



**Department
for Work &
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**Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
Palace of Westminster
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Sent electronically

30 June 2025

Dear Sir Geoffrey

Following the committee's session to discuss the National Audit Office's (NAO) report 'Supporting people to work through Jobcentres' on 15 May 2025, I am writing to update the committee on changes we are making to the frequency and length of appointments for service users in our Jobcentres.

As you are aware from the NAO's report and evidence presented to the Committee, the department has faced pressure in recent years in Jobcentres due to a mismatch between the demand on work coach time and the supply of work coaches. As a result, since September 2023 we operated a national framework for local flexibility which provides jobcentres that are under the most pressure in terms of work coaches' caseload with guidance on how to prioritise their resources in a consistent way.

The NAO's report made reference to work the department has been taking forward to examine whether some of the measures in the local flexibility framework could be made permanent, to help manage demand pressures without adversely affecting outcomes for claimants, benefit expenditure, or fraud and error. This work has now concluded and so I am writing to update the committee on changes that we will be implementing in Jobcentres as a result.

Ministers have agreed the following changes which will be introduced in Jobcentres from June 2025:

- To reduce the frequency of appointments for customers in the Intensive Work Search group with employed earnings from weekly or fortnightly to every 8-weeks. We are making this change on the basis of evidence from our In-Work progression Randomised Control Trial¹ which showed no statistically significant difference in earnings outcomes between those receiving fortnightly interventions and those seen every eight weeks.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-in-work-progression-randomised-controlled-trial>

- After 13 weeks of a customer's claim, all customers in the Intensive Work Search group (excluding those with earnings) will be seen fortnightly for 10 minutes, compared to 50% currently being seen weekly for 10-20 minutes. We are making this change on the basis that Randomised Control trials have shown weekly reviews are more effective before week 13 than after week 13, relative to fortnightly interventions.²
- The first claimant commitment meeting, where customers are talked through the requirements of their claims, will be shortened from 50 minutes to 30 minutes. There is no formal evidence on the impact of this change, but feedback from frontline staff suggests that customers can be supported within the reduced time frame. However, where a customer needs longer than the 30 minutes provided, a further appointment may be offered depending on individual circumstances.

These changes are being implemented in Jobcentres across the country to ensure we have a consistent national support offer. As a result of these changes, we will no longer operate a national framework for local flexibility.

We continue to monitor and review our Jobcentre support to ensure we are delivering for our customers within our operating constraints.

I am also copying this letter to the Work and Pensions Select Committee, as Johanna Baxter attended the Public Accounts Committee hearing on 15 May and because of their ongoing inquiry into Jobcentres.

Yours sincerely

Lee Skelton

Sir Peter Schofield KCB
Permanent Secretary

² <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b3b6d40e5274a70075629e9/weekly-work-search-review-trial.pdf>