

Work and Pensions Committee

Oral evidence: Disability Employment, HC 1147

Wednesday 11 July 2018

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Members present: Frank Field (Chair); Heidi Allen; Alex Burghart; Neil Coyle; Ruth George; Steve McCabe; Chris Stephens.

Questions 1 - 115

Witnesses

I: Rt Hon Esther McVey MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Department of Work and Pensions, Sarah Newton MP, Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work, Department of Work and Pensions, Angus Gray, Deputy Director, Work and Health Unit, Department of Work and Pensions, and James Wolfe, Director, Disability Employment, Department of Work and Pensions.

Witness Examination

Witnesses: Esther McVey, Sarah Newton, Angus Gray and James Wolfe.

Q1 Chair: Welcome. Some of our members are caught by the new timetables—you may be pleased or not pleased by that—so they are still on trains. They may join us, hopefully, later on. May I do the normal form: Esther, might you identify yourself for the sake of the record and then we will go down the team?

Esther McVey: Yes. Esther McVey, the Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions.

Sarah Newton: Sarah Newton, and I am the Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work.

James Wolfe: I am James Wolfe. I am the Director for Disability Employment and Support in the Department for Work and Pensions.

Angus Gray: I am Angus Gray, Deputy Director of the Work and Health Unit.

Q2 Chair: Very good. Thank you. The Government, Esther, has this noble objective, which the whole House shares, about making a most major reduction in the employment gap between disabled people and others. Might you report progress to us? Later on we are going to ask you how open your minds are to much smaller scale reforms. You have to have big programmes but these could supplement those. Esther, might you begin, please?

Esther McVey: That is right. We do have big ambitions for people with disabilities. How do we make sure and enable that they can take an active part in society and have a job? I think that is the correct thing to do. Maybe, for a long period of time, people had not been as ambitious as that. I do think that we need to reach for the stars so that people can fulfil their potential, and I would say that for all people.

It is not just what the benefit system can do. We also have to work with the Department for Education; we need to work with the Department of Health and Social Care; we need to work with local communities. We have to work across Government to see what can be done, whether that is working with businesses through Disability Confident, something that I not only launched but created because everybody has to take responsibility for what we are doing, and reaching out and doing health pilots. I know Sarah can talk about them because she has launched them and worked with them. How do we work better with the Department of Health and Social Care? How do we work better with the Department for Education on apprenticeships to help people into work? I am glad that they are bold ambitions and we do have to work towards that target.

We have seen an increase of disabled people getting into work, 600,000 over the last few years, which is a really positive step forward. We know



HOUSE OF COMMONS

that gap has closed by several percentage points, but there is a lot more to do because there still is a significant gap, 30 percentage points more or less, between people who are disabled and people who are not disabled. We have to continue to close that gap. Ambitious, yes, but we are going in the right direction.

Q3 Chair: Secretary of State, I am really anxious about your time this morning so we are going to hone in on these. I am going to come back to you in a moment about your working with the Department for Education. Sarah, when we last discussed this I do not know how many previous Secretaries of State ago, they talked about a working party between you and the Department of Health. I thought the crucial thing was: was the Department of Health going to give you some of their money so that you would be able to pilot properly the projects for those with health disabilities into work? How has that joint working gone and where is the money?

Sarah Newton: Yes, that is a really good point and I am pleased to report back that we now have a whole unit shared between the Department of Health and the DWP, the Health and Work Unit, which Angus is director of. "Improving Lives: the future of work, health and disability" set up a very big, bold plan as to how that joint working is going to enable 1 million more disabled people into work, but we are just as focused on helping people stay in work and make progress at work. In there is a whole stream of work for the Department of Health and Social Care and they have put in a lot of investment. Let me just tell you about two things—

Q4 Chair: You say lots of investment. What is the money? What is the budget of this great working party?

Sarah Newton: I was just going to say that there are two things I launched last week, which are the best, most practical examples I can give you. These are in the West Midlands and the Sheffield City region. Each region has about £3.5 million and this is to enable health-led trials about how to help people back into work. The IPS model is well known for helping people with severe mental health conditions into employment, and we are extending that to people with more moderate mental health conditions and physical health conditions.

Q5 Chair: Can I go back on this, Sarah? So £3.5 million for two areas that are initiating programmes to get people with disabilities into work. The two areas again?

Sarah Newton: They are the West Midlands and Sheffield City region and they are health-led. They are doing randomised control trials, so a huge amount of money is vested in research.

Q6 Chair: This is really welcome news. Thank you. For other regions like Merseyside, will that depend on the results of this spending of this £3.5 million or are you geared up to other regions applying specifically with ideas for you that they wish to pilot along these lines?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sarah Newton: Yes, so these came out of the innovation fund that was part of “Improving Lives”. We will be launching a challenge fund, but there are things that the NHS is—

Q7 **Chair:** Sarah, how much more would there be for us others to get regions to make bids for the money?

Sarah Newton: We are working on all those details now and before the end of the year we will be launching those funds with the sums of money. There are other things that—

Q8 **Chair:** So that Merseyside, for example—

Sarah Newton: Could apply into the challenge fund.

Q9 **Chair:** We could apply?

Sarah Newton: Yes.

Q10 **Chair:** Would we have access to how the other regions are working so that we would know that, try to gauge what is going really well there and add new things to that?

Sarah Newton: Yes, absolutely. We are very open about reporting what we are doing, sharing what we are doing, but there are things that the NHS is doing nationwide. It has doubled its funding for independent employment advisers in mental health settings. We know this works really well, so all over the nation people are getting the benefit of support from the NHS from the health setting and helping people into employment. We have set up the largest randomised control trials in the western world for helping people into work from a health setting. We are absolutely determined to do this properly so we can properly measure what works so we can roll it out. This work that is happening in these regions is to the benefit of the nation. There is some very good work also going on in Scotland.

Q11 **Chair:** There is a general health budget earmarked for this and there is specific money for projects that you are describing?

Sarah Newton: Yes, there is.

Q12 **Chair:** Does Angus want to come in?

Esther McVey: I know the Chair here is interested in a pilot in Merseyside and, although it is not the same, Merseyside does have a pilot. So, Angus?

Angus Gray: I wanted to add some detail about the numbers, the money. As part of the last spending review a combination of the Department of Health and Social Care and the NHS itself put in I think around £25 million to our innovation fund, so that is about 40% of the total innovation fund comes from health budget specifically. We are trying to run it, certainly in our decision making, as a joint fund, so it is a signal of their commitment to our joint enterprise. Then, as the Minister very



HOUSE OF COMMONS

clearly explained, the biggest health-specific thing we are doing is the trials in the West Midlands and Sheffield. I think the £3.5 million might have been an annual amount. The total between the two is just short of £20 million over the period of the randomised control trials that are being invested in those two.

The other big health thing is the expansion of employment advisers in the mental health services, where we are investing £38 million over three years. Again that is not quite a randomised control trial but it is a robust quantitative trial that will measure the difference between the areas that have more employment advisers and those that do not, to see whether that is a model that works that can then be expanded.

On your other local areas point, the Minister mentioned the challenge fund, which is worth just over £4 million and will launch on Monday, so there will start to be lots of marketing of that to local areas asking for new and innovative ideas that can build our evidence base.

Q13 Chair: The two big pilot areas have a budget up to £20 million, but you have a random control experiment as well?

Angus Gray: Sorry, those two areas are both randomised control trials.

Q14 Chair: There is no reason why you should know this, but I would love you to write to us with a reply. How much of that £20 million is going to be the research and how much is physically going into helping claimants?

Angus Gray: I do not know the precise number, but it is a significant investment in research. Most of that money is for help.

Chair: I have always found it is the reverse way, that if you want to do one of these random control ones it costs you far more than the money you are paying to help people.

Q15 Chris Stephens: Secretary of State, what early indications have the Department established that the Work and Health Programme is more effective in getting disabled people into work than the Work Programme?

Esther McVey: This is specifically targeted at people with work and health issues, and we know that as we have got more and more people into work— as we have got over 3.3 million people into work now—we have to reach out to people who are further away from the jobs market, whether that is a health condition or a disability condition, and we have to work to see how we do that best. I am doing extra work in outreach work. I am doing extra work trying to use the flexible support fund just to really see that it can be as tailored as it possibly can.

There is no simple answer to this. I know when I was in this role before we checked and received information as to what was happening around the world and there was not a simple, easy way of getting people furthest from the labour market into work. That is why we are doing these small control tests, allowing people to have the freedom and flexibilities to do this work, joining up with different partners who know these different



HOUSE OF COMMONS

groups better. That is what we are doing, so slowly and gradually we are taking these efforts forward in a bid to help more people into work. As I said, you have seen the 600,000 more people with disabilities into work over the last couple of years.

Sarah Newton: Could I add something there? The Work and Health Programme contracts were let and started to come into effect in the first quarter of this year, so we will have data but it will be at the end of the year. Clearly, they are getting the referrals in; they are starting to work on people, really supporting them. We will be publishing data. We made a commitment that we would publish data to see how it is working. We have really good stakeholder engagement with the people who are providing the contracts. I will be going around the whole country this summer meeting with the various contract holders of each region and getting feedback so that we can make this work. We will be publishing data later in the year, but anecdotally in terms of referrals and how it is working I am getting good feedback that the profile that we would expect into those contracts is broadly on track. We will be able to publish that data later this year.

Q16 **Chris Stephens:** How will we know if the programme is working and providing good value for money? You are saying there is going to be an impact on data, so how will we as a Committee know that the programme is working and it is good value for money? What tests are you both putting in to make sure of that?

Esther McVey: That is what we always seek to do to ensure that we are helping people to best effect, how can we now adjust it so that we are helping people more, and that is what we will be doing, monitoring that. As Sarah said, we will be reporting back to the Select Committee on that and I am quite sure the Select Committee will make sure on a regular basis that we are doing just that.

Chris Stephens: I think you can guarantee that.

Angus Gray: We always evaluate our national programmes, but we often look at proxies for the impact, whereas in the Work and Health Programme for the first time on a really large scale it has an element of this randomised control design again. So you will get comparisons of similar groups of people who either did or did not go through it, which gives you a robust estimate of the difference that the programme has made.

Sarah Newton: The difference in what we learned from the Work Programme is that we have invested a huge amount in our work coaches in our Jobcentres and we have disability employment advisers and we have the community partners. The amount of support that the staff in the Jobcentres, working in their community with health partners, with the local authorities and with employers, is really different from when the Work Programme existed. There is this specialist provision in the Health and Work Programme, but there is also lots more support. There is the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

individual support and there is the flexible support offers, so a much richer range of personalised, tailor-made support for people. That is what we have learned—that everybody is different, everybody's circumstances, the root causes for them being out of work, are varied and complicated and that is why we must have this very person-centred response. We are able to evaluate each programme according to how many people it has helped get into work and stay in work.

- Q17 **Chair:** Secretary of State, you have a huge budget. We know you have to be responsible for how it is spent, and so on, but if Members of the Committee came to you with proposals to do experiments, particularly to get those furthest from ever getting a job into work, might that be something that you would look kindly on as one-off experiments to see whether we as individuals, working with disabled people's associations and indeed disabled people themselves, could make proposals to you that are beyond the scope of what have to be big programmes?

Esther McVey: What I said before is that it is not just the Department that is trying to get this right and we have to open up to all ideas. If people have a good idea, a good suggestion, and they are working locally with them, yes, and that is why we have opened up a challenge fund to say, "Come forward". Yesterday as I was at the Learning and Work Institute I had the same conversation saying to the various members in that room, "If you have a good idea that you think will work, then obviously we will have to evaluate it", but I think it is only right that we do that because it is a complicated picture. As I said before, there is not a simple solution and we are open to suggestions. That is exactly what I want to do with our flexible fund, outreach work and, as I said, this challenge fund because that is where we are now and that is what we have to do.

- Q18 **Chair:** Very good, so we as a Committee or we as individuals may make approaches for ideas for you to consider?

Esther McVey: Yes, we would appreciate that.

Chair: Brilliant.

- Q19 **Neil Coyle:** Minister, you mentioned that you have learned that all people are different. I think that was a given back in 2010. You alluded to the fact that disability employment advisers were making a part of the difference now. When the Work Programme was rolled out, disability employment advisers were axed. Was that a mistake? Do you regret the impact of that and are there now the equivalent number of DEAs across the country as there were in 2010 or are they still behind?

Sarah Newton: I think disability employment advisers do have a really important role to play. We have been recruiting more disability employment advisers. They do give support to our front-line work coaches, but we have also invested a huge amount in the work coaches themselves. We have also set up partnerships locally. What the Chairman of the Committee suggested is absolutely right: this is about local



HOUSE OF COMMONS

working, local partnerships. I go up and down the country and I see where the Jobcentre managers are working with their community partners, with employers, with colleagues in the local authorities, working with the people who are providing adult social care services, children's social care services and absolutely joining up the work to support those individuals. It is a whole series of activities and measures that are happening.

It has been an evolution. The Work Programme itself was a huge evolution on what was there before, and it is only right that each Government that comes in evaluates what has happened before, takes forward what they feel is the best thing to do and leaves behind the things that they do not think are working so well. It is a constant process of listening, learning, evaluation and improvement. We are committed to that.

James Wolfe: We recruited 300 additional disability employment advisers. I think the model that we are trying to deliver—

Q20 **Neil Coyle:** Since when, sorry?

James Wolfe: Since, I believe, April 2017 but I will check that.

Q21 **Neil Coyle:** That is after the 1,000 that we lost in 2010?

James Wolfe: The point is that the model is changing, so with Universal Credit, as the Minister said, what we are trying to do is treat everybody as an individual and not put them in a box that says, "You are on benefit X and, therefore, you get a DEA, and you are on benefit Y and, therefore, you do not". The new model means that every work coach has the opportunity to draw on the expertise of one of those disability employment advisers as and when they need to, because people have complicated lives that have complex needs, and their disability is just one part of that overall picture. It is a better model to provide that personalised support.

Esther McVey: As you look at the change in what has happened from 2010 to 2017 that I was alluding to at the top with what people would deem now near on full employment, we have various different people now coming through the Jobcentre Plus doors. It is, therefore, vital that everybody is trained in disability and health issues. Obviously, you have DEAs but everybody now is rigorously trained on what to understand, what to appreciate, and, therefore, combined with the claimant commitment—which is very much a personalised plan for that individual, to understand the needs of that individual—you can then direct them to the best support. That is what it is all about, a personalised service as best we can, because, as you said, everybody is different and we have to support people as best we can.

Sarah Newton: If I can give you a really good example, in addition to the disability employment adviser we have our community partners. We did some work with our community partner in the north London Jobcentre



HOUSE OF COMMONS

area, because she highlighted to us some of the issues of people with neuro-diverse conditions, particularly people on the autistic spectrum, coming into the Jobcentre environment. I went along to a meeting of people with learning disabilities on the autistic spectrum who are our benefits claimants and asked them, "How can we make this better for you?" Tomorrow we are having the first ever opening of a Jobcentre only for people who are neuro-diverse, who are on the autistic spectrum. There are going to be employers there who want to employ them. There are going to be charity partners, there are specially trained work coaches there, and that will be an environment that has been designed by those disabled people for those disabled people to really improve their engagement. This is the extent to which through local working, local partnerships, we are able to listen to disabled people, listen to our customers, and innovate.

Q22 **Chair:** Where is that, Sarah, did you say?

Sarah Newton: In Finsbury Park, tomorrow.

Q23 **Chris Stephens:** Sarah, you mentioned local partnerships, but can I ask you if the Department has carried out any analysis on the effect of scaling down the Work Programme to the employment support provider market? Has there been any analysis carried out about the effects? They are scaling down the Work Programme and there is a new concern that has been given to this Committee that providers of employment support services are also scaling down their work and it is having an effect on local and small employment support providers. Is there any analysis that the Department has done looking at that?

Esther McVey: Sorry, you are mumbling there. You are really difficult to hear.

Chris Stephens: I do not believe I am mumbling, Secretary of State.

Esther McVey: Well, I am craning forward.

Chris Stephens: I will shout.

Esther McVey: Please do. So you are saying?

Heidi Allen: It is the acoustics in this room. They are not brilliant.

Q24 **Chris Stephens:** Okay, I am asking basically if the Department has carried out any analysis on the scaling down of the Work Programme and what that has meant to the employment support provider market?

Esther McVey: If you are talking about the Work Programme, the reason that was scaled down was because a different set of people were coming through the door and that is when it moved into the Work and Health Programme, so there was, again, an evolution in who the people were coming forward. Therefore, there was a natural change in what was happening, because the groups of people going through to the programme needed more support; hence it was changed to a Work and Health Programme, not just a Work Programme. Yes, analysis was done



on that, on the number of people who were coming through the door and how it needed to change to move on to a Work and Health Programme.

- Q25 **Chris Stephens:** Okay, but there has also been some comment given to this Committee from employment support providers who are saying that it has had an effect on small-scale and local providers, the scaling down of the Work Programme. James?

James Wolfe: What I would add to that is there is and will continue to be an important role for contracted provision in what we are doing. The smaller scale of the Work and Health Programme more reflects the kind of buoyancy of the labour market overall. In terms of sick and disabled people, we are still expecting around 275,000 people to go through the programme. There is still a sizeable commitment in relation to this particular group.

In terms of the broader group of people who are on benefits for a long period of time, thank goodness that is lower than it used to be because the labour market is in a good place.

- Q26 **Heidi Allen:** If you look at the ceilings, they are insanely high in here and I think that is probably why you cannot hear anything. They are not exactly fit for the modern age, are they?

It is brilliant to hear, because I know disability organisations for donkey's years have been saying, "We need that tailored individual support" and that is the only way to crack this disability gap issue. It is brilliant that we are trying to provide that now. I suppose my question and my slight concern is if we can just about cope with the numbers now—and we are recruiting more disability project advisers, which is great—when managed migration comes, that is a lot of new claimants. I think it is around about two-thirds of the people that will come across in a managed migration will be ESA claimants. I worry about the pressure on work coaches because they so want to do a good job. How will they cope with the increased case load and still maintain this tailored support and signpost it for people, when the volume is going to be absolutely massive coming at them?

Esther McVey: I think that is a right issue to raise. At the moment, work coaches could take more people than they have coming through to them, but what we should be doing is we need to reflect the numbers that we will need. Should there be an issue on that and we need to increase the number of work coaches that are there, then that is something we need to do. We are building an agile system across the board; therefore, that agility also needs to be in place to support our workforce as well. Like we brought in extra disability employment advisers, like we brought in community officers, we have to do the same thing on the frontline as well.

- Q27 **Heidi Allen:** Do we have any data about how long work coaches get? I think there are figures that you can provide that are average time that a work coach has with a claimant, but that, of course, does not tell you



HOUSE OF COMMONS

whether some lucky soul gets an hour and a half and a dozen people get two minutes. Do you have that granularity of data to understand how long people are taking now and whether, as you say, Secretary of State, there is more capacity with work coaches? We have to say it is more likely that we hear the bad stories than the good ones, and that people are really squashed for time and they do not, in fact, get more than 10 minutes sometimes.

Esther McVey: We do have an array of times, particularly as you come in for the first time you will invariably have more. You could be signposted to somebody else to get more support, whether that is with budgeting, whether that is with IT. Yes, we do and you are quite right, some people do take more time than others, but I think as well with our work coaches if they discover they have not heard back from you, if you are not in contact again, they will go out and connect you. I know, James, you wanted to come in.

James Wolfe: Yes, I think that one of the things that we need to recognise is that the model of Universal Credit is different from the benefits it replaces. Work coaches have much more discretion under Universal Credit to decide which of their caseload they are going to spend more time with and which they are going to spend less. Obviously, that makes it more challenging in terms of providing you with information because those decisions are being made, quite rightly, at a very local level.

As part of our testing and trialling activity, we are also running a number of trials that are testing different ways and times of interacting with people. It is not just about how long we spend with people. It is also about when we engage with them. At the moment we have a very rigid model where a lot of that engagement is right after their claim. That might not be the best time for someone to be thinking about work. There are at least another three trials under the personalised support models that are looking at different ways that we can do that. Obviously, the aspiration is that by the time the migration is under way we will have a much better idea of what works.

Q28 **Heidi Allen:** Is that data as it evolves something that you are able to share with us?

James Wolfe: I am sure it is.

Q29 **Chair:** I have one experience of a work coach 210 miles away from another work coach and they both say it is 10 minutes and their line manager is pushing them, pushing them, and in 10 minutes you hardly get through putting claims on to the computer. How does this evidence that we get tailor with what you are telling us, James?

James Wolfe: I think that is exactly why we are testing and learning with different approaches. Obviously, we cannot expand the time that the individual work coach can be out there, so what we are looking at in those trials is, well, in previous times with benefits where we have much



HOUSE OF COMMONS

less flexibility in the legislation we have been giving people 10-minute slots. We can now trial giving the work coach the discretion to give someone a 30-minute slot and maybe not see some other people. Those are exactly the kinds of things that we are trying, but we are doing that in a test and learn way rather than in a kind of random way, so that by the time the EC migration is in full swing we will know what the optimum model is going to be.

Q30 Chair: We were promised before this ever hit the road, this new benefit, that it was going to be like that and in my experience talking to work coaches it has never been like that. The message we take out from here is that work coaches have to fight back and introduce this flexibility that you talk about at the top. It does not seem to operate in London or 210 miles away from London.

Esther McVey: What I will say is I go around the country meeting work coaches, too, so I hope other people go into their Jobcentres. They have said with the change of this system now they feel very positive, they feel very liberated, they are spending more time with the individual. They say they are able to do what they always wanted to do, help people into work and signposting them. The letters that I have received from people who have said they have been into the Jobcentre, say, 10 years ago, whether it is a lone parent or somebody with disabilities or somebody very far away from the marketplace, they have all said it has been a very different experience this time and a much more positive one. Again, I would ask people to please go and visit your Jobcentres and meet with your work coaches because most of those people not only do a terrific job but are saying they feel more liberated to help them.

Chair: I am really anxious. We have a lot to get through and it is a busy day for the Secretary of State.

Q31 Alex Burghart: Secretary of State, in your last answer you referred to universal support, although not by name. You said that people can get help with budgeting and with digital. Many moons ago when people were first talking about Universal Credit there was the hope that it would eventually be available for a lot of other things as well, not just budgeting and IT. Is that still the Department's hope?

Esther McVey: As we roll out, which we have said gradually, slowly, what we are seeing is collecting data and evidence on what that help is that people need. At the moment it has been very much the IT so they can get online. It has been the budgeting support because as they have come to us a lot of them have had debt arrears already, so that has been the focus at the moment. You are quite right to say when that shifts to what other help and support people need so should our support. That is why at the same time we have linked up with community support. We have our work coaches now working more effectively with local charities on the ground, so they can signpost at this moment in time, but then it will be to work with agencies. We put £200 million at present into



HOUSE OF COMMONS

working with local authorities to help people but, yes, that will adapt with time and we have to be responsive to that.

Q32 Steve McCabe: I want to ask a couple of questions about Disability Confident, which seems to be pretty much the Department's flagship approach to closing the gap. It did not get off to the best of starts, but you have had a relaunch since then. What is your view now? How is it working and what are the measures by which you judge its success?

Esther McVey: What we realised at the time, and again I said this at the start, and what was important, hence when we launched it in the first issue, was that it could not just be the benefits department that were helping people into work. The people with the jobs are the employers and we had to engage them. I will also say the employers, too, felt that they needed to do a little bit more, whether it was for their staff, whether it was for their customers, whether it was we live in an age of true diversity, inclusion and transparency. They came to the table knowing they wanted to do something, but they did not always know what it was they could do with best effect. We thought if we worked together, hence we called it Disability Confident because are you confident to ask? Are you confident to be able to deliver? What could we do together? How did we mobilise access to work? How did we mobilise our support that we had within Government with their desire to want to help people?

Q33 Steve McCabe: What do we know now? Do we have any measures of its success? Is there any published analysis?

Esther McVey: By the sheer volume of the number of businesses that are now on board, that have come on board, which is close to 7,000 so it is growing all the time, and that is in the public and private sector, the small SME sector. They want to get involved and by their very nature, as we have said, with the increase of people with disabilities now in work, 600,000 over the last couple of years, it shows that all of these measures together—not one single thing, but all of these measures—are working.

Q34 Steve McCabe: Is there a published analysis of the programme? I am curious to track its success.

Esther McVey: Yes, and that is what we will be doing. Sarah?

Sarah Newton: Yes, I provided to the Committee, at the Chairman's request, a breakdown of all sorts of information that you requested. That was this week, so it is the latest information. A predecessor to this Committee had said to us, will we commit to doing a proper evaluation of Disability Confident, and we said yes. The Committee had asked by 2020, so we will do that, but what we have done is we are in the process of commissioning external, properly registered research agencies to go back to the employers that are already signed up to ask them how it has changed their behaviour, how it has helped them recruit people, how it has helped them retain people with disabilities and help people make progress. That work will be done later this year and we, of course, will share it with the Committee. We are very, very committed to working



with employers to enable them to employ more people with disabilities. We have worked very collaboratively on this programme. If there are things that we can learn and change we are really open to that, but our flagship programme is that it brings all this together, which is improving lives.

As the Secretary of State said, there is not a single silver bullet. It is about what we can do as a state, what employers can do, what the support is from health services, and bring all of those strands together, which will make a difference.

Q35 Chair: Sarah, the Secretary of State said 7,000 employers from different sectors. If all of those took on five disabled people, that is 35,000. We have a long way to go, haven't we?

Sarah Newton: Yes, but if you look at the analysis that I shared with you, the number of pledges they have made to employment, to apprenticeships, if you look at since we introduced adapted apprenticeships for people with disabilities, since we had the Maynard taskforce—which set a goal for us by 2020 of having 11.9% of all apprenticeship starts for disabled people—we have seen really good progress. This year we are up to 50,930 people with disabilities, which was 10.3% of starts, so there are lots of things. There are the supported internships, there is work experience for people with disabilities, apprenticeships, employment, and if you look at the analysis that I shared you will see the numbers of pledges that organisations are making. Once you get to leadership status it has to be independently validated that what you are doing—

Chair: That is right. A quick one on that from Neil and then back to Steve.

Q36 Neil Coyle: I will be quick. Those 7,000 businesses quickly became public sector as well, so that 7,000, how many are private sector and how many are public sector and have duties on them anyway? Can you break that figure up for us?

Sarah Newton: I have given you all the information you asked, not only by the number of employees, by the type of sector and region. I could take up the whole of the Committee's time with giving you those statistics, when I have written it all in the letter. You will see very clearly what is there. As a follow-up, if you want to ask me anything else, detailed information, of course I will provide it, but we will be doing this independent—

Q37 Neil Coyle: How many of the private businesses who have attended a Disability Confident programme have gone on to employ disabled people?

Sarah Newton: That information is in the information that we will be collecting in the independent evaluation later this year.

Q38 Neil Coyle: You do not know? This has been going on for years.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Esther McVey: We do. Some of the boldest companies who came on board and who have said they have changed and are recruiting more people will be people like Fujitsu, Barclays Bank, GlaxoSmithKline.

Q39 **Neil Coyle:** How many disabled people have they taken on? It is great that they are involved.

Sarah Newton: Neil, I have provided this information to the Committee. You have quotes there from Barclays, quotes from KPMG, quotes from Fujitsu saying what they have done. We know that this is anecdotal. That is why we are doing the independent evaluation going back to all of them so that we can quantify what you are saying.

Q40 **Steve McCabe:** I notice that you said there that they have made these pledges. If I remember correctly, I think that it was one of your criticisms when you were talking about the relaunch that a number of people have said it is too easy to get certificated and you said that you were going to put some teeth into the programme. I think you also said you were going to have some incentives so there was going to be a preference for Government procurement. Has that happened?

Sarah Newton: I am glad you have raised that. Remember this is a campaign and it is deliberately set with three phases. We want to make the initial step to say, "Yes, I want to tackle this issue. I want to become Disability Confident" straightforward, so signing up to level 1 is deliberately very straightforward. Then we take people on a journey and we give them increasing levels of support, so when they get to level 3, as I say, what they say they are going to do as an organisation has to be independently, externally verified. In terms of making sure people are doing what they say they are going to do, that is why we are putting in place this independent evaluation that we are doing later this year.

Going back to public sector procurement, I am delighted that all ministerial Government Departments are now leadership level, and I have a public sector summit in a matter of weeks. Some 70% of local authorities are now Disability Confident, so the LGAs are coming along, too. We are working very carefully with them as to how we can use their relationships, their supply chains, to encourage more people to sign up and be Disability Confident. We are working right across Government so that we can introduce that as part of the procurement challenge, and we are very close to being able to do that. Once we have done that I will be able to share it with you.

Q41 **Steve McCabe:** I am sorry to interrupt. Has that started yet?

Sarah Newton: Yes.

Q42 **Steve McCabe:** Is there a list of companies in this information you have provided that are getting preferential access to procurement?

Sarah Newton: Our Disability Confident leaders all work with the supply chains in their organisations, so Barclays, the Post Office, Sainsbury's.



These are just some of our leaders' groups and they have conversations with their main suppliers and they ask them to become Disability Confident. We are working out the form of words that does not get in the way of competition law, does not breach any equalities duties, so that we can have that in people's contracting processes. That is the detail that we should be bringing to conclusion this summer so that we can have it officially in procurement.

Esther McVey: If you look at the overall figures for people with disabilities, so without naming people, they will say they want to bring it as part of their general employment process, widening it, seeing everybody for who they are, but if we look between quarter 2 of 2013 and quarter 2 of 2017 the employment rate of disabled people increased by 5.6 percentage points. Over the same period the employment rate for non-disabled people increased by 3.8 percentage points. I am thinking within that Disability Confident and people's awareness and what people want to do is having an impact.

Q43 **Steve McCabe:** Do you think that is attributable to Disability Confident?

Esther McVey: I have said that before and I quite honestly say that, that there is not one single thing. I could say one thing that really moved the dial, I believe, was the Paralympics in the UK. I think that when people saw what people could do they thought, "We all as a society need to do more". I am not going to put it down to one individual thing, but I do believe—

Q44 **Steve McCabe:** No, I understand that, but if it is your flagship policy then we really do need to know what is directly attributable to it.

Esther McVey: There are lots of things we are doing. This was the engagement pretty much for the first time, like this, with business leaders. Like I said, a lot of those business leaders wanted to come forward and say, "What can we do together?" They were looking for help and support and we were looking at what they could do as well.

James Wolfe: This is a boring technical point, but you cannot run a randomised control trial on something like Disability Confident because we cannot know who Fujitsu or Barclays would or would not employ if they had not been Disability Confident.

Q45 **Steve McCabe:** Of course. That is why I asked right at the start what measures you are using. That is exactly my point. You cannot do it like that, but you cannot possibly invest money and make all these claims about a programme and then have no measure—

Esther McVey: That is why I gave you the statistics of what has happened. That is why I mentioned 600,000 more disabled people into work, so we do not want to take all the credit for this. That would not be right but it shows that there has been a movement.

Q46 **Steve McCabe:** No, of course, but I asked how you measured it and then



HOUSE OF COMMONS

I asked if the figures you were quoting were directly attributable to it. I am not trying to be clever. It is a reasonable condition. You have invested a lot in this. You have a lot of faith in this. I am really interested in it, but obviously I want to know what bits of it really work and what bits of it you can confidently say is a direct result of this, where we are seeing this impact. That is reasonable to expect.

Esther McVey: What we do know is the engagement with those businesses that have written to us afterwards, who have said it has enhanced what they have done and supported what they are doing, and they are on board. That has to, surely, be a positive step with what they are saying, with what they are now doing, with these employment statistics, with the overall picture but, like Sarah said, this other analysis, which we promised to the Select Committee by 2020, that is what is happening.

Q47 **Steve McCabe:** How many of the 7,000 companies are at level 3?

Sarah Newton: We did give it in the letter. It is a small number as yet because it is very much a journey. I think it is only a matter of a couple of hundred. It is in the letter that I gave.

Neil Coyle: It is 133.

Sarah Newton: Yes. It is a small number as yet. We do take people on a journey.

Q48 **Steve McCabe:** A bit of a journey to go?

Sarah Newton: Yes, we do.

Esther McVey: Equally, though, all companies will be different sizes. An SME might just have one or two people, but some of those big companies that are the 133 employ thousands and thousands of people, so you cannot necessarily compare those numbers.

James Wolfe: It is about a third of employers who employ more than 250 people who are on the Disability Confident scheme, so the reach of the scheme in terms of employees is quite good.

Q49 **Heidi Allen:** Just going back to one of the earlier points about whether it is a public sector organisation or private sector, I heard somewhere, and I cannot remember where it was, that Whitehall or Government Departments—and I have Cabinet Office in my head but that does not make sense; it must be the same rules for everybody—cannot use or cannot apply for Access to Work. James, you are nodding. I cannot remember where I picked that up but it seemed to me bonkers.

James Wolfe: That is simply because the Government Departments should be providing that support as part of their general employment deal. It should not need to be funded additionally from Access to Work. For example, at the Department for Work and Pensions, you should receive the same reasonable adjustment that you would have received if



HOUSE OF COMMONS

you were working for an employer that qualified for Access to Work but clearly—

Q50 **Heidi Allen:** Is it a bit perverse, though? I understand why, but if we are wanting Government to be trailblazers and saying, “We are just like any other employer, look at us, you can do it, too”, we would have our hands tied. I do not know—

Esther McVey: We have gone a step further, haven’t we?

James Wolfe: We have indeed.

Esther McVey: We have gone a step further by doing it.

James Wolfe: I think the important thing is that Access to Work—

Q51 **Heidi Allen:** It is one of the many tools, isn’t it, that can help?

James Wolfe: Access to Work is there. If there is a small employer who does not have experience of working with disabled people and he might struggle to afford to provide those adaptations, then clearly Access to Work is the right solution for that employer, but that is not really an excuse for an employer to decide—

Q52 **Heidi Allen:** Although Access to Work can be getting a taxi to get me to work. It is not necessarily a reasonable adjustment that the employer has to make. It can be something that facilitates the individual getting there.

Angus Gray: We would just expect Departments to—it is avoiding playing internal Government shops.

Heidi Allen: No, and I can understand that.

Angus Gray: The Department should just fund it themselves and commit to doing the right thing for their disabled employees.

Heidi Allen: Yes, I just wonder. It was suggested to me that that would be one lever that could help get more disabled people into Government, that was all.

Q53 **Neil Coyle:** On that specifically, the law is based on what is reasonable and there are examples where Government Departments have said it is not reasonable to fund, for example, an interpreter for someone in the Foreign Office and that has denied a disabled person a job. Did you not think it is worth reviewing that decision?

Chair: Could you look at that for us and come back?

Sarah Newton: If you want to give me an example, that example, then I will be at the Public Sector Summit and each of the permanent secretaries from each Government Department will be there. We certainly expect the Government to lead by example and we certainly expect us to be the best possible employers, and if that is not happening I will take it up.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Chair: We will come back with examples, Sarah, if we can. We now have a copy of the letter that came in to us late yesterday so Neil, at the end, is going to look at that. Is that all right? Yes.

Q54 **Chris Stephens:** Secretary of State, can we just look at the employment support allowance and the introduction of the Work-Related Activity Group, which has now been in place for about a year. The Department had committed, obviously, that they would try to ensure claimants would not get into hardship. What work is being carried out and what progress has been made in identifying a claimant's additional costs?

Esther McVey: What we are doing with that, obviously, was helping more people into work with that sort of extra premium because people who went on to ESA, we found out, who had a capability to work were not getting into work. When the Opposition party brought in ESA with the aim and hope of getting, say, a million more disabled people into work, what you were finding is only 1% a month were going into work. We have said with that section of people who could definitely do some work how could we best support them. What was decided was with that £300 million we will try an array of different ways of trying to support people into work and then measure what is the best way forward with that. That is what we are doing now with a lot of the trials, a lot of the outreach work that Sarah has already mentioned, and that is what we are doing with those ESA customers who are in the work-related activity group.

Q55 **Steve McCabe:** But I think there are concerns, Secretary of State, as there has been a lot of witness evidence to the Committee suggesting that the new rules are increasing stress and poverty within people who are in the work-related activity group. They are saying that there is a very significant cliff edge between the support group and the work-related activity group and that people are seeing it as a disincentive to get to work because of what has taken place here, Secretary of State. I think that there is a very real concern that people are moving into hardship if they are on ESA and this work-related activity group. Is there more work you think the Department can do to ensure that is not the case?

Esther McVey: Of course, we will be making sure that we get people into work. We will be obviously testing and ensuring people are not going into hardship, but again we will be looking at these figures. I was looking at compared to 2010, the latest statistics, whether that was on absolute poverty rates. They had fallen for individuals living in families where someone is disabled, and for working-age adults living in families where someone is disabled the latest statistics also show those poverty rates have fallen. We do monitor those. We do look at those, but the whole aspiration and aim for this group of people who could get into work was using this money to best effect to do that.

Q56 **Chris Stephens:** It was also to try to get disabled people into more work quickly, yet there is a lot of evidence we have been given by many organisations who are saying that that is not the case. Would you agree



with them? Would you agree with Action for ME, Mind, Mencap, who are saying that the ESA work-related activity group is not moving disabled people into work quicker?

Esther McVey: We have said it was never going to be a fast journey, but what we are doing is making sure we are helping those people. That was not there before. This Government are putting more money into trying to support people into work, because what we saw was there before, as I said, the Labour Party brought in ESA and what was happening with those figures was we were not getting those people into work. We thought, best effect, what we are saying is how do we spend money to support them and get people into work, and that is what we are doing. As we have all said, it is not easy and it is evolving as we go. We are learning from what we do but with the very focus to get those people into work.

Chris Stephens: Okay. I think there is very real concern about hardship.

Chair: Indeed. We might come back to the hardship side, or we will do.

Q57 **Heidi Allen:** Just staying on the mechanics of the benefit system for the moment, one of the big changes under Universal Credit is new claimants coming on. In the old system, somebody who would be on ESA would be on no conditionality while they are waiting for the work capability assessment. That is changing in that we put an assessment rate on it. That is changing. Is that the right approach, do you think? How are you safeguarding that while people are waiting—given that, not often but it does sometimes happen, assessments can take a lot longer to be arranged than should be the case—these payments are not falling foul through their own health issues, whatever the reason might be, and receiving conditionality failing time after time after time? How are you protecting against that?

James Wolfe: You are right that that is a big change with Universal Credit coming in. Part of the reason for that is that the one thing that we know is that the longer you are out of the labour market and the more disconnected you are from it the less likely you are to return and the longer it will take. There is a sizable number of people in that group who will be found fit for work at their work capability assessment and it is not in their interest to have spent a long period of time—

Q58 **Heidi Allen:** How do you differentiate because a lot of them will not?

James Wolfe: The answer to that is that it is the discretion of the work coach. It is not a blanket policy that everybody in that period is having full conditionality, far from it. What it means—

Q59 **Heidi Allen:** Are they healthcare experts to be able to make that judgment?

James Wolfe: We have talked about the training, the fact that the claimant commitments are individually tailored and, of course, their health condition is only one part of their whole circumstances and



HOUSE OF COMMONS

whether or not they are interested in looking for work and how that condition is affecting them at that particular moment in time.

Work coaches are skilled in knowing what somebody can do and what the best steps are for them to get back into the labour market. As the Minister did say, we are looking very closely at the whole health journey in UC. We have the test and learn approach that you know about. As I was going to say earlier on, we do not yet have massively significant numbers of people with health conditions coming in to UC because of the way the benefit is set up.

Q60 Heidi Allen: You are going to, aren't you?

James Wolfe: We are at that point in the cycle where we are testing and learning and looking at people coming through the door very carefully, deciding who we might want to apply some conditionality to and then looking at what happens before those large numbers start coming through.

Q61 Heidi Allen: What sort of options are you looking at as possible solutions for this? It is that safeguarding, isn't it? Not everybody should be treated the same and how great to have discussion with the work coaches, but they are pressurised, they have a lot of work on. In an ideal world that discretion means everybody gets a personalised service, but in reality it could mean that some parts of the country get better service than others. What safeguards can we put in place?

James Wolfe: Let us not forget that about a third of the people who come on to ESA come from JSA. In a Universal Credit world, those would be people who already have a work coach who they have been working with and who knows them quite well and will be able to make quite a good judgment on what they can and cannot do at that point in time. I would not underplay the expertise of the work coach in that individual relationship, but the guidance that we have and the instructions that our people have is very much to be cautious about this at the moment.

Clearly, where we have people who want to work, are keen to engage and have already been job searching, we do not want to switch that off just because they have turned up with a fit note, but I think that this is something that is going to evolve over a period of time as we start to get the numbers through and see what the impact of it is.

Q62 Heidi Allen: That will be part of the test and learn after the regulation button is pressed for managed migration, the slow test and learn in the beginning?

James Wolfe: It is not so much of a managed migration issue as it is people naturally coming into UC. The thing is that the flows into UC do not reflect what eventually the UC population will look like. Fit and able job seekers are far more likely to come in naturally in larger numbers than people with health conditions. It is only as we have rolled out some more Jobcentres that we are starting to see that flow of new ESA-type



claimants through the door. It is still relatively early days on that, but we are looking at it very closely.

Q63 Heidi Allen: That discretion is an important thing to try to put some framework around. Not in the last evidence session, I think the one we had before, which was looking more specifically at sanctions of people that are on the system, we had in front of us three young people, one with one or two young children, a youngster with disabilities, and caring responsibility I think was the third one. Again, I know, pinch of salt, we do not hear good stuff on the Committee, we hear when things go wrong. Every single one of them bought into the sanctions regime, "Yes, of course, you need it", rotten apples, there have to be sticks as well as carrots in the system, but they had all been sanctioned despite their best efforts to communicate with work coaches. "I rang up. They said they contacted me twice. Well, yes, they emailed me twice within half an hour and told me that was it, two strikes and I was out." There are too many examples that we are hearing where the sanctions regime, that discretion, is not being fairly applied. I just worry; we have to get it right. It is people coming on to the system as well as those that are on it. How do we get that balance, Secretary of State, for discretion versus people struggling in the system who should not be?

Esther McVey: You will have monitoring closely of the different Jobcentres and work coaches, so there will be, if you find discrepancies between areas because they will be regularly monitored, what could that be about and how would you make sure that we are delivering the best service possible. That sort of analysis between the different areas, between the different Jobcentres and work coaches, is being done, so that should not happen.

The whole basis, and the reason a claimant commitment was brought in—it is hard to believe that it was brought in only a couple of years ago; you would have thought the benefit system would have done that in advance—is very much to understand what the individual circumstances are. Should they have an appointment? Should they have to have taken the child maybe—I do not know—to school, to doctors, to whatever? They would be able to say, "This was my reason" for doing something, and then if you had good reason then you would not have had a sanction. While it would be that you did not attend this meeting, you are able to come in afterwards to explain, not even before, you can explain afterwards to say, "This was the reason. Obviously, it was an emergency. I was in a panic. I could not call you before. This was it". Then if they did not take that reason into account, it would go further to a decision maker to do that. This is what we have to get right.

Chair: Esther, that is a really important, empowering statement, thank you.

Q64 Heidi Allen: Just closing that point, if you are able to share with us any data to show the assessment that you make of work coaches and then the feedback loop—I guess it is continuous professional development for



HOUSE OF COMMONS

the work coaches as much as anything else—if you can share that level of granular data, that would be useful to see.

Alok came in front of us recently and we were talking to him about this. I am sure, unless my memory serves me incorrectly, which happens a lot these days, he said he would go away and look at whether we should take disabled people, people with disabilities, out of the sanction regime altogether.

Esther McVey: If they are in the support group they are outside of the sanction regimes, and most people are in the support group so they would not be coming under the sanction regime.

James Wolfe: In the work-related activity group the number of people sanctioned is less than a quarter of 1%.

Esther McVey: Yes, 0.2%.

Heidi Allen: Yes. He agreed to go away and look at that group, too, as to whether that would—

Q65 **Chair:** We will pursue that. James, we have talked a lot about managed migration. Who does the managing? If I was a worker, could I say, “I cannot manage any more” and would that turn the tap off for a bit until I could manage the service that the Secretary of State is describing to us?

James Wolfe: Sorry, I apologise for using civil service jargon.

Chair: No, we all use it but I want to know who manages what. The key person is the work coach. Can the work coach say, “I cannot manage any more managed migration at the moment”?

James Wolfe: The Committee will know that the regulations for managed migration are currently with the Social Security Advisory Committee, who are consulting on them. What I can say is that, as we have throughout the Universal Credit rollout process, we have a feedback loop from the front-line and we will be watching very carefully once that process starts how it is going and we will make sure it is done in a set way—

Q66 **Chair:** James, with the best will in the world, you know that is not the answer to the question. If I am a work coach and I am the key person in the managed migration, can I say, “I cannot manage any more migration” and will that then affect my work? That would stop it?

Esther McVey: Yes, of course you can. If we want, which is what we want, to give the best service to an individual, which would achieve being a good employer, then we have to be able to listen to our front-line staff. Should somebody say that for these reasons, whether it is they need maybe more training, if it is to understand what is going on, that is what we would be doing.

Q67 **Chair:** They may need training or they might just mean it is impossible to do the job under—



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Esther McVey: We would listen to that as well.

Chair: Very good. Thank you very much.

Q68 **Ruth George:** Just on that point, the National Audit Office report says that at the moment work coaches currently have a caseload of around 85 people each and that that is due to increase to 370 each work coach. Do you think that is acceptable or will you be looking at the number of work coaches and their workload before it gets to that stage?

Esther McVey: Those are the numbers that are projected, a combination of the IT system and when people are more used to it, because obviously it will be 2023 by the time managed migration happens and people will have more people that they would be working for—

Q69 **Ruth George:** Finished by 2023?

Esther McVey: 2023. Yes, starting next year, 2023. Again, those are the numbers that people would be able, we consider, to be looking after, but if they cannot, exactly as the Chair said, this will be monitored. What you have seen with our process so far is that if we have needed to stop rollout we have. If we have needed to slow it down we have, and if we have needed to speed it up we have. I think that we have a good track record of looking at what needs to be done and doing it. At the moment those numbers are envisaged, but it might not be that when we get to 2021, 2022 or 2023.

James Wolfe: If I could say quickly, I think that there are too many important things. The first is that I have been over a lot of the country in the last few weeks and our work coaches genuinely across the country cannot wait for Universal Credit to come in in their areas. There is a lot of enthusiasm in the Department for it, so I am not picking up the message that work coaches are concerned about this. Part of the reason for that—

Neil Coyle: The PCS union has made it very clear and they are representatives for the sector.

Q70 **Ruth George:** Yes. What work coaches tell top officials when they go round the country is probably not the objective evidence that we are looking for, although obviously it is important to you. Can I just say that—

Esther McVey: Can I just say what I will say there? I have made it very clear to everyone. Whether it is in the Jobcentre, whether it is in the Department, whether it is out and about, I have said, "If we are looking at the individual, if we are looking at the claimant, I need to hear what is right, wrong or indifferent. You must speak truth to power because we all have to get this right". I think that I am somebody you can speak pretty clearly and openly to, and that is something that we have to make sure, right through the organisation, we drill down so everybody knows. It is vital that people can come forward and say that and, of course, we will then review it.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

- Q71 **Chair:** Esther, it is easier to speak truth to power if your manager is not in the room. When you go round do you say, "I want just to talk to job coaches and nobody else should be present"?

Esther McVey: No, trust me, I speak to anybody, walk into different floors, chat to everybody in lifts. Frequently, people might or they might not know who you are. I will also speak to claimants. I will ask for letters from claimants. I think that it is important we all do that, and it might not just be me. You might know who I am. I might be very recognisable, but there will be other people who are out and about and that is what we have to do to get this system right.

- Q72 **Ruth George:** I am glad to hear that that is going to improve because obviously the National Audit Office report says that the Department has not been good at listening to feedback from claimants and third parties, so I am pleased to hear that that is going to happen under your watch, Secretary of State.

On timeliness of payments and the amount of time that it takes to deal with people with limited capacity for work, back in December around 80% of people were paid on time but there were big differences in that 90% of people without a health condition were paid on time. Only 31% of people with limited capability for work were paid on time. The NAO reports that the Department does not anticipate payment timeliness to improve significantly this year. Do you feel that 31% of disabled claimants being paid on time is acceptable?

Esther McVey: What we looked at there—and I will get the figures—is we brought in should somebody not be paid on time, then they would have an advance. We also broke down why and how they were paid in its entirety. Were they paid for part of it, ie they could have received their housing or they could have received their personal allowance? It could have been childcare. Why were they not paid? Was it because they did not do the verification? Was it because there were certain bits that had not been filled in correctly? While they were waiting for that, if they made a declaration now on us as a claimant they would be supported every step of the way, but we brought in that for the advances and we brought in the extra dividing up what it was they were getting paid for.

Of course, you want to get more and more people paid immediately, but that is what we brought in: should somebody not be paid immediately they could get from day one, a vulnerable person like this, the advance of 100%.

- Q73 **Ruth George:** They can do, but obviously that then needs paying back at quite steep rates. It would be more helpful to avoid the delays in the first place. We heard last week that—

Esther McVey: Then obviously their payment would go back to when their declaration had been made, so as, you are quite right, they would be paying back their advance, they would get their original payment from when the declaration had come in.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q74 Ruth George: What I am asking is would it not be better for claimants to be paid on time if possible. Last week we heard that there is not a tick box on the Universal Credit claim form to say that somebody has been on ESA and, therefore, for all that information about their health condition to be able to be linked into the Universal Credit claim and for them not to have to go through all that again, which seems to be having an impact on the speed in which Universal Credit claimants' health conditions are being paid. Is that something that the Department will look to take forward?

Esther McVey: We are.

James Wolfe: Yes. In terms of people moving from ESA on to Universal Credit, it is important that clearly your ESA does not get switched off until your UC declaration claim is complete. It is a slightly different issue from the payment gap. We do not stop your claim and then start to process your Universal Credit claim.

Q75 Ruth George: No. It is about moving the information over, which the DWP already has under the ESA system, to make sure that you do not have to go through all those verifications again under Universal Credit.

James Wolfe: Certainly, if you have been through a work capability assessment and you have had the outcome of that assessment, then you do not have to go through that again. In terms of other information about your claim, there are some things that we need for Universal Credit that we did not need for ESA, like your housing costs, for instance. Where we can use the information we have we are doing it.

Q76 Ruth George: Okay, so those will be linked, good. Moving on to hardship levels, obviously it is much more difficult for people with limited health conditions. They often have additional costs, and the Department's own survey found that even after nine months on Universal Credit over half of claimants with a long-term health condition were in hardship. Do you find that acceptable, Secretary of State?

Esther McVey: What we also looked at is what was the situation under legacy. What were the issues that people already had and how were we making them better? Of course we do not want anybody in hardship and of course we are supporting people, hence whether that was an advance to come forward, but I do not think you are necessarily comparing the situation the individual was also on under legacy. Although we do not have identical statistics to work with, you will find there is a comparator between the two.

Q77 Ruth George: The number of claimants with health conditions at the start of their Universal Credit claim and after nine months who were not able to meet their bills and commitments was almost exactly the same, so it is something that was under legacy benefits that Universal Credit is not helping. It is just not helping. It is a long-term problem under Universal Credit. It is good that you have said that claimants with severe disability premium will get the transitional support from legacy benefits for that premium through to Universal Credit, but obviously that is going



HOUSE OF COMMONS

to erode over time and it is going to have a severe impact on incomes of people with disabilities who are moving on to Universal Credit for the first time and as that transitional support finishes. It is £64 a week. That is a lot of money that people use to help with their long-term health conditions. How is that level of hardship going to be replaced?

Esther McVey: First, I said it was about continual improvement. When you said, "Are people listening to what people are saying?", when you said, "Who do you speak to?", whether it is the CAB, whether it is Christians Against Poverty, whether it was the Trussell Trust, one of them or all of them came forward and said, "What are you going to do with the severe disability premium?" I have to say that was one of the first things that I looked to change, sought to change, and, as the Committee has welcomed, we have made that change particularly for that transition for people who were on severe disability premium for all of the reasons you said.

Moving forward, UC is a very different benefit. Therefore, what you will see for the people who are most disabled is a significantly higher premium than was before under legacy benefits. The money that we have there we are putting through to the top rate of premium. That will be nearly £320 a month.

Q78 Neil Coyle: I am sorry, how are you working that out? As against the highest level support group ESA and severe disability premium, how are you working out that they are getting more under Universal Credit?

Esther McVey: What we have here will be on the higher rate. It will be approximately £320 a month. It will be on the higher rate on a UC for people with disability premium, working alongside as well what we have for people on extra support through PIP claims.

James Wolfe: The point is that the rate that you get for being in a support group, which is 1.6 million people, is higher in Universal Credit than it is in ESA. Very large numbers of disabled people who are too sick or disabled to work will get more under Universal Credit.

Esther McVey: What we also know is that the spend has gone up for disabled people as we help them. We know we have spent more now. It has increased every year from 2010 to 2022 and it will continue to do so. We have put that extra support into PIP and DLA.

Q79 Ruth George: We obviously have more people. I wonder would you, or James maybe, be able to write to the Committee and set out how people under Universal Credit who have qualified for severe disability premium will be better off under Universal Credit than they are at the moment? Would you be able to do that? That is what the Secretary of State said going forward, that people will be better off.

Esther McVey: The comparison there was on what would have been in the ESA top rate, and what we have now is what the UC top rate is going to be.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

James Wolfe: This information is all in the public domain, but we can write to the Committee. I think the point is that in terms of the direct comparison with ESA the rate for somebody who is found to have limited capability for work or work-related activity in Universal Credit is higher than the rate in UC. There are obviously then premiums in other legacy benefits that you can get and that does mean that it is possible to get a higher total benefit package in legacy than it is in Universal Credit. That is why the Secretary of State rightly said there are measures being put into place for the transition. In steady state—

Q80 **Heidi Allen:** But people who go off to a job and come back on again, they will not benefit from that, will they? If something happens in their life, they try, they go into work and they fail and they have come out of the system and they bounce back on, then that transitional protection will not be there for them, will it?

James Wolfe: We have not legislated yet—

Q81 **Ruth George:** There is around half a million people on that higher level of legacy benefits who are going to lose out severely under Universal Credit. Is that acceptable?

Esther McVey: No, what we have is a transition protection for those people who are on that benefit.

Q82 **Ruth George:** That is about 4,000 people out of half a million who are currently on the highest level of legacy disability benefit.

James Wolfe: Right from the very beginning of Universal Credit we have always made clear that when we manage to migrate people across, if their total award of legacy pre-existing benefits is higher than their Universal Credit entitlement, there will be transitional protection. It has always been acknowledged since the very beginning of Universal Credit that some people will be in that position and that will be in place to make sure that those people do not lose out. The issue currently is people who are finding their way into the system ahead of that exercise and that is the problem that we are taking action to address.

Esther McVey: That is what I took the action for. That is what SAC is doing the consultation period on, and then it comes back to the House that we will all be voting on later on in the year.

Q83 **Ruth George:** But that transitional protection is only for a limited amount of time. It is not permanent protection of incomes, is it?

James Wolfe: Obviously, the detailed rules will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny of the legislation, but it is transitional protection.

Q84 **Heidi Allen:** I suppose the important point is that a person with severe disabilities today, last year, in three years' time, two and a half months from now, last Pancake Tuesday, should all have the same benefits.



Esther McVey: But you are creating a different system, a completely different system, and that is why I said whatever was on the ESA higher rate, we now under UC have a higher rate, and it is higher than what would have been on ESA. We have the transition protection. We are bringing in a new benefit and, as I said, it is a non-comparable system.

Q85 Heidi Allen: Can you maybe give us some examples of Joe Bloggs who is on in the old world what he would be on if he was on the top rate of everything, Joe Bloggs version 1, versus a transitional Joe Bloggs or a 2025 Joe Bloggs, what the benefit package will be for him, and break it down for us in the various components? I think that would be quite useful.

Chair: I think, Esther, that this is such an important point that we will come back to you, posing questions to you.

Esther McVey: This, at the moment, is with SAC for consultation and it will come back to Parliament later on for us to vote on, but what we do know is we wanted to support the people on severe disability premium and that is what we have brought in to do it.

Q86 Alex Burghart: Minister, earlier on you referred to Paul Maynard's taskforce from 2016 on disability apprenticeships. How far into implementing Paul Maynard's recommendations is the Department?

Sarah Newton: Yes, I am pleased to say that they are fully being implemented. It was not only about setting targets and working with the Apprenticeship Training Agency: it was about making reasonable adjustments, which the legislation has gone through, particularly in maths and English but BSL now is accepted as a functional English qualification, which I think is fantastic. There is a financial support package for learners if they have additional learning support. It is now all systems go and it is a question of getting more employers to offer the apprenticeships.

There is a network that is led by one of our colleagues, Helen Grant, which is the Apprenticeships Diversity Champions Network, so speaking to employers, showing them the value of offering apprenticeships to young people with disabilities. I am particularly pleased to see the progress with young people with learning disabilities because we know they have the most appallingly unacceptable employment rate. Only 6% of young people with a learning disability go on into work. This is totally unacceptable.

Not only are we making good progress with the apprenticeships, but what I have been focused on is making sure that for every young person in school we have an equal level of ambition for them. That means for all children who are in special schools that we can make sure they have opportunities to work experience and then to supported internships and then going on into apprenticeships. We have been trialling a lot of good work on both supported internships and supported work experience so that all young people, especially those with learning difficulties, start their



HOUSE OF COMMONS

journey to work and being prepared for work from junior schools. We enable that to happen so that there is that ambition and expectation that they will be able to work.

Q87 Alex Burghart: How many more young people with disabilities are doing apprenticeships now than were in 2016?

Sarah Newton: The latest available data is we have 50,930 for the last year. That is 10.3% of all apprenticeship starts. The Maynard taskforce set itself the target by 2020 of having 11.9% of all apprenticeship starts being for disabled people. The Government are setting a very big ambition for 3 million more apprenticeships, and I think it is right that the Maynard taskforce set a percentage so that people with disabilities keep up with the pace of change and we do not just focus on an absolute number. There is clearly more to do between 10.3% and 11.9% but with the amount of employers joining the network and offering the apprenticeships, I think this pre-work experience—getting people ready for work so by the time they get to the age of an apprenticeship they are more likely to be ready and succeed in taking those apprenticeships up—is now where the real focus is.

Q88 Alex Burghart: How did the taskforce fix on the number of 11.9%?

Sarah Newton: It was a percentage increase. They wanted to see a growth in the percentages, so that is why they fixed on 11.9%. They took a baseline year and said we wanted to see a 20% increase and the 20% increase took them up to 11.9%.

Q89 Chair: What are the people numbers, Sarah? Can you give us that?

Sarah Newton: Yes, it is 50,930 for the last period, which was 2016-17. The actual Library note from the House of Commons Library is good on this and the Department for Education—

Q90 Chair: Did you write it, Sarah? Did you help write it? It would be rather good if you did.

Sarah Newton: No. The Department for Education is the lead, and in their regular stats that the Department for Education publish, they publish all the protected characteristics, including disabled people.

I want to bust that target and I am sure the Department for Education does. It is good to set ourselves goals, but I think they are a very minimum. I would like to see many more people than that with disabilities taking on apprenticeships, but it is good to have targets because it drives change.

Q91 Alex Burghart: Going back to Steve's point from earlier, what procedures are you putting in place to check that it is the Department's activity that is driving or contributing to this positive change?

Sarah Newton: The Department for Education is the lead on this and they do publish regular data on gov.uk both in terms of actions that the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Apprenticeship Employment Agency are taking in fulfilling the Maynard taskforce's recommendations and the numbers themselves. I am very proud, as the Minister for Disabled People, to have this cross-government reach. I do work very closely with Anne Milton, who is the Minister there, to make sure that all young people have these opportunities, pre-apprenticeships right into apprenticeships and into work, so we meet regularly to review progress.

There is a lot of investment in the DfE into supported internships. The DWP has just finished a trial, inspirational, listening to the local authorities who partnered with us in Portsmouth, Durham and Devon. I was meeting with them yesterday, the local authorities working with the DWP, with work coaches and special schools. There are hundreds of young people in the last few months that have had work experience in years 10 and 11, particularly those with learning difficulties, and the confidence and self-esteem and the benefit to them is huge. That has enabled local employers to feel more confident about offering work experience to children who then can go on to have supported internships and then hopefully on to apprenticeships.

Q92 Alex Burghart: These young people who are going on to apprenticeships, are they entitled to Access to Work as they do so? Are they entitled to reasonable adjustments? What supports are being put in place to make sure that there are not the same sort of barriers to moving into work that they might find if they were slightly older?

Sarah Newton: One of the key recommendations of the Maynard taskforce was that initial assessment of the workplace to make sure that all the reasonable adjustments would be made and would be supporting the individual. There is funding from the DfE that was part of the apprenticeship scheme to do that, so the Skills Funding Agency fund that. The work that I am doing with Anne Milton and the Department is to ease the transition, so while the funding supports that reasonable adjustment in the apprenticeship, when they are taken then on into the main workforce that there is a smooth transition for any support, and that will be done through Access to Work.

One of the reforms that I made to Access to Work in the recent series of improvements that I announced was that the planning to access Access to Work can start three months ahead of employment. It used to just be a month. People know as their apprenticeship is coming to an end they can now start the dialogue with Access to Work three months in advance so that there is a seamless transition of support as people go from their apprenticeships into their full-time positions.

Q93 Alex Burghart: You know because we have discussed this before in this Committee and outside it—and this is starting to encroach on the next question, Chair, so I apologise—I am very interested in how people can be given access to things like Access to Work and assistive technology while they are looking for work and while they are looking for apprenticeships so that they can feel confident to apply for certain jobs



and employers know that they have all their packages in place already and that there is not going to be this long transition period while everyone is trying to settle in.

Chair: Before you answer, Steve, do you want to come in on this as well?

Steve McCabe: Let Alex carry on. I want to come back on something else in a second.

Chair: All right, very good. Alex, this is one of your specialisms.

Alex Burghart: At the moment, although I acknowledge that the Department is doing a lot of good work in this area, it still feels a little bit like, "You go and get your job and then we will help you", rather than, "We will help you get everything in place so that you can find greater job opportunities". Is that something that the Department is mindful to change?

Sarah Newton: Alex, I completely share your ambition that all the support is there at every stage of the journey. I think that there is a lot more good work going on than you realise. I could write back and show at each stage with the different cohorts of people how we do that. You can use Access to Work for pre-employment support to get into work, but remember there is also all the individual support packages that are available in the Jobcentre for people, which can include all of that sort of thing, taxis to work, assistive technology.

What I am taking is a life course approach, so I want to make sure that for children who either have a statement in a regular school or in special schools, the teachers and everyone supporting them, the families, know about assistive technology, which will be on their phone, which will be on their tablet, which will be on the computer, and make sure everybody is absolutely aware of what is already available and that this happens all through their life.

One of the changes I made on Access to Work was portability. It used to be the case that the money went to the employer, or the assistive technology, whatever it was that was required to support somebody into work, and when the person moved jobs they had to go through the whole process again. Now that is portable. It goes with the individual. Of course, technology is constantly changing. Some assistive technology that you may have had when you were 13 or 14, and you have got used to and that's great, but by the time you get to be 21, there could be something else, so it is constant learning and constant training and support that we need to make available.

Q94 **Chair:** This is commendable for people who are not in the labour market, coming up available to the labour market, but Alex was also asking, as we did in our report, about people who have been searching for a very long time, who have been unemployed for a very long time. How can they access what they think will be their package of assistive technology to get them the jobs that they would like to do and believe they can do?



Sarah Newton: For those people who are furthest from the labour market, they would be referred into our Work and Health Programme providers. They would be getting specialist, tailor-made support from the work coaches, and they can be supported with assistive technology at that stage. It is a question of educating the whole system about the power of assistive technology. When we respond fully to your excellent inquiry, you will see the steps we are taking to make sure that that is happening. At every stage of people's lives, they can have access to people who can help them understand the technology that is available to help them.

Q95 **Chair:** I turn up at the Jobcentre, Sarah, and I need this package, I think, assistive technology, to get me into jobs that I have tried, but failed, to get before, and the package will cost a considerable amount of money. Will the work coaches be able to sanction that budget?

Sarah Newton: Absolutely, but it is actually not as expensive as you think; it is mostly already on devices that you have. I was really surprised when I got this job and I met with some of our Access to Work facilitators, and they said, "Here is your phone, Sarah. You just go here, here and here" and up came this menu of the most extraordinary amount of things that I had no idea existed. A lot of it is there but people do not realise it is there.

The assessors find the same when they go into companies to look at the support when somebody is going into work. People may think, "Oh, goodness, we are going to have to buy this new piece of software and we are going to have to buy this new piece of kit". No. They are shown how it is already there in the systems that those organisations use. It will be that for people who are supporting those people who are trying to get into work, for some people, an explanation of the technology that is available that they will be given that support for. If they do need to be helped with finance, yes, it will be there.

Q96 **Steve McCabe:** Could I come back on the question of the Government's targets for getting disabled people into work? As I understand it, the commitment is to get 1 million disabled people into work by 2027. I do not want to sound like a curmudgeon, but I have been looking at the figures the Minister provided, and in March of this year there were 4,500 paid employment commitments. At that rate, it would take 200 years, or more, to get a million people into work. The Minister was very confident and optimistic earlier and I know you said they are on a journey, but I do think you need to accelerate somewhat if you are going to get anywhere near the commitment you have given for 2027.

Sarah Newton: We are absolutely determined to do everything to meet that target. Disability Confident is one of the things that we are doing. Most people acquire disability while they are working so a big part of our "Improving Lives: the future of work, health and disability" is ensuring that people, as they acquire a disability or a health condition, at work are supported, where possible—obviously if people are too poorly to work,



HOUSE OF COMMONS

they must leave work and they must be supported—but where possible, to be supported to remain in employment. That is a lot of the other work strands—

Q97 **Steve McCabe:** That would be additional people going in. The commitment is to get an extra 1 million people in.

Sarah Newton: These would be people who would have fallen out of the workforce.

Q98 **Steve McCabe:** Yes, I know. You may be arresting the number who fall out, but the commitment is to get 1 million extra in.

Sarah Newton: Yes, it is.

Q99 **Steve McCabe:** I am saying that at the rate of progress on Disability Confident, it would take you over 200 years. You need to do a bit better than that, surely.

Sarah Newton: We are very ambitious and we are very committed to our target. In “Improving Lives: the future of work, health and disability”, there was a series of things that we are doing and, of course, we want to make sure that every company in our country, and every part of the public sector, is Disability Confident so that all of them will want to take on more people with disabilities. We are absolutely leaving no stone unturned with engaging with employers on how to do that.

Take this, for example. One of the innovation funded projects is working with a local enterprise partnership to see what the barriers are for small and medium-sized businesses in taking on people with disabilities. That is a fully funded project for two years, business led, in a particular part of the country. Over the course of those two years, they can further help us to develop what we are doing and that can be rolled out across the country.

Q100 **Chair:** We applaud the goal, as you got from the meeting. Our concern is how we are going to achieve it. I do not doubt the wish to; it is whether we are going to meet that target.

Sarah Newton: I think we have described, this morning, a huge amount of tests, evaluation, monitoring, sharing of data. We will be able to show you the progress that we are making over this 10-year plan that we have set in place.

Chair: We are going to come back in correspondence, if we may, Esther, to ask about how this is being monitored, because it is so crucial to the Government’s target overall, which we want you to achieve; there is no question about that.

Q101 **Neil Coyle:** I want to come back to Disability Confident and Access to Work, but first, in order to get more disabled people into work, there has to be trust with the Department and with the Jobcentres in particular. Disabled people have seen direct personal support withdrawn. Secretary of State, you say more disabled people will get more, but actually DLA



HOUSE OF COMMONS

means half a million disabled people get less and, as Ruth George just pointed out, half a million disabled people, at least, lose out under Universal Credit, including for things like severe disability premium. We have also seen that reduction in disability employment advisers and a drop in Access to Work, and we have seen increased pressure from sanctions, assessments, inaccuracy, and on individuals' health. It is that health aspect that lots of charities, including Mencap, have been in touch with us about. What assessment is the Department making of the cumulative impacts of the welfare changes on disabled people's readiness and ability for work?

James Wolfe: If you look at the numbers, the fact is, as we have discussed earlier in the hearing, that there are more disabled people in work—

Q102 **Neil Coyle:** As a percentage of working-age disabled people, are you saying?

James Wolfe: Certainly, the employment rate for disabled people is rising faster than for the general working-age population. Clearly, therefore, progress is being made in that direction. We have already talked a bit about the poverty numbers, which are obviously concerning but at least moving in the right direction.

What I do not accept is the caricature of the Department as being somehow the enemy of disabled people. We have talked a lot about all the different things we can do—

Q103 **Neil Coyle:** I can only go on my surgeries and the feedback we have had here. It is about trust. The question is about what assessment you have made about the impact of the changes on disabled people's preparedness for work.

James Wolfe: The outcome is there in the disability employment statistics. Clearly, we have an issue with the support group and ESA where for many years we have only seen 1% of people a month coming off the support group. That is why we—

Q104 **Chair:** The questions that have arisen today, which we will want to pursue, are about protection, income levels, and hardship. On this question that Neil is raising about the operation of the labour market—which is not in any way trying to undermine what you are doing, because we are totally behind you in wanting more disabled people to achieve employment—it could be, could it not, that given that we passed what many people thought to be the full employment level, that as the job market tightens employers are more willing to open their doors to disabled people in a way that they would not do in the past and, therefore, we would be seeing at this extraordinary stage of the economic cycle more disabled people getting jobs than otherwise? This is not to say that you should not be doing what you are doing and all the rest of it, but it might be that it is the tension in the labour market that is delivering success for disabled people moving into work more than the



programmes. I don't want to see a downturn but the real test of your programmes will be when the downturn does come, whether we in fact maintain that good record of larger numbers of disabled people getting whatever jobs are available and securing them over people who are not disabled. Isn't that the real test?

Esther McVey: That is why at this moment in time we showed that the rates for disabled people getting into work on the figures that we have are actually higher than for people who are not disabled, which is, again, all the different kinds of support we are putting in, in the various ways, and learning lessons from other good examples from around the world, putting in extra money, whether it was the extra support money, £300 million, into support, looking at different ways to do it and not having a one size fits all, doing smaller samples, doing all these randomised controls, supporting young people into apprenticeships, so a combination of those. It will be incremental and it will be with lots of different measures, bringing in more DEAs, having these community support officers, doing as much as we can to nudge the dial forward.

At the same time, what we have done is, for those people who are most disabled, helping them as much as possible. I look at the figures, whether it is DLA and PIP, and I look at the extra £9 billion in real terms. Extra has been spent on people with disabilities and health conditions. In the round, if you look at the money that has gone into helping people, and then if you look at the extra money that is going into helping people into work, and then you look at the extra increase on the number of disabled people getting into work—and by the way, they have told us they would like to do more—

Q105 **Neil Coyle:** This sounds very much the same as the response from the NAO. You are all saying there is a direct causal link between all of this but the NAO is saying you cannot prove it, you cannot provide any evidence, because you have not done any analysis. Where is the analysis to prove which intervention worked, because that is where you should direct the funding; that is where we want to see—

Esther McVey: That is why we have the randomised control. Equally, we are working more closely with Health. As I have said from the very beginning, it is not just what the benefit system does; it has to also be what Health is doing, hence these extra trials with Health making that a part of what is the conversation, what is the mentoring, what is the extra support you have there, and money and support is going through the health system to disabled people as well, also through the education system, so we are a part of the solution. Equally, that is why we set up the new inter-ministerial group, to make sure that everybody is coming to this journey together. When I talk about figures and the extra money that has gone in, some of it is from this Department, some of it is going to be from Health and some of it is going to be through Education.

Q106 **Neil Coyle:** It would be great to have, in your letter to the Committee afterwards, that breakdown by how many more disabled people are



HOUSE OF COMMONS

getting more, or whether some disabled people are getting more and a lot are getting less. We touched on learning disabilities in the apprenticeship offer and the Minister has pointed out how terrible it was to have that 6% employment rate. People with schizophrenia have a 5% employment rate. What specific interventions is the Department making for that group?

Sarah Newton: This is the really exciting work that we are doing with the Department of Health and this is using a really well-tested model of the IPS, which I mentioned earlier, where people with very considerable mental health problems can be supported into employment. I have met, with Health Ministers, teams of people working in north London and people with schizophrenia and other very severe mental health conditions. It is extraordinary how having a job literally saves people's lives.

However, again we are on a journey. It was very interesting listening to the consultants who were supporting these patients. They said, "If you had told me three years ago that my patients would be working, that that was possible, I just absolutely would not have believed you". Working with the medical profession to see work as a health outcome is really important. These have been big societal changes about seeing work as a positive health outcome.

I am not just saying all work is good, obviously it has to be the right work for the right person, and obviously there has to be good health and safety and good levels of employment and all the rest of it, but this work that has been done in the NHS, for which now the Department of Health is doubling the funding and will be expanding, is fantastic. Part of that is about changing the attitudes of doctors. It is also about training up a workforce. It is a very particular workforce and, as you know, the NHS has a lot of plans for investing in its future workforce, particularly in mental health services.

Q107 **Neil Coyle:** So we will see more people with severe disabilities going into work?

Sarah Newton: I am very confident about that because of the work that I have been seeing that has been done, and so well evaluated, in the NHS. However, we cannot just magic up a lot of very specialist health professionals who take six, seven, eight years to train, and although the investment is going in to train a lot more people in the NHS, particularly in mental health services, this will take time. I would love it if we could just recruit hundreds of people overnight but they just simply do not exist.

Q108 **Neil Coyle:** You are thinking offshore. It is good to hear that that work is going forward.

On Access to Work, which we have touched on as well, last year of all those who were assessed as needing support and accepted as requiring some support, 1,000 did not go on to receive any help. Why was this?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sarah Newton: I would have to look at the individual cases, but I imagine it is because—all employers have a responsibility under the Equality Act to make reasonable adjustments, but what we often find is that when Access to Work advisers do their workplace assessments with the disabled person and their employer, they find that the reasonable adjustments are things like being able to come into work a bit later so people do not have to go on the busy tube; they do not need funding. Or, as I was saying before, the assistive technology is already there. If you have any issues where people are saying that they were denied Access to Work, which meant they did not get a job, I want to hear about it.

Q109 **Neil Coyle:** This is the failure to provide equipment in particular, or transport in particular, or just disagreeing over ultimate costs, which is holding up people from beginning their jobs.

Sarah Newton: If you can give me any information—

Q110 **Neil Coyle:** About 10% of those who were being assessed. They are your figures. You want me to send you a breakdown of your figures in order for you to work out what has gone wrong?

Sarah Newton: No. The figures are on there but the figures do not indicate that something has gone wrong. Where I would see—

Q111 **Neil Coyle:** I would suggest that 1,000 people being assessed and not going on to achieve support in any one year would probably indicate a problem.

Sarah Newton: Not necessarily because it could be during those conversations that the employers can make the reasonable adjustments and they do not need to be funded through Access to Work. It is absolutely possible that that is the case.

What would be a failure would be if somebody could not take up employment as a result. If there was any evidence that people were not able to get a job in that circumstance, that would be a different matter.

Q112 **Neil Coyle:** Has the Department checked that any of those 1,000 have been blocked from starting their job or paying tax, for example?

Sarah Newton: I am sure I will be able to go back to the Access to Work team and they will be able to write to you to reassure you.

Neil Coyle: Fantastic. That would be really helpful.

Q113 **Neil Coyle:** I have another question on Disability Confident. Your letter does not provide the breakdown we were talking about at the start. It does not break down by sector, which is what we asked for, including private sector versus public. James mentioned earlier that the public sector should be doing this anyway, so it should not be part of this. Why is the public sector part of Disability Confident and why have you not broken down in table whatever it is—table 4, I think—by private sector? Can you provide that information might be the quick question?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sarah Newton: As far as I am concerned, we provided all the information requested, but if you feel there is some additional information that you want—

Neil Coyle: By private sector, yes, that would be great.

Sarah Newton: —then of course I will provide it.

Q114 **Neil Coyle:** Annex C also points out that of all those on levels 1 and 2, a job may have been offered to about 4,000 people, 4,500 people, out of 7,000 employers, so you have a lot of people in there, including 900 self-evaluating as disability ready, who have not offered a job. There is a significant gap. I think it would take close to 1,000 years to meet the target under this. Why are people allowed to be part of this who are not even offering a job?

Sarah Newton: Because it is part of a journey. They could offer supported internships, they could offer an apprenticeship, they could offer work experience. The independent research that we are commissioning at the moment, which we will share before the end of the year, is going back to the Disability Confident employers to see and ask them what difference being part of the scheme has made. We will be asking people about the numbers of people that they have brought into employment. We have been absolutely open. If there are changes that need to be made, we will make them, but it is about changing attitudes and it is a campaign about helping employers understand the benefits of employing people with disabilities and enabling them to do that, and it is part of a journey and we will be constantly looking to see how we can do more.

Q115 **Chair:** Thank you. The last question, Angus. Your research is clearly a part of this whole complex of changes that the Department is bringing through. When do you think we are going to see the results?

Angus Gray: The different trials deliver at different times. We are expecting some initial results from one of our first randomised control trials called Groupwork, which we finished in March. The initial results will be available to us in the autumn. The bigger trials, the Health-led trials, the interim report I think is in 2020 and then the final results after that. It struck me that partly because of the inevitable focus of this Committee, some of the specifics we are doing you may not be aware of so I thought that one of the things we could do is to write you a short note on those big trials and what the dates are so that you are fully aware of what we are testing and where.

Chair: Angus, thank you. Esther and Sarah, James, Angus, thank you very much.

Sarah Newton: Could I make one correction? It is the Kentish Town Jobcentre, not the Finsbury Park Jobcentre, that is doing the Calm Quiet day for people with learning disabilities and on the autistic spectrum. That is my mistake. It is Kentish Town, not Finsbury Park.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Chair: Thank you.