



Department
for Work &
Pensions

THE RT HON LIZ KENDALL MP
Secretary of State for Work & Pensions

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Tothill Street
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Lord Bridges of Headley MBE
Chair, Lords Economic Affairs Committee
House of Lords
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26 November 2024

Dear Lord Bridges,

Today, the Government has published the Get Britain Working White Paper – bringing forward the biggest reforms to employment support in a generation and turning a department of welfare into a genuine department for work. This takes the first steps towards delivering our bold ambition of an 80% employment rate, through a decade of national renewal. I wanted to share some key updates with you.

The UK is the only country in the G7 whose employment rate hasn't returned to pre-pandemic levels. We have a near record 2.8 million people out of work due to long-term sickness or disability. Almost a million young people are not in education, employment or training. Millions are stuck in low paid, insecure work.

To turn the page on this, nothing short of a fundamentally different approach is needed. Our White Paper brings in three major reforms to:

- **Create a new jobs and careers service, overhauling Jobcentres from a one size fits all service that overwhelmingly focuses on administering benefits into a genuine public employment service providing personalised help and support.** We will bring Jobcentres together with the National Careers Service in England, beginning with a pathfinder early next year. We'll work closely with mayors and local leaders to ensure the new service is rooted in local communities and properly joined up with local health and support. We'll work closely with employers so it better meets their needs. We will also test, trial and develop a radically improved digital offer, using the latest technologies and AI to provide up to date information on jobs, skills and other support, and to free up work coach time. This is backed with £55m of initial funding.
- **Establish a new Youth Guarantee in England to ensure every young person is earning or learning.** We will bring together all the different support for 18- to 21-year-olds under the leadership of Mayors and local areas to ensure all young people have access to education, training, and employment opportunities once they reach 18, and that no-one misses out. Backed with £45m of funding, we have announced eight trailblazers for our youth guarantee (in Liverpool City Region, the West Midlands, Tees Valley, East Midlands, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, West of England, and 2 areas within Greater London). We have also announced a

new national partnership to provide exciting new opportunities for young people in sports, arts and culture. We will invest in young people and give them the choices and chances they deserve, but in return they will have a responsibility to take up the training or work that's on offer.

- **Address the growing and unsustainable problem of people being out of work due to poor health.** We are already taking action to drive down waiting lists, including with targeted support at the 20 NHS Trusts with the highest economic inactivity. We're joining up employment and health support, for example by expanding Individual Placement Support and piloting new WorkWell services. However, we need to go much further and faster to tackle this issue.

To meet the scale of the challenge, **we will devolve new funding, powers and responsibilities to tackle economic inactivity to Mayors and local areas. Because local leaders know their communities best.** We will support all areas in England to produce local Get Britain Working Plans – joining up work, health and skills support. Today we have announced 8 trailblazers, backed by £125m of funding (in West Yorkshire, North East, South Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Wales, York and North Yorkshire, and 2 Greater London areas). To kick start this work, we're funding a new supported employment programme called Connect to Work – backed by £115 million of initial funding for next year.

Alongside this action, **we have announced an independent “Keep Britain Working” review.** This will look at the role of UK employers and government in tackling health-related economic inactivity and creating and maintaining healthy workplaces. This will be led by the former Chair of John Lewis, Sir Charlie Mayfield and report in the Autumn.

And **we will bring forward in the Spring a Green Paper setting out proposals on reforming the health and disability benefits system.** This will ensure disabled people and those with health conditions have the same rights and opportunities as everybody else including the right to work, they are treated with dignity and respect, and the system responds to the complex and fluctuating nature of the health conditions that so many people living with today. We will work closely with disabled people and representative organisations as we develop our proposals.

These ambitious reforms will require expert input and collaboration with a range of stakeholders. To support this, I am pleased to confirm we will be forming a Youth Guarantee Advisory Panel and a disability panel to ensure that these voices are at the heart of our reforms.

The Labour Market Advisory Board will continue to provide insight, ideas and challenge to UK Government, and we will carry out in depth engagement with devolved governments, local authorities, civil society groups, employers and trade unions as we develop and implement these reforms.

Many of the policy areas described in this White Paper are devolved in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Where this is the case, the focus is on the actions the UK Government will take in England. The UK Government will work closely with the Devolved Governments to maximise positive outcomes and learning across the UK whilst

respecting devolution settlements. Within Great Britain we will work with the Scottish and Welsh Government to ensure all aspects of our new approach to delivering employment support partner effectively with devolved provision, including but not limited to skills, health and careers as well as Scottish and Welsh Government-funded employment support.

To deliver change, we need action across government, which is why this White Paper has been developed with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Education and with input from the Department for Health and Social Care and many other departments.

I look forward to working constructively with colleagues across Parliament, including the Lords Economic Affairs Committee, as we develop and deliver our White Paper proposals. They are real reforms that will help more people into better jobs, to give young people the chance of a better life, and to make sure our employment and social security system understands that a healthy nation and a healthy economy are two sides of the same coin. This is how we get Britain working again and how we get Britain growing again.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liz Kendall', written in a cursive style.

RT HON LIZ KENDALL MP