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Work and Pensions Committee

Improving Access to Work for disabled people

Second Report of Session 2014–15

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to the report*

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Summary

Access to Work (AtW) is an important element of specialist employment support for disabled people. It is unique in providing help to people already in, or about to start, mainstream work. It has the potential to be an extremely effective model, helping to address the substantial gap between the employment rate for disabled people and that of the rest of the population. Where it works well, it transforms the lives of disabled people, many of whom would be unable to work without it.

DWP internal review

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) began its own internal review of AtW while our inquiry was under way. We expect our Report to inform DWP's findings, which we hope will lead to substantial improvements to the programme.

Caseload, funding and marketing

There is strong evidence that AtW currently supports only a minority of disabled people whom it might benefit. Current attempts to increase the number of people helped by the programme, within an only marginally increased budget, risk bearing down on the awards of people who happen to have relatively high cost needs. While we understand the importance of delivering value for money within the programme, such an approach would not be acceptable. AtW's focus should remain on removing barriers to employment for the full range of disabled people who can benefit from it, including the relatively few whose support costs are high. DWP should make a strong and evidence-based case to HM Treasury for substantial additional funding for AtW and then aim to increase take-up through much more high profile marketing, and proactive promotion of AtW, including through Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches and contracted employment services providers.

In taking forward the closure or sale of Remploy factories, the Government stated that it did not believe that this type of support was the optimum way of helping disabled people move into employment in the 21st century, and that the money involved could be used for more effective specialist support, including AtW. DWP was not able to provide a clear indication as to how the savings from the closure of the Remploy factories had been used. The only element of spending on employment support for disabled people which has seen a substantial increase since the Sayce Review is that for Employment and Support Allowance claimants taking part in the Work Programme, DWP's mainstream contracted employment programme. Greater clarity on additional funding which has been provided for specialist disability support is required.

Mental health and other more hidden impairments

There is a misperception that the sole purpose of AtW is to provide physical aids, equipment and transport for people with sensory impairments and physical disabilities; consequently relatively few people with other types of disability, and different support needs, currently use the programme. In scaling up the programme DWP needs to address this imbalance. Its priority should be supporting a much greater number of people with

mental health problems, and intellectual, cognitive and developmental impairments, including learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders. Information about AtW, including on its webpages, should make it much clearer that AtW is as relevant to people with mental, intellectual, cognitive and behavioural impairments as it is to those with sensory impairments and physical disabilities. DWP should also develop a range of AtW mental health provision, in addition to the existing Workplace Mental Health Support Service.

Guidance on Support Workers and the impact on BSL

DWP's recent application of the guidance on full-time Support Workers (known as "the 30 hour rule"), and the capping of hourly rates, in relation to British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation, demonstrates a lack of understanding of how BSL interpretation is currently provided and used. DWP must work with service users and the BSL interpreting profession to fully resolve these issues as a matter of urgency, and fulfil its commitment to review the awards of deaf people adversely affected by the Department's recent approach.

Clarity and transparency of decision making

DWP must be much clearer and more transparent about the basis on which it makes AtW award decisions and the processes by which applicants and service users can challenge decisions and make complaints. Clarified guidance, and contact details and links to the Independent Case Examiner and the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, should be published in accessible formats as a priority. It must be made much clearer to all AtW applicants and service users that they have the option to escalate their complaints once DWP's decision review and complaints processes have been exhausted.

Support for the self-employed and entrepreneurs

The guidance on support for the self-employed and entrepreneurs requires substantial clarification and amendment to ensure that DWP staff take into account the full circumstances of self-employed people's businesses, and the financial realities of working on a freelance basis, including intermittent and fluctuating earnings.

Administration

AtW has sometimes been undermined by poor administration. This must be addressed before the programme is scaled up. AtW currently relies on inefficient and outmoded paper-based processes; these should be replaced by online systems. The recently established central call centre system does not work well for many service users. DWP needs to focus on making the call centre system more flexible and user-friendly, including by improving the flow of information from the call centre to trained Advisers, and establishing a system in which service users receive a communication, in response to calls to the DWP call centre, in a format and at a time that is suitable and convenient for them.

Disability awareness and accessibility

Disability awareness training for DWP staff administering the programme should be improved, and additional specially trained Adviser teams established for service users with learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders. There should be much more

information about AtW in accessible formats, including BSL and Easy Read. A Video Relay Service should be established to allow deaf applicants and service users to contact the Department more easily.

Consultation and communication with service users

A number of recent issues, including the ineffective introduction of the central call centre system and the recent approach to BSL interpretation, demonstrate the need for DWP to engage fully and meaningfully with AtW service users prior to making significant changes to the programme and for changes to be communicated much more clearly and effectively in future.

1 Introduction

In the text of this report, our conclusions are set out in **bold type** and our recommendations, to which the Government is required to respond, are set out in ***bold italic*** type.

1. Despite progress over recent decades, people with disabilities are still at a considerable disadvantage in the UK labour market. Official data show a substantial gap between the employment rate of working age people with disabilities (51%) and that of the general working age population (73%).¹ A large number of people fall out of employment each year due to ill health and disability: some 429,000 people in 2013.²

The Access to Work programme

2. Access to Work (AtW) is a publicly funded employment support programme, administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The programme aims to help level the playing field for disabled people in the labour market. It addresses barriers to employment by providing a range of practical help. Support is available to all long-term disabled people aged 16 years and over who are in, or about to start, paid work, including self-employment.

3. AtW can be used to fund single or multiple adaptations or pieces of equipment, or ongoing support, for example work-related travel costs, communication support for deaf people, Support Workers for people with learning disabilities or autism, or help to overcome difficulties at work presented by mental health issues. Ongoing awards tend to be granted for three years and are typically reviewed annually.³

4. AtW is a discretionary award; it is not a statutory benefit to which eligible people have a legal entitlement. Applicants have no right to a formal appeal against DWP's decisions on their eligibility or level of award.⁴ The programme is intended to provide a level of support above the "reasonable adjustments" which some employers are required to make by law.⁵ Larger employers are required to make a financial contribution to some types of AtW support for their employees.⁶

1 Office for National Statistics, [Labour Market Statistics](#), November 2014, Statistical Bulletin; table A08 [employment rate for disabled people includes people with a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010 and/or work-limiting disabilities]

2 Scope, [A million futures: Halving the disability employment gap](#), April 2014

3 See www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview; DWP ([ATW0235](#))

4 DWP, [Access to Work guidance](#), version 24, para 631

5 Equality Act 2010

6 DWP/JCP, [Employers' Guide to Access to Work](#) [accessed 19 November 2014]

The Sayce Review

5. AtW is part of a range of publicly funded specialist disability employment support, most of which offers help to people who are unemployed, through Jobcentre Plus or providers of DWP's two main contracted employment programmes, the Work Programme and Work Choice. Until recently some disabled people worked in government-subsidised supported employment, in factory businesses run by Remploy. AtW is unique in supporting disabled people who have secured a "mainstream" job or are already in work but need some practical help to stay there.

6. In 2011 Liz Sayce OBE, then Chief Executive of the Royal Association for Disability Rights, was asked by the Government to undertake a review of the range of available specialist support. Her report highlighted "overwhelming support" for the AtW programme. She described it as "highly effective and well-liked" by "service users, employers, disabled people's organisations and charities." She also concluded that AtW was in line with most disabled people's aspirations to work in mainstream employment, rather than in any form of supported or subsidised work, such as that then provided in Remploy's factory businesses.

7. Liz Sayce emphasised that AtW currently helps far fewer disabled people than might potentially benefit from it. She described the programme as being "rationed by a lack of publicity"; it was consequently "the Government's best-kept secret". Awareness of AtW was particularly low amongst smaller employers and particular groups of disabled people, including people with mental ill health and intellectual, cognitive, and developmental impairments.

8. The Sayce Review's recommendations in relation to AtW were primarily designed to: raise awareness of, and access to, the programme, particularly amongst currently under-represented groups; create efficiencies in the way AtW support is provided; and substantially increase the number of people the programme helps. She recommended that Remploy's factories be closed or sold, with the savings from its public subsidy funding then released to be used for other elements of employment support for disabled people, including AtW. The recommendations were accepted by the Government, which subsequently appointed an expert panel, led by Mike Adams OBE, Chair of ECDP, a Disabled People's User Led Group, to consider how they could be implemented.

Our inquiry and the current DWP internal review

9. Our starting point for this inquiry was agreement with the broad conclusions of the Sayce Review; we therefore wanted to monitor progress towards implementation of some of its key recommendations. We also set out to consider in some detail DWP's administration of the programme, and identify potential improvements, including

improving access for the groups identified by Liz Sayce as being under-represented in the current AtW “caseload”.⁷

10. During the course of our inquiry the then DWP Minister for Disabled People (Mike Penning MP) announced an internal departmental review of AtW, largely in response to serious concerns expressed by deaf people who use AtW to fund British Sign Language (BSL) support at work. DWP’s review is currently looking for ways to “support more disabled people and further improve customer service.”⁸ In oral evidence, the current Minister (Mark Harper MP) assured us that the Department had been following the evidence to our inquiry very closely and was considering many of the same issues.⁹ We therefore expect our Report to inform DWP’s internal review, which we hope will lead to substantial improvements to the programme.

11. We received over 340 written and BSL video submissions, most of which were accepted as formal written evidence (video submissions were transcribed) and are published online.¹⁰ We held four oral evidence sessions with: Liz Sayce and Mike Adams; witnesses representing users of AtW with a wide range of impairments; employers, a self-employed person and small business owner, and providers of AtW support; and the Minister, Mark Harper MP, and Colin Stewart, Work Services Director, North West England, DWP. A full list of witnesses is available at the end of this Report.

12. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the inquiry, particularly those who offered help and advice on making the inquiry accessible and the many individual AtW service users who took time to share their experiences with us.

7 See Sayce, L., [Getting in, staying in and getting on: Disability employment support fit for the future](#), June 2011 [Hereafter, Sayce Review]; DWP, [Specialist disability employment programmes: Government’s response to Liz Sayce’s independent review of specialist disability employment programmes](#), [Getting in, staying in and getting on](#), Cm 8106, July 2011; and HC Deb, 4 July 2012, [cols 59–61WS](#)

8 HC Deb, 10 June 2014, [cols 45–46WS](#)

9 [Q254](#) [Mr Harper]

10 A list of published written evidence is set out at the end of this report

2 Marketing and funding

13. Concerns about a lack of awareness of AtW, and insufficient funding, are not new. In 2003 a predecessor Committee recommended that:

[...] the Access to Work budget should be increased by a significant proportion to reflect the number of disabled people who want to work and who need support to enable them to do so. We also urge the Government to embark on a much wider publicity campaign—aimed at disabled people and their employers—to increase awareness of Access to Work.¹¹

Liz Sayce believed that implementing her recommendations could lead to a doubling of the number of people helped by AtW, broadly within the current overall funding package for specialist disability employment support.¹²

14. In this chapter we examine the available information on AtW caseloads and spending in recent years. We also consider the likely level of unmet need and whether additional funding for AtW could be found from elsewhere within the overall funding package for specialist disability employment support. Finally we consider the steps which DWP needs to take to establish the overall cost-effectiveness of AtW, so that a strong case could be made to HM Treasury for substantial additional funding. This would enable much more high profile marketing of the programme to be undertaken with the aim of satisfying the current extent and range of unmet need.

Caseload and expenditure

15. Caseload figures are published in the AtW Official Statistics. Programme expenditure is not routinely published, but expenditure in recent years can be gleaned from DWP's answers to Parliamentary Questions. AtW supported 35,450 people in 2013/14 at a total cost of £108 million. The caseload increased in each of the last two full financial years; however, this followed two years of decline, and the 2013/14 total is below the peak of 37,280 reached in 2009/10. AtW caseloads and programme spend from 2009/10 to 2013/14 are set out in the table below:¹³

Access to Work total caseloads and programme expenditure 2009/10–2013/14		
Financial year	Total caseload	Total programme spend (£ million)
2009/10	37,280	98.0
2010/11	35,820	105.5
2011/12	30,780	98.3
2012/13	31,500	99.0
2013/14	35,450	108.0

11 Work and Pensions Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2002–03, [Employment for all: Interim report](#), HC 401-I

12 [Sayce Review](#), p 124

13 HC Deb, [6 December 2012](#), col 824W; HC Deb, [11 June 2014](#), col 168W; [Access to Work official statistics](#); Written Answer, 30 October 2014 [[211995](#)]

Awards by impairment type

16. Liz Sayce pointed out in her review that there has long been a perception that AtW is about providing “bits of kit”—special equipment and technology—to enable people with physical and sensory disabilities to overcome their barriers in work. This was echoed by witnesses to our inquiry. AtW has tended to be considered less relevant to people with mental health problems, learning disabilities or autism spectrum disorders.¹⁴

17. The emphasis of the programme has broadened somewhat in recent years. In 2011 DWP established an AtW Workplace Mental Health Support Service (WMHSS), to help people who develop a mental health issue to stay in their jobs (see chapter 3). However, it remains the case that the programme is mostly utilised by people with physical or sensory impairments. The 2013/14 Official Statistics show that around 30% of AtW users have a hearing or sight impairment (10,740 people) and about 24% have physical problems with their arms, hands, legs, feet, back or neck (8,620 people). The number of users who have a mental health problem has grown significantly in recent years but remains relatively low. The number increased from just 200 people in 2007/08 to 1,410 people in 2013/14; a more than seven-fold increase. However, this still represents only 4% of the total caseload. The number and proportion of AtW users who have a learning disability is also low: 1,760 people (5% of the caseload). The Official Statistics do not separately identify the number of AtW users with autism spectrum disorders.¹⁵

The costs of different types of support

18. There are official data on the types of support AtW provides, but very little information on the financial costs of different elements of support is routinely published. The Official Statistics contain a breakdown of the total number of awards by element type. This shows that the most used type of support is “Support Workers” (14,850 awards in 2013/14); followed by travel to work (13,120); and aids and equipment (5,470). AtW funds very few adaptations to premises (40) and vehicles (200). The Official Statistics do not give any breakdown of the costs of the different elements.¹⁶ The UK Statistics Authority recently found that the coverage of DWP’s statistics on AtW is “too limited, which constrains their usefulness.”¹⁷

19. DWP emphasised that support for people with hearing impairments accounts for a disproportionately large amount of AtW spending: 5,250 hearing impaired service users (17% of the total caseload) accounted for some £35 million of spending in 2012/13 (around 35% of total expenditure).¹⁸ This is largely due to the costs of BSL interpretation: a recent DWP Freedom of Information response revealed that BSL interpretation alone accounted

14 [Sayce Review](#), p 82; [Q36](#) [Liz Sayce]; [Q126](#) [Nicola Oliver]

15 DWP, [Access to Work: Official Statistics](#), July 2014

16 *Ibid.*

17 UK Statistics Authority, [Statistics on Access to Work](#), December 2014

18 DWP ([ATW0235](#))

for around £25 million of AtW expenditure in 2013/14.¹⁹ The Minister confirmed that DWP had recently taken steps to address the costs of AtW-funded BSL interpretation, but that it was DWP's intention that AtW should continue to provide effective BSL support (we return to this issue in chapter 4).²⁰

20. Liz Sayce noted that, while the costs of meeting some disabled people's needs, such as those who require full-time Support Workers, including BSL interpreters, can be very high, the average cost of AtW per service user is not, at around £3,000 per year.²¹ Her view was that, while it is always important to consider the most cost-effective ways of supporting people with high cost support needs, DWP should not cap the total amount of funding on an individual basis. She emphasised that the number of people with very high cost support needs was small.²² DWP reported that 120 AtW awards in 2012/13 were over £40,000; of these 60 were over £50,000.²³

Establishing the level of unmet need

21. While it is clear that there is a large "employment gap" between disabled people and the non-disabled population, and that a substantial number of people fall out of work each year due to ill health and disabilities, establishing with any precision the number of people who might benefit from AtW is not straightforward.

22. Disability Rights UK (DRUK) cited recent research which suggests that around 4% of the disabled working age population would have additional disability-related needs at work. If this percentage is applied to the gap between the proportion of disabled people in employment and the proportion of the general population who are employed (a difference which equates to proportionately 2 million fewer disabled people in work) or to the entire economically inactive disabled population (some 3.6 million people), it implies a range of between 80,000 and 144,000 potential beneficiaries of AtW.²⁴ However, Liz Sayce, now Chief Executive of DRUK, acknowledged that these figures were uncertain, and that it is currently difficult to estimate from official data how many of these people would require support above the level of "reasonable adjustments" which employers are required to provide.²⁵

Budget

23. The AtW budget is part of an overall funding package for specialist disability employment support—£350 million in the spending period to 2015/16.²⁶ This funding is

19 DWP, [Freedom of Information request 4093/2014](#)

20 [Q271](#)

21 [Q28](#); DWP ([ATW0235](#)) [£3,000 figure is total annual programme expenditure in 2013/14 (£108 million) divided by the total number of people helped by the programme in the same period (35,450)]

22 [Q28](#)

23 DWP ([ATW0235](#))

24 Disability Rights UK ([ATW0286](#))

25 [Q11](#)

26 HM Treasury, [Spending Round 2013](#), para 2.84

part of DWP's overall Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL), the budget allocated for administrative costs and programme expenditure, including employment programmes. DWP's DEL has been reduced year on year since 2009/10 as part of the Government's economic measures to address the budget deficit: it was £5.4 billion in 2013/14, down from £7.4 billion in 2009/10.²⁷

Release of resources from Remploy

24. Liz Sayce envisaged that implementing her proposals for the closure or sale of Remploy's factories would release resources for other forms of specialist disability employment support, including AtW. In 2012 DWP confirmed that "savings from the policy changes will be used for more effective and proven employment programmes such as Access to Work, to benefit many more disabled people".²⁸

25. Remploy is currently a non-departmental public body, sponsored by DWP, and receives government grant-in-aid funding, i.e. a public subsidy. The closure or sale of Remploy's factories following the Sayce Review was largely completed by the end of 2013.²⁹ Remploy also has an employment services arm, which places disabled people into mainstream employment. Remploy Employment Services has become established and successful in the market over the last 15 years. It is currently the subject of a commercialisation process, in which a private or third sector investor is being sought, to take a substantial stake in the business.³⁰

26. Remploy's Annual Reports show that it received £130 million in grant-in-aid subsidy in 2010. This had fallen to £61.3 million by 2013 in a planned reduction following the reorganisation recommended in the Sayce Review.³¹ Gareth Parry of Remploy explained that its total public subsidy is likely to have been reduced by around £80–£85 million, compared to the 2010 figure, when the reorganisation process is complete. He confirmed that this was set to be achieved in the next few months, once a number of "transitional issues" had been dealt with.³²

27. Despite the reduction in public funding for Remploy, the Minister insisted that "There was not a spare £80 million lying around that could all have gone into Access to Work." He told us that the resources released from the reorganisation of Remploy had already been "recycled", including an additional £15 million for AtW, announced in 2012.³³ He stated that funding for the other main elements of disability employment support, Work Choice and the Work Programme, had been "protected" during a time when savings had been made elsewhere in DWP programme expenditure.³⁴ However, it was not immediately clear

27 DWP, [Annual Report & Accounts 2013/14](#), June 2014

28 HC Deb, 7 March 2013, [cols 63–66WS](#)

29 See *Remploy*, Standard Note [SN/00698](#), House of Commons Library, August 2014

30 HC Deb, 22 July 2014, col [126WS](#)

31 Remploy, [Annual reports and financial statements](#) [accessed 18 November 2014]

32 [Q247](#)

33 [Q259](#)

34 [Qq 259–60](#)

from the Minister's answers to our questions how the remaining reduction in Remploy's subsidy had been reallocated. The Minister later told us that "the £80 million figure is not specifically recognised by the Department". He reiterated that spending on specialist disability employment support had been protected from the substantial cuts to DWP's budgets since 2010 and that, "Had the Department not reformed Remploy, this would not have been possible." Information provided by DWP shows that, other than the additional £15 million for AtW announced in 2012, the only element of spending on disability employment support which has increased substantially since 2011 is that for Employment and Support Allowance claimants taking part in the Work Programme, DWP's mainstream contracted employment programme.³⁵

28. DWP has not provided a satisfactory explanation of how the money saved from the closure or sale of Remploy factories has been used to increase funding for effective, specialist disability employment support. We do not consider it appropriate to classify spending on the Work Programme as additional funding for specialist disability employment support. We recommend that, in response to this Report, the Department provide further information on how the savings from the reorganisation of Remploy have been used to date, and that it clarifies whether it intends to increase funding for specific areas of specialist disability employment support, other than the Work Programme, as a result of the reorganisation of Remploy.

29. The Minister stated that any additional funding for AtW before the next Spending Review period would have to come from other employment programmes or from further administrative savings from elsewhere within DWP's DEL.³⁶ It should be noted that DWP's DEL is not a ring-fenced element of government spending and may be subject to further reductions.

Potential "AME/DEL switch"

30. The Minister acknowledged that implementation of Liz Sayce's recommendation to double the AtW caseload would require a broadly commensurate increase in funding. He indicated that the Department was considering how this might be achieved in the next Spending Review period (i.e. from 2016/17 onwards). He explained that one option might be to make the case to HM Treasury to increase funding for AtW by using DWP's much larger Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) budget, which is for items that are demanded and difficult to forecast, in particular social security expenditure. The rationale for this is that AtW is widely considered to be cost-effective; supporting disabled people in work often brings a long-term return to the Exchequer through reduced out-of-work benefits and increased income tax returns. In theory DWP's larger AME budget (£163 billion in 2013/14) could be used to substantially increase funding for cost-effective employment

³⁵ DWP ([ATW0344](#))

³⁶ [Q258](#)

programmes such as AtW, on the understanding that this was likely to produce long-term savings in benefits expenditure.³⁷

31. However, it should be noted that the idea of applying an “AME/DEL switch”, or “Invest to Save”, in relation to DWP’s spending on employment programmes, has existed since at least 2007.³⁸ There is no indication that HM Treasury supports the concept; it would require a very significant change to HM Treasury’s approach to the setting of DWP’s budgets.

Establishing the cost-effectiveness of Access to Work

32. The Sayce Review cited research by disability organisations which concluded that expenditure on AtW achieved a return to the Exchequer of £1.48 for every £1 spent, based on reduced social security benefits and increased income tax take. She therefore recommended that in the longer term the Government implement the so-called “AME/DEL switch”, as described above.³⁹

33. The Minister told us that the £1.48 figure was not supported by official research; DWP had “not been able to establish the workings for that figure.” He indicated that he had asked DWP officials to “undertake some analytical work” on the cost-effectiveness of AtW because, “if we are going to have a discussion with Treasury colleagues about funding, we want some good evidence.”⁴⁰

Employers’ contributions

34. Larger employers contribute to the costs of AtW funded aids and adaptations to premises, or equipment for their employees. Employers are required to contribute 100% of the costs up to a threshold, and 20% of costs between the relevant threshold and £10,000. The thresholds are based on the total number of employees a business has, as set out below:

0–49 employees:	Nil
50–249 employees:	£500
250 or more employees:	£1,000

Additional voluntary contributions are sought “where the support provides a general business benefit” to the employer.⁴¹ DWP abolished employer contributions for employers

37 [Sayce Review](#), p 15; Disability Employment Coalition, [Access to Work for Disabled People](#), 2004; Business Disability Forum ([ATW0285](#))

38 Freud, D., [Reducing dependency, increasing opportunity: options for the future of welfare to work, An independent report to the Department for Work and Pensions](#), 2007

³⁹ Sayce Review, p 94

40 [Q276](#)

41 DWP/JCP, [Employers’ Guide to Access to Work: Factsheet](#) [accessed 14 November 2014]

of fewer than 50 people in 2012/13, as part of a drive to encourage participation in AtW by smaller employers, following the Sayce Review's conclusions.⁴²

35. Mike Adams told us that his expert panel's recommendation had been to abolish employer contributions altogether to encourage employer engagement across the board. He believed that the current arrangements resulted in employers contributing such a small proportion of the total cost of AtW support that the administrative costs to DWP of collecting it were likely to be disproportionate.⁴³ The Business Disability Forum (BDF) agreed. BDF also believed that the current arrangements caused confusion amongst employers about the extent to which contributions were mandatory or voluntary. However, TLT Solicitors, a nationwide employer which engages extensively with AtW, found the current arrangements "easy to interpret" and believed them to be "reasonable".⁴⁴

36. The Minister told us that DWP was considering the employer cost-sharing arrangements as part of its internal review. However, he was clear that the administrative costs of collecting employers' AtW contributions were "certainly not" greater than the total amount collected. Employers currently fund around £7 million per year in total mandatory and voluntary contributions. This was equivalent to the administrative costs of running the entire AtW programme. The Minister therefore believed that it was "not a trivial amount". However, he noted a lack of information about the range of larger and smaller employers taking part in the programme and their respective financial contributions. He confirmed that he had asked DWP officials to collate data on this. He was keen to ensure that the Department "takes full advantage of the amount of taxpayer money we have got and the amount of employer resource as well."⁴⁵

Tension between marketing and available funding

37. Given the likely scale of unmet need and the limited available funding, there is an inevitable tension between marketing AtW more widely and maintaining costs within the budget. Susan Scott-Parker of the BDF told us that her understanding, drawn from speaking to DWP officials over the last 15 to 18 years, was that the budget for AtW had "never been fully utilised" and that "officials have been under pressure not to tell too many people about it in case the demand grew."⁴⁶

38. DWP again rebutted the assertion that there was "unused money lying around".⁴⁷ However, the Minister did acknowledge the difficult balance between marketing the programme more widely and ensuring that there was sufficient funding available to meet increased demand. He also believed that it was important to ensure that more robust

42 DWP, [Annual Report and Accounts 2012/13](#), December 2013, p 23

43 [Q31](#)

44 TLT Solicitors ([ATW0341](#))

45 [Q322](#)

46 [Q164](#)

47 [Q269](#)

administrative structures were put in place, before any substantial expansion of the programme (we address some of the key administrative issues in chapter 6).⁴⁸

39. DWP spent around £50,000 on a 12-month “targeted marketing campaign” from June 2012. This included:

[...] press releases, presentations at disability and employer events, and articles in disability publications and engagement in direct marketing to large employers. It also included use of digital media, paid advertising links in popular search engines, magazine adverts and awareness training for Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisors.

DWP believed that this activity reversed the decline in caseload which had occurred in 2010/11 and 2011/12 and resulted in a significant increase in visits to the AtW webpages on the GOV.UK website.⁴⁹

40. DWP also drew attention to its *Disability Confident* campaign, which was launched in July 2013. *Disability Confident* is a series of conferences and promotional material aimed at employers. It seeks to “work with employers to remove barriers, increase understanding and ensure that disabled people have the opportunities to fulfil their potential and realise their aspirations.”⁵⁰ A central message of *Disability Confident* is that employers can reap economic benefits from employing disabled people, as well as achieving corporate social responsibility aims.⁵¹

41. Notwithstanding the above, most witnesses felt that AtW still suffered from inadequate marketing and that awareness remained low, particularly amongst smaller employers and disabled people with particular types of impairments. Individual service users suggested that awareness tended to be spread by word of mouth rather than as a result of any official marketing strategy.⁵² The BDF, which has taken part in *Disability Confident* events, believed that AtW was not featured sufficiently prominently in the campaign. This view was supported by Remploy.⁵³

42. Improved marketing should lead to increased uptake of AtW which in turn should begin to address the level of unmet need. It is clear that this unmet need lies in some specific groups of potential AtW users, including people with mental health problems, learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders, and young people with disabilities trying to enter the labour market for the first time. In addition, as we pointed out in our report on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) earlier this year, a significant number of claimants are being found fit for work as result of the ESA process. Many of these people are likely to require in-work support of the type AtW can help to fund, if they

48 [Q304](#)

49 DWP ([ATW0235](#))

50 DWP ([ATW0235](#))

51 See [Disability Confident campaign](#) [accessed 5 November]

52 See, for example, Faye Stewart ([ATW0320](#)); Josef Baines ([ATW0313](#)); Rachael Parker ([ATW0309](#)); Dr Dai O’Brien ([ATW0296](#))

53 [Q188](#)

are to enter and sustain employment. An expert panel involved in the trial of an alternative assessment for ESA eligibility identified that 83% of claimants deemed fit for work would need “on average, two or three” adjustments; and 24% would need a support worker. We argued that the ESA process needed to be properly joined up with effective employment support for people found fit for work who had disabilities or ongoing health conditions.⁵⁴ Proactive promotion of AtW, by Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches and contracted providers, to people leaving incapacity benefits and trying to find work would be one step in this direction.

43. It was clear from the Minister’s evidence that DWP intends to increase the number of people helped by Access to Work. This is welcome; the evidence strongly suggests that Access to Work currently supports only a minority of disabled people who might benefit from the programme. However, it was equally clear that the Department is currently trying to increase the Access to Work caseload within an only marginally increased budget. We believe that there is a risk of unintended consequences from this approach, because focusing on the number of people being helped while trying to remain within a tightly constrained budget might result in DWP bearing down on the awards of current service users who happen to require relatively high cost support, to the detriment of meeting their needs effectively. We welcome the Minister’s assurance that this is not DWP’s intention. The focus of the programme should remain addressing the range of barriers faced by disabled people, including the relatively few people whose support needs are currently high cost. We agree with the Minister that a substantial increase in the number of people Access to Work helps is likely to require a broadly commensurate increase in the available funding.

44. It is not currently possible to ascertain with certainty the number of people whom Access to Work might benefit; the range of needs they would have in work; or the cost of providing support which meets the range of currently unmet need. However, it is clear that substantial unmet need includes that which exists amongst people with mental health problems, learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders, young disabled people trying to enter work for the first time, and people found fit for work as a result of the Employment and Support Allowance eligibility process. While it is widely accepted that supporting disabled people in work brings a long-term return to the Exchequer through reduced spending on out-of-work benefits and increased income tax returns, there is a lack of published official data to support this.

45. We recommend that, as a priority, DWP undertake research to establish a) the likely level and range of currently unmet need; and b) a cost-benefit analysis of Access to Work expenditure, including its likely long-term impacts on social security expenditure and income tax returns. We believe that such a study is likely to produce an overwhelming case for substantial additional funding for Access to Work, which we recommend be presented to HM Treasury at the earliest possible opportunity. Our hope is that HM

⁵⁴ Work and Pensions Committee, First Report of Session 2014–15, [Employment and Support Allowance and Work Capability Assessments](#), HC 302, Summary; para 56; and chapter 7

Treasury will be able to announce substantial additional funding before the next Comprehensive Spending Review.

46. There is remarkably little published information on Access to Work. We have had to piece together much of the information we needed for this inquiry from DWP's answers to Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests. This lack of transparency is unacceptable. We recommend that DWP change its approach to Access to Work statistics and that, as a minimum, it regularly publish the following information: an indicative annual budget; annual expenditure outturns, broken down by support element and impairment type (including autism spectrum disorders); the number of service users by size of employer; and employers' mandatory and voluntary financial contributions, broken down by size of employer. We also recommend that DWP set out the steps it is taking in response to the December 2014 UK Statistics Authority Report on the compliance of Access to Work statistics with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, in its response to this Report.

47. We welcome the Minister's assurance that the current employer cost-sharing arrangements are being considered by the Department as part of its internal review. We believe that DWP could do more to clarify and simplify the arrangements, which might encourage more employers to engage with the programme. We recommend that DWP publish case studies on the Access to Work webpages, to illustrate the types of support which are typically considered to be "reasonable adjustments" under the Equality Act, and those which would normally qualify for publicly funded support. Case studies should also illustrate the circumstances in which employers' contributions are typically regarded as mandatory, and those in which contributions are voluntary.

48. Given the severe constraints on DWP's budgets, we recommend that the Department encourage increased voluntary employer contributions, particularly from larger employers. DWP should publish and promote case studies which illustrate examples of employers which have gone beyond their legal requirements to support the recruitment of disabled people, to encourage others to follow their example. The Access to Work webpages should include an employers' page, and links to Disability Confident promotional material, to promote the benefits of employing disabled people. We also recommend that Access to Work be more prominently featured in the Disability Confident marketing campaign.

49. In the remainder of this Report we examine AtW in more detail, including aspects of DWP's administration of the programme, which are likely to require change in the short to medium-term, particularly if, as both we and the Department hope, AtW is to be scaled up substantially in the longer-term.

3 The AtW Workplace Mental Health Support Service

50. DWP launched an AtW Workplace Mental Health Support Service (WMHSS) in late 2011. The service is currently the only element of AtW which aims specifically to help people overcome mental health-related difficulties at work. Below we examine the design of the WMHSS; its effectiveness; and the adequacy of its current reach.

Contractual arrangements and service design

51. Remploy won the contract to deliver the WMHSS to DWP's specifications following an open tender process. The service is designed to support people in work who are off sick or encountering difficulties due to mental health problems. Support is delivered by Vocational Rehabilitation Consultants—multi-disciplinary specialists, including occupational therapists, psychologists and specially trained employment advisers—subcontracted to Remploy. People must refer themselves to the service, initially by telephoning the DWP call centre. They are not required to disclose their participation in the scheme to their employer, but the employer's engagement is sought if the participant consents.

52. Support is delivered both face-to-face and over the telephone. The types of help offered include:

- Workplace adjustments, including the potential for flexible hours, home working or a workplace mentor or buddy to provide additional support;
- Coping strategies related to working practices such as time management and planning;
- Condition management, with resources and information to support anxiety, stress or fatigue management, relaxation techniques, and many other conditions. This may also involve signposting to provision available through the NHS or leading mental health organisations;
- Support with disclosure in the workplace, and potential mediation between the employer and individual if their relationship has broken down;
- Employer education and advice on mental health in the workplace, increasing understanding of the impact of mental health conditions and how they can be managed; and
- If the individual is already on sick leave, suggestions on a return to work strategy, particularly around timing, nature of tasks upon return, and any adjustments required beforehand.

Remploy receives around £900 from DWP to support each participant in the scheme for six months. To date the service has supported around 3,000 people. The current annual cost of the scheme is approximately £1.6 million, which is around 1.5% of total AtW programme expenditure.⁵⁵

Effectiveness and scope

53. The WMHSS appears to be highly effective; Remploy reported that more than 90% of people referred to the service remained in work after six months of support.⁵⁶ However, while expert witnesses were supportive of the establishment of a specific AtW scheme to address mental health issues, they believed that its focus was currently too narrow. Some were also concerned that it was the only AtW-funded support option available to people experiencing mental health problems and that this implied an unacceptable lack of choice. Liz Sayce believed that there would be “nothing wrong” with the WMHSS if it were one of a number of employment support options for people with mental health issues.⁵⁷

54. Nicola Oliver, a specialist working with the Centre for Mental Health, was concerned that the WMHSS support options described above appeared to be primarily designed to address relatively mild conditions, including work-related stress and anxiety. Her view was that they were unlikely to be adequate for people experiencing more severe problems, including depression and bi-polar disorder. She agreed with Liz Sayce that a broader range of support options was required, including through specialist organisations such as Mind, Rethink and Bi-polar UK.⁵⁸

55. Tom McAlpine OBE, a mental health professional specialising in employment support, told us that alternative providers had previously offered effective support, funded by AtW, for people with “severe enduring mental health conditions”, but that they been prevented from doing so since the establishment of the WMHSS contract. His view, supported by a number of mental health organisations, was that people with mental health problems should have a range of options to choose from, as is the case for people with other types of disability.⁵⁹

Pre-employment eligibility letter

56. In 2010 DWP introduced a pre-employment eligibility letter which is available to download and print from the GOV.UK website. The letter is intended to allow people with a pre-existing disability or long-term health condition to indicate to a prospective employer that they are likely to be eligible for AtW support. The intention is to “reassure employers that they will not incur excessive costs as a result of taking on a disabled person” and also increase the confidence of disabled people to apply for jobs, knowing that they

55 Remploy ([ATW0083](#))

56 *Ibid.*

57 [Q37](#)

58 [Q138](#)

59 Tom McAlpine OBE ([ATW0199](#)); Joint submission from mental health sector ([ATW0250](#))

were likely to be eligible for support.⁶⁰ A number of witnesses pointed out that, because the WMHSS is designed to support people already in work, this option did not appear to be available to people with a pre-existing mental health issue.⁶¹

Reach

57. The over-riding concern expressed about the WMHSS was that its current reach was insufficient given the scale of mental health issues in the UK. A joint submission from the mental health sector emphasised that:

- One in six workers will experience mental ill health at some point in their working life;
- Stress and mental health problems are the second biggest cause of work absence; and
- Between 2011 and 2012 employers saw a 44% increase in reported mental health problems.⁶²

A recent report by Dame Sally Davies, the Government’s Chief Medical Officer, concluded that “Mental illness is the largest single cause of disability” in the UK and that “it is the leading cause of sickness absence in the UK, accounting for 70 million sick days in 2013.”⁶³

58. Remploy acknowledged that “the WMHSS can only reach a tiny proportion of those requiring workplace mental health support.” However, Gareth Parry stressed that the scheme had “significant capacity to grow”. He told us that the caseload was “not limited by ability to deliver”; the issue was primarily one of “promotion of the service.”⁶⁴

Self-referral process and the call centre

59. The relatively small number of referrals to date may be partly due to the current scope of the scheme, as described above. Remploy believed that aspects of the scheme’s design and administration were also holding back referrals. In particular, it believed that the system of self-referral by telephone was inappropriate for many people experiencing a mental health issue. Gareth Parry of Remploy explained that;

In many walks of life, that might be a perfectly normal, acceptable thing to do, but for somebody experiencing high levels of stress or anxiety or, particularly, depression, making that phone call to an anonymous person can be quite a difficult experience.⁶⁵

60 [Sayce Review](#), p 15

61 Joint submission from mental health sector ([ATW0250](#)); Remploy ([ATW0083](#))

62 Joint submission from mental health sector ([ATW0250](#))

63 Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2013, [Public Mental Health Priorities: Investing in the Evidence](#), September 2014

64 [Q195](#)

65 [Q200](#)

Remploy noted that a more flexible system, which allowed initial referrals from employers or other third parties, had existed until about a year ago; it argued that this system should be reinstated.⁶⁶

60. Gareth Parry reported that referrals to the WMHSS were down by around 50% compared to a year ago. He believed that this was at least partly related to changes made to the way AtW applicants can contact DWP—from May 2014 all AtW calls have been routed through the main DWP call centre rather than more local DWP staff. Mr Parry reported incidents in which people seeking referral to mental health support had phoned the call centre only to find that staff were unaware of the existence of the WMHSS (we consider the central call centre system in more detail in chapter 6).⁶⁷

Integration with health services and the Fit for Work service

61. Witnesses highlighted a lack of awareness of the WMHSS, and AtW more generally, within health services. Nicola Oliver argued that DWP should do much more to make health services aware of the employment support available to people with mental health problems, and others, through AtW. Remploy told us that it had “done lots of work” to raise awareness of the WMHSS with disability organisations, employers and health services, particularly GPs; but it agreed that DWP should do more at a “strategic level”, including coordinated work with the Department of Health and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.⁶⁸

62. The Minister indicated that DWP had noted these concerns and was considering them as part of its internal review. He was clear that:

[...] if we are going to make a big impact on the disability employment gap [...] we are going to have to make a big impression on people with mental health problems, only half of whom are at work, and those with learning disabilities. We absolutely need to do better on the mental health side of things.⁶⁹

He said that he “could not explain” the recent drop in referrals which Remploy had identified, but assured us that he would “look into it”.⁷⁰ He noted that DWP’s Fit For Work service, which was launched in November 2014, in which employees who have been off sick from work for four weeks are referred for an occupational health assessment, had the potential to boost referrals to the WMHSS, and AtW provision generally, if the two services could be successfully coordinated.⁷¹

66 Remploy ([ATW0083](#))

67 [Q200](#)

68 *Ibid.*

69 [Q320](#)

70 *Ibid.*

71 [Q316](#)

63. While the Department has made some progress in broadening the emphasis of Access to Work to include support for people with mental health problems as well as physical and sensory impairments, there is clearly a very long way to go in this regard. We agree with the Minister that addressing mental health needs has a big part to play in closing the employment gap between disabled people and the rest of the population. While its introduction is welcome, the current Access to Work provision for mental health, the Workplace Mental Health Support Service, is far from sufficient, given the scale of mental health problems in the UK and their impact on employment.

64. *In scaling up Access to Work, priority should be given to supporting people with mental health problems, and other more hidden intellectual, cognitive and behavioural impairments, and learning disabilities, to gain and continue in employment. We recommend that DWP take steps to publicise the Access to Work Workplace Mental Health Support Service (WMHSS) to mental health service providers. It should also ensure that the provider of the new Fit for Work service is fully aware of the WMHSS and refers people where appropriate.*

65. *To increase the reach of the service, we recommend that DWP change its practice and begin to accept initial referrals to the WMHSS from employees' advocates and employers, where the employee's consent has been given. DWP also needs to take immediate steps to ensure that all of its call centre staff are aware of the WMHSS and that they refer callers appropriately. DWP should publish case studies on the Access to Work webpages to illustrate to potential service users and employers how the programme can support people with mental ill health; learning disabilities; and other cognitive, intellectual and developmental impairments.*

66. *People with physical and sensory impairments have an element of choice in how their Access to Work support is provided; there is currently a lack of choice in Access to Work mental health support. We recommend that DWP develop a range of mental health provision, in addition to the WMHSS, with a broader focus and which is better able to address difficulties faced by people with more severe and enduring mental health conditions. Once this additional provision is in place, we further recommend that DWP make clear that the Access to Work pre-employment eligibility letter is available to all disabled job applicants, including those with pre-existing mental health problems.*

4 Guidance on “Support Workers” and the impacts on BSL interpretation

67. The very large majority of written evidence to the inquiry was from deaf people who use AtW to fund British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation to help them in their jobs. Many of these witnesses told us that they relied heavily on AtW and were appreciative of the support it provided. For example, Henry Skinner wrote that:

I have used AtW for my work and found it very useful for my career and in developing links to a wider range of people. Without it I would be out of work, at home on benefits with the possibility of low self-esteem and motivation to improve myself.⁷²

Marije Davidson, who uses BSL and a range of other communication support, told us that:

Access to Work has enabled me to pursue a successful career through the voluntary and public sector. Without it, I would be without a job, unable to maintain my family and participate actively in the local community. Having a job in which I can flourish and I can make a positive contribution to society is important for my self-esteem, health and well-being.⁷³

We received numerous similar submissions.⁷⁴

68. However, almost all of the submissions we received from deaf people raised very serious concerns about the way in which DWP was applying guidance on the funding of full-time “Support Workers”, and the impact this was having on the provision of effective BSL interpretation.⁷⁵ In this chapter, we consider the relevant paragraph of the guidance and the rationale behind it; the way in which it has been implemented by DWP; and its impacts on AtW funded BSL interpretation.

The 30 hour “rule”

69. The relevant paragraph in the guidance is set out below:

If a Support Worker is required full time, for example 30 hours or more a week, Access to Work will normally fund on the basis of an annual salary rather than an Agency worker employed on an hourly basis.⁷⁶

72 Henry Skinner ([ATW0004](#))

73 Marije Davidson ([ATW0161](#))

74 See, for example, Mencap ([ATW0254](#)); Equal Lives ([ATW0248](#)); Solar Bear ([ATW0211](#)); Camilla Arnold ([ATW0204](#))

75 See, for example: Jackie Wan ([ATW0333](#)); Fiona Garfield ([ATW0323](#)); Faye Stewart ([ATW0320](#)); Maria Barroso ([ATW0318](#)); Olivier Jamin ([ATW0316](#)); Yasmin Kovic ([ATW0312](#)); Rachael Parker ([ATW0319](#)); Grant Thornton ([ATW0288](#)); Steven Wynne ([ATW0264](#)); Solutions 4 Community Support ([ATW0245](#)); Sam Calder ([ATW0220](#))

76 [Access to Work Guidance](#), version 24, para 366

The evidence we received suggested that this guidance had recently been stringently applied to BSL support; some AtW users who required 30 hours per week or more of interpretation reported having been told by DWP that they, or their employer, *must* employ a dedicated full-time interpreter on a salaried basis. Witnesses invariably referred to the guidance as the 30 hour *rule*. Many reported being told by DWP that the maximum permissible annual salary for a full-time interpreter was £30–£35,000, despite this not being set out in the guidance.⁷⁷

70. At the same time, the evidence suggested that the guidance had been applied somewhat inconsistently. Numerous witnesses had been told that they could continue to book freelance or agency interpreters, but that hourly rates for BSL interpretation would be capped, based on the maximum permissible annual salary. Hourly rates which witnesses had been told were acceptable for reimbursement ranged between £18 and £25.⁷⁸ Marije Davidson emphasised that the current problems were not only affecting those who require full-time BSL. DWP had told her, and others who use a range of communication support and therefore require less than 30 hours per week of BSL, that rates at which the Department would reimburse interpreters had been capped at £25.⁷⁹

71. The relevant paragraph has been in the guidance for some time but it appears to have been widely implemented, at least in relation to BSL interpretation, only since 2012 for new applicants, and since 2013 for ongoing awards which had come up for annual review. DeafAtW, a campaigning organisation set up in response to the concerns around this issue, reported that service users had perceived a notable change in DWP's policy and general approach to BSL interpretation from summer 2013. It reported that AtW Advisers no longer applied discretion in the application of the guidance; correspondence dating from this time from DWP to AtW users gives the impression that the guidance was effectively being applied as a rule.⁸⁰

Impact on sign language interpretation

72. The way in which the 30 hour guidance and the caps on hourly rates for BSL interpretation have been applied appears to have had a profoundly detrimental impact on the ability of many deaf BSL users to source the effective interpretation they need to do their jobs. Numerous witnesses reported that it had resulted in their AtW support budget being reduced by 50% or more, leaving them unable to source appropriate support or with interpreters' invoices which they were unable to pay. A number of witnesses were deeply concerned that they would be unable to continue in their jobs if DWP could not be persuaded to change its approach.⁸¹ Susan Scott-Parker of the BDF gave an example of a deaf service user whose hours of AtW support had recently been cut:

77 See, for example: South West London and St. George's Mental Health Trust ([ATW0334](#)); Jackie Wan ([ATW0333](#)); Dara Trainor ([ATW0112](#))

78 See, for example: DeafAtW ([ATW0343](#)); Maria Barroso ([ATW0318](#)); Josef Baines ([ATW0313](#))

79 [Q84](#)

80 DeafAtW ([ATW0343](#))

81 See, for example, Julian Peedle-Caloo ([ATW0104](#)); Rachael Hayes ([ATW0040](#))

[...] they have now been told by Access to Work that they can only communicate four days a week. They have to have a non-communication day. What employer is going to suddenly go, “I cannot talk to you today; you cannot go to any meetings today”? It is a false economy, because that person could then end up losing their job, but it looks as though you have saved a bit of money.⁸²

The British Deaf Association told us that several deaf people had already left their jobs due to AtW issues. At least one individual deaf person told us that they had recently left their job.⁸³

73. Most witnesses pointed to two fundamental problems with the approach being applied by DWP. Firstly, £18 to £25 per hour is substantially below the current market rate at which effective BSL support can be sourced for a variety of work situations. Rates vary according to the specific work and the technical expertise required of the interpreter, and there are regional variations and other factors, but typical rates appear to range between £37 and £45 per hour.

74. Secondly, witnesses argued that there are a number of sound reasons why employing a single interpreter on a full-time basis invariably suits neither the deaf person nor the interpreter. AtW service users told us that full-time salaried support does not offer the flexibility needed to meet the requirement for varied types of communication support at different points of the working day or week; deaf people often need a range of support, depending on the specific work situation, for example a mix of BSL; note-taking; and speech-to-text reporting. Interpreters were clear that working with a single deaf person would harm their professional development and lead to them becoming “complacent, stale and de-motivated.” The Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI) reported that in a recent survey of BSL interpreters 86% said that they would not consider a salaried position.⁸⁴

Suspension of the 30 hour guidance for new applicants

75. The concerns expressed by deaf people and their representative organisations led to DWP temporarily suspending the relevant part of the AtW guidance, in relation to new applications, for three months from June 2014. The then Minister (Mike Penning MP) acknowledged concerns about the 30 hour guidance’s practical effect, “notably on the ability of some deaf customers to source appropriate BSL support.”⁸⁵ It was later confirmed that users with ongoing awards who had experienced problems could ask for a “full review

82 [Q158](#)

83 British Deaf Association ([ATW0222](#)); Alexandra Shaw ([ATW0050](#))

84 Association of Sign Language Interpreters ([ATW0160](#))

85 HC Deb, 10 June 2014, cols [45–46WS](#)

of their situation”.⁸⁶ However, some witnesses subsequently told us that difficulties had continued despite this announcement.⁸⁷

Controlling the costs of BSL interpretation

76. The current Minister was clear that the guidance had been applied in the way described in an attempt to control the costs of BSL support, which, as noted in chapter 2, account for a disproportionately large amount of total AtW expenditure. Some 3,430 people received AtW funded BSL interpretation in 2013/14 (around 9% of the total caseload), at a total cost of around £25 million (24% of total AtW expenditure).⁸⁸

77. Representatives of the BSL interpreting profession acknowledged that it was perfectly reasonable for DWP to look to control spending on BSL and ensure that it was provided in the most cost-effective way possible. Dr Jules Dickinson, representing ASLI, believed that technological solutions, including Video Relay Systems (VRS), which allow deaf people to communicate by video phone using an interpreter in a remote location, had the potential to provide more cost-effective support in some situations.⁸⁹ She also agreed that it was reasonable for DWP to set a maximum permissible hourly, half-daily or daily rate for AtW funded BSL interpretation and indicated that ASLI was willing to collaborate with the Department to set such rates.⁹⁰ However, as far as she was aware, there had been very little meaningful consultation on these issues to date, even since the announcement of the suspension of the guidance.⁹¹

78. The Minister emphasised the need to control high-cost forms of support such as BSL, while maintaining effective employment support and ensuring that people currently using AtW are able to stay in their jobs. He reported that he had had some “initial conversations” with representative organisations, including Action on Hearing Loss, which were “very keen to work in a cooperative way to try to come up with a better solution.”⁹² Mr Harper noted that DWP had “set up a forum with stakeholders and customers where we can discuss operational changes and guidance.”⁹³ He also indicated that the Department was considering establishing a specialist team to deal with AtW service users with particularly complex and high-cost support needs.⁹⁴

79. The way in which DWP has recently applied the Access to Work guidance on full-time Support Workers, and capped the hourly rate at which it is prepared to reimburse Support Workers’ costs, has had a profoundly detrimental impact on many service

86 HC Deb, 16 June 2014, [col 343](#)

87 Deaf AtW, the Stop Changes to Access to Work Campaign and National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters ([ATW0342](#)); DeafAtW ([ATW0343](#))

88 DWP Freedom of Information Requests [4088/2014](#); [4093/2014](#)

89 [Qq217-23](#)

90 [Qq210-11](#)

91 [Q206](#)

92 [Q303](#)

93 [Q296](#)

94 [Q278](#)

users, particularly deaf people who require a significant amount of British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation in order to do their jobs effectively. DWP's recognition of this adverse impact, and the temporary suspension of the guidance, is welcome; however, its stringent application of the guidance in this context demonstrated a lack of understanding of how BSL interpretation is currently provided and highlights the need for much improved consultation with stakeholders prior to significant changes to service delivery in the future.

80. *We recommend that DWP fulfil its commitment to undertake full and proper award reviews in all cases where service users believe that the guidance on full-time Support Workers, or caps on hourly rates, as applied to BSL interpretation, has rendered them unable to source effective BSL interpretation appropriate to their needs at work.*

81. *We recommend that DWP re-issue the guidance on full-time Support Workers, making it clearer that reimbursement of costs on the basis of an annual salary, rather than an hourly, half-daily or daily rate, should be considered on a case-by-case basis, and only applied in circumstances where it reflects the reality of how effective support can be provided. We further recommend that the guidance explicitly state that this does not typically apply to BSL interpretation.*

82. *We recommend that DWP consult the BSL interpreting profession, through the Association of Sign Language Interpreters and the National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters, to establish suitable maximum permissible hourly, half-daily and daily rates for BSL interpretation funded by Access to Work, based on robust research. The Government should also consult formally on improving the efficiency of the market for BSL interpreting services across the public sector. This consultation should consider steps which could be taken to increase the number of BSL interpreters in the UK.*

83. *We recommend that DWP establish a specially trained team to deal with high-cost ongoing Access to Work awards, including those for BSL Interpretation. This team should receive intensive training in deaf awareness and on the full range of communication support options, including the latest technological innovations and the most cost-effective solutions. DWP staff and Access to Work service users should be encouraged to consider technological solutions to communication support, where it is appropriate to needs and cost-effective.*

84. *The recent problems in relation to the 30 hour guidance have, in part, arisen from a lack of consultation and engagement with service users. We therefore recommend that DWP makes it its policy to consult on all significant future changes to Access to Work policy and guidance, through the newly established Access to Work stakeholders' forum, and to undertake much more effective communication about changes to the programme. We request that the Department sets out, in its response to this Report, the membership of the forum, and the processes by which stakeholders will be consulted on future changes.*

5 Clarity and transparency of decision-making

85. As previously noted, AtW is a discretionary award; it is not a statutory benefit to which eligible people have a legal entitlement. DWP staff follow detailed and comprehensive guidance in coming to their decisions about applicants' eligibility and the levels of awards, but applicants have no right to a formal appeal, even where they believe that the guidance has not been followed. Below we consider the clarity and transparency of AtW decision-making, and the processes by which applicants can challenge DWP's decisions or complain if they believe they have been treated unfairly.

Eligibility criteria

86. The eligibility criteria for AtW are relatively straightforward. Support is not means-tested or based on National Insurance contributions—common complexities in the social security system. AtW is in theory available to all people aged 16 years and over who are resident in Great Britain and have a long-term disability, as defined by the Equality Act 2010. They must be in paid work, full or part-time, which pays at least the National Minimum Wage (NMW). They can also be eligible if they have an offer to start paid work, or are taking part in one of an approved range of work experience or similar placements. Applicants are not typically eligible for support if they are in receipt of out-of-work benefits.⁹⁵

Clarity and transparency of AtW staff guidance

87. Despite eligibility criteria which are, on the face of it, fairly straightforward, DWP staff follow long and prescriptive guidance in coming to their decisions. The current (24th) version of the AtW guidance is a 105-page document containing 759 paragraphs and seven appendices. It details the steps DWP staff should take in relation to: establishing an applicant's eligibility to apply for support; processing applications; assessing applicants' needs; and the provision of each of the main elements of AtW support—travel to work; Support Workers; and adaptations/equipment.

88. A key concern amongst service users was that they were not clear about the basis on which DWP makes its decisions.⁹⁶ The guidance is not published by DWP. One group of employers told us that consequently it was “impossible to judge the extent to which [the eligibility rules] have been followed in any case.”⁹⁷ The guidance has only recently become available on the internet following a Freedom of Information request.⁹⁸

95 See [Access to Work Guidance](#), version 24. Some Employment and Support Allowance claimants may be eligible if they are participating in Permitted Work

96 See, for example, [Q162](#) [Susan Scott-Parker]; Tamsyn Hockaday ([ATW0154](#))

97 Higher Education institutions ([ATW0251](#))

98 *Access to Work*, Standard Note [SN06666](#), House of Commons Library, October 2014

89. The Minister told us that DWP did not deliberately keep the guidance “a secret”; if applicants asked for a copy, they were sent it. However, he acknowledged that the current guidance was inaccessible and “not user-friendly”. He confirmed that it was his intention, following DWP’s internal review, to publish the guidance, in a simplified form, on the AtW webpages.⁹⁹ He subsequently wrote to us, emphasising that a core task for the Department’s internal review of AtW was to ensure that the guidance is “clear, coherent and accessible”.¹⁰⁰

Flexibility versus consistency of decision-making

90. Many witnesses were concerned about inconsistencies in the way the guidance was applied, for example in relation to BSL interpretation, as set out in the previous chapter. On the other hand, some argued that DWP staff ought to be encouraged to take a much more flexible approach in some circumstances. Gareth Parry used the example of AtW-funded taxi travel for people who find using public transport difficult:

That is fantastic, but there is no flexibility in the system to say, “Could this individual receive training to be able to travel independently and use technology to be able to do that? Could Access to Work do that?” In the short term, that might be a slightly more costly solution, but in the long term that is a much more economically efficient way of doing it, and it also gives the individual much greater independence in the way they lead their life as well.¹⁰¹

91. The Minister’s view was that there was “quite a lot of discretion” for Advisers in the current guidance, and that this was appropriate for a discretionary award. He recognised the challenge of ensuring that decisions on awards for people with similar needs were broadly consistent, while allowing a level of flexibility sufficient to take individual circumstances into account.¹⁰²

92. Many Access to Work applicants and service users are unclear about the basis on which the Department makes decisions on eligibility and levels of awards. There is currently an unacceptable lack of clarity and transparency around this. DWP appears recently to have taken an inflexible approach to some Access to Work awards, particularly those for relatively high cost support such as Support Workers. This is regrettable. We believe that it is important that Access to Work remain focused on its fundamental policy intention: to provide the minimum level of effective support to help disabled people overcome their disability-related barriers in work.

93. While it is important to maintain a reasonable level of consistency, individual needs will to some extent always be different and decision-making should reflect this. Access to Work is not a social security benefit; although the use of substantial amounts of

99 [Q277](#)

100 DWP ([ATW0344](#))

101 [Q181](#)

102 [Q277](#)

public money through a programme with limited transparency and accountability is a concern, the discretionary nature of Access to Work should be a strength of the programme. A “box-ticking”, “one size fits all” approach is inappropriate.

94. We welcome the Minister’s assurances that the clarity, coherence and accessibility of the Access to Work guidance will be addressed as part of DWP’s internal review. We recommend that clarified guidance be published online, in formats accessible to disabled people, at the earliest possible opportunity, so that applicants can be much clearer about the basis on which DWP makes its award decisions. DWP staff should be encouraged in guidance to take a more flexible, innovative and long-term approach to award decisions, for example by investing in training to overcome difficulties using public transport, rather than assuming that long-term funding for use of taxis is the most appropriate form of support.

The self-employed and entrepreneurs

95. A number of witnesses highlighted support for self-employed people, and owners of small businesses, as an area in which much more flexibility would be appropriate. For the purposes of AtW self-employment is currently defined as follows:

Operating a business either on the customer’s own account or in partnership, or working for an employer on a self-employed contractual basis;

Operating a franchised business on a self-employed basis; and

Paying Class II or Class IV National Insurance contributions.

There is no requirement in the guidance for the self-employed person’s business to be profitable; only that the business “must have a history of, or a reasonable prospect of, generating income”. Where an AtW Adviser has any doubt about the business’s prospects of profitability, “they can decide to put AtW support in place for a limited time e.g. 3 months and then review the case.”

96. However, where an AtW applicant is paid a PAYE salary by the company they own and run, they are considered to be employed rather than self-employed.¹⁰³ Therefore, under a strict interpretation of the guidance, they must pay themselves at least the NMW. Evidence from some service users suggested that application of the guidance in this way had unfairly affected owners of nascent small businesses who were paid only a small salary from that business. We also received evidence that self-employed people, particularly those with intermittent and fluctuating earnings, including actors, were sometimes adversely affected by strict adherence to the current guidance.¹⁰⁴

97. These issues were most clearly illustrated by DWP’s recent approach to the AtW award of Julie Fernandez, a self-employed actor and broadcaster, who is also the joint owner of

¹⁰³ [Access to Work guidance](#), version 24, paras 34–38

¹⁰⁴ Julie Fernandez ([ATW0345](#)); Equity ([ATW0340](#))

small business established in 2011. She had received AtW support since 2001, allowing her to fund Support Workers to overcome barriers posed by her disability in her various work roles. Her most recent three-year award was granted in 2011. When it last came up for review in May/June 2014, she was told by DWP that her support would be discontinued. Among the reasons given were that: a) her self-employed acting and broadcasting work had provided insufficient income in the last tax year; and b) her salary from her jointly owned business was below the NMW.¹⁰⁵

98. Julie Fernandez told us that her earnings from acting and broadcasting fluctuated greatly; she might have no media work at all for several months but then secure very lucrative work. She also explained that she and her business partner had decided to take a very small salary, sufficient to meet their travel costs only, from their company during a period of expansion. She emphasised that her business was “only three years old and growing and doing very well”; she expected to be able to draw a larger salary in the future, but that this would “take time”. She reported that the business employed 11 other people.¹⁰⁶

99. When we put it to the Minister that DWP needed to examine the way in which it was applying discretion in these types of cases, he indicated that this would be a key part of the Department’s internal review. He suggested that “what Access to Work Advisers should be doing is looking at the business in the round”, including its “history and future prospects” and the number of people it employs.¹⁰⁷ He later wrote to us to confirm that “As a matter of urgency we will insert an amendment in the guidance”, stating that “the requirement for employed people to be paid the NMW does not apply to those employed as Company Directors.” He also stated that general concerns about the clarity of the guidance around support for the self-employed and entrepreneurs would be looked at as a priority, within the internal review.¹⁰⁸

100. We believe that Access to Work should aim to level the playing field for disabled people in the labour market, including by aiming to facilitate the same chance of success in self-employment and entrepreneurship as applies to the rest of the population. We therefore welcome the Minister’s assurance that the clarity of the guidance in relation to self-employment will be a priority within DWP’s internal review. We also welcome the Minister’s urgent amendment to the guidance in relation to minimum earnings requirements for Company Directors.

101. We recommend that the guidance on support for self-employed people be substantially re-drafted and clarified. In cases where the applicant is a business owner the full history and circumstances of that business should be taken into account in determining AtW support, including whether it employs staff. The guidance also needs to be amended so that it encourages DWP staff to take greater account of the financial realities of working on a freelance basis, including intermittent and fluctuating earnings.

105 Julie Fernandez ([ATW0345](#))

106 [Q239](#)

107 [Q280](#)

108 DWP ([ATW0344](#))

Decision reviews and complaints

102. Most witnesses understood that AtW awards are discretionary, but many appeared to be unclear about the process by which they could query decisions, and ask for them to be reviewed.¹⁰⁹ A number of witnesses were concerned that the review and complaints processes were not widely publicised by DWP—they are not published on the AtW webpages, for example.¹¹⁰

103. The current guidance sets out the “decision review escalation process” as follows:

If a customer is unhappy with the decision about their application for support they should make a written request for a review. The review should be carried out by an officer at the next level up from the original approver, e.g. a decision by an adviser should be reviewed by the Regional Manager while a decision by a Regional Manager would be reviewed by a Senior Ops Manager.

If a customer remains unhappy with a decision, further escalation is possible.

A table then illustrates that the onus is on the applicant to escalate the review through four further stages, each time in writing to an increasingly senior DWP manager.¹¹¹ Review by the DWP Customer Services Director is the “end of the process” within DWP. Applicants can refer DWP’s decision to the Independent Case Examiner if they believe they have been unfairly treated.¹¹²

104. The Minister told us that the Department was looking at how the decision review process could be streamlined.¹¹³ Colin Stewart confirmed that the option to request a decision review was set out in DWP’s award decision letter to applicants and “should be clear”. The standard DWP complaints procedure applied, as a separate process, as did the option to complain to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.¹¹⁴

105. The Minister indicated that the focus of DWP’s review would be on “making the right decision in the first place.”¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, in answer to a Parliamentary Question on 3 November, the Minister stated that the AtW decision review process “has now changed but guidance is yet to be updated. We no longer have five stages of reconsideration.”¹¹⁶ A recent DWP Freedom of Information response indicates that it is now a two-stage process.¹¹⁷

109 See, for example, Equity ([ATW0340](#)); Faye Stewart ([ATW0320](#)); Maria Barroso ([ATW0318](#))

110 See, for example, Edward John Richards ([ATW0315](#)); Dr Dai O’Brien ([ATW0296](#)); Nicola Evans ([ATW0262](#))

111 [Access to Work guidance](#), version 24, paras 631–33; Appendix 5 [accessed 18 November 2014]

112 See www.gov.uk/government/organisations/independent-case-examiner

113 [Q312](#)

114 [Q313](#)

115 [Q314](#)

116 Written Answer [212121](#), 3 November 2014

117 DWP Freedom of Information response (ref. VTR4535), available at [What Do they Know](#) [accessed 27 November 2014]

106. *The process which users have had to follow to challenge AtW decisions is complex and onerous. We recommend that the decision-review process be channelled through a single DWP contact point, who should escalate the review on the applicant's behalf if they indicate that they remain dissatisfied. The guidance should be updated accordingly. We understand that DWP has recently streamlined the decision-review process to some extent in response to the concerns that we have heard, but the details have not yet been publicised. We request that DWP set out the changes it has made, in response to this Report.*

107. *We recommend that DWP publish the Access to Work decision review and complaints procedures prominently on the Access to Work webpages, with links to the Independent Case Examiner (ICE) and the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO). It must be made clear to all AtW applicants and service users that if they are dissatisfied following completion of the DWP decision-review or complaints procedures, they can, in the first instance, refer their case to the ICE; and that the PHSO may be able to investigate their complaint further should they remain dissatisfied.*

6 Administrative issues

108. While overwhelmingly supportive of AtW in general, the majority of witnesses highlighted significant administrative issues which were affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme. In this chapter we address three key issues which emerged from the evidence: problems with the recently established central call centre system; poor disability awareness displayed by some DWP staff administering AtW; and an over-reliance on outmoded and inefficient paper-based processes.

Central call centre system

109. AtW was until recently administered at a relatively local level, through DWP's national network of Jobcentres. DWP's written submission did not refer to any recent or planned reorganisation of this system. However, during the course of our inquiry it became clear that DWP had centralised its administration of AtW, consolidating service delivery from 72 sites across Great Britain into just three, and routing all telephone calls through DWP's main call centre.¹¹⁸

110. AtW applicants, and service users with ongoing awards, are now required to make initial contact with the call centre. Details of their case are passed to a trained AtW Adviser, who calls them back; service users are not able to contact an Adviser directly. This system appears to have been established in May 2014.¹¹⁹ Many witnesses reported that the first they knew of the change was when they rang the usual telephone number expecting to get through to an Adviser, only to find that they had been connected to DWP's central call centre.¹²⁰

111. Witnesses highlighted a number of problems with the new approach. The previous arrangements had allowed them to maintain ongoing relationships with a single AtW Adviser, or small group of Advisers, who knew and understood their circumstances. Under the new system, each call appears to be randomly allocated. Service users expressed frustration that each time they phoned the call centre they were allocated a different Adviser, who appeared to have little or no information about their individual circumstances. This necessitated the service user having to set these out each time they spoke to an Adviser.¹²¹ Numerous witnesses also complained that they had not received a call back at an agreed time or within an agreed timeframe.¹²²

112. Evidence suggested that the call centre system was particularly problematic for service users with certain impairment types, particularly those who required support to receive a telephone call, for example deaf people who use BSL and therefore require an interpreter,

118 [Q294](#) [Colin Stewart]

119 DeafAtW ([ATW0342](#))

120 See, for example, Q110 [Rachel Brown]; Breakthrough UK ([ATW0120](#))

121 See, for example, Q235 [Julie Fernandez]; Marije Davidson ([ATW0161](#))

122 See, for example, Deafway ([ATW0328](#)); Candoco Dance Company ([ATW0306](#)); Jack Lopresti MP ([ATW0283](#))

and people with learning difficulties or autism who might also need a Support Worker to be available.¹²³ The Minister acknowledged the difficulties for BSL users of a system which required service users to await a telephone call from an Adviser and confirmed that this specific issue was “one of the things that we have logged as an issue to take away”.¹²⁴

113. Colin Stewart of DWP acknowledged that there had been significant administrative problems at the call centre during summer 2014. This was primarily due to staffing and training issues. DWP had recruited around 100 new call centre staff, all of whom required quite intensive training. Staff training had taken place over the summer, which had resulted in a 25% reduction in productivity. Mr Stewart reported that performance had begun to “stabilise” in September and October 2014 and he expected performance to be “on an even keel from February [2015]”.¹²⁵

114. The Minister confirmed that the intention of establishing the centralised system was to ensure that AtW had administrative structures in place which were sufficiently robust to cope with an increasing caseload. However, he acknowledged that DWP had not handled the implementation well and accepted that service users ought to have been consulted on the change before it was implemented. As previously noted, he indicated that an AtW stakeholders’ forum had now been established, through which changes of this nature would be communicated in future.¹²⁶

115. Access to Work is clearly a good model for effective specialist disability employment support, but its efficiency and effectiveness have sometimes been undermined by poor administration, cumbersome processes, and a distinct lack of consultation with stakeholders. Service users were not consulted on the recently introduced central call centre system and were not told in advance about the change; consequently it was poorly implemented and does not currently work well, particularly for those users who require support to take a telephone call or greater certainty about when a call from an Adviser will be received.

116. We recommend that DWP take urgent steps to address the ineffectiveness of the central call centre system. It is unacceptable that a programme designed to help disabled people should be inaccessible or inconvenient for a substantial proportion of service users. We appreciate the difficulty of delivering a personalised service for a growing caseload, and the rationale for a more centralised system, given the Department’s welcome intention to “scale up” the programme. However, DWP needs to focus on making the call centre system more flexible and user-friendly, including by improving the flow of information from the call centre to trained Advisers, allowing them seamlessly to pick up cases with which they are not personally familiar. We also recommend that a system is established in which service users receive a communication, in response to calls to the DWP call centre, in a format and at a time that is suitable and convenient for them. We

123 See, for example, Jason Vessey ([ATW0033](#)); Eleanor Craik ([ATW0302](#)); Signing Network CIC ([ATW0282](#))

124 [Q301](#)

125 [Q294](#)

126 [Q277](#); [Q296](#)

request that DWP update us on progress with these improvements, in response to this Report.

Paper-based processes

117. Many witnesses were concerned that AtW relies on paper-based application, assessment and invoicing systems. A wide range of individual service users, support providers and employers believed that the administration of AtW was often slow and cumbersome as a result.¹²⁷ A number of witnesses reported delays caused by lost or mislaid paperwork.¹²⁸ The importance of swift processes was emphasised by witnesses who told us that it was common for disabled people to miss out on jobs because AtW support was not in place quickly enough.¹²⁹

118. A number of support providers reported that delays in payment of invoices were common. Many believed that a paper-based invoicing system was outmoded. For example, Tamsyn Hockaday, a BSL interpreter, wrote:

In the age of internet banking, the ability to organize tax payments for the HMRC online, online utility bill payments, why do AtW rely on a paper based system and all the flaws inherent in it? I have lost count of the number of times I have had to ask clients to repost my invoices after they have got “lost in the post” or “lost in the system”.¹³⁰

Numerous witnesses recommended that DWP establish an online application system (although most also believed that the option of a paper-based application should be retained).¹³¹

119. Liz Sayce’s review recommended that AtW move to a much more online system. Her vision was for a “web portal”, partly to speed up the purchase and delivery of support. She also envisaged that an online service would allow service providers to compete, driving down costs, and service users to search for, and compare, the range of available support, thereby increasing choice and effectiveness. She believed that a web portal might also allow service users to offer “on-line peer support”, for example by taking part in “discussion forums and reviews of products and services.” She emphasised that in the course of her review many disabled people had told her that they found hearing about other people’s experiences useful when considering how best to address their own employment support needs.¹³²

127 See, for example, TLT Solicitors ([ATW0341](#)); Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children ([ATW0321](#)); National Deaf Children’s Society ([ATW0175](#))

128 See, for example, Deafinitely Theatre ([ATW0322](#)); Kath Sunderland ([ATW0319](#)); Tamsyn Hockaday ([ATW0154](#))

129 Scope ([ATW0247](#)); SPECTRUM Centre for Independent Living ([ATW0231](#))

130 Tamsyn Hockaday ([ATW0154](#))

131 See, for example, National Autistic Society ([ATW0226](#)); British Deaf Association ([ATW0222](#)); Sally Reynolds ([ATW0210](#)); Employment Related Services Association ([ATW0202](#)); UK Council on Deafness ([ATW0178](#)); National Deaf Children’s Society ([ATW0175](#))

132 [Sayce Review](#), pp 88–90

120. The Minister agreed that greater use of online services would be beneficial:

I think we could move to a more IT-based system that would be quicker, and would make it easier to share information, and would make it easier to settle the bills. I have asked officials to look at options, and present me with those options for decision. [...] It is not going to [happen] overnight, but you do not have to persuade me that we can do some things to make this work better.¹³³

121. *Access to Work's reliance on paper-based processes is outmoded and inefficient. We recommend that DWP establish an online application system and an electronic invoicing system for Access to Work, at the earliest opportunity and in advance of the programme being scaled up. Paper-based applications should be retained for service users who choose that option. In the longer term DWP should implement Liz Sayce's recommendation of a "web-based portal", through which suppliers can compete, driving down costs, and service users can search for, and compare, the range of available support, increasing choice and the effectiveness of support.*

Disability awareness and accessibility of information

122. Many witnesses were critical of the level of disability awareness displayed by some DWP staff administering AtW. This was a particular issue for deaf BSL users, many of whom believed that DWP staff often did not fully appreciate that BSL is a separate language from English, and that many deaf people have BSL as their first language. Some felt that their need to communicate in BSL at work was being challenged by DWP staff in an unfair or discriminatory way.¹³⁴

123. The National Autistic Society (NAS) reported examples of AtW Advisers telling autistic applicants "that they and their manager have a simple communication problem and they should speak to their manager about it." NAS believed that this displayed a "very serious lack of awareness" about the needs of autistic people.¹³⁵ Mencap highlighted a "general lack of understanding" of learning disabilities.¹³⁶ One service user who has a learning disability told us: "The main problem I have had is with phone calls with the advisors and the inaccessible information they send us. People at the call centre talk too fast and use words I don't understand".¹³⁷

124. Witnesses were concerned that there was a general lack of accessible information on AtW and limited means by which some disabled people could contact DWP. For example, Mencap noted a complete absence of information in Easy Read format to help people with learning disabilities understand how the programme works and how it might help them. Deaf people's representative organisations emphasised the lack of BSL content on the

133 [Q290](#); [Q292](#)

134 See, for example, Marie Vickers ([ATW0012](#)); Dexy Wallace ([ATW0106](#))

135 National Autistic Society ([ATW0226](#))

136 Mencap ([ATW0254](#))

137 Mencap (Easy Read submission) ([ATW0255](#))

AtW-related pages on the GOV.UK website.¹³⁸ Witnesses noted that it was not currently possible for BSL users to contact AtW staff by telephone without booking their own interpreter, and recommended that DWP introduce a Video Relay System.¹³⁹

125. DWP told us that, as part of the recent administrative reorganisation, it had established specially trained teams to deal with applications and queries from people with sensory impairments and those with fluctuating conditions, including mental ill health. It was hoped that these teams would “share knowledge and build on-site expertise”.¹⁴⁰ Colin Stewart confirmed that all call centre staff received 13 weeks’ training, including disability awareness training providing by external contractors.¹⁴¹ Mr Harper told us that the Government was looking to improve the accessibility of services across all departments; Video Relay Systems were being considered as part of that work.¹⁴²

126. Some DWP staff administering Access to Work have displayed an unacceptable lack of disability awareness. We recommend that DWP consult with disability representative organisations, with a view to highlighting areas where the disability awareness of DWP staff is currently weak and that it collaborate with them on establishing enhanced staff training to address those issues.

127. We welcome the establishment of specialist Access to Work Adviser teams for service users with sensory impairments and fluctuating conditions. We recommend that at least two further specialist teams are established, for service users with learning disabilities and those with autism spectrum disorders.

128. We recommend that DWP take urgent steps to increase the accessibility of the Access to Work webpages on the GOV.UK website, including by introducing “Easy Read” content to help people with learning disabilities understand Access to Work and how it might help them, and British Sign Language content for deaf service users.

129. We understand that work to improve the accessibility of government services is being undertaken on a cross-departmental basis. However, we believe that there is a particularly strong case for DWP to improve the accessibility of its disability-related services. We therefore recommend that DWP introduce a Video Relay Service, to enable deaf BSL users to contact the Department more easily, as a priority.

138 British Deaf Association ([ATW0222](#)); UK Council on Deafness ([ATW0178](#))

139 Charlene Spires ([ATW0043](#)); UK Council on Deafness ([ATW0178](#))

140 [Q277](#) [Colin Stewart]

141 [Q295](#)

142 [Q300](#)

Conclusions and recommendations

In this list, conclusions are set out in plain type and recommendations, to which the Government is required to respond, are set out in *italic type*.

Funding and marketing

1. *DWP has not provided a satisfactory explanation of how the money saved from the closure or sale of Remploy factories has been used to increase funding for effective, specialist disability employment support. We do not consider it appropriate to classify spending on the Work Programme as additional funding for specialist disability employment support. We recommend that, in response to this Report, the Department provide further information on how the savings from the reorganisation of Remploy have been used to date, and that it clarifies whether it intends to increase funding for specific areas of specialist disability employment support, other than the Work Programme, as a result of the reorganisation of Remploy. (Paragraph 28)*
2. It was clear from the Minister's evidence that DWP intends to increase the number of people helped by Access to Work. This is welcome; the evidence strongly suggests that Access to Work currently supports only a minority of disabled people who might benefit from the programme. However, it was equally clear that the Department is currently trying to increase the Access to Work caseload within an only marginally increased budget. We believe that there is a risk of unintended consequences from this approach, because focusing on the number of people being helped while trying to remain within a tightly constrained budget might result in DWP bearing down on the awards of current service users who happen to require relatively high cost support, to the detriment of meeting their needs effectively. We welcome the Minister's assurance that this is not DWP's intention. The focus of the programme should remain addressing the range of barriers faced by disabled people, including the relatively few people whose support needs are currently high cost. We agree with the Minister that a substantial increase in the number of people Access to Work helps is likely to require a broadly commensurate increase in the available funding. (Paragraph 43)

The case for additional funding

3. It is not currently possible to ascertain with certainty the number of people whom Access to Work might benefit; the range of needs they would have in work; or the cost of providing support which meets the range of currently unmet need. However, it is clear that substantial unmet need includes that which exists amongst people with mental health problems, learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders, young disabled people trying to enter work for the first time, and people found fit for work as a result of the Employment and Support Allowance eligibility process. While it is widely accepted that supporting disabled people in work brings a long-term return to the Exchequer through reduced spending on out-of-work benefits and increased income tax returns, there is a lack of published official data to support this. (Paragraph 44)

4. *We recommend that, as a priority, DWP undertake research to establish a) the likely level and range of currently unmet need; and b) a cost-benefit analysis of Access to Work expenditure, including its likely long-term impacts on social security expenditure and income tax returns. We believe that such a study is likely to produce an overwhelming case for substantial additional funding for Access to Work, which we recommend be presented to HM Treasury at the earliest possible opportunity. Our hope is that HM Treasury will be able to announce substantial additional funding before the next Comprehensive Spending Review. (Paragraph 45)*

Access to Work statistics

5. *There is remarkably little published information on Access to Work. We have had to piece together much of the information we needed for this inquiry from DWP's answers to Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests. This lack of transparency is unacceptable. We recommend that DWP change its approach to Access to Work statistics and that, as a minimum, it regularly publish the following information: an indicative annual budget; annual expenditure outturns, broken down by support element and impairment type (including autism spectrum disorders); the number of service users by size of employer; and employers' mandatory and voluntary financial contributions, broken down by size of employer. We also recommend that DWP set out the steps it is taking in response to the December 2014 UK Statistics Authority Report on the compliance of Access to Work statistics with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, in its response to this Report. (Paragraph 46)*

Employer cost-sharing arrangements

6. *We welcome the Minister's assurance that the current employer cost-sharing arrangements are being considered by the Department as part of its internal review. We believe that DWP could do more to clarify and simplify the arrangements, which might encourage more employers to engage with the programme. We recommend that DWP publish case studies on the Access to Work webpages, to illustrate the types of support which are typically considered to be "reasonable adjustments" under the Equality Act, and those which would normally qualify for publicly funded support. Case studies should also illustrate the circumstances in which employers' contributions are typically regarded as mandatory, and those in which contributions are voluntary. (Paragraph 47)*
7. *Given the severe constraints on DWP's budgets, we recommend that the Department encourage increased voluntary employer contributions, particularly from larger employers. DWP should publish and promote case studies which illustrate examples of employers which have gone beyond their legal requirements to support the recruitment of disabled people, to encourage others to follow their example. The Access to Work webpages should include an employers' page, and links to Disability Confident promotional material, to promote the benefits of employing disabled people. We also recommend that Access to Work be more prominently featured in the Disability Confident marketing campaign. (Paragraph 48)*

Mental health support

8. While the Department has made some progress in broadening the emphasis of Access to Work to include support for people with mental health problems as well as physical and sensory impairments, there is clearly a very long way to go in this regard. We agree with the Minister that addressing mental health needs has a big part to play in closing the employment gap between disabled people and the rest of the population. While its introduction is welcome, the current Access to Work provision for mental health, the Workplace Mental Health Support Service, is far from sufficient, given the scale of mental health problems in the UK and their impact on employment. (Paragraph 63)
9. *In scaling up Access to Work, priority should be given to supporting people with mental health problems, and other more hidden intellectual, cognitive and behavioural impairments, and learning disabilities, to gain and continue in employment. We recommend that DWP take steps to publicise the Access to Work Workplace Mental Health Support Service (WMHSS) to mental health service providers. It should also ensure that the provider of the new Fit for Work service is fully aware of the WMHSS and refers people where appropriate.* (Paragraph 64)
10. *To increase the reach of the service, we recommend that DWP change its practice and begin to accept initial referrals to the WMHSS from employees' advocates and employers, where the employee's consent has been given. DWP also needs to take immediate steps to ensure that all of its call centre staff are aware of the WMHSS and that they refer callers appropriately. DWP should publish case studies on the Access to Work webpages to illustrate to potential service users and employers how the programme can support people with mental ill health; learning disabilities; and other cognitive, intellectual and developmental impairments.* (Paragraph 65)
11. *People with physical and sensory impairments have an element of choice in how their Access to Work support is provided; there is currently a lack of choice in Access to Work mental health support. We recommend that DWP develop a range of mental health provision, in addition to the WMHSS, with a broader focus and which is better able to address difficulties faced by people with more severe and enduring mental health conditions. Once this additional provision is in place, we further recommend that DWP make clear that the Access to Work pre-employment eligibility letter is available to all disabled job applicants, including those with pre-existing mental health problems.* (Paragraph 66)

BSL interpretation

12. The way in which DWP has recently applied the Access to Work guidance on full-time Support Workers, and capped the hourly rate at which it is prepared to reimburse Support Workers' costs, has had a profoundly detrimental impact on many service users, particularly deaf people who require a significant amount of British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation in order to do their jobs effectively. DWP's recognition of this adverse impact, and the temporary suspension of the guidance, is welcome; however, its stringent application of the guidance in this context demonstrated a lack of understanding of how BSL interpretation is currently

provided and highlights the need for much improved consultation with stakeholders prior to significant changes to service delivery in the future. (Paragraph 79)

13. *We recommend that DWP fulfil its commitment to undertake full and proper award reviews in all cases where service users believe that the guidance on full-time Support Workers, or caps on hourly rates, as applied to BSL interpretation, has rendered them unable to source effective BSL interpretation appropriate to their needs at work. (Paragraph 80)*
14. *We recommend that DWP re-issue the guidance on full-time Support Workers, making it clearer that reimbursement of costs on the basis of an annual salary, rather than an hourly, half-daily or daily rate, should be considered on a case-by-case basis, and only applied in circumstances where it reflects the reality of how effective support can be provided. We further recommend that the guidance explicitly state that this does not typically apply to BSL interpretation. (Paragraph 81)*
15. *We recommend that DWP consult the BSL interpreting profession, through the Association of Sign Language Interpreters and the National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters, to establish suitable maximum permissible hourly, half-daily and daily rates for BSL interpretation funded by Access to Work, based on robust research. The Government should also consult formally on improving the efficiency of the market for BSL interpreting services across the public sector. This consultation should consider steps which could be taken to increase the number of BSL interpreters in the UK. (Paragraph 82)*
16. *We recommend that DWP establish a specially trained team to deal with high-cost ongoing Access to Work awards, including those for BSL Interpretation. This team should receive intensive training in deaf awareness and on the full range of communication support options, including the latest technological innovations and the most cost-effective solutions. DWP staff and Access to Work service users should be encouraged to consider technological solutions to communication support, where it is appropriate to needs and cost-effective. (Paragraph 83)*
17. *The recent problems in relation to the 30 hour guidance have, in part, arisen from a lack of consultation and engagement with service users. We therefore recommend that DWP makes it its policy to consult on all significant future changes to Access to Work policy and guidance, through the newly established Access to Work stakeholders' forum, and to undertake much more effective communication about changes to the programme. We request that the Department sets out, in its response to this Report, the membership of the forum, and the processes by which stakeholders will be consulted on future changes. (Paragraph 84)*

Clarity and transparency of decision-making

18. Many Access to Work applicants and service users are unclear about the basis on which the Department makes decisions on eligibility and levels of awards. There is currently an unacceptable lack of clarity and transparency around this. DWP appears recently to have taken an inflexible approach to some Access to Work awards, particularly those for relatively high cost support such as Support Workers. This is regrettable. We believe that it is important that Access to Work remain focused on its

fundamental policy intention: to provide the minimum level of effective support to help disabled people overcome their disability-related barriers in work. (Paragraph 92)

19. While it is important to maintain a reasonable level of consistency, individual needs will to some extent always be different and decision-making should reflect this. Access to Work is not a social security benefit; although the use of substantial amounts of public money through a programme with limited transparency and accountability is a concern, the discretionary nature of Access to Work should be a strength of the programme. A “box-ticking”, “one size fits all” approach is inappropriate. (Paragraph 93)
20. *We welcome the Minister’s assurances that the clarity, coherence and accessibility of the Access to Work guidance will be addressed as part of DWP’s internal review. We recommend that clarified guidance be published online, in formats accessible to disabled people, at the earliest possible opportunity, so that applicants can be much clearer about the basis on which DWP makes its award decisions. DWP staff should be encouraged in guidance to take a more flexible, innovative and long-term approach to award decisions, for example by investing in training to overcome difficulties using public transport, rather than assuming that long-term funding for use of taxis is the most appropriate form of support.* (Paragraph 94)

The self-employed and entrepreneurs

21. We believe that Access to Work should aim to level the playing field for disabled people in the labour market, including by aiming to facilitate the same chance of success in self-employment and entrepreneurship as applies to the rest of the population. We therefore welcome the Minister’s assurance that the clarity of the guidance in relation to self-employment will be a priority within DWP’s internal review. We also welcome the Minister’s urgent amendment to the guidance in relation to minimum earnings requirements for Company Directors. (Paragraph 100)
22. *We recommend that the guidance on support for self-employed people be substantially re-drafted and clarified. In cases where the applicant is a business owner the full history and circumstances of that business should be taken into account in determining AtW support, including whether it employs staff. The guidance also needs to be amended so that it encourages DWP staff to take greater account of the financial realities of working on a freelance basis, including intermittent and fluctuating earnings.* (Paragraph 101)

Decision reviews and complaints

23. *The process which users have had to follow to challenge AtW decisions is complex and onerous. We recommend that the decision-review process be channelled through a single DWP contact point, who should escalate the review on the applicant’s behalf if they indicate that they remain dissatisfied. The guidance should be updated accordingly. We understand that DWP has recently streamlined the decision-review process to some extent in response to the concerns that we have heard, but the details*

have not yet been publicised. We request that DWP set out the changes it has made, in response to this Report. (Paragraph 106)

24. *We recommend that DWP publish the Access to Work decision review and complaints procedures prominently on the Access to Work webpages, with links to the Independent Case Examiner (ICE) and the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO). It must be made clear to all AtW applicants and service users that if they are dissatisfied following completion of the DWP decision-review or complaints procedures, they can, in the first instance, refer their case to the ICE; and that the PHSO may be able to investigate their complaint further should they remain dissatisfied. (Paragraph 107)*

Administrative issues

25. *Access to Work is clearly a good model for effective specialist disability employment support, but its efficiency and effectiveness have sometimes been undermined by poor administration, cumbersome processes, and a distinct lack of consultation with stakeholders. Service users were not consulted on the recently introduced central call centre system and were not told in advance about the change; consequently it was poorly implemented and does not currently work well, particularly for those users who require support to take a telephone call or greater certainty about when a call from an Adviser will be received. (Paragraph 115)*

Central call centre

26. *We recommend that DWP take urgent steps to address the ineffectiveness of the central call centre system. It is unacceptable that a programme designed to help disabled people should be inaccessible or inconvenient for a substantial proportion of service users. We appreciate the difficulty of delivering a personalised service for a growing caseload, and the rationale for a more centralised system, given the Department's welcome intention to "scale up" the programme. However, DWP needs to focus on making the call centre system more flexible and user-friendly, including by improving the flow of information from the call centre to trained Advisers, allowing them seamlessly to pick up cases with which they are not personally familiar. We also recommend that a system is established in which service users receive a communication, in response to calls to the DWP call centre, in a format and at a time that is suitable and convenient for them. We request that DWP updates us on progress with these improvements, in response to this Report. (Paragraph 116)*

Paper-based processes

27. *Access to Work's reliance on paper-based processes is outmoded and inefficient. We recommend that DWP establish an online application system and an electronic invoicing system for Access to Work, at the earliest opportunity and in advance of the programme being scaled up. Paper-based applications should be retained for service users who choose that option. In the longer term DWP should implement Liz Sayce's recommendation of a "web-based portal", through which suppliers can compete, driving down costs, and service users can search for, and compare, the range of available support, increasing choice and the effectiveness of support. (Paragraph 121)*

Disability awareness and accessibility of information

28. *Some DWP staff administering Access to Work have displayed an unacceptable lack of disability awareness. We recommend that DWP consult with disability representative organisations, with a view to highlighting areas where the disability awareness of DWP staff is currently weak and that it collaborate with them on establishing enhanced staff training to address those issues. (Paragraph 126)*
29. *We welcome the establishment of specialist Access to Work Adviser teams for service users with sensory impairments and fluctuating conditions. We recommend that at least two further specialist teams are established, for service users with learning disabilities and those with autism spectrum disorders. (Paragraph 127)*
30. *We recommend that DWP take urgent steps to increase the accessibility of the Access to Work webpages on the GOV.UK website, including by introducing “Easy Read” content to help people with learning disabilities understand Access to Work and how it might help them, and British Sign Language content for deaf service users. (Paragraph 128)*
31. *We understand that work to improve the accessibility of government services is being undertaken on a cross-departmental basis. However, we believe that there is a particularly strong case for DWP to improve the accessibility of its disability-related services. We therefore recommend that DWP introduce a Video Relay Service, to enable deaf BSL users to contact the Department more easily, as a priority. (Paragraph 129)*

Formal Minutes

Wednesday 10 December 2014

Members present:

Dame Anne Begg, in the Chair

Debbie Abrahams
Sheila Gilmore
Glenda Jackson
Paul Maynard

Nigel Mills
Anne Marie Morris
Mr Michael Thornton

Draft Report (*Improving Access to Work for disabled people*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

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

Paragraphs 1 to 129 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Second 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, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 17 December at 9.15 am.]

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the Committee's inquiry page at www.parliament.uk/accesstowork.

Wednesday 2 July 2014

Question number

Mike Adams OBE, Chief Executive Officer, Essex Coalition of Disabled People, and former Chair of the Government's Access to Work expert advisory panel, and **Liz Sayce OBE**, Chief Executive Officer, Disability Rights UK, and author of the 2011 independent review of specialist disability employment support

Q1-51

Wednesday 3 September 2014

Andy Rickell, Chief Executive Officer, Action on Disability and Work UK, **Fazilet Hadi**, Director of Engagement, Royal National Institute of Blind People and **Marije Davidson**, Access to Work service user

Q52-97

Nicola Oliver, Individual Placement with Support Project Coordinator, Centre for Mental Health, **Ciara Lawrence**, Campaigns Assistant, and **Ailis Hardy**, Staff Development Coordinator (Ciara's Access to Work funded Support Worker), Mencap, and **Rachel Brown**, Administrative Assistant, Notting Hill Housing, and **Susan Askew**, Workplace Support Consultant (Rachel's Access to Work funded Support Worker), National Autistic Society

Q97-148

Wednesday 15 October 2014

Dr Jules Dickinson, Member of Access to Work working group, Association of Sign Language Interpreters, **Susan Scott-Parker OBE**, Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum, **Julie Fernandez**, Freelance actor/broadcaster and small business owner, **Gareth Parry**, Disability Capability Director, Remploy, and **Lee Reed**, Equality and Diversity Officer, TLT Solicitors

Q149-252

Wednesday 29 October 2014

Mr Mark Harper MP, Minister of State for Disabled People, and **Colin Stewart**, Work Services Director, North West England, Department for Work and Pensions

Q253-322

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the Committee's inquiry page at www.parliament.uk/accesstowork. ATW numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 #Stopchanges2atw ([ATW0330](#))
- 2 Action on Disability and Work UK ([ATW0080](#) & [ATW0338](#))
- 3 Action on Hearing Loss ([ATW0133](#))
- 4 Adolfs Kristapsons ([ATW0039](#))
- 5 Alexandra Shaw ([ATW0050](#))
- 6 Ali Gordon ([ATW0300](#))
- 7 Alison Crook ([ATW0053](#))
- 8 Andrew Sutcliffe ([ATW0119](#))
- 9 Angela Spielsinger ([ATW0314](#))
- 10 Anna-Marie Reilly ([ATW0046](#))
- 11 Argonaut Community Enterprises ([ATW0163](#))
- 12 Asif Iqbal ([ATW0052](#))
- 13 Association of Sign Language Interpreters ([ATW0160](#))
- 14 Audrey Gardiner ([ATW0015](#))
- 15 Bashir Ayub ([ATW0096](#))
- 16 Bid Services ([ATW0233](#))
- 17 Bob Marsh ([ATW0157](#))
- 18 Body and Soul ([ATW0078](#))
- 19 Breakthrough UK Ltd ([ATW0120](#))
- 20 Bristol Disability Equality Forum ([ATW0327](#))
- 21 British Association for Supported Employment ([ATW0214](#))
- 22 British Deaf Association ([ATW0222](#))
- 23 British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust ([ATW0230](#))
- 24 Business Disability Forum ([ATW0285](#))
- 25 Caglar Kimyoncu ([ATW0253](#))
- 26 Camilla Arnold ([ATW0204](#))
- 27 Candoco Dance Company ([ATW0306](#))
- 28 Carol Cuming ([ATW0328](#))
- 29 Caroline Corrigan ([ATW0180](#))
- 30 Caroline O'Neill ([ATW0153](#))
- 31 Carolyn Hunt ([ATW0006](#))
- 32 Catherine Nightingale ([ATW0074](#))
- 33 Charlene Spires ([ATW0043](#))
- 34 Christopher Bojas ([ATW0187](#))
- 35 Christopher Clelland ([ATW0049](#))
- 36 Claire Jones ([ATW0081](#))
- 37 Claire Perdomo ([ATW0130](#))
- 38 Clare Mitchell ([ATW0243](#))
- 39 Clare Redstone ([ATW0070](#))

- 40 Clare Vinton ([ATW0055](#))
- 41 Clare Wadsworth ([ATW0209](#))
- 42 Claro Learning Ltd ([ATW0192](#))
- 43 Cleo Parise ([ATW0167](#))
- 44 Colette Hogan ([ATW0034](#))
- 45 Colette Phippard ([ATW0194](#))
- 46 Communityid & Communicationid ([ATW0166](#))
- 47 Conrad Keil ([ATW0257](#))
- 48 Constantina Christou ([ATW0298](#))
- 49 Craig Jones ([ATW0297](#))
- 50 Craig Potheary ([ATW0047](#))
- 51 Cross Party Group on Deafness ([ATW0173](#))
- 52 Dara Trainor ([ATW0112](#))
- 53 David Phippard ([ATW0146](#))
- 54 Dcal ([ATW0060](#))
- 55 Joint submission from Deaf AtW; the Stop Changes to Access to Work Campaign; and National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters ([ATW0342](#))
- 56 Deaf Direct ([ATW0238](#))
- 57 Deaf2work ([ATW0176](#))
- 58 DeafATW ([ATW0177](#) & [ATW0343](#))
- 59 Deafblind Scotland ([ATW0208](#))
- 60 Deafconnect ([ATW0193](#))
- 61 Deafinite Interpreters ([ATW0225](#))
- 62 Deafinitely Theatre ([ATW0322](#))
- 63 DeafPLUS ([ATW0337](#))
- 64 Department for Work and Pensions ([ATW0235](#) & [ATW0344](#))
- 65 Dexy Wallace ([ATW0106](#))
- 66 Diana Wright Solutions Ltd ([ATW0267](#))
- 67 Dimensions ([ATW0061](#))
- 68 Diocese of Liverpool ([ATW0213](#))
- 69 Disability Dynamics Ltd ([ATW0197](#))
- 70 Disability Rights UK ([ATW0286](#))
- 71 Dominic Caswell ([ATW0277](#))
- 72 Donaldson's School ([ATW0331](#))
- 73 Dr Dai O'Brien ([ATW0296](#))
- 74 Dr Ju Gosling ([ATW0125](#))
- 75 Dr Sarah Powell ([ATW0001](#))
- 76 Dyslexia Action ([ATW0183](#))
- 77 Dyslexia Adult Network ([ATW0115](#))
- 78 Edward J Richards ([ATW0315](#))
- 79 Eleanor Craik ([ATW0302](#))
- 80 Elizabeth Bojas ([ATW0185](#))
- 81 Elizabeth Moon ([ATW0088](#))
- 82 Elvire Roberts ([ATW0024](#))
- 83 Equal in Salford Staff Group ([ATW0172](#))

- 84 Equal Lives ([ATW0248](#))
- 85 Equity ([ATW0340](#))
- 86 ERSA ([ATW0202](#))
- 87 Eva Navarro Lopez ([ATW0013](#))
- 88 Eze Ani ([ATW0275](#))
- 89 Faye Stewart ([ATW0320](#))
- 90 Fiona Garfield ([ATW0323](#))
- 91 Firdous Khurshid ([ATW0098](#))
- 92 Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children ([ATW0321](#))
- 93 Genevieve Isherwood ([ATW0171](#))
- 94 Graeae Theatre Company ([ATW0236](#))
- 95 Grant Thornton ([ATW0288](#))
- 96 Gregory Pierssene ([ATW0189](#))
- 97 Hampshire Unison ([ATW0272](#))
- 98 Heather Peachey ([ATW0102](#))
- 99 Helen Faulkes ([ATW0077](#))
- 100 Helen Phillips ([ATW0019](#))
- 101 Henry Skinner ([ATW0004](#))
- 102 Ian Hodgetts ([ATW0164](#))
- 103 Ian Noon ([ATW0064](#))
- 104 Ian Reynolds ([ATW0259](#))
- 105 Inclusion London ([ATW0269](#))
- 106 Independent Dyslexia Consultants ([ATW0116](#))
- 107 iNet Interpreting Ltd ([ATW0122](#))
- 108 Interpreting Matters Ltd ([ATW0069](#))
- 109 Jack Lopresti MP ([ATW0283](#))
- 110 Jackie Griffiths ([ATW0031](#))
- 111 Jackie Wan ([ATW0333](#))
- 112 Jacqueline Barnes-Jones ([ATW0044](#))
- 113 Jane Foulston ([ATW0206](#))
- 114 Jane Hunt ([ATW0107](#))
- 115 Jason Vessey ([ATW0339](#))
- 116 Jeff McWhinney ([ATW0200](#))
- 117 Jenna Mistry ([ATW0056](#))
- 118 Jennifer Smith ([ATW0141](#))
- 119 Jo Lindley ([ATW0308](#))
- 120 Joanna Wootten ([ATW0244](#))
- 121 Joanne Harrison ([ATW0150](#))
- 122 John Townsend Trust ([ATW0305](#))
- 123 Jonathan Ko ([ATW0301](#))
- 124 Josef Baines ([ATW0313](#))
- 125 Josie Smith ([ATW0191](#))
- 126 Julian Peedle-Caloo ([ATW0104](#))
- 127 Julie Fernandez ([ATW0345](#))
- 128 Julie Fletcher Interpreter Ltd ([ATW0068](#))

- 129 Justine Smyth ([ATW0336](#))
- 130 Karen Newby ([ATW0144](#))
- 131 Kath Sutherland (-Cash) ([ATW0319](#))
- 132 Kay White ([ATW0132](#))
- 133 Laura Mcquillan ([ATW0057](#))
- 134 Lesley Sheldon ([ATW0051](#))
- 135 Liana Lloyd ([ATW0135](#))
- 136 Lina Kankeviciute ([ATW0026](#))
- 137 Lisa Warnock ([ATW0007](#))
- 138 Living Options Devon ([ATW0335](#))
- 139 Lottie Powell ([ATW0190](#))
- 140 Louis Neethling ([ATW0179](#))
- 141 Lyndsey Sunter ([ATW0234](#))
- 142 Lynn Shannon ([ATW0198](#))
- 143 Margaret Malpas ([ATW0018](#))
- 144 Maria Barroso ([ATW0318](#))
- 145 Marie Vickers ([ATW0012](#))
- 146 Mariella Reina ([ATW0145](#))
- 147 Marije Davidson ([ATW0161](#))
- 148 Mark Healy ([ATW0218](#))
- 149 Martin Willis ([ATW0059](#))
- 150 Matthew Daniel Eddy ([ATW0188](#))
- 151 Matthew Royce ([ATW0184](#))
- 152 Matthew Sykes ([ATW0232](#))
- 153 Mencap ([ATW0254](#))
- 154 Mencap (Easy Read) ([ATW0255](#))
- 155 Michael Achtman ([ATW0151](#))
- 156 Michael Brickliffe ([ATW0093](#))
- 157 Michele Taylor ([ATW0089](#))
- 158 Joint submission from Mind; Rethink Mental Illness, Mental Health Foundation, Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health, The Royal College of Psychiatrists, Hafal And The Scottish Association For Mental Health ([ATW0250](#))
- 159 Moodswings ([ATW0109](#))
- 160 Mrs Deborah Kapaj ([ATW0108](#))
- 161 Mrs Jacqueline M Bielby ([ATW0003](#))
- 162 Ms Kelly West ([ATW0317](#))
- 163 N G Nicholson ([ATW0290](#))
- 164 National Autistic Society ([ATW0226](#))
- 165 National Deaf CAMHS ([ATW0237](#))
- 166 National Deaf Children's Society ([ATW0175](#))
- 167 National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters ([ATW0293](#))
- 168 Natspec: Association Of National Specialist Colleges ([ATW0239](#))
- 169 Nia Coleman ([ATW0014](#))
- 170 Nick Beese ([ATW0030](#))
- 171 Nicola Evans ([ATW0262](#))

- 172 Olive Lycett ([ATW0113](#))
- 173 Olivier Jamin ([ATW0316](#))
- 174 Omeima Mudawi-Rowlings ([ATW0137](#))
- 175 Padraic Joyce ([ATW0140](#))
- 176 Papworth Trust ([ATW0103](#))
- 177 Paul Anthony ([ATW0097](#))
- 178 Paula Fye ([ATW0136](#))
- 179 Pauline Latchem ([ATW0261](#))
- 180 Penny Cartwright ([ATW0005](#))
- 181 People First (Self Advocacy) ([ATW0223](#))
- 182 People First England ([ATW0011](#))
- 183 Peter Kane ([ATW0215](#))
- 184 Peterborough Diocesan Board of Finance ([ATW0252](#))
- 185 Phil White ([ATW0009](#))
- 186 Pilgrims' Friend Society ([ATW0054](#))
- 187 Pluss ([ATW0091](#))
- 188 Prospects ([ATW0240](#))
- 189 Rachael Hayes ([ATW0040](#))
- 190 Rachael Parker ([ATW0309](#))
- 191 Randstad Student & Worker Support ([ATW0227](#))
- 192 Ranjit Singh ([ATW0105](#))
- 193 Rebecca Barber ([ATW0274](#))
- 194 Rebecca Britton ([ATW0295](#))
- 195 Remark! Ltd ([ATW0271](#))
- 196 Remploy ([ATW0083](#))
- 197 Revd Dr Hannah Lewis ([ATW0092](#))
- 198 Richard Dunford ([ATW0256](#))
- 199 Royal National Institute of Blind People ([ATW0101](#))
- 200 Robin Bray-Hurren ([ATW0299](#))
- 201 Roger Beeson ([ATW0242](#))
- 202 Royal Association for Deaf People ([ATW0020](#))
- 203 Royal British Legion Industries ([ATW0221](#))
- 204 Ruth Nortey ([ATW0058](#))
- 205 Sally Reynolds ([ATW0210](#))
- 206 Sam Calder ([ATW0220](#))
- 207 Sam Roxburgh ([ATW0304](#))
- 208 Sandra Totterdell ([ATW0099](#))
- 209 Sandwell Deaf Community Association ([ATW0086](#))
- 210 Sanjay Mistry ([ATW0121](#))
- 211 Scope ([ATW0247](#))
- 212 Scott Challenger ([ATW0076](#))
- 213 Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters ([ATW0117](#))
- 214 Sebastian Cunliffe ([ATW0016](#))
- 215 Sense ([ATW0075](#))
- 216 Shafait Aslam ([ATW0127](#))

- 217 Shana Weinbaum ([ATW0042](#))
- 218 Shaping Our Lives ([ATW0111](#))
- 219 Shaun Hamblett ([ATW0284](#))
- 220 Shirley L Ryall ([ATW0062](#))
- 221 Sign Health, Deaf Hope Project ([ATW0203](#))
- 222 SignHealth ([ATW0126](#) & [ATW0219](#))
- 223 Signing Network CIC ([ATW0282](#))
- 224 SigningWorks Ltd ([ATW0201](#))
- 225 Simon Horseman ([ATW0182](#))
- 226 Siobhan O'Donovan ([ATW0087](#))
- 227 Social Firms Scotland ([ATW0207](#))
- 228 Solar Bear Ltd ([ATW0211](#))
- 229 Solutions 4 Community Support Ltd ([ATW0245](#))
- 230 South West London and St. George's Mental Health Trust ([ATW0334](#))
- 231 Spectrum Centre for Independent Living ([ATW0231](#))
- 232 Stephen Hudson ([ATW0028](#))
- 233 Stephen Hurley ([ATW0278](#))
- 234 Stephen Martin ([ATW0045](#))
- 235 Stephen McKenna ([ATW0329](#))
- 236 Steven Wynne ([ATW0264](#))
- 237 Stuart Harrison ([ATW0149](#))
- 238 Stuart Wilson ([ATW0023](#))
- 239 Sumita Paul ([ATW0048](#))
- 240 Susan Billam ([ATW0065](#))
- 241 Susan Gill ([ATW0032](#))
- 242 Tamsyn Hockaday ([ATW0154](#))
- 243 Team Hado Ltd ([ATW0063](#) & [ATW0138](#))
- 244 Tessa Padden ([ATW0195](#))
- 245 The Action Group ([ATW0159](#))
- 246 The Deaf Agency Limited ([ATW0025](#))
- 247 The University of Manchester's Disabled Staff Network ([ATW0326](#))
- 248 Thomas McAlpine OBE ([ATW0199](#))
- 249 Thomas Mulloy ([ATW0196](#))
- 250 TLT Solicitors ([ATW0341](#))
- 251 Toby Burton ([ATW0027](#))
- 252 Tony Sutton ([ATW0147](#))
- 253 UK Council on Deafness ([ATW0178](#))
- 254 UK Forum for Hidden and Fluctuating Conditions ([ATW0279](#))
- 255 United Response - Cornwall Supported Employment ([ATW0017](#))
- 256 United Response ([ATW0332](#))
- 257 University College London ([ATW0251](#))
- 258 Verity Joyce ([ATW0139](#))
- 259 Visual Language Professionals ([ATW0280](#))
- 260 Wayne McMillan ([ATW0142](#))
- 261 Yasmin Kovic ([ATW0312](#))

262 Zafar Iqbal ([ATW0100](#))

263 Zebra-Uno ([ATW0174](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/workpencom.

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2014–15

First Report	Employment and Support Allowance and Work Capability Assessments	HC 302 (Cm 8967)
First Special Report	Monitoring the performance of the Department for Work and Pensions in 2012-13: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2013–14	HC 394
Second Special Report	Universal Credit implementation: monitoring DWP's performance in 2012–13: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2012–13	HC 426
Third Special Report	Fraud and error in the benefits system: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2013–14	HC 627

Session 2013–14

First Report	Can the Work Programme work for all user groups?	HC 162 (HC 627)
Second Report	The role of Jobcentre Plus in the reformed welfare system	HC 479 (HC 1210)
Third Report	Monitoring the performance of the Department for Work and Pensions in 2012–13	HC 1153 (HC (14–15) 394)
Fourth Report	Support for housing costs in the reformed welfare system	HC 720
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