



The Rt. Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP
Chairman of the Work and Pensions
Select Committee

24th May 2023

Dear Sir Stephen

It was a pleasure to appear before the Committee alongside the Minister for Disabled People, Work and Health, and departmental officials. I am writing to follow up on points discussed during the session on 3 May 2023, where more detail was requested than we provided at the time. Much of the clarification is contained in the letter sent to the Committee by the Secretary of State on 2nd May.

Restart Statistics

I am pleased to inform the Committee that the Department will begin publishing 6 monthly routine Restart Scheme statistics, starting on 8 June 2023 as announced on 5 May 2023. These will include demographics and volumes of referrals, starts, first earnings, job outcomes and performance by contract area, month, and cohort.

Kickstart

At the Committee, you asked about the aim to get young people in the Kickstart scheme to spend 52 days or more off benefit and 80 or more days in work compared to those not taking part in the scheme. This initial estimate was based on the Future Jobs Fund. Work is underway to understand the impact of Kickstart in terms of extra time spent in work as part of the impact assessment. As this intends to measure the long-term impact of Kickstart, sufficient time needs to pass to observe movement into work and make a comparable estimate.

During the lifetime of the scheme, over 163,000 Kickstart roles were started by young people and around 7 in 10 participants were in paid employment 10 months after starting their Kickstart job.

The department has now completed the fieldwork for the process evaluation of the Kickstart Scheme and we intend to publish the findings in due course.

Returnerships

I was asked to provide more information on Returnerships, an expansion of which was announced in the Budget. Returnerships¹ are targeted at people over the age of 50 who are returning to work or seeking a career change. Returnerships bring together

¹ [Budget 2023: What are 'returnerships' and who are they for? - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2023/04/27/budget-2023-what-are-returnerships-and-who-are-they-for/)

Apprenticeships, Skills Bootcamps and Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs).

Both the Department for Education and Jobcentre Plus will raise awareness of these pathways, providing a clear route back into work and encouraging employers to hire older workers.

In the Spring Budget, the Government announced additional funding of £63.2 million over the 23-24 and 24-25 financial years to increase the availability of Skills Bootcamps and SWAPs. This includes £34.4 million of additional funding for Skills Bootcamps, helping up to 8,000 more people to benefit from this transformational scheme, with an aim of delivering 64,000 training places from the 24-25 financial year. We expect this will result in around 1,000 Skills Bootcamps starts for the over 50s based on current participation rates by age.

Jobcentre Plus is also expanding SWAPs, supported by £28.8 million of additional funding, to increase the number of places available and make the programme more accessible. This will provide for 80,000 new SWAPs starts in England and Scotland in each of the two financial years 23/24 and 24/25.

Returnerships are being promoted as part of the Department for Education's Skills for Life campaign and by Work Coaches in Jobcentre Plus as part of their support to over 50s claimants.

Way to Work

On Way to Work statistics, following the letter² from the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), dated 29 June 2022, the Head of Profession for Statistics in DWP held conversations with senior officials in the OSR to discuss DWP's approach in this instance, and more generally.

I am committed to my Department upholding the principles of the Code of Practice for Statistics and, through our regular engagement with the OSR, our Head of Profession for Statistics has reassured them of this commitment and that we aim to release information in a way that supports openness and intelligent transparency.

To clarify, as explained in the oral evidence, the Department achieved its ambition to see at least 500,000 people move into work from Universal Credit (Intensive Work Search) or JSA during the campaign.

Provision access

I was asked whether providers were capable of supporting individuals who live in one Contract Provision Area but are looking for work in another. As a general rule, the policy design for provision centres around the relationship between the participant, Jobcentre Plus and the Provider. As discussed by Rhodri Thomas, Managing Director of Reed in Partnership at the Committee hearing on 8 February, provision is designed around the participant's needs and we expect the Provider to facilitate a job search even if it falls outside their Contract Provision Area and collaborate with other Providers in the interests of the participant to share job vacancies and insight.

Where provision sits within other systems e.g. employment support delivered within health, the person-centred approach continues to be key, but ability to access support in another area may depend on the service. For example:

² [Ed Humpherson to Peter Schofield: Department for Work and Pensions \(DWP\) Way to Work target and use of figures by government – Office for Statistics Regulation \(statisticsauthority.gov.uk\)](#)

- For Employment Advisers in NHS Talking Therapies, clients will generally self-refer. They can refer themselves to a service of their choice and this can be in their locality, near their place of work, or in another area that is more convenient for them to travel to. This is especially true in areas like London where there are services that are co-terminus with local authority boundaries and less common in rural areas where NHS Talking Therapies providers cover whole counties. In addition, it is perfectly straightforward for a client to receive treatment from NHS Talking Therapies and receive their employment support from another provider (for example: JCP; Access to Work Mental Health Support; local specialist employment support provider).
- For Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care (IPSPC) the grants were issued to enable authorities to improve employment and health outcomes in their local area. An individual needs to be resident in one of the participating local authorities to be eligible for the support but the employment can be outside of the contract provision area if they are able to support the participant.

Levelling Up Partnerships

I said I would provide more detail on the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' (DLUHC) Levelling Up Partnerships programme. This is a £400m programme targeted at 20 of the most left behind areas in England to identify and implement interventions that will help overcome a range of barriers to levelling up. The first two areas DLUHC are focusing on are Kingston upon Hull and Sandwell. DLUHC then plan to move through another 18 places³ in England. DLUHC led a Deep Dive programme as a forerunner to Levelling Up Partnerships. Deep Dives, similar to Levelling Up Partnerships in design, were carried out last year in Blackpool, Grimsby and Blyth.

Devolution

I also agreed to provide more on our work with Manchester and the West Midlands Combined Authorities. As set out in the Levelling Up White Paper the Government committed to the creation of new Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and deeper devolution deals for two trailblazer areas – Greater Manchester (GMCA) and West Midlands (WMCA). DLUHC led negotiations for these deals.

The Department has agreed both GMCA and WMCA can have a role in future new employment programmes, including a role in co-design and, unless a national approach is deemed necessary, a starting assumption of a delegated delivery model, subject to readiness conditions, including strengthened accountability arrangements, which are yet to be decided.

Sanctions

We discussed the upcoming automation of the 'Failure to Attend' referral process. This estimated to save 2 minutes per referral and is due to be rolled out on 17 May. Reports from the 3 test sites have been very positive; Work Coaches report that re-engagement with customers has significantly improved. The streamlined process not only makes it easier for Jobcentre colleagues but also for customers to understand what is expected of them.

³ [Levelling Up Partnerships: methodology note - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-partnerships-methodology-note)

New Enterprise Allowance

The New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) programme, funded by DWP, started in April 2011. A qualitative evaluation was undertaken between October 2012 and February 2013 to explore the programme's effectiveness and the extent to which it was meeting its objectives and the findings were published⁴ in 2013.

These findings led to the eligibility criteria for the programme being widened to include additional groups of claimants. A quantitative survey of 15,000 NEA participants⁵ was undertaken in 2016, which reported on the extent to which NEA participants went on to start their own business, and the sustainability and characteristics of business start-ups.

The findings of the evaluation and the survey were both used to inform the design of the second phase of NEA, which started in April 2017. The programme was due to finish at the end of 2021. In June 2021, the then-Secretary of State decided not to fund a replacement programme, and the programme closed to new referrals on 31 December 2021.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

I agreed to share details of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities decision to lift the partial UK Shared Prosperity Fund people and skills restrictions at the Work and Pensions Select Committee on May 3rd, 2023.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities led fund – the Minister in charge is Dehenna Davison, Minister for Levelling Up. Its objective is to build pride in place and increase life chances through three main investment priorities: community and place; supporting local Business; and people and skills.

When it launched in April 2022 lead Local Authorities were asked to focus UK Shared Prosperity Fund investments on communities and place and local business interventions in 2022-23 and 2023-24 in England, alongside support for people through the Multiply adult numeracy programme, to complement the residual employment and skills funding from the European Social Fund.

Lead Authorities were given flexibility to invest in people and skills interventions in 2022-23 and 2023-24 where the voluntary and community sector was at risk of funding from the European Social Fund ending before 2024-25.

At the 2023 Spring Budget, following the Prime Minister's commitment to understand and address barriers to economic inactivity, a package of new support measures was announced to support economically inactive people into employment.

These new measures complement and align with UK Shared Prosperity Fund people and skills interventions on a local level.

To ensure local areas have full flexibility to align to the Spring Budget measures and respond to local need, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities removed the restriction on people and skills spending in England, giving lead authorities flexibility to invest in people and skills provision from April 2023, when previously only allowed from April 2024.

⁴ [rrep836.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵ [New Enterprise Allowance Survey - DWP report 915 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

This decision was communicated to lead authorities by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 23rd March, the announcement was not part of the Spring Budget, but complementary to the measures announced in it.

DWP is committed to working with and supporting local leaders to ensure the alignment of national support (including the programmes announced in the Spring Budget) and local support (including devolved funding such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund) through our national policy teams and regional engagement teams.

It is for local areas to decide how to deliver the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, but Government continues to advise lead local authorities to work collectively across broader geographies and other local employment and skills funds to ensure national and local employment and skills interventions are properly coordinated.

We trust that this information provides clarity on the various queries raised.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Guy Opperman', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Guy Opperman MP
Minister for Employment



Work and Pensions Committee

26 May 2023

Guy Opperman MP
Minister for Employment
Department for Work and Pensions
(By e-mail only)

Dear Guy

Follow-up to 3 May Committee session on Plan for Jobs and employment support

Thank you for your letter following up on points discussed during the Committee session on 3 May 2023 where the Committee had requested additional detail from the Department. The information you have provided is helpful. There are a few points on which I would appreciate if the Department could provide further clarification or additional information to the Committee:

- 1) The Committee looks forward to the publication of the Department's evaluation of the Kickstart Scheme. Will this evaluation include programme outcomes against the target that aimed for participants to spend 52 days or more off benefits and 80 days or more in work, compared to those who have not taken part in the scheme?
- 2) Your response on 24th May did not comment on what information the Department holds on savings resulting from the conditionality regime or the cost of administering the regime. What information does the Department gather on this matter?
- 3) Thank you for the additional information on Returnerships. Could you please also provide the Committee with the evidence which has been gathered on Returnerships, including outcomes from pilots?
- 4) Is the Department planning to undertake an end of programme evaluation of the National Enterprise Allowance scheme, which ended last year, in addition to the 2013 qualitative evaluation and the 2016 quantitative survey?
- 5) The Committee welcomes the Department's intention to move towards a delegated delivery model with the creation of new Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and the ambition to involve the two pilot areas—Greater Manchester (GMCA) and West Midlands (WMCA)—in the development of this initiative. Please could you provide the Committee with the results of the pilot projects with GMCA, WMCA and any other pilot MCAs?

I would be grateful for your response to these questions by Friday 2nd June. As is usual practice with the Committee's correspondence, I will be publishing this letter and your response on the Committee's website.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stephen Timms". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee