

“Get Britain Working” White Paper Summary

Introduction

A key part of the government’s mission to kick-start growth is the commitment to building an inclusive and thriving labour market where everyone has the opportunity of good work, and the chance to get on at work. This aims to improve living standards and ensure that vital public services can be funded. It is also central to delivering the government’s missions to break down barriers to opportunity, and to improve the health of the nation.

The white paper sets out the long-term ambition to achieve an 80% employment rate. This would place the UK among the highest performing countries in the world, with the equivalent of over 2 million more people in work. This approach is based on 3 pillars:

- a modern Industrial Strategy and Local Growth Plans – to create more good jobs in every part of the country
- improving the quality and security of work through the Plan to Make Work Pay
- the biggest reforms to employment support for a generation, bringing together skills and health to get more people into work and to get on in work

This third pillar is the focus for this White Paper: to Get Britain Working, **as part of a system based on mutual obligations, where those who can work, do work, and where support is matched by the requirement for jobseekers to take it up.**

The impact that is desired:

- Reduce unemployment (currently 1.5 million), inactivity (over 9 million), and long-term sickness (2.8 million).
- Improve access to healthcare, education, and skills training.
- Foster economic growth through a healthier, more inclusive workforce.

The case for change

The UK is the only major economy that has seen its employment rate fall over the last 5 years, reversing the previous long-run trend of declining rates of economic inactivity. This has been driven predominantly by a rise in the number of people out of work due to long-term ill health.

The White Paper sets out fundamental reforms to tackle 6 key issues:

- too many people are **excluded from the labour market** – especially those with health conditions, caring responsibilities or lower skill levels
- **too many young people leave school without essential skills** or access to high-quality further learning, an apprenticeship or support to work so that they can thrive at the start of their career

- **too many people are stuck in insecure, poor quality and often low-paying work**, which contributes to a weaker economy and also affects their health and wellbeing
- **too many women who care for their families still experience challenges** staying in and progressing in work
- **too many employers cannot fill their vacancies** due to labour and skills shortages, holding back economic growth and undermining living standards
- **there is too great a disparity in labour market outcomes** between different places and for different groups of people

The UK has lived with many of these challenges for decades, **but the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic alongside long-running economic, demographic and technological changes mean that we need radical action now to address them.**

The current employment support system is too narrowly focused on unemployment with insufficient support for disabled people and those with health conditions, too centralised and siloed and too focused on benefit compliance.

Definitions

Economically inactive - People who are neither in employment nor unemployed. This group includes, for example, all those who were looking after a home or retired.

People claiming out of work benefits/unemployed - Refers to people without a job who are seeking and available to start work

What is the proposed change of approach?

The driving purpose behind the new approach is to enable everyone to have the opportunity of secure, rewarding and fulfilling work. **Tackling economic inactivity, particularly where it is driven by ill health so that everyone has the opportunity to secure rewarding, fulfilling work.** It means getting more young people the chances and choices to learn, earn and take the first steps in work and their career. It means helping more people to get good jobs and progress out of poverty. And it means enabling local areas – especially through mayoral authorities – to lead and drive action to reduce economic inactivity and expand opportunity for young people, working with the NHS, councils, colleges, the voluntary sector and employers.

The focus will be on

- support for people to get back into work** if they are outside the workforce (and help to stay in employment if they have a health condition)
- access to training, an apprenticeship, or help to find work for young people** (including help to avoid losing touch with the workforce at a young age)
- help for people to get a job, upskill, and get on in their career**, whether they are unemployed or in employment, alongside clear obligations on people to take up support and do in return everything they can to work
- support for employers to recruit, retain and develop staff**

Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1: sets out our ambition to drive growth through employment and to build a thriving and inclusive labour market that works for people, communities and the economy.

Chapter 2: diagnoses the problems we face in the labour market and sets out the case for fundamental reform of our health, employment and skills systems.

Chapter 3: focuses on interventions to prevent economic inactivity driven by ill health and sets out government action to increase workforce participation through improving the health of the population, mobilising local work, health, and the skills systems, supporting employers to promote healthy workforces, and reforming the health and disability benefits system. It also sets out plans for a series of major place-based trailblazers to design and test local action to tackle economic inactivity.

Chapter 4: focuses on getting young people the jobs and opportunities they deserve, the challenges faced by young people first entering the world of work, how the Government is delivering the Youth Guarantee in England, including through new local trailblazers, and plans to launch a Youth Guarantee Advisory Panel and national partnerships with leading organisations to help young people develop skills and find employment.

Chapter 5: focuses on how the Government will deliver a new jobs and careers service to support people to progress in their careers, earn more and find higher quality work, the five pillars that will underpin design and delivery of this new service and our plan for adult skills.

Chapter 6: sets out wider labour market reforms that support the Government's policy agenda to deliver economic growth and break down barriers to opportunity.

Chapter 7: sets out the territorial scope of these reforms, our plans for greater devolution in Wales and England and our conclusions and next steps.

The proposals for action and change

- 1 Scaling up and deepening the contribution of the NHS and wider health system to focus on interventions to prevent economic inactivity driven by ill health through improving the health of the population to have an impact on employment outcomes**
 - support the NHS to provide 40,000 extra elective appointments each week and deploy dedicated capacity to reduce waiting lists in 20 NHS Trusts in England with the highest levels of health-related economic inactivity
 - address key public health issues that contribute to worklessness, through an expansion of Talking Therapies, our landmark Tobacco and Vapes Bill and a range of steps to tackle obesity (including trials of new treatments)
 - expand access to expert employment advisers as part of treatment and care pathways, in particular mental health and musculoskeletal services. We will also continue to expand access to Individual Placement and Support (IPS) for severe mental illness, reaching 140,000 more people by 2028/29
- 2. Backing local areas to shape an effective work, health and skills offer for local people, with mayoral authorities leading the way in England**

- work with MCAs to **mobilise 8 place-based trailblazers to reduce economic inactivity**, with £125 million of funding in 2025/26. This will enable them to work with the full range of partners in their areas to shape a strong, joined-up and local work, health and skills offer. **Support all areas in England to develop local Get Britain Working Plans** and to convene local partners to work together to deliver these. **Plans will focus on reducing economic inactivity and taking forward the Youth Guarantee within local areas.** We expect these plans to be developed by mayoral authorities where they exist – aligned with their Local Growth Plans – and elsewhere by groups of local authorities.
- kick-start local plans with £115 million in funding next year to enable local areas in England and Wales to deliver new back-to-work support for people who are economically inactive. **Connect to Work, a new supported employment programme, will support up to 100,000 people a year at full rollout**, as the first tranche of money from a new Get Britain Working Fund. This approach will enable local areas to develop this new provision as part of a coherent local offer, alongside wider health and skills support, the use of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and active links with local employers
- incorporate devolved funding for Connect to Work into the new Integrated Settlements for Mayoral Combined Authorities from 2025/26, which will initially be available to Greater Manchester and the West Midlands

3. Delivering a Youth Guarantee so that all 18 to 21-year-olds in England have access to education, training or help to find a job or an apprenticeship

Building on existing provision and entitlements, there is a commitment to:

- work with **mayoral authorities to mobilise 8 place-based Youth Guarantee trailblazers** with £45 million of funding in 2025/26. These trailblazers will design and test how different elements of the Guarantee can be brought together into a coherent offer for young people, with clear leadership and accountability and proactive engagement to make sure no young person misses out. All trailblazers will have a set of agreed outcomes, shared governance and a commitment to robust evaluation and learning
- **expand opportunities for young people by transforming the Apprenticeship Levy into a more flexible Growth and Skills Levy.** As a first step, we will create new foundation and shorter apprenticeship opportunities for young people in key sectors
- establish a new national partnership to **generate a range of exciting opportunities that engage young people and set them on the path to success**, beginning with leading sports, arts and cultural organisations like The Premier League, Channel 4 and the Royal Shakespeare Company
- **explore a new approach to benefit rules for young people**, to make sure they can develop skills alongside searching for work, while also preventing young people from falling out of the workforce before their careers have begun
- **act to prevent young people losing touch with education or employment before the age of 18**, with a guaranteed place in education and training for all 16 and 17-year-olds, an expansion of work experience and careers advice, action to tackle school attendance, and steps to improve access to mental health services for young people.

4. Creating a new jobs and careers service to help people get into work and get on at work

To promote employment, tackle economic inactivity and boost living standards, we will **transform Jobcentre Plus across Great Britain into a genuine public employment service, bringing it together with the National Careers Service in England.** This service will:

- be **digital, universal and fully inclusive**
- be based around **personalised support to help people get into work, build skills and get on in their career**, underpinned by a clear expectation that jobseekers do all they can to look for work
- **build new and enhanced relationships with employers** that better meet their recruitment needs and help to reduce reliance on foreign workers
- have a **clear focus on supporting progression and good work by bringing together employment support and careers advice**
- be locally responsive, embedded and engaged, as a strong local partner with other local services and local organisations

The new jobs and careers service will be focused around 3 core objectives of improving engagement, employment and earnings. The recent Budget allocated £55 million in 2025/26 to kick-start these ambitious reforms. This will enable investment in new digital prototypes and tests and trials of elements of the new service, including an enhanced employer offer. To build a national service that is fundamentally local at heart, we will design, develop and test this service in partnership with mayoral authorities, local authorities and devolved governments.

5. Launching an independent review into the role of UK employers in promoting healthy and inclusive workplaces

Poor workforce health imposes large costs on employers, especially from sickness absence and turnover, while also making it harder for them to find the talent they need to grow and thrive. There is also compelling evidence about the value of helping people with a health condition or disability to stay in work, including to prevent them becoming economically inactive. In response, the review will consider what more can be done to enable employers to:

- increase the recruitment and retention of disabled people and those with a health condition, including via the new jobs and careers service
- prevent people becoming unwell at work and promote good, healthy workplaces
- undertake early intervention for sickness absence and increase returns to work

The review will run until next summer and involve wide-ranging engagement with employers, employees, trade unions, health experts, and disabled people and those with health conditions. It will complement the government's Make Work Pay reforms, which will tackle job insecurity and expand flexible working.