



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2017-0152, 19 July 2017

Job centres and the Department for Work and Pensions estate

Summary

This Debate Pack briefing provides information in anticipation of the debate, entitled “Job centres and the Department for Work and Pensions estate”. This debate is sponsored by Chris Stephens MP and will take place in Westminster Hall on Thursday 20 July at 1.30pm, lasting for 90 minutes.

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.

In a written statement on 5 July 2017, the Employment Minister Damian Hinds set out further plans for the future of the entire DWP estate, including buildings providing jobcentre services, after the publication of the Government’s initial proposals in January.

There have been three previous Westminster Hall debates on the proposed closure of jobcentres in Glasgow, for which Debate Packs were also produced – [Closure of jobcentres in Glasgow](#) (CDP-2016-0255), [Future of the DWP estate](#) (CDP-2017-0012), and [Jobcentre Plus office closures](#) (CDP-2017-0089).

A spreadsheet published alongside this Debate Pack gives full details of the Government’s plans for all DWP sites in Great Britain, following the Government’s announcement on 5 July.

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.¹

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.²

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.³ 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 was also been criticism of the lack of consultation prior to the announcement.

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 2015

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

³ ['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), [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.⁴

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

⁴ [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.⁵

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.⁶

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](#)

⁵ [HCWS349, 26 January 2017](#)

⁶ [‘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.

1.4 Scottish Affairs Committee report

On 26 April 2017 the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee published a report on [Jobcentre Plus closures in Scotland](#).⁷ The Committee concluded that the Government's plans to close Jobcentre Plus offices in Glasgow, and throughout Scotland, showed a lack of clear planning and should be reviewed. While the expiration of the 20-year PRIME contract provided an opportunity for a comprehensive review of how Jobcentre Plus services could be modernised, to best suit the needs of users and to provide value for money, the proposed closure of eight offices in Glasgow appeared to demonstrate a lack of "strategic thinking" by the Department. The press release accompanying the Committee's report states:

Plans appear only to have considered which current sites were expendable and did not look at how a comprehensive service could be provided for an area. A 'holistic' approach would almost certainly indicate the need for new Jobcentres near transport hubs, however only closures of existing services have been proposed. The Government has to show more ambition and dexterity to create an effective Jobcentre network.⁸

The Committee called on DWP to undertake a "full and proper" evaluation of Jobcentre Plus provision in Glasgow, demonstrating a "proper understanding of the geography and transport infrastructure in the city." It added:

Particular consideration should be given to a large central location that would allow the greatest number of people to access it, supported by smaller offices in areas with poor transport links.⁹

The Committee also recommended that:

- Given the wider effect on the community of Jobcentre closures, the Government should consult on changes to the Jobcentre network as a whole, not just in those localities where a proposed closure breached arbitrary ministerial criteria.

⁷ HC 979 2016-17

⁸ "[Jobcentre Plus closures result of incoherent planning and need rethink](#)," Scottish Affairs Committee, 26 April 2017

⁹ Ibid.

- The Government publish equality impact assessments for each proposed closure, in light of the potential impact on the most vulnerable groups in society who rely on the facilities provided by Jobcentres.
- In light of evidence received by the committee contradicting Ministerial assertions that sanction rates would not rise as a result of Jobcentre closures and resulting longer travel times, the Department should set out what mitigation should be in place for Jobcentre users and for how long.
- The Department should move to end the unnecessary uncertainty placed on staff, provide a clear statement about where staff would be expected to relocate, and work more closely with unions and staff to provide support for those being asked to change roles or location.

On the publication of the report, the Committee's Chair, Pete Wishart, commented:

"Nothing in this policy backs up the UK Government's insistence that it is a result of carefully thought out, long-term planning and not just an opportunistic cost cutting exercise. The end of the PFI contract could have allowed them to embark on a programme of meaningful change, should they have wished. They could almost have started with a clean state and asked what sort of Jobcentre provision would work best for each city or town. Instead they seem to have just looked at how many offices they could close down and how much money they could save.

Their treatment of staff, service users and colleagues in the Scottish Government fell short of what should be expected. When a staggered series of closure announcements begins with eight in one city, it is only going to create uncertainty and resentment. It is also a worrying sign that they did not feel it necessary to inform the Scottish Government. This must not be repeated as they look to build a working relationship on welfare powers.

Jobcentre Plus centres are there to serve their communities, when people are often at their most vulnerable, these proposals will fail to do this adequately. We urge the Government to look at this policy again and come back with a coherent solution that works for the people who use the service, as well as being value for money."¹⁰

1.5 July 2017 statement on the future of the DWP estate

The most recent Government announcement on the future of the DWP estate came in a written statement from Damien Hinds, the Minister for Employment, on 5 July 2017. This confirmed that the majority of the proposals announced in the statement in January would go ahead, albeit with some revisions as a result of the abovementioned consultations, and provided additional information about the future of jobcentre sites which had not been included in the original proposals:

¹⁰ Ibid.

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

On 26th January 2017 DWP tabled a statement outlining proposals for changes to its estate, which will come into effect from 31 March 2018 when the current PFI contract with Telereal Trillium expires.

Today's announcement confirms that the majority of those proposals will go ahead. Some smaller jobcentres will merge with larger ones, and others will be co-located with local government premises. It will mean that DWP will be able to offer a more efficient service, while delivering good value for the taxpayer, saving over £140 million a year for the next ten years.

The support provided to jobseekers will be further strengthened this year as more work coaches are recruited in every nation and region of the UK.

The plans reflect the fact that eight out of ten claims for Jobseeker's Allowance and 99% of applications for Universal Credit Full Service claims are now made online. This means that DWP buildings are used much less with 20% of the estate currently underutilised.

Following more detailed planning work and further discussions with staff, public consultations and feedback from stakeholders, the outcomes for some sites have been revised. The attached list ([DWP Estates Announcements 5 July 2017](#)) details where such a revision has been made. There are a small number of sites where commercial negotiations are ongoing, the Department is unable to announce these plans until this process is complete. These sites are also in the attached list.

In January, we were unable to announce our proposals for some offices because negotiations with landlords had not been concluded. We are now in a position to provide an update on proposals for these offices and they are listed in the attached document.

For the vast majority of DWP offices there will be no change in location. Where we are closing a site, we will take all possible precautions to minimise disruption for customers. Vulnerable people will continue to receive home visits and postal claims where it is appropriate to do so.¹¹

According to the [list](#) attached to this written statement, revisions have been made to the proposals for 24 sites, and there are now plans for 13 new sites which were not included in the original proposals because commercial negotiations had not been completed.¹²

Two of the 8 Jobcentres in Glasgow originally earmarked for closure – Castlemilk and Cambuslang – are now to be retained.

1.6 Summary of the DWP's plans for Jobcentres

The table below – produced by the House of Commons Library Social and General Statistics Section – gives an overview of the DWP's plans for Jobcentres in the English regions and in Scotland and Wales,

¹¹ [HCWS30, 5 July 2017](#)

¹² [DWP Estates Announcements 5 July 2017](#)

following the January 2017 and July announcements. The table covers Jobcentres only; it does not cover the Department's plans for other DWP offices.

DWP estates proposals for Jobcentres in Great Britain

| | Retain | Divest | Co-location | Acquisition | Under negotiation |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
| England | 454 | 91 | 41 | 7 | 6 |
| East Midlands | 41 | 8 | 6 | 0 | 1 |
| East of England | 48 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| London | 45 | 22 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| North East | 40 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| North West | 69 | 20 | 8 | 1 | 1 |
| South East | 63 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| South West | 47 | 10 | 8 | 2 | 0 |
| West Midlands | 55 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 2 |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | 46 | 10 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Scotland | 79 | 15 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Wales | 57 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Great Britain | 590 | 109 | 50 | 10 | 8 |

Note: Table does not include Ipswich MYGO. Caution should be taken when calculating the total number of Jobcentres in an area or the % due to close using the above data, as some Jobcentres (e.g. those due to be both "divested" and subsequently "co-located" appear in the table more than once.

Sources

DWP 26 January 2017 Jobcentre Plus Estate Proposals
Written Statement - HCWS30, 5 July 2017

1.7 Urgent Question, 6 July

In response to an Urgent Question from Margaret Greenwood on the Government's plans to close Jobcentre Plus offices, and the impact on local communities and DWP staff, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, David Gauke, told the House on 6 July:

Yesterday's announcement confirmed the proposals that were published in January. These changes will mean that the DWP will be able to offer a more efficient service, while delivering good value for the taxpayer, saving more than £140 million a year for the next 10 years. Eight out of 10 claims for jobseeker's allowance and 99% of applications for universal credit full service are now made online, which means that DWP buildings are used much less, with 20% of the estate currently underutilised. Our estate plans must reflect the way customers interact with DWP now and in the future, not how they behaved in the past. I can assure the House that these changes will not lead to a reduction in the number of frontline jobcentre staff; in fact, to continue improving the service provided to customers, jobcentres are actively recruiting in many areas.

These changes are being made in consultation with DWP employees and their trade unions, which will ensure that the important connections that jobcentre staff have with the local community are preserved and customer services can be maintained.¹³

Margaret Greenwood responded:

¹³ HC Deb 6 July 2016 c1320

Members will recall that in December last year the Government announced that they were planning to close half the jobcentres in Glasgow. In January this year, they set out plans for further closures, amounting to the closure of more than one in 10 jobcentres across the UK. These closures have the potential for the loss of up to 750 jobs. Yesterday, the Department announced via a written ministerial statement that just six of the original 78 jobcentres earmarked for closure will remain open, and only 11 of the 80 planned to co-locate with local authorities have been given a reprieve. Two additional jobcentres that were to stay open have been added to the closure list.

The impact of the closures will undoubtedly be felt most by the poorest and most vulnerable in our society. By closing such a large proportion of the DWP estate, the Government would be forcing claimants to travel further to access the vital services that they need, thus having an impact on the lives of sick and disabled people, carers and parents with young children, so will the Minister commit now to publish the equality analysis on each site that is being closed? Currently these are secret, and they should be made public. Furthermore, the Government plan to subject an additional 1 million claimants to in-work conditionality, a process under universal credit by which people in work may be required to attend jobcentres. What assessment has the Minister made of the impact on demand for jobcentre services as a result of increased in-work conditionality?

The decision to close jobcentres on this scale at the same time as accelerating the roll-out of the universal credit full digital service makes no sense. It is simply not good enough to quote figures about online claims to justify closure plans. Universal credit will place other, new demands on staff, who will, for example, have to assess whether self-employed people claiming universal credit have a viable business plan. What assessment has the Minister made of the increased demand placed on jobcentre staff as a result of the roll-out of universal credit?

Finally, the closures will have an impact on jobs within the DWP. Will the Minister outline the number of jobs that will be lost as a result of these closures, among frontline jobcentre staff and in the corporate centre sites as a result of the new “hub strategy” for the corporate centre? The Government must immediately pause these closures to allow proper scrutiny of their plans.¹⁴

With regard to Jobcentre Plus staff, the Secretary of State said:

The reality is that in every nation and region there will be an increase in the number of jobcentre staff, from the beginning of the process to its end. Job numbers are going up, particularly as we roll out universal credit. She talks about 750 job losses, but only a small minority of them are likely to be redundancies among frontline jobcentre staff. She asked how many; we are probably looking at a range of 80 to 100 or so—I do not want to be too precise about that, but that is the maximum we are looking at, and we hope to be able to bring it down.¹⁵

Mr Gauke added that the reforms took account of changes to the welfare system as a result of the roll-out of the Universal Credit Full Service, and that it was possible to “find savings in the DWP’s estate

¹⁴ Ibid. cc1320-1

¹⁵ Ibid. c1321

and, at the same time, provide modern, up-to-date jobcentres that provide the service that is needed.”

For the SNP, Chris Stephens said:

Compassionate conservatism lasted fully two days. There should have been an oral statement and a vote in the House on this issue. Does the Secretary of State accept that there is a direct link between the index of multiple deprivation and those jobcentres earmarked for closure? Will he publish an equality impact assessment, particularly on the effects on those with disabilities and those with caring responsibilities? What engagement has there been with the devolved Administrations throughout the UK? What will be the effect of the roll- out of universal credit, given that some of the jobcentres earmarked for closure were included in the statement on the roll-out published by the Department?¹⁶

The Secretary of State said that when the changes were implemented Glasgow would “still have more jobcentres per head of population than any other still have more jobcentres per head of population than any other city in the United Kingdom”, adding that a number of the Glasgow jobcentres were particularly under-utilised. Mr Gauke continued:

On the equality impact assessment, the Government have, as always, fulfilled their obligations in terms of the assessment they have made.¹⁷

1.8 PCS campaign against DWP office closures

The trade union, the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), has been campaigning against the proposed office closures, which it argues “will impact on welfare of our members and vulnerable service users.”

Its website states:

PCS is opposing the closure of more than 100 jobcentres and back of house offices, threatening at least 750 job losses, negative impacts on vulnerable users and damage to the local economy.

There are numerous welfare implications if these closures and relocations go ahead:

1. Staff will face job losses, and in some cases, unreasonable travel journeys to and from work. Those with caring responsibilities, childcare commitments and access requirements will be particularly disadvantaged. Staff losses are coming at a time when Universal Credit is being rolled out, hampered by delays, IT failures and backlogs. DWP could redeploy staff to Universal Credit where resources are needed.
2. The government has not consulted claimants who use these jobcentres on the closure plans. Many are in areas of high unemployment and social deprivation. Disability claimants, staff/users with caring responsibilities and vulnerable users must be given due regard in terms of the equality impact assessment and the disadvantage that they will face if offices close or are relocated. Having to travel

¹⁶ Ibid. c1322

¹⁷ Ibid. c1322

further as a result of these proposals also means some users are unfairly out of pocket and run the risk of being sanctioned for lateness.

3. The ministerial criteria for the proximity of a jobcentre to claimants is that they must be 2 to 3 miles distance or 20 minutes by public transport from the old to the new site. One striking criticism is that some of the journeys have been assessed as appropriate using Google maps. This has meant bus routes have been taken into account which no longer exist. Factors such as traffic and accessibility for disabled and vulnerable users has not been adequate.

PCS 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 share many of the concerns raised by the Mayor of London who states that "plans to close jobcentres will hit the disadvantaged hardest".¹⁸

In February the Union launched an online petition calling on the House of Commons to instruct Ministers to delay implementation of the proposals pending a full public consultation; to account for how all services delivered in each Jobcentre marked for closure would be protected; to consult widely about the economic impact on local communities of removing jobs; and to "immediately rescind" plans to close 11 "hotspot offices" identified by the PCS as being at risk of compulsory redundancies.¹⁹

On 2 June PCS staff at the Eastern Avenue Jobcentre in Sheffield began strike action in protest at the proposed closure of the site.²⁰

1.9 July Early Day Motion on DWP Estate Office Closures

On 11 July 2017 Chris Stephens MP, tabled an Early Day Motion which responded to the confirmed plans for the DWP Estate. It expressed concern about the planned closures and the impact they will have on the accessibility "of services for many of the most vulnerable people" in "many areas of deprivation", as well as a fear that they will put "hundreds of staff at risk of redundancy".²¹

The full text of the Early Day Motion is available to read in part 4.3 of this Debate Pack.

1.10 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

¹⁸ PCS, [Stop DWP office closures](#)

¹⁹ PCS, [Save our DWP offices – no cuts to public services!](#)

²⁰ See PCS, [Week long strike at Sheffield Avenue jobcentre begins](#), 12 June 2017; PCS, [Shadow chancellor gives support to Eastern Avenue strikers](#), 13 June 2017; PCS, [Further week of strike action at Sheffield Eastern Avenue Jobcentre](#), 14 July 2017; PCS, [Second week-long strike starts at Eastern Avenue jobcentre](#), 17 July 2017; and

²¹ [EDM154, 11 July 2017](#)

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.²²

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.²³

The abovementioned EDM, sponsored by Chris Stephens, criticised the fact that “the Department [of Work and Pensions] has not published any equality impact assessment or analyses”.²⁴

On 17 July 2017, Damian Hinds, [in response to a PQ from Mr Jim Cunningham MP](#) about the potential for additional caseload for the Cofa Court Jobcentre in Coventry, commented that

Changes to the DWP estate announced on 5 July are not intended to reduce the number of staff or level of service we deliver, they are about redesigning our estate in a way that provides value for the taxpayer while continuing to support to our claimants.

Whilst no specific estimate has been made of the additional caseload for Cofa Court Jobcentre as a result of these changes, the number of work coaches in jobcentres is set to increase in all areas which will offset any increases.²⁵

²² [PO 66025, 6 March 2017](#)

²³ [PO 65740, 2 March 2017](#)

²⁴ [EDM154, 11 July 2017](#)

²⁵ [PO 4179, 17 July 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."

Department for Work and Pensions

[Delivering a more efficient and modern employment service](#)

5 July 2017

Final plans have been published to update the DWP's property estate so services reflect the way people access jobs and the benefits system.

Today's announcement confirms that some smaller jobcentres will merge with larger ones, and others will be co-located with local government premises. It will mean that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will be able to offer a more efficient service, while delivering good value for the taxpayer and saving over £140 million a year for the next 10 years.

The support provided to jobseekers will be further strengthened this year as more work coaches are recruited in every nation and region of the UK.

The plans reflect the fact that eight out of ten claims for Jobseeker's Allowance and 99% of applications for Universal Credit full service claims are now made online. This means that DWP buildings are used much less with 20% of the estate currently underutilised.

Jobcentres and benefit centres are covered by Public Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts which are now coming to an end. In the 20 years since these contracts were signed, the welfare system has undergone large-scale reform.

Since 2010, around 3 million more people are in work, youth unemployment has fallen by 375,000, the employment rate is at a record high and unemployment is at the lowest level since 1975.

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. These changes reflect the fact that more people access their benefits online resulting in many of our buildings being underused.

We're merging some offices and locating other jobcentres with local authorities to make sure that the welfare state and our employment support works for those who need it and those who pay for it."

Today's announcements confirm that DWP plan to:

- merge 68 smaller jobcentres into larger or underused ones nearby
- move 4 jobcentres to new sites where we have secured better new premises
- co-locate around an additional 40 jobcentres with local authorities or other community services to provide joined-up services for the local community with all services in one place
- move to a network of larger more efficient corporate and back office buildings, opening a new corporate site and 5 new large service centres across the country, in a phased approach starting in 2018 and closing 26 processing or corporate sites

- close 4 offices where the building is no longer used and standing empty
- retain almost 800 offices
- re-organise the corporate centre to make maximum use of 7 regional corporate hubs (in 6 cities), including establishing a new office in central Manchester

The planned changes have been made in consultation with staff taking into account the impact on benefit claimants and DWP staff. The majority of staff will remain in their current offices. Where staff need to move office, most moves are within a short distance but if this is not the case alternative job roles will be offered wherever possible.

More information

Initial plans to reform the DWP estate were published on 26 January 2017.

It was announced that our tenancies would be renegotiated in the 2015 Spending Review

DWP currently uses over 900 buildings around the UK – all of them leased from a range of landlords. The DWP estate covers around 1.5 million square metres across the country, of which 300,000 square metres is under-utilised.

The expiry of the PRIME contract provides DWP with the opportunity to review which offices we need, leaving those that we no longer need at commercially advantageous terms and having the opportunity to negotiate better deals on those we want to use in future.

The savings of over £140 million a year for the next 10 years will be made by a combination of a smaller estate, rent set to market levels, a new service delivery model and maximising space usage.

Where practical, we are co-locating with local authorities in their buildings. These arrangements bring benefits for the department, claimants and the taxpayer. More of the services that customers use are in one place which means that claimants have access a greater breadth of expertise.

In the areas that underwent public consultation and a jobcentre is merging with another, an outreach service will be put in place within the local community to ensure people can access support to get into employment. Vulnerable people will continue to receive home visits and postal claims where it is appropriate to do so.

The majority of staff will remain in their current offices with others moving to another DWP site nearby. There may be some redundancies: but we expect these numbers will be around 750 people (less than 1% of our overall staff numbers) and the majority of these will be covered by our voluntary redundancy scheme.

This programme is about reducing under-used space, not reducing staff numbers. The figures take account of 13 sites which are currently still under commercial negotiations and for which we are unable to announce at this point.

Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS)

[Urge your MP to oppose DWP office closures](#)

17 July 2017

MPs are this week debating the closure of more than 100 DWP offices, including jobcentres and 'back of house' offices – urge yours to back the PCS campaign to keep them open.

Earlier this month the government confirmed plans to close almost one in 10 jobcentres, 27 'back of house' offices and 6 hub offices/corporate centres, by March 2018.

A further 40 'back of house' offices are due to close by 2023.

Ministers had publicly admitted they expect at least 750 DWP staff to lose their jobs and refused to rule out compulsory redundancies. As well as hurting vulnerable users, this will mean a loss of thousands of pounds worth of income for local businesses and the local community. The government has not taken the impacts on vulnerable groups and employees into account thoroughly and has not even consulted claimants who use the job centres on plans to close them.

Our members at Sheffield Eastern Avenue jobcentre have today begun a second week-long strike against the government's closure plans.

Contact your MP and ask them to join the campaign by signing early day motion 154 before the close of parliament this Friday (21) sponsored by PCS parliamentary group Chris Stephens and by attending the Westminster Hall debate on the closures at 1.30pm on Thursday (20).

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), [Future of the DWP estate](#) (CDP-2017-0012), and [Jobcentre Plus office closures](#) (CDP-2017-0089).

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"](#)

BBC News, 26 April 2017

[MPs call for review of Glasgow Jobcentre closure plans](#)

Civil Service World, 2 June 2017

[DWP staff strike over proposed Jobcentre closure](#)

BBC News, 5 July 2017

[Six Glasgow job centres to be closed](#)

ITV News, 5 July 2017

[Jobcentre closures to affect up to 750 jobs](#)

Mirror, 6 July 2017

[DWP to shut 68 Jobcentres across Britain with 750 jobs at risk - the full list of branches affected](#)

Civil Service World, 6 July 2017

[Compulsory redundancy warning as DWP confirms 750 jobs to go in Jobcentre closures](#)

Civil Service World, 7 July 2017

[Most DWP job losses 'will be back office staff'](#)

The Times, 8 July 2017

[Kirk attacks move to close jobcentres](#)

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), [Future of the DWP estate](#) (CDP-2017-0012), and [Jobcentre Plus office closures](#) (CDP-2017-0089).

4.1 Debates

- [HC Deb 30 January 2017, cc661-74](#)
- [HC Deb 16 March 2017, cc196-220WH](#)
- [HC Deb 06 July 2017, cc1320-1331](#)

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

- [Jobcentres: Closures](#)

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

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the additional caseload for Cofa Court Jobcentre in Coventry as a result of closure of the Torrington Avenue Jobcentre.

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

Department: Department for Work and Pensions

Changes to the DWP estate announced on 5 July are not intended to reduce the number of staff or level of service we deliver, they are about redesigning our estate in a way that provides value for the taxpayer while continuing to support to our claimants.

Whilst no specific estimate has been made of the additional caseload for Cofa Court Jobcentre as a result of these changes, the number of work coaches in jobcentres is set to increase in all areas which will offset any increases.

17 Jul 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 4179

Date tabled: 11 Jul 2017 | **Date for answer:** 17 Jul 2017 | **Date answered:** 17 Jul 2017

4.3 Early Day Motions

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

Glindon, Mary

Hopkins, Kelvin

Howarth, George

Lucas, Ian

MacNeil, Angus

McDonnell, Alasdair

McNally, John

Meale, Alan

Shannon, Jim

Skinner, Dennis

Stephens, Christopher

Streeting, Wes

Early day motion 154

DWP ESTATE OFFICE CLOSURES

Session: 2017-19

Date tabled: 11.07.2017

Primary sponsor: Stephens, Christopher

Sponsors:

- Drew, David
- Gaffney, Hugh
- Morris, Grahame M
- Glindon, Mary
- Hill, Mike

Number of signatures: **19**

That this House is deeply concerned at the announcement by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) of the closure of almost one in 10 jobcentres; notes that only six of the original 78 earmarked for closure have been reprieved and two which were not under threat will now close; further notes that only 11 of the 80 planned to co-locate with local authorities have been given a reprieve; recognises that this will create difficulties in accessing services for many of the most vulnerable people and affects many areas of multiple deprivation; fears that this puts hundreds of staff at risk of redundancy; is disturbed to learn that the Department has not published any equality impact assessments or analyses; regrets that all but two back-of-house offices that were originally proposed for closure, as well as several corporate centre offices, are also to be closed; believes that those decisions will inevitably have a detrimental impact upon the communities affected; and calls on the Government to halt this ill-considered decimation of the DWP estate.

Cunningham, Jim

Day, Martyn

Docherty, Martin

Drew, David

Fellows, Marion

Gaffney, Hugh

Glendon, Mary

Hepburn, Stephen

Hermon, Lady

Hill, Mike

Hopkins, Kelvin

Linden, David

McDonald, Stewart

McNally, John

Morris, Grahame M

Shannon, Jim

Stephens, Christopher

Stevens, Jo

Thewliss, Alison

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