

It's key for jobcentres to help people back to their feet

This weekend, as we can finally enjoy the long-overdue haircut, go to the pub or pop out for a meal we are finding our new normal.

Wherever you go though, the necessary safety measures and restrictions remind us that things are not the same – and we all know there will be difficult times ahead.

Through the rapidly designed and expertly delivered furlough scheme, we have prevented thousands of businesses from going to the wall and protected millions of jobs. But we have always said we cannot save every one.

And for those who have already lost or do lose their jobs because of this pandemic, we must make sure we are able to support them back into work as swiftly as we can.

My Department knows what it takes to get Britain working, having supported record high employment in this country just a few months ago. And we have a plan for recovery and revival.

Today I can reveal a central pillar of that plan: ramping up our jobcentre Work Coach capability. We are doubling their number to 27,000 by March, with 4,500 of them due to be in post by October.

We know how important and effective it is to have a service that is tailored to skills, circumstances and the local jobs market to help people find work. Later this week the Chancellor will reveal further details of our comprehensive package setting Britain on a path back to work.

Bringing in 13,500 new work coaches dedicated to helping people find work will have a huge impact.

We will be transforming our service – something my Department has become very good at.

We have done it once when the outbreak began, redeploying 10,000 staff to process claims so that millions of people plunged into urgent need by this pervasive virus could access financial support quickly.

Now, we are transforming again – switching our focus from processing claims to supporting people back to work with this new brigade of work coaches.

They are the people who can see from a CV that someone can pivot from one struggling sector into another thriving one, who can tease out the great skills people have and can be used in a new role or career direction.

They are the people who can find jobseekers the right training opportunity so they can take the next step.

And they are the people who will know what makes a good fit so that when someone gets a job, it is one they can stay in and which allows them to carry on the other important things in their life, like caring for children or older family members.

Thérèse Coffey, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, at Marylebone Jobcentre.

I know first-hand just what it feels like to walk through the doors of a jobcentre, receiving support while looking for work. In fact, this week I returned to Marylebone JCP where I had signed on over 20 years ago, to see staff hard at work ready and fully reopening as a Covid-safe site.

Of course, our support for people looking for work has already begun with work coaches speaking to tens of thousands of claimants by phone, and helping even more online with their job search and to plan their next steps. Those phone calls have sometimes been the first time a customer has spoken to anyone for a while.

These are difficult, uncertain times for many and we want to do everything we can to help people find work or increase hours, where that is possible for them.

On Wednesday, the Chancellor will set out his wider plan to secure Britain's economic recovery, building on the PM's 'New Deal' speech it will include measures to protect jobs and give people the tools they need to get better jobs.

Work coaches, who were integral to those record employment figures I mentioned, will be at the heart of our renewal. They know what they are doing, they will bring our new recruits up to speed, fast, and I trust them to deliver.

Doubling their numbers reinforces our frontline as we help Britain get back on its feet and back into work.

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