

# B20

## Helping people achieve their full potential: Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services

This consultation paper published by DWP on 3 December 2007 covers four national specialist disability employment programmes:

- Job introduction scheme
- WORKSTEP
- Work Preparation
- Access to Work

as well as the way that Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentre Plus work.

**Job introduction scheme** – can pay a wage subsidy of £75 p/w to an employer for up to 13 weeks when they employ a disabled person.

**WORKSTEP** – provides support for disabled people who face complex issues in finding and/or keeping a paid job.

**Work Preparation** – helps disabled people to address employment related issues associated with disability and prepare to enter work, including confidence building, identifying suitable types of work and work experience.

**Access to Work** – can fund work-based support or adaptations to enable disabled people to start and/or retain paid employment.

**Disability Employment Advisers (DEA)** – based in Jobcentre Plus offices and have specialist knowledge and experience of issues faced by disabled people in trying to find and/or keep a job, providing a range of services including in-depth job seeking advice, referrals to job support and advice to employers.

Total budget is around £140million per year. For this expenditure, there were the following outcomes:

- Job introduction scheme – 750 individuals supported
- WORKSTEP – 17,000 individuals supported
- Work Preparation – 7,500 individuals supported
- Access to work – 24,000 individuals supported

Whilst noting improvements to the employment rate of disabled people, it is also felt that more could be done. Highlights of current approach are:

- Pathways to Work and introduction of ESA
- Recent skills paper following up Lord Leitch report
- Creation of Office for Disability Issues
- Introduction of Disability Equality Duty
- Health Work and Wellbeing strategy

They want to work with other public, private and voluntary sector organisations, including devolved administrations to link up employment services delivered by different organisations, help disabled people access the right support regardless of who funds particular services and ensure that there are fewer obstacles and delays to people receiving the right support. Thus, they ask for opinions of how services covered by this consultation could provide a better fit with other locally delivered services and local partnership arrangements, for example, Individual Budgets and employment opportunities for learning disabled people.

### **Case for change**

Both the National Audit Office and PM Strategy Unit have identified the need for improvement in these services. Following on from the respective recommendations, the department highlights the following key concepts as crucial:

- a greater focus on those who need specialist support;
- less prescription and greater flexibility;
- better links between elements of provision;
- better consistency and quality of provision;
- provision for all types of disability;
- a greater focus on job entries;
- improved support for people in work;
- improved progression to unsupported employment; and
- improved progression within longer-term supported employment.

**A greater focus on those who need specialist support** – ensuring that disabled people’s views are considered from the outset in designing future services such as the flexible New Deal. Review training and guidance for all staff so they are better able to make appropriate referrals. Consider making arrangements for DEAs to be single point of contact for referring customers to specialist disability employment provision.

**Less prescription and greater flexibility** – period of Work Preparation could be extended, as could WORKSTEP. Job Introduction Scheme subsidy will only be payable where it is linked to direct adjustment and tied to more practical hands-on support.

**Better links between elements of provision** – Enhance role of DEA in developing support package at the start of the process and merge Work

Preparation and WORKSTEP type support under one contract. Also, raise positive benefits of Access to Work being paired with full range of employment programmes.

**Better consistency and quality of provision** – reduce the number of contracts so that contract managers can focus on these issues, as well as developing feedback mechanisms so that customers and representatives can provide their views about quality of provision.

**Provision for all types of disability** – rather than have contracts focusing on one single disability, they want to ensure contracts genuinely cover all types of disability, including those with greater support needs and that they do not lose the expertise of smaller specialist disability specific providers.

**A greater focus on job entries** – of 7,500 people a year supported under Work Preparation, only 1,600 enter employment within 6 months. Thus, where an individual is likely to require supported employment, it is believed that it would help significantly in their journey back to work if this is identified at an early stage, as well as better integration to help people keep their jobs.

**Improved support for people in work** – see ‘Access to Work’ section below.

**Improved progression to unsupported employment** – need to do more to move people from supported employment into a position where they can maintain that employment independently of external support. In 2004/05, 18% of WORKSTEP clients progressed to sustainable unsupported employment within a two-year period. Need to raise awareness of this ambition as well as looking at the financial incentives to achieve this goal.

**Improved progression within longer-term supported employment** – for some people, it may be unrealistic to expect them to progress to independent unsupported employment – even so, they should still be helped to progress as much as possible. Piloting a Distance Travelled toll to help providers and customers keep track of their goals and progress in meeting them.

**Question 1** – are there any points in the evidence-base that you strongly agree or disagree with?

**Question 2** – do you agree that disabled people should only be directed to specialist disability employment provision where it is unlikely that other programmes, such as New Deal, would be effective?

### **Integrated flexible support**

It is proposed to combine Job Introduction Scheme, Work Preparation and WORKSTEP into a single integrated programme with 3 clear support functions. This will be available to any disabled customer regardless of which benefit they

claim. A DEA will establish suitability for the programme and identify an initial package of support covering one, or a combination of, the proposed programme's three main elements. These are:

1. Work Entry
2. Transitional Supported Employment
3. Longer-Term Supported Employment

There would be flexibility to adapt to new circumstances if adjustments to the initial package need to be made but from the point of view of the individual concerned, they will be experiencing one single package of support.

**Work Entry** – this will focus on resolving disability-related issues and improved levels of specialist disability understanding, including vocational guidance and action planning, confidence building, job search advice and support with applications and so on. Service providers will be expected to check that individuals have settled into a workplace, that transport is ok, that appropriate benefits advice is delivered as well as agreeing a support plan with the employee and employer, etc.

**Supported employment (SE)** – this will be separated into two distinct strands as noted above, transitional SE and longer-term SE. Under both types of support, it is expected that close working will occur between the provider, the disabled person, their employer and in many cases, their co-workers. Cash incentives are not ruled out but they should be time limited and clearly linked to an agreed support plan demonstrating how the employee will be supported by such a payment. Key types of support could include taking on job coach roles to help people adapt to new work tasks, delivering disability awareness training to employers and co-workers and so on.

**Transitional supported employment** – individuals coming under this strand are thought likely to be able to progress to unsupported employment and will be given a service that lasts up to 2 years. If someone's condition deteriorates over time, it is expected that the DEA should identify this and consider moving the person onto the longer-term support.

**Longer-terms supported employment** – in some cases, where the need for long-term support is very specific e.g. sign language interpretation, it may be more appropriate to provide support through Access to Work. Again, the DEA will be tasked with making such decisions. In other cases though, DWP state that they do not want to limit anyone's prospects with this provision. So it is felt important that alongside the goal of helping people maintain their employment and progress within their job, the aspiration of independent working is there for all, although for some people needing longer term support, this will not be expected to be their primary focus. Thus, regular checks will be made to ensure individuals are receiving a quality service and appropriate levels of support.

**Who will deliver the programme?** Open competitive tendering with the public, private and voluntary sectors will take place, with sub-contractors ensuring diversity of provision. Questions are raised as to the preferred size of each contract area and the preferred lengths of contracts.

**Role of supported businesses** – They are considering some contractual protection to approximately 3,000 supported businesses currently in use with the WORKSTEP programme. This could, for example, take the form of guaranteeing a level of funding for each of the places over the course of the contract. However, noting progressions under WORKSTEP being generally low or non-existent, any support will be on the basis of offering protection due to their unique historical position, the position of their disabled employees and the particular difficulties they face in reforming in the short timeframe.

As an interim step, it is proposed to help existing supported businesses to modernise by stipulating that any future requests for Factory Support Grant funding under WORKSTEP were focused on ways to modernise the businesses to produce greater numbers of progressions to unsupported employment and to produce a greater quality of service for people progressing within the support.

- Question 3** - Are there points of our overall proposal to replace the Job Introduction Scheme (JIS), Work Preparation and WORKSTEP with a single programme that you either strongly agree with or strongly disagree with?
- Question 4** - For the Work Entry element of the proposed new programme – how could we best ensure that our providers focus their efforts on all their customers and not just those most likely to get a job?
- Question 5** - For the Transitional Supported Employment element of the proposed new programme – is it right that we should introduce a greater focus on helping people progress off the provision and what safeguards and flexibilities would you like to see included?
- Question 6** - For the Longer-Term Supported Employment element of the proposed new programme – how can we best ensure that providers work closely with employers and individual disabled people to help them develop in their job whilst on the provision?
- Question 7** - What should we do to ensure that consistently high quality standards are delivered?
- Question 8** - What else can we do to improve the way in which DWP's supported employment services for disabled people are delivered?
- Question 9** - What role do you think supported businesses/factories should have in providing employment for disabled people?
- Question 10** - If we go ahead with these reforms, do you believe we should offer some protection to supported businesses when we tender for the new programme? If so, what form should this protection take and how long should it last for?

**Question 11** - We are proposing to initially transform the WORKSTEP Factory Support Grant (FSG) to focus on modernising services to deliver better progressions within and outside the programme. This would be instead of, for example, buying new factory equipment. Eventually we would like to spend this money directly on helping more individuals onto the proposed new programme. What are your views on this proposal?

**Question 12** - We are considering holding an open competitive tender for contracts. For some of our current WORKSTEP customers this could mean their employment support transferring to another provider. What would we need to consider and what actions do you think we would need to take to help make any such transfers a success?

**Question 13** - How do you think we could best ensure that we retain the skills of smaller and specialist providers in the proposed open competitive tender of this programme?

**Question 14** - Are there other specific issues that we would need to consider in moving to a competitive tender for this provision?

## **DEA role**

DEAs will undertake the primary role of deciding which aspects of the support programmes any particular individual would benefit from receiving, as noted above. Consideration is being given to giving greater emphasis on the role that DEAs have in developing, with their customers, high-level action plans that identify key goals and the main elements of support that a customer can use to get into and retain work. Action plans should be made in partnership with support from social services and education and training providers where appropriate. These plans should not be set in stone, in order that changes in someone's life circumstances can be included where appropriate.

They are looking to ensure all customers are aware of the DEA role in terms of feeding back experiences about programmes of support, as well as opening up more formal channels of communications between DEAs and contract managers of external services. However, this role must not be at the expense of other important core roles in advising and supporting individuals and employers.

**Question 15** - We are proposing that only Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) would be able to refer individuals to the proposed new programme. What are your views on this proposal?

**Question 16** - Do you believe that DEAs should have a higher profile role for people to feedback on the support they receive from our externally delivered provision?

**Question 17** - If you have used the Jobcentre Plus DEA service to help you find or retain suitable employment, what aspects of the service do you like and are there aspects that you think could be improved?

**Question 18** - As an employer or provider of our services, in what ways, if any, do you currently use the Jobcentre Plus DEA service to help you employ or retain

disabled people in employment? What aspects of the service do you like and are there aspects that you think could be improved?

## **Access to Work**

Access to Work has 4 main elements to it:

- Special Aids and Equipment
- Adaptations to premises and equipment
- Support workers/communication support at interview
- Travel to work, including taxi fares.

£60million was spent on Access to Work in 2006/07, with 24,000 disabled people being helped to take up and/or remain in work, as well as a further 16,000 people continuing to directly benefit from support provided previously under the Special Aids and Equipment section. There is not thought to be an evidence base for suggesting major changes to the scheme, although there is scope to improve it.

Reform is already underway to improve the speed, quality and consistency of service that people receive. Notwithstanding this work, DWP have combined two main approaches to ongoing reform:

- first, in recognition that of the need to strengthen the evidence-base on Access to Work, an external research organisation has been commissioned to conduct a thorough evaluation of the programme's delivery, with interim findings expected in Spring 2008; and
- second, use the opportunity of this consultation to ask for views about Access to Work from a wide range of stakeholders, including disabled people, Access to Work recipients and employers.

Key themes are thought to be:

- Speed of delivery
- Consistency of decision-making – national standards and flexibility
- Reaching more customers
- Employer contributions
- Public sector use of Access to Work

**Question 19** - If you have recent experience of our Access to Work provision, what aspects did you like the most and do you have any suggestions for improving the service?

**Question 20** - What can we do to ensure Access to Work is used more effectively to meet the needs of individuals?

**Question 21** - How would you try to better balance the need for consistency of decision-making in Access to Work across the country with benefits of local flexibility?

**Question 22** - How can we more effectively focus Access to Work on adjustments/support beyond that which an employer should make as a reasonable adjustment under the Disability Discrimination Act?

**Question 23** - Do you believe that we should increase employer contributions to Access to Work adjustments as long as the savings are reinvested in the programme?

**Question 24** - Are there more innovative ways in which we could make better use of the private and third sectors in delivering Access to Work?

**Question 25** - Ministerial Government Departments are now directly funding Access to Work adjustments for their disabled staff. What are your views on other public sector organisations paying for such adjustments if any savings were reinvested in the programme?

### **In summary**

In summary, DWP want to reach a position where all disabled people have access to the right level of support to help them prepare for, enter and/or retain employment. As part of this, they want to:

- improve the capability of all provision to help disabled people into sustainable employment;
- ensure that all specialist disability provision is reserved for those whose support needs are not met by other provision; and
- ensure that their programmes are better targeted on the individual needs of disabled people and employers to improve their ability to help disabled people live fulfilling and independent lives.

**Question 26** - How do you feel we can improve the way these services work with other locally delivered services and/or local partnership arrangements?

**Question 27** - We are committed to producing a full Equality Impact Assessment on the final proposals and would value your input in this area. Do you have any specific comments on the impact of the proposals put forward in this consultation on particular individuals or groups?

**Question 28** - Please let us know your views about any other aspect of this consultation

The formal consultation period will last for 14 weeks from 03 December 2007 and responses must be received by close of business on 10 March 2008.

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Full details of consultation paper, including various formats, is available at [www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/des-consultation.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/des-consultation.asp)