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Ministerial foreword



Having recently accepted the appointment of Minister for Disabled People I am pleased to be able to present the summary of responses we received to the consultation *Helping people achieve their full potential: Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services*¹, which ended earlier this year.

We believe the consultation proposals offer a greater clarity of service and support for disabled people, and are clear that the proposed new specialist disability employment programme must meet the specific needs of those disabled people who are furthest from the labour market.

We received over 450 responses to the consultation proposals, from a wide range of people and organisations, which were overwhelmingly positive. In light of this strong support, the recent Green Paper *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility* published in July 2008² announced our intention to press ahead with implementation and delivery.

The reform proposals are all about making our services more flexible and more personalised, in other words moving away from the 'one size fits all' idea and with a greater emphasis on moving into unsupported employment, where appropriate. We believe that no-one should be left behind and we will provide personalised support to everyone who needs it, to ensure they have the opportunity to get into and remain in work.

We know that aspects of these reforms may bring challenges, but our goals are equally challenging – an 80 per cent employment rate, and opportunity for all, including the most disabled, to find and keep a fulfilling job. For some, these opportunities have never been available.

Taking into account the need for time to prepare for the forthcoming changes, we intend to start the new programme in 2010 and will be discussing arrangements with key stakeholders in the next few months. It is important that we involve as many of you as possible, both at national and local levels, in taking forward the new programme. We believe, that alongside proposals set out in the Green Paper earlier this year, this new programme will help more disabled people into work and into unsupported employment and so realise their full potential.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Shaw'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and 'S'.

Jonathan Shaw

Minister for Disabled People

¹ DWP. 2007. *Helping people achieve their full potential: Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services* public consultation. ISBN 978-1-84763-177-0.

² *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility* Green Paper consultation. 2008, TSO (The Stationery Office). Can be accessed online at: www.dwp.gov.uk/noonewrittenoff – see Chapter Three pages 74-79.

Summary

1. The public consultation *Helping people achieve their full potential: Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services* was launched on Monday 3 December 2007 and ended on Monday 10 March 2008.
2. It set out and sought views on proposed reforms to:
 - three national (England, Scotland and Wales) specialist disability employment programmes (i.e. Work Preparation, WORKSTEP and the Job Introduction Scheme); and
 - the way that Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) in Jobcentre Plus work in relation to these programmes.
3. In addition, we asked how we might further improve Access to Work.
4. The consultation put forward a number of questions to help respondents shape and prepare their responses. This summary captures the key issues and ideas that have been raised in response to the consultation. There were other areas where stakeholders wanted to comment and these are also reflected.
5. We received over 450 responses to the consultation which were overwhelmingly positive, particularly around our proposals to replace our existing specialist disability employment programmes (ie Work Preparation, WORKSTEP and the Job Introduction Scheme) with a new programme. Responses reinforced our belief that Access to Work was a popular and effective programme.
6. As a result, the Green Paper *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility* published on 21 July 2008 announced our intention to press ahead with the reform proposals outlined in the consultation. In addition, the Green Paper announced our intention to double the Access to Work budget by 2013/2014, together with an expansion of the supported employment budget for the proposed new programme.
7. These reforms will ensure that we help those disabled people who are furthest from the labour market to get and keep a job, where appropriate, and at the same time help drive progress towards a number of government priorities, including the Public Service Agreement on adults at risk of social exclusion³.

³ Public Service Agreements (PSAs) – information available at: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk