

The Work Programme: providers and contracting arrangements

The Coalition Government has announced its intention to replace all existing welfare-to-work programmes with a single scheme, known as the Work Programme, which is planned to be in place nationally by the summer of 2011.

The Department for Work and Pensions plans to establish an umbrella arrangement of approved providers (known as the Framework) which will be used to deliver the Work Programme. Private, public and voluntary sector organisations were invited to bid by the end of September for inclusion in the Framework on the basis of 11 regional lots. The outcome of the bidding process will be known in November. Organisations who are successful in the Framework competition will then be invited to tender for Work Programme contracts in a "mini-competition" to begin in December. Contracts are expected to be awarded by the end of January 2011.

The Work and Pensions Committee has decided to hold an inquiry into the contracting arrangements for the Work Programme and related provider issues. Written evidence is invited from interested organisations.

The areas on which the inquiry will focus include:

- The steps the Department for Work and Pensions needs to take to ensure that a procurement programme of this size and complexity is managed effectively and delivers high quality outcomes
- The extent to which the Work Programme will differ from existing contracted employment programmes
- The relationship between prime contractors and sub-contractors and DWP's role in overseeing this relationship
- The role of Jobcentre Plus in delivering the Work Programme, including the lessons learned from the Delegated Flexibility Pilots
- The implications for providers of the increase in volume and the change in profile of Jobseeker's Allowance claimants arising from the migration from Incapacity Benefit and Employment and Support Allowance
- The implications for providers of "payments by results" arrangements, with particular reference to the voluntary and social enterprise sector
- The likely effectiveness of a differential payment scheme in encouraging providers to support harder to help groups
- The implications of regional variations in the labour market, and whether these will be reflected in the differential payment arrangements
- How providers will be encouraged to work effectively with local authorities and other local agencies

The deadline for written evidence is 25 November 2010.

How to submit your evidence

- Contributors should feel no obligation to comment on all the issues raised above, but should focus on those areas in which they have particular expertise or interest.
- Please bear in mind that the Committee cannot investigate individual cases.
- Written evidence should be in Word or rich text format, not PDF format, and sent by email to workpencom@parliament.uk. The body of the email must include a contact name, telephone number and postal address. The email should also make clear who the submission is from. Hard copy submissions should be sent to: The Work and Pensions Committee, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA.
- Submissions should be in the format of a self-contained piece of written evidence. Paragraphs should be numbered for ease of reference, and the document must include a summary. For further guidance on the submission of evidence see www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/witness.cfm
- Submissions should be original work, not previously published or circulated elsewhere. Material already published elsewhere may be referred to within a proposed piece of written evidence, in which case a hard copy of the published work should be included.
- Once submitted, your submission becomes the property of the Committee and no public use should be made of it unless you have first obtained permission from the Clerk of the Committee. The Committee normally, though not always, chooses to publish the written evidence it receives, either by printing the evidence, publishing it on the internet (where it will be accessible by search engines) or by making it publicly available through the Parliamentary Archives. If there is any information you believe to be sensitive you should highlight it and explain what harm you believe would result from its disclosure. The Committee will take this into account in deciding whether to publish or further disclose the evidence.
- For data protection purposes, it would be helpful if individuals wishing to submit written evidence send their contact details in a covering letter. You should be aware that there may be circumstances in which the House of Commons will be required to communicate information to third parties on request, in order to comply with its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Further information

Committee membership: Miss Anne Begg MP (Chair) (Lab, Aberdeen South), Harriett Baldwin MP (Con, West Worcestershire) Karen Bradley MP (Con, Staffordshire Moorlands), Ms Karen Buck MP (Lab, Westminster North), Margaret Curran MP (Lab, Glasgow East), Richard Graham MP (Con, Gloucester) Kate Green MP (Lab, Stretford and Urmston), Mr Oliver Heald MP (Con, North East

Hertfordshire), Sajid Javid MP, (Con, Bromsgrove), Stephen Lloyd MP (Lib Dem, Eastbourne), Shabana Mahmood MP (Lab, Birmingham, Ladywood)

Specific Committee Information: workpencom@parliament.uk/ 020 7219 5832

Media Information: Laura Humble humblel@parliament.uk/ 020 7219 2003

Committee Website: www.parliament.uk/workpencom

Watch committees and parliamentary debates online: www.parliamentlive.tv

Publications/Reports/Reference Material: Copies of all select committee reports are available from the Parliamentary Bookshop (12 Bridge St, Westminster, 020 7219 3890) or the Stationery Office (0845 7023474). Committee reports, press releases, evidence transcripts, Bills; research papers, a directory of MPs, plus Hansard (from 8am daily) and much more, can be found on www.parliament.uk