



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP 2016-0255 , 19 December 2016

Closure of jobcentres in Glasgow

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Summary

A Westminster Hall debate on closure of jobcentres in Glasgow is scheduled for Tuesday 20 December 2016 from 4.30 pm to 5.30 pm.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald will lead the debate.

On 7 December 2016 DWP announced plans to close 8 out of the 16 Jobcentres in Glasgow, as part of a review of its wider estate. The Department states that the merging of the Jobcentres will not affect the level of service for their users, but Members of Parliament, MSPs, Scottish Government Ministers, trades unions and others have voiced major concerns about the proposed closures and their potential impact on the ability of people to access Jobcentre Plus services.

The DWP has now launched an online consultation on the proposed closure of three of the Jobcentres – Bridgeton, Castlemilk and Maryhill. The consultation closes on 31 January 2017. For the other five Jobcentres – Langside, Parkhead, Easterhouse, Anniesland and Cambuslang – the Department considers that the replacement Jobcentres are within reasonable travelling distances.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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1. Background

Since 1998 the majority of offices occupied by the Department for Work and Pensions have been provided under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangement known as the PRIME contract. Under the terms of this 20-year PFI, the Department contracts to occupy fully serviced accommodation from a private sector partner, Telereal Trillium.

The contract is due to end in March 2018 and the Department is considering future locations for Jobcentre Plus and other offices ahead of its expiry. The DWP is committed to reducing the size of its estate by 20%, and to increasing “co-location” of Jobcentre Plus offices with other local services such as local authority benefit teams and mental health services.¹

Announcement of 7 December

On 7 December 2016 DWP announced plans to close 8 out of the 16 Jobcentres in Glasgow, as part of its review of its estate.² Under the plans:

- Castlemilk and Langside Jobcentres would move to Newlands Jobcentre;
- Parkhead, Easterhouse and Bridgeton Jobcentres would move to Shettleston Jobcentre;
- Anniesland Jobcentre would move to Partick Jobcentre;
- Maryhill Jobcentre would move to Springburn Jobcentre; and
- Cambuslang Jobcentre would move to Rutherglen Jobcentre.

DWP states that the merging of the Jobcentres will not affect the level of service for their “customers.” It states that the changes provide the opportunity to modernise operations while ensuring its premises provide the best value to the taxpayer.

Members of Parliament, MSPs, Scottish Government Ministers, trades unions and others have voiced major concerns about the proposed closures and their potential impact on the ability of people to access Jobcentre Plus services, including whether it might increase the risk of benefit sanctions being incurred. There has also been criticism of the lack of consultation prior to the announcement. The Scottish Government has written to the UK Government asking them to clarify urgently their plans for Jobcentres across the rest of Scotland, and whether further closures should be expected.³

Social Security Committee evidence session

On 15 December the Scottish Parliament’s Social Security Committee held an evidence session on Universal Credit roll-out at which Neil Couling, the DWP Universal Credit Director General, and Denise

¹ [Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015](#), Cm 9162, November 2015, para 2.54; [Department for Work and Pensions’ settlement at the Spending Review](#), DWP press release, 25 November 2016

² BBC News, [Half Glasgow’s Jobcentre Plus services to close under DWP plans](#), 7 December 2016

³ [Clarity sought over Jobcentre Plus closures](#), Scottish Government press release, 11 December 2016

Horsfall, the Department's Scotland Work Services Director, gave evidence. The officials told the Committee that:

- The Department was in the process of negotiating leases for around 1,000 buildings across Great Britain
- The negotiations involved complicated commercial discussions with a very large number of landlords, so the "cards were kept very close to our chest" about the proposals
- The Department would hopefully know by the end of February of March at the latest what the plans were for all other sites across Great Britain
- There was a "high density" of Jobcentre sites in Glasgow – there were a number of smaller sites with insufficient space, and as a result the Department could not operate in ways it would wish to
- For five of the proposed closures, the Department judged the alternative offices to be within reasonable travelling distances. For the other three – Bridgeton, Castlemilk and Maryhill – the travelling distances to the alternative offices were longer. DWP was therefore consulting on these closures, and had written to "stakeholders."
- In determining travelling distances, DWP had used Traveline and Google Maps, but admitted there was "further work" to do.
- The 20-year PFI deal had "locked in" DWP – some sites had underutilised space, and in some cases the Department was "paying over the odds" for accommodation. The Department wanted to take some opportunities to co-locate services with some local authorities.

The Official Report of the evidence session is due for publication by 6 pm on 19 December 2016. The session can also be viewed on the Scottish Parliament's [You Tube channel](#).

Consultation on the proposed closure of the Bridgeton, Castlemilk and Maryhill jobcentres

The Department initially proposed to run a consultation on the proposed closure of the Bridgeton, Castlemilk and Maryhill jobcentres ending on 18 January 2017. The short timescale was criticised by, among others, the Scottish Parliament's Social Security Committee.

On 19 December 2016 DWP [launched an online consultation](#) on the proposals to close the three jobcentres. The consultation ends on 31 January 2017.

The consultation paper states that the closures "will contribute to the consolidation of the Glasgow jobcentre network and, through disposal, provide the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) with the opportunity to deliver improved customer services at reduced costs to the taxpayer through better use of the office space we occupy."⁴

The consultation paper gives the following information on the background to the proposals, and what they mean:

After 20 years, the national contract covering many Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) offices expires on 31 March 2018.

⁴ DWP, [Proposal for the future of Bridgeton, Castlemilk and Maryhill jobcentres](#), December 2016, p3

This gives the department an opportunity to review what offices are needed in the future, taking account of the welfare reforms that will be delivered over the coming years and the services on which so many of our customers depend.

By paying only for the space we need we will save many millions of pounds of taxpayers' money. Where it makes sense to do so, we will also continue to make use of opportunities to co-locate and share buildings with other organisations.

The financial savings secured from improving the efficiency of our estate is an integral part of the department's overall financial plan.

What this means for Glasgow

1. DWP is committed to maintaining a network of jobcentres, across Great Britain, delivering services that support an effective welfare system that enables people to achieve financial independence by providing assistance and guidance into employment. Our commitment to Glasgow means we are proposing an estate that is right for the city, our benefit claimants and our colleagues; an estate that will deliver improved services by bringing together some neighbouring jobcentres where we can achieve access to more employers and partners. Our proposals will provide an estate that gives access to more employment opportunities for local claimants and allow us to achieve significant savings for the taxpayer.

The proposal

2. The city of Glasgow is split into 4 geographical areas - north, south, east and west. Jobcentres were historically built up within these areas, primarily within large housing estates. As unemployment has dropped across the city, so has the use of some of these smaller jobcentres.

3. DWP propose to bring these smaller jobcentres together into larger existing sites within the city's 4 geographical areas while retaining sites in locations which are accessible to all residents. Our overriding priority has been to ensure the locations of the sites we have proposed for retention are as accessible as possible to all of our claimants. We believe our current proposals are the best way to achieve this in Glasgow.

4. The larger sites are all geographically based in locations around the city that can offer better services to our claimants. This approach builds on the life changing improvements DWP has already delivered over recent years for the city by bringing services together to offer additional support to those who need it most.

5. We believe that it is a reasonable expectation that claimants travel to an office within 3 miles or 20 minutes by public transport of their existing jobcentre. This is an approach applied across the jobcentre network and not specific to Glasgow. If a proposed closure is outside of these criteria, we have chosen to consult publicly. This will ensure that we take into account the impact of any closure before we make a final decision.

6. This consultation proposes that 3 jobcentres are closed as follows:

- Bridgeton Jobcentre;
- Castlemilk Jobcentre; and
- Maryhill Jobcentre.

7. We have carefully considered where the workload and services of the jobcentres proposed for closure, could be relocated. We propose that service delivery for Bridgeton Jobcentre will relocate to Shettleston Jobcentre, services for Castlemilk Jobcentre will move to Newlands Jobcentre and, in respect of Maryhill Jobcentre, services will be merged with Springburn Jobcentre.

8. In designing the future estate, and making this proposal for these jobcentres, we have sought to maintain the services we offer claimants and to minimise the impact on claimants travel as far as possible. In some instances, this may mean slightly longer and slightly shorter journeys for some of our claimants.

The consultation paper includes an annex which illustrates the estimated travel time between the jobcentres it is proposed to merge, using the shortest journey times by public transport and by car:

Jobcentre proposed for closure	Proposed location for service delivery	Distance	Public Transport	Car
Bridgeton Jobcentre	Shettleston Jobcentre	2.7 miles	Approximately 30 minutes	11 minutes
Castlemilk Jobcentre	Newlands Jobcentre	3.9 miles	Approximately 45 minutes	14 minutes
Maryhill Jobcentre	Springburn Jobcentre	2.9 miles	Approximately 30 minutes	11 minutes

The consultation paper states:

10. By consulting publicly about our proposals, we are seeking your views on the office mergers, including the impact on travel times and costs, and on support available to claimants and the wider population.

11. When considering responses to this consultation and making decisions regarding the future of these jobcentres, ministers will consider whether effective access to services can be maintained, whether the proposal creates any significant cost issues for claimants and, the closure offers value for money for the taxpayer.

It lists six questions:

Question 1: Do you agree with the proposals? What overall comments would you like to make on the proposals?

Question 2: Will the proposals to close Bridgeton, Castlemilk and Maryhill jobcentres have a direct impact on you? If yes, please provide further details.

Question 3: If you currently use Jobcentre Plus services at these jobcentres, what impacts are there on the time and cost taken to travel to your new jobcentre?

Question 4: Are there any other particular impacts of the proposals that DWP should take into account when making a decision?

Question 5: Are there alternative services that could be provided that would be a benefit to some claimants? For example this could be a member of Jobcentre Plus staff based in a community venue to provide help with looking for work. Please explain your answer, with specific examples and evidence of the potential demand for the service where possible.

Question 6: Please provide any additional comments that you have.

2. Press releases

Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS)

[Outrageous plan to close half Glasgow's jobcentres](#)

7 December 2016

We have promised outright opposition to plans announced today to close more than half of Glasgow's jobcentres.

The proposal to shut eight of the 16 sites that serve the city will hit the most disadvantaged areas hardest.

If the Department for Work and Pensions gets its way jobcentres in Parkhead, Bridgeton, Easterhouse, Castlemilk, Langside, Anniesland, Cambuslang and Maryhill would close by March 2018.

In its announcement the DWP says the closures will mean it is well positioned to "deliver an estate that's right for the city, its customers and our people".

But in fact it will mean vital services being removed from areas crying out for investment.

We believe the decision breaches a government commitment from 2011 to ensure "a reasonable footprint" remains in areas affected by jobcentre closures "to maintain a reasonable customer service".

Government departments also under a legal duty to consider the impact of their policies on equality issues, but DWP is yet to share its analysis with us.

We have grave concerns about the effect these closures would have particularly on women, children and people with disabilities.

Hours after the announcement the issue was raised at prime minister's questions in the House of Commons by SNP leader Angus Robertson.

We will continue to work with MPs and MSPs to oppose the plans, as well as organising members' meetings and campaigning alongside voluntary and unemployed workers groups.

Our Scottish secretary Lynn Henderson said: "No one should be in any doubt that these proposals will have a devastating impact on the worst socio economic areas in the city of Glasgow.

"Our very clear view is that DWP needs to pause on these proposals and subject them to both parliamentary and public scrutiny."

Citizens Advice Scotland

[Glasgow Jobcentre closures will 'hit the most deprived people'](#)

7 December 2016

Citizens Advice Scotland has said that the proposal to close half of Glasgow's Jobcentres will impact most on those who are already struggling in the city. The charity has also said that many people will not be able to use the internet as an alternative way to access services.

CAS spokesman Rob Gowans says,

"Our research shows that around one third of Scottish CAB clients are unable to use a computer to apply for work or benefits, due to either lack of access or lack of skills. These people tend to be among the most deprived, and the most financially vulnerable. They rely on access to the face-to-face support that jobcentres provide.

"CAB research has also shown that travel is difficult for some people, particularly those who are sick or disabled, or those who live in areas where public transport is expensive or inadequate.

"Our concern is that these proposed closures are very extensive, in a city which already has a high number of people who need help to find work and practical access to social security.

"The local CABs across Glasgow are, as always, ready to help anyone who is unable to access these services or concerned about their benefits. CAB help is always free, impartial and confidential."

Scottish Government

[Clarity sought over Jobcentre Plus closures](#)

11 December 2016

Employability Minister requests further information from UK Government.

The UK Government must provide further clarity around proposals to close Jobcentre Plus offices, the Minister for Employability and Training Jamie Hepburn has said.

In a letter to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Mr Hepburn has asked how these changes could reduce access to services, and possibly increase the risk of sanctions which are applied around the need to attend the facilities. He has also asked for urgent advice on the future of Jobcentre Plus facilities across the rest of the country.

This latest request follows Mr Hepburn's letter to the UK Government last week, which expressed Scottish Government concerns over the announcement.

Mr Hepburn said:

"The closure of half of the Jobcentre Plus offices in Glasgow, announced last week, could make it more difficult for people to access these vital services. We urgently need the UK Government to clarify their plans for centres across the rest of the country and whether we should expect further planned closures.

“I am disappointed that there was no consultation with the Scottish Government on this issue, which is contrary to the spirit of the Smith Agreement and it’s particularly frustrating given how closely we have been working to ensure there is a smooth and effective transition of our new employability support powers.

“My first concern is to understand how the UK Government assessed how these proposed changes would impact on their customers at a time when they are increasing the level of Jobcentre Plus based support in favour of reducing funding for devolved employment provision.

“We also need the UK Government to confirm how the remaining Jobcentre Plus facilities will meet the increased demand being placed upon them, and how the additional costs of people who have to travel further to access these services will be met.

“The UK Government needs to properly consult on any changes to ensure the views of communities in Scotland are fully reflected in any decisions.”

Scottish Catholic Media Office

[Archbishop Tartaglia urges DWP to reconsider Job Centre closures](#)

14 December 2016

Archbishop Philip Tartaglia has expressed concern at a proposal to close half of Glasgow’s job centres.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has indicated it intends to close 8 of the 16 job centres in the city.

Commenting on the proposal, Archbishop Tartaglia said:

“I am very concerned by the Department of Work and Pensions’ proposals to close half of Glasgow’s Job Centres. Sadly, Glasgow has one of the highest rates of unemployment in Scotland, and suffers high levels of deprivation as a result. Closing offices in some of the most deprived areas of the city, risks reducing access to support for those who need it most.”

“Tens of thousands of people will potentially have to travel further at additional cost to attend their appointments, while risking severe sanctions if they are even a few minutes late. I hope this proposal will be reconsidered in a way which respects the dignity of claimants and meets their needs.”

3. Press articles

Daily Record, 17 December 2016

[Benefits staff in Glasgow face dealing with triple number of claimants if Tory closure plans go ahead](#)

SNP MPs insist Tory plans to close eight Jobcentres in the city will result in thousands more claimants being forced to go elsewhere.

The National, 17 December 2016

[Mhairi Black: Stretch people more and sanctions will rise](#)

The Herald (Glasgow), 16 December 2016

[DWP to consult on JobCentre closures](#)

Locals affected by plans to axe half of Glasgow's JobCentres will be able to participate in an online consultation after a DWP climbdown.

The Herald (Glasgow), 15 December 2016

[No DWP assurance on jobcentres after Glasgow closures, MSPs told](#)

The Herald (Glasgow), 14 December 2016

[Archbishop Tartaglia tells DWP to think again on Glasgow Jobcentre closures](#)

The Herald (Glasgow), 13 December 2016

[Plan for Jobcentre closures fall short on many fronts](#)

Scotsman, 13 December 2016

[Glasgow JobCentre landlord offers to lower rent to stop closure](#)

The landlord of a JobCentre under threat of closure has offered to cut the rent if it helps to keep it open.

Evening Times (Glasgow), 12 December 2016

[MP hits out after 'deeply disappointing' talks on Jobcentre closures](#)

Daily Record, 12 December 2016

[How many Glasgow job centres will we close? Let's Google it](#)

The SNP claims Department of Work and Pensions bosses used Google Maps to work out how far claimants will have to travel before wielding the axe.

The National, 11 December 2016

[Google maps used to decide which Jobcentres to close, claims SNP](#)

BBC News, 8 December 2016

['No consultation' over Glasgow job centre closures](#)

The Scottish government has said it was "completely unacceptable" that it was not consulted on plans to close half of Glasgow's job centres.

The Herald (Glasgow), 8 December 2016

[Government under fire over 'covert' bid to axe half of Glasgow's job centres](#)

BBC News, 7 December 2016

[Half Glasgow's Jobcentre Plus services to close under DWP plans](#)

Benefit claimants in Glasgow may have to travel further for employment services under UK government plans to close half the city's 16 job centres.

STV News, 7 December 2016

[Half of Glasgow Jobcentres to close under UK Government plans](#)

Proposals to close eight of 16 centres in Scotland's largest city met with heavy criticism.

4. Parliamentary material

4.1 Contributions

Prime Minister's Questions, HC Deb 7 December 2016 c209

Angus Robertson (Moray) (SNP): Some of the most deprived communities in the country are in Glasgow, yet today we learn that apparently the Government plan to close jobcentres in those very communities, in Parkhead, Bridgeton, Easterhouse, Castlemilk, Langside, Anniesland, Cambuslang and Maryhill. Is it true that the Government are planning to close these important offices and bring misery to the lives of the many tens of thousands of people in Glasgow who currently use these centres?

Mr Lidington: Clearly, the Department for Work and Pensions, like every Department, looks from time to time at its estate and the number of offices it has, but the right hon. Gentleman makes a perfectly reasonable point on behalf of people in Glasgow. I will ask my right hon. Friend the Work and Pensions Secretary to contact him with the details he is seeking.

Angus Robertson: I am sorry but that is not good enough. [Interruption.] I am being heckled while standing up for deprived communities. That will ill behave Tory Members in Scotland.

The Leader of the House is correct that the Department has plans to cut the estate by 20%, but it is planning to cut it by 50% in Glasgow. Why are the Government planning disproportionately to cut vital jobcentres in some of the most deprived communities in our country?

Mr Lidington: The key element in any such decision that a Department has to make is not the raw number of offices there should be but how accessible the offices and the services they provide continue to be for the people who need to use them. I am absolutely confident that that criterion is at the heart of my right hon. Friend's thinking in planning for the future of offices in Scotland and everywhere else in the United Kingdom.

[...]

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP)

Q7. How does closing Maryhill jobcentre in my constituency, one of the most deprived parts of the country, help my constituents who want to find a job? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that travelling further to other centres will mean increased costs for people already on the lowest incomes and an increased risk of sanctions? Why do the Government continue to target the poorest and most vulnerable in our society? [907706]

Mr Lidington: If the Government have been targeting the poorest and most vulnerable, it has been to get them back to work in record numbers and to provide a boost to the pay of people on low incomes

through the introduction of and the increase in the national living wage. I wish the hon. Gentleman was prepared to welcome and celebrate those achievements.

Business Questions, HC Deb 8 December cc379-80

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): Now that the Leader of the House has had a bit of time to think about it, may we have a statement or a debate on jobcentre closures, with particular reference to the part of the Smith agreement that says that the UK Government and the Scottish Government should work together to

“establish more formal mechanisms to govern the Jobcentre Plus network in Scotland”?

Perhaps in that debate the Government can explain to Glasgow’s MPs and the Scottish Government why they had to read in the press that our jobcentres were going to be closed.

Mr Lidington: My understanding is that the existing pattern of provision in Glasgow means that it has significantly more small, separate jobcentres than other large Scottish cities. The Department for Work and Pensions is proposing—the consultation is now under way—to reduce the overall number so that services can be concentrated in locations that are still accessible to everybody in the city and provide a better quality of service to people who need access to jobcentres in person. One of the reasons why fewer people have been using individual jobcentres in Glasgow is of course that unemployment in that city has been falling significantly. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would sometimes acknowledge that in his questions.

[...]

cc385-386:

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): Over the past few years, job-finding services, such as cards displaying real jobs and telephones to call about those jobs, have been stripped from jobcentres. With the unexpected news yesterday that the number of Glasgow jobcentres will be cut by 50%, including the jobcentre in Anniesland in my constituency, will the Leader of the House make a statement on the services my constituents should expect in the new planned supercentres?

Mr Lidington: These are obviously matters that will primarily be for the management of Jobcentre Plus, but there will be the full range of Jobcentre Plus services at the larger centres. As I said in response to the hon. Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady), I hope the hon. Lady and her colleagues will acknowledge that one reason we need to provide a concentration of services, to help and provide support to those who genuinely—due to disability, long-term unemployment or whatever other reason—find it hard to get back into work, is that the overall number of people out of work, in Glasgow and elsewhere in Scotland, has come down very significantly. I do wish Scottish National

party Members would sometimes balance their challenges to the Government with a recognition of the fact that there are now more people in work than ever before.

[...]

cc386-387:

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP): I join my hon. Friends in asking for a debate in Government time or a statement on jobcentre closures in Glasgow, and in particular on the effects this measure will have on social security claimants. Will the Leader of the House confirm that an equality impact assessment will be published, so that all hon. Members can provide their response to these closures and the effects they will have on claimants?

Mr Lidington: The DWP will comply with all its statutory obligations in respect of these changes. It has held initial consultations and briefings with the trade unions, and they will now consult their members about its proposals, but again I just say to the hon. Gentleman that the reason for the consolidation is not just that Glasgow has more small individual jobcentres than other cities in Scotland, but that unemployment in Scotland has come down. The level of employment in Scotland has gone up by 166,000 since 2010, while the youth claimant count has gone down by a very welcome 18,200.

[...]

cc388-389:

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): The Government's announcement on jobcentres yesterday will take Glasgow's jobcentres down from 16 to eight, and there will be consultation only on two of those closures across the city. Members of Parliament had to read about this in the press, and it took seven hours after that story breaking before a Minister bothered to contact me. Given that, does the Leader of the House agree that we need a statement? If he is so confident about accessibility between closing jobcentres and remaining jobcentres, will he tell me how far it is from Castlemilk to Newlands, and how long the journey would take him on a bus?

Mr Lidington: What my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is proposing is to bring the distribution of jobcentres in Glasgow in line with the pattern that already applies in other Scottish cities. I note that there is no outcry from Scottish National party Members about opening additional jobcentres in other cities. It seems to me that what the Department is proposing is entirely reasonable. Its objective is to provide an enhanced service to those people who need help from jobcentres.

Debate on Equality: Autumn Statement, 14 December 2016

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP):

[...]

Half of Glasgow's jobcentres are to close. In discussion with DWP staff last week, Glasgow's elected representatives were told that the equalities impact assessment on these plans would be done only after the consultation. The Government are proceeding with these closures, yet only three out of eight are going to consultation while the others will not be consulted on. This is completely inadequate. The plans were drawn up by looking at Google Maps to see how far one jobcentre was from another and which buses people might get. Some of the buses referred to do not exist any more because they have just been withdrawn. When I met representatives of One Parent Families Scotland, they told me that the women with caring responsibilities they have been working with are already finding it incredibly difficult to fulfil their obligations as well as dropping off their kids at school and nursery, and adding the extra burden of travelling across Glasgow on more than one bus will make it very much harder, as well as putting them at serious risk of being sanctioned. It is inexplicable that that would not be taken into account prior to these consultations being issued. It is almost as though the Government are deliberately making it so hard for people to claim what they are actually entitled to.

14 Dec 2016 | Proceeding contributions | House of Commons | House of Commons chamber | 618 cc834-8

Points of Order, HC Deb14 December 2016 c818

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Government plans were announced last week to close half of Glasgow's jobcentres. We were supposed to be getting a consultation on three out of eight of these closures. I have raised the matter of access to that consultation with the Leader of the House and with the responsible Department for Work and Pensions Minister. A week later, it still does not appear on the DWP website. Given that this is happening over Christmas, I am sure you can understand my frustration and that of my constituents, Madam Deputy Speaker. Can you give me some guidance on how I can make the Minister get this up on the website? It is really not on that, a week later, it is still not there for public consumption.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order and for his having indicated to me that he intended to make it. He will appreciate that it is not, of course, a matter that I can address from the Chair. The Chair has no power whatsoever to make Ministers do what Members ask them to do. I know that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues have, with some passion and understandable commitment, raised this matter several times in the House. I understand that the hon. Gentleman has an Adjournment debate in Westminster Hall next week. I hope that is right, because that is the correct place in which to air a matter such as this in some detail. At the same time, with the hon. Gentleman having raised the matter now at this busy time in the Chamber, I am quite sure that

those on the Treasury Bench will have noted what he has said. They will have appreciated that the matter is one of great importance in his constituency, so action might come soon from the relevant Department.

Business Questions, HC Deb 15 December 2016 c968

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): Last week, the Leader of the House failed to tell me how far it was from Castlemilk to Newlands, which I am surprised about, given that when the Department for Work and Pensions calculated the distance, it did not use any of the great resources at its fingertips; instead, it used Google Maps. That is how it calculated its decision to close eight of Glasgow's 16 jobcentres. Here we are, however, eight days on from the announcement, and still the consultation is not on the DWP website—so that is at least eight days by which it will have to extend the consultation. Will the right hon. Gentleman help me to facilitate getting it put on the website today, and will he convey our frustration to Ministers at the way they have handled this whole sorry affair?

Mr Lidington: The central point is that there will no change in the level of service that jobcentres offer people in Glasgow. The DWP is merging a number of smaller offices into bigger sites as leases come to an end so that we can save taxpayers, including Scottish taxpayers, money without changing the service offered. The Government have already consulted on the plans, but there will be further consultation in areas where people have to travel more than three miles or for longer than 20 minutes to reach a jobcentre.

Points of Order, HC Deb 15 December 2016 c995

Chris Stephens: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. First of all, I refer Members to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests and my position as chair of the Public and Commercial Services Union parliamentary group.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you will be aware that an issue exercising Members who represent the great city of Glasgow is the proposal to close half its jobcentres. Yesterday my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South (Stewart Malcolm McDonald) raised in a point of order the fact that it was day seven with no information at all referring to this matter on the website of the Department for Work and Pensions. Today is day eight with no information on the DWP website about a public consultation on the proposed closure of half the jobcentres in our city. That is of great concern. We are now entering the Christmas and new year period, when public consultation is already curtailed.

The consultation is a morass. In my view, it shows contempt not only for hon. Members of this House but for the general public. Mr Deputy Speaker, can you advise me whether a Minister could come before the House today to outline the processes of public consultation on the proposed jobcentre closures in the great city of Glasgow?

Mr Deputy Speaker: My understanding is that this was dealt with from the Chair yesterday, when it was fully aired. I have great sympathy and recognise the importance of the matter. I think the hon. Gentleman is aware that there is a debate at 4.30 pm on Tuesday in Westminster Hall, which I think will be the right avenue to pursue the matter. It is certainly back on the record.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Further to that point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. When I raised this issue during business questions earlier, I think the Leader of the House inadvertently misled Members by claiming at the Dispatch Box that the DWP was actively consulting on the issue. That is false. There is no consultation. I cannot find it because it does not exist. Can you try to find an opportunity sometime this afternoon for the Deputy Leader of the House to come and correct the record from the Dispatch Box?

Mr Deputy Speaker: It is not for the Chair to correct the record. If there was an inaccuracy or misstatement, the hon. Gentleman has put the point that what was said was not correct. But it is a matter for the Leader of the House. I am sure he feels that if it was wrong it is up to him to correct it. If nothing else, the Chamber is aware of the issue, as am I. As I said just before, there is a debate next Tuesday. I am sure that this will not have gone away, and the hon. Gentleman will be able to bring his point forward once again.

4.2 Parliamentary questions

[Jobcentres: Scotland](#)

Asked by: Grady, Patrick | **Party:** Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions he had with his counterparts in the Scottish Government on the proposed closure of job centres in Glasgow before the announcement of those closures was made on 7 December 2016.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The department has been in discussion with local authorities, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Government for some time now regarding our estates strategy. This has included exploring co-locations in places where this makes sense for all parties. As DWP is currently renegotiating leases on its entire estate portfolio, commercial sensitivities have limited our ability for detailed discussions with Scottish Government on specific site proposals.

The announcement made on 7 December 2016 included commencement of public consultation on three proposed closures. We remain committed to working with Scottish Government to ensure effective support for unemployed people.

13 Dec 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 56723

Date tabled: 08 Dec 2016 | **Date for answer:** 13 Dec 2016 | **Date answered:** 13 Dec 2016

[Jobcentres: Glasgow](#)

Asked by: Grady, Patrick | **Party:** Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what financial support will be made available to jobseekers in Glasgow who will face additional travel costs and time in the event of the closure of their current Jobcentre Plus office.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The department is committed to retaining an accessible Jobcentre network and continuing to serve customers in all areas of the country. Increasingly, our customers access many of our services on-line. This includes claiming benefits, looking for jobs and keeping us informed of their efforts to find work. We tailor our service so that face-to-face contact can be focused on those who need extra support from us.

The reimbursement of travel costs is available to claimants when they are required to attend the Jobcentre for appointments other than mandatory fortnightly signing appointments. The department will advise customers on alternative Jobcentre locations, taking into account travel and access to the local labour market. In offices over three miles or 20 minutes away by public transport, we will carry out local consultation prior to implementing any changes to help inform decisions about additional provision, such as outreach services.

13 Dec 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 56759

Date tabled: 08 Dec 2016 | **Date for answer:** 13 Dec 2016 | **Date answered:** 13 Dec 2016

[Jobcentres: Glasgow](#)

Asked by: Grady, Patrick | **Party:** Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the number of additional sanctions likely to be issued in enlarged jobcentres in Glasgow as a result of increased travel distances and time for users relocated from centres that have closed.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

We do not expect any of the changes to our estate to result in additional benefit entitlement sanctions. The department will support customers through the change of their Jobcentre's location.

13 Dec 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 56761

Date tabled: 08 Dec 2016 | **Date for answer:** 13 Dec 2016 | **Date answered:** 13 Dec 2016

[Jobcentres: Glasgow](#)

Asked by: Stephens, Chris | **Party:** Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many of the eight Glasgow jobcentres earmarked for closure will be subject to public consultation; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Department for Work and Pensions

There are three Jobcentres that are subject to public consultation.

13 Dec 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 56765

Date tabled: 08 Dec 2016 | **Date for answer:** 13 Dec 2016 | **Date answered:** 13 Dec 2016

[Jobcentres: Glasgow](#)

Asked by: Stephens, Chris | **Party:** Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will publish the equality impact assessment made on the proposals to close the Glasgow jobcentres that was announced on 7 December 2016; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Department for Work and Pensions

We will be undertaking an equality analysis as part of the detailed planning for service reconfiguration. This will include feedback from public consultation in those locations where this applies. A decision regarding publication of the equality analysis will be made at that time.

13 Dec 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 56767

Date tabled: 08 Dec 2016 | **Date for answer:** 13 Dec 2016 | **Date answered:** 13 Dec 2016

[Jobcentres: Glasgow](#)

Asked by: Stephens, Chris | **Party:** Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will publish the travel times to the nearest jobcentre from each of those eight jobcentres earmarked for closure in Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Department for Work and Pensions

The department has written to all Members of Parliament and Members of the Scottish Parliament who have a Jobcentre affected by these announcements in their constituency. These letters provide details of travel times to the nearest Jobcentres by car and public transport.

For offices over three miles or 20 minutes away by public transport, we will carry out local consultation prior to implementing any changes to help inform decisions about additional provision, such as outreach services.

The reimbursement of travel costs is available to claimants when they are required to attend the jobcentre for appointments other than mandatory fortnightly signing appointments.

13 Dec 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 56768

Date tabled: 08 Dec 2016 | **Date for answer:** 13 Dec 2016 | **Date answered:** 13 Dec 2016

Jobcentres: Glasgow

Asked by: McDonald, Stewart Malcolm | **Party:** Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, who owns the (a) Langside, (b) Castlemilk and (c) Newlands Jobcentre Plus offices.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Since 1998 the Department occupies the majority of its accommodation under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) known as the PRIME contract. Under the terms of this 20-year PFI, the Department contracts to occupy fully serviced accommodation from its private sector partner, Telereal Trillium.

The leases for the buildings in question are included within the provisions of this PFI arrangement and are therefore not held by DWP. Therefore we are unable to supply the information you have requested.

15 Dec 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 57075

Date tabled: 12 Dec 2016 | **Date for answer:** 15 Dec 2016 | **Date answered:** 15 Dec 2016

Jobcentres: Glasgow

Asked by: Stephens, Chris | **Party:** Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which companies or organisations (a) hold and (b) own the lease for each of the 16 jobcentres in Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Since 1998 the Department occupies the majority of its accommodation under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) known as the PRIME contract. Under the terms of this 20-year PFI, the Department contracts to occupy fully serviced accommodation from its private sector partner, Telereal Trillium.

The leases for the buildings in question are included within the provisions of this PFI arrangement and are therefore not held by DWP. Therefore we are unable to supply the information requested.

15 Dec 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 57273

Date tabled: 12 Dec 2016 | **Date for answer:** 15 Dec 2016 | **Date answered:** 15 Dec 2016

[Jobcentres: Glasgow](#)

Asked by: McDonald, Stewart Malcolm | **Party:** Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when he plans to publish on the Government's website the public consultation on proposed job centre closures in Glasgow; and if he will extend the time period for that consultation to take account of the time taken for such online publication since the Department's announcement on 7 December 2016 on plans for that consultation.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The current consultation process for the proposed closure of Glasgow Bridgeton Jobcentre, Glasgow Castlemilk Jobcentre and Glasgow Maryhill Jobcentre started on 7 December 2016. Stakeholders in the area have been notified of this by letter, with leaflets and posters also made available to customers. The Department is currently considering other options on public consultation.

16 Dec 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 57534

Date tabled: 13 Dec 2016 | **Date for answer:** 16 Dec 2016 | **Date answered:** 16 Dec 2016

[Jobcentres: Glasgow](#)

Asked by: McGarry, Natalie | **Party:** Independent (affiliation)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions he has had on what dates with the landlords of the Jobcentre Plus offices in (a) Shettleston, (b) Parkhead and (c) Easterhouse on the closure of Jobcentre Plus offices in Glasgow.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Since 1998 the Department has occupied the majority of its accommodation under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) known as the PRIME contract. Under the terms of this 20 year PFI, the department contracts to occupy fully serviced accommodation from its private sector partner, Telereal Trillium.

The leases for the buildings in question are included within the provisions of this PFI arrangement and are therefore not held directly by the department. As such, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has had no discussions with the landlords of a) Shettleston, (b) Parkhead and (c) Easterhouse Jobcentre Plus offices.

16 Dec 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 57325

Date tabled: 13 Dec 2016 | **Date for answer:** 16 Dec 2016 | **Date answered:** 16 Dec 2016

4.3 Early Day Motion

Early day motion 814

PLANNED CLOSURE OF JOB CENTRES IN GLASGOW

Session: 2016-17

Date tabled: 15.12.2016

Primary sponsor: McDonald, Stewart

Sponsors:

- Thewliss, Alison
- Stephens, Christopher
- Grady, Patrick
- Monaghan, Carol
- McLaughlin, Anne

That this House is concerned at the planned office closures of jobcentres in Glasgow; is further concerned that the proposals would see eight of the 16 jobcentre offices across Glasgow close, affecting some 68,000 people in receipt of jobseeker's allowance, employment and support allowance and universal credit; believes that this decision will result in the poorest communities not being serviced by a jobcentre and make it even harder for those seeking employment to get support and result in tens of thousands of people having to travel further at additional cost to attend their appointments; notes that those closures raise questions on the futures of Department for Work and Pensions staff in Scotland and also how remaining jobcentres will cope with increased numbers of claimants; and calls on the Government to reconsider its plans and ensure that all jobcentres in Glasgow are covered by a public consultation.

Total number of signatures: **14**

Cherry, Joanna

Day, Martyn

Grady, Patrick

Law, Chris

McDonald, Stewart

McGarry, Natalie

McLaughlin, Anne

Monaghan, Carol

O'Hara, Brendan

Oswald, Kirsten

Stephens, Christopher

Thewliss, Alison

Whitford, Philippa

Wishart, Pete

5. Scottish Parliament

5.1 Portfolio Question Time, 14 December 2016

The Minister for Employability and Training (Jamie Hepburn):

I have already set out a clear direction of travel for our ambitions, which we will continue to pursue. I will tell members what we would not have done, though. It is telling that Annie Wells pointed out the significant proportion of those who are disabled and unemployed in Glasgow, the city that she represents—if we had control of Jobcentre Plus, we would not be shutting down eight jobcentres in that city right now.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):

On that specific matter, I met representatives of the Public and Commercial Services Union on Monday, along with MP colleagues. They told me that they are particularly worried about the future for employment and support allowance claimants at jobcentres if eight jobcentres close in Glasgow, including in my constituency of Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn, where the jobcentre in Maryhill Road is threatened with closure. The Department for Work and Pensions told the PCS that forcing vulnerable constituents with mobility issues to travel longer distances would be an incentive into work. That is just crazy. Will the Scottish Government support the calls that have been made to halt that process and to ask for a fundamental rethink by the DWP?

Jamie Hepburn:

I know that that is an important issue for Bob Doris, given his constituency interest, and that it is of interest to all Glasgow representatives. I have made contact with Damian Green, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, and have been keeping the MPs and MSPs who represent Glasgow up to date about that correspondence.

On Bob Doris's point that the DWP has suggested that the changes will act as an incentive for people to get into work, that tells us more about the DWP's attitude to human beings than it does about anything else. I absolutely agree with Bob Doris about the impact on service users, and I met the PCS earlier today to discuss that.

There is also an issue to do with the Scottish Government's position. The Smith commission spoke about increased joint management between the Governments in relation to Jobcentre Plus but, in this matter, we had no prior notification, no meeting, no letter, no call and no email. Along with Angela Constance, I will meet Damian Green at the joint ministerial working group on welfare in January, when I will certainly raise that matter.

5.2 Social Security Committee evidence session

On 15 December the Scottish Parliament's Social Security Committee held an evidence session on Universal Credit roll-out at which Neil Couling, the DWP Universal Credit Director General, and Denise Horsfall, the Department's Scotland Work Services Director, gave evidence. At the beginning of the session, the officials were questioned about DWP's plans to close the eight Jobcentres in Glasgow.

The Official Report of this session is due for publication by 6 pm on 19 December 2016. The session can be viewed on the Scottish Parliament's [You Tube channel](#).

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