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Your Ref:

Our Ref:

Rt Hon Frank Field MP (Chair)  
Work and Pensions Committee  
14 Tothill Street  
London  
SW1H 9NB

16 January 2017

*Dear Frank*

Your letter dated 20 December requests a number of clarifications to feed into your report on Employment Opportunities for Young People inquiry.

Responses to the six questions in your letter are provided below. The information is additional to the verbal evidence given on 12 December relating to the Youth Obligation and the Department's own apprenticeship and traineeship provision.

- 1. You explained that most of the provision that will be on offer as part of the Youth Obligation is available currently across the country (Q181); what are the additional programmes available to young people subject to the Youth Obligation?*

Final options for the Youth Obligation are still being discussed along with the Jobcentre Plus standard offer for claimants which is also under review. The additional offer for 18-21 year old claimants in the all work related conditionality group of UC full service will be tailored to individual need and is likely to include:

- From the initial diagnostic interview at day one they will participate in an intensive period of support, learning job-search & interview techniques and do structured work preparation. This structured curriculum including two workshops and a set of exercises will last approximately three weeks.
- Their work coach will then encourage them to apply for appropriate activities (an Apprenticeship, go on work related skills training, including sector-based work academy places and traineeships, or a work experience placement).
- There will be a face-to-face intervention at five months stage to review progress to date and job goals and suitable options at six months.

- After six months they will be expected to apply for an Apprenticeship, a traineeship, gain work-based skills employers value, or undertake some work of community value to give them the skills they need to get on in work.

*2. Will Work Coaches be allowed any discretion in referring young people to apprenticeships, traineeships or a Community Work Placement at the end of the six month Youth Obligation period?*

There is a clear expectation every young person will be referred to an activity but work coaches retain the flexibility to consider individual circumstances a claimant presents before referring them to undertake activity. Ultimately the diagnostic review at five months is a key decision point to facilitate outcomes.

A claimant must also be given reasonable time to make representation on why participation is inappropriate and may be able to demonstrate "good reason" for failing to participate. For example, it would be inappropriate to refer a claimant to a work placement if they have a job start date for the following week.

Tailored, flexible support will be provided to those in work, and who are still in the full conditionality group, but need to increase their earnings.

*3. What projections has the Department made of the numbers of young claimants who will access Community Work Placements at the end of the six month period?*

DWP are still working through the detailed design of the Youth Obligation provision at the six month point and planning assumptions are subject to change as part of the ongoing policy development.

*4. What steps is the Department taking to ensure that there are sufficient Community Work Placements available for young people who do not get an apprenticeship or traineeship after the Youth Obligation?*

In 2017/8 DWP Employment Advisers will source work placements from registered charities and public sector organisations. Considering whether to contract out this activity in subsequent years will partly depend on an assessment of assumptions and forecast volumes requiring this provision in subsequent years.

Employer Advisers will:

- recruit placement hosts
- undertake Health and Safety and other checks;
- monitor the quality of the placement, ensuring the placement is providing meaningful work experience;
- provide on-going support to the placement host and claimant;

- take appropriate action on any attendance/time keeping/behaviour issues.

DWP have tested operational readiness to deliver. We will be monitoring the demand for placements in live running and taking any appropriate action to ensure we have sufficient number of opportunities for claimants who lack the work experience they need to gain employment. .

*5. What training do Work Coaches receive that relates specifically to supporting young people?*

Work coaches will receive training to support a mixed caseload of claimants and will deal with specific cohorts such as young people.

Advice and guidance is available to work coaches in relation to different claimant groups (e.g., 18-21 year olds and older claimants), specific need (e.g. lone parents, disabled people), conditionality by benefit type and eligibility for the various employment support programmes, e.g. sector-based work academies, traineeships, work experience and New Enterprise Allowance.

The Department has a professional accreditation programme for work coaches leading to an externally accredited qualification.

*6. How many apprenticeships and traineeships does the Department offer, and how do these feed into Jobcentre staffing?*

DWP's target for apprenticeship starts in 2016/17 is 1,989. From April 2016 to the end of November 2016 DWP has had 3,050 new apprenticeship starts. DWP have a plan in place to achieve 2.3% of its headcount as apprenticeship starts as per the legislation due to be introduced as part of the Enterprise Bill.

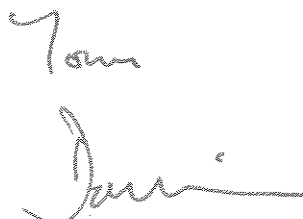
DWP introduced traineeships in 2015 as a pathway to the DWP AO Apprenticeship programme and as part of this we supported 181 young people to complete a Movement to Work placement. Of these, 160 successfully secured an apprenticeship within the Department.

So far in 2016/17, 342 individuals have benefitted from our traineeship programme with 200 of those going onto our AO apprenticeship programme (this 200 is included in the 3,050 figure above). The vast majority of our apprentices go into roles in Operations, not just Jobcentres but Benefit Delivery and Pension Centres. Apprenticeships are built into workforce planning requirements across DWP.

DWP has been a major contributor towards the Civil Service annual pledge of 6000 Movement to Work placements, committing to deliver 3000 placements in 2014/15 and a further 4500 placements in 2015/16. Annual commitments have so far been exceeded - with 7,431 placements delivered in 2014/15, of which 6,800 were in DWP, and a further 6,401 in 2015/16, of which 5,662 were in DWP. The Civil Service

has again committed to deliver 6000 Movement to Work placements in 2016/17, of which 4500 will be in DWP.

I look forward to the final report of the inquiry. If I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Damian', written in a cursive style.

Damian Hinds MP  
Minister for Employment