



House of Commons  
Work and Pensions Committee

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**Role of Jobcentre Plus  
in the reformed  
welfare system:  
Government Response  
to the Committee's  
Second Report of  
Session 2013–14**

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**Third Special Report of Session  
2013–14**

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The Work and Pensions Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Work and Pensions and its associated public bodies.

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### Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at [www.parliament.uk/workpencom](http://www.parliament.uk/workpencom).

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Carol Oxborough (Clerk), Joanna Welham (Second Clerk), David Foster (Committee Media Adviser), James Clarke (Committee Specialist), Daniela Silcock (Committee Specialist), and Emma Sawyer (Senior Committee Assistant).

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# Third Special Report

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On 28 January 2014 the Work and Pensions Committee published its Second Report of Session 2013–14, *The role of Jobcentre Plus in the reformed welfare system* (HC 479). On 28 March 2014 we received the Government’s Response to the Report. It is reproduced as an Appendix to this Special Report.

In the Government Response, the Committee’s recommendations are shown in ***bold italic text***. The Government’s response is in plain text

## Appendix

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### Introduction

The Government welcomes the Committee’s endorsement of the role of Jobcentre Plus in a reformed welfare system. The Government believes it has provided through the recession and into the period of recovery good value for money and excellent levels of service to claimants and employers. With employment rising to record levels, falls in unemployment and sustained reductions in the number of people on welfare benefits, Jobcentre Plus continues to be a model other countries follow.

### Assessing claimant’s needs and barriers to work

***We recommend that Jobcentres adopt a more thorough and systematic initial face-to-face assessment of claimants’ barriers to employment to identify the level of employment support they need from Jobcentres and contracted providers. Assessments should be regularly updated during longer claims, and relevant data passed to Work Programme and other contracted providers if claimants are referred on. (Paragraph 24)***

### Partly Agreed

We agree that face to face assessments are important to identifying individual barriers that prevent claimants returning to work quickly. Jobcentre Plus advisers are already trained to diagnose individual needs through a thorough and systematic assessment of things we know affect jobsearch efficacy and the likely chances of finding work, i.e.

- readiness for work—life-style, personal circumstances, expectations, etc
- having realistic and achievable job goals
- knowing what jobs are available and where to find them
- being able to sustain jobsearch over time
- being able to present well to employers through appropriate means, e.g. online and at interviews.

We already know from previous studies that regular jobsearch reviews have a positive impact on off flows, even for those claimants who are already considered job ready. During

the first 13 weeks of a jobseeker's claim, fortnightly job reviews reduce the average length of JSA claims by 6.1 days. As such, advisers continue to have regular reviews with claimants throughout their claim.

To further support relationship building between claimant and advisers, wherever possible, claimants see the same adviser throughout the duration of their claim.

As part of the ongoing roll-out of the JSA Claimant Commitment, claimants are also encouraged to use, and advised on how to make best use of, the My Work Plan Booklet to help structure, manage and follow-up their jobsearch activities and to inform subsequent discussions with their adviser when reviewing progress and identifying additional help that may be needed.

We aim to get even better at targeting more support on those who need it most. But segmenting people is difficult—even those who appear very “job ready” and close to the labour market can find it difficult and can stay unemployed for longer than expected. And because claimants do not always disclose their full range of issues at the first meeting an initial face to face assessment can only be part of the process.

## Segmentation

*We further recommend that DWP continue to work to develop a “segmentation” tool, to be conducted by Jobcentre Advisers face-to-face with claimants, to allocate claimants to separate work streams according to their distance from the labour market and relative need for intensive employment support. This tool should be established prior to drawing up the specifications for the re-letting of Work Programme contracts in 2016. (Paragraph 25)*

### Partly Agreed

We share the Committee's aspiration of developing a segmentation tool and are in the process of developing and testing a new approach to segmentation. But it is important to manage expectations. DWP has had a number of attempts at developing segmentation tools based on administrative data e.g. Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study Profiling tool (2005) and the Jobseekers Classification Instrument (2010). Previous attempts produced accurate predictions of only 70%, in identifying claimants at risk of becoming long term unemployed. A failure rate of this level would have serious implications for claimants who could be referred to the wrong type of support and provision and not get the help they need, as well as having significant cost implications.

Our new approach to segmentation is considering which claimants would respond to a specific intervention (at this point we are examining which new JSA claimants should be assigned to Weekly or Fortnightly Jobsearch Reviews). We should be cautious at this point, as we do not know if this new approach works yet or what potential costs there may be given possible errors in the tool. Depending on the outcomes of this approach, we will consider whether it has wider application, including for contracted programmes such as the Work Programme.

*A more effective initial face-to-face assessment should also enable a “no initial face-to-face signing on work stream” to be established, in which determinedly job-seeking*

*claimants who are closest to the labour market and likely to return to work quickly with little or no support are, for a limited period, not required to visit the Jobcentre, freeing up time for Jobcentres to support those with greater barriers. We recommend that DWP pursues this approach. (Paragraph 26)*

### **Partly Agreed**

We know that regular (currently at least fortnightly) job search reviews have a positive impact on off-flows, even for those claimants who appear very job ready and close to the labour market and who we expect to find work quickly. Indeed, the existing job search review process provides clear value for money, with the AME savings accrued more than out-weighing the administrative cost.

We are looking at alternative means of delivery, and are testing whether there are more efficient and cost-effective delivery mechanisms for this process to help people into work, making best use of digitalisation and more intuitive understanding of claimant job search activity, e.g. through use of Universal Jobmatch. However, we need to make sure alternative approaches do not undermine off-flows and the clear benefits of the current face-to-face, regular job search review process.

We are currently trialling 3 different approaches to conducting Fortnightly Jobsearch Reviews, (FJR) using digital channels – Digital “Drop & Go”, Online Signing and Remote signing. This set of scale pilots are intended to assess the direction and scale of the risk to AME that comes with using digital approaches to administer the fortnightly signing regime.

## **Evaluating JCP’s employment support interventions**

*We recommend that, at the very least, the Government publish raw data on benefit off-flows into employment for claimants taking part in each of the Get Britain Working schemes, to supplement the current publication of headline statistics showing the number of claimants taking up Work Experience, Sector-based Work Academy placements and the New Enterprise Allowance. We also recommend that DWP consider commissioning independent evaluations of the effectiveness of each of the schemes in relation to employment outcomes. (Paragraph 31)*

### **Partly Agreed**

The Department uses a combination of in-house expertise and externally contracted research to evaluate the impact of its policies. We have undertaken and published an analysis of the early off-benefit and employment impacts of work experience<sup>1</sup>. We will consider extending this analysis to assess longer term impacts as well as undertaking an impact analysis of sector based work academies. We have also published detailed analysis of the off-benefit outcomes of New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) participants<sup>2</sup>. As the NEA analysis makes clear, there are considerable difficulties in identifying a credible counterfactual against which to assess the impact of the programme.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/work-experience-programme-impact-analysis>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-enterprise-allowance-analysis-of-benefit-status-of-participants>

Our impact analysis of employment outcomes relies upon matching to PAYE data. As the select committee report notes in paragraph 108, there are considerable delays associated with this method. The data also requires a great deal of cleaning as our impact analysis reports make clear. For these reasons, it would not be feasible to routinely publish off-flows into employment data for these schemes.

## Flexible Support Fund

*We recommend that the Government separately evaluate the impacts of the Flexible Support Fund on employment outcomes and identify and disseminate good practice across JCP districts. (Paragraph 34)*

### Rejected

Due to the nature of the FSF, collating performance information and understanding the additionality of such performance is resource intensive. The FSF is an integral part of the JCP Offer so it is difficult to disentangle its impact from other aspects of the Offer.

'The Jobcentre Plus Offer: Final evaluation report' and summary were published on 28th November 2013<sup>3</sup>.

### Partly Agreed

Detail on FSF expenditure is available to publish and, as District Managers (DM) are budget holders, both expenditure and budgets are reported monthly to that level of granularity in the Management Accounts.

However it is not standard practice to provide budget information as this is usually indicative, for internal management purposes only and subject to change during the financial year. All budget allocations are reviewed quarterly as part of a continuing planning process and subject to change in light of ongoing reviews of performance, value for money achieved and wider priorities.

Information on FSF budgets and expenditure at national and district levels is not currently a Business Plan Indicator nor reported to the Executive Team in performance reporting data. Therefore, it is not planned to be included in the 2013-14 Annual Report and Accounts (ARA). To include detailed, additional information conflicts with the Government policy to streamline and simplify the ARA where possible.

## The Claimant Commitment

*It would be highly regrettable if the Claimant Commitment resulted in a process-driven, box-ticking exercise in which Jobcentre Advisers measure the length of time claimants spend searching for jobs, regardless of the likely effectiveness of the job-search activities undertaken. We recommend that guidance on this issue is set out clearly for Jobcentre staff. (Paragraph 48)*

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/261656/rrep852.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/261656/rrep852.pdf)

## Agreed

Such guidance was included in the training delivered to all 25,000 Jobcentre Plus staff involved in the delivery of the Claimant Commitment.

Jobcentre Plus has transformed the way it delivers employment support to provide a more personalised and flexible service. In both Universal Credit and Jobseeker's Allowance, Jobcentre Plus frontline teams now have more freedom and autonomy to focus on delivering support tailored to individual and local labour market need, rather than being required to focus on a more rigid and process driven service delivery model. This more flexible and personalised service delivery model ensures claimants get the help they need from day one of their claim—the Claimant Commitment is at the heart of this approach.

Through the My Work Plan JSA claimants take ownership for their own actions and Work Coaches support and encourage claimants to establish the right plan and then follow it.

Our Claimant Commitment guidance does set out this new approach to job search. The key theme running throughout the suite of guidance products advocates a personalised, individually tailored approach to job seeking. This includes an assessment of the claimant's capability to apply for jobs using the full range of job search methods and application processes available. Work Coaches and Assistant Work Coaches will regularly review the effectiveness of the claimant's job search to identify where any further support is needed.

The cultural transformation of the Claimant Commitment is being embedded throughout the Jobcentre network with investment in training, support, evaluation and continuous learning.

Around 25,000 Jobcentre staff and managers are receiving two days bespoke facilitated learning, developed using the knowledge gleaned from our trials and pathfinders. It has a strong focus on the behavioural insight techniques developed by the Cabinet Office and introduces the coach athlete approach.

This includes:

- Practical skills on how to build the coach/athlete relationship with claimants in order to effectively coach and support them in planning their work search activities,
- An understanding of what is required to make sure claimants are meeting the terms of their Claimant Commitment, through Work Search Review interventions,
- Enable Coaches to assess the effectiveness and quality of Claimant Commitments.
- A reflection Workshop, held around 6 weeks after the initial learning event to assess progress and competence in working with the Claimant Commitments and My Work Plan booklets and identify any further learning and/or support needs.

## Universal Jobmatch: current functionality

*We recommend that DWP guidance to Jobcentre staff makes clear that Universal Jobmatch should be promoted to claimants as a potentially effective tool to find work, and that Jobcentre staff should provide advice and support on getting the best out of the system. Universal Jobmatch also provides a useful tool for monitoring claimants' compliance with benefits conditionality. However, we recommend that guidance makes clear that this is a secondary function, with the emphasis on the benefits of using Universal Jobmatch to monitor compliance between claimant interviews, freeing up more time for advice and support during interviews. We also recommend that DWP explore the potential for increased functionality of Universal Jobmatch, particularly in areas of assessing quality of CVs and the likelihood of success of job applications, to ensure that claimants' job search activities are focussed and effective. (Paragraph 58)*

### Agreed

Whilst Universal Jobmatch (UJ) provides a record of a claimant's activity, its primary purpose is to improve job seeking activity and employability. Claimants are encouraged to use the full range of jobsearch techniques. Whilst UJ is an important element of this, claimants are expected to take all reasonable steps to secure employment which, for many, will require activity beyond UJ to satisfy the requirements for benefit and to optimise employment prospects. This is already set out in existing guidance.

### Partly Agreed

Two key releases are scheduled for 8 February 2014 and 17 May 2014 to enhance core functionality as well as features like the search facility. These improvements are based on feedback from employers, jobseekers and DWP Staff.

UJ already provides the facility for employers to score applications against their specification and criteria. Where this happens, candidates are able to review their CV and skills profile with their Advisor/Coach and make changes to enhance future applications.

We continue to gather insight from users in order to further develop the service.

## Support for vulnerable claimants: the Local Support Services Framework

*We recommend that DWP identifies good practice in building local services and disseminates this across the Jobcentre network as the Universal Credit Pathfinders are expanded through 2014. (Paragraph 69)*

*The Local Support Services Framework, now due to be published in Autumn 2014, will set out the Agreed process for providing support to claimants. We request an assurance from DWP that this will be a comprehensive document, which provides a best practice framework for the provision of a diverse range of support services and sets out a robust plan for how these services will be funded and delivered nationally from financial year*



***2015/16, so that local authorities are able to make budgeting decisions and commission services. (Paragraph 70)***

### **Partly Agreed**

We issued an update to our plans for Universal Credit in a written ministerial statement in December. As our plans for further expansion and rollout are developed and communicated we will share information relating to LSSF in good time to inform the strategic planning and budgeting processes for 2015/16 and beyond. We are also committed to sharing good practice and learning from LSSF trialling conducted during 2014/15 as we have done throughout our previous piloting programmes. The DWP, along with officials from the Local Government Association, the Welsh Local Government Association and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, will continue to work closely as part of the UC LSSF Task Force to further develop the Framework

### **Support for claimants with health conditions and disabilities**

***We recommend that urgent action is taken to improve the level of JCP support for jobseeking claimants with health conditions and disabilities, including by addressing the unacceptably high ESA WRAG caseloads per DEA. (Paragraph 75)***

### **Partly Agreed**

The current Full Time Equivalent (FTE) resource allocation is 570 for Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) and 735 for ESA Advisers. ESA support is resourced at an average of 88 minutes per Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) claimant – comprising of 80 minutes for each claimant, plus an additional 80 minutes for 10% of all WRAG claimants. However this is a resource model and not a reflection of how support is actually delivered. The minimum requirement is two adviser interactions per year as mentioned in the report. These interventions could range between 10 and 60 minutes so, if an adviser makes a judgement that light touch support is appropriate for a particular claimant, such as short telephone interviews for example, any time not used on that claimant can be used on another where more intensive support is required. This combined with the additional resource allowed for 10% of claimants does allow for more flexible and intensive adviser support where it is deemed appropriate.

Various other ESA support initiatives are being trialled; for example the Government has announced it will fund a two year pilot scheme, run by Greater Manchester Council, designed to get more ESA claimants into work. It will seek to mirror the success of the troubled families programme by giving ESA claimants a single contact to help with their job search and health and social care support.

The scheme will see a key worker working with an ESA claimant that has just completed their time with the Work Programme. The key worker will be responsible for identifying the best help, advice and actions needed. For example this could include, arranging occupational health visits, mental health support and housing support—and stage these in a way that enables the claimant to move closer to, and into, work

People can volunteer to join the Work Programme at any stage in their claim and WRAG group customers are referred following the Work Capability Assessment. In addition, ESA

customers are also referred to specialist provision, such as Work Choice, or to a DWP Work Psychologist as appropriate.

The Government published “The disability and health employment strategy: the discussion so far” in December 2013. The paper outlines a number of key proposals for how DWP can look to do more in both mainstream and specialist support, while understanding the financial climate support will be delivered in.

There are a range of recommendations outlined but paramount to the strategy is ensuring that, in delivering this, the role of the adviser is invaluable, working with claimants to identify the employment need of the individual and the support required to find a suitable job.

To enable DWP to identify the right support, for the right people, at the right time we are exploring how best to support and deliver the specialist adviser role, including a national network of specialist advisers. It is envisaged that this specialist support would provide a more intensive, personalised and tailored approach.

### **The impacts of sanctioning on claimants**

*We recommend that DWP take urgent steps to monitor the extent of financial hardship caused by benefit sanctions, including by collecting, collating and publishing data on the number of claimants “signposted” to food aid by Jobcentres and the reasons for claimants’ need for assistance in these cases. (Paragraph 97)*

#### **Rejected**

We continue to monitor sanctions policy on an on-going basis and collect customer feedback wherever appropriate as part of our evaluation of relevant DWP policies.

The sanctions system is designed to provide clear consequences for any failure to comply. Sanctions play a vital role in supporting the conditionality regime. They encourage claimants to comply with the requirements that are designed to help them move into or prepare for work. And we know that where sanctions are understood, they have a positive impact on claimant behaviour.

The use of food banks is not exclusive to benefit claimants and Jobcentres have no part in deciding whether support is provided. Jobcentres will continue to provide details of suitable local support services to all members of the public including food banks.

### **Monitoring the conditionality regimes**

**It is important that JCP makes fair and proportionate sanction referrals and that the process is transparent. We welcome the current independent review which will focus on the clarity of communications between JCP and claimants in relation to the conditionality and sanctioning process; the availability of hardship payments for sanctioned claimants; and the clarity of the review and appeals process. We strongly believe that a further review is necessary and welcome the Minister’s commitment to launch a second and separate review into the broader operation of the sanctioning process.**

*We recommend that the second review of sanctions investigate: whether sanction referrals are being made appropriately, fairly and proportionately, in accordance with the relevant Regulations and guidance, across the Jobcentre network; and the link between sanctioning and benefit off-flow, including whether benefit off-flow targets have an influence on sanctioning rates. We also recommend that this review consider whether, and to what extent, the use of sanctions is having the desired effect of encouraging claimants to engage more actively in job-seeking. We further recommend that this review is launched as a matter of urgency and reports before the end of 2014. (Paragraphs 100-101)*

### **Partly Agreed**

Sanctions play a vital role in supporting the conditionality regime. They encourage claimants to comply with the requirements that are designed to help them move into or prepare for work. And we know that where sanctions are understood, they have a positive impact on claimant behaviour but it is right that we continue to test the system works effectively.

We have already committed to an independent review by Matthew Oakley which will look primarily at the communications to claimants and offer recommendations to improve the operations of the sanctions process. And we will be publishing further information on sanctions through the forthcoming Work Programme Evaluation and the claimant commitment research to help inform our future strategy. We are fully committed to monitoring the current regime to ensure it continues to deliver the intended outcomes and will assess whether any further evaluation is needed once the current evaluation programmes have concluded.

### **Measuring JCP performance**

*We recommend that JCP establish a system by which it records, as a matter of course, the reason claimants leave benefit at the time they end their claims. We further recommend that DWP use this information to re-establish “off-benefit and into work” performance measures with immediate effect. (Paragraph 113)*

### **Rejected**

Given the move to real-time income information over the period that UC is implemented, introducing a temporary system to monitor outcomes does not represent value for money and would place an additional burden on the business. It is not currently practical or cost effective to establish, at point of claim closure, the reason why claimants leave JSA. This is because a significant proportion of people simply fail to attend their Fortnightly Jobsearch Review, rather than actively closing their claims. Additionally the question of verifying outcomes arises, with significant cost attached.

*We recommend that DWP prioritise the formulation of JCP performance indicators which promote and measure sustained job outcomes and better reflect the changing role of JCP consequent on the implementation of Universal Credit and the proposals for in-work conditionality, with a view to establishing the performance measures across the Jobcentre network when full national implementation of Universal Credit has been achieved. (Paragraph 114)*

## Partly Agreed

The current JCP performance metrics, focussing on off-flows, make best use of the data currently available to the department, but do not track people once they leave benefit, as this is not cost-effective. For Universal Credit the department will have prompt access to real-time income information from HM Revenue and Customs for people that move into work. Measures are being developed to make full use of this information in order to drive performance in Jobcentre Plus and measure job outcomes. This includes plans to pilot employment-related performance measures. Part of this is testing the applicability of employment measures to different groups of claimants; for instance, speed of movement into work vs duration in work vs earnings progression whilst in work

## Provision of longer term training for claimants

*We recommend that DWP make clear in guidance that Jobcentre staff can apply flexibility to the rules on the permissible length of full-time pre-employment training if it is clear that the claimant is being held back from finding sustained employment by a lack of skills which could be addressed by training courses longer than the currently permissible two to eight-week period. (Paragraph 119)*

## Partly Agreed

Claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance are required to be available for work and actively seeking employment as a condition for receiving their benefit. HM Treasury permits JSA claimants to be excused these requirements to allow them to do full time training for 2 weeks in any 12 months. In addition people who have been claiming JSA for 6 months or more are able to attend full time training for up to 8 weeks and remain on benefit. For JSA claimants of less than 6 months doing full time training the flexibility exists to move the claimant onto a Training Allowance for the duration of the training. An announcement was made in the Autumn Statement that the 16 hour training rule will be removed for Traineeships. This change will come in from 3 March. Guidance is already in place to support these initiatives.

Universal Credit claimants may undertake part time education or training courses that can flexibly be accommodated within their work search and other work related requirements. Advisers may also treat it as a claimant's work preparation activity, enabling claimants to gain essential skills to help them to gain and progress in work.

## Universal Jobmatch: supporting an efficient and flexible labour market

*We recommend that DWP increase its oversight of vacancies posted onto Universal Jobmatch, including by working with Monster Government Solutions to regularly purge the system and ensure that it contains, as far as is possible, only genuine and accurately described job vacancies. This is particularly important as Universal Jobmatch is intended to be used as a tool to monitor claimants' compliance with job-seeking conditionality. Claimants should only be required to apply for genuine vacancies which meet all the relevant employment standards. We recommend that this is made clear in guidance to JCP staff. (Paragraph 127)*

## Partly Agreed

There are a variety of monitoring tools and vacancy checks included within UJ, which help to detect, deter and remedy inappropriate use of the site.

We act on information we receive relating to inappropriate vacancies. We are currently exploring with Monster the scope for purging vacancies that are no longer current.

JSA claimants are not expected to apply for all jobs to which they are automatically matched on the UJ service. We are clear that we would not expect claimants to apply for jobs that they suspected were fraudulent. Job adverts that, for example, ask for applicants to provide bank details or national insurance numbers should be reported to Jobcentre advisers and where appropriate we will have the advert removed. However, they must continue to do all that is reasonable to look for work. A sanction can only be applied where a claimant refuses or fails to apply for, or accept, a job that has been notified to them by an employment officer, i.e. a JCP adviser. If the claimant considers that they have good reason for not applying for a particular post, they can inform their adviser and the case will be referred to a decision maker for a decision on whether or not a sanction should apply.

***We recommend that guidance make clear that it is an explicit part of the JCP Employer Adviser role to monitor use of Universal Jobmatch by local employers and to offer help and guidance where necessary. (Paragraph 128)***

## Agreed

Employer Engagement staff already have access to specific guidance and supporting products to help promote and demonstrate UJ to employers. We are also developing a range of online tutorials to support employers to get the best recruitment outcomes through UJ.

A range of products focusing on enhancing employers' use of UJ is also available; a "recruitment good practice guide" supports employers to ensure they can successfully:

- Search for jobseekers
- Maximise their use of UJ
- Avoid potential discrimination.

## Engaging with employers

***We recommend that DWP review the service provided to employers by JCP to identify best practice and then take urgent steps to disseminate understanding of what works best across the Jobcentre network. (Paragraph 131)***

## Agreed

Our work with employers is subject to continual scrutiny. We recognise the critical role that employers play in helping claimants to make the transition into employment and to progress in the labour market. We have made significant progress with our employer engagement approach across the Jobcentre Plus network, focusing on designing solutions

that are right for the employer and right for the labour market. This aims to provide consistency of service delivery built around employers' needs and their willingness to engage with government in tackling unemployment. Feedback from employers is strong.

We are also working in partnership with UK Trade Associations to understand their members' needs and how we can improve our engagement with employers. Many of the Trade Associations have signed Partnership Agreements with DWP, setting out their commitment to working with us to help claimants move into employment.

## The Benefit Cap

***There is insufficient information to establish the causal links between: the Benefit Cap; affected claimants engaging with employment support; and the likelihood of affected claimants entering work. We recommend that DWP conducts and publishes research into these causal links in 2014, in order to establish whether the Benefit Cap is achieving one of its key policy aims. (Paragraph 138)***

### Partly Agreed

The DWP is already planning to undertake (subject to feasibility) an econometric net impact study of the Benefit Cap's effect on affected claimants entering employment, moving house etc. This work will be done with advice from the Institute for Fiscal Studies and will be published, as all DWP research is, in autumn 2014, as part of the planned review into the Benefit Cap.

***We recommend that DWP conduct a review of the employment support needs of claimants affected by the Benefit Cap and the availability of the requisite support in Jobcentres. The review should be conducted with a view to identifying and disseminating best practice across the Jobcentre network. (Paragraph 139)***

### Partly Agreed

DWP recently published official statistics showing that over 8,000 households who had their benefits capped moved off the cap as a result of finding jobs, reducing their benefit claim, becoming exempt, or having another change of circumstance, with 40% of these households finding work<sup>4</sup>.

DWP has already commissioned Ipsos-MORI to conduct a two wave nationally representative survey with affected claimants to see how they have responded to the cap; one of the key responses is finding work. We also plan to conduct in depth interviews with a wide range of affected claimants, looking at both how they have moved into work and, for cases that are still capped, the barriers they face in finding work.

## Localisation of the discretionary Social Fund

***We recommend that DWP review the clarity of guidance to JCP staff on the circumstances in which it is appropriate to refer claimants to local welfare assistance schemes operated by local authorities, which have replaced elements of the discretionary***

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-cap-number-of-households-capped-to-december-2013>

***Social Fund, and that it take steps to ensure that the guidance is followed across the Jobcentre network. (Paragraph 144)***

### **Agreed**

We will review our Short Term Benefit Advance internal guidance provided to staff by the end of March 2014.

Staff are already provided with guidance on considering what support is appropriate in each customer's particular circumstances, including paying benefit if it is due or making a Short Term Benefit Advance where eligible. Short Term Benefit Advances are not a benefit in their own right and are limited to providing early access to benefit in certain specific circumstances, i.e. at the start of a new benefit claim or where a change of circumstances significantly increases their benefit amount.

### **Resourcing of JCP in the medium term**

***We recommend that DWP set out, in its response to this Report, its assessment of the impact on Jobcentre customer volumes and the staffing implications for Jobcentres of each of the following announcements:***

- ***Weekly signing on for “half of all jobseekers” in 2015–16;***
- ***Daily signing on for one third of unsuccessful Work Programme participants returning to JCP from April 2014; and***
- ***The various options for an “in-work conditionality” regime under Universal Credit. (Paragraph 157)***

***We recommend that, to facilitate effective scrutiny, Jobcentre budget and staff allocations are set out in full in DWP’s Annual Report and Accounts. Information should include the number of Jobcentre Advisers and Assistant Advisers; Disability Employment Advisers; Lone Parent Advisers; and Employer Advisers. It should also include the average claimant caseloads for each type of Jobcentre Adviser. (Paragraph 158)***

### **Rejected**

Although the Department holds information on different types of funding, claimant volumes, advisor allocations and deployment in JCP, we do not believe that the ARA is the right publication to disclose such a breakdown. This would also conflict with Government policy to streamline the accounts mentioned above.

Plans are already in place to deliver the full range of services in 2014/15 including the April changes.

### **Making the best use of the JCP estate**

***We recommend that DWP conduct a formal audit of the Jobcentre network to identify whether it is currently making the best use of available space within its existing estate and how its accommodation can be adapted to meet changes in demand over the next several years. (Paragraph 162)***

## **Rejected**

DWP already undertakes regular reviews of its service delivery options for Jobcentres to make sure that it delivers the best service for claimants and employers while delivering best value for money for the taxpayer.