House of Commons
Work and Pensions Committee

The future of Jobcentre Plus

Second Report of Session 2016–17

Report, together with formal minutes relating to the report

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Work and Pensions Committee

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The future of Jobcentre Plus (JCP) is one of change. Against the backdrop of a changed labour market, the Universal Credit roll-out and the scaling down of contracted-out welfare-to-work programmes, JCP will be expected to provide employment support to a broader and more challenging caseload of claimants. The Department for Work and Pensions’ success in supporting such people will largely rely on getting it right within JCP. This represents a considerable challenge.

Culturally, JCP must ensure that it becomes an inspirational place from which individuals find and succeed in work. JCP Work Coaches—front-line advisors—will play a pivotal role. Too often, JCP staff have been cast in the role of policemen rather than supporters who help people progress to and in work. Major changes will be required of Work Coaches. There is a case for some Work Coaches to specialise in helping specific claimant groups, while others take a higher caseload of more general cases. There should also be a clearer route for Work Coaches themselves to progress in their careers in providing tailored employment support, reflecting the increased demands of today’s labour market.

The success of the new Work Coach model will depend, in part, on Coaches’ awareness that they are not experts in all areas—including disability and health conditions. They must, therefore, embrace working alongside more knowledgeable third parties and charities. To make a success of its new, expanded role, JCP will have to ensure that it is open to working in ways that are increasingly flexible, adaptable and experimental. It must strengthen working relationships with employers and other external partners in order to ensure that specialist support is available to claimants when it is needed. It will also need to demonstrate an ability to learn on the job and adapt its provision, both to changing labour market circumstances and as it learns what works in supporting claimants. This new role will also need to be reflected in its opening hours.

We welcome the Department’s aim of providing improved, innovative support to those who have been inadequately served within the current system. We do not, however, downplay the scale of the challenge that JCP faces in supporting its more varied and complex caseload of claimants. The changes required are significant: not just operational, but also cultural transformation. These concerns form the heart of our report.
1 Introduction

1. Jobcentre Plus (JCP) is a core part of support provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP/The Department) for jobseekers in receipt of unemployment benefits and Universal Credit (UC). It provides employment advice and uses knowledge of local labour markets to match unemployed claimants to suitable job vacancies. It is also responsible for applying conditionality to the receipt of benefits. JCP currently serves around 700,0001 unemployed claimants through its network of 713 Jobcentres in geographical districts across England, Scotland and Wales.2 In Northern Ireland, similar services are delivered through the network of Jobs and Benefit Offices.

2. JCP’s services sit alongside contracted-out welfare-to-work provision, whereby private and third-sector organisations are responsible for providing employment support to some individuals. Such provision has been a feature of employment support in Great Britain since the 1990s. Since 2011, the Work Programme has been the main such programme. Specialist provision for disabled people is also available through the much smaller Work Choice scheme. A range of further, smaller schemes are commissioned locally: for example, through Local Authorities. The Welsh Government commissions some of its own programmes, and provision to devolve welfare-to-work to the Scottish Government is contained in the Scotland Act 2016. Provision is also devolved in Northern Ireland.

The context of our inquiry

3. Reducing the welfare bill and getting people into employment remains a key priority for the Government. In many respects, however, the labour market now is very different from when the current welfare-to-work arrangements were established in 2010–11. The number of people claiming unemployment related benefits halved between 2010 and 2016 (see Figure 1). Yet an increasing proportion of the unemployed have been so for an extended period: the proportion of claimants who have been on Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) for six months or more is three times higher in 2016 than before the 2008–09 economic recession. A total of 15% of JSA claims lasted more than two years in 2016, compared with 4 to 6% before 2008 (see Figure 2).

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1 This includes the number of people claiming JSA or Universal Credit principally for the reason of being unemployed.
2 National Audit Office fIP0076
Figure 1: Trend in unemployment-related benefit caseload in England, Wales and Scotland, January 2001 to February 2016

The number of people claiming JSA increased by a third within six months of the 2008–09 recession starting, and started to fall in 2013.

Number of unemployed claimants (millions)

JSA caseload reached over 1.6 million following the 2008-09 recession, almost double the level before the recession

JSA caseload before the 2008-09 recession was between 0.8 and 1 million

JSA caseload started falling in 2013

Notes:
1. Unemployed-related benefit caseload includes Jobseeker’s Allowance up to April 2013.
2. Unemployed-related benefit caseload includes Jobseeker’s Allowance and Universal Credit from May 2013.

Source: National Audit Office (FJP0076)

Figure 2: Long-term claims as a share of total JSA claims (excluding Universal Credit) in England, Wales and Scotland

The proportion of long-term JSA claimants is three times higher today than before the 2008–09 recession.

Percentage of all JSA claimants

Claiming over 6 months

Claiming over 1 year

Claiming over 2 years

Note:
1. Only JSA caseloads are included in the analysis because data on the duration of Universal Credit claims are not available.

Source: National Audit Office (FJP0076)
4. The Government has also pledged to halve the disability employment gap by 2020 (see Figure 3). At current rates of employment this will involve helping around 1.5 million disabled people into work, and improving the rate of employment for people with disabilities a much faster rate than for the general population.

Figure 3: Disability employment gap, 1999–2015:

![Chart showing disability employment gap]

Notes: Annual rolling averages, year to date shown. Historical dashed lines represent trends based on the 18-59(women)/64(men) age definition. The employment rate for disabled people is measured as the percentage of disabled people who are employed compared to the percentage of non-disabled people who are employed. For the most recent year, the disability employment gap is 34 percentage points in 2015.


5. While the Work Programme is performing generally as well as the programmes it replaced, a large majority of participants—almost 70%—spend up to two years on the programme without finding a job, at which point they return to JCP. In most cases, this would mean JSA claimants had also spent between nine and twelve months receiving support from JCP only, prior to referral to the Work Programme. The Work Programme has also worked better for some claimant groups than others. Outcomes are particularly poor for ill or disabled Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants, who can be mandated to the Programme if they are in the Work-Related Activity Group (deemed closer to employment than those in the alternative Support Group). While around one in four JSA claimants obtain a job after referral to the Work Programme, the same can only be said of one in seven new ESA claimants and one in sixteen in the ESA ‘Other’ category, which includes former Incapacity Benefit claimants. In contrast, the much smaller, specialist provider-led Work Choice achieves much better results. 59% of individuals referred to it in 2014–15 moved into sustained employment.

3 Gardiner, L. and Gaffney, D., Retention deficit, Resolution Foundation June 2016, p.19. This number assumes that there will be a corresponding growth in the non-disabled employment rate, according to forecasts from the ONS.

4 Gardiner, L. and Gaffney, D., Retention deficit, Resolution Foundation June 2016, p.18

5 Work and Pensions Committee, Welfare-to-work, Session 2015–16, HC 363, para 87. Note: the 70% figure refers to all participant groups in Work Programme.

6 DWP, The Work Programme, December 2012, p.6

7 DWP, Work Programme quarterly statistics to March 2016, June 2016

8 DWP, Work Choice official statistics, May 2016
6. The 2015 Spending Review announced resources and programmes designed to increase employment:

- The Work Programme and Work Choice will be replaced by a new Work and Health Programme, contracts for which will begin from October 2017. It will provide specialist support for some claimants with health conditions or disabilities, and for some other categories of claimants, including some those of unemployed for over two years;9
- Unemployed claimants in the early stages of their benefit claim will attend more frequent interviews in JCP;
- JCP offices will be increasingly co-located with other local services, such as council benefit teams and health services;10 and
- The process of devolution of employment services to combined local authorities and devolved governments will continue.

7. These changes take place alongside the introduction of UC, which is merging six working-age benefits—including the income-related elements of the two main unemployment benefits, JSA and ESA—into a single payment. UC will also affect the way JCP delivers its services. It is intended to be a mainly online application process, supported by job-searching and job-matching on an online-based vacancy system, Universal Jobmatch. UC will be paid to both working and non-working claimants. It will include an in-work progression service, through which JCP will support low-paid claimants to take steps to increase their earnings to at least the equivalent of 35 hours per week at the National Living Wage. A full JCP-led in-work progression service could apply to around one million working people.11

8. The scaling down of contracted provision and the shift to UC will therefore alter the caseload of people that JCP is expected to support, and the sorts of provision that it is required to make. Many claimants who would have been referred to contracted-out provision will instead be supported “in house”. This will include higher proportions of individuals with health conditions and disabilities, and people who are long-term unemployed.

9. Allied to wider economic trends, JCP has performed well in recent years in supporting claimants who are closer to the labour market into work. It is, in part, a victim of its own success, as to further reduce unemployment, it must now focus on ensuring that it has measures in place that can offer equally effective support to a caseload of claimants with much more varied, complex and substantial barriers to work.

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9 HM Treasury, Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015, Cm 9162, November 2015, para 1.129
10 HM Treasury, Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015, Cm 9162, November 2015, para 1.129
11 Work and Pensions Committee, In-work progression in Universal Credit, Session 2015–16, HC 549, May 2016, para 3
The future of Jobcentre Plus

The aims of this report

10. JCP faces a significantly different context since our predecessor Committee reported on *The role of Jobcentre Plus in the reformed welfare system* in 2014.12 In our inquiry we here aimed to identify potential barriers to JCP’s success in meeting its new challenge of providing high quality, effective employment support to a complex caseload of claimants in house, and to recommend how it should overcome these. Within this framework we also sought to identify how the Department can better understand what works in supporting these claimants into work. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to this inquiry. In the text our conclusions are set out in **bold**, and our recommendations, which require a Government response, are set out in **bold italic**.

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The future of Jobcentre Plus

2 The vital role of Jobcentre Plus staff

11. The Department told us that its scaling down of contracted-out welfare-to-work programmes should be “seen alongside the package of reform and measures agreed to deliver [its employment ambitions] including more early intervention support from Jobcentre Plus when claimants first leave work”.13 This support will be initially provided by JCP’s Work Coaches (see Box 1), who will be responsible for providing front-line support to individuals with a wide range of needs.

Box 1: The Work Coach role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Coaches are front-line DWP staff based in Jobcentres. The Department introduced the role of Work Coach in 2013. It is a similar job description to the previous JCP Adviser role. Work Coaches’ main responsibilities include:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Agreeing “Claimant Commitments” with new claimants setting out the conditions that they need to fulfil to remain eligible to receive benefits, and making sanction referrals if claimants fail to fulfil these;14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supporting claimants into work by motivating, providing advice, and using their knowledge of labour markets; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supporting employed claimants in the pilot in-work service.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DWP, Jobseekers to start signing new Claimant Commitment today, October 2013; Work and Pensions Committee, In-work progression in Universal Credit, Session 2015-16, HC 549, May 2016, para 3

Providing personalised support

12. UC claimants will receive support from the same Work Coach throughout their claim, whether they are in or out of work. The Minister for Employment, Damian Hinds MP (the Minister), told us that a “key advantage” of this approach is that “as somebody changes between benefits, they stick with the same Work Coach”, who can “get to know them better”, building an understanding of their needs and their changing circumstances.16 The Department told us that Work Coaches are “vital” for the success of UC and to JCP supporting claimants effectively. The Minister explained:

I think the work, the role that our Work Coaches do is amazing. They can turn people’s lives round, help them in all sorts of ways to make really big differences for their lives and the lives of their families, and that is a great thing.17

13 DWP (DEG0083)
14 Department for Work and Pensions, Jobseekers to start signing new Claimant Commitment today, October 2013
15 Work and Pensions Committee, In-work progression in Universal Credit, Session 2015-16, HC 549, May 2016, para 3
16 Q141 (Damian Hinds), DWP (FJP0064)
17 Q143 (Damian Hinds), DWP (FJP0064), DWP, Transforming lives through welfare and work, April 2016. See also: Working Links (FJP0061), learndirect Limited (FJP0013), Remploy (FJP0080)
13. To fulfil this role successfully, we heard that Work Coaches must provide personalised advice and build relationships, developing trust and rapport with claimants. They must have the ability to draw out details of claimants’ skills and ambitions, even when they are very low in confidence. The role further requires Work Coaches to have a good understanding of claimants’ barriers to work, and for claimants to feel comfortable disclosing and discussing these personal issues. We received evidence from several homelessness charities emphasising that this is particularly important to ensuring that Work Coaches can support claimants with more complex needs. The Department agreed that these skills and characteristics are essential for the Work Coach model to function effectively.

14. Work Coaches must also use their discretion to judge which work search interventions and conditions will best support a person to return to employment. Conditions can be enforced by sanctions that reduce, suspend or end access to benefits if a claimant fails to fulfil them. The decision on whether to sanction a claimant is not ultimately made by the Work Coach, but by a Decision Maker. The Work Coach does, however, decide whether or not to refer the case to a Decision Maker by raising a “doubt” if they believe that a claimant has not fulfilled a mandatory requirement.

15. Although Work Coaches are required to consider individual needs in agreeing a personalised Claimant Commitment, the DWP does not monitor the extent to which claimants feel this has been the case. We heard some evidence that Work Coaches are referring non-compliant claimants for sanctions less often than a few years previously, where they believe this is in claimants’ interests. This may suggest that greater discretion is being exercised. The Minister told us that the Department is undertaking a large trial of different approaches to in-work conditionality, the results of which will affect the way that the conditionality and sanctioning element of the Work Coach role develops in future.

16. Several witnesses outlined a tension between the dual Work Coach roles of setting and applying conditionality and providing employment support, particularly as the

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18 See, for example, Q99 (Keith Faulkner), Q100 (Nicola Whiteman & Matthew Green), Institute of Employability Professionals (FJP0081), Bright Sparks Consulting Ltd (FJP0088), Child Poverty Action Group (FJP0035), The Intraining Group (FJP0044), The Lived Experiences of Welfare Reform Study (FJP0008), UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) (FJP0047), Joseph Rowntree Foundation (FJP0072), Employment Related Services Association (FJP0045), Plymouth City Council (FJP0020), Sight for Surrey (DEG0080)
19 Crisis, Supporting Claimants with a Disability or Health Condition towards work: Crisis response to DWP’s review of Work Coach Capability, February 2016, Remploy (FJP0080), Citizens Advice (FJP0085)
20 Centrepoint, Crisis, ERSA, Homeless Link, Salvation Army, St Mungo’s (DEG0036). See also: Salvation Army (DEG0027), Revolving Doors Agency (FJP0058)
21 Q169 (Paul Williams), Q143 (Damian Hinds)
22 DWP (FJP0064)
24 Adcock, A., & Kennedy, S., Debate pack number CDP-0113: Benefit sanctions, House of Commons Library, November 2015. The Decision Maker should attempt to obtain evidence from the claimant, as well as from the Work Coach and make a decision on whether to apply a sanction.
25 Note: The DWP’s claimant experience survey (p.53) asks ‘whether staff encountered in person understood my particular circumstances’, but does not ask claimants whether their conditions are appropriate to them.
26 Private discussion with the NAO, Crisis (FJP0060). The NAO reported that Jobcentre staff referred half the proportion of claimants to Decision Makers in 2015 as they did in 2013.
27 Q132 (Damian Hinds)

support element rests on developing a good working relationship. The Employment Related Services Association (ERSA), a trade body, told us that many jobseekers view the Jobcentre as a “policing structure”, focused on judging their behaviour and removing their benefits. Similarly, the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) Union, which represents the majority of JCP staff, stated:

The focus on conditionality has led to claimants viewing Jobcentre staff as “enforcers” of the benefit regime, solely employed to administer conditionality by the threat and imposition of sanctions. This has resulted in many cases of Jobcentre staff being perceived as the enemy, particularly by those vulnerable claimants with complex needs.

17. Other witnesses echoed this, suggesting the sanctioning regime means that claimants with complex needs will be less likely to be open and honest about the issues that may affect their ability to find and retain work. Matthew Oakley, of the Social Market Foundation think-tank, told us that this would limit claimants’ chances of finding work. Nicola Whiteman of the Papworth Trust, a disability charity, suggested it created an “any job will do” attitude, when instead Work Coaches should focus on identifying “roles that are right and appropriate for the individual” so that they are able to remain in work.

18. Matthew Oakley suggested minimising this tension by separating the employment service from benefits administration in JCP. Other witnesses suggested Work Coaches could:

- Carry out an initial compulsory appointment followed by voluntary engagement, an approach that proved successful in the New Deal for Lone Parents model.

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28 See, for example, Qq 2, 20 (Matthew Oakley), Q25 (Tony Wilson), Q75 (Cathy Corcoran), Q117 (Nicola Whiteman), Gingerbread (FJP0051), Child Poverty Action Group (FJP0035), Crisis (FJP0060), Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (FJP0043), Association of Employment and Learning Providers (FJP0037), Scope (FJP0069), Mind and Royal College of Psychiatrists (FJP0067), Royal British Legion Industries (FJP0006), Disability Benefits Consortium (FJP0054), The Lived Experiences of Welfare Reform Study (FJP0008), Inclusion London (FJP0022), North East Combined Authority (FJP0041), Plymouth City Council (FJP0020), Recruitment and Employment Confederation (FJP0089)

29 ERSA (FJP0045)

30 Public and Commercial Services Union (FJP0079). See also: YMCA England (FJP0014), Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071)

31 Q58 (Kirsty McHugh), Working Links (FJP0061), Child Poverty Action Group (FJP0035), Oxfam Cymru (FJP0086), Salvation Army (FJP0018), Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071), Employment Related Services Association (FJP0045), ENABLE Scotland (FJP0062), Citizens Advice (FJP0085), Hind, D., Delivering differently: how to deliver change, Policy Exchange, August 2016, p.44

32 Q2, 20 (Matthew Oakley)

33 Q114 (Nicola Whiteman). See also: Gingerbread (FJP0051), GIPSIL (FJP0039)

34 See, for example, Working Links (FJP0092), Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071), Association of Employment and Learning Providers (FJP0037), Recruitment and Employment Confederation (FJP0089), Local Government Association (FJP0056). Note: our predecessor Committee rejected this suggestion during previous period of intense welfare reform, when JCP proved to be cost effective. See Work and Pensions Committee, the role of Jobcentre Plus in the reformed welfare system, Session 2013–14, HC 479, January 2014

35 Q117 (Keith Faulkner), Q58 (Kirsty McHugh), Royal British Legion Industries (FJP0006), Inclusion London (FJP0022), Centrepoint (FJP0032), Child Poverty Action Group (FJP0035), Crisis (FJP0060), Employment Related Services Association (FJP0045), The Lived Experiences of Welfare Reform Study (FJP0008), National Autistic Society (FJP0052)

36 Child Poverty Action Group (FJP0035)

• Use the initial appointment to explain clearly how claimants could avoid sanctions and help to avoid any “breakdown” in relationship with their Work Coach.38

• Discuss the help and support that claimants require before focusing on employment as the main outcome: for example, identifying claimant needs around confidence building, skills development, or help with managing a health condition or disability.39

19. The Disability Benefits Consortium, a coalition of over 60 charities and organisations, told us that Work Coaches’ ability to vary conditionality appropriately is dependent on them having a good understanding of the barriers to work that an individual’s circumstances might create.40 More than half of disputed ESA sanction decisions are overturned,41 suggesting that this is not currently always the case. Crisis, which represents homeless people, called for more comprehensive guidance for Work Coaches on setting conditionality requirements for vulnerable claimants, including examples illustrating the circumstances in which different levels of conditionality would be appropriate.42

20. ERSA told us that JCP advisers will need a “an increase in the allotted time available with individual jobseekers” if they are to provide appropriate support, citing concerns that high caseloads and plans for more frequent interviews will not afford Work Coaches enough time to provide quality advice.43 In particular, the complex barriers to working, experienced by some people, can require a longer amount of face-to-face time to overcome.44 Each Work Coach is responsible for a caseload of around 100 unemployed claimants and conducts 10 to 20 claimant interviews per day.45 Interviews for new claims last around 40 minutes, and consist of checking claimant details, agreeing a Claimant Commitment, and diagnosing job readiness and identifying support needs. Fortnightly job search reviews last around 10 minutes.46 Working Links, an employment support provider that is part-owned by DWP, told us that a “one size fits all” approach to determining contact time between Coaches and claimants “may not offer the necessary support to certain people and could also offer more resource than necessary to those who are closer to the labour

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38 Q117 (Keith Faulkner). See also: Citizens Advice (FJP0085)
39 Royal British Legion Industries (FJP0006), Citizens Advice Scotland (FJP0066), Social Security Advisory Committee, Decision making and mandatory reconsideration: occasional paper number 18, July 2016, p. 44
40 Disability Benefits Consortium (FJP0054). See also: Gingerbread (FJP0051), Parkinson’s UK (FJP0010), ENABLE Scotland (FJP0062), Joseph Rowntree Foundation (FJP0072)
41 Social Security Advisory Committee, Decision making and mandatory reconsideration: occasional paper number 18, July 2016, p. 13
42 Crisis (FJP0060). See also: Disability Benefits Consortium (FJP0054), Parkinson’s UK (FJP0010), Gingerbread (FJP0051)
43 ERSA (FJP0045). See also: Q100 (Brian Bell and Nicola Whiteman), , London Councils (FJP0068), North East Combined Authority (FJP0047), Remploy (FJP0080), Gingerbread (FJP0051), Young Women’s Trust (FJP0036), Working Links (FJP0067), Serco (FJP0050), Salvation Army (FJP0018), GIPSIL (FJP0039), Revolving Doors Agency (FJP0058), Citizens Advice (FJP0085), Oakley, M. Employment support for a high-wage economy, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, November 2015
44 Essex County Council (FJP0027), Working Links (FJP0061), Serco (FJP0050), learndirect Limited (FJP0013), Mind and Royal College of Psychiatrists (FJP0067)
45 Personal correspondence with DWP officials
46 National Audit Office. Responding to change in Jobcentres, February 2013, see Figure 3
The future of Jobcentre Plus

market”. They, and others, such as Crisis and Remploy, which provides employment support to disabled people, therefore recommended that JCP adjust the frequency and length of face-to-face meetings according to the needs of the claimant.

21. Much of whether JCP can achieve its objectives in supporting claimants with complex needs rests on Work Coaches and their relationships with claimants. Work Coaches are tasked with referring claimants for possible sanctions at the same time as supporting them into and in work. This combined role may mean that many claimants see JCP staff as policemen rather than genuine coaches, potentially undermining claimant trust and confidence. Trustful, positive and personalised support is central to the Work Coach model working effectively, but currently the Department has little means of assessing how far this is being delivered.

22. We recommend the Department set out how it will support Work Coaches to strike the right balance between coaching and conditionality—potentially conflicting elements of their role. Work Coaches should be given more comprehensive guidance on how to adopt a flexible approach to conditionality for vulnerable groups of claimants, such as those with health conditions or housing problems. The guidance should include multiple examples illustrating the circumstances in which different levels of conditionality, including frequency of meetings, would be appropriate and effective.

23. We recommend that the Department monitor the extent to which claimants consider Claimant Commitments personalised. This should include adding a question on this topic to the annual Claimant Experience survey.

Generalist versus specialist support

24. In UC, Work Coaches have mixed caseloads and support claimants with a wide range of needs. They do not specialise in supporting particular categories of claimants. As such, there has been a decline in the numbers of specialist employment advisers: for example, those specialising in issues around disability employment (see Figure 4), or who focus on lone parents or young people. The Minister told us that the Department had adopted a mixed caseload approach while recognising that “there is always going to be a debate about whether your frontline staff should be specialists in one area or [ … ] generalists able to cover a range of areas”.

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47 Working Links (FJP0061), See also: Gingerbread (FJP0051)
48 Working Links (FJP0061), Serco (FJP0050), Salvation Army (FJP0018), London Councils (FJP0068), Remploy (FJP0080), National Autistic Society (FJP0052), Crisis (FJP0060)
49 DWP (FJP0064), The DWP introduced the Work Coach role in 2013 - see: DWP, Jobseekers to start signing new Claimant Commitment today, October 2013
50 Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071)
51 Q141 (Damian Hinds)
25. Both the PCS Union and Crisis suggested that the prevailing model, of generalist support, places “considerable expectations” on Work Coaches to have a very wide and detailed understanding of the capacity for work of claimants within their caseloads.\textsuperscript{52} We heard doubts about the extent to which Work Coaches possess this.\textsuperscript{53} Homeless Link, a membership body, told us, for example, that their member organisations felt that JCP staff are often “unable to identify the needs and barriers of vulnerable claimants”\textsuperscript{54} while Mind, a mental health charity, and the Royal College of Psychiatrists had “little confidence” that the “skills, experience, capacity and culture of Work Coaches” could deliver a good service for people with mental health conditions.\textsuperscript{55}

26. JCP retaining and building a disability specialist-coaching model, including for claimants with mental health conditions, was widely supported.\textsuperscript{56} Rt Hon. Stephen Crabb, the former Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, agreed that JCP needs to develop more expertise in supporting people with health conditions given the new operating model. The Department told us that 509 Disability Employment Advisers (an increase of...
300) and 50 Work Psychologists will support Work Coaches in JCP.\(^{57}\) The Minister told us that under UC, Disability Employment Advisers will work as “coaches to Work Coaches”, providing an additional source of specialist advice rather than working with claimants directly.\(^{58}\)

27. Other witnesses called for specialist support for additional claimant groups, including those who have experienced homelessness and domestic violence;\(^{59}\) people seeking to progress in work,\(^{60}\) self-employed claimants,\(^{61}\) lone parents,\(^{62}\) and people with drug and alcohol addictions.\(^{63}\) Remploy told us that since each Jobcentre will have a wide range of knowledge and experience amongst its staff, “it would be prudent to allow those Work Coaches who have more experience of working with specific groups […] to have a caseload that reflects this”.\(^{64}\) The Department told us that it is “open” to thinking about whether additional specialisms could be necessary in future, identifying self-employment as a possible example.\(^{65}\)

28. Alongside working directly with claimants, the Department also expects Work Coaches to act as a “gateway to a wide range of support that disabled people and people with health conditions can access”.\(^{66}\) This includes making referrals to external specialist support. It requires Work Coaches to have a good understanding of what support is available and appropriate for their claimants’ needs.\(^{57}\) Witnesses also told us that referrals to external support should generally come sooner in the process than later, as claimants are not best served by receiving support from JCP alone for extended periods.\(^{58}\) The Department recognised that claimants need to be able access support “very quickly”.\(^{69}\) The Minister told us that all Work Coaches can use a “district provision tool”, setting out all of the support available locally for individuals with a range of different barriers.\(^{70}\)

**A professional role**

29. While the overall aim of JCP is supporting the work progression of unemployed claimants and lower-paid workers, the Work Coach role offers the Department a similar opportunity for supporting progression amongst its own staff. Stephen Crabb told us that the Work Coach role is “as meaningful” as other professional roles including “nurses

\(^{57}\) Q141 (Damian Hinds), DWP (FJP0064)

\(^{58}\) Q121 (Damian Hinds)

\(^{59}\) Crisis (FJP0060), Centrepiece, Crisis, ERSA, Homeless Link, the Salvation Army, St Mungo’s (DEG0036), Young Women’s Trust (FJP0036), Homeless Link (FJP0048)

\(^{60}\) Citizens Advice (FJP0085)

\(^{61}\) Low Incomes Tax Reform Group (FJP0077), Citizens Advice (FJP0085)

\(^{62}\) Gingerbread (FJP0051), 4Children (FJP0030)

\(^{63}\) Revolving Doors Agency (FJP0058)

\(^{64}\) Remploy (FJP0080)

\(^{65}\) Q121, Q141 (Damian Hinds).

\(^{66}\) DWP (DEG0083)

\(^{67}\) ERSA (DEG0087), Scope (DEG0069), Leonard Cheshire Disability (DEG0039), Papworth Trust (DEG0043), Centrepiece, Crisis, Homeless Link, ERSA, Salvation Army and St. Mungo’s (DEG0036), Kennedy Scott (DEG0056), Shaw Trust (DEG0058)

\(^{68}\) Q118 (Nicola Whitman), ERSA (FJP0045), Association of Employment and Learning Providers (FJP0037), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (FJP0016), Plymouth City Council (FJP0020), London Councils (FJP0068), National Autistic Society (FJP0052), Action on Hearing Loss (FJP0026), The Lived Experiences of Welfare Reform Study (FJP0008), The Work Foundation (DEG0094), Joseph Rowntree Foundation (DEG0085)

\(^{69}\) Q169 (Paul Williams)

\(^{70}\) Q141 (Damian Hinds)
and firefighters”.\footnote{Q44 (Stephen Crabb, HC 997-i)} The Institute for Employability Professionals, a membership body, agreed, telling us that accreditation and formal training provision would be appropriate for Work Coaches given their responsibilities as public servants supporting people with complex needs.\footnote{72 Institute of Employability Professionals (FJP0081)} The Minister told us that the Department is committed to providing Work Coaches with “more training and development”,\footnote{DWP (FJP0064), Q121 (Damian Hinds)} including trialling a professional accreditation programme for Work Coaches delivering the new model (see Appendix 1).\footnote{DWP (FJP0064), Q121 (Damian Hinds)} New Work Coaches will work towards Level 3 accreditation in their first year of employment, and the Department is exploring how to manage accreditation to Level 4 for existing staff.\footnote{Q135 (Damian Hinds)}

30. The DWP told us that it aims to “attract the best talent” to work in Jobcentres.\footnote{DWP (FJP0064)} Work Coaches can be appointed at either the higher Executive Officer (EO) or lower Assistant Officer (AO) level. All new Work Coach and Disability Employment Adviser posts are advertised at the EO level, with a salary ranging from £22,000 to £25,230 outside London, and £23,505 to £29,290 in London.\footnote{DWP (FJP0075)} The Minister told us this reflects a decision to increase the proportion of Work Coaches at the higher grade.\footnote{Q121, 123 (Damian Hinds)} We welcome this move.

31. The Minister told us the Department’s decision to recruit 3,000 new Work Coaches at EO level, as well as seeking to promote existing Coaches, means that claimants are “more likely, more often” to see a higher grade EO Work Coach.\footnote{Q121, 123 (Damian Hinds)} 38% of JCP’s existing Coaches have progressed to EO level.\footnote{Q143 (Paul Williams)} The Department also told us that successful EO Work Coaches can progress further in JCP, going on to a Higher Executive Officer grade by becoming a Work Coach Team Leader who is responsible for managing a team of nine other Coaches.\footnote{Q145 (Paul Williams). Note: in 2016–17 the ratio of Team Leaders to Work Coaches will drop to 1:9. In 2015–16 it was 1:12.} The promotion to Team Leader, however, does not recognise the specialist skills and knowledge that Work Coaches may have developed. The specialist Disability Employment Adviser role does not involve progression to a higher grade.\footnote{Personal correspondence with DWP officials} We heard evidence that creating such a progression route could reward and incentivise the development of specialist skills, helping to ensure that claimants receive the support that they need.\footnote{Remploy (FJP0080), Salvation Army (FJP0018), UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) (FJP0047), Hind, D., Delivering differently: how to deliver change, Policy Exchange, August 2016, p.48}

32. In the 2015 JCP staff survey, 62% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that there were opportunities to develop their career—exceeding the Civil Service benchmark of 41%.\footnote{DWP (FJP0087); Cabinet Office, Civil Service People Survey 2015: benchmark scores, November 2015} Policy Exchange, a think-tank, stated that JCP follows a “hierarchical grading structure and fixed pay increases for JCP staff regardless of performance”.\footnote{Hind, D., Delivering differently: how to deliver change, Policy Exchange, August 2016, p.48} Several other witnesses suggested, however, that a key indicator for progression and assessment of Coaches should
be the individual’s performance in supporting claimants into, or closer to work.86 The Department told us that it had deliberately avoiding setting “targets” for individual Work Coaches in terms of supporting claimants. All Work Coaches, however, are expected to give “the best possible service to their client base” and to provide “good quality time to everybody they see, including those who are very far away from the labour market”.87

33. It is concerning that as JCP moves towards directly supporting more claimants with complex needs it is also moving away from specialism, towards a generalist Work Coach model. Some of the claimants that Work Coaches support will have significant and complex needs that require knowledge, understanding, and dedicated coaching to overcome. Others will require much less support, and may be well served by a generalist approach. The Work Coach role needs to develop in such a way that it can account for these different ways of working, and recognise Work Coaches’ skills and abilities in supporting their clients accordingly.

34. Claimants should not be left with only JCP support for long periods of time. If Work Coaches fail to identify claimant needs quickly and accurately it will hamper efforts to offer them the right additional support to move them closer to work. Identifying what support is appropriate, at which point in a claim, again requires a level of specialist knowledge on behalf of Work Coaches that the generalist model will not always provide.

35. There is a clear case for allowing some Work Coaches to specialise in directly helping smaller numbers of specific claimant groups with complex needs, while others can help general cases and retain a higher caseload. We recommend that progression to a Senior Work Coach role, at Higher Executive Officer grade, should be available to those Work Coaches who have demonstrated a capacity to support specific claimant groups such as disabled people, homeless claimants, self-employed claimants, lone parents, or those with drug and alcohol problems. Senior Work Coaches should continue to provide front-line support to claimants with substantial barriers to work, so that DWP staff increasingly master the greater “skills” demands that will be placed on them by the Government. We also recommend that assessment of the performance of Work Coaches be based on evidence of developing specialist skills, offering personalised support and supporting claimants to progress into and in work.

Capability of JCP managers

36. Patrick Hughes, a former Jobcentre Plus regional director, suggested that the 35 to 40 JCP district managers and “hundreds” of delivery managers offered an “opportunity to deliver change”, providing that they were skilled appropriately.88 The DWP states it has “improved” managers’ training, focusing on the skills and capability needed to deliver cultural change.89 The Minister also told us that branch managers are currently responsible

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87 Q150 (Damian Hinds)
88 Q38 (Patrick Hughes)
89 DWP (FJP0064)
for monitoring whether Work Coaches are performing well, using an “appraisal system that they will run through with their individual Work Coaches”. As such, they have an important role in ensuring that the Department is delivering effective support.

37. Witnesses noted, however, that leadership capability varies across different regions. Tony Wilson, of the Learning and Work Institute, said that in some places, strategic and operational leadership “just does not happen” and depends on “how managers see their role”. He emphasised that there will be some managers “who will be good at process”, but that they “may not get the outcomes”. He therefore called for “clear direction centrally” about the “expectations of managers”. The PCS Union shared this concern, reporting “significant numbers of inexperienced and untrained managers”. It said this was largely due to a “shortfall” in the general management grade, with a large proportion “acting up” into this grade from a lower level.

38. An organisation the size of JCP must rely on its middle managers, at district and branch level, to deliver the new services that the Department requires. We heard, however, that the capabilities of managers vary across regions. We are concerned that without a strong understanding amongst district managers of the direction and purpose of new reforms, and good management of Work Coaches by branch managers, JCP will struggle to deliver the services expected.

39. We recommend the Department set out its expectations of district managers in delivering change and ensure that they are equipped to do this. We further recommend that the Department commission an independent assessment of JCP district managers’ ability to deliver large-scale change. Similarly, branch managers have an important role in ensuring Work Coaches can carry out their extensive new functions. We recommend that the Department ensure that clear guidelines on expectations of helping claimants into, and closer to, employment are incorporated into the Work Coach appraisal system, to be used by branch managers.

90 Q151 (Damian Hinds)
91 Q29 (Tony Wilson)
92 Public and Commercial Services Union (FJP0079)
3 Learning about “what works”

40. The DWP states that JCP will be seen in future as “the place to go for anyone wanting to find or progress in work”.\(^93\) Much of the evidence that we received emphasised the scale of the challenge involved achieving this. In developing new services, JCP will need to learn on the job. It will have to try out new models of provision, evaluate and identify what works well within and beyond JCP, and use this information and understanding in evolving JCP support. The Minister recognised this, telling us that the DWP is following a process of “iterative development” or “test and learn” in JCP, and that it is “willing to be flexible and adjust and learn from what happens”.\(^94\)

Working with other services

41. Helen Milner, Chief Executive of digital inclusion charity the Tinder Foundation, said that JCP does not need to be “an island alone where they are going to do it all themselves”,\(^95\) while Patrick Hughes called for JCP’s organisational boundaries to become “more porous”.\(^96\) Witnesses suggested that joint working between JCP and other local services offered advantages such as:

- Facilitating access to external specialist support, in light of the generalist Work Coach model and reduced contracted-out welfare-to-work provision;\(^97\)
- Drawing on, and maintaining, the “huge amount” of capacity in third sector and private sector organisations that will become available when the Work Programme and Work Choice contracts expire;\(^98\)
- Helping individuals who need support beyond what JCP can offer to move between services;\(^99\)
- Developing employment services that are more responsive to local labour market conditions;\(^100\) and

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\(^93\) DWP (FJP0064)

\(^94\) Q147 (Damian Hinds), see also Q173 (Paul Williams)

\(^95\) Q75 (Helen Milner)

\(^96\) Q24 (Patrick Hughes)

\(^97\) Q55 (Nicoya Palastanga), Q72 (Cathy Corcoran), Q114 (Keith Faulkner), Q87 (Karen Walker-Bone) Forth Sector (FJP0012), North East Combined Authority (FJP0041), The Highland Council (FJP0024), Royal British Legion Industries (FJP0006), Professor Daniel Finn (FJP0040), Learning and Work Institute (DEG0086), Remploy (DEG0079)

\(^98\) Q59 (Kirsty McHugh), Q67 (Peter Bacon)

\(^99\) See, for example, Q26 (Tony Wilson), Hind, D., Delivering differently: how to deliver change, Policy Exchange, August 2016, p.48, The Highland Council (FJP0024), London Councils (FJP0068), ENABLE Scotland (FJP0062), Joseph Rowntree Foundation (FJP0072), Royal British Legion Industries (FJP0006), Citizens Advice Scotland (FJP0066)

\(^100\) See, for example, Q26 (Tony Wilson), Hind, D., Delivering differently: how to deliver change, Policy Exchange, August 2016, p.45, Association of Employment and Learning Providers (FJP0037), British Psychological Society (FJP0025), Newcastle City Council (FJP0042), The Highland Council (FJP0024), Professor Daniel Finn (FJP0040)
- Re-branding JCP as a community hub or a ‘single front door’ to local employment-related services:101 for example, the MyGo service in Ipswich, where JCP support for 18 to 24 year olds is integrated in a local authority-led public employment service.102

42. The DWP’s settlement in the 2015 Spending Review requires it to increase co-location of JCP offices with other local services such as council benefit teams and mental health services.103 It must also reduce the size of its estate by 20%.104 In July 2016 there were 45 co-located sites across the UK. The DWP is considering future locations ahead of the expiry of the contract for its estate in March 2018.105

43. The Department told us that physical co-location would help to produce improved and cost-effective outcomes, particularly for people with complex needs.106 The Minister said that the DWP is open to developing a “whole range of models of co-location”—including both inward models, where organisations come into JCP—and outward models, where JCP staff are placed in third-party premises.107 Many organisations, including local authorities, were supportive of this approach.108 Serco, an external provider, highlighted that delivering a benefits service in a co-located setting at Peterborough City Council improved service provision.109 ERSA also reported that co-location made a “significant difference” in terms of growing trust and understanding between different organisations.110

44. The PCS Union said, however, that the organisational improvements of co-location have been “overstated”.111 Both the Learning and Work Institute and London Councils highlighted a “missed opportunity” because the DWP had focused on geographical co-location, rather than integrating the delivery of services.112 Several witnesses stressed that the relationships between organisations mattered more than physically being in the same space.113 Chris Williams, President of the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapists, said, for example, that pointing people to services that

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101 See, for example, London Councils (FJP0068), Essex County Council (FJP0027), North East Combined Authority (FJP0041), Disability Sheffield (FJP0059), Working Links (FJP0061), Royal British Legion Industries (FJP0006), Oakley, M., Employment support for a high wage economy, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, November 2015

102 MyGo, the MyGo service, 2016. See also: Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071) and Local Government Association (FJP0056)

103 HM Treasury, Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015, Cm 9162, November 2015, para 1.129

104 DWP, Press release: DWP settlement at the Spending Review, November 2015

105 DWP (FJP0087)

106 DWP (FJP0064)

107 Q137 (Damian Hinds)

108 See, for example, Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071), Joseph Rowntree Foundation (FJP0072, DEGO085), GIPSIL (FJP0039), Child Poverty Action Group (FJP0035), Touchstone Consultancy (FJP0073), The Intraining Group (FJP0044), Liverpool City Region Employment and Skills Board (FJP0053), Royal British Legion Industries (FJP0006, DEGO086), Revolving Doors Agency (FJP0058), Disability Sheffield (FJP0059), National Deaf Children’s Society (FJP0023), Dyslexia Adult Network (FJP0021), Citizens Advice Scotland (FJP0066), Local Government Association (FJP0056), Essex County Council (FJP0027), Plymouth City Council (FJP0020), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (FJP0016), West Lindsey District Council, City of Lincoln Council, North Kesteven District Council (FJP0015), The Highland Council (FJP0024), Mr Mark Whiteley (FJP0003), Remploy (DEGO079)

109 Serco (FJP0050)

110 ERSA (FJP0045)

111 Public and Commercial Services Union (FJP0079)

112 Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071), London Councils (FJP0068)

113 Q47 (Nicoya Palastanga), Q45 (Claire Horton), Q31 (Tony Wilson), Q46 (Kirsty McHugh), Q72 (Helen Milner), Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071), Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) (FJP0038), Working Links (FJP0061), ERSA, Housing and employment services joint plan, 2016, p. 3, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (FJP0043)
nearby but not in the same offices “might work better”. Some witnesses were concerned about plans to place JCP advisers in health service settings, suggesting that this could cause anxiety and reduce the trust that claimants with health conditions have in their medical care. The Minister told us, however, that the Department was “not aware” of any concerns about the alternative approach of having mental health specialists delivering support in JCP.

45. The DWP said that JCP has the flexibility to work in partnership with Local Authorities, third sector organisations and other partners to meet local demands, and to enable it to be a “gateway” to local services. This is already happening in some areas through the local devolution deals and trials of Universal Support Delivered Locally, a programme which provides an opportunity for JCP to extend partnership working to other local areas. Several witnesses highlighted, however, that the delivery of integrated services is often patchy, and is within quite narrowly defined boundaries around existing JCP initiatives.

Barriers to joint working

46. We heard several barriers to effective joint working. These included difficulties in sharing data between the DWP and other providers: for example, sharing the Claimant Commitment to help organisations understand an individual’s needs and situations. A lack of a common triage process between JCP staff and voluntary and community sector organisations to make appropriate referrals to specialist interventions was another important barrier. Some organisations had found ways of addressing this: for example, Newcastle City Council showed that using a questionnaire in Universal Support Delivered Locally provided a consistent approach to identifying needs and making referrals to relevant digital, budgeting, employment or housing support at an early stage.

114 Q51 (Chris Williams)
115 Inclusion London (DEG0059), Inclusion Scotland (DEG0061), Parkinson’s UK (DEG0024), David Gillon (DEG0071)
116 Q169 (Damian Hinds)
117 DWP (FJP0064)
118 A series of devolution deals between central government and local areas in England to transfer powers, funding and accountability for policies previously undertaken by central government to support local economic growth. See: National Audit Office, English devolution deals, April 2016, p. 5
119 Universal Support Delivered Locally is a framework for delivering local support to Universal Credit claimants that may require transitional support, in particular in relation to digital skills and personal budgeting. As part of this framework, 11 areas were selected to trial different aspects of partnership working, needs assessment and delivery of support. See: DWP, evaluation of the Universal Support delivered locally trials, July 2016
120 DWP (FJP0064), Salvation Army (FJP0018), Action on Hearing Loss (FJP0026), Scope (FJP0069), London Councils (FJP0068)
121 Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071), Employment Related Services Association (FJP0045), Association of Employment and Learning Providers (FJP0037)
122 Q42 (Claire Horton), Q51 (Nicoya Palastanga), Newcastle City Council (FJP0042), London Councils (FJP0068), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (FJP0016), Employment Related Services Association (FJP0045), Joseph Rowntree Foundation (FJP0072), Royal British Legion Industries (FJP0006), The Intraining Group (FJP0044), Liverpool City Region Employment and Skills Board (FJP0052), DWP, evaluation of the Universal Support delivered locally trials, July 2016, Finn, D., the organisation and regulation of the public employment service: the experience of selected European Countries - the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, and the United Kingdom, May 2016, p. 97, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Evaluation of the deepened co-location trials, December 2012, p. 7
123 Newcastle City Council (FJP0042), Plymouth City Council (FJP0020), London Councils (FJP0068), Serco (FJP0050), Bright Sparks Consulting Ltd (FJP0088)
124 Newcastle City Council (FJP0042)
47. Kirsty McHugh, Chief Executive of ERSA, reported that the availability of funding in
different parts of the country did not match enthusiasm for joint working. She explained,
“third sector organisations or private ones also need paying”. The DWP suggested that
JCP districts could use the Flexible Support Fund (see Box 2) to pay partner organisations
and create their own bespoke programmes. Several witnesses endorsed wider use of
the Fund for joint working. The Local Government Association, for example, suggested
the Fund could deliver capacity where it was most needed. Mind and the Royal College
of Psychiatrists also suggested that the Fund allowed specialist organisations to provide
support “without the direct financial risk”. The Flexible Support Fund budget in 2014–15
was £136 million. Only £72 million was spent, however, leaving an under-spend of
£64 million. Our predecessor Committee received evidence suggesting that there was
a lack of awareness in JCP about the Fund and its uses, and hesitancy amongst JCP staff
in using it to develop partnership working. The Department does not gather data on
how the Fund is spent in supporting partnership working, and as of February 2016 had
no plans to do so. It did, however, provide some examples to this inquiry of partnership
programmes that have been established.

Box 2: The Flexible Support Fund

The Flexible Support Fund replaced a number of previous funding schemes operated by
Jobcentre Plus from April 2011. It has two purposes:

1. Work Coaches have the discretion to use the Fund to provide additional
support to help individual claimants move into work. This might include
funding travel to interviews, clothing for interviews, or training courses.

2. A grant funding mechanism that allows JCP district managers to fund
partnerships with other organisations on a discretionary basis.

Source: McGuinness, T., & Kennedy, S., Briefing paper number 06079, Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund, House of
Commons Library, March 2016

48. Those organisations attempting to work in partnership with JCP are often “frustrated”
by the DWP’s central control of the JCP budget. We heard calls for JCP districts to be
offered a fully devolved budget to deliver local employment services. We also received
numerous submissions telling us that devolved budgets should combine spending on
employment support with other funding streams, including health and social care.

125 Q61-62 (Kirsty McHugh)
126 DWP (FJP0064)
127 Local Government Association (FJP0056)
128 Mind and Royal College of Psychiatrists (FJP0067)
129 McGuinness, T., & Kennedy, S., Briefing paper number 06079, Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund, House of
Commons Library, 16 March 2016
130 Work and Pensions Committee, The role of Jobcentre Plus in the reformed welfare system, 28 January 2014, HC
479 2013–14, para 10
131 PQ27973, 26 February 2016
132 DWP (FJP0094)
133 Essex County Council (FJP0027)
134 Q67 (Chris Williams), Plymouth City Council (FJP0020), Essex County Council (FJP0027), Professor Daniel Finn
(FJP0040), The Intraining Group (FJP0044)
135 Q91 (Karen Walker-Bone), The Work Foundation (DEG0094), Scope (DEG0069), National Autistic Society
(FJP0052), Kennedy Scott (DEG0056), Local Government Association (DEG0046), Royal British Legion Industries
(DEG0046), Leonard Cheshire Disability (DEG0039), Thurrock Coalition (FJP0057), Revolving Doors Agency
(FJP0058), North East Combined Authority (FJP0041), Hind, D., Delivering differently: how to deliver change,
Policy Exchange, August 2016, p.47
example, the North East Combined Authority told us that “devolution can be the key to foster greater service integration and a more holistic service to produce performance gains”.136 The Revolving Doors Agency, which works with ex-offenders, argued that extensive evidence shows “taking a holistic approach, rather than addressing single needs in isolation” is a common feature of effective employment support.137 Kennedy Scott, a specialist employment support provider, emphasised that this approach should be “propagated in not just the areas with greater devolutionary powers i.e. city regions, but also across the country.”138 The Department told us that it agreed with integrating employment support and health services to a greater extent. Iain Walsh, Director of Labour Market Strategy, stated that it is committed to “closer working at a more structural level between health and work”, because “that is where the real potential gains come from”.139

49. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) concluded that it is not clear how the Government will judge success and measure the progress of joint working.140 Tony Wilson also emphasised that there was a difference between the Government simply telling organisations to co-locate and improving local outcomes.141 Several witnesses therefore called for local areas to agree clear and common success measures, so that staff work together to achieve shared results.142 Witnesses suggested such measures could include:

- The take-up of additional support, for example budgeting, digital or housing support, as a direct result of immediate referral;143
- Reductions in benefit sanctions over time;144
- The proportion of people who find sustained employment;145 and
- Levels of rent arrears, following, for example, budgeting support.146

50. The DWP’s written submission did not set out in any detail how it expects individual JCPs to set out and implement their plans for joint working. It merely stated: “the challenge will be for local Jobcentres to respond flexibly and imaginatively to the opportunities this provides”.147 The Minister told us that the Department expects JCP to work extensively with third-party providers at each site. He explained that the Department uses a “Jobcentre Operating Model” to set out a core framework for this.148 He added that the Department is taking a “test and learn” approach to developing multiple new models of provision and establishing what is most effective.149

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136 North East Combined Authority (FJP0041)
137 Revolving Doors Agency (FJP0058)
138 Kennedy Scott (DEG0056)
139 Q174 (Iain Walsh)
140 Public Accounts Committee, Cities and local growth, Session 2016–17, HC 296, 1 July 2016, para 1
141 Q31 (Tony Wilson)
142 Greater Manchester Combined Authority (FJP0016), Essex County Council (FJP0027), Newcastle City Council (FJP0042), North East Combined Authority (FJP0041), Joseph Rowntree Foundation (FJP0072), Serco (FJP0050), The Intraining Group (FJP0044), Liverpool City Region Employment and Skills Board (FJP0052), Crisis (FJP0060), DWP, evaluation of the Universal Support delivered locally trials, July 2016,
143 Q49-50 (Nicoya Palastanga)
144 Q42 (Claire Horton), North East Combined Authority (FJP0041), Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) (FJP0038)
145 Q50 (Kirsty McHugh), Professor Daniel Finn (FJP0040), Oakley, M., Employment support for a high wage economy, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, November 2015
146 Q50 (Claire Horton)
147 DWP (FJP0064)
148 Q154 (Damian Hinds)
149 Q146-147, 149, 151 (Damian Hinds, Paul Williams, Iain Walsh)
51. JCP will be the gateway for ensuring the right people are referred to the right support at the right time. It may prove ineffective, however, in supporting vulnerable claimants if it is unable to work closely with other local organisations to address the broader social and health issues which affect claimants’ employability. JCP has limited organisational experience of this way of working. While we welcome the Department’s overall flexible, experimental approach to new provision, it needs to ensure that this is matched with clear guidance on, and promotion of, the opportunities for joint working.

52. The Flexible Support Fund is a potentially important resource that JCP can use to develop its partnership working with other organisations. However, it is underused and under-publicised. We recommend that the Department take steps to promote the Fund for this purpose, and that it monitors the extent of uptake and the purposes for which it is used. This should include identifying its use by individual Jobcentres.

53. There is significant support for allowing JCP districts greater control of their budgets, and for integrating health and employment budgets in particular, to help JCP address the full range of barriers to work. This should extend beyond the Flexible Support Fund which, while valuable, is also discretionary. We recommend that JCP districts should be allocated their own health budgets for the remaining financial years during this Spending Review period, with the expectation that this will be spent on developing partnerships to address health-related barriers to work. Clear and common success measures should be agreed with local areas, including the proportion of people who find sustained employment through these programmes.

Central accountability and evaluation

54. The PAC cautioned that devolution does not absolve central government departments of oversight of implementation. Accountability is a concern for any devolution of the working relationship between Jobcentres and local government. To ensure a consistent service and help minimise a “postcode lottery”, several witnesses therefore called for a national framework of minimum service standards for JCP. This would set out the quality and nature of support that claimants can expect to receive. Within it, local areas could agree on responsibilities, outcomes and resourcing.

55. Professor Daniel Finn stressed that it would not be feasible for all local areas to acquire immediately the expertise of central government in establishing employment services. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation also said that the government should not force joint working on local areas unwilling to undertake, or insufficiently experienced in, the tasks involved. Witnesses therefore called for the DWP to test new approaches

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150 Public Accounts Committee, Cities and local growth, Session 2016–17, HC 296, July 2016, p. 3
151 Professor Daniel Finn (FJP0040)
152 On the risk of a postcode lottery, see, for example, learndirect Limited (FJP0013), Forth Sector (FJP0012), Disability Sheffield (FJP0059), Thurrock Coalition (FJP0057), Leicester Red-Thread Limited (FJP0049), Professor Daniel Finn (FJP0040). On a national framework of minimum service standards, see for example, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (FJP0016), Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071), Professor Daniel Finn (FJP0040), Serco (FJP0050), The Intraining Group (FJP0044), Oakley, M., Employment support for a high wage economy, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, November 2015, p. 3
153 Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071)
154 Professor Daniel Finn (FJP0040)
155 Oakley, M., Employment support for a high wage economy, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, November 2015, p. 3
The future of Jobcentre Plus

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56. We recommend the Department set an evaluation framework that local areas can use to test different approaches to local delivery, and produce information on “what works”, before moving to fuller devolution of JCP employment services. This should form the basis for a national framework of minimum service standards that central government can use to hold local areas to account. The evaluation framework should clearly set out performance measures that can be applied across the whole of the JCP caseload, including claimants who are a long way from the labour market. This means that metrics should be applicable to claimants who have not yet moved onto Universal Credit, and should be appropriate for measuring progress towards work as well as moves into work. We return to this in Chapter 5, para. 96-97.
4 The Work and Health Programme

57. The new Work and Health Programme is expected to run from late 2017. It will provide support for some people with disabilities and health conditions, some people who have been unemployed for at least two years, and selected other groups that experience particular disadvantages in the labour market. We examined its predecessors, Work Programme and Work Choice, in our previous report on welfare-to-work.\textsuperscript{159}

The capacity of the new programme

58. Our previous report found that Work Choice had a much better success rate than Work Programme in getting people into work: 62\% of participants in Work Choice between April and September 2015 had moved into work\textsuperscript{160} by March 2016,\textsuperscript{161} compared to 20\% on the Work Programme.\textsuperscript{162} This appeared encouraging, since Work Choice is specifically aimed at disabled people, who have lower employment rates than the general population. We identified concerns, however, that Work Choice was not targeting jobseekers with more substantial health-related barriers to work as effectively as it might, and that its capacity should be increased. We continued to hear during this inquiry arguments that the capacity of Work Choice’s replacement should be at least doubled to allow a greater proportion of disabled jobseekers, including those who are further from the labour market, to access it.\textsuperscript{163}

59. The DWP’s Employment and Health Related Services “Umbrella Agreement”, through which prospective Work and Health Programme providers are required to bid, has a total contract value of £1.77 billion. Not all of this will go to the Work and Health Programme, however. The Umbrella Agreement suggests that it will have a budget of £554 million over its lifetime.\textsuperscript{164} This is a manifold reduction compared to what it will replace. In comparison, the DWP states that £492 million in total has been spent on Work Choice up to 2015–16 alone,\textsuperscript{165} and £2.2 billion had been paid to Work Programme providers as of December 2015.\textsuperscript{166} The Department states that it is not possible to calculate the proportion of Work Programme’s budget spent on disabled people specifically over the programme’s lifetime. External analysis, however, suggests that combined Work Choice and Work Programme spending on disabled people has been approximately £1 billion since 2010.

60. Building on the experience of previous programmes including Work Choice, the Learning and Work Institute suggested that the Work and Health Programme could therefore support between 100,000 - 400,000 participants. This means that the number of disabled people receiving contracted-out employment support would be lower in this

\textsuperscript{159} Work and Pensions Committee, \textit{Welfare-to-work}, Session 2015–16, HC 363
\textsuperscript{160} Providers on the Work Programme are paid if individuals that they have supported obtain a “sustained job outcome” — being in work for three or six months, depending on their initial proximity to the labour market. They can then receive “sustainment payments” every four weeks for up to two years. Work Choice providers can be paid for either “short job outcomes” or “sustained job outcomes” depending on the length of time an individual remains in work.
\textsuperscript{161} DWP, \textit{Work Choice official statistics}, May 2016
\textsuperscript{162} DWP, \textit{Work Programme quarterly statistics to March 2016}, June 2016
\textsuperscript{163} Q84 (Diane Lightfoot)
\textsuperscript{164} DWP, \textit{Umbrella Agreement for the provision of Employment and Health Related Services specification and supporting information}, October 2016, p.25
\textsuperscript{165} Written question 42016
\textsuperscript{166} Dar, A. \textit{Work Programme: background and statistics}, briefing paper 6340, March 2016
parliament than in 2010 to 2015. Witnesses told us that this reduction in support meant that many of those who might benefit from specialist support would be unable to access it. The Department pointed, however, to the wider support being provided to individuals with disabilities, including through changes in JCP itself.

61. It is disappointing that DWP’s plans for the Work and Health Programme do not involve expanding on Work Choice’s successes in supporting disabled people into work. We are concerned that the resources allocated to the scheme do not match its ambition. This is especially so given that the Government has committed to making significant in-roads into the disability employment gap, and the Department’s own recognition that it needs to do much more to help disabled claimants. With this in mind, our recommendations for the Work and Health Programme focus on getting the best possible results from the smaller contracted-out service.

Eligibility and referrals

62. The reduced size of the contracted-out programme means that difficult decisions will have to be made on eligibility criteria for those with disabilities. This is especially since, as ERSA pointed out, “a certain proportion of the programme will cater for jobseekers on JSA (or its equivalent under Universal Credit)”. Diane Lightfoot, Director of Policy and Communications at United Response, a charity that supports people with learning disabilities and mental health needs, said that flexibility in the current requirement for Work Choice participants to work for at least 16 hours per week could be helpful. This restriction may act as a barrier to initial participation, even if individuals might be capable of building up to substantial part-time or even full-time hours over time. The weakness of Work Choice targeting for people with higher levels of need may be exacerbated by this rule.

63. Eligibility criteria must strike a balance between supporting people into work who are far from the labour market and helping those who are likely to be able to obtain a job more quickly if given appropriate support. Mark Elliott of Leonard Cheshire Disability, Karen Walker-Bone, Director of Arthritis Research UK, and Diane Lightfoot emphasised the importance of helping both groups.

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167 Learning and Work Institute (DEG0086). Note: the bottom end of the range assumes costs per unit that are the same as Work Choice, while the top end assumes costs that are the same as Work Programme.

168 Learning and Work Institute (DEG0086), ERSA (DEG0087), Inclusion London (DEG0059), Kennedy Scott (DEG0056), Centrepoint, Crisis, ERSA, Homeless Link, St Mungo’s, Salvation Army (DEG0036), Leonard Cheshire Disability (DEG0039), Rethink Mental Illness (DEG0037), Papworth Trust (DEG0043), Shaw Trust (DEG0058)

169 DWP (DEG0083)

170 ERSA (DEG0087)

171 Q84-Q85 (Diane Lightfoot), United Response (DEG0030)

172 Work and Pensions Committee, Welfare-to-work, Session 2015–16, HC 363, para. 43-44; British Association for Supported Employment (DEG0033)

173 Q88 (Karen Walker-Bone), Q89 (Diane Lightfoot), Q90 (Mark Elliott)

174 Oakley, M. Closing the gap, Social Market Foundation, March 2016, p.17

175 Leonard Cheshire Disability (DEG0039), Rethink Mental Illness (DEG0037), British Association for Supported Employment (DEG0033), Centrepoint, Crisis, Homeless Link, ERSA, Salvation Army and St. Mungo’s (DEG0036), Papworth Trust (DEG0043)
64. We received no evidence that the Work and Health Programme should be mandatory for disabled people overall. Some witnesses told us there might be some value in aspects of mandation. Participants in the Twist Partnership’s Work Programme provision stated that mandation to the programme enabled them to regain “a degree of control over our lives [that] might never have happened without it, or at any rate it might have taken longer.” ERSA suggested that the Department might consider mandating “first contact” with the programme, but maintained that the “default position” should be voluntary participation. Danielle Hamm of Rethink Mental Illness told us that volition is the “most important” factor in determining whether a disabled participant in an employment programme manages to obtain and stay in work. The Learning and Work Institute explained that there is “clear evidence” that voluntary programmes are “likely to be more effective for disabled people than mandatory ones” and, further, that mandation could “significantly undermine” JCP’s attempts to work in partnership with organisations that support disabled people. On 31st October 2016 the Department announced that participation in the Work and Health Programme will be voluntary for disabled people on ESA, or those assessed as having limited capability for work on Universal Credit.

65. Liz Sayce, Chief Executive of Disability Rights UK, and Ben Baumberg-Geiger of the University of Kent emphasised the need for “safe experimentation” within welfare-to-work provision. This would allow individuals to take steps towards work, including undertaking short work trials or voluntary work, without fear of being sanctioned or losing entitlement to benefits if employment does not work out. This applied to JCP provision and support in general, as well as the Work and Health Programme. David Finch, Senior Economic Analyst at the Resolution Foundation, further suggested that UC might be helpful in this respect, incentivising disabled people to move into work with shorter hours.

66. There is a clear consensus that people with disabilities and work-limiting health conditions should not be mandated to take part in the Work and Health Programme. Indeed, mandation could be self-defeating, making poor use of limited space on the programme and undermining relationships with the specialist support organisations alongside which JCP needs to work. We are pleased that the Department has confirmed that participation in the Work and Health Programme will be voluntary for disabled people on ESA and those with limited capability for work on Universal Credit. We recommend the Department clarify whether and how mandation will apply to disabled people and those with health conditions on JSA or the Universal Credit equivalent. The Department should produce guidance for Work Coaches on making referral decisions, mandation and the eligibility criteria for the Programme. This should encompass the use of discretion in potentially complex situations such as where an individual with a health condition has been unemployed for more than two years but may stand to benefit from external provision, or is claiming JSA or the Universal Credit equivalent.

176 Twist Partnership (DEG0054)
177 Q90 (Danielle Hamm)
178 Learning and Work Institute (DEG0086, FJP0071)
179 DWP, Improving lives: the work, health and disability green paper, Cm 9342, October 2016, p.27
180 Q38 (Liz Sayce), Q22 (Ben Baumberg Geiger). See also: Council for Work and Health (DEG0091)
181 Q31 (David Finch)
Commissioning and payments

67. Our previous report recommended maintaining a specialist programme for disabled people, delivered exclusively by specialist organisations at both prime and sub-contractor level. The DWP accepted this recommendation in principle.\(^\text{182}\) We received substantial further evidence of the importance of specialist support in helping disabled people into work. In the previous two chapters we considered this in relation to JCP. As it will replace Work Choice and be largely aimed at disabled people, we unsurprisingly received a large volume of evidence advocating the involvement of specialist organisations in the Work and Health Programme.\(^\text{183}\)

68. We considered how the Department might best discourage providers from choosing not to devote resources to the most difficult jobseekers to help—a phenomenon known as “parking”. Several witnesses told us that the Department should consider introducing “milestone” payments for providers that take into account participant progress towards employment.\(^\text{184}\) As well as encouraging providers to help those furthest from the labour market, this could encourage participants to take steps towards work, notably in undertaking short hours or voluntary work by way of preparation for a more substantial job. It would also be compatible with the idea of “safe experimentation”. In a similar vein, the Department told us that it was considering an “accelerator model”, through which “providers would receive larger fees as they supported more participants within a group into sustained employment”.\(^\text{185}\)

69. Charities and providers told us that it was important that the new Programme retains a more substantial up-front service fee than the current Work Programme provision, as is the case in Work Choice. This reflects the greater costs of support for the anticipated more complex caseload.\(^\text{186}\) The Department’s evaluation of Work Choice indicated that the commissioning structure of the programme had led to difficulties for some specialist providers (as opposed to pan-disability providers). Some reported receiving “few, if any” referrals, and some had left the market entirely.\(^\text{187}\) Similar problems were reported on the Work Programme.\(^\text{188}\) We heard this continues to be a concern for prospective smaller contractors in any new programme.\(^\text{189}\) Kennedy Scott suggested that “strong guidance on management fees” would help to protect specialist providers,\(^\text{190}\) while ERSA said that guaranteeing minimum referral volumes would be the “one single change” that would most contribute to de-risking the Programme for specialists.\(^\text{191}\)

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\(^\text{183}\) British Association for Supported Employment (DEG0033), Pluss (DEG0040), Action for ME (DEG0031), Centrepoint, Crisis, Homeless Link, ERSA, Salvation Army and St. Mungo’s (DEG0036), Leonard Cheshire Disability (DEG0039), Essex County Council (DEG0051), Sight for Surrey (DEG0080), Kennedy Scott (DEG0056), Shaw Trust (DEG0058)

\(^\text{184}\) Local Government Association (DEG0049), Pluss (DEG0040), British Association for Supported Employment (DEG0033), Leonard Cheshire Disability (DEG0039), Sense (DEG0065), Scope (DEG0069), Remploy (DEG0075), Mencap (DEG0084)


\(^\text{186}\) Pluss (DEG0040), Learning and Work Institute (DEG0086), Remploy (DEG0075)


\(^\text{189}\) British Association for Supported Employment (DEG0033), Essex County Council (DEG0051), Pluss (DEG0040), Leonard Cheshire Disability (DEG0039)

\(^\text{190}\) Kennedy Scott (DEG0056)

\(^\text{191}\) ERSA (DEG0087)
The “black box”

70. The “black box” provision that allows providers to devise their own programmes of support was generally praised by providers, who appreciated the flexibility that it gives them.192 In our previous report we recommended the introduction of a clearer set of minimum service standards, applicable to all providers.193 This was commensurate with receipt of an up-front service fee and would give claimants clarity about what to expect from the programme. This was especially important to enable people to make an informed choice over whether to participate. We heard renewed calls for this change.194

71. A strong theme that emerged in our discussions of what makes a successful employment programme was direct engagement between providers, local employers and participants. Witnesses including Roy O’Shaughnessy, Chief Executive of Shaw Trust, Peter Bacon, of Kennedy Scott, and Mark Elliott of Leonard Cheshire Disability emphasised how important working closely with employers was in their provision. Such engagement tended to improve employment outcomes and build participants’ confidence.195 Equally, a number of submissions emphasised that effective integration with other local services was a crucial part of successful provision for jobseekers with more substantial and complex barriers to work.196 The Department indicated in the procurement documents for the Work and Health Programme that providers must integrate and co-ordinate their services with local provision, and has designated this as one of the most important elements of bid evaluation criteria.197 This concurs with our earlier recommendations.198

72. To maximise the impact of the Work and Health Programme in supporting jobseekers with complex needs, the Department will need to ensure it offers something distinct from general JCP provision. We are pleased that the Department agreed with our recommendation that there should be a strong emphasis on integrated provision. We also recommend that, given the generalist approach prevailing in JCP, there is clear case for contracts to be let to specialist providers. The Department will also need to ensure that payment structures for the Programme incentivise providers to invest in supporting the more substantially disadvantaged jobseekers within the cohort. In particular, small, specialist providers may need enhanced financial security to participate. This could be achieved through implementing “milestone” payments, or through an “accelerator model”.

73. Commissioning for the Work and Health Programme should prioritise providers that demonstrate provision that goes beyond what is routinely available to jobseekers in JCP. We recommend that specialist providers should be prominently represented, and that the Department should set out clearly how it will ensure that such organisations are not made financially vulnerable through their participation: for example, by guaranteeing minimum referral volumes. Payment by Results should be maintained.

192 ERSA (DEG0087)
194 Learning and Work Institute (DEG0086), Gardiner, L. and Gaffney, D. Retention deficit, Resolution Foundation, June 2016, p. 51
195 Q96 (Mark Elliott), Q68 (Roy O’Shaughnessy), Q69 (Peter Bacon)
196 Action for ME (DEG0031), The Work Foundation (DEG0094)
197 DWP, Umbrella Agreement, section 9
but with a substantial service fee, reflecting the greater needs of the cohort that Work and Health Programme will serve—particularly those claimants who will be most difficult to place into work.
5 Building confidence in JCP

Prioritising changes to JCP services

74. JCP has a good track record of delivering major change projects. A notable example was in light of the 2008–09 economic downturn: the Department significantly increased JCP frontline resources, trained new staff, handled a rapid rise in claimants, and in 2010–11 implemented new welfare-to-work programmes, while maintaining its performance. In the 2015 JCP staff survey, 51% of JCP staff agreed or strongly agreed that the DWP’s Executive Team had a clear vision for the future of DWP. Witnesses were concerned, however, by the scale of planned changes to JCP services over the next few years. Serco told us, “it feels like trying to achieve too much too soon”. Evidence that we received from the Department underlined the scale of the change that the Department is attempting in JCP, and its reliance on a number of un-tested approaches.

75. Witnesses called for the Department to set out its detailed proposals for the future resourcing and design of JCP services in a comprehensive strategy. Tony Wilson said that JCP’s successful response to the 2008–09 economic downturn was partly attributable to one of the most centralised public service control structures in the OECD. Patrick Hughes similarly emphasised that JCP is “capable of cultural change if it is pointed in the right direction”, and that JCP “does what it is told”. The Learning and Work Institute suggested that the strategy should include the DWP’s priorities for the implementation of the set of reforms to JCP to avoid “constant goalpost moving”.

76. The Department’s plans for reforming JCP involve a number of experimental and un-tested approaches, and require significant cultural as well as practical change. We welcome the Department’s ambition, but the doubt remains as to whether the Department may be attempting to achieve too much, too quickly. The Department should set out the key policy objectives that JCP must deliver over the next five years, and should give a clear indication of how JCP districts and individual Jobcentres should prioritise their delivery. This should include details of how the timing of policy objectives links with the roll-out of Universal Credit.

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199 See, for example, Working Links (FJP0061), Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071), Association of Employment and Learning Providers (FJP0037)
200 National Audit Office. Responding to change in Jobcentres, February 2013
201 DWP (FJP0087)
202 Q33 (Matthew Oakley), Q27-29 (Tony Wilson), Working Links (FJP0092), Serco (FJP0050), Liverpool City Region Employment and Skills Board (FJP0053)
203 Serco (FJP0050)
204 See, for example, Q127 (Paul Williams), Q139-140 (Iain Walsh), Q141-144 and Q146-150 (Damian Hinds)
205 See, for example, Q38 (Tony Wilson), Q97 (Helen Milner), Serco (FJP0050), Working Links (FJP0061), Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071), Association of Employment and Learning Providers (FJP0037), Homeless Link (FJP0048), Oxfam Cymru (FJP0086)
206 Finn, D., The organisation and regulation of the public employment service: the experience of selected European Countries - the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, and the United Kingdom, Policy research report prepared for the Korea Labour Institute, May 2016, p. 74
207 Q24-25 (Patrick Hughes)
208 Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071)
209 Association of Employment and Learning Providers (FJP0037)
JCP staffing levels

77. In February 2016, 11,000 front-line full-time equivalent Work Coaches supported 745,000 out-of-work claimants across Great Britain.210 Work Coach numbers have fallen by 35% since 2011–12 (see Table 1), a period over which the JSA claimant count has also fallen. The DWP is facing tight resource budget restrictions, and must reduce its day-to-day spending by 19% between 2015–16 and 2019–20,211 a total reduction of 41% compared with 2010–11.212

Table 1: Number of Work Coaches by benefit type, 2011–12 and 2015–16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>2011–12</th>
<th>2015–16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobseekers Allowance</td>
<td>15,890</td>
<td>6,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Support</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>1,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment &amp; Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefit</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>1,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troubled families</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal Credit</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Work Coaches</td>
<td>17,750</td>
<td>10,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Work Coach (JSA)</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total direct support to claimants</td>
<td>17,750</td>
<td>11,453</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DWP (FJP0075)

78. A Work Coach is responsible for a caseload of around 100 unemployed claimants and conducts 10 to 20 claimant interviews per day.213 Work Coach caseload will increase further through:

(a) Helping employed claimants in the pilot in-work service. A full JCP-led in-work service, for example, could apply to around one million people, an increase in JCP footfall of 325,000 claimants a week; almost a quarter of existing JCP levels.214

(b) Introducing UC to all claimant groups. The DWP stated that serving claimants through non face-to-face channels would be “vital” to manage this increased footfall, while still delivering a “world class service” to those who need it;215

(c) More frequent interviews for unemployed claimants in the early stages of their benefit claim;216

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210 DWP (FJP0064), Office for National Statistics, Claimant Count data. Note: This includes the number of people claiming JSA or Universal Credit principally for the reason of being unemployed.
211 HM Treasury, Budget 2016, Departmental Resource Budgets (Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit excluding depreciation), HC 901, March 2016, p. 91. The DWP’s estimated resource budget (for day-to-day spending) in 2015–16 was £6.2 billion. Its planned resource budget for 2019–20 is £5.4 billion. This represents cumulative real growth of -19%. In 2010–11, the DWP’s resource budget was £9.1 billion (see National Audit Office, A short guide to the Department for Work and Pensions, June 2015, p. 8). This represents cumulative real growth of -41%
212 The Department plans to achieve savings through reducing the size of its estate by 20% and co-locating JCP offices with local authorities. See: DWP, Press release: DWP settlement at the Spending Review, 25 November 2015
213 Personal correspondence with DWP officials
214 Work and Pensions Committee, In-work progression in Universal Credit, Session 2015–16, HC 549, 11 May 2016, para 34
215 DWP (FJP0064)
216 HM Treasury, Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015, Cm 9162, November 2015, para 1.129
(d) Supporting more claimants who would have been referred to the Work Programme under the current regime.\(^{217}\)

Witnesses told us that additional staffing pressures might also emerge as JCP extends its opening hours to meet the needs of in-work claimants. Patrick Hughes explained that JCP “simply cannot run as a nine-to-five operation” because many claimants would be in work at those times.\(^{218}\) The Minister told us that JCP has “the flexibility to be able to open in the evenings and, indeed, on Saturdays” but that “exactly how that flexibility is used is for future determination”\(^{219}\).

79. At March 2016, 23% (or more than 3,000) of Work Coach positions were vacant.\(^{220}\) The Department plans to recruit around 3,000 new Work Coaches at the Executive Officer grade over 2016–17, while managing planned exits of around 1,400 staff at the lower Administrative Officer grade.\(^{221}\) This reflects both DWP’s plans for a predominantly Executive Officer Work Coach model,\(^{222}\) and a broader cross-government reduction in the lower administrative grades.\(^{223}\) Beyond 2016–17, the DWP said it would review projected demand for Work Coaches’ time as it further develops UC and introduces the Work and Health Programme.\(^{224}\) The Department told us that in the 2015 JCP People Survey, 63% of staff agreed that they had an acceptable workload—higher than the Civil Service benchmark of 41%.\(^{225}\)

80. We heard concerns about the capacity of JCP to deal with any future rise in caseloads, alongside the effect of planned changes to its service.\(^{226}\) The Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts that unemployment levels will start to rise from 2017, though there is considerable uncertainty around their projections.\(^{227}\) Tony Wilson suggested that JCP would not require more resources until 2020, when it would support long-term unemployed claimants and working claimants on a large scale.\(^{228}\) The PCS Union, however, reported that changes to JCP services and long-term staffing reductions were already creating “significant extra work” and putting “increasing pressure” on staff.\(^{229}\) Serco and Working Links both told us that the DWP was developing new JCP services to meet current levels of demand and claimant need, without taking into account projected changes in claimant numbers or the effects of JCP reform.\(^{230}\) The National Audit Office found that the DWP’s forecasts of claimant numbers were “extremely uncertain”, and Policy Exchange, a think-tank,

\(^{217}\) HM Treasury, Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015, Cm 9162, November 2015, para 1.129
\(^{218}\) Q36 (Patrick Hughes). See also: London Councils (FJP0068),
\(^{219}\) Q136 (Damian Hinds)
\(^{220}\) DWP (FJP0087)
\(^{221}\) DWP (FJP0064)
\(^{222}\) DWP (FJP0064)
\(^{223}\) Bouchal, P., The shape of the Civil Service: remaking the grade, Institute for Government, 23 October 2011. Note: the Civil Service grades are structured as follows: Administrative Officer; Executive Officer; Higher Executive Officer; Grade 7; Grade 6; Senior Civil Servant
\(^{224}\) DWP (FJP0064), Q126-132, Q159-164
\(^{225}\) DWP (FJP0087), Cabinet Office, Civil Service people survey, November 2016
\(^{226}\) See, for example, Q10, 25, 28–29 (Tony Wilson), Q38 (Matthew Oakley), Serco (FJP0050), National Audit Office (FJP0076), Working Links (FJP0067), Public and Commercial Services Union (FJP0079), Employment Related Services Association (FJP0045), Serco (FJP0050), The Highland Council (FJP0024), Remploy (FJP0080
\(^{227}\) Office for Budget Responsibility, Economic and fiscal outlook, March 2016, see p. 12.
\(^{228}\) Q38 (Tony Wilson). Note: Tony Wilson suggested that plans to support long-term unemployed claimants would mean a similar resource commitment as currently exists under the Help to Work scheme for unemployed people leaving the Work Programme; and plans to support working claimants is currently being piloted until 2018 with 15,000 claimants (rather than the potential 1 million claimants)
\(^{229}\) Public and Commercial Services Union (FJP0079)
\(^{230}\) Serco (FJP0050), Working Links (FJP0067);
reported that DWP’s estimates may not reflect new claimant groups and operational flexibilities. These include the shift to a digital service and corresponding need to support claimants with low IT skills, and the pressure placed on appointment times as Work Coaches increasingly have to identify and set up appropriate external support. Changes to JCP’s caseload, and expectations of support, may also occur after the Department has completed the review of the Work Capability Assessment announced in its Work, Health and Disability green paper.

81. It was not clear to us what projection the Department was using to predict future claimant demand, or how, if at all, projections of new and additional demands on Work Coaches as a result of JCP reforms are being incorporated into staffing plans. It was therefore unclear how the Department could be certain that the 3,000 Work Coaches would be sufficient to meet demand. The Minister explained that it is hard to predict future requirements:

You have a number of different things going on. There is the overall change in the headcount. Then within that there is the FTE [full-time equivalent] levels of staffing, but then within that you have a changing grade mix. You have a changing function of Work Coaches as the central customer-facing role. Then you have the support functions and so on that I am talking about.

The DWP’s Director of Labour Market Strategy, Iain Walsh, told us that:

We are expecting the caseload to go up because there is a variety of people at the moment on tax credits or partners who are not on that type of regime and we expect them to come in. The precise numbers are unclear. Just as the Minister said, we will have to test and learn how we engage with them.

82. Witnesses including Scope, a disability charity, called on the DWP to undertake a more thorough analysis of the staffing levels required to meet current and future claimant demand, in particular from those who require more intensive support. Others, such as Serco and the PCS Union, suggested the DWP would need to invest a significant increase in resources to ensure claimants receive sufficient time and support. Matthew Oakley illustrated that if such support helped claimants who are in work to earn £30 per week more, equivalent to working less than an extra hour each day, savings to the Exchequer would be £4.1 billion a year. Investment in additional support could therefore more than pay for itself. He added, “there is a huge amount of money here to play with”, which the Treasury should invest into “better” support.

83. JCP has responded well in the past to fluctuating claimant numbers. The planned changes to JCP services mean, however, that if staffing levels do not increase significantly, it will need to deliver much more with fewer resources. This problem could be exacerbated by an economic downturn and consequent increase in claimant numbers. JCP’s plans are at best based on uncertain and unclear forecasts, and may

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231 National Audit Office. Responding to change in Jobcentres, February 2013, paras 16, 18. See also: Hind, D., Delivering differently: How to deliver change, Policy Exchange, August 2016, p.45
233 Q165 (Iain Walsh)
234 Crisis (FIP0060), Scope (FIP0069)
235 Inclusion London (FIP0022), learndirect Limited (FIP0013), Serco (FIP0050), Child Poverty Action Group (FIP0035), Public and Commercial Services Union (FIP0079)
236 Q38 (Matthew Oakley)
not reflect the time required for activities to support its more complex claimant population. We are concerned that the Department has no real idea how many Work Coaches it needs, less so will need, to provide its ambitious service.

84. **The Department must assess future staffing levels required to deliver the planned changes to JCP services, alongside the introduction of Universal Credit and scaled down contracted-out support.** We recommend the Department set out a clearer framework for assessing the volume and complexity of demand, and its staffing consequences, in response to this report. The caseload of claimants coming into regular contact with JCP may also change as a result of the review of the Work Capability Assessment announced in the Department’s Work, Health and Disability green paper. We recommend the Department review its staffing needs once it has decided on a course of action.

Adapting the physical layout

85. Some witnesses were concerned that the open plan layout of JCP offices makes it hard for individuals to disclose their personal barriers to working.\(^{237}\) Participants in Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s research, for example, described the atmosphere of Jobcentres as “unpleasant” and lacking privacy in which to have conversations with advisers.\(^{238}\) The Forth Sector, an employment service charity, also suggested that the position of computer terminals in JCP offices does not afford privacy to claimants.\(^{239}\)

86. A wide range of witnesses called for the DWP to make available private rooms for meetings between claimants and Work Coaches when the JCP estate is renewed in 2018.\(^{240}\) This would promote conversation, supporting claimants to freely discuss their barriers to work. The UK Council for Psychotherapy said that this would be particularly important given DWP’s plans to increase the number of employment advisers in the NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme. It is especially important that claimants receive psychological therapy in an environment where they feel comfortable.\(^{241}\)

87. **The current open plan physical layout of Jobcentre Plus gives insufficient privacy to claimants when disclosing their personal barriers to working, particularly for those with physical or mental health conditions. JCP should configure its office space when it renuits its estate in 2018 so that appointments between claimants and Work Coaches can be held in private, on a genuine one-to-one basis.**

Digital inclusion

88. Alongside existing face-to-face and telephone-based services, JCP increasingly serves claimants online. In UC, claimants can record work search evidence online and receive online advice from their Work Coaches. The Minister also confirmed that the Department is “open” to using additional channels of communication, such as Skype.\(^{242}\) The DWP

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\(^{237}\) See, for example, Revolving Doors Agency (FJP0058), Q75 (Cathy Corcoran), Homeless Link (FJP0060), The Intraining Group (FJP0044)

\(^{238}\) Joseph Rowntree Foundation (FJP0072)

\(^{239}\) Forth Sector (FJP0012)

\(^{240}\) See, for example, Q75 (Helen Milner), Q52 (Chris Williams), UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) (FJP0047), Crisis (FJP0060), The Intraining Group (FJP0044), Revolving Doors Agency (FJP0058), The Lived Experiences of Welfare Reform Study (FJP0008)

\(^{241}\) UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) (FJP0047)

\(^{242}\) Q141 (Damian Hinds)
suggested that this approach frees up Work Coaches to allocate more time to jobseekers who benefit from a face-to-face service.\textsuperscript{243} All Jobcentres have Wi-Fi and broadband, and claimants can access services in public libraries.\textsuperscript{244} The Department also highlighted that the ability to help claimants develop digital skills was one of the competencies requested in a recent Work Coach job advert.\textsuperscript{245}

89. Several witnesses reported, however, that a significant proportion of claimants lack the requisite access and skills to make UC claims online.\textsuperscript{246} Up to 12.6 million UK adults, one quarter of the total,\textsuperscript{247} lack basic digital skills, and an estimated 5.8 million people have never used the internet at all.\textsuperscript{248} The closure of some local libraries, time restricted internet access and limited or costly transport provision were cited as further limiting access to IT provision.\textsuperscript{249} We heard, for example, that the time taken to fill in the Universal Credit application outstrips the internet access time available in many libraries.\textsuperscript{250} Witnesses reported that in some cases, claimants who were unable to comply with online reporting obligations were sanctioned.\textsuperscript{251}

90. Claimants struggling with IT can be referred to online support centres. The high levels of JCP referrals to those centres may suggest that support for claimants with low levels of IT competence within JCP is insufficient. This concern was widely shared by witnesses.\textsuperscript{252} Almost 60% of jobseekers supported by the Tinder Foundation, for example, were directed there from JCP or a Work Programme provider.\textsuperscript{253} The Royal College of Psychiatrists reported that DWP’s guidance suggests claimants can prepare for using online tools merely by “finding out where you can access the internet” and “improving your internet skills”.\textsuperscript{254} Helen Milner of the Tinder Foundation and Cathy Corcoran, Chief Executive of the Cardinal Hume Centre, a homelessness service, were both concerned that JCP advisers were assuming that someone having access to the internet at home meant that they were able to use it.\textsuperscript{255} They both called for a digital skills assessment for all benefit

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{243} DWP (FJP0064)
\bibitem{244} DWP (FJP0064)
\bibitem{245} Q133 (Paul Williams)
\bibitem{246} See, for example, Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) (FJP0038), Low Incomes Tax Reform Group (FJP0077), Oxfam Cymru (FJP0086), Young Women’s Trust (FJP0036), Crisis (FJP0060), Centrepoint (FJP0032), Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (FJP0043), Serco (FJP0050), learndirect Limited (FJP0013), Mind and Royal College of Psychiatrists (FJP0067), UK Council for Psychotherapy (UCP) (FJP0047), Revolving Doors Agency (FJP0058), Thurrock Coalition (FJP0057), Disability Benefits Consortium (FJP0054), Dyslexia Adult Network (FJP0021), Newcastle City Council (FJP0042), North East Combined Authority (FJP0041), Plymouth City Council (FJP0020), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (FJP0016), The Highland Council (FJP0024), The Lived Experiences of Welfare Reform Study (FJP0008), Citizens Advice Derbyshire Districts (FJP0070), Citizens Advice Croydon (FJP0017), Citizens Advice (FJP0085)
\bibitem{247} ONS population estimates
\bibitem{248} Science and Technology Committee, Digital skills crisis, Second Report of Session 2016–17, June 2016. N.B.: Figures are based on estimates from Ipsos Mori and the Foundation respectively
\bibitem{249} Chwarae Teg (FJP0083), Low Incomes Tax Reform Group (FJP0077), GIPSIL (FJP0039), Thurrock Coalition (FJP0057), Citizens Advice Derbyshire Districts (FJP0070), Citizens Advice Croydon (FJP0017)
\bibitem{250} Private discussion with the Citizen’s Advice Bureau
\bibitem{251} Q 87, 92 (Helen Milner), Q69 (Cathy Corcoran), Tinder Foundation (FJP0082), Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) (FJP0038), Low Incomes Tax Reform Group (FJP0077), Cardiff Hume Centre (FJP0090), Crisis (FJP0060), GIPSIL (FJP0039), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (FJP0016), The Lived Experiences of Welfare Reform Study (FJP0008), Citizens Advice Derbyshire Districts (FJP0070)
\bibitem{252} Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) (FJP0038), Tinder Foundation (FJP0082), Disability Benefits Consortium (FJP0054), Parkinson’s UK (FJP0010), Mind and Royal College of Psychiatrists (FJP0067), Citizens Advice Derbyshire Districts (FJP0070)
\bibitem{253} Tinder Foundation (FJP0082). See also: Crisis (FJP0060)
\bibitem{254} Mind and Royal College of Psychiatrists (FJP0067)
\bibitem{255} Q70-71, 83, 92 (Helen Milner), Q81 (Cathy Corcoran)
\end{thebibliography}
claimants to identify the support they need before being introduced to online resources such as Universal Jobmatch, with a specific section added to the claimant commitment interview on this topic.

91. Jobcentre Plus increasingly serves claimants through digital channels of contact, requiring them to record work search evidence online, use Universal Jobmatch for finding job vacancies, and receive online advice from Work Coaches. Such services are clearly the future for a large proportion of JCP activities. One in four UK adults lacks basic digital skills, however, and more than one in ten have never used the internet at all. JCP is not doing enough to identify any support a claimant needs before being introduced to online resources: some advisors have assumed that access to a computer or the internet equates to the ability to use it. This risks significant numbers not being able to comply with their work search requirements. **Jobcentre Plus should include a digital skills assessment in the Claimant Commitment interview which goes beyond simply asking if a claimant has access to the internet or a computer. This should draw on the good practice examples of digital skills assessments that are used by specialist support centres. Having poor IT skills should, for example, be grounds for claimants to be offered longer meetings with their Work Coaches.**

### JCP performance measures

92. The current key measure of JCP performance is the number of claimants ending their benefit claims ("off-flow"). This is a very different measure to how JCP performs in supporting claimants into work. Some claimants may have found work, but they may also have moved onto other benefits, or ceased claiming without taking up work. The emphasis on off-flow also means that JCP performance is not assessed in terms of moving claimants into sustained work. Although 75% of claimants moved off benefits within six months of making a claim, only 36% of claimants who found a job within six months of claiming benefits remained employed for the following seven or eight months.

93. Off-flow performance measures can incentivise JCP offices to take actions that discourage people from claiming benefits without them necessarily moving into work. This could include inappropriate referrals to programmes, increased use of sanctions, or making it hard for claimants to sign on. For example, a recent investigation found that managers in the Plaistow Jobcentre encouraged aggressive approaches to improve off-flow. These included falsely signing claimants off benefits and misusing the Flexible Support Fund to cover gaps in benefit payments.

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256 Q71, 80 (Cathy Corcoran), Q82, 92 (Helen Milner).
257 Tinder Foundation (FJP0093) and Cardinal Hume Centre (FJP0090). See also: Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) (FJP0038), Citizens Advice Derbyshire Districts (FJP0070). For an example of the digital skills assessment used by the Cardinal Hume Centre see FJP0090.
258 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (FJP0072), Oxfam Cymru (FJP0086), Prince’s Trust (FJP0028), Citizens Advice (FJP0085), Local Government Association (FJP0056), The Highland Council (FJP0024), Professor Robert MacDonald (FJP0019).
260 Oakley, M. Employment support for a high-wage economy, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2015
261 Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071), Employment Related Services Association (FJP0045)
262 National Audit Office, Investigation into misuse of the Flexible Support Fund in Plaistow, July 2016
There was a wide consensus that delivering a more personalised, needs-based service will require DWP to revise JCP performance measures. The Department plans to use data from the Real Time Information (RTI) system that underpins UC to measure the proportion of claimants who find employment and the extent to which is sustained. Benchmarks for RTI are set out in Table 2. The Department states that this represents a "change in culture and behaviour" for both staff and customers. Some witnesses endorsed this idea. The Department did not, however, set out when it will introduce these measures. Their full roll-out will be contingent on that of UC, which was recently delayed, yet again.

Table 2: DWP measures for Universal Credit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>2016 17 benchmark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of earnings at 1 month</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of earnings at 3 months</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustained evidence of earnings to 3 months</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustained evidence of earnings to 6 months</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No evidence of earnings at 6 months</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DWP (FJP0064)

Other witnesses suggested that the DWP should adopt a "more rounded and holistic" set of JCP performance measures for all claimants; not just those on UC. These might include customer satisfaction, the number of claimants restarting their claim, and "distance travelled", which takes into account whether claimants have undertaken measures to improve their suitability for work. Measuring distance travelled, in

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263 See, for example, Q14 (Matthew Oakley), Q24 (Patrick Hughes), Q117 (Brian Bell), Chwarae Teg (FJP0083), Gingerbread (FJP0051), Child Poverty Action Group (FJP0035), Oxfam Cymru (FJP0086), Salvation Army (FJP0018), Serco (FJP0050), Crisis (FJP0060), Prince’s Trust (FJP0028), Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071), Employment Related Services Association (FJP0045), The Intraining Group (FJP0044), learndirect Limited (FJP0013), Forth Sector (FJP0012), Working Links (FJP0061), Liverpool City Region Employment and Skills Board (FJP0053), Local Government Association (FJP0056), Newcastle City Council (FJP0042), North East Combined Authority (FJP0041), Professor Daniel Finn (FJP0040), Citizens Advice (FJP0085), Work and Pensions Committee, the role of Jobcentre Plus in the reformed welfare system, Session 2013–14, HC 479, 28 January 2014, Oakley, M., Employment support for a high wage economy, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, November 2015, National Audit Office. Responding to change in Jobcentres, February 2013

264 DWP (FJP0064), Q148 (Damian Hinds)

265 See, for example, Q15 (Matthew Oakley), Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071), Prince’s Trust (FJP0028), The Intraining Group (FJP0044), Plymouth City Council (FJP0020)

266 Written statement on welfare reform made by Lord Freud: HLWS98, 20 July 2016

267 The Evidence of Earnings at 1 month measure for the January 2016 cohort, for example, is defined as the percentage of claims starting in January which report earnings for February through the RTI system which correspond to new job starts. i.e. back-payments relating to previous jobs do not count towards these measures.

268 The 3 month Sustained Evidence of Earnings measure is defined as the percentage of claimants with earnings in a month who go on to sustain earnings for 3 consecutive months.

269 The No Evidence of Earnings measure is defined as the percentage of those claims still live at 6 months which have had no evidence of earnings in RTI since the start of the claim.

270 Serco (FJP0050),

271 See, for example, Joseph Rowntree Foundation (FJP0072), Gingerbread (FJP0051), Serco (FJP0050), Prince’s Trust (FJP0028), Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (FJP0043), Plymouth City Council (FJP0020), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (FJP0016), Dyslexia Adult Network (FJP002), UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) (FJP0047)
particular, would give the Department an indication of whether JCP coaching is helping claimants with complex barriers to move closer to the labour market—for example, by taking up a volunteering place or skills training.  

96. Providers explained that assessing JCP performance was important in informing future Departmental decisions regarding the balance between DWP-led and contracted-out support, and enabling comparison between the Work and Health Programme and JCP’s support.  

Steve Sherry, Chief Executive of Royal British Legion Industries, voiced a concern about the “visibility, openness and transparency on the analysis that has been done at Jobcentre Plus vis-à-vis the outsourcing” thus far. He continued, “if you do not get that information out into the public domain and compare apples with apples, you have a problem in how to go forward”. The DWP, however, ceased publishing regular performance data in 2015.

97. Changes to JCP services will mean that the Jobcentre will become much more than the place where people sign on to benefits. Current JCP performance measures tell us little about how effectively JCP is fulfilling its more holistic role, and do not focus on getting people into appropriate, sustainable employment and helping them to progress in work. It is not clear when new measures of sustained earnings for Universal Credit programmes will be fully in place, given delays to the Universal Credit roll-out. In any case, relying on Real Time Information as the sole measure of progress fails to tell the whole story of JCP’s effectiveness. JCP must ensure that it has good quality data available on its progress in supporting all of its claimants into work, including those who are a long way from the labour market, who may need substantial pre-employment support.

98. We recommend that by the end of 2016 the Department set JCP similar performance targets of sustained earnings over time as it plans to introduce for Universal Credit. These measures must apply to all claimants in JCP, not just those claiming Universal Credit. We further recommend that JCP introduce a more holistic set of performance measures, including “distance travelled” towards work such as take-up of volunteering or skills training, customer satisfaction, and the number of claimants restarting their claims. These performance data must be routinely published. These measures will increase transparency, enable better decision-making on future provision, and help drive the necessary change in the culture and behaviour of JCP.

99. The scale of the task ahead for the Department in reforming JCP reflects the scale of its ambition. Trying new methods and seeking to reach groups previously left behind by the welfare system is risky; things will go wrong and the Department will need to adapt accordingly. But it should be congratulated for taking those risks.

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272 Leonard Cheshire Disability (DEG0039), National Autistic Society (FJP0052), Pluss (DEG0040), ENABLE Scotland (FJP0062)
273 Q67-68 (Steve Sherry and Peter Bacon)
274 Q68 (Steve Sherry)
275 Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071), Serco (FJP0050), Newcastle City Council (FJP0042), Public Accounts Committee, Accountability to Parliament for taxpayers’ money, HC 732, May 2016, Mind and Royal College of Psychiatrists (FJP0067), The Highland Council (FJP0024), Homeless Link (FJP0048)
Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

1. Allied to wider economic trends, JCP has performed well in recent years in supporting claimants who are closer to the labour market into work. It is, in part, a victim of its own success, as to further reduce unemployment, it must now focus on ensuring that it has measures in place that can offer equally effective support to a caseload of claimants with much more varied, complex and substantial barriers to work. (Paragraph 9)

The vital role of Jobcentre Plus staff

2. Much of whether JCP can achieve its objectives in supporting claimants with complex needs rests on Work Coaches and their relationships with claimants. Work Coaches are tasked with referring claimants for possible sanctions at the same time as supporting them into and in work. This combined role may mean that many claimants see JCP staff as policemen rather than genuine coaches, potentially undermining claimant trust and confidence. Trustful, positive and personalised support is central to the Work Coach model working effectively, but currently the Department has little means of assessing how far this is being delivered. (Paragraph 21)

3. We recommend the Department set out how it will support Work Coaches to strike the right balance between coaching and conditionality—potentially conflicting elements of their role. Work Coaches should be given more comprehensive guidance on how to adopt a flexible approach to conditionality for vulnerable groups of claimants, such as those with health conditions or housing problems. The guidance should include multiple examples illustrating the circumstances in which different levels of conditionality, including frequency of meetings, would be appropriate and effective. (Paragraph 22)

4. We recommend that the Department monitor the extent to which claimants consider Claimant Commitments personalised. This should include adding a question on this topic to the annual Claimant Experience survey. (Paragraph 23)

5. It is concerning that as JCP moves towards directly supporting more claimants with complex needs it is also moving away from specialism, towards a generalist Work Coach model. Some of the claimants that Work Coaches support will have significant and complex needs that require knowledge, understanding, and dedicated coaching to overcome. Others will require much less support, and may be well served by a generalist approach. The Work Coach role needs to develop in such a way that it can account for these different ways of working, and recognise Work Coaches’ skills and abilities in supporting their clients accordingly. (Paragraph 33)

6. Claimants should not be left with only JCP support for long periods of time. If Work Coaches fail to identify claimant needs quickly and accurately it will hamper efforts to offer them the right additional support to move them closer to work. Identifying
what support is appropriate, at which point in a claim, again requires a level of specialist knowledge on behalf of Work Coaches that the generalist model will not always provide. (Paragraph 34)

7. There is a clear case for allowing some Work Coaches to specialise in directly helping smaller numbers of specific claimant groups with complex needs, while others can help general cases and retain a higher caseload. We recommend that progression to a Senior Work Coach role, at Higher Executive Officer grade, should be available to those Work Coaches who have demonstrated a capacity to support specific claimant groups such as disabled people, homeless claimants, self-employed claimants, lone parents, or those with drug and alcohol problems. Senior Work Coaches should continue to provide front-line support to claimants with substantial barriers to work, so that DWP staff increasingly master the greater “skills” demands that will be placed on them by the Government. We also recommend that assessment of the performance of Work Coaches be based on evidence of developing specialist skills, offering personalised support and supporting claimants to progress into and in work. (Paragraph 35)

8. An organisation the size of JCP must rely on its middle managers, at district and branch level, to deliver the new services that the Department requires. We heard, however, that the capabilities of managers vary across regions. We are concerned that without a strong understanding amongst district managers of the direction and purpose of new reforms, and good management of Work Coaches by branch managers, JCP will struggle to deliver the services expected. (Paragraph 38)

9. We recommend the Department set out its expectations of district managers in delivering change and ensure that they are equipped to do this. We further recommend that the Department commission an independent assessment of JCP district managers’ ability to deliver large-scale change. Similarly, branch managers have an important role in ensuring Work Coaches can carry out their extensive new functions. We recommend that the Department ensure that clear guidelines on expectations of helping claimants into, and closer to, employment are incorporated into the Work Coach appraisal system, to be used by branch managers. (Paragraph 39)

Learning about “what works”

10. JCP will be the gateway for ensuring the right people are referred to the right support at the right time. It may prove ineffective, however, in supporting vulnerable claimants if it is unable to work closely with other local organisations to address the broader social and health issues which affect claimants’ employability. JCP has limited organisational experience of this way of working. While we welcome the Department’s overall flexible, experimental approach to new provision, it needs to ensure that this is matched with clear guidance on, and promotion of, the opportunities for joint working. (Paragraph 51)

11. The Flexible Support Fund is a potentially important resource that JCP can use to develop its partnership working with other organisations. However, it is underused and under-publicised. We recommend that the Department take steps to promote the Fund for this purpose, and that it monitors the extent of uptake and the purposes for which it is used. This should include identifying its use by individual Jobcentres. (Paragraph 52)
12. There is significant support for allowing JCP districts greater control of their budgets, and for integrating health and employment budgets in particular, to help JCP address the full range of barriers to work. This should extend beyond the Flexible Support Fund which, while valuable, is also discretionary. (Paragraph 53)

13. We recommend that JCP districts should be allocated their own health budgets for the remaining financial years during this Spending Review period, with the expectation that this will be spent on developing partnerships to address health-related barriers to work. Clear and common success measures should be agreed with local areas, including the proportion of people who find sustained employment through these programmes. (Paragraph 53)

14. We recommend the Department set an evaluation framework that local areas can use to test different approaches to local delivery, and produce information on “what works”, before moving to fuller devolution of JCP employment services. This should form the basis for a national framework of minimum service standards that central government can use to hold local areas to account. The evaluation framework should clearly set out performance measures that can be applied across the whole of the JCP caseload, including claimants who are a long way from the labour market. This means that metrics should be applicable to claimants who have not yet moved onto Universal Credit, and should be appropriate for measuring progress towards work as well as moves into work. (Paragraph 56)

The Work and Health Programme

15. It is disappointing that DWP’s plans for the Work and Health Programme do not involve expanding on Work Choice’s successes in supporting disabled people into work. We are concerned that the resources allocated to the scheme do not match its ambition. This is especially so given that the Government has committed to making significant in-roads into the disability employment gap, and the Department’s own recognition that it needs to do much more to help disabled claimants. With this in mind, our recommendations for the Work and Health Programme focus on getting the best possible results from the smaller contracted-out service. (Paragraph 61)

16. There is a clear consensus that people with disabilities and work-limiting health conditions should not be mandated to take part in the Work and Health Programme. Indeed, mandation could be self-defeating, making poor use of limited space on the programme and undermining relationships with the specialist support organisations alongside which JCP needs to work. We are pleased that the Department has confirmed that participation in the Work and Health Programme will be voluntary for disabled people on ESA and those with limited capability for work on Universal Credit. (Paragraph 66)

17. We recommend the Department clarify whether and how mandation will apply to disabled people and those with health conditions on JSA or the Universal Credit equivalent. The Department should produce guidance for Work Coaches on making referral decisions, mandation and the eligibility criteria for the Programme. This should encompass the use of discretion in potentially complex situations such as where
an individual with a health condition has been unemployed for more than two years but may stand to benefit from external provision, or is claiming JSA or the Universal Credit equivalent. (Paragraph 66)

18. To maximise the impact of the Work and Health Programme in supporting jobseekers with complex needs, the Department will need to ensure it offers something distinct from general JCP provision. We are pleased that the Department agreed with our recommendation that there should be a strong emphasis on integrated provision. We also recommend that, given the generalist approach prevailing in JCP, there is a clear case for contracts to be let to specialist providers. The Department will also need to ensure that payment structures for the Programme incentivise providers to invest in supporting the more substantially disadvantaged jobseekers within the cohort. In particular, small, specialist providers may need enhanced financial security to participate. This could be achieved through implementing “milestone” payments, or through an “accelerator model”. (Paragraph 72)

19. Commissioning for the Work and Health Programme should prioritise providers that demonstrate provision that goes beyond what is routinely available to jobseekers in JCP. We recommend that specialist providers should be prominently represented, and that the Department should set out clearly how it will ensure that such organisations are not made financially vulnerable through their participation; for example, by guaranteeing minimum referral volumes. Payment by Results should be maintained, but with a substantial service fee, reflecting the greater needs of the cohort that Work and Health Programme will serve—particularly those claimants who will be most difficult to place into work. (Paragraph 73)

Building confidence in JCP

20. The Department’s plans for reforming JCP involve a number of experimental and un-tested approaches, and require significant cultural as well as practical change. We welcome the Department’s ambition, but the doubt remains as to whether the Department may be attempting to achieve too much, too quickly. (Paragraph 76)

21. The Department should set out the key policy objectives that JCP must deliver over the next five years, and should give a clear indication of how JCP districts and individual Jobcentres should prioritise their delivery. This should include details of how the timing of policy objectives links with the roll-out of Universal Credit. (Paragraph 76)

22. JCP has responded well in the past to fluctuating claimant numbers. The planned changes to JCP services mean, however, that if staffing levels do not increase significantly, it will need to deliver much more with fewer resources. This problem could be exacerbated by an economic downturn and consequent increase in claimant numbers. JCP’s plans are at best based on uncertain and unclear forecasts, and may not reflect the time required for activities to support its more complex claimant population. We are concerned that the Department has no real idea how many Work Coaches it needs, less so will need, to provide its ambitious service. (Paragraph 83)

23. The Department must assess future staffing levels required to deliver the planned changes to JCP services, alongside the introduction of Universal Credit and scaled down contracted-out support. We recommend the Department set out a clearer
framework for assessing the volume and complexity of demand, and its staffing consequences, in response to this report. The caseload of claimants coming into regular contact with JCP may also change as a result of the review of the Work Capability Assessment announced in the Department’s Work, Health and Disability green paper. We recommend the Department review its staffing needs once it has decided on a course of action. (Paragraph 84)

24. The current open plan physical layout of Jobcentre Plus gives insufficient privacy to claimants when disclosing their personal barriers to working, particularly for those with physical or mental health conditions. (Paragraph 87)

25. JCP should configure its office space when it renews its estate in 2018 so that appointments between claimants and Work Coaches can be held in private, on a genuine one-to-one basis. (Paragraph 87)

26. Jobcentre Plus increasingly serves claimants through digital channels of contact, requiring them to record work search evidence online, use Universal Jobmatch for finding job vacancies, and receive online advice from Work Coaches. Such services are clearly the future for a large proportion of JCP activities. One in four UK adults lacks basic digital skills, however, and more than one in ten have never used the internet at all. JCP is not doing enough to identify any support a claimant needs before being introduced to online resources: some advisors have assumed that access to a computer or the internet equates to the ability to use it. This risks significant numbers not being able to comply with their work search requirements. (Paragraph 91)

27. Jobcentre Plus should include a digital skills assessment in the Claimant Commitment interview which goes beyond simply asking if a claimant has access to the internet or a computer. This should draw on the good practice examples of digital skills assessments that are used by specialist support centres. Having poor IT skills should, for example, be grounds for claimants to be offered longer meetings with their Work Coaches. (Paragraph 91)

28. Changes to JCP services will mean that the Jobcentre will become much more than the place where people sign on to benefits. Current JCP performance measures tell us little about how effectively JCP is fulfilling its more holistic role, and do not focus on getting people into appropriate, sustainable employment and helping them to progress in work. It is not clear when new measures of sustained earnings for Universal Credit programmes will be fully in place, given delays to the Universal Credit roll-out. In any case, relying on Real Time Information as the sole measure of progress fails to tell the whole story of JCP’s effectiveness. JCP must ensure that it has good quality data available on its progress in supporting all of its claimants into work, including those who are a long way from the labour market, who may need substantial pre-employment support. (Paragraph 97)

29. We recommend that by the end of 2016 the Department set JCP similar performance targets of sustained earnings over time as it plans to introduce for Universal Credit. These measures must apply to all claimants in JCP, not just those claiming Universal Credit. We further recommend that JCP introduce a more holistic set of performance measures, including “distance travelled” towards work such as take-up of volunteering
or skills training, customer satisfaction, and the number of claimants restarting their claims. These performance data must be routinely published. These measures will increase transparency, enable better decision-making on future provision, and help drive the necessary change in the culture and behaviour of JCP. (Paragraph 98)

30. The scale of the task ahead for the Department in reforming JCP reflects the scale of its ambition. Trying new methods and seeking to reach groups previously left behind by the welfare system is risky; things will go wrong and the Department will need to adapt accordingly. But it should be congratulated for taking those risks. (Paragraph 99)
Appendix 1: UC Work Coach accreditation

Overview: UC Work Coach accreditation provides an externally recognised qualification. There are 3 accreditation stages: Essential, Certificate and Diploma:

(1) Essential level: internal accreditation where service managers observe Work Coaches as part of the Department’s Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) process. Work Coaches must be assessed as achieving ‘best practice’ in all QAF observations to achieve the Essential standard. Most of the Work Coaches involved in the accreditation trial by the end of 2015 completed Essential level.

(2) Certificate level: Work Coaches progress to the City and Guilds level 4 Certificate in ‘Managing the Delivery of Services to Customers’. This consists of four mandatory modules, plus one out of three additional modules. Two of the mandatory modules, on understanding the labour market and coaching, are developed specifically for the Work Coach role. It will take around 6 months to complete the Certificate level.

(3) Diploma level: Work Coaches with relevant staff management experience may be suitable to progress to the City and Guilds level 4 Diploma in operational delivery. The level 4 Diploma consists of two mandatory modules. It will take between 2 and 5 months to complete.

Source: DWP (IWP0045)
Formal Minutes

Wednesday 2 November 2016

Members present:
Frank Field, in the Chair
Heidi Allen Richard Graham
Ms Karen Buck Luke Hall
James Cartlidge Steve McCabe

Draft report (The future of Jobcentre Plus), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

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

Paragraphs 1 to 99 read and 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 16 November at 9.15 a.m.]
Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee’s website.

Wednesday 4 May 2016

Matthew Oakley, Director of WPI Economics, and Senior Researcher, Social Market Foundation, Tony Wilson, Director of Policy and Research, Learning and Work Institute, and Patrick Hughes, former Director, London and East of England Jobcentre Plus

Claire Horton, Project Manager, Newcastle City Council, Nicoya Palastanga, Partnership Manager (Universal Credit), West Lindsey District Council, Lincolnshire, Kirsty McHugh, Chief Executive, Employment Related Services Association, and Chris Williams, President, British Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies

Monday 11 July 2016

Helen Milner OBE, Chief Executive, Tinder Foundation, Cathy Corcoran OBE, Chief Executive, Cardinal Hume Centre and Tom Hadley, Director of Policy, Recruitment and Employment Confederation

Matthew Green, Director of Birmingham Skylight Centre, Crisis, Keith Faulkner CBE, Chair, Twin Group and Board Member, Institute of Employability Professionals, Brian Bell, Managing Director for Employability, Working Links and Nicola Whiteman, Senior Policy Officer, Papworth Trust

Monday 10 October 2016

Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP, Minister for Employment, Department for Work and Pensions, Paul Williams, Labour Market Operations Director, Department for Work and Pensions, and Iain Walsh, Director Labour Market Strategy, Department for Work and Pensions
Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee’s website.

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

1. 4Children (FJP0030)
2. AchieveAbility (FJP0007)
3. Action on Hearing Loss (FJP0026)
4. Aspiedent CIC (FJP0063)
5. Association of Employment and Learning Providers (FJP0037)
6. Bright Sparks Consulting Ltd (FJP0088)
7. British Psychological Society (FJP0025)
8. Cardinal Hume Centre (FJP0090)
9. Centrepoint (FJP0032)
10. Child Poverty Action Group (FJP0035)
11. Chwarae Teg (FJP0083)
12. Citizens Advice (FJP0085)
13. Citizens Advice Croydon (FJP0017)
14. Citizens Advice Derbyshire Districts (FJP0070)
15. Citizens Advice Scotland (FJP0066)
16. Crisis (FJP0060)
17. CSAN (Caritas Social Action Network) (FJP0038)
18. Department for Work and Pensions (FJP0064)
19. Department for Work and Pensions (FJP0075)
20. Department for Work and Pensions (FJP0087)
21. Disability Benefits Consortium (FJP0054)
22. Disability Sheffield (FJP0059)
23. Dyslexia Adult Network (DAN) (FJP0021)
24. ENABLE Scotland (FJP0062)
25. ERSA (FJP0045)
26. Essex County Council (FJP0027)
27. Forth Sector (FJP0012)
28. Gingerbread (FJP0051)
29. GIPSIL (FJP0039)
30. Greater Manchester Combined Authority (FJP0016)
31. Homeless Link (FJP0048)
32. Inclusion London (FJP0022)
33. Institute of Employability Professionals (FJP0081)
34 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (FJP0072)
35 learndirect Limited (FJP0013)
36 Learning and Work Institute (FJP0071)
37 Leicester Red-Thread Limited (FJP0031)
38 Leicester Red-Thread Limited (FJP0049)
39 Liverpool City Region Employment and Skills Board (FJP0053)
40 Local Government Association (FJP0056)
41 London Councils (FJP0068)
42 Low Incomes Tax Reform Group (FJP0077)
43 Mark Peachey (FJP0002)
44 Mental Wealth Foundation (FJP0034)
45 Mind and RCPsych (FJP0067)
46 Miss Ebere Ikerionwu (FJP0005)
47 Money Advice Service (FJP0055)
48 Mr Anthony Harris (FJP0046)
49 Mr Mark Whiley (FJP0003)
50 Name withheld (FJP0009)
51 National Audit Office (FJP0076)
52 National Deaf Children’s Society (FJP0023)
53 Newcastle City Council (FJP0042)
54 Newcastle City Council (FJP0074)
55 Norse Group Ltd (FJP0084)
56 North East Combined Authority (FJP0041)
57 Oxfam Cymru (FJP0086)
58 Parkinson’s UK (FJP0010)
59 Plymouth City Council (FJP0020)
60 Professor Daniel Finn (FJP0040)
61 Professor Robert MacDonald (FJP0019)
62 Public and Commercial Services Union (FJP0079)
63 RBLI (FJP0006)
64 Recruitment and Employment Confederation (FJP0078)
65 Recruitment and Employment Confederation (FJP0089)
66 Remploy (FJP0080)
67 Revolving Doors Agency (FJP0058)
68 Scope (FJP0069)
69 Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (FJP0043)
70 Serco (FJP0050)
71 South Yorkshire Credit Union (FJP0029)
72 The British Dyslexia Association (FJP0011)
73 The Highland Council (FJP0024)
74 The Intraining Group (FJP0044)
75 The Lived Experiences of Welfare Reform Study (FJP0008)
76 The National Autistic Society (FJP0052)
77 The Prince’s Trust (FJP0028)
78 The Salvation Army (FJP0018)
79 Thurrock Coalition (FJP0057)
80 Tinder Foundation (FJP0082)
81 Tinder Foundation (FJP0093)
82 Touchstone Consultancy (FJP0073)
83 UK Council for Psychotherapy, British Psychological Society, British Psychoanalytic Council, British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists, British Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (FJP0047)
84 West Lindsey District Council, City of Lincoln Council, North Kesteven District Council (FJP0015)
85 Working Links (FJP0061)
86 Working Links (FJP0092)
87 YMCA England (FJP0014)
88 Young Women’s Trust (FJP0036)
# List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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

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

### Session 2015–16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Reference Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Report</td>
<td>Pension freedom guidance and advice</td>
<td>HC 371 (Cm 9183)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Report</td>
<td>Welfare to work</td>
<td>HC 363 (HC 720)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Report</td>
<td>A reconsideration of tax credit cuts</td>
<td>HC 548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Report</td>
<td>Benefit delivery</td>
<td>HC 372 (HC 522)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Report</td>
<td>The local welfare safety net</td>
<td>HC 373 (HC 924)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Report</td>
<td>Understanding the new state pension – interim report on pension statements</td>
<td>HC 550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Report</td>
<td>Communication of state pension age changes – interim report</td>
<td>HC 899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth Report</td>
<td>Communication of the new state pension</td>
<td>HC 926 (HC 229)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth Report</td>
<td>Support for the bereaved</td>
<td>HC 551 (HC 230)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenth Report</td>
<td>In-work progression in Universal Credit</td>
<td>HC 549 (HC 585)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleventh Report</td>
<td>Automatic enrolment</td>
<td>HC 579 (HC 610)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Special Report</td>
<td>Progress with automatic enrolment and pension reforms: Government and Financial Conduct Authority responses to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2014–15</td>
<td>HC 375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Special Report</td>
<td>Pension freedom guidance and advice: Financial Conduct Authority Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2015–16</td>
<td>HC 719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Special Report</td>
<td>The local welfare safety net: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2015–16</td>
<td>HC 924</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Session 2016–17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report Type</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Report</td>
<td>BHS</td>
<td>HC 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Special Report</td>
<td>Communication of the new state pension: Government Response to the Committee’s Eighth Report of Session 2015–16</td>
<td>HC 229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Special Report</td>
<td>Support for the bereaved: Government Response to the Committee’s Ninth Report of Session 2015–16</td>
<td>HC 230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Special Report</td>
<td>Benefit delivery: Government Response to the Committee’s Fourth Report of Session 2015–16</td>
<td>HC 522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Special Report</td>
<td>In-work progression in Universal Credit: Government Response to the Committee’s Tenth Report of Session 2015–16</td>
<td>HC 585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Special Report</td>
<td>Automatic enrolment: Government Response to the Committee’s Eleventh Report of Session 2015–16</td>
<td>HC 610</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>