

Press release: Record employment is not enough – jobseekers need the chance of better work

After helping deliver record numbers of people into work, Amber Rudd, the Work and Pensions Secretary, will call for a new government focus on helping people better themselves in work, moving to higher paid, higher skilled roles.

Of those workers on low pay in 2006, just one in 6 had escaped that earnings bracket a decade later.

To tackle this, Rudd announced 2 new projects for jobcentres:

1. Building the ability to help claimants make good decisions about job switching. With evidence that changing jobs is often the best way to open up new opportunities and take on more responsibility, this project will help DWP staff assist workers to make informed decisions about new opportunities.
2. Boosting the capability of DWP's employer-facing staff to have effective conversations with local employers about progression and good quality flexible working.

Rudd also announced that the length of the maximum single sanction any benefit claimant could face will be reduced to 6 months.

After committing in February to publishing an evaluation into how the sanctions system supports people into work, Rudd expressed concern at the impact of the longest sanctions on some claimants' ability to support themselves.

While under 3% of eligible Universal Credit claimants are currently undergoing a sanction, where they have failed to meet their obligations like attending meetings and interviews without good reason, and with the average lasting only a month, the change will help to prevent claimants from facing long sanctions.

Acknowledging the growing role of automation in the workplace, Amber Rudd said:

Automation is driving the decline of banal and repetitive tasks.

So the jobs of the future are increasingly likely to be those that need human sensibilities: with personal relationships, qualitative

judgement and creativity coming to the fore.

And there is a clear role for government to help people take advantages of these changes, and to help businesses create high-quality jobs.

I don't underestimate the challenges ahead. Jobs are being made, remade and reshaped every day, as we find new ways to be useful to one another.

But I remain incredibly optimistic about what we can achieve.

Changing career, perhaps several times, in the midst of working life can be daunting – particularly if you have a family to look after. I know – that's the path I took.

The work we are doing across government, and particularly in my department, is designed to support people through this.

We want every person, no matter their background, to progress in the workplace and outperform what society says they should be able to do.

These values are at the heart of what I will do at the DWP.

While necessary for the integrity of the system, I believe long financial sanctions become much less valuable over time, and ultimately undermine our aim to help people into work.

That is why we will reduce the length of the maximum sanction to 6 months to make them more proportionate, and why I have already launched an evaluation to consider further improvements we can make.

Chief Executive of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC), Neil Carberry said:

We are delighted to welcome Amber Rudd today. REC is all about brilliant recruitment, because it offers people opportunity and generates economic growth and prosperity. Building a progression nation is a vital part of this – addressing skills needs, gender gaps and regional disparities.

Recruiters across the country change people's lives every day by helping them develop their career. And the vast majority of people tell REC it is the most important life decision they make.

It is good to see the Secretary of State acknowledge this through her choice of venue today. We look forward to working with the

government on these new pilots, ensuring that people get the opportunities they need to build their future.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

Follow DWP on: