

Increased jobcentre support for women experiencing domestic abuse

Around 600 DWP staff across the UK are currently undergoing specialist training from expert organisation [Women's Aid](#). The newly assigned points of contact will be trained to identify and support the needs of anyone experiencing domestic abuse, and will work closely with local services to share knowledge and signpost women to additional, external support.

And in an important step to protect those experiencing domestic abuse, the Secretary of State will also announce that new Universal Credit claims will receive automatic guidance directing payments to be made to the main carer's account.

In the same week that the Domestic Abuse Bill received its First Reading in the House of Commons, the critical change set out by Rudd follows a [commitment made in January](#) to ensure the welfare system works in the best interests of women.

On a visit today to Women's Aid member organisation [Advance](#), Amber Rudd will discuss the importance of the new training with DWP staff who have recently completed it. She is also expected to meet frontline support workers and hear first-hand accounts from survivors of abuse who are currently being helped by the charity.

Work and Pensions Secretary Amber Rudd said:

"Domestic abuse is a despicable crime that often happens behind closed doors, making it incredibly difficult to detect. By ensuring there is a specially trained domestic abuse support officer in every UK jobcentre, we are increasing the likelihood that someone will spot the tell-tale signs and get support to the victim quickly.

"And with the automatic recommendation that payments are to go to the main carer, we're making it easier for women to build the financial independence they need to leave their abuser."

Minister for Family Support, Housing and Child Maintenance said:

"It's crucial that we work closely with experts to identify and support people who have experienced abuse. Drawing on the knowledge and expertise of Women's Aid, we are equipping our staff with the training to spot the signs of abuse, and help vulnerable people to stabilise their lives."

Currently around 60% of Universal Credit payments go to women within joint claims. But recognising that women experiencing domestic abuse may also be victims of financial coercion, the Department for Work and Pensions want to do more to ensure benefit payments are directed to the primary carer of children in a household.

There are also a range of measures designed to provide assistance and support to survivors of domestic abuse including benefit easements and advance payments, as well as maintaining close links with local supported accommodation provision.

The domestic abuse point of contact role compliments the ongoing work taking place to support vulnerable benefit claimants, and trained staff will be in place in all jobcentres by the end of August 2019. While the new online prompt, which was welcomed by industry organisations in January, will occur automatically for all new online Universal Credit applications by the end of this month.

Jacqui Kilburn, manager of the National Training Centre at Women’s Aid, said:

“Women’s Aid has welcomed the opportunity to deliver training to DWP, ensuring approximately 600 Jobcentre Plus staff understand the devastating nature and harm caused by domestic – including economic – abuse.

“We now look forward to working with the Secretary of State to ensure every frontline work coach is trained to deliver the right response to survivors, and secure a welfare system that supports women and children experiencing domestic abuse.”

Niki Scordi, Chief Executive of Advance said:

“For women escaping domestic abuse, help needs to be where they are – whether a GP surgery or a jobcentre. Training like this can help change and even save lives.

“With jobcentres and specialist services like Advance working together, women and children can be supported to rebuild their lives.”

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UK aid to help prevent unsafe abortions

UK aid support for the Safe Abortion Action Fund (SAAF) will also give some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable women and girls access to safe abortion.

It will also give urgent care and counselling for women dealing with the often devastating consequences of unsafe abortion and improve their access to contraception and family planning services.

Unsafe abortion disproportionately affects the world's most vulnerable women and girls, with 97% occurring in the world's poorest countries.

International Development Minister Baroness Sugg said:

We know that when girls and women can access all the information and safe healthcare services they need, lives are saved and unsafe abortions are prevented.

Limiting women's choice only increases the number of unintended pregnancies. Restricting access to abortion doesn't mean it happens less frequently, it just makes it less safe.

This UK aid funding can make the crucial difference between giving women and girls access to safe options or forcing them to resort to unsafe alternatives.

Millions of women and girls in developing countries still can't get the contraception they tell us they want. It's either too expensive, too difficult to access, particularly in remote, rural areas, or too taboo. Myths and stigma mean there is often a lack of information about contraception or safe abortion options.

As a result, 89 million women in developing countries will get pregnant, without wanting to, each year. Of these 25 million will resort to dangerous, painful backstreet abortions which can leave girls and women severely ill, disabled, or even cost them their life.

UK aid, through SAAF, will support grassroots organisations around the world to:

- increase the number of women who can access safe, comprehensive abortion care services;
- provide life-saving medical care and counselling for women dealing with the life-changing consequences of unsafe abortion;
- teach girls and women in need of abortion and abortion care services about sexual and reproductive health information and offer them voluntary modern contraceptive methods;
- fight dangerous myths and stigma about abortion in communities to allow girls and women to seek preventative contraception and safe abortion services, and help stop girls dying due to resorting to unsafe abortion; and
- campaign for safer legislation, policy, regulations, national curricula and services on safe abortion rights and services.

Maité Matos-Ichaso, Head of SAAF, said:

SAAF's goal is to work towards a world where women are empowered to exercise their rights and, crucially, women's lives are saved.

SAAF is unique because with the funding comes a package of interventions to give grassroots organisations the capacity to create a safe spaces for women in restrictive and fragile settings, through activities that are sustainable and relevant to the needs of the local people.

- UK aid will provide £2 million for the Safe Abortion Action Fund. SAAF is aiming to build a world where women's rights to safe and legal abortion are established and protected, women are empowered to exercise these rights and their lives are saved. It was established in 2006 as a multi-donor funding mechanism to support small local organisations working to increase access to safe abortion.
- SAAF currently supports grassroots organisations in 38 countries around the world. With this funding from UK aid, SAAF will give priority to projects that focus on the most vulnerable women and girls in the poorest countries and humanitarian settings.
- Globally there are an estimated 214 million women who want to delay or prevent pregnancy but who are not able to access or use contraception. Unintended and early pregnancy is a key cause of high maternal death rates in Africa. Having access to contraception is critical for women continuing their education and being able to take up employment opportunities.

- UK aid is a world leader in supporting women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. UK aid has committed to support an estimated 20 million total users of contraception, prevent 6 million unintended pregnancies, and so prevent more than 3 million abortions, many of which would be unsafe. It will save the lives of over 6,000 women every year – that's at least 16 women's lives every day for the next five years.
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Government looks at steps to make new drivers safer

- graduated driver licensing is being explored further in a bid to cut new driver crashes
- research will look at the impact of limiting what less experienced drivers can do in their first few months on the road
- part of the Department for Transport's upcoming two-year road safety action plan

New drivers could face limits on what they can do on the road, to ease them into a lifetime of safe driving.

The government will commit in its road safety action plan, to be published later this week, to explore further whether graduated driver licensing – or a similar scheme – should be introduced in England.

These schemes could put restrictions on new drivers, such as a minimum learning period, not driving at night, or not driving with passengers under a certain age in the car.

One in 5 new drivers crashes within their first year on the road, and so any changes would be designed to help reduce this number and improve road safety.

Road Safety Minister Michael Ellis said:

We have some of the safest roads in the world but we are always looking at ways to make them safer.

Getting a driving licence is exciting for young people, but it can also be daunting as you're allowed to drive on your own for the first time.

We want to explore in greater detail how graduated driver licensing, or aspects of it, can help new drivers to stay safe and reduce the number of people killed or injured on our roads.

Graduated licensing schemes already operate in New Zealand; New South Wales and Victoria in Australia; New York and California in the USA; Ontario and British Columbia in Canada and in Sweden.

Previously these schemes have been rejected due to concerns that it would adversely affect the ability of young people to get on in life – potentially restricting education and jobs.

However, conducting further research means the Department for Transport can build an evidence base to fully understand how graduated driver might work.

Currently, new drivers have their licences revoked if they accumulate 6 points within the first 2 years – equivalent to points for using a handheld mobile phone while driving or 2 speeding offences.

The [government changed the driving test in December 2017](#) to reflect modern-world driving conditions, including adding a satellite navigation section.

[Learner drivers are now also allowed to travel on motorways with an approved driving instructor](#) to acclimatise new drivers to these roads.

Motorcyclists in the UK have a similar scheme to graduated driver licensing as young bikers are restricted to less powerful bikes.

Any changes to licensing will be consulted on before being introduced.

[Scheme to help adults retrain gets underway](#)

Adults whose jobs could change due to advances in technology will get support to retrain and get on a path to a new career, Education Secretary Damian Hinds announced today, marking the start of the innovative National Retraining Scheme.

The National Retraining Scheme – which is being developed to support adults to adapt to changes in the workplace – has begun its initial rollout in the Liverpool City Region with the launch of a new digital service, Get Help to Retrain.

[It comes as figures reveal that up to 35% of jobs could be at risk of changing as a result of automation in the next 10-20 years](#) with computer programmes or even robots transforming the way things are done in the workplace.

Get Help to Retrain is designed to help adults to discover new opportunities and what they need to do to get the skills to land a new job. The online service will help adults identify their existing skills, explore local job

opportunities and where to go to find training courses to gain the skills they need to progress. Dedicated support will also be on hand from trained careers advisors to guide people through the process and provide expert information and advice.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

“Technologies like AI and automation are transforming the way we live and work and bringing huge benefits to our economy, but it also means that jobs are evolving and some roles will soon become a thing of the past.

“The National Retraining Scheme will be pivotal in helping adults across the country whose jobs are at risk of changing to gain new skills and get on the path to a new, more rewarding career.

“This is big and complex challenge, which is why we are starting small, learning as we go, and releasing each part of the scheme only when it’s ready to benefit its users. We’re beginning with the launch of the Get Help to Retrain digital service in the Liverpool City Region first, working alongside our partners the CBI and TUC, to make sure we get it right and the service works for the people who need it.”

The launch of the Get Help to Retrain digital service is the first of a series of products that will make up the full National Retraining Scheme. The National Retraining Scheme – backed by £100 million of Government investment – is a manifesto commitment and is a key part of the Government’s Industrial Strategy for building a country fit for the future.

The scheme is led and overseen by the National Retraining Partnership – a unique partnership between Government, the CBI and the TUC – to ensure the collective voices of businesses and employees are heard.

Get Help to Retrain will initially start as a private service. Eligible adults across Liverpool – those aged 24 and over, with a qualification below degree level and working below a certain wage threshold – will be invited to trial the new service so the system can be developed and fully evaluated before being scaled up and rolled out to other regions in the coming months. Get Help to Retrain will be released to all eligible adults in England in early 2020. A series of additional products that will make up the full service are being developed and tested in parallel, before being released at different times.

The [National Careers Service](#) in the Liverpool City Region is supporting the testing of the scheme by providing qualified careers advisers to give expert information, advice and guidance to users of Get Help to Retrain.

Robert Jenrick, Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, said:

“The pace of technological change has never been faster and U.K. is well positioned to take advantage of that, but we also need to watch the backs of working people whose careers will be changed as a result.

“The National Retraining Scheme is a £100m programme to help people gain new

skills in the workplace, change occupation if necessary and increase their pay and prospects.”

Matthew Fell, CBI Chief UK Policy Director, said:

“Ensuring our country’s workforce is fit for the 21st century, particularly the challenges and opportunities presented by automation, is vital if we are to improve productivity growth, which is the only sustainable route to higher wages and living standards.

“As the world of work changes, employers – supported by Government – have a crucial role to play in providing opportunities that help people learn throughout their careers. And as it develops, the national retraining partnership should become part of wider cross-government efforts aimed at embracing the fourth industrial revolution.”

Kevin Rowan, Head of Organising, Skills and Services Department at the Trades Union Congress said:

“Every worker should have the opportunity to improve their skills and retrain.

“This is crucial as the labour market is transformed by technology and automation in the coming years. The launch of the first phase of the National Retraining Scheme marks the beginning of a new collaborative approach – opening retraining up to many more adults, and preparing them for the jobs of the future.

“Union learning reps will play a key role in supporting workers to access the advice and retraining opportunities made available through the scheme.

“This is just the beginning. The challenge for the National Retraining Partnership is to develop a national programme that invests in the potential of all workers, delivering the skills we need to compete in the growth sectors of the future.”

Steve Rotheram, Metro Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, said:

“As new technologies disrupt our existing economic model, creating new types of jobs but making others obsolete, it makes perfect sense to give people the opportunity to retrain for the employment opportunities of the future so I’m pleased that the National Retraining Scheme is launching in the Liverpool City Region.

“It is also clear that, because regional economies like ours differ so much from those of London and the South East, the government needs to deliver real devolution of powers and funding for training so that we can ensure our residents have the skills that our economy needs.”