

Press release: New streamlined Jobcentre Plus network with more support for jobseekers

Plans have been published to reform Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Jobcentre Plus offices and benefit centres, in light of 20% of office space being under-used.

The way DWP services are delivered has changed significantly in recent years; for example 8 out of 10 claims for Jobseeker's Allowance and 99.6% of applicants for Universal Credit submit their claims online.

Since 2010, 2.7 million more people are in work, youth unemployment has fallen by 366,000 and the employment rate is at a record high.

Jobcentres and benefit centres are covered by old building contracts which are now coming up for renewal. In the 20 years since these contracts were signed the welfare system has undergone large scale reform.

The DWP estate covers around 1.5 million square metres across the country and 300,000 square metres of this is under-utilised and could be vacated.

Some smaller jobcentres will be merged with larger ones, and others will be co-located with local government premises. DWP will be better able to offer a more efficient service while delivering good value for the taxpayer, saving around £180 million a year for the next 10 years.

The support provided to jobseekers will be further strengthened this year as staff numbers are boosted by a recruitment drive to hire 2,500 new work coaches.

Damian Hinds, Minister for Employment said:

We will always make sure that people have the support they need to get into and progress within work, that's why we are recruiting 2,500 more work coaches to help those who need it most.

The way the world works has changed rapidly in the last 20 years and the welfare state needs to keep pace. As more people access their benefits through the internet many of our buildings are under-used. We are concentrating our resources on what we know best helps people into work.

The changes we've announced today will help ensure that the way we deliver our services reflect the reality of today's welfare system.

Today's announcements include proposals for:

- merging 78 smaller Jobcentre Plus offices in urban areas with larger ones nearby
- co-locating around 50 Jobcentre Plus offices with local authorities or other community services to provide joined-up services for the local community with all services in one place
- closing 27 back office buildings around the country and developing larger, more efficient processing sites including opening 5 new large service centres across the country in a phased approach starting in 2018
- retaining over 700 existing offices
- re-organising our corporate centre to make maximum use of 6 regional corporate hubs, including establishing a new office in central Manchester

The planned changes will be made in consultation with staff taking into account the impact on benefit claimants and DWP staff. The vast majority of staff will have the option to relocate or offered alternative roles.

Department for Work and Pensions Jobcentre Plus estate proposals

PDF, 758KB, 59 pages

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More information

We announced that we would renegotiate our tenancies in the [2015 Spending Review](#).

DWP currently uses about 900 buildings around the UK – all of them leased from a range of landlords.

The expiry of the PRIME contract provides DWP with the opportunity to review which offices we need, leaving those that we no longer need at commercially advantageous terms and having the opportunity to negotiate better deals on those we want to use in future.

The savings of around £180 million a year for the next 10 years will be made by a combination of a smaller estate, rent set to market levels, a new service delivery model and maximising space usage.

Where practical, we are co-locating with local authorities in their

buildings. These arrangements bring benefits for the department, claimants and the taxpayer. More of the services that customers use are in one place which means that claimants have access a greater breadth of expertise.

The most recent figures show that employment rate is at 74.5 per cent – a joint record high; unemployment down 906,000 since 2010 as the economy has grown.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0203 267 5141

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[News story: Article 50 Bill process begins](#)

From:

First published:

26 January 2017

Part of:

The European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill has been introduced to the House of Commons today, by Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union David Davis.

The straightforward Bill, which gives the Prime Minister the power to formally trigger Article 50, is expected to move through both the House of Commons and House of Lords before gaining Royal Assent prior to the March 31st deadline.

The Bill comes ahead of the introduction of the Great Repeal Bill, that will transpose EU law into UK law to ensure the maximum stability on exit, with changes to the law requiring the full consent of Parliament.

Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union David Davis said:

The British people have made the decision to leave the EU and this government is determined to get on with the job of delivering it.

So today we have introduced a Bill in Parliament which will allow us to formally trigger Article 50 by the end of March.

I trust that Parliament, which backed the referendum by six to one, will respect the decision taken by the British people and pass the

legislation quickly.

The Bill is being introduced following the judgment handed down by the Supreme Court earlier this week. It can be found [here](#).

[News story: Government commits to ensuring new and expectant mothers have sufficient protections from redundancy](#)

From:

First published:

26 January 2017

Today the government is committing to making sure new and expectant mothers have sufficient protections from redundancy in the workplace.

In a [response](#) to a report by the Women and Equalities Select Committee on pregnancy and maternity discrimination, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy said it will consult in due course on options to ensure new and expectant mothers in work have sufficient protections from redundancy.

Business Minister Margot James said:

We are determined to tackle pregnancy and maternity discrimination and a key part of that is making sure new and expectant mothers are supported and treated fairly by their employers.

While most businesses abide by the law, some do not. There should be zero tolerance of discrimination against pregnant women, or women who have just given birth, that's why today we are committing to making sure new and expectant mothers have sufficient protections from redundancy.

I'd like to thank the Women and Equalities Select Committee for shining a light on this issue which is a key priority of mine.

The government has also committed to considering what further guidance can be

provided to both courts and claimants about existing flexibilities in the employment tribunal system to extend the time limit for bringing a case.

The 3-month time limit for bringing a case can be extended when the independent employment tribunal decides it is “just and equitable” to do so.

[News story: £64 million government funding to encourage more cycling and walking to work](#)

Thousands more people will be encouraged to cycle and walk to work thanks to a £64 million government investment, Transport Minister Andrew Jones announced today (26 January 2017).

The funding will support local projects over 3 years from 2017 to 2020 and form part of a wider government package of more than £300 million to boost walking and cycling during the current parliament. By 2040 the government aims to make this part of everyday life and walking and cycling the natural choice for shorter journeys.

The money will deliver:

- more safety and awareness training for cyclists
- extra secure cycle storage
- bike repair and maintenance courses
- road safety measures
- mapping information for pedestrians
- real time bus information through smart phone apps or information at bus stops
- increased focus on car sharing clubs

The funding will also target those looking to get back into work because access to transport and the cost of travel often restricts where people can look for work and their ability to attend interviews. They will also benefit from discount bus travel and bike loans.

Transport Minister Andrew Jones said:

We are committed to improving how people travel and this investment will ensure that people’s journeys are cheaper, safer and better for the environment. It will help people to become more active and better transport planning will reduce congestion on our roads – particularly at peak times.

This investment will also help people access jobs, education and training – specifically targeting those looking to get back into work, as part of our relentless drive to make this is a country that works for everyone.

The funding could lead to:

- 95 million fewer miles in car journeys
- 99,000 extra walking trips per day
- 40,000 extra cycling trips per day

Stephen Joseph, Chief Executive, Campaign for Better Transport said:

We strongly welcome this announcement of the access fund projects and the new cycling and walking to work fund. The evidence suggests that these kinds of projects can remove barriers to work, help local communities and businesses and also tackle local transport problems by giving people attractive alternatives to car use. We look forward to working with the government, the authorities involved, and other organisations to develop and learn from these projects.

All English transport authorities (outside London) were invited to bid for the funding. The following 25 successful local authority bidders will each receive a share of the £60 million Sustainable Travel Access Fund for 2017 to 2020:

Local Authority	Award (£million)
Blackpool Council – Consortium bid with Buckinghamshire CC, Hertfordshire CC, North East CA, Stoke on Trent CC, West Sussex CC, Hampshire CC, Leicester CC, North Lincolnshire Council and Surrey CC	7.498
Brighton and Hove Council	1.485
Bristol City Council (West of England)	6.901
Devon County Council	1.5
East Riding of Yorkshire Council	0.682
East Sussex County Council	1.2
Herefordshire County Council	1.5
Isle of Wight Council	1.35
Kent County Council	1.452
Lancashire County Council – Joint bid with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	1.94
Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council	3.195
Lincolnshire County Council	0.975
Luton Borough Council (joint bid with Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council)	2.128

Local Authority	Award (£million)
Norfolk County Council	1.488
North East Lincolnshire Council	1.388
North Yorkshire County Council	0.974
Nottingham City Council – joint bid with Derby City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council	2.735
Nottinghamshire County Council	0.845
Plymouth City Council	1.497
Sheffield City Region Combined Authority	7.5
Slough Borough Council	1.5
Southampton City Council (joint bid with Hampshire County Council)	2.294
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council joint bid with -Thurrock Council and Essex County Council	3.322
Tees Valley Combined Authority	3.323
York, City of	1.312

The Cycling and Walking to Work Fund offers £3.8 million to be invested in 3 city regions over the next 12 months to connect people with employment and apprenticeships:

Local Authority	Award (£million)
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	1.5
Liverpool City Region	0.77
West Yorkshire Combined Authority	1.5

[**News story: UK Minister for Asia Alok Sharma visits Thailand**](#)

From:

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Part of:

Alok Sharma, the UK Minister for Asia and the Pacific, is in Bangkok for wide ranging talks on issues including trade, human rights and Thailand's election plans.

The UK and Thailand have a strong relationship focused on practical cooperation. Mr Sharma is here to deepen this.

In Bangkok, Minister Sharma will hold talks with Deputy Prime Minister Somkid and Deputy Foreign Minister Virasakdi to discuss the strength of the relationship and opportunities to increase trade and prosperity. Mr Sharma will speak to other political figures, to hear their views on the political situation and the prospects for elections in Thailand.

Mr Sharma will meet members of civil society organisations to learn more about their work and the challenges they face especially on freedom of expression and to express the UK's support for their work.

He will speak to businesses and investors to reaffirm that Global Britain is open for business and discuss how the UK Government can help Thai and British businesses trade with each other more.

Mr Sharma said:

Thailand is a very important partner for the UK, as proven by the fact that over 1 million British people come here every year.

I will be holding talks on the British Government's commitment to boost bilateral trade and I will encourage further progress on bringing in the rights and freedoms the Thai people need for credible elections in the future.

Further information

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