

# Press release: Amber Rudd: West Midlands a standard bearer for helping people into work

Work and Pensions Secretary Amber Rudd will take her UC fact finding tour to the West Midlands today (Friday, 4 January).

The tour forms part of a commitment to review how welfare reforms are impacting people across the country.

Making her first visit of 2019 to the West Midlands, Amber Rudd will be hosted at the Jobcentre Plus in Stoke-on-Trent and Yardley, Birmingham, to meet staff, including the work coaches who've helped many of the 65,000 people who've moved into work in the last year in the region – delivering record employment in 2018.

Work and Pensions Secretary Amber Rudd said:

Universal Credit can be a huge force for good and has produced positive results here in the West Midlands.

One of these is a programme I'll see today in Yardley. It provides special training to British Pakistani and British Bangladeshi women to help get them into work for the first time.

So when I talk about making our welfare system work better and fairer for women, the West Midlands is a regional leader in this respect and these are exactly the type of schemes I want to see more of.

Yet I know there is more to do to make sure Universal Credit is right for every single person who uses it so I'm looking forward to meeting local claimants and our brilliant work coaches to hear directly from them about what is and isn't working for them.

Since 2010 the region has seen 276,000 more people enter work – the vast majority in higher-skilled roles. 128,000 more jobs were created in IT and business services for example.

Since her appointment in November, Amber Rudd has been reviewing the government's key welfare reform, Universal Credit, which replaces 6 different benefits with one single payment.

While the new system has been shown to get people into work more quickly and stay in work longer, Amber Rudd has committed to ensuring it works for all claimants by getting support to people faster.

While in the West Midlands she will also meet local people using the Jobcentre Plus to get back into work, including women from the British Pakistani and British Bangladeshi communities taking part in a special mentoring programme in Yardley.

This follows her new year commitment to make the welfare system work better for women in particular, as well as helping more people into work and ensuring they get the support they need more quickly.

She will also visit Acacia Training in Stoke – which works with local Jobcentres to help unemployed people get the qualifications they need for jobs in nursing, childcare and social care. 75,000 more people have secured health and education jobs in the West Midlands since 2010.

## **Yardley – British Pakistani and British Bangladeshi mentoring programme**

Employment rates among British Pakistani and British Bangladeshi women are among the lowest in the UK.

That's why Job Centre staff in Yardley launched a mentoring pilot in September 2018 for women from these communities, identifying the barriers they faced to entering work.

Working with local MP Jess Phillips to help women into the programme, they offered tailored support such as training, opportunities to gain qualifications and confidence-building exercises. Many of the women have since found jobs and the programme is expected to be rolled out further this year.

### **More information:**

Yardley Job Centre in Birmingham has been running Universal Credit for all new claimants since November 2017, followed by Hanley Job Centre in Stoke from June 2018.

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