

Work and Pensions Committee

Get Britain Working: Creating a new jobs and careers service

Fifth Report of Session 2024–25

HC 1286

Work and Pensions Committee

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Summary

The Government is aiming to transform the employment support it delivers via its network of Jobcentres. As part of this, it plans to integrate the National Careers Service (NCS) with Jobcentres, creating a new jobs and careers service that focuses on building people's skills and careers.

Bringing together the NCS and Jobcentres is an exciting opportunity to achieve much more than just administrative change. Integrating the two services could be a vital step in changing the culture of the employment support that Jobcentres deliver, shifting from a short-term focus on finding work to a long-term focus on building sustainable careers, with a much greater emphasis on people's aspirations and development. It could also provide greater support for in-work progression, especially for people in low paid or insecure work.

However, without a more ambitious and energetic approach to implementing the changes, the new service risks becoming little more than a rebranding exercise. The Government announced the new service ten months ago. We are concerned that it has so far only provided an outline sketch of how it will integrate the NCS with Jobcentres, and that key challenges to the planned merger remain unresolved. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has yet to address important issues such as contract changes, accountability structures and devolution arrangements. This lack of progress is troubling—combining two established organisations, with different cultures, objectives and ways of working, is a major task. The absence of information is also creating uncertainty for the staff of both services. The Government must urgently bring forward more details on how it will bring together the two services and how the new service will operate.

To ensure the success of the new jobs and careers service, we also recommend that DWP and the Department for Education develop a strategy for adult careers guidance. This is needed to bring coherence to the patchwork of services currently available, and to ensure that the new jobs and careers service is aligned with the Government's wider vision for the sector.

1 Introduction

Our inquiry

1. Our Committee is running a series of ‘Get Britain Working’ inquiries, examining the Government’s planned reforms to achieve an 80% employment rate. We launched our first inquiry in this series in January 2025.¹ Our report, *Get Britain Working: Reforming Jobcentres*, was published on 8 September 2025.² In preparing that report, we decided that the planned merger of the National Careers Service (NCS) and Jobcentres to create a new jobs and careers service warranted a separate report. We expect the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to work with the Department for Education (DfE) on the Government response to this report.
2. Our report examines careers advice within the scope of the new jobs and careers service. It does not offer a complete discussion of adult careers services in the UK, which was not part of the terms of reference for this inquiry. It also does not look at the provision of careers advice for those in full-time education, which is beyond the remit of our Committee.
3. Further details of the evidence we received and the activities we undertook during our reforming Jobcentres inquiry are set out in the introduction to that report.³ As with that report, we are grateful to all those who contributed to the inquiry, and the wealth of experience they provided.

A new jobs and careers service

4. In November 2024, as part of reforms to employment support set out in the *Get Britain Working White Paper*, the Government announced its plan to create a new jobs and careers service:

We will create a new single and universal service, reforming Jobcentre Plus and providing a stronger focus on skills and careers. The new service will cover Great Britain but will be flexible, operating differently

1 Work and Pensions Committee, [Get Britain Working: Reforming Jobcentres](#), opened January 2025

2 Work and Pensions Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2024–25, [Get Britain Working: Reforming Jobcentres](#), HC 653

3 Work and Pensions Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2024–25, [Get Britain Working: Reforming Jobcentres](#), HC 653, para 6

in different areas to reflect local systems and needs—including reflecting devolution settlements in Scotland and Wales. It will provide support for anyone who is looking for work, who wants to get on in work, or who wants to change their career or retrain.⁴

Jobcentres

5. Every year, millions of people attend Jobcentres for help with their benefits and support to find a job. Jobcentre services are, mostly, only available to people claiming out-of-work benefits.⁵
6. Jobcentre Plus is the current branding for the UK’s public employment service in place since 2002.⁶ Jobcentre Plus operates throughout England, Wales and Scotland.⁷ Employment support, including the equivalent of Jobcentre Plus, is fully devolved in Northern Ireland and not within the scope of this inquiry.⁸ The Government’s announcement made clear that in England the new service would involve bringing together Jobcentre Plus and the NCS.⁹ Throughout this report, we refer simply to “Jobcentres”.

The National Careers Service

7. In England, central government funded careers advice is delivered by the NCS. Skills and careers support is devolved in Scotland (delivered by Skills Development Scotland), Wales (delivered by Careers Wales) and Northern Ireland (with a Careers Service provided by the Department for the Economy).¹⁰
8. The NCS provides high quality, free and impartial careers advice, information and guidance. Its service is available to anyone aged over 13, regardless of the stage of their career.¹¹

4 Department for Work and Pensions, [Get Britain Working White Paper](#), CP1191, 26 November 2024

5 National Audit Office, [Supporting people to work through jobcentres](#), Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC (2024–25) 769, 31 March 2025

6 House of Commons Hansard Written Answers for 2 Apr 2001 (pt 26)

7 National Audit Office, [Supporting people to work through jobcentres](#), Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC (2024–25) 769, 31 March 2025

8 The Commission on the Future of Employment Support, [Working for the Future Final Report](#), September 2024

9 Department for Work and Pensions, [Get Britain Working White Paper](#), CP1191, 26 November 2024

10 The Commission on the Future of Employment Support, [Working for the Future Final Report](#), September 2024

11 National Careers Service, [About us | National Careers Service](#) (accessed August 2025)

2 Careers advice in the UK

9. In this chapter, we outline the current provision of adult careers advice in the UK and by the NCS in England. We discuss the current challenges facing the NCS and the value that good careers advice can bring.

The UK labour market

10. In our report on Reforming Jobcentres, we discussed the importance of ‘good work’ and ‘good jobs’.¹² Professor Tony Wall, Liverpool Business School, Liverpool John Moores University, described good work as work that offers a fair income, job security, personal and professional development, freedom to express concerns, and equality.¹³ While the Minister for Employment, Alison McGovern MP, told us that “what a good job means is relative to the person who is doing it”. We concluded that good jobs are better for citizens, employers and the state, while supporting a more productive economy.¹⁴
11. We also explored the issues of insecure work, and the low pay, no pay cycle.¹⁵ The Work Foundation, Lancaster University, reported in 2024 that one in five UK workers are in severely insecure work, with a mix of low pay, unpredictable hours, poor protections and limited career progression. It found that insecure workers often face a cycle of insecurity, moving from one job to another, or out of work entirely, with little time or resource to pursue a more secure career. It further reported that the biggest factor enabling people to escape insecure work into a more secure role is their ability to switch sector and called for a greater focus by the Government on how the quality of work contributes to long-term employment outcomes.¹⁶

12 Work and Pensions Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2024–25, [Get Britain Working: Reforming Jobcentres](#), HC 653

13 Professor Tony Wall (Liverpool John Moores University) ([RJ0055](#))

14 Work and Pensions Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2024–25, [Get Britain Working: Reforming Jobcentres](#), HC 653, para 98

15 Work and Pensions Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2024–25, [Get Britain Working: Reforming Jobcentres](#), HC 653, paras 85–86

16 Work Foundation Lancaster University, [No Progress - tackling long-term insecure work](#), September 2024

Provision of adult careers advice

12. The Career Development Institute defines career development as:

A lifelong, unique process for each individual of managing learning, work, and transitions in order to move toward an evolving preferred future and participate effectively in work and society. Successful career development is important to individuals' personal and economic well-being and both economic productivity and social justice.

Careers advice is the professional support people receive to help them make choices about their careers.¹⁷ Professor Pete Robertson, Professor of Career Guidance, Edinburgh Napier University, told us that careers services were professional services, with highly trained staff and professional ethics. Careers advisers aim to put the person first and to provide individualised interventions.¹⁸

13. The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, whose work includes research and policy development around education and skills, undertook analysis of the current landscape of adult careers guidance in England. Currently, adult careers guidance is delivered by a patchwork of providers, including charities, local authorities, private providers, employers, further education colleges and the NCS (or equivalent in Scotland and Wales). The Foundation found that guidance was provided by various stakeholders with no common thread. It also noted that both DfE and DWP had elements of careers guidance within their departmental responsibilities, but that there was little coordination with the NCS or the wider careers guidance sector.¹⁹
14. Sir John Holman, Independent Strategic Adviser on Careers Guidance, DfE, also described a fragmented system. In 2022, he made a set of recommendations to DfE on the future of careers guidance systems in England, including that the Government develop a strategic framework for its careers guidance offer, providing overarching direction, priorities and objectives for careers services.²⁰ In 2023, the predecessor Education Committee echoed Sir John's findings and recommended that the Department publish an updated Careers Strategy, and that it bring together existing delivery bodies under a single strategic umbrella function.²¹ The

17 Career Development Institute, [Definitions: Career Development and Related Roles](#), November 2022

18 [Q9](#)

19 The Gatsby Charitable Foundation ([RJ0050](#)); The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, [Career Guidance for Adults: Evidence gathering](#), November 2022

20 Letter from Sir John Holman, independent strategic adviser on careers guidance, DfE to DfE and DWP Ministers regarding the careers guidance system in England, [6 June 2022](#)

21 Education Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2022–23, [Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance](#), HC 54

then Government responded that it would publish a Strategic Action Plan for Careers in 2024, which would set out clear measurable outcomes and dates by which these should be achieved, but this had not happened prior to the 2024 General Election.²²

15. Careers education and guidance is devolved in the UK, with four distinct systems in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Career Development Institute describes the system in England as the most fragmented, as the other three nations have adopted an integrated, all-age model of delivery.²³ The Gatsby Charitable Foundation also praised the digital offer of Careers Wales and Skills Development Scotland, which it described as more comprehensive, more structured, more interactive and with excellent signposting, when compared to the NCS website.²⁴

The National Careers Service

16. The NCS provides free, up-to-date and impartial advice on careers, skills and the labour market. Services are provided via face-to-face meetings, telephone calls, webchats and online resources.²⁵ The NCS is delivered through contractors, with eleven prime contractors in different regions and sub-contractors reporting to these. Management of the NCS contract sits with DfE.²⁶ While anyone over the age of 18 can access the NCS, 60% of its users are referred by Jobcentres.²⁷
17. Users of the NCS reported positive experiences. The NCS reported that 93% of face-to-face and telephone customers agreed that it provided a good service,²⁸ and 97% of face-to-face and telephone customers experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months since their

22 Education Committee, Fifth Special Report of Session 2022–23, [Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance: Government response to the Committee's Fourth Report](#), HC 1848

23 International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby, [Investing in Careers: what is career guidance worth?](#), July 2023

24 The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, [Career Guidance for Adults: Evidence gathering](#), November 2022

25 [About us | National Careers Service](#)

26 New Challenge CIC ([RJ0007](#))

27 [Q39](#)

28 The Department for Education (DfE) conducts telephone surveys of National Careers Service (NCS) users to monitor customer satisfaction and progression. In 2023–24, DfE conducted 8,495 interviews on satisfaction. DfE measures satisfaction by the proportion of those who “strongly agree” that the NCS is good.

call or meeting.²⁹ A survey by the Career Development Institute found that 79% of adult users of the NCS said they would recommend the support they received, compared to 48% who would recommend Jobcentre support.³⁰

Current challenges

18. Despite these positive numbers, we heard evidence about some challenges and limitations. Ramesh Moher, Director, New Challenge, an NCS sub-contractor, and Andrew McGregor, Chair of Careers Forum, UNISON, raised issues around funding. They told us that providers were only funded for one session per person per 12-month period. While a single session might work for some people, for example helping them update their CV, it did not provide enough time, they argued, to properly support most people.³¹ The Phoenix Group told us that the NCS was limited by a lack of investment, estimating that its budget was between £50 and £90 million a year, and that public investment in adult careers support had been cut by around 25% since 2009.³²
19. We were also told about a lack of awareness and understanding of the NCS. The Career Development Institute found only 34% of people were aware of the NCS (compared to 77% who were aware of Jobcentres).³³ This included a lack of knowledge among Jobcentre staff, despite NCS advisers being located in most Jobcentres. Becci Newton, Director, Public Policy Research, Institute of Employment Studies, told us that work coaches often referred people to the NCS just for help with writing CVs, suggesting a limited understanding of the value of careers advice.³⁴
20. We received several submissions from careers advisers with experience of the NCS.³⁵ They described a focus on hitting numerical targets over delivering quality support. This, they said, meant they were not able to delve into people's circumstances, understand individuals' barriers or provide the personalised support that people need: "you could provide the most

29 Department for Education, [National Careers Service - customer satisfaction and progression annual report](#), October 2024.

30 Career Development Institute ([RJ0034](#))

31 [Qq44, 103](#)

32 Phoenix Group ([RJ0036](#))

33 Career Development Institute ([RJ0034](#)); Career Development Institute, [Valuing Careers](#) (accessed July 2025)

34 [Q10](#)

35 New Challenge CIC ([RJ0007](#)), Miss Leila Bryan ([RJ0009](#)), Miss Leanne Chew ([RJ0014](#)), Ms India McIndoe; Mr David Jepson ([RJ0056](#)), Hutton ([RJ0059](#)), Team of careers advisers within the Greater Manchester area ([RJ0072](#)), Anonymous ([RJ0129](#)), Anonymous ([RJ0131](#))

impactful, life-changing session for someone, but if you didn't meet your numbers, it's considered a failure."³⁶ We were told advisers felt undervalued and misused, leading many to leave the profession.³⁷

- 21.** While any adult can access NCS services, we received evidence that its funding model limits the extent to which it is truly universal and demand-led.³⁸ The Learning and Work Institute explained that the NCS was only funded to the full amount for certain priority groups (for example: 18–24 year-olds not in education, employment or training; adults without a Level 3 qualification; and single parents), with limited funding for people who want careers support but fall outside these priority groups.³⁹ The NCS contract incentivises providers to focus on customers from priority groups, for which they can earn up to £230 compared to £67 for supporting non-priority group customers.⁴⁰ Ramesh Moher also told us that from September 2024, DfE had stopped providing additional funding beyond the original contract, even if there were eligible customers.⁴¹

The opportunity of careers advice

- 22.** We also heard that careers advice was underused. The Career Development Institute found that, despite 75% of UK adults having career aspirations and 80% citing barriers to achieving these, only 15% had accessed employment or careers support in the past five years.⁴² The Gatsby Charitable Foundation calculated that there were 11 million working-age people with a clear need for careers guidance. This comprised: 1.3 million who are very unhappy at work, 1.8 million who are out of work and would like to work, 3.5 million who are actively seeking new/additional work, and 4.5 million who are in work, but their work situation is precarious.⁴³
- 23.** Submissions emphasised the economic potential of greater use of careers advice. The Phoenix Group estimated that better careers advice could increase UK GDP by up to £2.5 billion by supporting people very unhappy at work to find more suitable jobs and add £15 billion in economic value by reducing rates of skills mismatching in the economy. They noted that these gains would also translate to greater tax income to the Exchequer and

36 Anonymous ([RJ0131](#))

37 Anonymous ([RJ0129](#))

38 Learning & Work Institute ([RJ0100](#))

39 Learning & Work Institute ([RJ0100](#))

40 Careers England ([RJ0035](#)), Phoenix Group ([RJ0036](#))

41 New Challenge CIC ([RJ0127](#))

42 Career Development Institute ([RJ0034](#))

43 The Gatsby Charitable Foundation ([RJ0050](#)); The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, [The demand for adult career guidance in England: Market sizing against a typology of needs](#), October 2022

reductions in out-of-work benefits.⁴⁴ The International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby, reported that every pound spent on careers guidance with unemployed adults delivered a return on investment of £3.20.⁴⁵

24.

CONCLUSION

Careers advice helps people achieve their potential, improving employment outcomes, as well as unlocking huge productivity gains with significant economic benefits. However, careers advice in England is a patchwork of services that lacks cohesion and is confusing and fragmented. Overall responsibility for adult careers guidance has fallen between the Department for Education (DfE), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and local government, with no coherent guiding strategy.

25.

RECOMMENDATION

DWP and DfE should work together to develop a strategy for adult careers guidance. This should be based on an audit of the current careers advice offerings and an assessment of the population's needs. It should provide an overarching framework and objectives for any careers-related initiatives to follow. The strategy should also set out how the Government will balance providing a universal service while still focusing on those people and areas who most need support. The Government should produce this strategy before it launches the new jobs and careers service, to help ensure the new service is more than just a rebrand of existing careers support.

26.

CONCLUSION

The National Careers Service (NCS) is an under-valued and under-utilised resource. Due to a lack of funding and pressure to meet unhelpful targets, careers advisers often can't spend enough time with people and have to focus on low impact interventions. There is also limited awareness of careers advice among Jobcentre staff and the public. The Government must address the current challenges faced by the NCS if it is to unlock the full economic potential of careers advice.

44 Phoenix Group ([RJ0036](#)); Phoenix Insights, [Work-in-progress-unlocking-the-value-of-adult-careers-guidance](#), February 2025

45 International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby ([RJ0068](#)); International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby, [Investing in Careers: what is career guidance worth?](#), July 2023

27.

RECOMMENDATION

DWP should review the funding and funding model for careers advice. It should develop a more strategic model that funds additional sessions for those for whom it will deliver the greatest impact and value for money, and in areas with greatest need. As it develops its new jobs and careers service, DWP should also review its incentives model for careers advice providers, ensuring it is aligned with the Government's wider employment goals.

3 Delivering a new jobs and careers service

28. In this chapter, we outline the Government’s plans to merge the NCS with Jobcentres to create a new jobs and careers service. We discuss the response to these plans, including current areas of uncertainty.

Response to the planned merger

29. The Government expects that “aligning employment support more effectively with skills and careers will help more people to get work and get on in work.”⁴⁶
30. Many witnesses to the inquiry welcomed the idea of the new service; in particular, the opportunity to bring the culture of careers advice to the fore. Professor Robertson said he wanted to see a move away from the ‘work first’ doctrine currently seen in Jobcentres towards a ‘career first’ doctrine that looked at people holistically and helped them to make long-term plans for themselves.⁴⁷ Prior to the Government’s announcement, the Commission on the Future of Employment Support had called for the full integration of employment support and careers services as this would “hard wire a focus on career progression” into the organisation.⁴⁸
31. However, we also heard about the risks of merging the two services. Of particular concern was the risk that careers advice would be swallowed up within the larger Jobcentre service given the size of the Jobcentre workforce (around 17,000 work coaches),⁴⁹ compared to the NCS (around 1,000 advisers).⁵⁰ Ramesh Moher noted that work coaches and careers advisers had different objectives: while the former were concerned with work-related conditions, for now at least, the latter were more interested in the individual’s motivations and the longer-term picture, and it might be

46 Department for Work and Pensions, [Get Britain Working White Paper](#), CP1191, 26 November 2024

47 [Q8](#)

48 The Commission on the Future of Employment Support, [Working for the Future Final Report](#), September 2024

49 National Audit Office, [Supporting people to work through jobcentres](#), Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC (2024–25) 769, 31 March 2025

50 The Commission on the Future of Employment Support, [Working for the Future Final Report](#), September 2024

easier for management to focus on the former.⁵¹ Professor Robertson told us that in other countries that had merged careers and employment services, the culture and value of the careers service had been undermined.⁵²

Andrew McGregor told us that careers advisers wanted their function to remain a distinct offering within the new service and for advisers to be clearly demarcated from work coaches to avoid association with benefit administration.⁵³

- 32.** Witnesses were also concerned that the merger of the two services might lead to a de-professionalisation of careers advice.⁵⁴ NCS advisers must have at least a level 4 diploma in careers information and advice, though many have a level 6 diploma in career guidance and development.⁵⁵ The NCS has also been working on a professionalisation agenda to enhance the practice and qualification of its advisers,⁵⁶ and several submissions called for the minimum qualification standard for NCS advisers to be increased to level 6.⁵⁷ Ramesh Moher told us that these were expensive qualifications, funded by the contracted organisation, with a lot of time invested in professional development—up to 280 guided learning hours and 450 hours of their time in total.⁵⁸ UNISON emphasised that careers advisers were generally more qualified and professionally experienced than work coaches, and that careers advice should not be delivered by a less qualified workforce under the new service.⁵⁹ As part of its reforms, the Government is developing an improved training offer for Jobcentre work coaches with a new coaching academy. This academy will develop work coaches' coaching skills and improve the quality of their support.⁶⁰
- 33.** Several organisations raised the issue of measuring success, and the need for the new jobs and careers service to focus on longer-term outcomes. UNISON said that the new jobs and careers service needed to focus on people, not targets, measuring outcomes that genuinely supported career progression and long-term employment stability.⁶¹ Ramesh Moher suggested that as well as measures looking over 3 to 6 months, the new

51 [Q48](#)

52 [Q9](#)

53 [Q93](#)

54 [Qq9, 46, 93](#)

55 [Q93](#); Career Development Institute, [Qualifying to provide career guidance and coaching](#) (accessed June 2025)

56 International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby ([RJ0068](#))

57 International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby ([RJ0068](#)), Career Development Policy Group, Careers Research Advisory Centre ([RJ0070](#)), Skills Federation ([RJ0103](#))

58 [Q46](#)

59 UNISON ([RJ0077](#))

60 [Q128](#); Department for Work and Pensions, [Get Britain Working White Paper](#), CP1191, 26 November 2024

61 UNISON ([RJ0077](#))

service could also include measures that looked at whether support helped people overcome barriers to employment (such as English for speakers of other languages, literacy, numeracy and digital skills).⁶² Elizabeth Taylor, Chief Executive, Employment Related Services Association (ERSA), told us not to dismiss ‘soft’ outcomes and outputs, because they were an important part of people’s journey and often led to ‘hard’ job outcomes.⁶³

- 34.** In August, DWP wrote to us about the metrics for the new jobs and careers service.

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.⁶⁴

35. CONCLUSION

Integrating careers advice into Jobcentres is an exciting opportunity: the culture of careers advice, with its focus on the individual and long-term outcomes, offers a blueprint to improve the culture of Jobcentres. However, there are risks that DWP will have to manage. Careers advice is a skilled profession, requiring qualities distinct from employment support. It must not become the poor relation of employment support or swallowed up by Jobcentres.

36. RECOMMENDATION

As part of the new service, DWP should protect the distinct role and skills of careers advisers. It will also need to define the future relationship between careers advisers and work coaches, which will be critical to the success of the new service. In its response to this report, DWP should set out its plans to support and develop careers advisers within the new jobs and careers service. This should include developing a training pathway for careers advisers (in addition to its planned coaching academy for work coaches) that continues to take advisers through their professional qualifications.

62 [Q49](#)

63 [Q49](#)

64 [Further letter from the Minister for Employment, responding to the Committee’s letter following up on the evidence session the Minister attended on 11 June 2025, dated 7 August 2025](#)

37.

RECOMMENDATION

In the next 6 months, DWP should write to us with details of how it will measure the performance of the new jobs and careers service. This should include outcome measures for careers advice that capture the steps people take as part of their career journey, and which will encourage advisers to focus on longer-term, personalised support.

Areas of uncertainty

38. The Government has allocated £55 million for 2025–26 to develop the service.⁶⁵ However, witnesses flagged a number of areas of uncertainty, as set out below.

- The future contract arrangements for NCS providers remain unclear. Ramesh Moher described an “information vacuum” following the Government’s announcement. When he spoke to us in March, he was not certain whether his company would receive funding from DfE from 1st April. This, he explained, was especially difficult for a small business.⁶⁶ In August, DWP wrote to us confirming that DfE had extended the NCS contracts until September 2026.⁶⁷
- DWP’s plans do not specify whether responsibility for adult careers advice will move from DfE. We wrote to DWP in July to clarify the future accountability arrangements for careers advice under the new jobs and careers service.⁶⁸ In its response, DWP told us that DfE currently manages the NCS and, as it designs the new service, it will share more details.⁶⁹
- There is also uncertainty about how the new jobs and careers service will operate in the devolved administrations, with either Skills Development Scotland or Careers Wales, and how the careers offer will

65 Department for Work and Pensions, [Get Britain Working White Paper](#), CP1191, 26 November 2024

66 [Q46](#)

67 Further letter from the Minister for Employment, responding to the Committee’s letter following up on the evidence session the Minister attended on 11 June 2025, dated 7 August 2025

68 [Letter to the Minister for Employment, following up on the evidence session the Minister attended on 11 June 2025 on Get Britain Working: Reforming Jobcentres](#), dated 20 June 2025

69 [Further letter from the Minister for Employment, responding to the Committee’s letter following up on the evidence session the Minister attended on 11 June 2025](#), dated 7 August 2025

differ between nations.⁷⁰ In the *Get Britain Working White Paper*, the Government said that it would work with the devolved governments to develop the service.⁷¹

- The Government has yet to set out what, if anything, the new jobs and careers service will offer under-18s. As Sir John Holman reported to DfE in 2022, there is a gap in support for 16- and 17-year-olds that do not attend a school or college, so cannot access that careers support, but are not yet eligible for adult careers guidance.⁷² While the NCS advertises services to anyone aged over 13, face-to-face careers advice appointments are not available to under-18s.⁷³ With a few exceptions, Jobcentres can currently only be accessed by over-18s.⁷⁴

39. We asked witnesses from the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) and UNISON, representing work coaches and careers advisers respectively, about the reaction of their members to the plans to merge Jobcentres and the NCS. Both unions told us the announcement had caused a great deal of uncertainty among their members. They said there was a lack of detail from the Government about what the merger would mean for people's jobs and how their roles would change as a result.⁷⁵

40. When we heard from the unions in April 2025, six months after the Government announced its plans for a new jobs and careers service, neither PCS nor UNISON had been consulted on the planned merger and both called for greater involvement in developing the new service. UNISON also called on the Government to consult other careers profession organisations, such as the Careers Development Institute.⁷⁶

41. We asked the Minister for more detail about the Government's plans. In response, she told us the Government had launched its first 'pathfinder' in the Wakefield Jobcentre, in which it is developing the new service with frontline staff and conducting trials.⁷⁷ While DWP did not set out the details of any of the changes it is testing, the Minister committed to delivering

70 Learning & Work Institute ([RJ0100](#))

71 Department for Work and Pensions, [Get Britain Working White Paper](#), CP1191, 26 November 2024

72 Letter from Sir John Holman, independent strategic adviser on careers guidance, DfE to DfE and DWP Ministers regarding the careers guidance system in England, [6 June 2022](#)

73 National Careers Service, [About us | National Careers Service](#) (accessed June 2025); Migrant Help ([RJ0130](#))

74 Youth Employment UK, [Jobcentre Plus Help & Support for Young People - Youth Employment UK](#) (accessed July 2025)

75 [Q92](#)

76 [Q94](#)

77 [Qq112, 122, 143](#)

plans based on customer and staff feedback.⁷⁸ She recognised the valuable experience of NCS staff, telling us that DWP was working closely with them and that they were a “big part” of the pathfinder.⁷⁹

42. During a Public Accounts Committee (PAC) evidence session in May, the DWP Permanent Secretary set out for the first time a timetable for the new jobs and careers service:

- phase 1, 2025–26: trials and pathfinders conducted across the country;
- phase 2, 2026–27: roll out of successful changes from its trials and begin integrating the NCS into Jobcentres;
- phase 3, 2027–28: roll out of ‘Jobcentre in your pocket’ (a digital offering that DWP is developing); and
- phase 4, 2028–29: completion of the implementation of the new jobs and careers service.⁸⁰

43. CONCLUSION

DWP has yet to set out how it will bring together Jobcentres and the NCS, putting service delivery at risk. NCS providers are operating under uncertainty, with no clarity about the future of contracts that are currently managed by DfE. The Government is also yet to clarify how the new service will operate in devolved administrations or where accountability will sit. The lack of detail has also led to significant concern for staff, whose buy-in will be vital to delivering the plans. The Government must urgently fill this information void.

44. RECOMMENDATION

In its response to this inquiry, the Government should provide clarity on:

- the accountability arrangements for its new jobs and careers service and for adult careers services generally, including any joint arrangements between DfE and DWP;
- the planned arrangements for the jobs and careers service in Scotland and Wales, where careers support is a devolved matter, including how it will ensure consistency across Great Britain and avoid duplication in devolved settings; and
- any eligibility criteria for accessing careers support through the new jobs and careers service, including age limits.

78 [Q134](#)

79 [Q143](#)

80 Oral evidence taken by the Public Accounts Committee on 15 May 2025, [Q66](#)

45.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government must also provide more certainty to staff and contractors. In the next 6 months, DWP should publish a transition plan for the NCS, setting out how it will be integrated into a new jobs and careers service and how contracts will be managed in the meantime. It should also commit to consulting with the unions representing staff in Jobcentres and the NCS.

Conclusions and recommendations

Careers advice in the UK

1. Careers advice helps people achieve their potential, improving employment outcomes, as well as unlocking huge productivity gains with significant economic benefits. However, careers advice in England is a patchwork of services that lacks cohesion and is confusing and fragmented. Overall responsibility for adult careers guidance has fallen between the Department for Education (DfE), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and local government, with no coherent guiding strategy. (Conclusion, Paragraph 24)
2. DWP and DfE should work together to develop a strategy for adult careers guidance. This should be based on an audit of the current career offerings and an assessment of the population's needs. It should provide an overarching framework and objectives for any careers-related initiatives to follow. The strategy should also set out how the Government will balance providing a universal service while still focusing on those people and areas who most need support. The Government should produce this strategy before it launches the new jobs and careers service, to help ensure the new service is more than just a rebrand of existing careers support. (Recommendation, Paragraph 25)
3. The National Careers Service (NCS) is an under-valued and under-utilised resource. Due to a lack of funding and pressure to meet unhelpful targets, careers advisers often can't spend enough time with people and have to focus on low impact interventions. There is also limited awareness of careers advice among Jobcentre staff and the public. The Government must address the current challenges faced by the NCS if it is to unlock the full economic potential of careers advice. (Conclusion, Paragraph 26)
4. DWP should review the funding and funding model for careers advice. It should develop a more strategic model that funds additional sessions for those for whom it will deliver the greatest impact and value for money, and in areas with greatest need. As it develops its new jobs and careers service, DWP should also review its incentives model for careers advice providers, ensuring it is aligned with the Government's wider employment goals. (Recommendation, Paragraph 27)

Delivering a new jobs and careers service

5. Integrating careers advice into Jobcentres is an exciting opportunity: the culture of careers advice, with its focus on the individual and long-term outcomes, offers a blueprint to improve the culture of Jobcentres. However, there are risks that DWP will have to manage. Careers advice is a skilled profession, requiring qualities distinct from employment support. It must not become the poor relation of employment support or swallowed up by Jobcentres. (Conclusion, Paragraph 35)
6. As part of the new service, DWP should protect the distinct role and skills of careers advisors. It will also need to define the future relationship between careers advisers and work coaches, which will be critical to the success of the new service. In its response to this report, DWP should set out its plans to support and develop careers advisers within the new jobs and careers service. This should include developing a training pathway for careers advisers (in addition to its planned coaching academy for work coaches) that continues to take advisers through their professional qualifications. (Recommendation, Paragraph 36)
7. In the next 6 months, DWP should write to us with details of how it will measure the performance of the new jobs and careers service. This should include outcome measures for careers advice that capture the steps people take as part of their career journey, and which will encourage advisers to focus on longer-term, personalised support. (Recommendation, Paragraph 37)
8. DWP has yet to set out how it will bring together Jobcentres and the NCS, putting service delivery at risk. NCS providers are operating under uncertainty, with no clarity about the future of contracts that are currently managed by DfE. The Government is also yet to clarify how the new service will operate in devolved administrations or where accountability will sit. The lack of detail has also led to significant concern for staff, whose buy-in will be vital to delivering the plans. The Government must urgently fill this information void. (Conclusion, Paragraph 43)
9. In its response to this inquiry, the Government should provide clarity on:
 - the accountability arrangements for its new jobs and careers service and for adult careers services generally, including any joint arrangements between DfE and DWP;
 - the planned arrangements for the jobs and careers service in Scotland and Wales, where careers support is a devolved matter, including how it will ensure consistency across Great Britain and avoid duplication in devolved settings; and

- any eligibility criteria for accessing careers support through the new jobs and careers service, including age limits.
(Recommendation, Paragraph 44)
- 10.** The Government must also provide more certainty to staff and contractors. In the next 6 months, DWP should publish a transition plan for the NCS, setting out how it will be integrated into a new jobs and careers service and how contracts will be managed in the meantime. It should also commit to consulting with the unions representing staff in Jobcentres and the NCS.
(Recommendation, Paragraph 45)

Formal Minutes

Wednesday 3 September 2025

Members present:

Debbie Abrahams, in the Chair

Johanna Baxter

Amanda Hack

Frank McNally

John Milne

David Pinto-Duschinsky

Get Britain Working: Creating a new jobs and careers service

Draft Report (*Get Britain Working: Creating a new jobs and careers service*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraph 1 to 45 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fifth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

Adjournment

Adjourned till Wednesday 10 September at 9.00 am

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 12 March 2025

Professor Peter Robertson, Professor, Edinburgh Napier University; **Becci Newton**, Director of Public Policy Research, Institute for Employment Studies

[Q1-14](#)

Jane Gratton, Deputy Director, Public Policy, British Chambers of Commerce; **Saira Hussain**, Employment Policy Champion, Federation of Small Businesses

[Q15-35](#)

Ramesh Moher, Director, New Challenge; **Elizabeth Taylor**, Chief Executive, Employment Related Services Association

[Q36-50](#)

Tuesday 1 April 2025

Rt Hon Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, Greater Manchester Combined Authority

[Q51-67](#)

Wednesday 23 April 2025

Abdi Mohamed, Head of Policy, Campaigns and Public Affairs, Scope; **Balbir Kaur Chatrik**, Director of Policy and Communications, Centrepoin; **Sam Reid**, Research Manager, Migrant Help; **Liz Sewell**, Director, Belina Grow

[Q68-90](#)

Martin Cavanagh, PCS President; **Angela Grant**, PCS DWP President, Public and Commercial Services Union; **Andrew McGregor**, Chair of Careers Forum, UNISON

[Q91-109](#)

Wednesday 11 June 2025

Alison McGovern MP, Minister for Employment; **Ed Lidington**, Director, Labour Market Strategy, Policy and Analysis; **David Barrow**, Director, Jobs & Career's Service, Department for Work and Pensions

[Q110-156](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

RJ numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1	Action for Children	RJ0099
2	Action Together Community Interest Organisation	RJ0039
3	Administrative Fairness Lab, University of York	RJ0096
4	Anonymised	RJ0129
5	Anonymised	RJ0131
6	Anonymised	RJ0001
7	Association of Colleges	RJ0117
8	Autonomy Institute	RJ0091
9	Belina Grow Community Interest Company	RJ0024
10	Bridges Outcomes Partnerships	RJ0104
11	Bright Blue	RJ0090
12	Bryan, Miss Leila	RJ0009
13	Business Board Network	RJ0029
14	Cardiff University	RJ0065
15	Career Development Institute	RJ0034
16	Career Development Policy Group; and Careers Research Advisory Centre	RJ0070
17	Careers England	RJ0035
18	Centre for Ageing Better	RJ0080
19	Centrepont	RJ0051
20	Changing Lives	RJ0041
21	Changing Realities	RJ0049
22	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	RJ0135
23	Chew, Miss Leanne	RJ0014

24	Child Poverty Action Group	RJ0118
25	Citizens Advice	RJ0071
26	Citizens Advice Somerset	RJ0044
27	Citizens Advice South Warwickshire	RJ0019
28	Collie, Dr Jonathan (Director, Lifework Lab Ltd)	RJ0012
29	Communities that Work	RJ0021
30	Construction Industry Training Board [CITB]	RJ0064
31	Cook, Mr Nigel D	RJ0025
32	De Montfort University	RJ0017
33	Department for Work and Pensions	RJ0095
34	Down's Syndrome Association	RJ0037
35	Edinburgh Napier University	RJ0022
36	Education Development Trust	RJ0074
37	Employability Edge Ltd	RJ0057
38	Employment Related Services Association	RJ0042
39	Fedcap	RJ0061
40	Finn, Professor Emeritus Daniel (University of Portsmouth)	RJ0032
41	Forces in Mind Trust	RJ0018
42	Futures Advice, Skills & Employment Ltd	RJ0066
43	Gibbs, Ian	RJ0134
44	Good Things Foundation	RJ0111
45	Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People	RJ0028
46	Herron, Ms Lis	RJ0114
47	Hudspeth, Joanne	RJ0020
48	Hughes, Ceri (Research Fellow, University of Manchester/LSE)	RJ0113
49	Hutton	RJ0059
50	Impetus	RJ0043
51	IncomeMax	RJ0010
52	Institute for Employment Studies	RJ0033 , RJ0126
53	Institute for Public Policy Research	RJ0084
54	Institute of Employability Professionals Ltd	RJ0058
55	International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby	RJ0068

56	Jones, Dr Katy (Reader, Manchester Metropolitan University)	RJ0060
57	Learning & Work Institute	RJ0100
58	Leonard Cheshire	RJ0119
59	LinkedIn	RJ0105
60	Local Government Association	RJ0053
61	London Borough of Camden	RJ0075
62	London Councils	RJ0098
63	Make UK	RJ0107
64	Matthews, Professor Peter (Professor of Social Policy and LGBTQ+ Studies)	RJ0122
65	Maximus	RJ0067
66	McIndoe, Ms India and Mr David Jepson	RJ0056
67	Mencap	RJ0112
68	Migrant Help	RJ0092 , RJ0130
69	Mind	RJ0087
70	Momentic Limited	RJ0073
71	Moore, Mrs Joanne (Senior Employment Adviser, NHS Talking Therapies)	RJ0109
72	Morrisby Ltd	RJ0031
73	NHS Confederation	RJ0052
74	New Challenge CIC	RJ0007 , RJ0127
75	Norman, Dr Alyson (Associate Professor in Health and Clinical Psychology, University of Plymouth)	RJ0016
76	Peabody	RJ0004
77	Phoenix Group	RJ0036
78	Policy in Practice	RJ0125
79	Recro Consulting	RJ0110
80	Recruitment & Employment Confederation	RJ0026
81	Rees, T	RJ0062
82	Research and Knowledge Exchange Department, Goldsmiths, University of London	RJ0048
83	Rethink Mental Illness	RJ0047
84	Roberts, Ms	RJ0003
85	Roberts, Mr Gary	RJ0006

86	Royal College of Occupational Therapists	RJ0089
87	Scope	RJ0078
88	Seetec	RJ0054
89	Sense	RJ0094
90	Skills Federatoin	RJ0103
91	Smith, Mr J	RJ0011
92	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority	RJ0115
93	Talent Unlimited	RJ0005
94	Taste for Life Community Interest Company	RJ0013
95	Team of Careers Advisers within the Greater Manchester area	RJ0072
96	The Gatsby Charitable Foundation	RJ0050
97	The King's Trust	RJ0079
98	The Open University	RJ0063
99	The Poverty Alliance	RJ0076
100	The Public and Commercial Services Union	RJ0069
101	The Royal National Institute of Blind People	RJ0085
102	The Salvation Army	RJ0123
103	The Shaw Trust Limited	RJ0082
104	The University of York School for Business and Society; and Better Connect	RJ0046
105	Trussell	RJ0120
106	UNISON	RJ0077 , RJ0133
107	Wall, Professor Tony (Liverpool John Moores University)	RJ0055
108	Welfare Benefits Unit	RJ0038
109	West Midlands Combined Authority	RJ0121
110	West Yorkshire Combined Authority	RJ0116
111	Women's Aid Federation of England	RJ0045
112	Women's Budget Group	RJ0106
113	Work Avenue Foundation	RJ0101
114	Work Foundation at Lancaster University	RJ0102
115	Workers Educational Association	RJ0023
116	Working Chance	RJ0088
117	Youth Futures Foundation	RJ0124 , RJ0132
118	Z2K	RJ0027

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Session 2024–25

Number	Title	Reference
4th	Get Britain Working: Reforming Jobcentres	HC 653
3rd	Get Britain Working: Pathways to Work	HC 837
2nd	Pensioner Poverty: challenges and mitigations	HC 465
1st	Safeguarding Vulnerable Claimants	HC 402
3rd Special	Safeguarding Vulnerable Claimants: Government response	HC 1248
2nd Special	Defined Benefit Pensions Schemes: Government Response	HC 870
1st Special	Statutory Sick Pay: Government Response	HC 787