



House of Commons
Work and Pensions Committee

**Welfare-to-work:
Government Response
to the Committee's
Second Report of
Session 2015–16**

**Fifth Special Report of Session
2015–16**

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The Work and Pensions Committee

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

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Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Adam Mellows-Facer (Clerk), Margaret McKinnon (Second Clerk), James Clarke (Committee Specialist), Rod McInnes (Committee Specialist), Rachael Savage (Committee Specialist), Abigail Slade (Committee Specialist), Andrew Wallace (Senior Committee Assistant), Alison Pickard (Committee Assistant) and Jessica Bridges-Palmer (Media Officer).

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Fifth Special Report

The Work and Pensions Committee published its Second Report of Session 2015–16, *Welfare-to-work* (HC 363) on 21 October 2015. The Government’s response was received on 23 December 2015 and is appended to this report.

In the Government response, the Committee’s recommendations are in **bold text** and the Government’s responses are in plain text.

Appendix: Government response

The Government welcomes the second report of the Work and Pensions Select Committee 2015–16, which credited the Department for Work and Pensions for implementing a programme (the Work Programme) which ‘produces results at least as good as before but for a greatly reduced cost per participant’ and represented good value for money for the tax payer. The Committee’s report is supportive of the principles of the Work Programme, but highlights areas where the Committee feel future commissioning of employment support could be enhanced. This response addresses those areas.

The Work Programme is a success and has transformed the way in which the Department delivers contracted employment support. It has helped over 459,000 people to move into lasting jobs – playing a big part in the significant improvements seen in the labour market. A further 37,000 entering work from Work Choice and 41,069 from the Remploy delivery of Work Choice (includes Work Step for 2010/11).

The claimant count is now nearly 700,000 lower than in 2010 and the unemployment rate is close to its pre-recession level. The number of people on out of work benefits is at a 30 year low, and the claimant count rate – at 2.3% – is the lowest since 1975. The employment rate is now at a record high (73.7%) and the number of people unemployed has fallen to 1.75m – its lowest level since 2008 – and long term unemployment has been falling for the last two years.

The Department has also changed the rules to help make sure work pays. Universal Credit is a major reform of welfare which is being introduced to support people who are on a low income or out of work, to ensure they are better off in work than on benefits. It will give recipients the support they need to prepare for work, move into work, or earn more. It extends financial incentives to people working less than 16 hours per week and removes the limit to the number of hours someone can work each week. A single taper of 65% means that financial support is withdrawn at a consistent and predictable rate, helping claimants to clearly understand the advantages of work. Universal Credit also stays with you when you enter work, giving claimants the confidence to enter work without having to go through the bureaucracy of changing their benefit claim.

The Claimant Commitment is at the heart of this approach, offering personalised Work Coach support, with requirements tailored to individual circumstances and capability.

Early and continuing engagement between Work Coaches and claimants is a key element of Universal Credit. For claimants unfit for work, the focus is on activities that keep them close to the labour market and move back into work as quickly as their health allows.

The Department now wants to go further and help more people transform their lives by moving into work. As part of the Spending Review, the Department has reviewed its approach to labour market support, taking account of the stronger economic and labour market environment today than in 2010. The Department plans to keep total investment in labour market support broadly flat over the Spending Review period, reflecting the Government's continuing commitment to making further progress in this area.

To reflect the best evidence on the value for money and employment impacts of support, the Department is refocusing on upfront support before people become long-term unemployed – preventing long-term unemployment as well as treating it. This means help and support going beyond the group of jobseekers the Department currently supports, continuing the rollout of Universal Credit and extending the same support that Jobseeker's Allowance claimants receive to around a million more people by 2020. This will extend the primary means of applying conditionality to better support people back into work and protect taxpayers' money.

To further build upon this approach, we are investing in more frequent Work Coach support, providing weekly worksearch reviews for unemployed claimants at the start of their claim and providing six months of more intensive support from 18 months.

Increasing disability employment is a key focus of the Government's aim to achieve full employment. That is why this Government is committed to halving the disability employment gap. The Spending Review therefore announced a real terms funding increase in spending to help people with health conditions and disabilities return to, and remain in, work. This funding will enable a real terms increase in the Access to Work Budget, enabling up to 25,000 additional disabled people to receive support and provide at least £115m of funding for the Joint Work and Health Unit, including a Work and Health Innovation Fund.

Universal Credit will also activate more claimants with health conditions and disabilities, including those with a current fit note who have not yet been assessed by the Work Capability Assessment. There are safeguards in place to ensure that support is appropriate to individual circumstances. Universal Credit Work Coaches have extensive discretion in determining support and throughout the claim requirements are tailored to the claimant's circumstances and capabilities, and are clearly set out in their Claimant Commitment.

The Department has also refined its approach to contracted provision to reflect these priorities. New referrals to current contracts for a number of the Department's major national contracted employment programmes are due to end over the next two years, including Mandatory Work Activity (31 March 2016), Community Work Placements (31 October 2016), the Work Programme (31 March 2017) and Work Choice (24 April 2017).

The economy and labour market are now considerably stronger than when these programmes were introduced, largely at the height of recession. The number of people unemployed has fallen by 30% from 2.5 million to 1.75 million since Mar–May 2011, and the number of long–term unemployed has fallen by just over 35% from 820,000 to 514,000 over the same period.

Contracted programmes will in future have a reduced, but still significant, role to play in future, although funding for current contracts will continue. The Department will retain enhanced specialist support for those who need it, introducing new contracted employment provision for people with health conditions or disabilities and those unemployed for over 2 years. This provision will be designed to support local growth and partnership working with Devolution Deals areas, and will be complemented in a number of areas by the Health and Work pilots being established through the new Innovation Fund.

The Department will also renew the successful New Enterprise Allowance programme, supporting the wider Government commitment to support new businesses. In addition, the type of support currently delivered by the Specialist Employability Support programme will continue. Consideration is being given to the best way to deliver this in future.

Furthermore, the Department will also invest in additional support for young people aged 18 to 21 to help them develop the skills and experience they need to get on in work and ensure that they are either earning or learning. The new Youth Obligation will provide intensive support from Day 1 of a young person’s claim to Universal Credit and if they are not on an Apprenticeship or on work–related training at six months they will be referred to a mandatory work placement. Jobcentre Plus will also reach out to schools to help support young people at risk of becoming NEET (not in Education, Employment or training) or who may otherwise be disadvantaged in the labour market. The Department is working with the new Careers and Enterprise Company to align this support with other sources of help available to schools to give young people the advice and guidance they need to make a smooth transition from school to work, training or further study. A cross–Government Ministerial Implementation Task Force has been established to support the development of a coherent and joined–up landscape of intensive support to reduce long term youth unemployment.

Whilst a number of design details are in development, meaning detailed responses to some of the Committee’s recommendations are not possible at this stage, a key principle in the design of all new measures will be to build on the strengths of and lessons learned from current contracted provision. This will include implementing a number of the Committee’s recommendations which reflect work already underway.

Responses to Recommendations

1. Paragraph 24: The Department must develop a new standardised assessment of claimants’ barriers to work, to be completed at an early point in claims by Jobcentre Plus. The new assessment should be based on a check–list of characteristics, including: illiteracy and innumeracy, and poor general educational attainment; employment

history over the last four years; contact with the criminal justice system; physical and mental ill–health and disabilities; housing problems and homelessness; drug and alcohol misuse; and long–term caring responsibilities. The assessment should be reviewed every three months, to reflect the fact that these types of characteristics are not always immediately disclosed or easily identifiable, and to ensure that an effective service, tailored to a claimant’s circumstances, can be developed over time. It should be shared with all contracted providers and local partners at the point of referral from Jobcentre Plus. We recommend that a new assessment is in place at the start of the new contracts which will replace current Work Programme and Work Choice provision in 2017. We further recommend that the Department and contracted providers track the job outcomes of different groups of claimants, broken down by the characteristics identified in the assessment, and report this data to a What Work Centre, as recommended in Chapter 6 of this Report.

The Department accepts this recommendation in principle.

- 1.1 Universal Credit provides an excellent opportunity to review the Department’s approach to identifying the support people would benefit most from. It is breaking down the rigid boundaries between benefit types, enabling Jobcentre Plus, contracted providers and other delivery partners to view people as individuals and tailor support accordingly.
- 1.2 The Department is therefore exploring whether there are changes it could make to its assessment and referral process both for future employment support contracts and in the move to a more flexible Jobcentre Plus offer. The Department’s ambition is, through testing and trialling, to develop a more sophisticated segmentation approach to deliver smarter service differentiation.
- 1.3 For Universal Credit, the Department is working to develop a set of diagnostic tools that both effectively capture and present information to Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches and claimants in a clear and accessible way and enable better decision making (either Work Coach–led or automated) at the start of and throughout a benefit claim. Through the development of these diagnostic tools the Department aims to identify people who it can interact with in a different way (for example through remote work search reviews) and better target face to face support interventions.
- 1.4 Development of the Department’s assessment and segmentation approach for future employment support provision is underway and further detail will be made available in due course.

2. Paragraph 33: One of the clearest conclusions we draw from the evidence to our inquiry is that employment support for long–term unemployed people with complex needs relies on effective integration with other locally–run services, including health, housing, education and skills, and support for alcohol and drug addiction and other indicators of a generally chaotic lifestyle. There are excellent examples of Jobcentre Plus, contracted providers, local authorities, and other local organisations working

together in co-located teams, pooling resources to address these types of issues at an early stage in benefit claims, while maintaining a central focus on employment. The Department for Work and Pensions should more actively seek to establish integrated and co-located teams more widely across Great Britain. We recommend that the Universal Support Delivered Locally pilots be expanded beyond IT and budgeting support, to include more effective integration of housing, health, education and skills, and drug and alcohol teams in single locations, each contributing

The Department accepts this recommendation in principle.

- 2.1 The Department acknowledges the importance of joining up public services to better integrate support, in particular to improve service and outcomes for some of its hardest to help claimants.
- 2.2 The Department is currently developing its approach to the future of Universal Support. This will draw on emerging findings from the 11 Universal Support Delivered Locally trial areas across England, Scotland and Wales.
- 2.3 There are excellent examples of innovative approaches. For example. In Croydon, Universal Support joins up Jobcentre staff with the Council's 'people gateway' service, focusing on budgeting and digital skills. The people gateway delivers tailored services that include reviewing the income of the whole household, any debts, and how the household is managing its money. Another example is Flintshire Connects, where Flint Jobcentre Plus was co-located with the Flintshire Local Authority in March 2014 in a site which brings together a wide range of services that offer support to unemployed people, those with health conditions and lone parents. Children's social services, supported living and learning disabilities teams, neighbourhood housing and anti-social behaviour teams, welfare rights advice, and police are also located in the same building.
- 2.4 The Department has also worked with the Department of Health to establish a Work and Health Unit to lead the drive for improving work and health outcomes for people with health conditions and disabilities, as well as improving prevention and support for people absent from work through ill health and those at risk of leaving the workforce. The Unit will seek to do this by improving integration across healthcare and employment services as well as supporting employers to recruit and retain more disabled people and people with long term health conditions.
- 2.5 The Department's intention is that more broadly, the design of future provision will take into account the need to improve integration of services at the local level.

3. Paragraph 36: We welcome the establishment of the joint Department for Work and Pensions/Department of Health, Health Unit as a first step towards integration of health and employment support. For integration to be effective, we believe that some

pooling of budgets will be necessary. We recommend that the Health and Work Unit test the efficacy of allocating a small part of local National Health Service commissioning budgets to employment support in Universal Support Delivered Locally pilot areas. We further recommend that the Work and Health Unit prioritise integration of the National Health Service Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme with employment support, to ensure that unemployed people with depression and anxiety disorders more consistently receive appropriate and prompt support.

The Department accepts this recommendation in principle.

- 3.1 The Work and Health Unit, set up in August, works across government, bringing together the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Health. The Unit also has secondments from NHS England and the Department for Communities and Local Government and expects to welcome additional civil servants from other Government departments and devolved administrations in due course.
- 3.2 The government wants to improve links between health services and employment support, recognising timely access to health treatments can help individuals return to work quicker. Over £115 million of funding will be provided for the Work and Health Unit, including at least £40 million for a Health and Work Innovation Fund, to pilot new ways to join up across the health and employment systems. To further integrate services and help people back into work, where it has been agreed as part of a devolution deal, local areas will co-design employment support for harder-to-help claimants.
- 3.3 The Unit is currently exploring the practicalities and legalities of pooling budgets at a local level, to inform how trials are delivered. Once trials under the Innovation Fund have been fully evaluated, the Unit will make the economic case for scaling up effective interventions.
- 3.4 The Work and Health Unit will work closely with the Department to consider and manage any interactions for people with health conditions and disabilities with the future approach to Universal Support.

4. Paragraph 45: The Government has made reducing the “disability employment gap” a priority. The configuration of contracted employment programmes from 2017 should reflect this. A separate, voluntary employment programme, for people with substantial health and disability-related barriers to employment, should be retained. The specialist programme should continue to be delivered exclusively by specialist organisations at prime and subcontractor level. There is too great a risk that consolidating support for this group into a national mainstream programme, delivered via non-specialist prime contractors, will diminish the quality and effectiveness of support available.

The Department accepts the need to retain specialist employment support as part of the package of support for disabled people and those with health conditions.

- 4.1 The Government is committed to halving the disability employment gap and supporting the hardest to help to return to work. The Spending Review sets out an ambitious approach to this with a real terms funding increase in spending to help people with health conditions and disabilities return to, and remain in, work. This includes, the new Health and Work Programme, and plans announced at the Summer Budget, committing to invest a further £60m, rising to £100m by 2021, claimants with health conditions and disabilities. The Department will focus on upfront Jobcentre Plus support, beginning with greater support when claimants first leave work via the Fit for Work service and through Universal Credit – preventing long-term unemployment as well as treating it. This is in addition to the more personalised tailored support already introduced through the Claimant Commitment and the Work Coach Delivery Model.
- 4.2 The Spending Review announced that new provision will be introduced after current Work Programme and Work Choice contracts stop receiving referrals, restructuring current provision to focus on providing the best possible support for claimants with health conditions or disabilities, as well as those who are long-term unemployed.
- 4.3 This better targeting of support will be accompanied by structural reform. The Spending Review also announced that the Government will publish a White Paper next year that will set out reforms to improve support for people with health conditions and disabilities and further reduce the disability employment gap.
- 4.4 The Department will be working with key stakeholders including disability employment organisations to ensure that future provision provides customers with the specialist employment support that they need to get a job. In developing the future provision, key lessons of the existing Work Programme, Work Choice and other specialist disability provision will be taken into account.

5. Paragraph 46: We recommend that the Department at least double the number of places available on the new specialist programme, compared to the current Work Choice programme. We appreciate that its budgets are under pressure, and that a Comprehensive Spending Review is on the horizon. We therefore recommend that, while Department for Work and Pensions retain a level of upfront service fee in the new specialist programme, the level be reviewed in consultation with providers, with a view to reducing the upfront costs per participant of the new programme compared to Work Choice.

The Department notes this recommendation and will consider it whilst appraising design and delivery options for the new programme.

- 5.1 In developing the new provision announced through the Spending Review to deliver specialist support to those with health conditions and disabilities,

the Department will apply key lessons learnt from the delivery of the Work Programme and specialist disability provision including Work Choice. This will include reviewing the balance between upfront investment and payment by results. Within the current Work Choice programme service fees have been reduced from 70% to 50% as part of agreement on contract extensions. The impact of this will be assessed to inform final payment model decisions for the future provision.

- 5.2 The Department will design support that provides better integration of services and support at local level including complementing the support that is provided through Jobcentre Plus and in a number of areas by the Health and Work pilots being established through the new Innovation Fund.
- 5.3 It is the Department's intention to ensure that the design of future provision takes into full consideration the different needs of claimants with health and disability issues, and that this is reflected in the procurement process. To achieve this, consideration must be given to what is likely to best drive improved support for all groups, including through a range of commercial choices, before final decisions are taken.
- 5.4 The Department must also design support for people with health and disability issues in the context of the broader support offer. Specialist provision needs to be considered alongside support offered through Jobcentre Plus and, in the context of needing to ensure value for money for taxpayers, it will be important to design provision to complement increased support elsewhere.
- 5.5 We will set out our plans for the future support as part of the White Paper in the new year.

6. Paragraph 47: The next specialist disability employment programme must maintain the strengths of Work Choice and address its flaws. We recommend the new programme must:

- **Continue to be voluntary, open to unemployed disabled people regardless of whether they are claiming an out-of-work benefit;**
- **Have clear and well-publicised referral routes from statutory organisations other than Jobcentre Plus, including health and social care providers;**
- **Have clearer and less-restrictive eligibility criteria. For benefit claimants access to the programme should be based on a new characteristic-based assessment, as recommended earlier in this Report. The programme should be available to people who have substantial health and disability-related barriers to working and who would require a level of in-work support; and**
- **Provide pre-employment support for up to at least 12 months.**

The Department notes these recommendations and will provide more detail about the scale and structure of future contracted provision as part of the Government's White Paper on Health and Disability.

- 6.1 The Department will be working with stakeholders including disability employment organisations to ensure that provision provides claimants with the specialist employment support they need to move into work. In developing the future provision, key lessons of the existing Work Programme, Work Choice and Specialist Disability provision will be taken into account.
- 6.2 Ensuring that individuals are engaged and motivated to participate is an important feature of Work Choice that needs to be harnessed in future specialist disability provision. It is important to ensure that people access the right support for them to enable greater numbers of individuals with a disability or health condition to enter employment.
- 6.3 Statutory Referral Organisations are another important feature of the existing programme and ways to facilitate greater integration of services will be key feature for future provision.

7. Paragraph 63: We recommend that Work Programme Plus participants be segmented into three payment groups, based on an assessment of characteristics known to affect likelihood of long-term unemployment, as recommended earlier in this Report:

- **Work-ready group: Relatively work-ready claimants with a good record of employment in the last four years;**
- **Intermediate support group: Claimants with some characteristics restricting their employability, such as lack of qualifications or skills, and a poor record of employment in the last four years; or**
- **Intensive support group: Claimants with complex or multiple barriers to working, including significant physical or mental ill health; drug or alcohol dependency; housing**

As announced at the Spending Review, the size and shape of future contracted employment provision will be different in future. The Department will therefore take this recommendation into consideration in working to design and deliver contracted provision that best meets the needs of those it supports.

- 7.1 The Department, however, welcomes the Committee's agreement that future contracted provision should have a simpler and better targeted segmentation model. The Department is considering a number of ways to improve its segmentation approach for future provision, as outlined in paragraphs 1.1 – 1.5.

- 7.2 Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches all receive training to equip them with the skills and knowledge to support the full range of Jobcentre Plus claimants. This allows Work Coaches to offer a personalised approach to claimants based on their individual needs, rather than a service based on particular claimant group or individual benefit type. The Department is exploring the role of Work Coaches in assessing support needs given the relationships they build up with their claimants.

8. Paragraph 64: We strongly support the Department’s intention to reconfigure the payment-by-results model for Work Programme Plus: it must more directly incentivise providers to invest in support to tackle participants’ more challenging barriers to working. The payment model should continue to have a very strong payment-by-results element and retain the focus on sustained job outcomes, but the new model must address the current under-investment in participants who are furthest from the labour market. We therefore support Department for Work and Pensions’ intention to introduce an “accelerator” payment model. We recommend that accelerator payments be applied in relation to the intermediate support and intensive support groups described above, based on the best available evidence on what constitutes average, good and exceptional job outcome performance in relation to these groups. We further recommend that a service fee, set at 30% of the job outcome fee, be introduced for participants in the intensive support group.

The Department accepts this recommendation in part.

- 8.1 The Department welcomes the Committee’s agreement that future contracted provision must retain an element of payment by results to protect taxpayers’ money and ensure providers are incentivised to deliver strong performance.
- 8.2 The Department is considering lessons learnt from the operation of current programmes’ payment models in the design of future provision, and is reviewing the impacts of different balances between payment by results and upfront funding as well as a range of mechanisms to drive the best service, performance and value for money. Further information will be made available in due course.

9. Paragraph 65: Estimating the optimal point at which to refer claimants from Jobcentre Plus to contracted employment programmes is difficult. It must be carefully considered to minimise “deadweight” spending (money spent to help claimants back into work, where they would have done so without any intervention). It must be based on assumptions about claimants’ likely period of unemployment, and the added value, above an estimated “non-intervention level”, of the contracted support available. We are likely to return to this issue later in this Parliament, perhaps by commissioning research into whether it is possible to challenge the Government’s current deadweight assumptions and make a case for much earlier referral to particular types of contracted employment support for particular types of claimants. However, there is already a

strong case for generally earlier referral to contracted providers. For Work Programme Plus, we recommend the simple referral system set out below:

- **Work ready group: referral at nine months of benefit claim**
- **Intermediate support group: referral at six months of benefit claim**
- **Intensive support group: referral at three months of benefit claim**

The Department does not accept this recommendation.

- 9.1 The Department agrees that it is essential to provide claimants with the right support at the right time, both to give them the best chance of finding work, and to protect taxpayers' money by ensuring that only those who would benefit from provision are referred to it. The referral criteria for future provision, and the future structure of the support claimants receive from Jobcentre Plus, are being developed to enable this.

10. Paragraph 69: The changes to the payment model set out in this Report will be a more effective way of incentivising providers to provide support for people who are facing greater challenges in returning to work; but more should be done to ensure that all participants in Work Programme Plus receive an adequate level of service and are not “parked”.

Paragraph 70: We reiterate the recommendation of our predecessor Committee: the Department must establish a single set of clear and measurable minimum service standards, applicable to all providers, and to which all Work Programme Plus participants are entitled.

The Department accepts this recommendation in principle.

- 10.1 The Department wants to continue to do more to ensure that the hardest to help claimants get the best service and outcomes, and will learn from its experience of delivering current programmes in the design of future provision to ensure the best possible results from day one. This will include reviewing the impact of the more transparent Customer Service Standards Framework introduced as part of last year's re-let of Work Programme Contract Package Area 18.

- 10.2 The Department is also working to improve service for harder to help groups in other ways, for example by

- working with the Department of Health through the Work and Health Unit to find the best ways of aligning services to better support people with health conditions and disabilities into work; and
- working with local areas in Devolution Deals areas and through Universal Support to join up services at the local level.

10.3 The Department's intention is that every participant receives high quality and meaningful support through all future provision.

11. Paragraph 81: In the interests of transparency in contracted public services, and to facilitate sharing of learning and best practice, we recommend that Department for Work and Pensions does not impose, and restricts prime contractors from imposing, restrictions on subcontractors publishing their own Work Programme Plus referral and job outcome data.

The Department accepts this recommendation in principle.

11.1 The Department is committed to transparency of performance information and will work with providers to ensure that where appropriate, information is shared across the market, while ensuring that we comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

12. Paragraph 86: Department for Work and Pensions should more actively promote the conditions for innovation and learning in employment support. We make three recommendations to achieve this:

- **Department for Work and Pensions should take steps to encourage a greater role in welfare-to-work delivery for smaller, specialist organisations, which are often more innovative and effective at supporting people with more complex barriers to working.**
- **Department for Work and Pensions should establish an Employment Support Innovation Fund, set at 2–3% of the total budget for the 2017 contracts — in line with research and development investment in advanced economies — which should be used to test innovative approaches to supporting groups of jobseekers who have not been well-served to date.**
- **The Cabinet Office should establish a dedicated labour market What Works Centre, or expand the remit of the What Works Centre for Economic Growth to encompass employment programmes. A What Works Centre should: act as a repository for referral and job outcome data below prime contractor level, and disaggregated according to claimants' characteristics, as identified in the new assessment recommended earlier in this Report; seek to identify the most effective providers and disseminate best practice; conduct research into what works for people with different characteristics in different types of locality; and monitor, and report on, the effectiveness of innovative, locally-commissioned approaches.**

The Department accepts this recommendation in part.

12.1 The Department is committed to working with the full range of organisations – including smaller specialist ones – which can help support claimants, including the hardest to help, into work. The Department is also committed to working collaboratively with local areas and across government to deliver

joined up support in order to improve service and outcomes for the hardest to help groups.

- 12.2 The Department recognises the need to promote and support innovative labour market approaches and to promote the sharing of evidence about effective practices right across the sector, although it should be noted that directly paying for innovation is just one of the ways in which this could be achieved.
- 12.3 The Department recently commissioned independent research, conducted by Inclusion and Nesta, which included a review of arrangements for innovation and evidence sharing across GB labour market intermediaries. The results will be forthcoming.
- 12.4 The Department is taking account of these research findings in considering what role a public-facing labour market What Works function might play in supporting local innovation and improving evidence sharing between labour market intermediaries including providers, Local Enterprise Partnerships and other public bodies with labour market roles including devolved authorities.
- 12.5 Partnership working with Devolution Deals areas in the commissioning of future provision has a number of potential benefits: effective integration of employment support with related, locally-run services; greater investment to support particular disadvantaged groups, according to local priorities; and shaping of employment programmes to match the needs of local labour markets. A number of Devolution Deals concerned with contracted employment support have been announced, and the impacts of these will inform future rounds of commissioning. It is imperative that emerging best practice from innovative approaches in Devolution Deals areas is evaluated, and learning is synthesised and shared across the wider sector.