

Touchbase

July 2012

Welcome to your monthly e-zine!



Welcome to the July edition of Touchbase. We are now into summer, although the weather needs reminding! We are also now less than a month away from the start of the Olympics. DWP has played an important role in supporting the Games and we have details of the work being done to get people into Games-related jobs.

We have two articles looking at examples of where DWP's work is helping people. Wage incentives are helping companies to take on new staff and we hear from these companies about their new recruits. Also, we have details of four new case studies that show how the principles of Social Justice are being followed locally.

I hope you find Touchbase useful. I would like to thank you for completing our survey last month. We are now looking through the responses and I will report back in a future edition.

If you have any suggestions for future articles and topics we should cover, please tell us. If you would like to contribute to a future edition, for example giving others an overview of your organisation's work, send an email with the details.

You and your colleagues can register for an e-alert which you will receive when Touchbase is published on the [DWP Advisers and Intermediaries website](#).

Look out for the August edition of Touchbase at the start of next month.

 To provide feedback on Touchbase email corporate.stakeholders@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

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Universal Credit

Further information on the Pathfinder

On 24 May 2012 DWP announced that Universal Credit will go live in the Greater Manchester and Cheshire area six months before national roll-out. The Pathfinder will take place in Tameside, Oldham, Wigan and Warrington from April 2013.

The early roll-out of the Government's flagship new benefit system is expected to see up to 1,500 new Universal Credit claimants coming on stream across these four areas each month.

It will test the new simpler, single benefit payment system with local authorities, employers and claimants, in a live environment before Universal Credit is rolled out across the country in October 2013.

The Secretary of State Iain Duncan Smith said:

“By sweeping away the complexities of the current benefit system, Universal Credit will be simpler and more straightforward for people to claim and this early roll out marks a significant step in the delivery of our welfare reforms.

“The early introduction of Universal Credit demonstrates our ongoing commitment to transforming the welfare system and will improve the lives of millions of claimants by incentivising work and making work pay.”

Work will continue over the coming months to ensure that Jobcentres, local authorities and employers in the Greater Manchester and Cheshire region are geared up to support the new service ahead of the early roll out in April.

Ministers have also confirmed that Universal Credit will be introduced across Britain, starting on a small scale in every region from October 2013 and building up capacity to April 2014, when all new claims to the current benefits and credits will be entirely phased out.

People who have recently lost their jobs and are closest to the labour market will be the first to make a claim for Universal Credit, with the majority making claims online rather than by telephone or face to face.



More information about [Universal Credit](#) is available on the [DWP website](#).

Personal Independence Payment

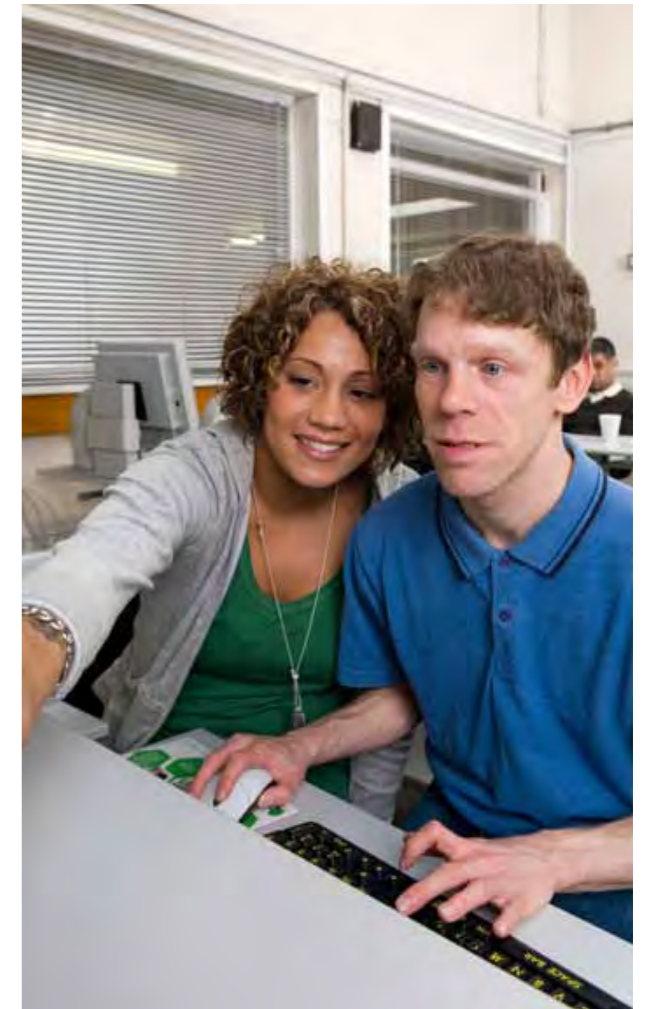
What support do you need from DWP to prepare?

DWP wants to make sure that organisations who represent and advise claimants have the information, tools, guidance and support that they need for the introduction of Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

It is important for DWP to understand the level of information organisations need and how they would prefer to receive that information.

Many organisations have already given feedback via DWP partner managers and other engagement routes. However, we would still like to hear ideas about:

- What information organisations need about PIP to support and advise claimants
- How DWP should provide that information, for example through written communications or face to face events such as conferences and roadshows
- What opportunities there might be to build on existing engagement between DWP partner managers and local organisations in this area.



Send an [email to DWP](#) with your ideas about the information your organisation needs about PIP.

Olympic and Paralympic Games

DWP's role in supporting the Games

The Olympic and Paralympic Games have created 100,000 jobs and volunteering opportunities across Britain, with massive long-term employment opportunities to come.

There are over 30,000 short-term contractor vacancies and 70,000 volunteers will play a key role in making the Games a success. These opportunities will give people work experience, increasing their future employment prospects.

A dedicated Jobcentre Plus employer engagement team has been in place for four years ensuring people have had access to these opportunities. Pre-employment support has been provided to ensure people are ready to compete for the jobs. Help has also been given to people to get accreditation to work on Games sites.

Jobs are still being filled. By 21 May 2012, Games jobs had been offered to 12,450 people from the host boroughs. Looking at recruitment in general, 34 per cent of people recruited were previously unemployed.

“There are over 30,000 short-term contractor vacancies and 70,000 volunteers will play a key role in making the Games a success.”

Longer term, billions of pounds will be invested in Olympic legacy projects through which DWP will aim to raise employment levels in east London towards the capital's average.

DWP aims to deliver its services as normal during the Games period of 16 July to 14 September 2012, by continuing to support jobseekers in actively looking for work and making sure claimants receive their benefits. Detailed plans are in place for offices in areas that will be affected by the Games, such as east London and Weymouth. Every office manager in the country has been asked to make plans to manage any impact on services by the Games.

DWP has committed to reduce staff travel and hotel bookings nationwide by 50 per cent during the Games. Staff have been asked to:

- Use alternative routes to work
- Work from other offices or home
- Vary their working patterns
- Make more use of video and telephone conferencing.

Wage incentives

Helping young people find work

Young unemployed people have been given a chance to move into work thanks to employers taking advantage of a wage incentive scheme.

Launched in April 2012 by the Government, the Youth Contract is a £1 billion package of support to help young people prepare for work and find a job. Youth Contract wage incentives, worth up to £2,275 each are making it easier for employers to offer sustained employment to young jobseekers. The wage incentive is payable to businesses taking on an 18 to 24 year-old for at least 26 weeks from the Work Programme. It allows companies to increase their workforce.

Halletts Convenience Store in Cleethorpes was looking to expand. Work Programme provider i2i explained to store owner Derek Hallett how the wage incentive scheme worked. Lucas, who was struggling to find work, was put forward by i2i. He was selected for an interview and was delighted when he got the job. Lucas is now working permanently as a shop assistant.

Derek Hallett is very pleased with Lucas and how easy the process was, saying: “The wage incentive has encouraged me to give a chance to a younger person that I otherwise could not have done. The whole process went smoothly and Lucas is a real asset to the team.”

Instant Logistics, a Birmingham-based distribution company was unsure how to find the right person for a vacancy until they spoke to Work Programme provider Pertemps People Development Group (PPDG). PPDG listened to what the



company's director, Paul Fisher needed, and advised how wage incentives could help. Paul explained: “I feel that younger people often get a bad press when it comes to employment. The majority just want an opportunity to show what they can do. The wage incentive scheme has made it possible for us to take on two new starters.”

One of the new starters is 23 year-old Katie. She started working on reception and is now learning about administration and filing systems, providing quotations and dealing with suppliers. Katie is really enjoying her role, and said: “I'm taking on additional training and improving my maths so that I can progress. I want to learn the whole process. This is an exciting challenge!”

Paul Fisher feels the scheme is an all round positive experience, adding: “It's the ideal vehicle, which I've already mentioned to six managing directors I know. I'll be returning to recruit again through the scheme.”



Read more about the [wage incentive scheme](#) on the DWP website.

Mandatory Work Activity and work experience

Support for claimants with different needs

Mandatory Work Activity

Through Mandatory Work Activity (MWA), DWP is giving extra support to a small number of Jobseeker's Allowance claimants who would benefit from the experience of a short period of work activity. Claimants will:

- Become familiar again with the working environment
- Re-focus on searching for jobs
- Get experience such as attending on time and regularly, carrying out specific tasks and working under supervision.

Jobcentre Plus advisers have the flexibility to use MWA, where they feel this is appropriate, as part of a wider range of support. This approach helps to make sure that all claimants receive the personalised, responsive support that they need to find work.

Placements are for up to 30 hours a week, last for four weeks and make a contribution to the local community. During the placement, claimants continue to receive Jobseeker's Allowance and are expected to continue looking for work.

Sanctions can be applied to claimants who do not take up or complete a mandatory work placement, without good cause. This could be the removal of benefit for three months for a first offence or six months for a later offence.

From May 2011 until the end of February 2012, there were 49,640 referrals to MWA. Of these referrals, 16,790 people started on MWA during the same period.

On 12 June 2012 the Government announced it is to expand the scheme, adding around 9,000 more places. This will make a total of 28,000 available places each year. The expansion will allow advisers to make between 60,000 and 70,000 referrals to MWA each year, based on current experience of the scheme.

Work experience

Work experience is part of the Get Britain Working package of measures. It is for Jobseeker's Allowance claimants:

- Aged 16 and 17 from day one of claiming benefit
- Aged 18 to 24 after 13 weeks of claiming benefit
- In exceptional circumstances, those aged 25 and over. This is at the adviser's discretion.

“Work experience gives young people work-related skills and improves their opportunities to get jobs in future.”



It is aimed at people who have little or no experience of the workplace, and who need to get and develop skills.

Work experience opportunities last for between two and eight weeks, for 25 to 30 hours a week. This is unless there is an agreed availability restriction on the jobseeker's agreement. Where the host employer offers an apprenticeship, and it is accepted by the claimant, the opportunity can be extended by up to four more weeks. This allows time for the necessary administration to be done to put the apprenticeship in place.

Work experience gives young people work-related skills and improves their opportunities to get jobs in future. Participation is completely voluntary, although a sanction will apply if the young person is dismissed for gross misconduct. Work experience opportunities are provided by employers in both the public and private sectors.

There are 100,000 funded spaces available each year over the next three years to March 2015. Between January 2011 and February 2012, 49,740 people started a work experience placement.

Computer-completed Statement of Fitness for Work

Introduction of a new style of fit note

The Statement of Fitness for Work, or fit note, is designed to help GPs give more helpful advice to their patients on fitness for work and on ways to help their return to work.

Using the fit note, a GP can show when a patient may be able to return to work following a period of sickness absence. The note can also provide advice on the effects of a patient's health condition on their capability for work. This helps employers understand how they might be able to support staff when discussing their return to work.

From early July, GPs can complete fit notes on their computer, print them, and give them to their patients.

Once printed, signed and issued by the GP, the computer-completed note will be used in the same way as the handwritten note. There are no changes to the rules and processes for fit notes, sick pay or benefit applications.

The computer-controlled note cannot be sent electronically, for example by email from a GP to a patient, or from an individual to their employer or DWP. This is because the information is for the patient in the first instance, not the employer or DWP. It is the patient's responsibility to use the note to tell the employer or DWP.

The computer-completed note will contain the same information as the handwritten note, with the current 'front' and 'back' of the A5 handwritten fit note printed side-by-side on single-sided A4 paper.

GPs will still use the handwritten A5 fit note when they are on a home visit or before their IT system has been upgraded. Hospital doctors will only use the handwritten note.

Existing fit note guidance will be revised by the end of 2012.

 **More information about [fit notes](#) is available on the [DWP website](#).**

Other news in brief...

Tax Credits claim renewals deadline


People claiming tax credits who need to renew their claim must do so before the deadline of 31 July 2012. If people do not renew their claim by this date their money will stop and they will have to pay money back. Please remind people to renew as soon as possible.

Around four million people need to reply by the deadline, and the helpline will be very busy taking renewals over the phone. People may find it easier to renew by post by completing the declaration form that came with the renewals pack.

 More information about [Tax Credits](#) is available on the HMRC website.

Benefit cap

DWP recently contacted all claimants they believed will potentially be affected by the benefit cap, which will be introduced in April 2013.

 To help claimants assess the impact of the cap on their personal circumstances, an [online calculator](#) is now available on the Directgov website.

 Further information about the [benefit cap](#) is available on the DWP website.

Industrial Injuries Advisory Council Annual Report

The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC) provides advice to ministers about industrial injuries scheme benefits. This covers which occupational diseases and jobs should give entitlement to Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit.

The Council's 2011/12 Annual Report was published on 21 June 2012. It contains a summary of the work the Council completed during the last year and highlights some of the topics they are taking forward in 2012/13.

 The [IIAC Annual Report](#) is available on the IIAC website.

Amendment to Prescribed Disease D10: primary carcinoma of the lung

From 1 August 2012, coke oven workers will be included in the list of those who are eligible to claim Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit for Prescribed Disease D10: primary carcinoma of the lung.

To be entitled, people must have worked mainly as a coke oven worker for at least five years in top oven work or at least 15 years in other oven work. If people have worked fewer years on both types of oven work, then the time spent on both can be added together to help them qualify.

Other news in brief...

Changes to the out of work process involving Tax Credits

DWP tells HMRC about all new claims to benefit when Working Tax Credit/Child Tax Credit (WTC/CTC) is involved.

From 26 June 2012, nine contact centres in north east England and Scotland started to pilot a new process. The revised process uses an electronic template which will be sent by email from DWP to HMRC. This tells HMRC about people becoming out of work and making a claim to benefit. The new process will be rolled out nationally over the next few months.


The change is being introduced as the telephone-based process that is used has a low success rate, causing benefit errors and overpayments.

Social Justice case studies

Three new case studies have been published on the Social Justice area of the DWP website. They are:

- Ex-Cell – How Bobbie went from being an ex-offender to a mentor for recently released female prisoners
- Centrepoint – Emilyn’s journey from being homeless at 17 to graduating from university in 2012
- Making Every Adult Matter – How a coalition of four national charities are helping Lee to move from a chaotic existence to working and giving back to his community.

Over the coming year DWP will be talking to people who are delivering services for people with multiple disadvantages.

 More information, including the case studies, is available on the [Social Justice section](#) of the DWP website.