

# LGA Briefing: New DWP programme for the unemployed

## October 2016

### *Overview*

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is preparing to launch a new Work and Health Programme (WHP) for people with health conditions and disabilities and those unemployed for over two years. It will replace the current Work Programme (WP) and Work Choice contracts. The expectation is that it will become operational in every local area by February 2018. With a budget of £130 million per year, it represents a fifth of the size of its predecessor WP. Jobcentre Plus will support all other JSA claimants up to their eligibility on WHP. The DWP is working bilaterally with nine devolution deal areas to decide how WHP works in their areas. For all other areas across England and Wales, a 'national offer' will apply. DWP is now rolling out a procurement exercise for WHP. It is keen to capture the expertise and knowledge of councils, which we know is so vital for delivering effective employment support.

### ***Local government's role in shaping the design of WHP***

#### Devolution areas

**Nine devolution deal areas** are working bilaterally with DWP to influence WHP provision in their areas through either co-design or co-commission arrangements. These areas are East Anglia, Greater Manchester, London, Liverpool City Region, Sheffield City Region, Tees Valley, West of England, West Midlands and Cardiff City Deal area.

#### WHP national offer

Outside of these areas, a **WHP national offer** will apply. The LGA sought to influence its design, commissioning and performance management, and worked with DWP to engage the sector through national consultation events in May 2016 and an Expert Working Group.

Our starting point for influencing it was LGA's original proposal of November 2015<sup>1</sup>. This set out that the best way providing employment support for the long term unemployed and those with disabilities is through groups of councils commissioning a service across a Combined Authority / single LEP area to align services locally and bring together employment, health and skills, awarding contracts to providers who know the range of partners to bring together locally. Funded through Whitehall and local resources, it would use a case worker model to coordinate interventions similar to councils' Troubled Families work.

While we were optimistic of the merits of joint working to influence the national offer, key design features fall short of LGA expectations. This includes large contract areas with one provider each, and tight procurement timetables. It is with this in mind, that the LGA cannot endorse the DWP's current approach to the WHP national offer. Click [here for an LGA view](#). Despite our concerns on the national offer, we understand that individual councils may still wish to engage with DWP's programme if they choose to locally.

### ***DWP offer to councils***

DWP remains keen to engage councils in its national offer. To find out more, and consider your council's involvement, e-mail [workandhealth.programme@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:workandhealth.programme@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> [Realising Talent: supporting people with multiple needs into work \(November 2015\)](#)