

# Press release: In-work progression and Universal Credit: SSAC report published

The Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) report published today (9 November 2017) presents the findings of its research which involved speaking with work coaches, policy experts, employers and a small number of working recipients of Universal Credit.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has embarked on an ambitious programme of in-work support through Universal Credit which is without precedent internationally. This extends conditions and support to people in low paid work only applying to unemployed claimants previously, with the goal of increased earnings and reduced benefit payments. The current 'test and learn' approach takes the form of a randomised control trial (RCT) testing the impact of different frequencies of work coach intervention.

The committee believes that DWP is right to be cautious given the very large number of households in scope. Of the 590,000 people receiving Universal Credit, 39% (230,000) are working. While it is not known how many people in work will get Universal Credit when it replaces tax credits, in 2015-16, 3 million families received in-work tax credit payments totalling £20.5 billion. While it is too soon to draw firm conclusions on how the current in-work approach is faring, SSAC concludes that DWP should:

- Test a much broader range of interventions, including those identified by work coaches in local jobcentres, taking account of personal and local circumstances.
- Establish a clear evaluation framework to enable local testing, while drawing on the central analytical capacity to ensure rigorous evaluation.
- Avoid constraining work coaches with tightly-prescribed targets. However, policy and guidance needs to clarify the variety of reasons people have for working part time (for example, having young children, having a disability or long-term condition, early phase self-employment, studying or re-training) if work coaches are to use discretion appropriately.
- Develop a richer understanding of working claimants and employers in key sectors. It is particularly important for DWP to understand routes into low paid work and the diverse circumstances of low paid households before any large scale migration of tax credit recipients onto Universal Credit.
- Take a data-driven approach to segmenting people's circumstances, drawing on skills, work experience and attitudinal data.
- Fix the delays and complexity reported by Universal Credit claimants which may hinder in-work progression. The rules for couples are particularly complicated. Universal Credit needs to provide predictable support if it is to really help people increase their earnings. A better

'it pays to progress' calculator is needed for both recipients and work coaches to have greater confidence.

Paul Gray, Committee Chairman said:

As tax credits migrate into Universal Credit, DWP is making a major shift from its traditional role of helping the unemployed into work towards supporting those already in low paid work to increase their earnings. This is a major challenge no other country has attempted on this scale. Our report highlights ways in which this focus on in-work support can best be tailored and improved.

Chris Goulden, Chair of the committee's Independent Work Programme sub-committee said:

The department is currently examining the effectiveness of different techniques of work coach contact, but this trial is quite narrowly focused. Our research highlights the breadth and complexity of in-work progression, as well as the wide range of affected groups – which includes both employers and working claimants. The committee would encourage the department to set out its broader aims on in-work progression as well as take up our recommendation to enable a broader and more innovative set of practices to be tested.

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## **Press release: Nomination of Suffragan Bishop of Ripon: 9 November 2017**

The Queen has approved the nomination of the Right Reverend Dr Helen-Ann Macleod Hartley, MTheol, ThM, MPhil, DPhil, Bishop of Waikato in the Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki, in New Zealand, to the Suffragan See of Ripon, in the Diocese of Leeds in succession to the Right Reverend James Harold Bell, MA, on his resignation 30 April 2017.

Bishop Helen-Ann (44) was born in Edinburgh, and grew up in Sunderland. She was educated at the University of St Andrews, Princeton Theological Seminary in the USA, and Worcester College, University of Oxford, where she is an Honorary Fellow. She trained for ordination on the St Alban's and Oxford Ministry Course, and was ordained deacon in 2005, and priested in 2006. She was Curate in the Benefice of Wheatley, and then in the parish of Littlemore, both in Oxford Diocese. In 2008 she was appointed Lecturer in New Testament at Ripon College Cuddesdon, and later Director of Biblical Studies. In 2012

she became Dean for the New Zealand Dioceses at the College of St John the Evangelist in Auckland. She was elected Bishop of Waikato in August 2013, and was consecrated on 22 February 2014.

Bishop Helen-Ann has published with SPCK, and is a regular contributor to the Daily Reflections series for Church House Publishing. She has also contributed to the Pilgrim course.

She is married to Myles, an organist and church musician. Her interests include the night sky, contemporary fiction and visual arts, going to the gym, and watching netball.

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## **Press release: Environment Secretary backs further restrictions on neonicotinoid pesticides**

Tougher restrictions on neonicotinoid pesticides are justified by the growing weight of scientific evidence they are harmful to bees and other pollinators, Environment Secretary Michael Gove said today.

Setting out the UK's position, the Secretary of State said the UK supports further restrictions on the use of these pesticides. Unless the scientific evidence changes, the government will maintain these increased restrictions post-Brexit.

This follows advice from the [UK government's advisory body on pesticides](#) which said scientific evidence now suggests the environmental risks posed by neonicotinoids – particularly to our bees and pollinators – are greater than previously understood, supporting the case for further restrictions.

Research estimates the value of the UK's 1,500 species of pollinators to crops at £400-680million per year due to improved productivity.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

I have set out our vision for a Green Brexit in which environmental standards are not only maintained but enhanced.

I've always been clear I will be led by the science on this matter. The weight of evidence now shows the risks neonicotinoids pose to our environment, particularly to the bees and other pollinators which play such a key part in our £100bn food industry, is greater than previously understood. I believe this justifies further restrictions on their use. We cannot afford to put our pollinator

populations at risk.

I recognise the impact further restrictions will have on farmers and I am keen to work with them to explore alternative approaches both now and as we design a new agricultural policy outside the European Union.

Since December 2013, the EU has banned the use of three neonicotinoids – Clothianidin, Imidacloprid and Thiamethoxam – on a number of crops attractive to bees, such as oilseed rape.

The European Commission has proposed restricting the same three neonicotinoids to only allow their use on plants in glasshouses. Currently, their use is banned for oilseed rape, spring cereals and sprays for winter cereals, but they can be used to treat sugar beet and as seed treatments for winter cereals. Should this proposal be adopted, the UK would have the right to consider emergency authorisations. We would only do so in exceptional circumstances where there is a real need for the products and the risk to bees and other pollinators is sufficiently low.

Defra's Chief Scientific Advisor Professor Ian Boyd said:

The important question is whether neonicotinoid use results in harmful effects on populations of bees and other pollinators as a whole.

Recent field-based experiments have suggested these effects could exist. In combination with the observation of widespread and increasing use of these chemicals, the available evidence justifies taking further steps to restrict the use of neonicotinoids.

Defra has today also given an update on its [National Pollinator Strategy](#), which shows encouraging progress on its aims to make farms, towns, cities and the countryside better places for our bees and pollinators. The strategy was launched in 2014, following independent research which showed an overall decline in the UK's wild bee diversity over the last 50 years. It sets out a collaborative plan to improve the state of bees and other pollinators, and recognises pesticides as one of the key threats to their populations. The government will continue to work with partners such as Friends of the Earth, British Beekeepers' Association and Kew to deliver the ambitious strategy.

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**[News story: £30 million for business](#)**

## and graduate partnerships

Innovate UK has announced an extra £30 million of funding for Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), which connect UK businesses with an academic or research organisation and qualified graduate to work on innovation projects.

It will allow significant expansion of the KTP programme. Currently, there are 630 graduates and post-doctoral researchers employed in KTPs. These include industrial research and development and entrepreneurial roles.

This funding comes from government's [National Productivity Investment Fund](#). It will help to build the pipeline of high-skilled research talent necessary for a growing innovation economy.

The investment was announced today at [Innovate 2017](#).

[Ella's Kitchen: transforming the organic baby food market](#)

### **Businesses of all sizes**

Businesses that have previously taken part in KTPs include [Dyson](#), [Jaguar Land Rover](#), [Rolls-Royce](#), [Sainsbury's](#) and [Unilever](#). Baby food brand, [Ella's Kitchen](#), has run 3 schemes, working with the [University of Reading](#).

The majority of KTPs are made up of small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – around 80% of all those run.

Science Minister, Jo Johnson, said:

Through Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, businesses of all sizes are partnering with our world-leading academics and researchers to learn how new skills and thinking can increase their competitiveness and productivity, and this extra funding will ensure even more UK businesses continue to innovate and grow.

By putting science, research and innovation at the heart of our Industrial Strategy, and emphasising the benefits of commercialising research, we are building on our strengths in R&D and delivering benefits across the country.

### **Stimulating innovation and producing successful outcomes**

Ruth McKernan, Chief Executive, said:

We are committing significantly more funding this year on KTPs. This enables an increase to the scheme, with additional KTPs

becoming more closely aligned to [Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund areas](#).

Companies that have used KTPs know their development value in bringing in excellent staff with cutting-edge academic knowledge. The current tried-and-tested model is widely recognised – and proven over 40 years of operation – for its excellence in stimulating innovation and producing successful outcomes.

There are many innovative companies, particularly SMEs, which could benefit from the academic mentoring that a KTP provides.

[Knowledge Transfer Partnerships at Northumbria University](#)

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## **Press release: Attorney General visits law students in Birmingham**

Attorney General Jeremy Wright QC MP will meet with University of Birmingham students and staff when he visits the law school today (Thursday 9 November).

The Attorney, who is the Government's Pro Bono Champion, is making the visit as part of National Pro Bono Week – a nationwide campaign to increase understanding and interest in pro bono work.

The University won an award for Outstanding Contribution by a Law School at the Attorney General's Pro Bono awards earlier this year. The Attorney will meet law students who give free legal advice to some of the most vulnerable people in the community, on issues including family and employment law. The University runs a number of different projects that enable students to get involved in a range of activities, while allowing them to develop their knowledge of how the law operates in the real world. The Attorney General said:

“Pro bono work often starts at universities and colleges, where students gain first-hand experience of providing legal advice and help to those in need.

“I strongly encourage both students and established lawyers to explore what sort of pro bono help they might be able to provide, as it will enhance their careers and make a real difference to those who receive it.”

Professor Michael Whitby, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Head of the College of Arts and Law at Birmingham Law School said:

“We are delighted to be welcoming the Attorney General to Birmingham Law School during National Pro Bono Week. Our Pro Bono Group represents a significant commitment by staff and students at the University of Birmingham

to making a positive difference to our community at global, national and international level.

“This initiative is generously supported by members of the city of Birmingham’s legal profession. The Group’s focus on increasing access to justice accords with the core values of our civic university and exemplifies Birmingham’s commitment to developing graduates with attributes and experiences that make them competitive and valuable employees.”

The Attorney, who superintends the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), will also visit the CPS West Midlands office in Birmingham.

CPS West Midlands recently underwent an inspection by Her Majesty Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate with inspectors roundly praising performance. They found hate crime conviction rates had much improved from previous inspections, and that the Area had been working well to improve outcomes for victims and witnesses.