

# The Work Programme

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## The New Benefits System

The Coalition's attempt to get the long-term unemployed back to work replaced numerous similar initiatives in June 2011. It provides an incentive to private companies to hire and train those on the programme; they are then paid if the jobseeker finds long-term employment. There is a lot of material online, with much of it aimed at attracting providers rather than informing jobseekers. This article should address the main concerns you may have.

## Who is Eligible to Join the Programme?

You may be required to join the programme if you are receiving Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support and Incapacity Benefits, or if you have just been released from prison and are claiming benefits. Younger claimants, from 18-24, will be referred after 9 months of unemployment, and those 25 and over will be referred after a year. If you're on ESA, then someone will assess you to see if you are fit for work.

Those who are deemed less likely to find employment on their own (the long-term unemployed who may have a limited capability for work) come with a bigger incentive for the provider to find them long-term employment. The government hopes this will prevent the harder to help cases being sidelined by providers.

## How can it Help You?

The aim of the programme is to provide the unemployed with the skills and resources necessary to gain stable employment. You should continue receiving the same benefits as before, and you may be eligible to claim travel expenses. There are different providers of the programme for different areas of the country; you can find your local provider on the [DWP site](#). Each provider may vary in how they try to help, but the basic support structure should be fairly universal.

[Ingeus](#), a provider for many areas across the UK, promises jobseekers:

- One-to-one support from an Employment Advisor
- Advice on job-searching, CV writing and interview skills
- Calculations that show how much better off you can be in work
- Vacancies that are exclusive to Ingeus clients
- Use of computers and phones to find and apply for jobs
- Specialist advice on areas such as housing, debt and benefits
- Health and wellbeing support provided by health specialists

## Is the Scheme Working?

The effectiveness of the Work Programme is up for debate. It is important to note that contracts between individuals and programme providers last up to two years, and we are only three years into the new initiative.

LVSC, the collaborative leader of London's voluntary and community sector, has produced an intricate [report](#) on the impact of the programme in London. There is the worry that the programme has failed one of its target groups; the report states that 'the number of job outcomes for ex-Incapacity Benefit claimants on the Work Programme is astonishingly low'.

A [report](#) produced by Crisis, Homeless Link, and St Mungo's raises serious concerns that homeless people have been severely let down by the programme; that they and the charities that support them are without sufficient help to secure long-term employment.

The most [recent DWP report is said](#) to show that the programme has been underperforming; that it is not doing as much to help those deemed to have a limited capability for work. There are also many firsthand accounts online by jobseekers taking part in the work programme. While some seem satisfied and have found

work, there are also those who are completely disillusioned with the scheme and feel let down.

It is important that if you feel that you are being sidelined or are suffering in part due to the programme that you talk to your advisor. There are also numerous charities that can assist you in matters you may find overwhelming, including the [Citizens Advice Bureau](#).

