



Department
for Work &
Pensions

The Rt Hon Mel Stride MP
Secretary of State for Work & Pensions

Caxton House
Tothill Street
London, SW1H 9AJ

Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP
Chair, Work and Pensions Select Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

7 March 2024

Dear Stephen,

Plan for Jobs and employment support – inquiry follow-up

Thank you for your letter of 22 February 2024 following up on three specific points made in the Government's response to the Committee's Report: Plan for Jobs and employment support. Please see below in response to the questions you raised:

1. The response stated that a review of the Disability Confident Scheme, started in 2021, had recently been completed, and that officials were refining recommendations from this review. What are the findings from this review and when will these be published? What changes do you intend to implement as a result?

Following the decision that the National Disability Strategy was lawful, work on the Disability Confident Review resumed in August 2023 and the recommendations were finalised. The recommendations including the findings of [Disability Confident Scheme: findings from a survey of participating employers](#) were agreed with the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work and circulated to c.60 stakeholders representing public, private and third sector, in autumn 2023. These recommendations are attached (Annex A).

DWP is implementing the recommendations over the course of 2024, beginning with recommendations strengthening the scheme criteria for all members and tailoring the scheme for SMEs. The Department is working closely with the Disability Confident Business Leaders Group and Professional Advisers Group to take this forward.

2. The response outlined a number of changes that would soon be implemented alongside the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023. These included a commitment to make the right to request a flexible working arrangement apply from the first day of employment, and a commitment to produce comprehensive guidance to explain the business case for flexible working. What progress has been made with fulfilling these commitments?

The Government has laid regulations to make the right to request flexible working apply from day one of employment. This measure will bring an estimated 2.6 million more employees in scope of the entitlement. This will come into force along with the measures in the Act on 6 April this year.

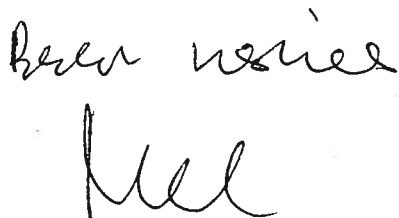
Work on guidance is underway by the Department for Business and Trade which will set out the business case for flexible working and it will also explain the implications of the statutory changes. This will be published along with the legislative measures on 6 April.

3. The response accepted that the way Universal Credit and Housing Benefit interact for people in supported housing needs to be addressed and, in subsequent correspondence with the Committee, you said that such an amendment would take a minimum of 6 to 12 months to implement. How is work on this progressing four months on?

Officials continue to develop policy and delivery options to improve the customer experience for those in supported accommodation. Any options involving further investment in work incentives would require Treasury approval in the normal way.

I look forward to our continued engagement with the Committee in future.

Yours sincerely,

The image shows a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is written in a cursive style and appears to read 'Mel Stride'. It is positioned to the right of the 'Yours sincerely,' text.

**Rt Hon Mel Stride MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions**

Annex A - Summary of Disability Confident Review recommendations

- **Strengthen scheme Level 1 for large employers:** Level 1 criteria should be strengthened to ensure it is appropriately challenging for large employers and to increase expectations of progression from Level 1 to higher scheme levels.
- **Tailor the scheme for SMEs:** Smaller employers (micro and small) should need to meet relevant scheme criteria commensurate to their size and resources available across all scheme levels. Appropriate advice and guidance should support the criteria.
- **Improve the Business Case for Scheme Progression:** There needs to be a clearer case of the benefits of progressing through the scheme levels for employers. Make the process of how to progress clearer in guidance and provide relevant case studies / scenarios that also demonstrate the value of progression.
- **Increasing expectations of Members to promote the scheme:** More should be asked of Disability Confident employers to actively promote the scheme. This should be at all levels but particularly at Level 2 and Level 3.
- **Reporting:** On reporting there should be more emphasis on collecting qualitative data, particularly for large employers. Capturing the views of disabled employees should be encouraged and use of the Voluntary Reporting Framework.
- **Demonstrate Continuous Improvement:** At all scheme levels members should be required to demonstrate continuous improvement, this should be considered in parallel with the length of membership period before renewal is due.
- **Provide additional guidance on the Offer of an Interview commitment:** Offer of an Interview guidance should be clarified and include implementation advice and examples. Consider if there are wider options for incorporating Positive Action.
- **Review and refresh the Employer Packs, Validation Guidance, tools and resources:** Providing clear guidance for each level of the scheme and a validators guide outlining the evidence requirements and expected quality with improved tools and resources.
- **Scheme Communications:** Improve Scheme Communications through a range of channels.



Work and Pensions Committee

22 February 2024

Mel Stride MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Department for Work and Pensions
(By e-mail only)

Dear Mel,

Plan for Jobs and employment support – inquiry follow-up

In the Government Response to the Committee's Report, *Plan for Jobs and employment support*, you responded to a number of our recommendations with assurances that work would be happening in the near future. I am writing to follow-up on some of these points and see what progress the Department has made four months on from the Government Response.

I would therefore be grateful if you could provide an update on the following points:

1. The response stated that a review of the Disability Confident Scheme, started in 2021, had recently been completed, and that officials were refining recommendations from this review. What are the findings from this review and when will these be published? What changes do you intend to implement as a result?
2. The response outlined a number of changes that would soon be implemented alongside the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023. These included a commitment to make the right to request a flexible working arrangement apply from the first day of employment, and a commitment to produce comprehensive guidance to explain the business case for flexible working. What progress has been made with fulfilling these commitments?
3. The response accepted that the way Universal Credit and Housing Benefit interact for people in supported housing needs to be addressed and, in subsequent correspondence with the Committee, you said that such an amendment would take a minimum of 6 to 12 months to implement. How is work on this progressing four months on?

I would be grateful for your response to these questions by Thursday 7 March. 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,

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