



Department
for Work &
Pensions

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Debbie Abrahams MP
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee
House of Commons
London
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Via email

7 August 2025

Work and Pensions Committee Inquiry: 'Reforming Jobcentres'

Dear Debbie Abrahams MP,

Thank you for your letter on 17 July asking for further detail on some of the topics discussed in the evidence session on 11 June. Please see below responses to these requests.

Changes to the claimant commitment

Findings from our internal review of the claimant commitment say that the current process spends too much time on system administration, at the expense of providing quality, tailored support. Our new approach is being initially testing through the Wakefield pathfinder.

We are testing separating the content of the first meeting into two. In the first meeting, conversations between the customer and work coach focus on benefits, work-related conditions and consequences. In the second meeting, the conversation focuses on work and skills.

This represents a change from business as usual when everything is discussed in a single appointment, where support offered is a secondary aspect. The aim of this new approach is to ensure conversations are focused on forward-looking employment support. Attending appointments will continue to be mandatory but we are testing different ways of helping claimants to engage in work-related activities.

Targeting work coach time

Particular customer groups are entitled to more time with their work coach to support them into employment. We currently refer to this as additional work coach support for

people with health conditions and disabled people, and additional work coach time for those that are 50 and over.

Additional work coach support helps disabled people to access employment and wider support earlier. It is available for claimants on Universal Credit who are awaiting their Work Capability Assessment and those who have been found to have 'limited capability for work' or 'limited capability for work and work-related activity' that want or could benefit from more help to move into work. It is also available for Employment Support Allowance claimants. For claimants who have been found to have limited capability for work and work-related activity following a Work Capability Assessment, all participation in this support and interviews is voluntary. Work Coaches can also draw on the expertise of Disability Employment Advisers who offer advice on how to help disabled people into work.

Earlier this year, the Department published the qualitative and quantitative findings from the evaluation of additional work coach support¹². The evaluation showed that this time has been positively received by customers, who valued the empathetic, tailored assistance and consistent relationships with work coaches that helped improve their wellbeing and provided effective referrals. As a result of the evaluation findings, refreshed guidance was issued reiterating some key principles around consistency in work coaching, building relationships, tailoring support and making use of Disability Employment Advisers.

On 6 March 2025 we also announced that in 25/26 we will increase support to help people with health conditions and disabled people towards and into work by deploying 1,000 work coaches to support them.

Additional work coach time is available for eligible older jobseekers claiming Universal Credit across Great Britain. This provides more intensive, tailored support during the first nine months of their claim and is additional to the skills provision and job search support that Work Coaches currently offer to claimants on Universal Credit. Claimants who are 50 and over in the Intensive Work Search regime, not self-employed, have not reported health conditions that require a Work Capability Assessment and not already taking part in a contracted provision are eligible for additional work coach time.

Jobcentre in your pocket

The term "Jobcentre in your pocket" aims to describe how we can improve our digital service for customers to enable them to access the support and services they need. Through the new Jobs and Careers Service, we will provide a modern, joined up and enhanced digital service. This will use up-to-date technology to offer personalised

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-experience-of-additional-work-coach-support-findings-from-qualitative-interviews-with-customers>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-impact-of-additional-jobcentre-plus-support-on-the-employment-outcomes-of-disabled-people/the-impact-of-additional-jobcentre-plus-support-on-the-employment-outcomes-of-disabled-people>

support and data to join up government and improve how the labour market functions, locally and nationally. This will drive growth of the local and national economy, as well as modernising and improving the services we provide.

We want to build a universal service. Anyone who wants to look for work, wants help to increase their earnings, or who wants help to change their career or re-train – benefit claimant or not – will be able to use the same tools and advice to plan, find or progress in work. We are currently exploring what an enhanced digital service for employers, customers and DWP colleagues will look like.

We are using a test and learn approach, using prototypes and working with partners to understand how we shape the new service to best meet a broader range of customer needs. More details about our digital plans will be shared soon.

Metrics for the new jobs and careers service

In April, the Government published its Get Britain Working Outcome metrics.³ These show some of the indicators that the government will continue to monitor closely. We will publish an annual update outlining trends in relation to these statistics.

The new Jobs and Careers Service will focus on increasing the employment rate at a national level, supporting our ambitions to both increase the rate to 80% and reduce regional disparities in employment rates. It will also focus on increasing earnings, helping individuals to boost their skills, as well as helping them move into higher paid, higher quality, and more productive work. This is a fundamental change in approach, and we are currently updating our performance framework to account for differences we expect to see in the new service.

We are taking a test and learn approach to develop the new service supported by evaluation. Some of this evaluation is already underway including through our first Pathfinder in Wakefield. Our evaluation strategy for the design and delivery of the new service is under development and is part of a wider Evidence and Evaluation Strategy for our labour market reforms which we published recently⁴. We intend to publish research from this strategy in line with Government Social Research processes at a future date.

Accountability for careers services

The Department for Education is currently responsible for the National Careers Service, which provides free, impartial careers information, advice and guidance to young people (aged 13+) and adults, irrespective of benefit status in England. Skills and careers support will remain the responsibility of Devolved Governments. We will continue to work closely with the Devolved Governments and the careers support agencies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure services are aligned.

The National Careers Service is delivered through nine regional contracts via five prime contractors with multiple sub-contractors. The Department for Education

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-britain-working-outcomes/get-britain-working-outcomes>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-and-evaluation-strategy-2025/evidence-and-evaluation-strategy-2025>

continues to manage these contracts, and they have been extended until September 2026.

We have committed to bring Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service together in England as part of our plans to reform Jobcentre Plus. We are in the design stage of the new Jobs and Careers Service, working closely with the Department for Education and more details will be shared in due course.

Closing the disability employment gap

The current way of measuring disability, using the Labour Force Survey and based on the Equality Act 2010 definition, began in 2013/14. Between then and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (2019/20) the disability employment gap closed from 32.7 to 28.1 percentage points – an average reduction of 0.8 percentage points a year. This progress has slowed with the gap closing at an average of 0.2 percentage points a year between 2020/21 and 2023/24. The latest annual estimates for 2023/24 show the gap now stands at 27.2 percentage points. These trends will be influenced by external factors such as the size and composition of the underlying disabled population and overall labour market performance, as well as interventions both from within and outside of Government. For example, research by the University of Sheffield showed that rising education levels were a key factor in the fall in the disability employment gap over the past decade.⁵

As I set out in my letter on the 17 July, the Government does not currently have a specific numerical target for the disability employment rate gap but is committed to reducing it and we are currently considering the importance of closing this gap as an outcome of a wide range of policy under development.

The Minister for Social Security and Disability and I welcome the Work and Pensions Committee inquiry on employment support for disabled people and its subsequent report ⁶.

I hope this information is helpful and look forward to reading the Committee's report in due course.

With very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alison McGovern'.

Alison McGovern MP
Minister for Employment

⁵ <https://sheffield.ac.uk/economics/research/impact-and-knowledge-exchange/unpacking-disability-employment-gap>

⁶ <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/9270/>