

NEW SUPPORT FOR JOBSEEKERS

From April Jobcentre Plus will begin to introduce a significantly expanded offer both to newly unemployed people and those reaching six months of unemployment. This is summarised below:

Customers Facing Redundancy/Made Redundant

Funding for the Rapid Response Service has been increased so that more people can be helped when they are made redundant or are facing the threat of redundancy.

The Day One Offer

From 6th April 2009 new customers will complete a checklist which will help to identify the support they may need. The adviser will determine what is offered to the customer taking into account any support already provided pre-redundancy through the Rapid Response Service.

The day one offer includes:

- access to the Adviser Discretion Fund, providing one-off cash help to improve an individual's immediate job prospects;
- access to Local Employment Partnership vacancies – see LEP extension details below;
- access to help in updating jobsearch skills, with a new one hour group information session for those needing more support;
- a new one day advice and coaching session delivered by external providers, including specialist support for those looking for professional or executive jobs delivered by organisations with expertise in that area; and
- additional funding for Access to Work, which supports disabled people in overcoming barriers to gaining or remaining in employment.

Local Employment Partnerships Extension

Last Autumn's Pre-Budget Report announced that LEPs would be extended to include the newly unemployed. The revised LEP business process will be operational from 6 April 2009. Key changes include the following:

- LEP Agreements extended to all newly unemployed customers;
- Significantly increased employer engagement, in particular targeting potential in existing employer accounts, growth sectors and large public sector employers and their sub-contractors to ensure that LEP is an integral part of their recruitment processes; and
- A new LEP Champion role in every District

The 6 Month Offer

At a recent Employment Summit the Prime Minister announced a package of support for Jobseekers aimed at ensuring that individuals reaching six months of unemployment are offered continuing and relevant support to get back into work quickly. The package will be available for 2 years from 6 April 2009 to all JSA customers who are:

- Entering the Supported Jobsearch stage (stage 3) of the new Jobseeker's Regime Flexible New Deal (JRFND) in Phase 1 Districts, until they reach JRFND stage 4 at 12 months.
- Aged 25 and over and have been unemployed for 6 months or more in Phase 2 Districts until the start of the mandatory programme that applies in their area (i.e. New Deal 25+ Gateway or PSL/EZ referral) at 18 months.

The 6 month offer covers:

- increased adviser support, including skills screening
- a new set of choices, including:
 - access to jobs where an employer receives £1,000 recruitment subsidy and access to in-work training through Employed Status Training for Work;
 - help with setting up in business (through a Self Employment Credit of £50 per week over 16 weeks);
 - easier access to training allowance for up to eight weeks, where the training is focussed on getting a job; and
 - access to work-focussed volunteering placements (to be brokered by Volunteer Development Scotland in partnership with other third sector organisations).

Please also note that from April 2009, Training for Work is available to all those unemployed from 13 weeks or more (a change from the previous 6 months). Day one eligibility also applies to early entry categories and pre-day 1 to those under notice of redundancy (where large scale redundancy status has been agreed).

ADDENDUM: Other Changes On the Horizon

You may be aware that the UK Government has committed itself to a range of wider Welfare Reforms. These include a revised Jobseeker Regime and Flexible New Deal which will provide additional support to help people back to work. These changes will be introduced across Scotland in two phases: in Edinburgh Lothians and Borders, Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway and Inverclyde and Lanarkshire and East Dunbartonshire from April 2009, and in the rest of the country from April 2010.