



DWP Employer News: July 2015

Early learning for two-year-olds

Did you know that many of your employees are eligible for **free** [early learning for their two-year-olds?](#)

This entitles parents who earn up to £16,190 and are receiving tax credits a year to 570 hours of free early learning and childcare per year. This typically equates to 15 hours a week over 38 weeks of the year, however in many cases it can be delivered more flexibly to meet the needs of parents.

Places are funded by the Government and can be taken in a range of good quality regulated providers. Research shows that children are more likely to enjoy and do well at school if they've experienced high-quality early education.

And the benefits extend to parents, too. Knowing their little boy or girl is being encouraged to try new things and develop new skills even when they're not with them can give your employees the assurance they need to take on more hours at work, take a college course to refresh their skills, or even get ideas about how to help their child play and learn.

To apply parents can visit [here](#), where they will be directed to their local authority's website.

We very much encourage you to make your staff aware of this programme and if you have any queries or would like more information then please do not hesitate to contact Will.plange@education.gsi.gov.uk who will be happy to help you.

Broadband Connection Voucher Scheme Update

As of end of May 2015, cities and suppliers had issued just over 26,000 vouchers to SMEs. Demand continues to grow, with on average over 1000 vouchers being issued per week.

The £40 million Challenge Fund for 2015-16 is managed on a first come first serve basis i.e. the value of each voucher issued taken from the total until the Fund is exhausted. After 9 weeks of the extended scheme, cities and suppliers issued over 11,000 vouchers, amounting to a commitment of over £12.1m.

The main factors appear to be due to increasing numbers of eligible SMEs in the new expanded scheme, increasing numbers of suppliers to selling vouchers direct to SMEs and rising awareness amongst SMEs as a result of national and local marketing and mailshots to SMEs via HMRC.



Virgin Media, BT, and Talk Talk continue to issue the greatest number of vouchers, accounting for approximately 40%.

A number of further benefits to the scheme are becoming clear:

- Vouchers and the competition for them is helping drive down the average monthly line rental costs where they are offered (by stripping out the installation charges), thus offering better deal for SMEs;
- We estimate based upon 26,000 vouchers issued and the average number of employees per business, just under 470,000 employees stand to benefit from better connectivity;
- Since the introduction of pre-registered packages in September, the average cost of a voucher has fallen from c. £2500 to c. £1250 meaning Government investment can go further for less; and
- We are seeing average connectivity speeds increasing. On average firms are getting speeds 7 times faster for download and 15 times faster for upload.

For more information about the scheme visit: connectionvouchers.co.uk.

DWP and UKCES launch seven projects to fight low pay

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) and DWP conducted a competition that addressed the challenge of how to increase earnings for low income workers whilst tackling costly retention, recruitment and skills gaps faced by businesses.

As part of this new initiative, seven new projects aimed at fighting low pay launched on 11 June 2015 across the UK. The projects, jointly funded through private and public investment, are aimed at the retail and hospitality industries, which have some of the lowest pay rates in the economy.

Major firms in the retail and hospitality industries, including Jamie Oliver's 'Fifteen' and the Rocco Forte hotel chain, are running the projects, joining forces with UKCES and the DWP. The projects will trial new ways of designing jobs, delivering training and support, increasing business and staff productivity and ultimately raising take home pay for workers on low wages.

For more information about the competition visit the [UKCES website](http://ukces.gov.uk).

Fit for Work (FfW) update

The rollout of Fit for Work is progressing rapidly across England with the [remaining four waves](#) of the GP referral programme scheduled to go live by the end of summer



2015. All employers in England and Wales will be able to refer from autumn 2015, once GP referrals have fully rolled out.

The GP referral rollout to all remaining NHS Boards in Wales and Scotland was completed 29 June 2015. The employer portal will go live over summer 2015, allowing employers across the whole of Scotland to also make referrals.

Employers in Scotland will be able to refer an employee by using the [online referral form](#). Once referred, employees will be contacted within 24 hours and they will receive an assessment by a health professional within two working days. This person will be their case manager.

Automatic enrolment: Have you nominated a contact?

By the end of the summer, The Pensions Regulator will have written to every employer in the UK to tell you the date you need to be ready to enrol your eligible staff into a workplace pension. The letter also asks you to nominate a primary and secondary contact. This is so that both contacts have the opportunity to receive regular information from the regulator in the run up to the date the duties begin.

Who is a primary and secondary contact?

The primary contact is usually the most senior person who is legally responsible for ensuring compliance with automatic enrolment duties. In a small business, this is likely to be the business owner. A secondary contact is usually the person responsible for the practical implementation of automatic enrolment on behalf of the employer. This may be someone else that works for you; alternatively this could be an accountant, bookkeeper, or other business adviser.

If you're an employer you can nominate your primary and secondary contacts [here](#).

What if you don't have any staff?

If you've received a letter and you don't know if automatic enrolment duties apply to you, e.g. you don't have any staff; [visit this page for more information](#).

You can keep up to date on automatic enrolment by [signing up for email alerts](#), or [visit The Pension Regulator's website](#) for more information.

State Pension changes – are your employees in the know?

The new State Pension is being introduced for people reaching State Pension age on or after 6 April 2016. The new State Pension is designed to give people greater clarity about what they will get from the state in retirement. More details at www.gov.uk/new-state-pension.



PensionTube

Did you know there is a dedicated YouTube channel devoted to pensions? DWP's [PensionTube](#) brings together videos featuring independent experts, employers, employees, charities and the government to highlight the changes happening to help people planning for their retirement.

State Pension statements for the over 55s

Do you have employees over the age of 55 who would like a personalised State Pension statement? They can either [download the application](#) or call the Newcastle Pension Centre on 03453000168.

DWP pensions bulletin

Need to keep up-to-date with pensions news? [Sign up](#) to our weekly bulletin to get the latest updates direct to your inbox.

'Vague' job ads waste applicants' and employers' time

As many as nine out of 10 online job ads do not meet the minimum requirement in terms of providing basic information such as hours and pay according to research from Citizens Advice.

The research stated that nine out of 10 ads on internet job portals failed to meet Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) requirements. Basic information about wages and hours was missing, leaving people unable to assess if a job would allow them to pay the bills or fit around commitments such as childcare.

Vague job ads also risked wasting employers' time and money because a lack of information could increase the number of unsuitable applications and put stronger candidates off applying.

Analysis by Citizens Advice of more than 824 online job ads found two out of five were unclear about whether a position was full or part-time, temporary or permanent; one in five did not give pay details; and one in 10 did not specify either an employer or an agency, so applicants were unaware of who they were sending their details to.

The ASA says all of this information should be included, together with a clear and accurate description of the work involved.

Disability Confident campaign - 2 years on



The [Disability Confident campaign](#) will mark its second anniversary during week commencing 27 July with a programme of activity to celebrate the successes of the campaign and looking ahead to year three.

We'll be re-launching our LinkedIn campaign page - sharing hints, tips and advice and highlighting help available to employers whether recruiting disabled people or if employees develop a health condition.

Over the past 2 years the campaign has been growing and gaining momentum, with many companies – both large and small – pledging to 'do one thing' and becoming Disability Confident.

We're now planning the next phase of the campaign, to encourage more employers to sign up and do something to support disabled people into work.

Please get in touch by emailing us at [Disability Confident](#) to share your Disability Confident stories. We can also provide tools to help. You could also join our [Disability Confident LinkedIn group](#) to engage, share and find out more.

Britain's Youth has got talent...

No, not the ITV show with dancing dogs hosted by Simon Cowell, I'm talking about the people who currently work for you or could be working for you gaining valuable work experience. Any 18-24 year olds currently on any of the following:

- Internships
- Apprenticeships
- Work placements
- Volunteering
- Sector Based Work Academies
- Or any other form of work experience

DWP will be launching the first phase of the Youth Employment campaign in mid-August **#WEcan** (work experience can). The campaign:

- Is aimed at 18-24 year old people on benefits but also any young person **without** experience on their CV. 14-18 year olds are also a target audience alongside friends and families of young jobseekers.
- Aims to help them understand the value of having work experience on their CV, and makes best use of employer voices to convince them.
- Will drive young people toward a bespoke blog platform populated with employer blogs, as well as other engaging, thought-provoking and shareable content (video, infographics, quizzes etc.)



So how can you help?

We'd welcome your support by:

- Highlighting any existing case studies (employers or young people) that would generate great content
- Work with us to write any new Blog posts about the importance of work experience (employers) or how work experience has helped (young people)
- Highlighting any existing short video content or existing videos that could be repurposed
- Share any insight on the impact of work experience in your business or on the young people you work with

Research suggests that:

- **76%** of employers say lack of work experience is the reason young people are unprepared for work (**Source:** British Chambers)
- **66%** of employers say work experience is a significant or crucial factor in their recruitment compared to 49% that say academic qualifications are critical or significant factors (**Source:** UKCES)

If you are interested in getting involved, please email [DWP Employer News](#) quoting **Britain's Youth has Got Talent** in the subject title.

ACAS UPDATE

Building productivity in the workplace

UK productivity levels continue to lag behind our competitors. Acas believes that the answer lies within the workplace. The way workplaces are organised, the part played by managers and leaders, and the role and involvement of employees and their representatives provide the means for things to change and improve.

Acas has [developed a model](#) which will help workplaces diagnose and improve workplace productivity.

What do your employees think about age issues?

To help you understand what your employees think about age issues, ensure your organisations' approaches and policies are within the law (and so help address any risks or issues that could potentially lead to future discrimination claims), and establish policies and practices, a [free interactive Age Audit Tool](#) from Acas is available.



Calculate and Manage Pay - Step-by-step guides for SMEs

A [new guide](#) has been launched to help SMEs to calculate and manage pay accurately. This is part of a series of manageable, concise, step-by-step guides for SMEs

Time off for antenatal appointments

Evidence from the Acas Helpline shows that many employers may be unaware that new leave rights for antenatal and adoption were introduced in October 2014 for adopters, surrogates and partners of pregnant women. [This guidance](#) attempts to respond to this need, and sets out top tips for employers and all prospective parents.

Early Conciliation a success

Acas introduced Early Conciliation in April 2014 to help parties to resolve workplace disputes without the need for an Employment Tribunal. Evidence published this week shows:

- High levels of satisfaction - over 80% of users.
- Around 90% said they would use the service again.
- 63% of cases did not proceed to a tribunal claim, 15% resulted in a formal settlement and 22% progressed to a tribunal claim.
- Early Conciliation saved parties time and money compared to an Employment Tribunal.

For more information and the latest statistics, visit the [Acas website](#).

Pass it on

Please forward this issue of the DWP Employer News on to others who you think may find it useful. If you've received a copy of this issue, and would like to receive your own copy, please [subscribe online](#).

We'd welcome your feedback about DWP Employer News and whether it meets your needs. If you have views or suggestions then please [email us](#) quoting DWP Employer News in the title.