

Improving the effectiveness of the Claimant Commitment as a tool to support people into work

The claimant commitment is a document that is meant to set out individually-tailored requirements that must be met in return for Universal Credit payments. Work coaches in jobcentres have discretion to define tailored requirements for claimants based on their circumstances, such as caring responsibilities or health conditions.

The main findings show that work coaches are trying their best to develop effective commitments, in what can be very challenging circumstances. There are excellent examples of work coaches defining tailored requirements for claimants, including claimants with complex circumstances.

However there is evidence that the quality of claimant commitments is variable, and there are some instances of inappropriate requirements being made of claimants. In some cases claimants were struggling with their claimant commitments. For example, some commitments contained requirements that were not suitably tailored to a claimant's circumstances, thereby potentially not fully supporting claimants to move into paid work. The Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) own survey evidence shows nearly 40% of claimants were not sure that their commitment was achievable. Claimants with physical and mental health problems were less likely than others to feel their commitments reflected their circumstances.

The report also found that some claimant commitments are not being reviewed regularly enough to ensure requirements remain relevant and appropriate.

The Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) welcomes DWP's existing work to ensure the claimant commitment is effective and helps ensure claimants achieve better labour market outcomes. However, where claimant commitments are not being developed and used well, it presents a real risk that they are not doing what they could to help claimants to achieve better labour market outcomes.

To complement the department's drive for continuous improvement, SSAC recommends that DWP should:

1. Work with a wide range of stakeholders to improve the design and delivery of the claimant commitment. This should be supported by a clear articulation of DWP's views of the objectives and principles underpinning the claimant commitment and how it believes these objectives can be best delivered.
2. Publish an evaluation strategy and an ongoing assessment of performance against the claimant commitment principles and objectives.
3. Define, and then test, a list of new approaches to improve the design and development of the claimant commitment. DWP should publish this list

and a timeline for when test results can be expected.

4. Develop a more rigorous approach to ensure work coach discretion is applied fairly and systematically. Specifically, DWP should prioritise data collection and analysis on the application of discretion (and easements). This analysis, including the statistics from the data, should be made publicly available.

While this happens, DWP should:

- provide clarity on when they'll be trialing new approaches to ensure discretion is applied fairly and a timetable of when improvements can be expected
- urgently act to ensure requirements placed on claimant commitments are just work-related and do not inappropriately include requirements related to a claimant's health or medicine

5. Act to understand why (and where) claimant commitments are not being regularly and frequently reviewed by work coaches and claimants, and then publish steps for how best to ensure they are.

Liz Sayce, interim Committee Chair, commented:

The claimant commitment is a central part of the government's approach to helping people back into work. But the Committee's work has shown that improvements need to be made. Inappropriate conditions and ineffective support risks failing some benefit claimants and their families, and in some cases may cause harm. Getting this policy right, all the way across the country, is essential. DWP needs to do more, more quickly, to ensure that happens.

[This research](#) considered claimants who are required to look for work and involved a [public consultation](#) and speaking with work coaches, policy and operational delivery experts, claimants, and a number of third sector organisations who work with claimants.

SSAC is an independent advisory body of the Department for Work and Pensions. The Committee's role is to give advice on social security issues; scrutinise and report on social security regulations (including tax credits) and to consider and advise on any matters referred to it by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions or the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland.

The Committee members are:

- Liz Sayce (Chair)
- Bruce Calderwood
- David Chrimes
- Carl Emmerson
- Chris Goulden
- Philip Jones
- Jim McCormick

- Grainne McKeever
- Dominic Morris
- Seyi Obakin
- Charlotte Pickles
- Victoria Todd

Further enquiries should be directed to Denise Whitehead, Committee Secretary, on 020 7829 3354.

MOD unveils transformed approach to innovation

Artificial intelligence and 3D printing are some of the concepts outlined in the new approach to harnessing innovation and developing emerging technologies.

MOD unveils transformed approach to innovation

The [Defence Technology Framework \(DTF\)](#) and [Defence Innovation Priorities \(DIP\)](#) – published today – set out how defence will address the accelerating pace of technological change in the years to come. This includes identifying technologies that can revolutionise defence as well as outlining a more sophisticated relationship with industry.

The documents respond to the Modernising Defence Programme's three central objectives: To mobilise to tackle today's challenges; modernise to meet future threats; and transform to become an agile and innovative organisation.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

We live in an era of extraordinary technological change and we must make sure we are harnessing the power of innovation by working as efficiently and effectively with industry as possible.

Our transformed approach to using and procuring technology will not only help us secure our military advantage, but will help drive prosperity and create jobs across the country.

Making the announcement at the DSEi conference in London today, Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff Admiral Tim Fraser will say:

Both the Framework and Priorities will not only guide the approaches of our major industry suppliers, but of SMEs, entrepreneurs and academia and our public sector partners and international allies.

They give us a clear strategic roadmap and will shape our investment in the future.

The Defence Technology Framework sets out Defence's assessment of the technology areas with the greatest potential to transform military capabilities.

The 'seven families' of technology – from Artificial Intelligence and advanced materials to energy storage and cutting-edge sensors – have the potential to revolutionise defence and will shape collaboration with international partners and the UK's world-class academic and industrial base.

Possible applications include deployed 3D printing, space tracking and communications, enhanced Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR), cyber defence, and automated logistics.

The Defence Innovation Priorities identifies where collaboration with the civil sector can help with Defence's most pressing problems. The Priorities define defence's new relationship with industry, driving cultural change within both parties to ensure the benefits of private sector innovation are translated effectively into the public sphere.

The document outlines five priority areas for collaboration with the civil sector, including how the MOD can access the people with the right skills and experience and how the complexity of the battlefields of the future can be simulated in training.

The MOD has made a series of recent investments aimed at harnessing the potential of the UK's world-leading scientific and industrial base.

The Transformation Fund, announced as part of the Modernising Defence Programme, will deploy £160m on fast-tracking new military capabilities onto the frontline.

Projects already funded include ground-breaking blood clotting technology which will save lives on the battlefield and two new autonomous minehunter vessels which will give the Royal Navy more flexibility in the face of rapidly changing underwater threats while keeping sailors safe.

More than £100m has already been invested from in innovation, including from the Defence Innovation Fund, primarily in Small and Medium-sized enterprises,

in pioneering programmes in the non-military sector which could have a transformative effect in defence.

The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA), the MOD's innovation hub, leads on finding and funding these programmes.

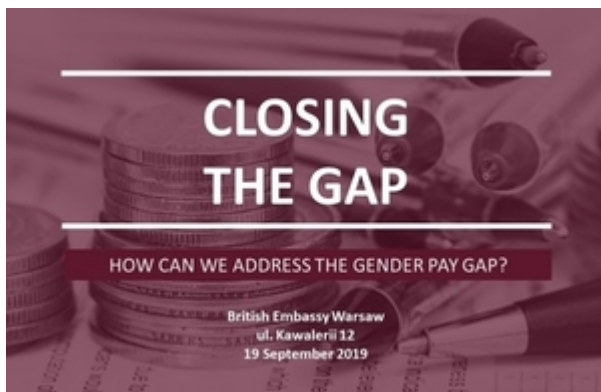
These initiatives are underpinned by a comprehensive Defence Industrial Policy, refreshed in December 2017, which outlines the MOD's plan to sustain an internationally competitive, innovative and secure defence industry in the UK. The MOD has also published sector-specific strategies on shipbuilding and combat air which help industry to become more resilient and productive by allowing companies to plan ahead.

The MOD spent almost £19bn with 16,000 UK suppliers last year, supporting 260,000 jobs.

Closing the gap: how can we address the gender pay gap?

British Embassy Warsaw will host a workshop to share experience and best practices on how to address the gender pay gap in Poland and in the UK.

Closing the gap: how can we address the gender pay gap?



In April 2017, the UK government introduced new legislation requiring public and private sector employers with 250 or more employees to publish data on the gender pay gap within their organisations. The first deadline for reporting was April 2018. Employers are also encouraged to publish an action plan on how they will address the pay gap in their organisation.

There are many business and other benefits to tackling the gender pay gap. The UK is keen to share experience of introducing this ground-breaking legislation with international partners, to enable them to introduce similar legislation. The UK is also keen to learn from partners and businesses on what tools they have introduced to tackle this issue in their country.

On 19 September 2019, British Embassy Warsaw, together with the UK Government Equalities Office and Poland's Congress of Women, will host a half-day workshop to share experience and best practices on how to tackle the gender pay gap in Poland and in the UK.

The workshop will be led by experts from the UK Government Equalities office. It will include:

- Full details on the new UK Gender Pay Gap (GPG) regulations
- Details from the first year of mandatory reporting and results in the UK
- Details of employer outreach programmes and the support for business
- Views from Polish experts
- Views from business representatives

Registration is free but places are limited.

Published 9 September 2019