimants, that ratio has improved—not just a little bit but markedly—as the numbers of people unemployed has come down.

Iain Walsh: Can I add a couple of things on that? One of the questions on resourcing will be how many people are in what we might term full conditionality or the equivalent of JSA. Based on the rollout of Universal Credit, we do have assumptions about what that might mean about the increase in the number of people being subject to that regime. They fit into two or three different categories. For example, there are people who are partners of existing claimants who under the current system would



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not be subject to conditionality but under Universal Credit would be. Then there is another category of people who are, say, claiming housing benefit or tax credits and when Universal Credit comes in if they choose to claim Universal Credit will be subject to a regime that they are not at present. Then there is a third category of people, which are those who are waiting on work capability assessment, who will have a different regime under Universal Credit. In absolute numbers terms, we do have working assumptions about what that will mean about the increase in the number of people having a JSA-type claim under Universal Credit.

Q139 Chair: Does this formula, Iain, take into account and are you taking into account what we expect to be an increasing number of claimants whose needs are complex?

Iain Walsh: It takes into account a number of things. One is the numbers. Secondly, there are questions about what the right amount of contact is with those individuals compared to the contact under JSA. Quite a lot of that we will have to find out from experience. To give you an example, if you are seeing at present one individual in a household but under Universal Credit you might be seeing both adults in a household, does that mean you should spend twice as long with them or one and a half times as long, and so on? Some of that we will have to test and learn from experience and work out some of—

Q140 Neil Coyle: But that sounds like it is linked to the conditionality and not to the Chair's point, which is about the complexity of the needs of the individual. That level of attendance is linked to the conditions on the individual or household. That is not reflecting the number of people with complex needs who will be coming in.

Damian Hinds: There is absolutely a recognition about complexity of needs and the role that mental health plays, which is a large part of caseload. It is a large part of ESA caseload and it is also a large part of JSA caseload. Today, on World Mental Health Day, it is an appropriate time to recognise that mental health issues and challenges exist right throughout society. I think all public bodies have got better but need to still get better at recognising that and acknowledging the ways in which we need to reflect and act. Jobcentres absolutely get that.

I mentioned earlier the changing role of the disability employment advisers, the DEAs. We are also recruiting more of them and part of that is a particular focus on mental health. You will know we also have the Work and Health Unit working across Government with resourcing, of which quite a substantial proportion is earmarked for mental health-related programmes. There is a recognition across the piece that depression and anxiety and so on are very prevalent through the client group who we are dealing with and, indeed, more broadly in society.

Q141 Heidi Allen: Apologies I was late, first and foremost. Some of these questions are probably going to overlap a little bit with what is coming later, so forgive me but it feels like the right time to ask.



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We are talking about caseload and amount of work for work coaches. A couple of points: given that you have just mentioned—and it is a question we will come on to later—the disability employment advisers, surely then if you are considering the numbers of those that you are going to need, because that is the more complex area, does that mean you have thought about your regular work coaches? Would you have specialists? Are you expecting your work coaches to be briefed in all skills and all knowledge areas? That is the bit that makes me most nervous. I think the culture of transformation required in Jobcentres is unprecedented. Have you considered having specialist work coaches or are they going to be jacks of all trades? Have you also factored in—given that we do not know what it looks like—what will come out of the Green Paper on disability, the work and health programme, in terms of what will then be required for jobseekers, people with disabilities? I have also had a little random thought: have you thought about using Skype and technology rather than out of hours necessarily to help claimants access Jobcentre staff?

Damian Hinds: Gosh, let me deal with those in reverse order. On Skype, we are open to any channel, whatever is the most effective channel for communicating with the client. Already Jobcentres communicate with clients in ways that 20 years ago, 10 years ago, you would not have thought was going to happen. Skype or other forms of VoIP are available if that is an appropriate way to do it and there is no reason to count that out. I think it is also worth saying that, of course, there is still something very important about face-to-face contact and no technology ever replaces humanity.

In terms of the Work and Health Green Paper, yes, of course, this is a very critical area and we have to be ready to be flexible and to adjust and so on, depending on what comes from that, as indeed is the case in other aspects of what the Department does. You have to be able to adjust and amend your approach.

In the first question you asked about the role of work coaches. My general observation is that in all organisations, private sector, public sector, you name it, there is always going to be a debate about whether your frontline staff should be specialists in one area or they should be generalists able to cover a range of areas, just as there is always debate about centralisation or devolution and localisation. There is no perfect answer and whichever thing you do, there is always an argument against it.

The approach that we are taking with work coaches is that they should have a mixed caseload. Here is one of the key advantages. It means that as somebody changes between benefits, they stick with the same work coach. It also means that through the lifetime of that claimant it is the one work coach who is their contact who can get to know them better, can help in terms of referring them on to third-party services, and so on.



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By the way, in terms of job content and so on, there are also good HR reasons to have a broader view as an employee.

We also recognise that it is not necessarily realistic to try to make every single one of what is a very large number of work coaches expert in every single aspect, so we have specialist functions for them to draw upon, the largest being the disability employment advisers of whom we are recruiting another 300. That will take our complement up from I think 209 to 509, so it is a big increase. There are also the work psychologists, of whom there are around 50, I believe, employed at district level who will each support a number of different Jobcentres at the highest level. We have the chief psychologist who will help to inform training programmes and so on that run through those specialist functions but also to frontline work coaches.

Where it is necessary, where it is sensible to have particular specialist staff, we are open to that. For example, it is an open question whether on self-employment, which involves aspects of business planning and marketing plans and all the rest of it, it is appropriate to have some form of specialisation either in addition to core business or for a subset of work coaches or work coaches specialising in only that. We are open-minded on that question at the moment. We are at a relatively early stage of in-work with Universal Credit and a relatively early stage, therefore, also with self-employment and we are seeking to learn. We have this test and learn approach, which I think is the right one. I think the Chair on another occasion noted that there is no other country in the world that you can go to and say, "How do you do in-work progression?" because we are trailblazing as a country. We have to work it out as we go along. If that ends up involving having some form of specialisation, then we can do that and we can adjust.

I should also say that the other set of specialists—and this goes across mental health issues that we were talking about, different types of employment and many other things—is external specialists. We have the flexible support fund, which gives quite broad ability for local Jobcentres to work out where their gaps are in terms of provision that they need and a thing called the district provision tool, which puts on the desktop of the work coach the full visibility of what is available in the area: what are the ESOL courses; what are the confidence-building sessions; what is the self-employment support; what are the mental health groups. In many cases, in the Jobcentre we will have, for example, somebody from Mind come in and do sessions. That is a very common thing to happen. There will also be specialists from other parts of Government who will be there sometimes. The Citizens Advice Bureau will sometimes be on site and so on.

Q142 Chair: Will they be paid for those sessions, Minister?

Damian Hinds: Generally speaking—I will be corrected from either side if I am wrong—my expectation would be there may be some voluntary



activity but in the main these are contracts that they would be engaged on.

Chair: So Mind will win contracts?

Damian Hinds: I do not want to pretend that I have the details of that arrangement in front of me but we could follow up separately.

Chair: All right. I am really anxious to move on.

Q143 **Neil Coyle:** What are the most important attributes that work coaches must have if they are to be successful? How do successful work coaches advance their own careers?

Damian Hinds: Mr Coyle, my experience of work coaches, and I have only been in this job three months, I think now, but I have had the opportunity—

Heidi Allen: Has there been a work coach helping you?

Chair: And what is the fee?

Damian Hinds: —to visit a few Jobcentres and meet quite a few work coaches and I have to say I hope every MP either has had or will have that opportunity because it is a very positive experience. I think the work, the role that our work coaches do is amazing. They can turn people's lives round, help them in all sorts of ways to make really big differences for their lives and the lives of their families, and that is a great thing. I think the single most important attribute—I am not an HR person talking here, I am not suggesting anything I say should appear on any competency-based recruitment profiling thing—is to be somebody who gets that satisfaction, gets that buzz, is motivated by helping somebody turn their life around. That is absolutely an attribute that you find in the work coaches I have met.

Of course there are technical skills that go with that. We have quite an extensive training programme. I sat in on one day of the training programme for new work coaches over the summer and it was a great experience to be with some of them when they were doing that. I think that motivation is the most important thing.

Paul Williams: Can I add that in our job advert for work coaches we talk about looking for people who can provide excellent customer service, can demonstrate good communication skills, a positive attitude to change and, as the Minister said, show examples of delivering a really good service to customers. We have taken the opportunity in our vacancy advert, and you asked about the 3,000, to highlight—I will pick one out—develop the skills and activities they need to look for and obtain work in a digital employment. We have tried to use the latest recruitment exercise to focus on the skills we need going forward.

Mr Coyle, you asked about some numbers earlier and the proportion of internal and external candidates who have made it through the EO



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progression, and I have the numbers here. The internal one is 38%, 1,687; external 1,361; external other Government Departments 498; other parts of the Department for Work and Pensions 945. If you are quick enough with your arithmetic, that is a lot more than 3,000.

Q144 **Chair:** But as I am not, what proportion of new blood is coming into the Department from those figures?

Paul Williams: A very pleasing proportion, Chair.

Chair: I know, but the actual number I want, being slow.

Paul Williams: The actual number of my 12,000 work coaches is 1,361 from external. Ms Buck mentioned planning assumptions earlier. Of course we have planning assumptions and forecasts about the number of people we need. That is why I was given authority to recruit 3,000 people last year and hopefully the same again in the year to come as UC builds. Those assumptions are there. When I described earlier the consideration we are giving to size of caseload, what I meant to really get over to the Committee was we are not sure yet what is a sensible number of UC claimants that we would expect a work coach to deal with. It would be straight forward for us to say 90 to 120—that is the JSA model—but we know that that is probably not the case. There is an element of working up from the bottom to test and learn and find out what is that best number.

Q145 **Neil Coyle:** Where does a work coach go next? What is their next step? If you have not visited London Bridge yet, it is meant to be an excellent—

Damian Hinds: Mr Coyle, I can reassure you that, like many others, I have visited London Bridge and others.

Neil Coyle: Where does a work coach go next and how are employers involved in the—you talk about providing a good service to customers but customers are being paid to attend, there is usually a benefit claimed, so where do employers go in all this?

Damian Hinds: Those are two really important but quite distinct questions. Can I defer to Paul in terms of career progression but then may I pick up employers?

Paul Williams: In career progression, the natural move is to a higher executive officer, a work coach team leader, at a higher rate of pay. Currently, at the same time as we are bringing in new work coaches, we are also promoting higher executive officers because we will need more to manage the work coaches. We have looked at the ratio of work coach managers to work coaches and, given the extent of the ask of work coaches next year, we have reduced that from one in 12, which was the position in 2015-16, to one in nine. We are now asking a work coach manager, an HEO, to coach, mentor and support nine work coaches rather than 12 previously. We hope that that will be an important enabler



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to improve delivering Universal Credit and delivering the improvements we want to see.

Damian Hinds: On employers, you say our customer is the claimant, or perhaps that is traditionally how we would have seen it. We have two customers, and you can use the terminology any way you like. You can say we have clients and we have customers, we have business-to-business customers and we have consumer customers—however you want to portray it.

Chair: You have taxpayers as well.

Damian Hinds: Shareholder, Chairman, however one wants to use the terminology. We are in a position between people who have vacancies and people who have skills and talent to fill those vacancies, and we need to make sure that we get that balance right. I am not going to pretend that everything is always perfect and we can always do better, but we have a twin-track approach. At a national level with big employers and also to work on some of our programmes where we are trying to help harder or premium-to-place people get into employment, we have an account management system with about 100 people working centrally across those mostly large companies.

Then at a local level every Jobcentre will have somebody who is an external relations lead who will be responsible for being in touch with the local employment market, individual local firms. They get supported, increasingly, by having labour market intel given to them and they should be on the hunt as well for where the emerging opportunities are. Part of their role is to sell the Jobcentre to employers to make sure that when vacancies come up they are made available to our people. It is also critical that we understand what it is they are looking for and we try to make sure that we facilitate the best possible match.

On top of that there are these premium-to-place groups and we want to make sure that as many companies as possible are engaged in those so that, for example, people leaving the criminal justice system or leaving the care system or people with severe disabilities have the chances that they should have to be able to get into and progress in the labour market.

In the future the big new thing with employers, and this is a theme that runs through everything, is as we move from the out-of-work to in-work focus to a broader, richer picture—out-of-work to in-work is still an absolutely critical stage—there is also sustainment and progression. There is a lot of new things to think about. There is already some work that goes on in Jobcentres between work coaches and people already in work and part of the account management, account handling process is about checking how satisfied employers are with our service to them and all of that. But, nevertheless, we are moving to a new level and we are, candidly, at a relatively early stage of learning and developing what our approach should be.



Q146 Heidi Allen: On that last point, early stage is fine but the heart of Universal Credit is getting people up and through and onwards and on to better wages; it is not just more hours. I find it a little bit worrying that you are describing it as an early stage, because Universal Credit is not just a benefit replacement system. The whole point of it working is that it is getting people on to higher wages, helping with the productivity issues in this country. What are the plans to upskill work coaches, upskill whoever these job account managers are in each Jobcentre? For me, it sounds like more work needs to be done there.

Damian Hinds: I think you should worry if I had come in and said we know exactly what to do because, as your Committee has noted, there is nowhere else in the world to go and look at and say, "This is what they do and it works and this is what they do over here and it doesn't work". One could just come up with a plan and say, "This is what we think will work" but that is not the way DWP does it. It is the very robust process of test and learn, of being able to try things out differently in some local areas. We have got this very largescale, 15,000 people, randomised control trial test going on. We have run a number of pilots or UKCES have run a number of pilots with us on in-work progression. There is some other work going on as well. There are lots of things to look at.

It is absolutely right that UC and work progression is at the heart of it and I hope the Committee will have seen—I am sure you will have—the opening up work ads that I think encapsulate that well. There are a number of different elements to that, of course. One is the removal of the 16, 24 and 30 hour cliff edge points in the previous benefit system. There is the additional support that the Government are providing: an extra £1 billion on childcare between the 30 hours offer for working parents of three and four year-olds, tax-free childcare coming in and the increase within Universal Credit from 70% reimbursement up to 85%, which will benefit for the first time a lot of parents on quite low numbers of hours of work. It is a way back into the workplace. There are many strands to how Universal Credit and everything that is built around it and with it goes to support that.

That is probably enough on that response just now but you may want to develop it further.

Q147 Heidi Allen: I have delivered big cultural change in big organisations and personally I do not think it is enough to say, "It has not been done elsewhere before so we don't quite know how we are going to do it". That really worries me but maybe that is just me being overly paranoid.

Damian Hinds: Perhaps rather one would call it iterative development. You do things and you are willing to be flexible and adjust and learn from what happens. This test and learn approach is at the heart of Universal Credit development, both the system itself but also all the systems and processes that go around it. To give an example, we are running an in-work randomised control trial with 15,000 people in three groups: 5,000 of those people will be on a fortnightly cycle, 5,000 on a eight-weekly



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cycle and 5,000 on what we call the light touch approach. It is such a large sample and that gives you some ability to subsegment, to look at what different things work better for different groups of people. But rather than just saying, "We think the approach is to do X", we are taking an approach that tries a couple of different things in order to assess which has the most beneficial outcome for the individual.

Q148 Heidi Allen: In that case, rather than having a plan already designed and test and learn, presumably you have metrics you are going to be measuring for what work coaches achieve and measuring increases in salaries of clients, increasing hours. What metrics are you wrapping around it to test which model works?

Damian Hinds: With RTI, real time information, from HMRC it is possible now and in the future to do things, to measure things in ways that it would not have been in the past. In broad terms, there are three key areas or metrics but in each of these there is a question about what is exactly the most accurate, useful precise metric to use. The three areas are how quickly you get into work, your sustainment in work and then your progression. RTI facilitates that in a way that in the past would not have been possible. What we are looking to achieve with Universal Credit—although you have to try to isolate the effect of the benefit from the overall health of the economy, from various other things, and it is not always possible to do that with total precision—is to help facilitate more sustained, higher-paying work. The whole idea is to help people through the entirety of how the system works to be in work for longer and to develop their careers. As the phrase on the wall at London Bridge, and elsewhere, says, "A job, a better job, a career". That is what Universal Credit is about.

Paul Williams: Through Universal Credit as well we will be measuring "into employment" as opposed to "offer", which is a really important change.

Can I come back, Minister, on the culture change point? We know cultural change takes a long time. It helps if you start early and Jobcentre Plus began its UC journey some time ago. We introduced the claimant commitment for JSA claimants back in, I think it was, April 2014 and then put Wi-Fi in all Jobcentres from October 2014. Now we are talking about introducing the work coach delivery model, which is personalisation, same claimant, same work coach—you stick with them. There is a challenge but within DWP the senior team, our executive team, has been pushing for a number of years now something called the DWP story, which is about the Department's vision for 2020 and going out to senior leaders, the top 550 leaders, and talking to our people about those changes. The hard yards are being put in and we are using our staff engagement in those as a measure to gauge our progress in that respect.

Q149 Neil Coyle: You say test and learn and I hear trial and error. One of the challenges, certainly in the summer, has been around arrears, people on housing benefit having particular problems. In your opinion, what have



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been the errors? What has not worked to date and how have things been improved?

Damian Hinds: We do say test and learn. It is about being open to doing things differently. In terms of payment of housing benefit and housing support, one of the things I did not mention in the list earlier in helping people into a job, a better job, a career is making the transition from being out of work to in work as smooth as possible. If you are in work, in the main people manage their own finances and there are some challenges to that, it is not straight forward, but they receive their money and they will pay their bills, including their rent. Universal Credit seeks to replicate that. But there is provision—and I look to these gentlemen for detail—for people who need extra help in budgeting and in even more difficult or challenging cases for whom direct provision needs to be made.

Chair: Could we have a note on that, because we have quite a lot to ask you still, Damian?

Q150 **Heidi Allen:** I want to talk more about third sector providers, such as Mind that we have already talked about, but am I allowed one sneaky little question, just to go back? You have described real time information, which you are absolutely right, connected to HMRC, brilliant; it is the modern world. One question that I still did not get the answer to was: how are you going to link that back to individual work coaches to know who was successful at getting people through and progressing?

Damian Hinds: I totally get where you are going to. Our approach is that right now there are not targets for individual work coaches, and that is absolutely deliberate. The work coaches are targeted on giving the best possible service to their client base, to giving good quality time to everybody they see, including those who are very far away from the labour market and need extra help and so on. In the future, it is possible to do more in terms of—

Q151 **Heidi Allen:** I do not mean targets insofar as, “Are you getting through the workload?” It is more learning which work coaches have nailed it, which process works to get people—

Damian Hinds: I get that. The short answer is we are open to how we think about that. At the moment, the measurement of these things goes essentially to the branch manager level, and of course the branch managers know their staff, know their teams and have a performance appraisal system they will run through with their individual work coaches. But on all these questions we are open minded about what in future it might be sensible to do as the system further develops and as there is more data, because it is still relatively early days on this.

Iain Walsh: Can I add to that very briefly? The RTI enables us to track what proportion of people are going to work at what speed, once they are in work is that being sustained and, the third element of progression, are earnings increasing. Right at the moment for the small proportion of people on Universal Credit, at an overall level we are measuring speed of



moving to work and sustainment within work. At the moment, we do not consciously have a measure for progression and the reason for that is to preserve the integrity of this large trial that we are running; we do not want to incentivise, if I might put it that way, activity elsewhere to taint it. But very much once we have done the trial we will want to have metrics on speed into work, retention and progression and RTI will enable us to do that. There is always wrinkles. For example, self-employment is hard to track. Having this data is going to really help with test and learn because we should be able to link things more swiftly and more accurately between what we are doing and what the outcomes are.

Q152 Heidi Allen: Just turning to third parties, such as Mind for example, as a Committee we discovered when we looked at the success of the work programme, without a doubt the key to helping people further away from the job market—whether it is disability, mental health issues, just being out of work for a long time, skill levels—was absolutely hands down the knowledge and expertise of third-party organisations. A difficulty we found time and time again is that people were left kicking around the Jobcentre system for two years before they finally got sent off to a third-party provider who knew how to help them. Talk us through how you envisage those third-party providers—we will not hold you to whether you are going to be paying for them or not—in general terms linking with the Jobcentre, the staff, and how easily will their knowledge and expertise be accessible to the work coaches and to the clients that they are serving?

Damian Hinds: Possibly the best way for me to illustrate that would be to take a particular Jobcentre, Thornton Heath, where I was a few weeks ago. While I was there sitting in on work coach interviews with clients, people were referred to a few different things locally. There is this thing called the district provision tool that comes up on your screen at your desk as the screen that you share between the work coach and the client, and you can see that, for example, a CV building course is available externally. There might also be one internally, depending on the particular Jobcentre, how big it is and what the demand is and all sorts of things. There might be something about confidence building, members of certain groups who are starting to think about getting into the labour force, maybe even for the first time, and that is a completely different type of approach required.

Meanwhile, while these interviews are going on, there is somebody from Mind, as it happens, in a room upstairs in the Jobcentre. I can't remember the frequency with which that person comes into that particular Jobcentre but it is a regular thing like half a day a week or a day a week or something, I don't remember precisely. He or she would have particular timeslots booked in for clients coming to the Jobcentre to go and see them to talk about mental health issues. In the particular case of this individual from Mind, it was somebody who themselves had a history of mental health challenges and had got back into work and so was able to talk very directly, and I think helpfully, to clients about it.



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One should not think of third-party involvement as being like a programme that happens X amount of time down the line. Obviously specific programmes also exist, but third-party involvement should be happening potentially right from the start. National Careers Service I think is in 94% of Jobcentres. We work with schools, so potentially we are working with somebody even before they have left school, sometimes in partnership with employers.

Q153 Chair: Given the proportion of people where mental health is a barrier to work, Damian, I thought going to an office and they may be there half a day a week or one day a week—

Damian Hinds: I should not have given that impression, if I did.

Chair: Are you open as time goes on, as the demand is shown, to changing the relative importance of the specialisms within the office?

Damian Hinds: Without doubt, and that has changed already. I did not mean to suggest that there was a sort of chance of you might turn up and a certain person might be there or might not. In arranging when they were going to come into the Jobcentre, you would try to match it up to when other provision was going to be happening. As caseloads change and as the prevalence of particular conditions change, of course it is important to reflect that in what we do and who we work with.

Q154 Heidi Allen: Like all these things in life, as you said, there is no perfect model that fits everything. Every location is different; every person needs something different. Mandating is always the last thing you want to do but some Jobcentres are clearly going to be better at this than others in terms of using the knowledge and the expertise of third-party organisations. Is there any way you can see of making sure that all Jobcentres consider it; are they checking they have the right range of third-party providers?

Damian Hinds: There is a thing I think is called the Jobcentre Operating Model, the JOM. Basically you have a core provision template around which you can add flexibility, which is a model that is not uncommon in the private sector in multi-site businesses and other types of organisations, and I think it makes sense. There are some things that we know, partly because of the tests and pilots that Iain was talking about. The rigour with which the DWP goes about trialling things, testing them, confirming results, is very strong indeed. Once you have put all that effort into discovering something, you are not just going to stand back and say, "I am indifferent about whether it happens or not". Of course you are going to expect to see those things happening as part of a standard offer in every site. On top of that, you entrust your local management and your local individual customer-facing staff, work coaches in our case, to know their caseload, their client base, their local area, what is available, and to be able to adjust.

With the particular example of mental health charities, it is very widespread to work with mental health charities but it is not necessarily



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the case that there is one particular mental health charity that would have the capability in every single region, every single location in which the Jobcentre operates, to have personal people available to do this thing. That is another reason why having some flexibility helps.

Q155 Chair: We have found that schools that are really successful partner for a time schools that are struggling. Have you thought of that for DWP offices?

Damian Hinds: I am sure there is. I am going to defer to Paul.

Paul Williams: I think the initiative to put, by March 2017, something like 100 work coaches in schools in England—

Q156 Chair: No, the model is that there are very successful schools, near at hand you have schools that are stumbling, and you partner the two. The recovery process, certainly in Wirral and beyond, has been remarkable. It follows directly on Heidi's question: how do we spread success?

Paul Williams: Yes, Chair, and we have done a lot of that informally. I think the link with schools now through the schools initiative will help.

Q157 Chair: I was not really asking about schools. I am asking specifically about whether in fact one of the pleasures of succeeding as an office is that you will adopt and work alongside, for a period of time, one that is not performing in any way as well as you are. That was the proposal.

Paul Williams: We certainly encourage and give time off to people to support schools.

Chair: No, that is not the point. Damian.

Damian Hinds: We are open to that. Chairman, there is an important difference between the network of Jobcentres and schools and that is that there is an organogram for the entire Jobcentre Plus organisation. Branches have districts and there is a management structure that goes all the way up. A district manager is there partly to make sure that within their district the different strengths and so on of different individuals, of different locations is used for the good of all. That is an important distinction. You can have all sorts of peer-to-peer support happening at different levels in the organisation. I shall not use the word organogram again during this session.

Q158 Chair: If you have any further thoughts on it you might give us a note.

Iain Walsh: You could possibly use the analogy about dropping in headmasters, for example. If you had a district manager who was very good in one place and another area was not working quite so well, you would be perfectly able, within the Jobcentre Plus network, to move a leader into another area to turn things around. That is just one example.

Chair: Could, but do they? We will leave that for the note.



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Paul Williams: I am sorry, Chair, I missed the point, but sharing good practice and moving capable people around is all part of the normal large organisation HR that you would expect to see.

Q159 **Ms Karen Buck:** To risk confusing everybody still further, I am sticking with the school point. In the school improvement programme, particularly in the London Challenge, one of the things that was most successful was developing a model called Families of Schools.

Damian Hinds: Yes, I am very familiar with it.

Ms Karen Buck: If you remember, it looked at clusters of data to compare like with like, rather than what tended to happen, which is that you compared two schools next to each other, assuming geographical proximity meant common characteristics. I think you do need probably to build a little bit on that because what we know from patterns of employment, but also patterns of disability and mental health, is that it can look superficially similar and actually be quite fundamentally different. We need to be trying to understand what is going on beneath the surface.

I was going to ask you one or two more questions about mental health but, before I do, can I go back, at the risk of being irritating, to this issue of projecting staff numbers? What I think I have understood you to say is that there is going to be 3,000 additional work coaches recruited now and then another 3,000.

Damian Hinds: No. What we have said is that there are 3,000 work coaches being recruited and we are open to what happens in future years. There are variables that go behind that.

Q160 **Ms Karen Buck:** You are not assuming, underpinning that, any increase in JSA caseload?

Damian Hinds: I am not making a prediction of an increased JSA caseload.

Q161 **Ms Karen Buck:** Your work coach projection does not factor in any change in JSA caseload and you do not know what your Universal Credit caseload is going to be because you have not done your—

Damian Hinds: I do not want to sound like I am trying to confuse the issue, because I am genuinely not, but there is a lot of different things going on at the same time. One of them is that, of course, with the rollout of Universal Credit you get people on JSA equivalent Universal Credit in place of people being on JSA. It is not quite as simple as just saying what—

Q162 **Ms Karen Buck:** Could you do us a note?

Damian Hinds: If I know what the question is, I will do my best.

Ms Karen Buck: My question is: if you have made a firm assumption about the numbers that you are recruiting now, with the option of



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possibly recruiting more work coaches, on what basis have you reached that number, broken down by JSA, if there is any, or Universal Credit in work progression? I think we need to have some sense of understanding of how you reach that.

Damian Hinds: We will do you the note.

Q163 **Ms Karen Buck:** It seems to me, from everything that you have said—it is hard to predict and I accept that—that that figure does not seem to be based on anything specific. I know you are going to argue with that, but I can't tell what the figures are.

Paul Williams: The Department's forecasts are taken from OBR forecasts.

Ms Karen Buck: But that includes an increase in JSA.

Paul Williams: If OBR is forecasting an increase in JSA—

Ms Karen Buck: But it does, that is my point.

Damian Hinds: There are inevitably working assumptions about every variable in the OBR forecasts.

Q164 **Ms Karen Buck:** But I have never known anybody deciding to recruit 3,000 staff without knowing what assumptions that is based on.

Damian Hinds: I suppose what I am trying to drive at is that the reason for increasing the number of people, but also upskilling and accrediting and bolstering the support functions that are also increasing, and also continuing to drive forward a programme of third-party specialised support, is there is no linear relationship between the increase in human resourcing that we are talking about and some sort of hidden projection of something to do with the number of people on JSA, absolutely not. There are a number of different things that we are doing more of or just doing for the first time, which were listed in the terms of reference for this inquiry. The assessment of how many people are required is based on all of those variables taken together.

Ms Karen Buck: Treasury always likes to give lots of money to people to do nice things.

Paul Williams: As you would expect, we have a staffing basis scheme, which is based on forecast volumes and time taken to do a certain activity. We work that through and that gives us an estimate of the number of people that we need each year. We have that checked out by the work study team and so on, and it follows best practice across the civil service. What we have been doing over the past year is trying to incorporate Universal Credit volumes and unit times, as we develop them, into that staffing model. We believe that we have got that fairly accurate for 2017-18, for the year to come, and we have been working on those assumptions for 2016-17. For instance, I have that authority to recruit the 3,000. I am hoping—it is not agreed yet—that there will be similar



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authority for 2017-18, but the model is still working through and still to be tested.

Q165 **Ms Karen Buck:** It would very helpful to have a note.

Paul Williams: We are happy to do that, but I would not want the Committee to think that we do not have a staffing basis model that tells us how many people we need to do certain functions, because we do.

Iain Walsh: Perhaps if I could add one thing. We will do a note because it is complicated but, as I mentioned earlier in a previous answer, we are expecting the caseload to go up because there is a variety of people at the moment on tax credits or partners who are not on that type of regime and we expect them to come in. The precise numbers are unclear. Just as the Minister said, we will have to test and learn how we engage with them. It is quite a complex picture and it is important we do the note, but I wanted to say that we would expect the number of people to go up for that reason, over and above what the OBR might be forecasting for economic reasons.

Q166 **Ms Karen Buck:** A couple of other questions on mental health, if I might. We heard announced last week—and this is very welcome news—an expectation that there would be a reduction in the number of repeat assessments for ESA claimants with serious conditions. Have you done a projection of that?

Damian Hinds: The Work and Health Green Paper, which will be out soon, will include this subject and there will be consultation on exactly how it is implemented. If your question is how the WCA workload interacts with JCP staff numbers, I would have to defer to my colleagues.

Paul Williams: At the moment I am not aware of any forecast that impacts on JCP resource. There will be forecasts that have been made but insofar as we are discussing the future of Jobcentre Plus, any impact on us, I am not aware of any.

Q167 **Ms Karen Buck:** Do you have any assumptions of the numbers of JSA and UC claimants with mental health conditions?

Damian Hinds: There have been surveys conducted. Among ESA claimants we believe close to half, 49%, have a mental health or behavioural disorder as their primary condition. Among the JSA population, I believe from a DWP report in 2012 a little under a quarter, 23%, have a mental health condition. That is survey based, of course, so it is not necessarily—

Q168 **Ms Karen Buck:** I think the adult psychiatric morbidity survey that has just come out has lifted that to just under two-thirds of all ESA claimants having a mental health condition, whether it is primary or whether it is—

Damian Hinds: I was talking about their primary condition.

Ms Karen Buck: No, I appreciate that. But it is still a condition, whether



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it is a primary condition or not. How do those figures inform the various elements of specialist service for mental health provision in your projections?

Damian Hinds: They absolutely have to. Within mental health, there is also the question of what are the most prevalent conditions, and we know that depression, stress and anxiety are the most common. Of course it is absolutely critical that provision reflects that.

Q169 Ms Karen Buck: Working with the mental health charities, and with mental health specialists generally, is there any sense that a mental health service that is provided within Jobcentre Plus is or is not an appropriate place for that service to be offered? I would think, and on the basis of some of the people I work with, that there is always a difficulty if you are combining what is a mandating, in some cases sanctioning, regime in one part of the same service that you are then seeking to provide therapeutic provision for.

Damian Hinds: I get that sensitivity absolutely. Clearly there are some things that it is appropriate to do and some things that it is not appropriate to do in a Jobcentre location. I am not aware of having been told or there having been a suggestion that there is a difficulty with the sorts of things that we have been talking about to an extent today that take place in Jobcentres, such as having somebody from a mental health charity having discussion sessions with people. They are behind closed doors in the case that I saw. Maybe there are other times when you can do that on a more open basis or a group basis, I don't know.

Paul Williams: I understand the point absolutely, because we are not mental health professionals. We can only go so far, but our work coaches do need to be able to understand issues, particularly in relation to work, and recognise characteristics and they do need to be able to signpost to appropriate help very quickly. To Ms Allen's point about Jobcentre Plus, we engage with a myriad of local partners. We have a district provision tool. We are quite proud of what we do, but can we do better? Almost certainly, yes. Where should we do better with people with health issues? As UC develops, that is where Jobcentre Plus work coaches need to strengthen. Back to the point about schools, if we can put a little bit of structure and a framework around what we are expecting Jobcentres to provide in that regard, that will strengthen. I think we have some opportunities with the Green Paper and the summer announcements to be able to do that.

Q170 Ms Karen Buck: A last question, which is a version of the same thing: given the nature of many of the mental health conditions that we are talking about, and the most common ones of anxiety, depression and stress, how are you going to make sure that you do not apply in-work conditionality to a group of people for whom stability is probably an integral part of their success in the workplace, and indeed mental health recovery, by getting people into work and then seeking to effectively destabilise that by a constant check on progress?



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Damian Hinds: The way that work coaches operate is that there has to be some degree of discretion and there has to be a recognition in in-work conditionality that not every individual is the same. This does not only apply to people with mental health conditions. It would apply to mothers with children, for example, about how much it is reasonable for somebody to work and so on. I do not have an all-encompassing answer for you to what is quite an open question: how do you stop something happening? But our work coaches all will have gone through a degree of mental health awareness training and they will have a mixed caseload and they will need to apply judgment in cases.

Paul Williams: We absolutely get the point. If a person has had a serious head injury and suffers from fatigue or concentration issues but because work is good and they are working a number of hours, then it is not sensible or reasonable to press that individual to work more. It might destabilise them. My ambition is that work coaches would not do that; they would understand the position and would be sensitive enough to do the right thing for the customer. The trick will be making that happen everywhere.

Q171 **Ms Karen Buck:** I take that in the spirit in which it was intended, but then exactly the same thing was said about work capability assessment, exactly the same thing, and that is what we have to be so careful of. That had a perfectly noble aim, not to leave people long-term unemployed if they were unwell, and it went spectacularly wrong because other pressures came to bear. I think that is a genuine worry.

Chair: We will leave that lesson with you, if we may.

Q172 **Neil Coyle:** Speaking of other pressures, I need to get to the PLP to find out the deselection timetable. I might need one of these work coaches shortly.

Paul, you were talking about doing better for people, specifically people with health conditions. Is part of that doing better the new health budgets and when do you expect Jobcentres to be able to spend on health budgets?

Paul Williams: Iain may know the timetable in terms of announcements, but I know that some of that money is predicated for next year 2017-18 and if there are changes to the flexible support fund I would expect them to apply then. We are already planning those announcements now, as you would expect.

Q173 **Neil Coyle:** So 2017-18, but you see this as part of the flexible support fund rather than additional spending?

Paul Williams: I mentioned that because that is just the bit that is within my remit and affecting me most directly, so you would expect us to be thinking and planning about how we engage with partners to make the best use of that.



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Iain Walsh: There is a variety of pots of money for health and disability spend. Some that has come in specifically for 2017-18 is the money set aside to help people on ESA who have been affected by the change to the work-related activity component. The second half of 2017-18 is when we expect to see the start of the work and health programme, so that will be coming in then. Then there is a number of trials that have been set up as part of the Joint Work and Health Unit. Going back to something the Minister said earlier, in the whole health and disability space we are trying out a number of different approaches, some of which is about earlier access to help. I think that is particularly important, so trying to boost cognitive behavioural therapy or IAPT, and working more closely with the health service. There is quite a lot of different things that are being either trialled now or coming up over the next 12 or 18 months and we would certainly expect a variety of things to be said in the Green Paper around that.

Q174 **Chair:** You will not be having money from the Department of Health specifically spent in your Department?

Iain Walsh: I think some money from the Department of Health is contributing to these innovation funds and trials. The main thing coming out, I am sure, from the Green Paper is about closer working at a more structural level between health and work. I think that is where the real potential gains come from. Early access to services is one of the big prizes as opposed to specific sums of money.

Neil Coyle: That was really vague. If we could have some specific figures on what is available now and expected over the next year that would be really helpful. Can I also ask about the use of the flexible support fund, maybe a supplementary note, given the time? Is it already available, how each Jobcentre uses it, the kind of spending they have and what they have been using it for? Is that already available and could you make that available to the Committee, please?

Paul Williams: Yes, it is available and it has been updated for a number of years, as I guess the Committee would know.

Q175 **Neil Coyle:** By individual Jobcentre?

Paul Williams: By individual Jobcentre? Certainly if it is available we will provide it. We will check. We will take that away.

Q176 **Heidi Allen:** Can I ask one really sneaky question, something I found out about recently that I would like to use this opportunity to ask? Women in refuges who have escaped domestic violence naturally are in a completely different part of the country to where they have come from. They should be. When they arrive in town X, wherever it might be, in a refuge, my understanding is that there is typically the benefits lady who helps get them on the system locally, because they have come literally with nothing, often just in the clothes that they are standing up in. What I have done for mine—and I would ask could this be replicated across the country and I am sure it is within your gift to do this—that there is a



named contact in every single Jobcentre in the country that that benefits lady can go to to get those women put on the system fast. They need to be disassociated with Universal Credit when it rolls out to families, they need to be disassociated with where they have come from as fast as possible for obvious reasons, and they also need to be set up on the new benefit system for housing, JSA and so on as fast as possible. The charities give them a bundle of clothes, some toiletries and a bit of food to keep them going and they often have no income otherwise. Can we have a dedicated person at every Jobcentre in the country to be the named contact for women's refugees?

Damian Hinds: Ms Allen, it is obviously a very important question and a very sensitive subject; people are in the most difficult imaginable circumstance. Like you, in my constituency I have had a chance to see those processes, those relationships, because they are relationships that are needed across different agencies in different parts of the organisations that the refuge works with, and how they work. On the specific question of whether it is an individual in the Jobcentre in each case or not, I don't know and I don't know if the officials here know the answer to that.

Q177 **Heidi Allen:** It is somebody that recognises the urgency rather than—

Paul Williams: I am not familiar with the detail but I believe we have special arrangements, as you would expect, for individuals in those circumstances.

Heidi Allen: Often not.

Paul Williams: We will take that away and look at the arrangements.

Chair: Minister, thank you for a commanding performance in helping us understand this. We hope to report by Christmas a further progression on your behalf to the Secretary of State and we look forward to the next two meetings. Thank you very much.