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Help to Work: post-Work Programme provision for the long-term unemployed

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Summary

Since April 2014, unemployed people leaving the Work Programme (the Government's main welfare-to-work scheme) are required to participate in Help to Work.

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants who have not secured lasting employment after two years on the Work Programme will be referred to one of three options:

- Daily work search reviews – claimants attend the jobcentre daily;
- Community Work Placements – claimants undertake work placements of benefit to the local community;
- Mandatory Intervention Regime – claimants receive more intensive support from Jobcentre Plus advisers, aimed at addressing individuals' specific barriers to work with greater flexibility as to the types of support offered.

This note discusses how the scheme is being delivered and how it works for claimants. It also looks at the evidence from a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) trailblazer scheme which informed the measures in Help to Work.

1. What is Help to Work?

Help to Work is a package of measures intended to help long-term unemployed people into work. It affects Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants who leave the [Work Programme](#) (the Government's main welfare-to-work scheme) without finding long-term employment. Claimants will be referred to one of three options:¹

Attending the Jobcentre every day

The daily meeting with their adviser would include discussing the progress made in looking for work, such as the number of job searches or applications made, or new activity to improve their skills base. It is designed for claimants who would benefit from regular support with looking for jobs, including those who need to build motivation, momentum and engagement. Currently, a claimant only needs to attend once every 2 weeks.

Community work placements

Claimants who lack work experience - and where this is felt to be holding them back from finding a job - may be asked to undertake a placement, which will also benefit their local community. This would include a range of roles in the voluntary and community sector that will give the claimant skills and experience within the work place. This could include gardening projects, running community cafes or even restoring historical sites and war memorials.

The placements will be for up to 6 months for 30 hours a week and will be backed up by at least 4 hours of supported job searching each week to help turn the experience into full time employment.

Intensive Jobcentre support [Mandatory Intervention Regime]

For jobseekers with multiple or complex barriers to work the Jobcentre Plus advisers will spend more time with the claimant looking at how to tailor back-to-work support, with more flexibility to send people on intensive training schemes, ad hoc funding to overcome issues blocking a return to work such as initial travel costs or suitable clothes for a job interview, and referrals to work experience opportunities with local organisations.

Jobcentre Plus advisers will decide which option is most appropriate for each claimant based on the information provided in the claimant's Work Programme exit report (prepared by the Work Programme provider when the claimant completes their time on the programme). It is intended that around a third of claimants will be referred to each Help to Work measure.²

Claimants required to attend the Jobcentre daily will have to do so for three months while Community Work Placements will last for six months. The Mandatory Intervention Regime does not last for a set

¹ Gov.uk website, [Help to Work: nationwide drive to help the long-term unemployed into work](#), 30 April 2014

² DWP, *Community Work Placements: Specification and Supporting Information*, version v.10

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period of time, so that claimants will continue on this option for as long as they claim benefit. People who complete one of the other Help to Work measures and are still claiming JSA will be moved on to the Mandatory Intervention Regime.³

The annual cost of the scheme is estimated at £190 million in 2014/15 and £230 million in 2015/16, as set out in the 2013 Autumn Statement.⁴ Community Work Placements will be part-funded by European Social Fund.

1.1 Who takes part?

Help to Work affects JSA claimants who complete the Work Programme and are still on benefits. The Government expects around 200,000 JSA claimants will be referred to Help to Work each year.⁵

JSA claimants are referred to the Work Programme within a year of starting their claim, and then remain on the Work Programme for two years.⁶ Consequently, some claimants referred to Help to Work will have spent a long time on benefit – up to three years. There will also be participants who commenced employment while on the Work Programme but have subsequently returned to benefit.⁷

DWP points out, "Claimants who do not find sustained employment during their time on the Work Programme will be among the hardest to help, and many will face significant and multiple barriers to work."⁸

1.2 Benefit sanctions

Participation in Help to Work is mandatory and claimants who fail to take part may face benefit sanctions. Sanctioned claimants may lose their JSA for four weeks in the first instance and for thirteen weeks in the second instance.⁹

Providers of Community Work Placements are required to notify DWP within 24 hours should a claimant fail to undertake an activity as mandated. A DWP Decision Maker will then decide if a sanction should

³ DWP *Touchbase* e-zine, October 2013, [New measures to get long-term unemployed into work](#)

⁴ HM Treasury, [Autumn Statement 2013](#), Cm 8747, Table 2.1. Costs had previously been estimated at £300 million per year – see for example a Treasury press release, [Help to Work](#), 30 September 2013, via PoliticsHome.com [accessed 20 May 2014]

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Claimants are referred to the Work Programme at different points in their claim, depending on their age and circumstances. JSA claimants aged 25 and over (the largest Work Programme customer group) are referred after they have been claiming for twelve months; claimants aged 18-24 are referred after nine months. Some groups are referred at an earlier stage – for example JSA claimants who were previously in receipt of Incapacity Benefits are referred when they have been claiming JSA for three months. Further information on the Work Programme can be found in [House of Commons Library standard note SN06340](#).

⁷ In the twelve months to April 2014, around 85,000 people passed the three year-point in their JSA claim. 126,000 passed the two year-point in their JSA claim. (Source: ONS Nomis and Library calculations.)

⁸ DWP, [Community Work Placements Information Pack for Delivery Partners](#), 4 November 2013, para 2.2

⁹ Gov.uk website, [Help to Work: nationwide drive to help the long-term unemployed into work](#), 30 April 2014

be applied.¹⁰ A Treasury press release explains that this will allow sanctions to be applied more quickly.¹¹

¹⁰ DWP, [Community Work Placements: Specification and Supporting Information](#), version v.10, para 2.76-80

¹¹ HM Treasury press release, [Help to Work](#), 30 September 2013, via PoliticsHome.com [accessed 20 May 2014]

2. Community Work Placements

Unlike the other Help to Work measures, Community Work Placements are delivered by external providers rather than by Jobcentre Plus.

Community Work Placements are targeted at claimants who have little work experience or are lacking motivation.

2.1 What will placements involve for claimants?

Claimants are required to undertake a work placement of community benefit for 30 hours a week, for up to six months. DWP explains:¹²

2.53 Work placements must be supervised, with tasks similar to those that a claimant might experience in a normal working environment and should encourage the development of crucial disciplines associated with sustained employment, while at the same time making a contribution to the community.

Once a claimant is referred to the provider, they must start on a placement within 20 working days. DWP expects claimants “to start placements as soon as possible” but acknowledges that in some circumstances these first 20 working days may be needed to prepare claimants for their placement.¹³

Claimants must also spend four to ten hours a week on jobsearch led by the provider, additional to time spent on the work placement. Consequently claimants will be engaged either on a work placement or in jobsearch for a total of 34-40 hours a week. Jobsearch may encompass a range of activities, tailored to suit individual claimants’ needs:¹⁴

2.63 Provider-led jobsearch must be tailored to each individual and should focus on the claimant gaining and enhancing the skills required to sustain employment. It MUST include weekly jobsearch activity including career guidance and the development of a CV (upon completion of the programme the claimant MUST have an up to date CV). Provider-led jobsearch may also include, improving communications, mock interviews, completing application forms, workshops and training (this list is not exhaustive).

While participating in work placements, claimants must continue to sign on at the Jobcentre (generally this will be on a fortnightly basis).¹⁵

Community benefit

Placements “must be additional to existing or expected vacancies”, so that they do not displace jobs that the host organisation would

¹² DWP, [Community Work Placements: Specification and Supporting Information](#), version v.10, para 2.53

¹³ DWP, [Community Work Placements: DWP Provider Guidance](#) (version 1), 27 May 2014, para 3.01-2

¹⁴ DWP, [Community Work Placements: DWP Provider Guidance](#) (version 1), 27 May 2014, para 2.39

¹⁵ Ibid, para 4.25

otherwise pay someone to do.¹⁶ Rather than relying on existing work placements, DWP has advised that providers should seek out new projects of community benefit:¹⁷

2.34 Providers should look to identify, support and create new projects that will be of benefit to the community.

2.35 Providers should outline in their tender how they intend to create placements and stimulate this emerging market not simply relying on existing work placements, and how they intend to work with the voluntary community sector and local community to do this.

DWP have specified that there should be a variety of placement roles, "avoiding as far as possible the dominance of roles in charity shops seen in similar existing provision". Therefore there will be a limit on the proportion of placements occurring in charity shops:¹⁸

2.29 DWP are looking for a diverse range of placement roles, and do not want providers overly relying on retail placements within charity shops as seen in similar existing provision. Therefore DWP require providers to ensure no more than 25% of completed work placement weeks involve claimants undertaking retail duties within charity shops. DWP will measure completed placement weeks to monitor and validate the 25% cap.

Travel and other costs

Providers are responsible for funding the travel costs of claimants participating in work placements. Further details as to the costs providers are expected to meet, including childcare, are set out in paragraphs 2.19-2.32 of the [Community Work Placements Provider Guidance](#).

2.2 Providers and contracts

Individual providers are responsible for delivering the scheme within a specific geographical area. There are 18 contract package areas (CPAs) across England, Scotland and Wales with one provider in each. CPAs are the same as those used in the Work Programme.¹⁹

A [Government press release](#) details which provider is responsible for scheme delivery in each CPA. In six of the eighteen CPAs, community work placements are being delivered by G4S while Seetec holds the contract in five CPAs. In five CPAs, the Community Work Placements provider is the same as one of the prime providers for the Work Programme in that area.²⁰

¹⁶ DWP, [Community Work Placements: Specification and Supporting Information](#), version v.10, para 2.55-6

¹⁷ Ibid, para 2.34-5

¹⁸ Ibid, para 2.04, 2.29-30. However, DWP will not take action should providers exceed the 25% limit in the first two quarters of contracts, as stated in [Community Work Placements: DWP Provider Guidance](#), para 9.7.

¹⁹ Ibid, Annex 1

²⁰ The five CPAs where the Community Work Placements provider is also a prime provider of the Work Programme are: North East Yorkshire and the Humber (G4S); West Yorkshire (Interserve); East of England (Seetec); Wales (Working Links); and Manchester, Cheshire and Warrington (Seetec).

Payment model

Providers are paid based on the number of weeks the claimant spends in the placement (or in paid employment), with a further payment should the claimant enter and remain in employment for at least six months.

Providers are able to claim the following payments:

- A **Start fee** for each new claimant who joins the programme and starts a work placement (or alternatively goes straight into employment)
- A **Short Completion Outcome fee** for claimants who complete 12 weeks on a work placement (or in employment).
- A **Long Completion Outcome fee** for claimants who complete 22 weeks on a work placement (or in employment)
- A **Job Outcome fee** for claimants who remain in employment for a cumulative period of 26 weeks. For employment to count towards a job outcome, the claimant must have started that period of employment at most two weeks after leaving the scheme.

Start fees make up 20% of the total value of contracts; Short Completion Outcome fees 20%; Long Completion Outcome fees 30%; and Job Outcome fees 30%.²¹

DWP has set a target that 15% of claimants who start work placements will go on to achieve Job Outcomes.²² This is a demanding target. Only 11.6% of JSA claimants referred to the Work Programme between June 2011 and December 2012 had completed six months in employment within a year of referral. Additionally, claimants participating in Help to Work will already have been on benefit for a longer period of time than claimants on the Work Programme.²³

2.3 Involvement of charities

Some charities have refused to host work placements on the grounds that claimants should not be forced to do work that would in other circumstances be done by volunteers. Charities boycotting the scheme include Oxfam and the YMCA.²⁴

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) had previously suggested that charities must consider the possible reputational risk presented by the scheme and how it impacts upon their mission.²⁵

²¹ DWP, *Community Work Placements: Specification and Supporting Information*, version v.10, para 3.01-7

²² DWP, [Community Work Placements: DWP Provider Guidance](#) (version 1), 27 May 2014, para 9.7

²³ DWP business plan transparency measures, [Proportion of customers for whom providers have achieved a job outcome payment at 12 months on the Work Programme by payment group](#) and House of Commons Library calculations

²⁴ For example, see, [Jobless must sign on every day: Government to dock money from long-term unemployed if they do not comply](#), The Independent, 28 April 2014; [Help to Work: New unemployment rules in force](#), BBC, 28 April 2014

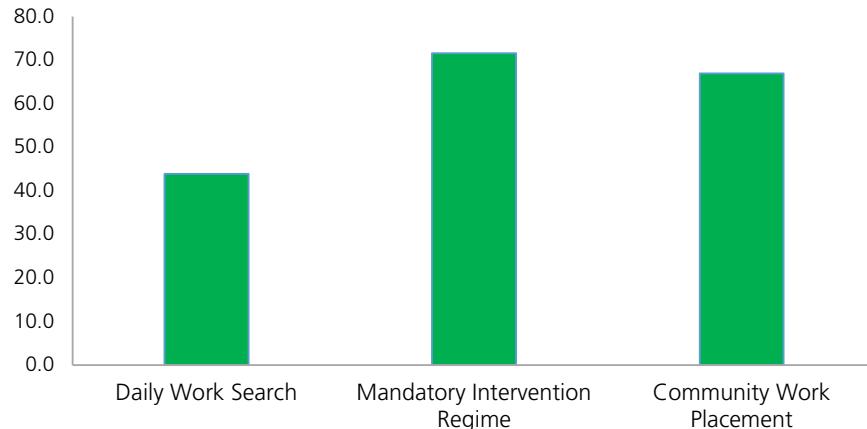
²⁵ Ramzi Suleiman, [Help to Work contracts – what to consider?](#), 4 December 2013

3. Statistics

Between April 2014 and September 2015 182,440 claimants have been referred to Help to Work:

Help to work referrals

Thousands, April 2014 to September 2015



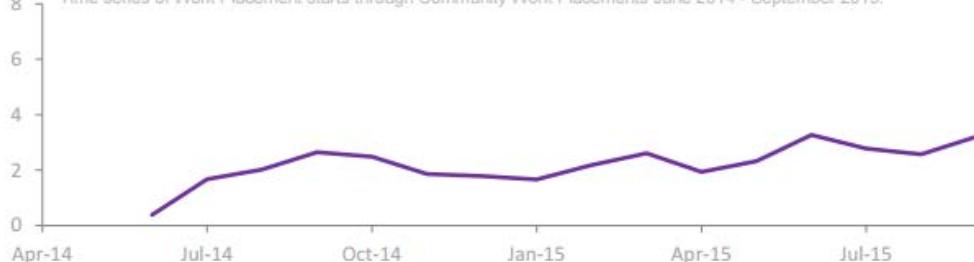
The majority of claimants have been referred to the Mandatory Intervention Regime (71,570) or a Community Work Placement (67,000). However, it should be noted that the three strands are not exclusive so an individual may show in both the Daily Work Search Regime and the Mandatory Intervention Regime, or in both the Community Work Placement strand and the Mandatory Intervention Regime. Also, a claimant who is still in the assessment stage of the programme may not show in any of the strands.

As the Community Work Placement strand is contracted out, the provider is expected to find a placement and the claimant expected to start that placement within twenty days.

In September 2015, over 3,000 people started a work placement – the highest monthly level since the scheme began:²⁶

Numbers starting a work placement are increasing over time.

Time series of Work Placement starts through Community Work Placements June 2014 - September 2015.



²⁶ DWP, [Help to Work: Quarterly Statistics](#), December 2015

4. ‘Support for the very long term unemployed’ trailblazer

The measures in Help to Work have been informed by a DWP trailblazer scheme which ran for nine months from November 2011 to July 2012 in four Jobcentre Plus districts. The trailblazer randomly allocated long-term claimants who had completed the Flexible New Deal programme to one of three groups:²⁷

Community Action Programme (CAP): a six-month work placement complemented by provider-led supported jobsearch. Providers were contracted by DWP to source placements for claimants which delivered a community benefit;

Ongoing Case Management (OCM): a more intensive offer of flexible and personalised adviser-based support, as well as a set of mandatory activities, delivered by Jobcentre Plus through increased adviser interventions for six months;

The control group (JCPO): fortnightly jobsearch reviews plus additional appointments with advisers based on advisers' discretion and access to a menu of back to work support [the 'standard' Jobcentre Plus Offer]

CAP and OCM are analogous to Community Work Placements and the Mandatory Intervention Regime.

DWP analysis of benefit and employment outcomes in the 91 weeks after claimants left the scheme found that:

- Claimants assigned to CAP and OCM spent fewer days in receipt of an out of work benefit during the 91 weeks than the control group – on average participants in the control group spent 509 days on benefit, while CAP participants spent 21 days fewer and OCM participants 26 days fewer. A decrease in the number of days spent on JSA was partially offset by an increase in time on ESA, Incapacity Benefit or Income Support.
- CAP/OCM participants spent more days in employment – claimants in the control group spent an average of 74 days in employment during the 91 weeks, but CAP participants spent nine days more and OCM participants ten days more on average.²⁸
- 64% of people assigned to OCM and 66% assigned to CAP were in receipt of any out-of-work benefit at 91 weeks, compared to 68% for the control group.
- The proportion of claimants in employment at 91 weeks was about the same across the three groups (18% for CAP and 19% for OCM compared to 18% for the control group).
- On average, CAP/OCM participants had a higher number of spells on benefit or in employment than those in the control group.²⁹

²⁷ Nilufer Rahim et al, [Evaluation of Support for the Very Long-Term Unemployed Trailblazer](#), DWP Research Report 824, 1 December 2012

²⁸ P45 employment only. Some employment spells will not be included – for example, if the individual was self-employed or was earning lower than the PAYE threshold.

²⁹ DWP, [Support for the very long term unemployed trailblazer: longer term analysis of benefit impacts](#), December 2013

Random referral meant some claimants were referred to CAP provision when they would have been better off in the OCM group. The analysis therefore concluded that CAP was “better suited to a tailored referral mechanism that selects only participants whose main barriers are a lack of recent work experience, motivation or work ethic.”

A qualitative evaluation for DWP also identified various ‘soft outcomes’. Claimants on OCM or who undertook CAP placements were more likely to report positive impacts on their motivation to work than participants in the control group or those CAP participants who were not placed. OCM participants were more likely to feel that the programme “helped them to overcome their barriers to work and to get closer to work”.³⁰

The evaluation identified the quality of adviser support as “a key factor in participants’ experiences” for both OCM and CAP. Participants valued continuity (working with the same adviser over a sustained period) as well as understanding of and empathy towards individuals’ circumstances on behalf of advisers, rather than a ‘one size fits all’ approach.³¹

³⁰ Nilufer Rahim et al, [Evaluation of Support for the Very Long-Term Unemployed Trailblazer](#), DWP Research Report 824, 1 December 2012, p4

³¹ Ibid, p5

5. Questions over effectiveness

Jonathan Portes of the National Institute for Economic and Social Research (NIESR) commented on the results of the trailblazer scheme, noting that “the small impacts of the programme mostly reflect the fact that this is just a very difficult client group to help back into work, with many people facing severe and/or multiple barriers”. He also challenged the assumption that the scheme could be used as a deterrent to staying on benefit, given the proportion of claimants who completed the trailblazer scheme:³²

The results provide absolutely no support for the idea that a substantial proportion of the long-term unemployed are, as Iain Duncan Smith [appears to believe](#), making a “lifestyle choice”, still less that they are working in the black economy or fraudulently claiming benefits. If they were, then one would think that being obliged to spend 6 months picking up litter, or similar, would sort them out and they would quickly leave benefits. But the peak benefit impact on those assigned to the CAP was just 5 percentage points, and almost 80 percent made it to the end of the programme.

Some commentators have questioned why Help to Work support is not delivered sooner into the participant’s benefit claim, given that participants will have already completed two years on the Work Programme. Jenny Gulliford and Beth Foley (of the Work Foundation) argue that claimants ought to already have received similar support during previous contact with Jobcentre Plus and Work Programme providers:³³

1) As the assessment points out, the group that will be in this programme are the people who, for the most part, have the most complex and severe barriers to work. Given that a third of all participants in the trailblazer cited health issues or disability as barrier to work, and 20% listed family or caring commitments, this is a group that’s going to need specialised support, not just harsher conditionality. As far as we are aware, none of the three proposed measures – work placements, training or intensive Jobcentre support – provide direct or specialist support to tackle these two major barriers to work. Indeed, participants should have already received these types of interventions during initial contact with JCP and the Work Programme, so the impact of offering the same again at this later stage is unclear.

They also note that tailored support was intended to be a feature of the Work Programme:

10) Finally, whilst we would recommend specialist support being available to this group, as we have [stressed previously](#), this is the type of more personalised intervention envisaged as part of the Work Programme. Attempts to address these support needs *after* participants have spent two years on the Work Programme suggests a poorly-designed system; early intervention, rather than long periods out of the labour market, is central to

³² Jonathan Portes, [The "Help to Work" pilots: success, failure or somewhere in between?](#), NIESR blog, 29 December 2013

³³ Jenny Gulliford and Beth Foley, [The new Help to Work scheme could use some work](#), LSE British Politics and Policy blog, 5 May 2014

effectively re-integrating those with complex barriers into sustainable employment. This is why it is vital to ensure the current underspend on support services within the Work Programme is reversed and that this help is provided at a much earlier stage.

Ramzi Suleiman of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations similarly questions why support should wait until claimants have left the Work Programme:³⁴

By leaving them on the Work Programme for two years, service users will be **even further from the labour market than when they were initially referred to it**. Not only have their fundamental barriers not been addressed but their morale and motivation would have negatively affected by the experience of **being parked**. NCVO would suggest – as we have in the past – that tailored support for those furthest from the labour market will help them overcome those barriers and towards employment. However, if this level of support is not being provided by the Work Programme, then ideally this specialist provision should be made available before service users are referred to the Work Programme.

³⁴ Ramzi Suleiman, [Key questions on Help to Work](#), NCVO blog, 23 October 2013

6. Background to the scheme

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, announced the new Help to Work scheme on 30 September 2013 at the Conservative Party Conference:³⁵

Today I can tell you about a new approach we're calling Help to Work. For the first time, all long term unemployed people who are capable of work will be required to do something in return for their benefits, and to help them find work.

They will do useful work putting something back into their community. Making meals for the elderly, clearing up litter, working for a local charity.

Others will be made to attend the job centre every working day. And for those with underlying problems, like drug addiction and illiteracy, there will be an intensive regime of support.

No one will be ignored or left without help. But no one will get something for nothing. Help to work – and in return work for the dole.

The commercial competition for contracts to deliver Community Work Placements was launched on 24 October 2013.³⁶ (The other options, daily signing and the Mandatory Intervention Regime, are delivered by Jobcentre Plus.)

The scheme went live on 28 April 2014 but the start date for the Community Work Placements option was delayed; DWP announced that referrals to Community Work Placements would instead commence at the end of May 2014 (although there has been no further official announcement).³⁷ Prior to the launch of Help to Work, JSA claimants who left the Work Programme between June 2013 and April 2014 had received support through the Mandatory Intervention Regime.

Options for post-Work Programme support for long-term unemployed people had previously been piloted in a DWP trailblazer scheme, which ran for nine months from November 2011 to July 2012 in four Jobcentre Plus districts (more details are given in section 3 of this note).

³⁵ Politics.co.uk, [George Osborne's conference speech in full](#), 30 September 2013 [accessed 12 May 2014].

A Treasury press release provided some further detail: [Help to Work scheme announced by the Government](#), 30 September 2013 [accessed 12 May 2014]

³⁶ DWP, [Community Work Placements Information Pack for Delivery Partners](#), 4 November 2013

³⁷ DWP *Touchbase* e-zine, May 2014, [Extra support to help long-term unemployed back to work](#)

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