



## DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2017-0089, 10 March 2017

# Jobcentre Plus office closures

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## Summary

This Debate Pack has been produced ahead of the 90 minute Westminster Hall debate on Jobcentre Plus office closures, to be held on Thursday 16 March from 3:00pm – 4:30pm. Chris Stephens MP will lead the debate.

In March 2018, the DWP's 20 year contract with Telereal Trillium to manage the DWP estate in Great Britain, including jobcentres, comes to an end. As a result, the Department is considering future locations for Jobcentre Plus and other offices in Great Britain ahead of its expiry.

As part of these considerations, the DWP is looking to reduce the size of its estate by around 20%, and to increase "co-location" of Jobcentre Plus offices with other local services such as local authority benefit teams and mental health services. This 20% reduction is part of a wider plan to sell £4.5 billion worth of Government land and property by 2020/21.

Attached to a written statement on 26 January 2017, the Employment Minister Damian Hinds set out proposals for the future of the entire DWP estate, including 784 buildings providing jobcentre services.

There have been two previous Westminster Hall debate on the proposed closure of jobcentres in Glasgow, for which Debate Packs were also produced – [Closure of jobcentres in Glasgow](#) (CDP-2016-0255) and [Future of the DWP estate](#) (CDP-2017-0012).

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 (DWP) 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 in Great Britain 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.<sup>1</sup>

This 20% reduction is part of a wider plan to sell £4.5 billion worth of Government land and property by 2020/21. According to *Civil Service World*, the DWP accounts for around 15% of the overall Government estate, the largest footprint of any department. The size of the department's estate had already seen a reduction of 17% over the last parliament.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.1 December 2016 announcement (Glasgow)

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.<sup>3</sup> 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 stated that the merging of the jobcentres would not affect the level of service provided. Concerns were raised by MPs, MSPs, Scottish Government Ministers, trades unions and others 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.

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<sup>1</sup> [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 2015

<sup>2</sup> ['Spending Review 2015: DWP to cut estate by 20% as government eyes £4.5bn savings'](#), *Civil Service World*, 25 November 2015

<sup>3</sup> ['Half Glasgow's Jobcentre Plus services to close under DWP plans'](#), *BBC News*, 7 December 2016

On 19 December 2016, the DWP launched an online consultation on its [Proposal for the future of Bridgeton, Castlemilk and Maryhill jobcentres](#), which closed on 31 January 2017.

More information on reaction to the proposals and the consultation can be found in the Commons Library Debate Packs [Closure of jobcentres in Glasgow](#) (CDP-2016-0255) and [Future of the DWP estate](#) (CDP-2017-0012).

## 1.2 January 2017 announcement on the future of the DWP estate

Proposals for a number of jobcentres, including the Glasgow sites, had been announced prior to January 2017. Attached to a [written statement](#) on 26 January, the Employment Minister Damian Hinds set out the DWP proposals for the remainder of its estate in Great Britain, covering over 900 buildings.

The proposals included future plans for all 784 buildings providing jobcentre services, including those already announced. Of these:

- 587 (75%) were to be retained;
- 135 (17%) were to be divested (closed);
- 48 (6%) were to be co-located;
- 14 (2%) were still under negotiation with the current landlord

Nine new jobcentre sites would also be acquired by the DWP.<sup>4</sup>

The written statement gave some further information on the rationale behind the changes, as well as information on staff impact and impact on service delivery:

DWP is today publishing its proposals for the future of its estate, including Jobcentres and back office sites.

On 31 March 2018 DWP's PFI PRIME (Private Resource Initiative for the Management of the Estate) contract with Telereal Trillium expires. This 20 year contract covers the majority of DWP's current property portfolio of over 900 sites. This gives us an opportunity to review which offices we will need in the future, taking account of the increased use of our online services, the impact of Universal Credit and the anticipated demand on our services.

The roll out of Universal Credit and our reforms of Jobcentre Plus have increased the number of interactions claimants now have with us online. For example, eight out of ten claims for Jobseeker's Allowance are now made online and 99.6% of applicants for Universal Credit full service submitted their claim online.

As a result we only need 80% of the space we currently occupy to continue to deliver our services and make sure that people will always be able to access the support they need to get back to work. Moreover, we are recruiting and expect to have 2,500 more Work Coaches in post by March 2018 compared to today.

For the vast majority of offices there will be no change in location, although the purpose of the building may change. Where we are proposing closing a site we will take all possible precautions to

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<sup>4</sup> [DWP Estates Proposal, 26 January 2017](#)

minimise disruption for claimants, and vulnerable people will receive home visits and postal claims.

All of the planned changes will be made in consultation with staff, taking into account the impact on benefit claimants and DWP staff. We will do everything we can to offer staff affected alternative roles and want to avoid any redundancies wherever possible. However we do recognise that in a small number of cases relocation will not be reasonable or achievable for individuals working in our back office functions and exits may be required.

We have already announced proposals for around 93 sites. I am attaching to this statement a full list of our proposals for all of our remaining Jobcentre and back of house sites. There are a small number of sites which we are still negotiating with landlords. I have indicated these on the list and will update the House when I am able to. I will be writing directly to those Honourable members whose constituencies will be affected by the proposed closures or moves of DWP services announced today. I will also be writing to my counterparts in the Scottish and Welsh Governments.<sup>5</sup>

A DWP press release stated that the proposed changes would vacate 300,000 square metres of its estate, saving an estimated £180 million per year for the next 10 years.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.3 Consultations

No specific rationale has been published for individual jobcentres proposed for divestment (closure). However, the DWP set reasonable travelling distance criteria of 3 miles and 20 minutes by public transport from the existing jobcentre

Where the proposed closure of a jobcentre would mean that claimants would have to travel more than 3 miles or for more than 20 minutes by public transport to another jobcentre (from the site of the closed jobcentre), this was put out to consultation.

In addition to the Glasgow consultation covering three jobcentres, 25 additional consultations were launched on 30 and 31 January, covering 27 jobcentres. The consultations were:

- [Petersfield](#)
- [Wilmslow](#)
- [Shipley](#)
- [Wellington](#)
- [Eltham](#)
- [Finchley](#)
- [Highgate](#)
- [Hoylake](#)
- [Broxburn](#)
- [Westminster](#)
- [Southall](#)
- [Leytonstone](#)
- [Darwen](#)

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<sup>5</sup> [HCWS349, 26 January 2017](#)

<sup>6</sup> ['New streamlined Jobcentre Plus network with more support for jobseekers', DWP press release, 26 January 2017](#)

- [Brighthouse](#)
- [Edgware](#)
- [Pyle](#)
- [Tunbridge Wells](#)
- [Clay Cross](#)
- [Rotherham Goldthorpe](#)
- [Mountain Ash](#)
- [Sheffield Eastern Avenue](#)
- [Newton-le-Willows](#)
- [Whitstable and Herne Bay](#)
- [Coventry Tile Hill](#)
- [Liverpool Edge Hill and Liverpool Wavertree](#)

The 25 consultations closed on 28 February, and feedback is currently being analysed. Feedback is also still being analysed for the earlier Glasgow consultation.

Announcements on the consultations are expected in April.<sup>7</sup>

## 1.4 Equality analysis

There has not been any specific equality analysis for individual jobcentre sites published, but a recent response to a [PQ from Luciana Berger](#) gave the following information on the analysis the Government is carrying out:

Throughout the development of these proposals, the Department has been mindful of its duties under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. Consideration of the potential impact on staff and customers has been informed by statistical analysis of population data, local knowledge and consultation.

As we obtain further local, site-specific information for all sites, including those in the Liverpool Wavertree constituency, we will ensure any issues identified are also taken fully into consideration when the final decisions are made. We intend to complete this work within the next 12 weeks; equality analysis is not generally published separately but it will be used to inform final decisions.<sup>8</sup>

In response to another [PQ from Luciana Berger](#), the Government indicated that it had not carried out analysis on internet, computer or telephone usage by claimants:

No specific assessment has been made of the proportion of claimants registered at Wavertree and Edge Hill Jobcentres without access to the internet, a computer or a telephone. 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.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> [HC Deb 20 February 2017, c769](#)

<sup>8</sup> [PQ 66025, 6 March 2017](#)

<sup>9</sup> [PQ 65740, 2 March 2017](#)

## 2. Press releases

Selected press releases specific to the proposed Glasgow closures are listed in the Commons Library Debate Pack from December, [Closure of jobcentres in Glasgow](#) (CDP-2016-0255).

### Department for Work and Pensions

[New streamlined Jobcentre Plus network with more support for jobseekers](#)

26 January 2017

Plans have been published to reform Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Jobcentre Plus offices and benefit centres, in light of 20% of office space being under-used.

The way DWP services are delivered has changed significantly in recent years; for example 8 out of 10 claims for Jobseeker's Allowance and 99.6% of applicants for Universal Credit submit their claims online.

Since 2010, 2.7 million more people are in work, youth unemployment has fallen by 366,000 and the employment rate is at a record high.

Jobcentres and benefit centres are covered by old building contracts which are now coming up for renewal. In the 20 years since these contracts were signed the welfare system has undergone large scale reform.

The DWP estate covers around 1.5 million square metres across the country and 300,000 square metres of this is under-utilised and could be vacated.

Some smaller jobcentres will be merged with larger ones, and others will be co-located with local government premises. DWP will be better able to offer a more efficient service while delivering good value for the taxpayer, saving around £180 million a year for the next 10 years.

The support provided to jobseekers will be further strengthened this year as staff numbers are boosted by a recruitment drive to hire 2,500 new work coaches.

Damian Hinds, Minister for Employment said:

We will always make sure that people have the support they need to get into and progress within work, that's why we are recruiting 2,500 more work coaches to help those who need it most.

The way the world works has changed rapidly in the last 20 years and the welfare state needs to keep pace. As more people access their benefits through the internet many of our buildings are under-used. We are concentrating our resources on what we know best helps people into work.

The changes we've announced today will help ensure that the way we deliver our services reflect the reality of today's welfare system.

Today's announcements include proposals for:

- merging 78 smaller Jobcentre Plus offices in urban areas with larger ones nearby
- co-locating around 50 Jobcentre Plus offices with local authorities or other community services to provide joined-up services for the local community with all services in one place
- closing 27 back office buildings around the country and developing larger, more efficient processing sites including opening 5 new large service centres across the country in a phased approach starting in 2018
- retaining over 700 existing offices
- re-organising our corporate centre to make maximum use of 6 regional corporate hubs, including establishing a new office in central Manchester

The planned changes will be made in consultation with staff taking into account the impact on benefit claimants and DWP staff. The vast majority of staff will have the option to relocate or offered alternative roles.

## Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS)

[We will oppose jobcentre cuts](#)

26 January 2017

The proposals put thousands of jobs at risk and would mean unemployed people having to travel further to get help getting back to work.

We are campaigning against plans to close half of Glasgow's jobcentres. Today's announcement would mean by March 2018:

- Closure of 78 of 714 jobcentres in England, Scotland and Wales, with work and staff transferring to the nearest office
- Another 80 jobcentres to be co-located in local authority buildings
- Closure of one fifth of the DWP's 150 non-frontline offices, including benefit processing sites and call centres, with a further 40 only guaranteed to stay open for another three to five years

At least 18 of the threatened jobcentres are outside a commitment previously given by ministers that no site would close if it would take 20 minutes or more to reach the next nearest by public transport.

DWP has refused to rule out making compulsory redundancies.

Our general secretary Mark Serwotka said: "Jobcentres provide a lifeline for unemployed people, and forcing them to travel further is not only unfair it undermines support to get them back to work.

"We are opposed to these closures and will vigorously fight any attempt to force DWP workers out of their jobs."

### 3. Press articles

Selected press articles specific to the proposed Glasgow closures are listed in the Commons Library Debate Packs, [Closure of jobcentres in Glasgow](#) (CDP-2016-0255) and [Future of the DWP estate](#) (CDP-2017-0012).

**The Guardian, 26 January 2017**

[Jobcentre staff at risk amid plans to close one in 10 offices](#)

**The Times, 27 January 2017**

[Jobcentres close as claimants go online](#)

**Mirror, 26 January 2017**

[Plans to close scores of Jobcentres across Britain announced – is yours affected?](#)

**Independent, 26 January 2017**

[Unemployed will be forced to travel further to sign on as DWP plans to close 78 local Jobcentres](#)

**Daily Record, 9 February 2017**

[Tory in-fighting as MPs blast Government over plans to close Scottish Jobcentres](#)

**BBC News, 8 February 2017**

[MSPs call on DWP to 'halt' Scots jobcentre closures](#)

**BBC News, 26 January 2017**

[Seven job centre offices in Wales earmarked for closure](#)

**Civil Service World, 30 January 2017**

[Jobcentre closures: DWP minister vows relocation for staff as MPs slam "spreadsheet exercise"](#)

**Civil Service World, 7 February 2017**

[DWP perm sec Robert Devereux defends Jobcentre closure plan: "I'm not intending to lose staff in this process"](#)

## 4. Parliamentary material

Selected parliamentary material specific to the proposed Glasgow closures are listed in the Commons Library Debate Packs, [Closure of jobcentres in Glasgow](#) (CDP-2016-0255) and [Future of the DWP estate](#) (CDP-2017-0012).

### 4.1 Contributions

#### Urgent Question, Jobcentre Plus Offices: Closure, HC Deb 30 January 2017, cc661-74

Full transcript of the Urgent Question can be found on [Hansard](#).<sup>10</sup>

##### **Ronnie Cowan (Inverclyde) (SNP)**

(Urgent Question): To ask the Minister for Work and Pensions if she will make a statement on the proposed closure of Jobcentre Plus offices throughout the United Kingdom.

##### **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Welfare Delivery (Caroline Nokes)**

On Thursday 26 January, the Department for Work and Pensions published proposals for the future of its estate, including jobcentres and back-office sites.

The Government are committed to helping people who can work to get back into work. Since 2010, the claimant count has dropped from almost 1.5 million to about 800,000, and employment has risen by 2.7 million to near record levels.

Old office contracts that are held by our jobcentres and benefits centres are now coming up for renewal, and in the 20 years since those contracts were signed the welfare system has undergone large-scale reform.

The roll-out of universal credit and our reforms of Jobcentre Plus have increased the number of digital interactions that claimants now have with us. Eight out of 10 claims for jobseeker's allowance are now made online, and 99.6% of applicants for universal credit full service submitted their claim online. That has resulted in the DWP buildings being used much less: 20% of the DWP estate is currently underutilised. As we renegotiate our out-of-date contracts, we are merging some smaller jobcentres with larger ones and co-locating others with local government premises. That will help the DWP to offer a better service to people looking for work, while delivering a better deal for the taxpayer, saving about £180 million a year for the next 10 years. That means that we can bolster the support that we offer jobseekers, with a recruitment drive to hire 2,500 new work coaches.

Of course, DWP staff will be consulted on those changes and the vast majority will have the option to relocate or be offered alternative roles. For any vulnerable claimants that may be affected, we will put in place

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<sup>10</sup> [HC Deb 30 January 2017, cc661-74](#)

robust procedures, such as offering home visits or maintaining a claim by post, to make sure that they get the support they need.

[...]

**Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con)**

Does the Minister agree that the Government's success in reducing unemployment leads to the need to look at reducing the number of Jobcentre Plus offices?

**Caroline Nokes**

As my hon. Friend will have heard me say, the jobcentres that we are looking at are, in some cases, 20% under-occupied. It is absolutely critical and appropriate that we look at how we use our estate, and that we reflect on providing not only the best service that we can to jobseekers, but value for money to the taxpayer.

**Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West) (Lab)**

The Opposition strongly oppose the Government's latest plans for the closure of one in 10 jobcentres in the UK. What assessment has the Department made of the impact of these closures on claimants, in terms of travel times and additional costs? Will the Department consider issuing guidance to staff to take into account increased travel times when issuing sanctions? Accessibility is a major issue for many disabled people. The Government have said that they aim to halve the disability employment gap in the lifetime of this Parliament. How do the planned closures fit with that aim?

From this April, lone parents will be obliged to prepare for work through interviews with work coaches once a child is three years old, rather than five years old as is currently the case. We are particularly concerned about the impact on women, children and people with disabilities. Will the Government publish an assessment of the impact of these proposals on equality issues?

The Government continue to roll out universal credit, and, for the first time, people who are actually in work will have to attend interviews at jobcentres. Will the Government delay their plans to reduce their estate until they have a clearer idea of what the demands on jobcentres and staff will be under universal credit? The Government's hope seems to be that universal credit claims will be made and managed online, but many people are not confident using IT and they may not have access to a PC, laptop or tablet. What provision will be made for claimants who have difficulty using PCs and the internet in areas where jobcentres are earmarked for closure?

These plans have simply not been thought through, and they will have a damaging impact on the way in which vital employment support is provided. The Government should think again.

**Caroline Nokes**

As the hon. Lady will have heard me say, the vast majority of our UC claimants now access services online, and we welcome and encourage such a relationship. We have made it very clear that vulnerable claimants will be able to make claims by post in some circumstances,

particularly where they find it difficult to access a jobcentre or have childcare responsibilities, and it is very important to make that distinction. The hon. Lady talked about accessibility. Where there is a difference under the ministerial criteria of more than 3 miles or of 20 minutes by public transport, we will seek to hold a public consultation, which will then feed in to our equality analysis so that we can best understand the impact on claimants.

**Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con)**

One of the things that really impressed me during my spell at the DWP was the quality of the work coaches and their capacity for supporting real, positive change in people's lives. If there is an opportunity to spend less on near-empty bricks and mortar and to invest more in a greater number of work coaches, is that not exactly the right thing to do?

**Caroline Nokes**

My right hon. Friend is of course right. Our work coaches are on the frontline of delivering services to claimants, not just helping them into work but helping those who are in work into more and better-paid work. That is why we are recruiting more work coaches and looking to make sure that our DWP estate both best reflects value for money for taxpayers and provides the services we need for claimants.

**Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP)**

I refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

May I tell the Minister that the Government appear to be making exactly the same errors as they did with the announcement of the Glasgow closure programme? Will the Minister tell us why the Scottish Government were not consulted, as per the Smith agreement? Why did she say in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Inverclyde (Ronnie Cowan) that jobcentres have catchment areas, when written answers to Members of the House have suggested that there are no catchment areas for jobcentres? Will she also tell us why the written ministerial statement indicated that redundancies may be required, and may we have further detail on that? Finally, what support, if any, will be available to claimants, particularly those with caring responsibilities, who have to travel greater distances?

**Caroline Nokes**

The hon. Gentleman will of course be conscious that, as an employer, the DWP has sought to put its staff first and to make sure that they are informed first about the proposals. It is important to reflect that we need to make sure we have good working relations with the Scottish Government, and he will be aware that my hon. Friend the Minister for Employment travelled to the Musselburgh jobcentre the week before last. It does matter to us that people get to go to the jobcentre most convenient for them. That need not be the one allocated to them by the jobcentre, but could be one they choose for themselves. In every instance, we are seeking to make sure that claimants can work with their work coach and go to the jobcentre that is most appropriate for them.

[...]

**Craig Whittaker (Calder Valley) (Con)**

I support the rationalisation and modernisation of any service, but Brighouse is the largest township within the Calder Valley, so relocating our jobcentre uphill and down dale out of the constituency will be a disaster to the long-term unemployed who rely on it for job advice and training. Will my hon. Friend assure me that those who have put forward the proposals have visited places such as the Calder Valley to understand the demographics and geography, or have they just sat in their offices in Whitehall using Google Maps?

**Caroline Nokes**

This is not an exercise using Google Maps. We have engaged in the exercise over very many months to make the best use of our DWP estate. When we are not using the space we have but are paying for it, it is critical that we think very hard about how we can best provide services to our claimants.

[...]

**Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con)**

In my constituency over the past seven years, unemployment has more than halved. That is good news, but it means that the people who are still unemployed are the more difficult people to place and they need more intensive work. The good people of Edgware will be wondering what they have done to upset their public services, with the closure of two libraries and the jobcentre. Will my hon. Friend consider the potential for not only home visits but satellite visits using commercial premises so that job organisations can run them and workplace coaches can coach a number of people together?

**Caroline Nokes**

I reassure my hon. Friend that the DWP is doing exactly that. Outreach is an important part of our suite of products to enable claimants to be get back into work. We will continue to look at the best ways to deliver that in the best locations across the country.

[...]

**Jake Berry (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con)**

It is all very well to talk about jobcentres in London, but in rural Lancashire my constituents in Edgworth will have to travel for over an hour to get to Blackburn if we close the Darwen jobcentre. They are supremely hardworking and supremely successful, and anyone who thinks they can get from Darwen to Blackburn in 23 minutes is living in la-la land.

**Caroline Nokes**

Like me, my hon. Friend represents a rural constituency. Our constituents are used to having to travel long distances to access services. Where claimants will have to travel for over an hour by public transport, we are considering what arrangements we can put in place, including claiming by post.

[...]

**Mhairi Black (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (SNP)**

The DWP administration centre in my constituency is closing, and 300 jobs will be transferred out of Paisley. Has there been any assessment or consideration of the economic impact on the area? Has there been any consultation whatever; and if not, why not?

**Caroline Nokes**

The most important aspect when it comes to relocations such as that one is, of course, the staff. That is why we have been working closely with all our DWP staff to make sure that we find roles for them elsewhere and give them the assistance they need, should we choose to relocate them.

**James Berry (Kingston and Surbiton) (Con)**

Many of my constituents use the jobcentre or the council's housing services, so I welcome the decision to move Kingston jobcentre to the council offices when the lease expires in a few months' time. It will be much more convenient for my constituents.

**Caroline Nokes**

Colocation is an important part of our strategy, and I am glad that my hon. Friend welcomes it. We need to identify the ways in which our claimants can best gain access not only to DWP services, but to the services of other organisations such as, in this instance, the local authority.

[...]

**Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab)**

Does the Minister or her Department think that there is any correlation between ease of access to jobcentre facilities and those who are seeking work? Can she give a cast-iron guarantee that no one will be sanctioned as a result of the closure of jobcentres in a locality?

**Caroline Nokes**

What we do know is that those who are on universal credit full service are spending more time looking for work. We also know that the vast majority of those job searches are conducted online, and that they are more successful.

It is important for individual claimants to have a relationship with their work coaches, because circumstances may change. That was emphasised to me in a Westminster Hall debate relatively recently. What is someone misses a bus? What if missing a connection means that a person is late for an appointment with the work coach? We want people to have a good relationship with their work coaches, so that they give them the necessary information. It is critical that if people miss appointments, they tell us why.

[...]

**John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op)**

The industrial injuries team in Barrow has accumulated many years of experience, and that expertise has enabled the team to take the

claimant handling time for one of the nation's most complex benefits down from 175 days to 33 days. That reduction has meant that some of the most vulnerable people in the country, with terminal conditions such as asbestosis, have been able to receive their benefit before they died. Will she listen to the concern that if that expertise is dissipated when a new team comes in, the waiting times will go back up and many people will die before they receive their benefit?

**Caroline Nokes**

The hon. Gentleman makes a really important point. It is crucial that we do not lose expertise, which is why we will be listening to all DWP staff to see how we can best use that resource in future.

**Work and Pensions questions, HC Deb 20 February 2017 cc767-8**

**Louise Haigh (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab)**

13. For what reason his Department did not carry out an impact assessment prior to the announcement of the proposed closure of Jobcentre Plus estates on 26 January 2017.

**The Minister for Employment (Damian Hinds)**

We have been mindful throughout of the impact on staff and customers. Analysis and local knowledge have informed the proposals, which are all subject to consultation with staff and, where appropriate, the public. A full equality impact assessment will be carried out.

**Louise Haigh**

Following the Minister's advice, I went to see the regional manager of my jobcentres last week, but she had absolutely no information on the number of employment and support allowance or income support claimants that will be affected by the proposed closure in my constituency; the plans for outreach in relation to what will replace my jobcentre after its closure; the amount saved by that closure; the necessary spend on increased capacity at the alternative centre; or projections of footfall at the centre destined for closure. I hope that such work has been undertaken internally, so will the Minister commit to publishing all that information not only before a decision has to be made, but preferably before the end of the consultation period?

**Damian Hinds**

First, ESA and IS claimants are not required regularly to attend the jobcentre in the same way that JSA claimants are. We want to look at outreach and other opportunities in working with partners. As the hon. Lady will know, the consultation closes on 28 February. On the overall approach for the city of Sheffield, this is about consolidating the amount of available space and using that space better to get a better deal for the taxpayer, while being able to provide enhanced services for customers. It will raise utilisation across Sheffield from 51% to 69%.

**Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op)**

In 2010, there were three jobcentres in my constituency. The coalition closed one in 2012, and now the Minister's Government want to close the remaining two. Just under 3,000 people—not an insignificant number—have to access the jobcentre in my constituency at least every two weeks. Why did his Department not conduct and carry out the full equality impact assessment before the closure of the consultation?

**Damian Hinds**

The proposals will raise utilisation across the city of Liverpool from 66% to 95%, which will make better use of buildings. Where movement from one jobcentre to another involves travelling less than three miles or 20 minutes by public transport, we consider it is reasonable to ask people to make such a move

## 4.2 Parliamentary Questions

There have been a number of Parliamentary Questions related to the proposed closure of specific jobcentre sites. The questions included below are ones with broader relevance.

See also section 1.4 of this Debate Pack.

- [Jobcentres: Closures](#)

**Asked by:** Abrahams, Debbie | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average rate of unemployment is in those communities in which his Department is proposing to close jobcentres.

**Answering Member:** Damian Hinds | **Party:** Conservative Party |

**Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

It is worth clarifying that although some Jobcentre buildings are proposed for closure, the staff and services will merge with nearby offices to continue delivering DWP services within communities. We are committed to retaining a Jobcentre network and continuing to serve people in all areas of the country to make sure they can continue to access the services they need, and the purpose of the equality analysis is to help establish how many people are likely to be affected by the proposals to close some offices.

We are unable to provide the average unemployment rates specifically for the areas where a Jobcentre building is proposed for closure however the claimant counts for each Jobcentre are available from the following link: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk>. Guidance for users is available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/home/newuser.asp>

20 Feb 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 63517

**Date tabled:** 07 Feb 2017 | **Date for answer:** 20 Feb 2017 | **Date answered:** 20 Feb 2017

- [Jobcentres: Closures](#)

**Asked by:** Haigh, Louise | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his departmental officials used google maps to calculate estimates of travel time between those jobcentres which his Department proposes to close and those jobcentres from where replacement services will be delivered.

**Answering Member:** Damian Hinds | **Party:** Conservative Party |

**Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Distances and journey times have been calculated using a variety of methods to improve accuracy, including Google Maps and AA route mapping, and information collected about local public transport routes with input from local DWP colleagues.

28 Feb 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 65402

**Date tabled:** 07 Feb 2017 | **Date for answer:** 28 Feb 2017 | **Date answered:** 28 Feb 2017

- [Unemployment: Scotland](#)

**Asked by:** Ferrier, Margaret | **Party:** Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what assessment he has made of the effect of recent and proposed closures in the Department for Work and Pensions estate in Scotland on the level of unemployment in Scotland.

**Answering Member:** David Mundell | **Party:** Conservative Party |

**Department:** Scotland Office

DWP are working to recruit more work coaches to support people into work in Scotland and we do not expect there to be a change in service as a result of the proposed closures. The UK Government is committed to retaining a Jobcentre network and continuing to serve people in all areas of the country to make sure they can continue to access the services they need, responding to economic trends and the changing ways in which claimants access services.

01 Mar 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 65300

**Date tabled:** 23 Feb 2017 | **Date for answer:** 27 Feb 2017 | **Date answered:** 01 Mar 2017

- [Jobcentres: Closures](#)

**Asked by:** Ferrier, Margaret | **Party:** Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2017 to Question [58932](#), on what date his

Department will (a) conclude and (b) publish its equality analysis for the proposed jobcentre closures.

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

Throughout the development of these proposals, the Department has been mindful of its duties under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. Consideration of the potential impact on staff and customers has been informed by statistical analysis of population data, local knowledge and consultation.

As we obtain further local, site-specific information we will ensure any issues identified are also taken fully into consideration when the final decisions are made. We intend to complete this work within the next 12 weeks; equality analysis is not generally published separately but it will be used to inform final decisions.

02 Mar 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 64988

**Date tabled:** 22 Feb 2017 | **Date for answer:** 24 Feb 2017 | **Date answered:** 02 Mar 2017

- [Jobcentres: Closures](#)

**Asked by:** Cunningham, Jim | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what representations he has received on the effect of the proposed closure of Jobcentre Plus offices on disabled people.

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

We have received a number of questions from MPs, MSPs, AMs, customers and other representatives as well as from public consultations for sites that are outside of the criteria we have set. We are conducting public consultation on all proposals to close or move a Jobcentre outside of these criteria to help determine any impacts that additional travel will have on claimants.

Throughout the development of our proposals, the Department has been mindful of its duties under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. Our continued focus on equality analysis will be important in helping to assess the needs of disabled people. Full equality analysis covering all sites where changes are proposed, will be carried out in due course to inform the final decision making process. This assessment will take into account feedback we have received for sites where we have undertaken public consultation and help establish the need for any alternative provision, such as outreach services.

02 Mar 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 65668

**Date tabled:** 27 Feb 2017 | **Date answered:** 02 Mar 2017

## 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: **26**

Brown, Alan

Cherry, Joanna

Cowan, Ronnie

Day, Martyn

Fellows, Marion

Ferrier, Margaret

Grady, Patrick

Hendry, Drew

Law, Chris

MacNeil, Angus

McDonald, Stewart

McGarry, Natalie

McLaughlin, Anne

McNally, John  
Monaghan, Carol  
Newlands, Gavin  
Nicolson, John  
O'Hara, Brendan  
Oswald, Kirsten  
Salmond, Alex  
Shannon, Jim  
Stephens, Christopher  
Thewliss, Alison  
Thompson, Owen  
Whitford, Philippa  
Wishart, Pete

### **Early day motion 895**

#### **PROPOSAL TO CLOSE COVENTRY'S THE JOB SHOP AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING**

Session: 2016-17

Date tabled: 30.01.2017

Primary sponsor: Cunningham, Jim

Sponsors:

- Glindon, Mary
- Howarth, George
- Lucas, Ian
- MacNeil, Angus
- Streeting, Wes

That this House is concerned by the proposal to close Coventry's the Job Shop; notes the importance of the Job Shop in Coventry; further notes that it has helped 25,000 people over the last three years; notes that this situation has been complicated by the planned relocation of Coventry Tile Hill jobcentre and the funding for Coventry City Council being cut by a massive 45 per cent since 2010, which equates to a £315 cut per person in Coventry; and calls on the Government to protect local government funding so that this and similar services can remain open.

Total number of signatures: **16**

Campbell, Ronnie  
Cunningham, Jim  
David, Wayne

Durkan, Mark

Glendon, Mary

Hopkins, Kelvin

Howarth, George

Lucas, Ian

MacNeil, Angus

McDonnell, Alasdair

McNally, John

Meale, Alan

Shannon, Jim

Skinner, Dennis

Stephens, Christopher

Streeting, Wes

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