



In-work Progression

**A response by Reed in Partnership to the
Work & Pensions Committee inquiry**

**We provide public services that
change people's lives for the better**



The Department of Work and Pensions has indicated it will establish an in-work service to assist individuals on Universal Credit on low incomes to increase their income. By the time Universal Credit is fully rolled out, the Government anticipates they will be working with one million more claimants who are in work.

Reed in Partnership supports the Government's stated aim of assisting low-paid claimants to progress in work and the concept of an in-work service. However, we have used this note to highlight several areas that will need to be given careful consideration.

1. Evaluation of government trials

As the government has stated, the UK will be one of the first countries in the world to attempt a large scale in-work progression programme. Therefore, there is little evidence nationally and internationally about the impact of labour market policies on progression once in employment.

The Government should use their current trials to evaluate what is realistic to define as 'progression' in the context of in-work employment support. We believe there are four broad ways in which someone can progress once in the labour market, namely:

- increasing working hours
- increasing rate of pay
- finding an additional job
- moving to a different job with higher earnings

Evaluation of the trials should measure the effectiveness of a series of interventions (such as those discussed later in this note) on the above metrics. They should be delivered in a range of ways, such as telephone, online and face-to-face, to measure the most effective method of support.

Finally, employer engagement will be vital for the delivery of a successful in-work progression service. Therefore the trials should also include outreach to business and measure successful business engagement.

2. Delivery of in-work support

Once someone has moved from unemployment into work, the nature of the support they require changes. Therefore it is important that the delivery of an in-work service is notably different to pre-employment support, both in terms of the interventions used, but also in how it is delivered. In our experience, recently successful job seekers can be reluctant to return to the same office they used when finding a job as they want to move away from being classed as unemployed.

We would envisage in-work interventions falling into three categories:

- **Increased engagement/mentoring** – for example, work coaches to assist with career planning
- **Training** – to improve sector specific skills and soft employability skills



- **Health condition management** – focused on helping people with disabilities and health conditions manage their condition to, e.g., work longer hours.

The requirements and conditionality placed upon someone in work will have to be very different to someone looking for employment and recognise their time and travel constraints. The in-work service – and, crucially, any conditionality – will have to be carefully structured to avoid becoming a burden to someone in employment. For this reason, we believe a model focused on telephone and online support is likely to be most useful. Support would also need to be made available outside ‘office hours’ so that individuals can access it in the evenings and at weekends.

It is also important to mitigate any fears of stigma from colleagues or employers for being part of an in-work service, and a method of delivery that is sensitive to individual circumstances within an organisation is likely to improve engagement.

There must also be realistic expectations about progression routes and timescales. While the improving state of the economy means many will have the opportunity to work more hours or move to more senior positions, we must recognise that many businesses will not be in a position to offer that.

3. Employer engagement

Employer engagement will be vital to the design and delivery of a successful in-work service. This service will be established within the context of a requirement to increase business participation in the government’s main contracted employment support programme, the new Work and Health Programme.

Reed in Partnership recently carried out a survey of employers to assess business views of the current Work Programme. We contacted people across the UK who had recently been involved in recruitment, with 433 employers responding. The sample included a mixture of those who have and have not used government employment schemes, provided by a range of provider organisations.

Of those businesses who had never used the work programme, the primary reason given for why not was they had never heard about it (44%). Additionally, almost a quarter (24%) said they didn’t know enough about it. While these questions were specifically about the Work Programme, we believe there are vital lessons to learn for other employment support programmes, including the proposed in-work service.

We also asked businesses what support providers could offer to assist their employees to progress to more hours or greater responsibility. Almost half said ongoing personal and professional development for the individual, with a similar proportion calling for funding for relevant training for the employee.

Therefore, from these survey results we can conclude that:

- Business is willing to become involved in employment support programmes, providing they have adequate information.



- For the new in-work services to be a success, the government must listen to why a significant number of businesses have not engaged with the current Work Programme, i.e. due to a perceived lack of information. Therefore government should be more proactive with employer engagement for the in-work service.
- Employers are enthusiastic about enabling their workers to progress in their roles, providing they are given the appropriate assistance.

The new in-work service should be designed to make it as straightforward as possible for organisations to become involved. Consideration should be given to how the in-work service will interface with existing employment support offerings. A plethora of programmes will make it much harder for employers to keep track of the requirements of each and therefore they are less likely to engage.

We believe the 'in-work' service should be offered as part of a seamless transition for the business, from taking on someone out of work to then encouraging their progression in employment. This would assist in improving familiarity with the programme and reduce 'programme fatigue' by limiting the number of schemes the business has to deal with.

This could be achieved with a national Work and Health Programme Information Centre to provide streamlined information to employers about the new Work and Health Programme, including 'in-work support'. This centre should, in conjunction with providers, be tasked with a continuing outreach programme to explain the benefits to business of becoming involved.

However, we would caution that while employers have shown a willingness to encourage staff development, there is the potential for conflict if one of the routes promoted by the government for progression is moving to a new job with a different employer.

4. In-work progression evidence

Reed in Partnership has carried out an initial analysis of our own business information to better understand the progression of our current Work Programme participants.

Many participants will undertake more than one job during their time on Work Programme and the nature of these different jobs is a useful metric of progression during their time on the programme.

Time taken for successful recruitment

Our data shows a clear link between time on the Work Programme and how quickly a participant is successfully recruited. They take longest to find their first job after referral onto the Work Programme, often after a prolonged period of unemployment before reaching our Employment Advisers. The participants then find each successive job more quickly than the last. This indicates progression in job searching capabilities and engagement with our advisers during the programme.

Hours worked



Our data shows a trend of increasing hours worked per week as the participant moves through successive jobs on the Work Programme. This indicates that participants' improvements to mindset and skills as they progress through the programme assists them advancing to more hours of employment.

We are now building on this data with further research and analysis to understand which interventions are most successful to aid in-work progression.

Reed in Partnership

Reed in Partnership is a national provider of public services, drawing on nearly 50 years of the Reed family of businesses' recruitment experience.

Starting with one office delivering employment support in Hackney, we have grown our business to deliver a range of services - from National Citizen Service in the East of England to providing skills and employability support in Northern Ireland.

Since 1998 we have helped over 150,000 people move into sustainable employment. We work in partnership with our customers to identify and overcome the barriers they face to entering the labour market. We know that for young people who have never had a job one of the hardest things is for them to believe that they really can get into work

For more information about the findings detailed in this consultation response, please contact:

Andrew Mackenzie

Policy and Research Manager, Reed in Partnership

e: andrew.mackenzie@reed.co.uk

t: 0207 708 6063

m: 0753 569 4494