

Touchbase

June 2014

Welcome to June's Touchbase



Sharrion Llewellyn,
Touchbase Editor

In this edition we have a summary of the latest jobs figures which show that employment is continuing to rise with a record number of people, over 30.4 million, now in work.

There is also great news on the jobs front in Scotland as we look ahead to the 20th Commonwealth Games which will be held in Glasgow from 23 July to 3 August 2014. Our article outlines the key role Jobcentre Plus is playing in the training and recruitment of people to fill the 30,000 jobs that have been created by the Games.

As with the London Olympics, the Games will also be supported by 15,000 volunteers who will be helping to make the 6,500 athletes and thousands of other visitors feel welcome.

The volunteering theme continues as we also celebrate the 30th anniversary of National Volunteers' Week which recognises the efforts of millions of people who give up their free time to help others each year.

Other reports include the Pensions Act 2014, the call for evidence for the 5th independent review of the Work Capability Assessment and the recent Disability Confident conference in Wales.

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Unemployment at its lowest for five years

The latest figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that the unemployment rate has fallen to a new five-year low. It follows the largest quarterly rise in employment since records began more than 40 years ago.



The number of people in a job rose by 283,000 in the last three months which helped to increase employment by 722,000 on the year. This means that a record number of people – 30.43 million – are now in work.

Employment Minister Esther McVey said: “As the recovery takes hold, more people are able to get a job or set up their own business and become the employers of tomorrow. Each and every person who has made a new start or hired someone new is helping to make Britain a more prosperous and confident place to be.

“We will continue to support those in and out of work who want to get on and fulfil their ambitions for a more secure future.”

The number of people claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) fell by 25,100 last month and is down 399,600 on the year. The amount of people claiming JSA for more than 12 months fell by 93,200 on the year – the largest annual fall since 1998. The number of young people claiming JSA has been falling for the last 23 months.

Job vacancies have risen again, up 116,000 over the past year, bringing the number of vacancies in the UK economy to 628,000.

Through our network of over 700 Jobcentres, Work Coaches across the country are successfully helping people to improve their skills and experience so they can move off benefits and into a job.

 Full details of the jobs figures are available on the [ONS website](#).

“We will continue to support those in and out of work who want to get on and fulfil their ambitions for a more secure future.”

The number of unemployed young people fell by 48,000 in the last three months, and has been falling now for the last eight months. Youth unemployment, excluding those in full-time education, is now at its lowest level since 2008.

DWP helps recruitment for Commonwealth Games

More than 6,500 athletes are expected to attend the 20th Commonwealth Games in Scotland from 23 July to 3 August 2014.

Around 30,000 jobs will be created for these Games, which are a third of the size of the Olympics, and the biggest multi sport event ever to be held in Scotland.

A dedicated Jobcentre Plus Commonwealth Games Recruitment team is now working with contractors to make sure they have the staff they need and that people can benefit from the opportunities available.

The challenge for host city Glasgow is being ready to welcome, house, feed and entertain, not just the home and international teams, but also 15,000 volunteers who will play a key role in making the Games a success.

DWP has provided pre-employment support to ensure people are ready to compete for the jobs. People have also been helped to get accreditation to work on the Games sites.

“A dedicated Jobcentre Plus Commonwealth Games Recruitment team is now working with contractors to make sure they have the staff they need and that people can benefit from the opportunities available.”

These job opportunities will give people work experience that will improve their confidence, skills and employability as well as their future job prospects.

The Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council and Commonwealth Games Scotland have a longer term plan to generate a lasting social, economic and sporting legacy from the Games. DWP’s role in this will be to:

- Ensure young people are supported into work;
- Promote training and volunteering opportunities;
- Help to equip the labour force so they are better placed to compete for jobs;
- Place more people into work and reduce benefit spending;
- Forge strong, effective and long-term partnerships.

Jobcentre Plus will continue to work as normal during the Games and every office in Scotland has been asked to review its business continuity plans in order to manage any impact the Games might have on services.

 Visit [Glasgow 2014](#) for information about the Games or email commonwealthgames.deliveryteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Pensions Bill gets Royal Assent

The Pensions Bill has now received Royal Assent and will become the Pensions Act 2014.

Amongst other things, the new Act will change the State Pension system for people who reach the State Pension age on or after 6 April 2016. The change will apply to men who were born on or after 6 April 1951 and women who were born on or after 6 April 1953.

From 6 April 2016, there will be a new, single-tier State Pension which will replace the current system of a basic and an additional State Pension.

The full level of the new State Pension will be set above the basic level of any means-tested support. How much people will get

will depend on the record of their individual National Insurance contributions. People will need to have a minimum of 10 National Insurance qualifying years to receive any State Pension.

The reforms are designed to significantly simplify the State Pension system so it is easier for people to understand how much State Pension they will get when they retire and to be more certain of the value of planning and saving for their retirement.

 Further information can be found at GOV.UK.

State Pensions Online improvements a success

Changes to State Pension Online means that 75 per cent of those who had problems using the service are now able to make their claim online with the extra support they are receiving.

As reported in the [April Touchbase](#), customers are now being given better information and prompts when they use the [Claim your State Pension online](#) page on GOV.UK. There is also extra support to help them to complete their Government Gateway registration which they need in order to use the service.

These improvements mean that more people than ever, who prefer to claim online, are now able to do so.

These changes are in response to customer feedback and we will continue to listen to their views and to amend the service where necessary.

State Pension Online is available in England, Wales and Scotland. It is secure and customers can use it when it is most convenient for them.

 'Claim your State Pension online' is at GOV.UK.

Welsh businesses and Government back Disability Confident

Over 100 business and community leaders from across Wales supported the Disability Confident event in Cardiff to showcase the talents of disabled people and their huge value to the economy.



The conference was fronted by Falklands veteran and Welsh businessman Simon Weston, and attended by major firms and organisations such as Sainsbury's, Cineworld, BBC Wales and South Wales Police. It took place on 20 May and

was sponsored by Motability with support from Admiral and Jobfit.

Minister of State for Disabled People Mike Penning said:

"Although the employment rates for disabled people have increased gradually over the years, we know that all too often the talents of disabled people in the workforce are left untapped. One in five of us have a disability and doing more to employ disabled people and provide services for them could help businesses tap into the £80bn purple pound – and I want businesses in Wales to do just that."

The Welsh Government's Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty Jeff Cuthbert said:

"We must all work to break down the barriers, both physical and those of attitude, to ensure disabled people have equality of opportunity to work and play their full role in society. We need to stop looking at people for their disability and start helping them make the most of their abilities. The Welsh Government is clear in its support for disabled people to get into work and to make sure they have the right skills."

The event was part of a series of regional conferences to support the [Disability Confident campaign](#) which was launched by the Prime Minister last year.

DWP's partners are supporting the campaign through their own channels and networks. For example, [Pluss](#) is hosting [mini Disability Confident](#) events in Cornwall and Devon and [Leonard Cheshire Disability](#) has set up a [work placement programme](#) for young disabled people.

Any organisation wishing to support the campaign can share [Disability Confident stories](#), encourage employers to use the information and guidance on the [Employer Portal](#), or email dwp.disabilityconfident@dwp.gsi.gov.uk to find out how to get involved.

Care leavers meet senior ministers

A group of care leavers have had a ground breaking meeting with senior Government ministers to discuss the problems of social exclusion.

Three young people met members of the Social Justice Cabinet Committee which is chaired by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Iain Duncan Smith.

This is the first time young people leaving care have had the opportunity to speak directly to senior ministers on this Committee which aims to ensure that there is a whole Government approach to tackling problems of social exclusion.

James Osborne from Essex was one of the care leavers who met the ministers. He said: "Our experiences for much of our lives growing up in care are of not being allowed to make any decisions about our own lives. So having the opportunity to speak to the most powerful people in the country, the real decision makers, is really mind blowing.

"It is an honour and a huge responsibility for me to have this opportunity to put together the voices and experiences of many care leavers and speak out on behalf of us all.

"We have all experienced significant trauma in our lives and some days it feels like just surviving the journey to adulthood is an achievement.

"We are often written off as no-hopers and as statistics, but we all want to find our place in the world, to live in society not excluded from it, and to give something back. We hope to get this message across to Ministers."



The meeting was arranged by the Care Leavers' Foundation which has been making grants to care leavers in need since 1999.

Improving the support care leavers receive is a key priority for the Government which is why they published the [Care Leaver Strategy](#) in October 2013. As a result there have been some recent improvements to the support DWP provides for those leaving care. These include:

- The introduction of the Care Leaver Marker;
- The care leaver awareness guide;
- The advanced claim service for care leavers;
- Providing access to benefits until the age of 21 for students who are not in advanced education;
- Earlier access to support from the Work Programme.

You can find out more about the Government's support for [care leavers](#) and about its social justice policies at [GOV.UK](#).

Thirty years of National Volunteers' Week

It is 30 years since National Volunteers' Week was launched to celebrate the contribution of millions of people across the UK who give up their time to help their local community.

Volunteers' Week is a national campaign and hundreds of events were held during the week, which ran from 1-7 June 2014. The events were co-ordinated by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) in England, the Wales Council for Voluntary Action and Volunteer Development Scotland.

As part of its activities in this anniversary year, NCVO has identified 30 volunteering ambassadors to highlight the diversity of people who volunteer and the range of ways in which they help others.

To mark the start of Volunteers' Week, the Employment Minister Esther McVey paid a visit to the Hammersmith and Fulham Volunteer Centre (HFVC), which is one of the largest voluntary centres in London with more than 5,000 volunteers.

Claimants can volunteer for as many hours as they wish in the public, private or voluntary sector, provided they can prove they are actively seeking and are available for work.

Jobseeker's Allowance claimants who volunteer must also be available for work for at least 40 hours each week. Their voluntary work must be unpaid and cannot be for a family member.

Figures published by the Cabinet Office show that more than 70 per cent of people volunteer at least once a year.

For further information on volunteering visit [NCVO](#) for England, [Volunteer Scotland](#) for Scotland and [WCVA](#) Wales.



Employment Minister Esther McVey pictured with staff and volunteers from HFVC and NCVO.

Other news in brief...

Civil penalty doubles for employers of illegal workers

The Government has made it simpler for employers to check if job applicants have the right to work in the UK. It has also doubled the penalties for those businesses that employ illegal workers.

The changes to the civil penalty scheme and right to work check requirements for employers came into force on 16 May 2014.

They include:

- Increasing the maximum penalty for those who repeatedly employ illegal workers from £10,000 to £20,000 for each illegal worker;
- Reducing the range of acceptable documents that employers might have to check and the frequency of most follow-up checks;
- Simplifying the [guidance](#) and improving support for employers.

The aim is to make it easier for legitimate employers to do the necessary right to work checks and to ensure that there are tougher penalties for those who employ illegal workers.

More information is available at [GOV.UK](#).

'Croeso' to Welsh-speaking carers

DWP's Carer's Allowance Digital Service is now available in Welsh.

The team has worked closely with the Welsh Language Unit to ensure that the web pages, help functions and claim notes are all available in Welsh.

The service is easy to access. Carers simply need to go to [GOV.UK](#).

For those using a Welsh browser the service will automatically default to the Welsh language. If not, they should select 'Apply now' on the [Make a claim](#) page and then the Cymraeg button at the top of the next page to convert the text to Welsh.

A new version of Carer's Allowance Online was launched in October 2013 and since then the customer satisfaction rating has increased to 90 per cent while 50 per cent of all claims are now online. The service is designed to work on most tablets and smartphones.

It is available 24/7 and is the quickest and simplest way to make a claim or report a change of circumstances.

Details on the eligibility for Carer's Allowance and how to apply are available at [GOV.UK](#).

Magazine for young disabled people now online

DWP's [Aspire2](#) magazine, which is aimed at young disabled people, is now available online. This issue focuses on the journey to work from education and training to careers and entrepreneurship.

The [e-zine](#) features interviews with disabled people who have forged successful careers, including Simon Weston and former model Katie Piper who was blinded in one eye after an acid attack.

There is also an article on Young Ambassadors helping young disabled people to navigate their journey into employment and some helpful links and information to support their journey from education to work.

This is the last of three [Aspire2](#) magazines that have been published as part of the drive to encourage young disabled people to follow their dreams and fulfil their potential.

The first two magazines can be read at [Aspire2 December 2013](#) and [Aspire2 August 2013](#).

Scotland paper published by DWP

As part of the UK Government's Scotland analysis programme, DWP published Scotland analysis: Work and pensions on 24 April.

It showed that an independent Scotland could face additional social security costs of £1.55bn per year over the next 20 years as a result of demographic changes and Scottish Government proposals.

The Paper also concluded that as part of the UK, Scotland has the 'best of both worlds', balancing an efficient social security system with a largely devolved skills policy to meet local needs. Further information about the Paper can be seen at [GOV.UK](#).

More people tracing their long forgotten pensions

More and more people have been located their lost pension funds using the Government's free Pension Tracing Service.

Latest figures show that in the past year alone almost 145,000 people have used the service to locate their long forgotten pensions. This is more than double the number who used the service in 2010, with numbers rising year on year.

By 2018 all employers will have to provide a workplace pension and as the average person will have 11 jobs in their lifetime, this could lead to 50 million dormant and lost pension pots by 2050.

Visit [find-lost-pension](#) or call 0845 600 2537, textphone 0845 300 0169, to find out if the Pension Tracing Service can locate a lost pension. Lines are open Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

