

Digital job surgeries launched to help 160,000 Brits get back into work

- New Job Finding Support service launched to benefit 160,000 people over the next year
- Support ranges from job searches and interview practice to advice on how to switch careers
- Service to run in parallel to existing support available in jobcentres and by work coaches, as part of UK Government's Plan for Jobs

A new team of 325 Job Search Advisers are now available online or over the phone, to support those recently unemployed who already have the skills and experience needed to move into a new career, but might not be sure where to start.

Over the next 12 months, an expected 160,000 jobseekers will receive digital support and advice, as part of a new Job Finding Support (JFS) service in a further boost to the Government's Plan for Jobs.

The quick-fire support, which takes place across four one-to-one sessions and aims to be completed in a matter of weeks, offers mock interviews, help to identify transferable skills and advice on how to switch industries, as well as online group sessions to improve job search techniques.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Therese Coffey said:

Job Finding Support will help jobseekers brush up on interview skills and advice, giving them a helping hand to move back into work quickly.

Our Plan for Jobs is helping us build back better and fairer, getting job support to people who need it right across Britain and levelling up opportunity.

The service is completely voluntary to all jobseekers who have been unemployed for less than 13 weeks and are claiming benefits. Participants are referred to the scheme through their Work Coach.

As the Department for Work and Pensions drives forward the Plan for Jobs, it has supported over 40,000 people to retrain and upskill on the Sector-based Work Academy Programme; and recruited 8,500 new Work Coaches to spearhead efforts to get Britain working again.

Chief Executive of ERSA, Elizabeth Taylor, said:

The government's Plan for Jobs package of labour market initiatives

is helping people to provide for their families throughout the pandemic, and Job Finding Support is another important step in helping jobseekers in these difficult times.

Job Finding Support will run in parallel to existing support that is available in jobcentres, and will complement the role of Work Coaches who provide more intensive support for jobseekers, including anyone facing specific difficulties returning to work. This service will also free up frontline staff as they continue to help people access the financial support they need through the welfare safety net.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

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New Code of Conduct to ensure a fairer dairy supply chain

The UK Government and Devolved Administrations have today (Wednesday 3 February) published their response to last year's consultation seeking views from dairy farmers and processors across the UK about how contracts and relationships could be improved.

The 12-week consultation was launched in June last year by the UK Government, with input from Devolved Administrations, to explore whether regulations could be introduced to ensure fair treatment across the UK's dairy sector. Imbalances of power within the dairy supply chain were believed to be causing instability for dairy farmers, such as where milk buyers have the ability to set and modify the terms of a contract at short notice.

The responses to this consultation clearly demonstrated the need to introduce new regulations to require certain standards for contracts between those producing and buying milk for processing. The consultation also revealed that the distinctive circumstances in Northern Ireland may need to be reflected in regulations, and this will be considered.

The UK Government, working in close collaboration with the Devolved Administrations, will develop a new statutory Code of Conduct for the sector, using section 29 of the Agriculture Act 2020, delivering on the Government's promise to increase fairness in the supply chain and help farmers become more competitive.

Building on the evidence shared as part of the consultation, the new statutory code will seek to provide a guiding framework, establishing minimum standards but also providing businesses with the flexibility to adapt

contracts to their individual circumstances. Further engagement with industry remains necessary to develop the standards to be specified within this framework.

Department For Environment Food and Rural Affairs Farming Minister, Victoria Prentis said:

It is only right that any contracts drawn up between farmers and processors deliver fair conditions across the board, for an industry that works hard year-round to provide the dairy products for which we are world-renowned.

This new Code of Conduct will crack down on unfair practices within the supply chain, supporting the dairy sector and ensuring that our dairy farmers remain competitive as they look to the future.

Scottish Rural Economy Secretary Fergus Ewing said:

This is an important moment for the Scottish Dairy Industry, as we take the necessary steps to promote fairness and ensure that Scottish farmers can sign contracts that are equitable and provide them with much needed stability.

The dairy mandatory code of conduct consultation demonstrated that Scottish respondents were the strongest supporters of putting transparency into contracts to protect our farmers. It is very important that we listen to the views of both our hard-working dairy farmers and processors here in Scotland.

We will now work to put together a new Code of Conduct which will increase transparency within the supply chain moving forward and enable Scottish farmers to compete more fairly in the Dairy Supply Chain.

Lesley Griffiths, the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, said:

The Welsh Government has been clear if the Voluntary Code of Best Practice did not address the imbalance of power in the dairy supply chain, a legislative solution would be an alternative to ensure our dairy farmers are able to secure fair deals for their produce.

Those within the sector have reported many contracts do not adhere to the voluntary code, and the resulting imbalance of power leads to reduced profitability for our hard-working dairy farmers, and unsustainable distribution of profits along supply chains.

We will continue to work collaboratively with the sector, and

governments across the UK, to ensure a resilient future for our Welsh dairy industry.

Northern Ireland Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister, Gordon Lyons MLA, said:

I, along with previous Minister and colleague Edwin Poots, am committed to ensuring fairness for Dairy farmers within Northern Ireland.

Feedback from the Northern Ireland consultees show that there is an appetite for legislation. Clearly the NI dairy sector differs to that in the rest of the UK due to the prevalence of co-operatives and the existing highly integrated cross border supply chain with the ROI.

Given the differences between the NI and GB dairy sectors, further stakeholder engagement will be required to ensure any potential legislation would be appropriate in Northern Ireland. I wish to explore the relevant issues further to inform my position on this matter. I welcome the plans for further consultation and I encourage local stakeholders to participate in this next phase of engagement.

[Evidence gathered during the Groceries Code Adjudicator Call for Evidence in 2016](#) highlighted how unfair practices have persisted in the dairy industry. Last year's consultation looked at whether regulations could be introduced to ensure farmers are treated fairly within the supply chain.

This evidence suggested unfairness in the supply chain has sometimes been caused by milk buyers having the power to set and modify the terms of a contract, often with little notification. This leads to uncertainty and ambiguity that can be unfair to dairy farming businesses.

Government officials will continue to engage with industry representatives of both producers and processors as they design the new code to ensure it delivers fairness and transparency for the entire supply chain across the UK.

Broadband speed boost sees home values jump by £3,500

- UK-wide superfast programme pushed broadband speeds up a gear for 5.5 million homes
- £2.7 billion of economic benefits created by rollout including 17,600

jobs, says new report

- Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden: "Our mission to level up the country with faster broadband is delivering much more than quicker downloads"

The £2.6 billion government scheme to roll out superfast broadband to 'commercially unviable' parts of the UK sparked a surge in home values of up to £3,500, according to a new report.

More than 96% of homes and businesses can now access superfast broadband, which provides a minimum of 30 megabits per second and fast enough to allow multiple people to hold video calls, watch high-definition movies and enjoy online gaming at the same time.

But as the government prepares to kick off its new £5 billion programme to roll out even faster gigabit broadband, Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden highlights that 11 million – or two in five – homes are yet to upgrade to superfast despite it being available in their area.

The [independent review](#) of the Superfast Broadband Programme, which secured faster connections for 5.5 million homes and businesses, found it had created £2.7 billion in economic benefits since starting in 2012, including:

- A surge in the value of homes sold in programme areas between 2012 and 2019 by up to £3,500, a rise of 1.16% worth £1.52 billion
- 17,600 more jobs in programme areas, including 2,100 lifted from long-term unemployment creating an increase in gross value added (GVA) by £125 million
- £1.1 billion gained in GVA through increased workplace productivity

The availability of faster coverage also helped power businesses and sparked a £1.9 billion increase in total annual turnover for firms based in areas upgraded through the programme.

The report, conducted by Ipsos MORI, concludes the programme's value for money is continuing to rise. For every £1 invested by the government in the programme, an additional £2.70-£3.80 of economic and social benefits has been created in the UK economy.

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

Our mission to level up the country with faster broadband is delivering much more than just quicker downloads. It's boosting the value of homes and businesses while helping to create thousands of jobs and keep the economy moving.

96% of us can now access superfast broadband, but 11 million homes are still missing out on faster speeds available in their area. I encourage anyone fed up with slow loading times or shaky video calls to check with their provider or an online switching service and see if they can join the superfast lane.

The programme saw the UK government join forces with councils and devolved administrations to invest more than £2.6 billion to ensure superfast speeds were rolled out to areas across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland where no plans for commercial build were in place.

Gareth Williams, CEO at Gigaclear, said:

The Superfast Broadband Programme has extended fast, reliable connectivity to areas that would have otherwise been left on the wrong side of the digital divide.

For our part, 2020 saw us extend our network footprint to over 150,000 premises, all served with 'full fibre' gigabit capable connectivity. A large part of that has been delivered through the Superfast Broadband Programme, connecting areas that, without the support of the programme, would be unlikely to receive this service due to the high cost to connect them.

We are proud of the role we have played in this programme and look forward to working with DCMS, BDUK and local authorities in extending gigabit capable connectivity across the UK as quickly as possible.

Openreach CEO, Clive Selley, said:

It's great to see how the UK is reaping the benefits of superfast broadband connectivity and we should recognise the huge contribution of an army of Openreach engineers and planners, who have helped build this new network throughout the country over the last decade. But technology never stands still and we're now busy future-proofing the UK with the next generation of ultrafast, ultra-reliable Full Fibre broadband.

Great connectivity's more important than ever to our economic and social wellbeing – and it's going to be critical to building back better and greener, post-pandemic.

These research findings chime with a detailed study from the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) which found that nationwide Full Fibre broadband would boost UK productivity by £59 billion by 2025 – and updated modelling suggests it could enable nearly one million more people to access employment including over 300,000 carers, nearly 250,000 older workers and 400,000 parents.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart said:

Joint working between the UK Government, devolved administrations and councils to invest more than £1.9 billion in superfast

broadband is delivering real results for millions of homeowners and businesses.

It has improved connectivity in many remote areas – which is more welcome than ever as the coronavirus pandemic has forced us to work, learn and socialise online from home – and it's also seen an increase in property prices, according to new research.

There is still more to be done and that's why the UK Government will soon be launching a new £5 billion programme for even faster connections as part of the commitment to level up every part of the country.

The Government is now focused on delivering even faster 'gigabit' connections to all homes and businesses through a new [£5 billion rollout programme](#). More details on the first areas to benefit from the scheme will be announced shortly.

One in three premises already have access to gigabit speeds which are capable of delivering 1,000 megabits per second. These allow people to enjoy next-generation technologies such as 4K and virtual reality streaming.

The UK is on track to connect 4.5 million premises per year, a higher build rate than most comparable countries, and by the end of this year more than half the country will have access to gigabit-capable networks.

In response to Covid-19, the government and Ofcom agreed a set of commitments with the UK's major broadband and mobile operators to support vulnerable consumers during the pandemic.

Providers committed to working with customers who are finding it difficult to pay their bill as a result of Covid-19 to ensure that they were treated fairly and appropriately supported, in addition to providing new and generous landline and mobile offers, such as free or low cost mobile data boosts.

The government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people.

The major mobile network operators are also supporting a government project enabling schools to request an uplift in mobile data caps for disadvantaged children who rely on mobile data to access remote education. Furthermore, a number of websites, including the NHS and educational websites, have been zero-rated.

The government is closely monitoring the situation, and will work with communication providers if further additional support options are required to ensure consumers get the connectivity they need.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- The Ipsos MORI report, 'Superfast Broadband Programme: State Aid Evaluation 2020', is available to view and [download here](#)
- A summary of the report's key findings can be [accessed here](#)
- Since the report was completed a further £640m of contracts have been taken forward as part of the Superfast Broadband Programme, bringing the total spent on the programme from £1.9bn (as published in the report) to £2.6bn.

More details on the '11 million'

- According to figures from Ofcom calculated for its Connected Nations 2020 report, 11 million households are currently able to access superfast speeds if they choose to upgrade or switch provider, but have not yet done so.
- A household which has taken a fibre package but is unable to get superfast speeds (30Mbit/s) because of distance to the cabinet is not included in this figure.
- However, if the household was also able to access coverage via another provider which could supply 30Mbps or more they would be included in the 11 million as they could get super/ultrafast broadband speed by switching.

More details about the benefits:

Reducing the digital divide and providing public value The findings suggested that the programme led to an increase in house prices of between £1,700 and £3,500, 0.56% and 1.16% uplift in prices respectively. At a programme level, land value uplifts have contributed to between £742m and £1.52bn.

This estimate represents how much house buyers valued access to a superfast broadband connection, accounting for many of the programme's indirect effects such as enabling greater remote working and reducing commuting times.

Driving growth in the economy Overall net economic benefits of the programme from 2012-2019 are estimated between £1.9bn and £2.7bn. This is broken down into the following benefits:

- Gross Value Added (GVA) increase through productivity gains: £1.1bn
- GVA increase through reduction in long term unemployed: £125m
- Land value uplift: low scenario of £742m and high scenario £1.52bn

Targeted areas have benefited from higher employment and wage growth and businesses have increased turnover.

The evaluation evidence suggests that the programme's value for money is improving over time as more evidence emerges: for every £1 invested by the Government in the programme, an additional £2.7-£3.8 of economic and social welfare has been created in the UK economy.

Stimulating the broadband market Government subsidies for broadband have provided a necessary 'incentive effect' for network providers to invest in their expansion of their networks. The Programme has also had the effect of increasing competition in the telecommunications market in areas where

smaller providers have won contracts.

As a result of higher than expected take-up of superfast broadband services, network providers are expected to return over £860 million to the public sector in 'clawback' clauses.

Business Secretary sets out new subsidies system that works for the UK

- UK to create a new subsidy control system that empowers local authorities and devolved administrations
- new system will be a clear departure from inflexible and bureaucratic EU state aid regime, and tailored to better support start-ups, small businesses and new industries
- consultation on plans will ensure new approach works for the UK and supports businesses and jobs in every part of the country

A new UK-wide system for providing more flexible and tailored financial support to businesses has been set out under plans by the Business Secretary today (Wednesday 3 February), taking advantage of the UK's newfound freedoms as an independent trading nation.

The new subsidy control system, which will be the long-term replacement for the EU's prescriptive state aid regime, will allow the UK to be more dynamic in providing support to businesses, including in innovative, R&D-focused industries, to encourage job creation and growth across all parts of the UK.

Previously, public authorities had to follow a bureaucratic, detailed set of EU controls – and may have needed prior approval from the European Commission before providing vital funds to viable businesses or pursuing key domestic policy objectives.

Under the proposed UK system, local authorities, public bodies and the devolved administrations in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast will be empowered to decide if they can issue taxpayer subsidies by following a set of UK-wide principles. These principles will ensure subsidies are designed in such a way that they deliver strong benefits and good value for money for the UK taxpayer, while being awarded in a timely and effective way.

The new system will be designed to be more flexible, agile and tailored to support business growth and innovation as well as maintain a competitive market economy and protect the UK internal market. At the same time, it will help protect against wasteful spending.

The system would also better enable the government to deliver on key priorities such as levelling up economic growth in the regions, tackling

climate change, as well as supporting our economic recovery as we build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

This is a significant milestone on our historic journey as an independent, sovereign nation.

Our new, more flexible system will empower public authorities and devolved administrations, and ensure fair competition for businesses across the UK.

Now we have taken back control of our money and laws from the EU, we want to use our newfound freedoms to propel the UK to the forefront of innovation and help create the jobs of the future, while also making the UK the best place to start and grow a business.

With a modern, tailored approach to supporting businesses, we will also be able to press ahead with our long-term ambitions to tackle climate change and to level up opportunity as we build back better from the pandemic.

The system will ensure the UK honours its international obligations under World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules, the [UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#) and other free trade agreements, and will not be a return to the 1970s approach of government trying to run the economy or bailing out unsustainable companies.

The consultation will seek views from businesses and public authorities on a number of areas, including:

- whether the UK should apply its own additional principles on subsidy control, as well as those set out in the UK-EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement
- how best to ensure transparency across the system
- the possible roles and responsibilities of the independent body that will oversee the new system
- how this independent body could have some role in supporting enforcement of the principles, alongside normal judicial review standards
- how the system could seek to introduce exemptions consistent with our international obligations, such as ensuring subsidies of low value, those given to support natural disaster relief or in response to global economic emergencies

The government has committed to consulting closely with the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, so that all 4 parts of the UK can take advantage of the greater flexibility afforded by leaving the EU.

A UK-wide subsidy control regime will ensure that subsidies do not unduly

distort competition within the UK's internal market. For example, it will ensure that a Welsh firm is not unfairly undercut or disadvantaged by a subsidy decision in England, and vice-versa. It will also mean that big companies cannot play off the regions, nations, towns, and cities of the UK against each other in a competition to benefit from taxpayer subsidy – protecting the dynamic and competitive market economy across the UK.

The government has always been clear that the regulation on subsidy control is a reserved matter. The UK Internal Market Act 2020 clarifies that the UK Parliament alone should legislate for the regulation of subsidies. The Act also helps to ensure that there is no confusion or ambiguity in law about the interpretation of the State aid elements in the Northern Ireland Protocol.

As set out in the UK Internal Market (UKIM) Act 2020, the Business Secretary will provide a draft of the proposed response to this consultation to devolved authorities and consider any representations they may have before a final response is published.

The consultation will run for a minimum of 8 weeks. Subject to the outcomes of this consultation, the government will bring forward primary legislation to establish in domestic law a system of subsidy control that works for the entirety of the UK.

The government has previously published guidance for public authorities on the [UK's subsidy control international commitments](#). This covers the relevant commitments in Free Trade Agreements, including the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the World Trade Organisation rules on subsidies and the Northern Ireland Protocol.

The Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland, part of the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement, contains provisions relating to subsidy control. Article 10 of the Protocol provides that the EU State aid rules will continue to apply in the limited circumstances where the subsidies affect trade in goods or wholesale electricity between Northern Ireland and the EU. The EU's declaration in the Joint Committee has clarified that subsidies granted in Great Britain are only in scope of Article 10 where there is a genuine, direct link between the subsidy and companies in Northern Ireland.

Peru and UK meet virtually to discuss issues of bilateral importance

Lima, 02 February 2021 – Representatives of the governments of the United Kingdom and Peru met virtually today for the III Meeting of the Political Consultations Mechanism. The two countries celebrated their diverse bilateral relationship that goes back to Peru's independence. The UK indicated that it will collaborate with the bicentennial celebrations, including the

development of a National Botanical Garden in Peru and pre-Columbian Peru exhibition at the British Museum in London.

During the dialogue, both sides welcomed the recent entry into force of the UK – Colombia, Ecuador and Peru Trade Agreement, and the progress in the process of Reconstruction of Peru's Northern Regions under the Government-to-Government Agreement framework. They agreed to strengthen their cooperation in science and health, and highlighted the importance of joint cooperation to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both countries said they will continue to promote long-term trade and investment, and Peru welcomed the United Kingdom's interest in joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). In addition, they agreed to advance negotiations on a double taxation convention. Peru reiterated its interest in achieving a short-stay visa waiver for Peruvian citizens travelling to the UK.

Hugo Shorter, Director for the Americas at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office said:

The Peru-UK Political Consultations Mechanism Meeting – the second I have led from the UK side – is a chance to take stock of the strong bilateral relationship between our two countries and identify opportunities for further cooperation.

Today we discussed everything from the UK's ground-breaking government-to-government agreement to help solve Peru's infrastructure needs, to joint research into Peru's unique biodiversity, to tackling the greatest global challenges in climate change and COVID-19

Both sides agreed on the importance of continuing the positive momentum to address climate change challenges ahead of COP26, highlighting their increasing commitments during the Climate Ambition Summit 2020. Fiona Clouder, COP26 Regional Ambassador for Latin America, said:

I am delighted to have attended the III UK Peru political consultations, the discussion around climate was very fruitful and I am sure we will keep the momentum to strengthen our cooperation and move towards a low carbon and resilient future together".

The UK emphasised its continued commitment to Peru in the fight against organised crime and other threats to stability, including corruption.

In turn, both delegations discussed the current regional situation and particularly highlighted the efforts of the Lima Group and the International Contact Group in the search for a peaceful, democratic and constitutional solution to the political and multidimensional crisis in Venezuela.

Finally, the delegations welcomed the recent announcement by the COVAX Facility that a first batch of COVID-19 vaccines will be delivered to Peru in the near future.