

[News story: New employment programme begins in England and Wales](#)

The government's new Work and Health Programme to help disabled people into employment started this week in north west England and Wales.

The entire programme is expected to provide specialised support to around 245,000 people with disabilities or health conditions, and also people who have been unemployed for over 2 years.

Participants will get personal support to help them find sustained employment. The support may include:

- identification of employment needs
- matching skills to work that's available
- putting participants in touch with employers
- managing health problems to reduce their impact on work

Five providers across 6 regions in England and Wales will deliver Work and Health Programme. The programme will roll out across the rest of England during early 2018.

Around £100 million of funding has been devolved to London and Greater Manchester to procure and deliver localised versions of the programme from 2018 to capitalise on the local knowledge, good practice and expertise of these areas. Participation on the programme will be voluntary for disabled people and specified early entry groups.

The Work and Health Programme forms part of a wider package of employment support for people with disabilities, as outlined in the government's [Work, Health and Disability Green Paper: Improving Lives](#), published in October 2016. Next steps following on from the Green Paper will be outlined in due course.

[Press release: Jim Harra appointed as Second Permanent Secretary at HMRC](#)

Today Sir Jeremy Heywood announced that Jim Harra, currently Tax Assurance Commissioner and Director General Customer for Strategy and Tax Design, has been appointed as the new Second Permanent Secretary at HMRC.

Welcoming the appointment, Sir Jeremy Heywood said:

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Jim Harra as Second Permanent Secretary at HMRC. He has done an excellent job in his dual roles of Tax Assurance Commissioner and Director General for Customer Strategy and Tax Design in HMRC. He brings with him a wealth of relevant experience and I look forward to working with him as he takes up his new role.

I would also like to thank Edward Troup for his tremendous public service over the last 13 years as he stands down next month from his role as Chair of HMRC.

Jon Thompson, Permanent Secretary at HMRC, said:

I am delighted that Jim has taken up this post in HMRC. There are some enormous and important challenges ahead for HMRC: our transformation programme to make us a world class, digital-first tax authority; our focus on supporting the honest majority and clamping down on the dishonest minority; and our work to rise to the challenges of exiting the EU – particularly on customs and the border.

Jim knows HMRC and its customers well and will bring his usual dedication, knowledge and professionalism to the role. I look forward to working with him to tackle these challenges.

Jim Harra said:

I very much look forward to becoming HMRC's new Second Permanent Secretary. The work we are doing in the department, to create a tax system that makes it easier for taxpayers to get things right, and to prepare for the UK leaving the EU, is vitally important and touches every life in the country. I am proud to have been given the opportunity to help lead this important work.

This appointment has been formally ratified by the Prime Minister, and is the result of a recruitment exercise across Whitehall.

1. Jim Harra has held a dual role of Tax Assurance Commissioner and Director General Customer Strategy and Tax Design in HMRC.
2. The Second Permanent Secretary role was created following Edward Troup's announcement of his retirement at the end of this year. Jim Harra's appointment means that HMRC continues to have a tax professional as one of its two Permanent Secretaries.
3. Arrangements for appointing a successor to fill Jim Harra's previous

role will be announced in due course.

Speech: Justine Greening: Speech at DfE Skills Summit

Speaking on Thursday 30 November 2017 at the Department for Education's inaugural Skills Summit, Secretary of State for Education Justine Greening said:

I'm delighted to welcome you all to this inaugural Skills Summit here at the Department for Education.

It's fantastic to see businesses of all sizes and sectors, from up and down the country, representing all kinds of industries here today. As well as some key players from across the education sector.

I'd like to thank the CBI for their support in organising this event, and particularly to Carolyn Fairbairn for her leadership on the skills agenda.

On Monday, we launched an Industrial Strategy aimed at making a Britain that's really fit for the future for our country and our economy, competing on the global stage, and thriving in the 21st Century.

This strategy recognises that while we must invest in machinery, in buildings, in roads and in technology...this will count for nothing unless we also invest in our biggest asset and that the investment works – for our own people, our home-grown talent that we have in this country.

Because, of course, in the end it's the people who get in the cars on those new roads, who log on to the 5G network, who operate that high-tech machinery and it is their wherewithal that will make the difference to this infrastructure and as to whether the investment really counts or not.

It's no secret that this country needs more skilled workers. And if you look at digital skills alone, businesses will need an estimated 1.2 million new workers by 2022. Whether that's experts on cyber security, mobile and cloud computing or big data.

And, if we're honest, this country's historic failure to address these skills shortages has meant that too often we've imported talent and people – instead of building up our own.

And that has to change.

Because we're not just talking about a skills shortage for the economy it's more than that – it's millions of opportunities missed for people.

And the real tragedy here is all those people who could have been that engineer, that doctor, that computer programmer...who, perhaps, could have been another James Dyson or Tim Berners-Lee. They're not – not because they didn't have that potential – they absolutely did, but because we didn't have a country that connected them up with that opportunity.

The human story of what might have been is why the skills gap also matters hugely for the left-behind communities in this country, where young talent so often languishes or leaves.

Britain has talent and it's spread evenly across the country – the problem is that opportunity isn't.

Where you are born, live, go to school and work still directly affects where you get to in life and how well you do.

Like for many people, when I was growing up in Rotherham. My parents lived where their parents lived...I grew up with them being round the corner. But I always knew it would be difficult for me to stay in the same place to get the opportunity I wanted. But people shouldn't have to move miles away from their families. That's how it was for me, and worst of all that's still how it is today. Again, that has to change. Opportunities have to be on people's doorstep.

And if we're going to make the most of ourselves as a country, and make Brexit a success then we have to make sure every person and every place is fulfilling its potential. It's a social imperative as well as an economic one.

Social mobility. Equality of opportunity. This is my and my department's guiding mission and we will soon be launching an overarching plan setting out the concrete, practical actions we will take on key areas.

I'm clear that, ultimately, we tackle the skills deficit when we tackle the opportunity deficit. This is how we build a Britain that is fit for the future and a Britain that works for everyone.

So we need to make a new offer to our young people – a universal offer on opportunity, so that everyone can reach their potential, regardless of their background or where they live.

And I feel the opportunity deficit is at its biggest on skills. Here in this room, I believe there is both the power and the intent to help deliver a much needed skills revolution for Britain...a revolution that could transform the social landscape of this country, by bringing opportunity to every doorstep and finally, at the same time, delivering the skills British business needs.

Of course, this is not something government can do alone... and we need business and education to form a new alliance – a deep, strategic, mutually beneficial partnership between business and education, educators and employers: this will be one team for skills.

This government is investing in education and skills, and in fact today there

are new stats out that showed now 1.9million more children are in good or outstanding Primary or Secondary schools in England. Crucially, we have committed to building a first class technical education system for the first time in the history of Britain...

We kicked this off already with our major overhaul of the apprenticeship system. And in fact, even since May 2015, we've had 1.1million people starting on apprenticeships. They go right up the ladder.

We've introduced new degree-level apprenticeships where you earn while studying for a degree.

Through the levy we are also giving employers greater control over the training an apprentice gets, and we want employers to become demanding customers in the training market to develop quality candidates better and faster.

I want this government to continue to work closely with you to help you make the most of the opportunities the levy can bring for you and your workforces – but also to make sure that the levy works effectively and flexibly for industry, as we set out in the budget.

In the greatest shake-up of further education in 70 years we are introducing new T Levels for 16 to 19 year olds, an alternative to A Levels focused on practical, technical skills which will include a mandatory three month work placement.

Indeed, today we are also publishing a full consultation on the detailed design and implementation of these T Levels, and we're also announcing the full list of our T Level panels, for the first 6 T Level routes.

Today we're also announcing the launch of Institutes of Technology, with a funding pot of £170million pounds to draw on.

We want successful bids to be a successful collaboration between employers and education, as well as local further and higher education providers

We are also launching the first of our Skills Advisory Panels in regions across the country, they'll be in Greater Manchester, West Midlands, Cornwall and the Scilly Isles, Greater Lincolnshire, Lancashire, Leeds and Thames Valley.

We are introducing a National Retraining Scheme and we have so far committed over £100million to career learning pilots and initiatives on digital and construction skills.

Today we're announcing £10 million for a set of pilots in areas including Leeds, Devon and Somerset, Lincolnshire, Stoke-on-Trent and the West Midlands, to test the best ways of incentivising adults to train in the skills that their local economy needs.

I think all of this is adding up to a fundamentally different offer to young people and to everyone in the workplace – to develop the skills they need and

we need to play their part in Britain's high tech future.

I know that this isn't the first time a government has promised to solve Britain's perennial skills problem.

So why have these well-intentioned efforts always failed?

Well, maybe part of it's been too much chopping and changing on policy. But most of all, I think it's because previous efforts never fully got employers on board...and there were too many employers who were happy to let government try to fix the skills problem and didn't want to be part of the solution as well. That approach didn't work, and couldn't work.

And this didn't, couldn't, work.

So that's why we are putting you, the employers, at the heart of the reform.

To be frank, everything I've set out today and the discussion we have today lives or dies on the strength of your involvement and commitment, to work in partnership.

It's businesses – big and small – that can uniquely motivate and inspire people in our schools, its businesses that can show people the path into careers, like Mamuda set out, that never thought were for people like them. All are crucial for the skills revolution and our policies need to help the global multi-national and the one-man start up.

Today is your chance to help us do that. Our workshops will focus on: how we can make T Levels work for business, delivering the important T Level work placements, Further Education teaching we want you to look at how you can work with us and improve that quality and consistency, and of course we do what workshops on apprenticeship reforms and adult learning. This is your chance to challenge and offer ideas, as our Permanent Secretary just said, on how we can do better.

But in return I want you to make a commitment – to work with us, to sign up to a new skills partnership and to make a better offer to young people, whatever their background.

So far 36 leading companies have done this and I hope that more will follow and sign up to our statement of action. We recognise that partnership can't just be about words though, it has to be about actions. What I want to see is a race to the top, companies showing leadership on skills.

Actions like GF Tomlinson who give children in Derby insight into careers in construction through mock interviews, site visits and work experience.

Actions like Kier who have an army of more than 200 volunteers working with young people to help them decide what career path they want to follow.

This is about a culture change for business, a mindset shift. And if we really are to have a skills revolution it cannot be business as usual.

It's about providing high quality apprenticeship,

It's about providing high quality work placements. We talk to them and they are crying out for this. Many of you are the converted already, but we want to talk to you to have that discussion and debate. I want young people to see business as the solution to get the education and opportunities they want.

Employers always say practical work experience – but not enough businesses offer it. How can we work together to change that? Today is your chance to tell me and my team.

Later this year we will publish our new careers strategy to help young men and women get practical advice and experience of the widest possible jobs and workplaces so their choice of a career is really based on what they know and experiences, not some wrong preconceived notion of what they are and what they aren't capable of. I never thought I could be a lawyer or do a law degree, as I had never met a lawyer. You are the credible voices that can bring this to life for them.

This is how you can get the biggest and the brightest candidates. Take engineering – according to Engineering UK, just one in eight roles are filled by women – you won't plug the skills gap in this industry without tapping into the other half of the population. It's probably one of the easier way to get more people into that job where there is a shortage.

I'd also like to see more industry experts actually going into colleges and teaching. What more credible voice is there for a young person in a college than a person who is part of the industry they are interested in. That's what the skills training and T Levels is all about – bringing those things together.

Finally, we need every business to instil a culture of lifelong learning through their organisation, to invest in learning and development, from the people already at the top all the way down the organisation. We all know the changes the economy and technology will have. Which is why we must look at the national training scheme – and that starts with businesses. From people at the top right through the way down. It's a lot isn't it, what I've set out? And this is out of the comfort zone of many. I get that as much as anyone sat round the Cabinet table – and I know that has to change, and businesses have to step out of the comfort zone if we're really going to plug the skills gap for good.

In conclusion, I wanted to bring you here to Sanctuary Buildings today to send a direct message to employers –at DfE, our doors are open to you.

This government believes in business – we see you as the solution. Business has helped to make our 21st century lives longer, more connected, more convenient. We see you as the solution and we want more young people to see you as a solution.

So we're throwing down the gauntlet to you today: Come with us on this journey. Bring the innovation, the creativity, the commitment that has made

British businesses the best in the world and help us develop apprenticeships, T Levels, careers advice schools and adult learning...

Join a skills partnership to create the workforce this country needs.

This is about people, it's about places – it's about all of us doing better and ending the opportunity deficit in this country.

We all have a part to play in that – and we all need to rise to the challenge.

Thank you.

News story: Countryside Stewardship: detail of new simplified offers

Four new Countryside Stewardship offers will be introduced for farmers and land managers from the New Year to boost biodiversity and help protect and enhance farmland and the countryside.

Significant improvements have been made to the scheme to make it simpler and easier for farmers and land managers to apply.

The four new offers – Online Arable Offer, Lowland Grazing Offer, Upland Offer and Mixed Farming Offer – will provide tailored options covering the full range of different farm types, so farmers and land managers can deliver environmental benefits no matter where they are or what they farm.

The popular Hedgerows and Boundaries Grant will also receive additional funding from 2018, with farmers and land managers able to apply for a maximum grant of £10,000, up from £5,000 in previous application rounds.

Paperwork for the new offers is quicker and easier to get through, due to streamlined evidence checks and shorter application forms designed to help save farmers valuable time. The scheme is also non-competitive, meaning that all farmers who meet the eligibility requirements can get an agreement to deliver as few as 3 options, or as many as 7 up to 14, depending on the offer applied for.

The changes have been made to help more farmers get back into agri-environment schemes, with options such as the popular nectar flower mix which many farmers delivered under the ELS schemes available to apply for in the new CS offers. The new Upland Offer also provides an opportunity for farmers who were on HLS agreements to get into Mid Tier agreements.

These new offers will complement the existing Higher Tier as well as the Mid Tier offer which has been enhanced and will continue to be available,

supporting agreements delivering organics, historic, water quality, wet grassland and traditional orchards.

Scheme handbooks with more detail on how to apply and the best options for different farms will be published in the New Year to coincide with the application window opening.

Online Arable Offer

- there are 11 arable options to choose from.
- farmers must pick at least one option from each category and the package delivers the minimum 3% of farmed land under option management which is needed for farmland birds and wild pollinators
- farmers can select more options from the list if they wish, with no maximum amount (subject to any individual options requirements). The minimum number of options in the 5 year agreement is 3
- delivering the offer provides the year round benefits essential to birds and pollinating insects, and can help protect water quality

Category 1. Nectar and pollen sources for insect pollinators and insect-rich foraging for birds (minimum 1 ha per 100 ha of farmed land included in the agreement, no maximum)

AB1	Nectar flower mix	£511
AB8	Flower-rich margins and plots	£539

Category 2. Winter food for seed-eating birds (minimum 2 ha per 100 ha farmed land included in the agreement, no maximum)

AB9	Winter bird food	£640
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Category 3. Additional resources & habitats (no min or max, apart from individual option requirements)

BE3	Management of hedgerows	£8/100m
AB4	Skylark plots	£18 (£9 per plot, min. 2 plots per ha).
AB5	Nesting plots for lapwing and stone curlew	£524
AB6	Enhanced overwinter stubble	£436
AB11	Cultivated areas for arable plants	£532
AB12	Supplementary winter feeding for farmland birds	£632 per tonne for every 2 ha of AB9
SW1	4m to 6m buffer strip on cultivated land	£353

Lowland Grazing Offer

- there are 7 options to choose from
- these are divided into 3 categories in the table and delivering the package will provide year round food, shelter and nesting habitat for birds, and nectar sources and habitat for pollinating insects
- farmers must pick at least one option from category 1 and 2. The minimum number of options in the 5 year agreement is 2. Farmers can select more options if they wish

Category 1. Nectar and pollen sources for insect pollinators and insect-rich foraging for birds (minimum 2 ha per 100 ha of farmed land included in the agreement, no maximum)

GS2	Permanent grassland with very low inputs (outside SDA)	£95
GS4	Legume and herb-rich swards	£309

Category 2. Nesting and shelter for insect pollinators and birds (minimum 500m of BE3 or 1 ha of GS1 per 100 ha farmed land included in the agreement, no maximum)

BE3	Management of hedgerows	£8/100m
GS1	Take field corners out of production (outside SDA)	£365

Category 3. Optional additional resources & habitats (no min or max, apart from individual option requirements)

GS3	Ryegrass seed-set as winter/spring food for birds	£331
GS17	Lenient grazing supplement	£44
WT1	Buffering in-field ponds and ditches in improved grassland	£201

Upland Offer

- there are 4 base options and additional supplements farmers can choose from.
- there are no Categories in the Uplands offer.
- as a minimum, farmers must pick 1 base option and 2 supplements or 2 base options and 1 supplement. The minimum number of options/supplements is 3, but Farmers can select more options if they wish.
- selecting the right mix of options/supplements will help provide the right management for flower-rich meadows and nesting and foraging habitat for upland birds, including breeding waders. The option also help protect water quality.

GS5	Permanent grassland with very low inputs in SDAs	£16
UP1	Enclosed rough grazing	£39
UP2	Management of rough grazing for birds	£88
BE3	Management of hedgerows	£8/100m
Supplements		
GS15	Haymaking supplement	£85
GS16	Rush control supplement	£73
GS17	Lenient grazing supplement	£44
SP6	Cattle grazing supplement	£45

Mixed Farming Offer

- there are 14 options to choose from.
- these are divided into 3 categories.
- farmers must pick at least one option from category 1, 2 and 3, and delivering the package will provide year round food, shelter and nesting habitat for birds, and nectar sources and habitat for pollinating insects.
- some category 3 options can help protect water quality and aquatic habitats. The minimum number of options in the 5 year agreement is 3.

Category 1. Nectar and pollen sources for insect pollinators and insect-rich foraging for birds (minimum 1 ha per 100 ha of farmed land included in the agreement for AB1 and AB8; 2ha for GS4. No maximum)

AB1	Nectar flower mix	£511
AB8	Flower-rich margins and plots	£539
GS4	Legume and herb-rich swards	£309

Category 2. Winter food for seed-eating birds (minimum 2 ha per 100 ha farmed land included in the agreement, no maximum)

AB9	Winter bird food	£640
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Category 3. Additional resources & habitats (no min or max, apart from individual option requirements)

AB5	Nesting plots for lapwing and stone curlew	£524
AB6	Enhanced overwinter stubble	£436
AB11	Cultivated areas for arable plants	£532
AB12	Supplementary winter feeding for farmland birds	£632 per tonne for every 2 ha of AB9

GS2	Permanent grassland with very low inputs (outside SDAs)	£95
GS17	Lenient grazing supplement	£44
SW1	4m to 6m buffer strip on cultivated land	£353
BE3	Management of hedgerows	£8/100m
WT1	Buffering in-field ponds and ditches in improved grassland	£201
WT2	Buffering in-field ponds and ditches on arable land	£501

Hedgerows and Boundaries

- this offer has been improved for the 2018 application round.
- the application window opens earlier in 2018, the total budget available has been increased to £10 million and the maximum grant individuals can apply rises to £10,000 from £5,000.
- the scoring system has also been simplified and farmers can apply online

[Press release: Strategy seeks one million more disabled people in work by 2027](#)

‘Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability’ sets out how the government will work with employers, charities, healthcare providers and local authorities to break down employment barriers for disabled people and people with health conditions over the next 10 years. This will be delivered through in-work programmes, personalised financial and employment support, and specialist healthcare services to help more people go as far as their talents will take them.

The UK has near record high employment levels with over 32 million people in work, including 600,000 more disabled people in the last 4 years alone. However, ill health that keeps people out of work costs the economy an estimated £100 billion a year, including £7 billion in costs to the NHS. The government is committed to not only getting people into work, but helping them to remain and progress so they can reap the rewards of having a job.

The government announced today’s plans in response to its [Work, health and disability green paper consultation](#) which closed earlier this year and received around 6,000 responses from stakeholders and the public.

Work and Pensions Secretary David Gauke said:

Everyone should be able to go as far as their talents can take them, but for too long disabled people and people with health conditions have been held back from getting on in work.

Today we've set out an ambitious 10-year strategy to end this injustice once and for all. By bringing employers, the welfare system and health services together we're taking significant steps to ensure everyone can reach their potential.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

Mental ill health can affect anyone, from any walk of life at any time. For too long society has dictated that people with physical and mental health issues or a disability are a burden. Ensuring that more people with disabilities or long-term health conditions can get into and stay in work would not only enhance their lives, but actually enrich our economy too.

This strategy will help shape the future for hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities and mental health issues as we continue to tackle the stigma that so many people face when trying to get into and progress in work.

Two new employment trials will also be launched in the West Midlands and Sheffield City Region combined authorities to provide employment support. The government is also investing around £39 million to more than double the number of Employment Advisors in Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services.

Meanwhile, all 40 recommendations of the recent [Stevenson/Farmer review of mental health and employers](#) are to be taken forward by the government. This includes establishing a framework for large employers to voluntarily report on mental health and disability within their organisations. Employers are a central part of plans, and encouragingly over 5,000 companies of all sizes have now signed up to the [Disability Confident](#) scheme to promote disability inclusion.

Sarah Kaiser, Diversity and Inclusion lead at Disability Confident employer Fujitsu, said:

It is fantastic to see the government is committing to seeing more disabled people enter the workplace. Fujitsu has significantly benefited from being Disability Confident, giving us access to untapped pools of talent and enabling us to increase our retention of employees with disabilities.

We have also worked with our employees with disabilities to ensure our products and services become even more accessible, benefitting our customers too. This is not just the right thing for employees,

but also significantly helps the employer.

Creating an environment where employees feel comfortable to be completely themselves and tell us if they have a disability allows us to put in place the right adjustments to properly enable them to do their work, whilst providing a working environment that emphasises support. This not only results in increased employee satisfaction but also performance, realising value for the organisation too.

Also announced today are the next steps for the [Fit for Work](#) service. Its assessment services will come to an end in England and Wales on 31 March 2018 and 31 May 2018 in Scotland, following low referral rates.

Employers, employees and GPs will continue to be able to use the same Fit for Work helpline, website and web chat, which offer general health and work advice as well as support on sickness absence. An 'Expert Working Group on Occupational Health' has been appointed to champion, shape and drive a programme of work to take an in-depth look at the sector.

In the last year, the government has taken decisive steps to support people with disabilities and health conditions, including:

- Introduced the Personal Support Package, which includes £330 million of funding over 4 years.

*Ending re-assessments for claimants with the most severe lifelong disabilities, illnesses or health conditions on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Universal Credit.

- Recruiting hundreds of additional Disability Employment Advisers and new Community Partners to bring specialist advice and support into the jobcentres.
- Introducing a new 'Health and Work Conversation' between people on ESA and their work coach, focusing on what they can do rather than what they cannot.
- Launching the Disability Confident Business Leaders Group, which helps to drive continued employer engagement through effective leadership and peer-to-peer support.
- A trial voluntary work experience programme for young people with limited capability for work. This will enable young people to benefit from time in the workplace with a mainstream employer to build their confidence and skills, enhance their CV and demonstrate their ability to perform a job role.

- Extending 'Journey to Employment' job clubs to 71 Jobcentre Plus areas with the highest number of people receiving ESA.

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