

# Withdrawn

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Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

# Areas of Research Interest

January 2018

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First published 2018.

ISBN 978-1-78425-988-4

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## Foreword by DWP Chief Scientific Adviser and Chief Analyst

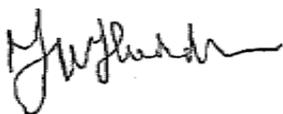
The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has a strong track record of producing, sponsoring and using high quality evidence to underpin the development of our policies and operations. As we look to the future, DWP will continue to champion the further development of our evidence base to ensure we are prepared to meet future challenges.

Over the last seven years, DWP has introduced Universal Credit, the New State Pension, the new Child Maintenance Service, the Personal Independence Payment, and the Work Programme and has implemented Automatic Enrolment into workplace pensions. All this was done whilst reducing operating costs by a third. The development of all of these initiatives has been enabled and informed by a vast amount of research, trialling, scenario modelling and data analysis – much of this work has been conducted by DWP analysts but a great deal has been carried out by external organisations.

Just as having good evidence and analysis has played a vital part in DWP's recent successes, the continued development of our evidence base will be necessary to ensure that DWP can respond effectively to future challenges. The Secretary of State, Ministers and Officials will rely on this high quality evidence to ensure that policy and operational decisions are fully informed.

DWP has a good record of sponsoring and working in partnership with external research bodies and academics. We would like to further increase this engagement with the world-class research community in the UK so that, together, we can generate the very best possible evidence to help inform further improvements to the effectiveness and efficiency of our policies to the benefit of our millions of customers and society more generally.

This document aims to increase and enhance these links by informing Research Councils and the broader academic community of our priorities for further developing our evidence base. We invite these groups to actively engage with DWP when planning their research programmes so that they have maximum impact on the future development of our policies and operations.



**Trevor Huddleston CBE**

**Chief Scientific Adviser and Chief Analyst, DWP**

## Introduction and Purpose

- i. This document summarises the most important research questions facing the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) over the next five to ten years, to raise awareness and improve understanding of these with the external research community.
- ii. The ambition is for increased engagement and collaboration between the Government and external research communities. This will enhance DWP's capability and capacity to answer complex and important questions by allowing DWP to:
  - a. Draw on a wider range of UK and international expertise and evidence;
  - b. Exploit more diverse and innovative methods, which can generate different perspectives and insights and therefore help provide more complete answers to particular research questions; and
  - c. Build and develop DWP's own internal capability to generate world-class analysis through knowledge transfer.
- iii. DWP's evidence requirements are wide-ranging and evolve over time. This document is therefore not exhaustive. It is intended to open conversation; not give definitive answers. We already have some evidence on all the research topics we list below and we have more evidence on some than on others. However, we are keen to increase and deepen our understanding of these issues. Moreover, we are interested in projects on any topic, and by any academic discipline, that can add to our existing evidence. This includes research that is outside the areas outlined below or which focus on particular facets of the areas listed.
- iv. **We set out our high-level research questions below. If you would like to know more about particular questions please contact us at [Evidence.StrategyTeam@dpw.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Evidence.StrategyTeam@dpw.gsi.gov.uk). We welcome any details of work you are doing or planning that is potentially relevant to DWP. We are also happy to discuss our priorities and any plans you might have in more detail. We will disseminate the ARI throughout 2018 and beyond to raise awareness of DWP's priorities and foster closer ongoing engagement and collaboration with the external research community.**

## DWP Vision and Objectives

DWP wants rigorous, robust, relevant and timely evidence so that the Department can design and deliver policies to achieve its vision and objectives. Consequently, our evidence priorities map directly onto our vision and objectives as set out in the Department's Single Departmental Plan<sup>1</sup> and summarised below:

### Vision

Our vision is to create and maintain an affordable and sustainable welfare system that provides financial security and supports economic growth and improved productivity through the extension of opportunity and promotion of personal responsibility to help people transform their lives.

### Objectives

Our objectives are to:

1. Support economic growth and improved productivity by ensuring work always pays and people are supported to find and progress in work.
2. Help reduce the disadvantages faced by disabled people and people with health conditions through the welfare system and labour market.
3. Increase saving for, and financial security in, later life.
4. Maximise the number of children benefiting from an effective child maintenance arrangement, encouraging family based arrangements where appropriate and reduce parental conflict in families.
5. Transform the way we deliver our services to improve quality and reduce costs.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-work-and-pensions-single-departmental-plan>

## Objective 1

**Support economic growth and improved productivity by ensuring work always pays and people are supported to find and progress in work.**

### Context

*We want to better understand how and why the labour market is changing and the implications for the number and types of people who need different types of support. We would like to improve our understanding of what determines the transitions people make between welfare and work and how people progress in work. We want to learn more about what works for whom, when, why, and under what circumstances.*

### Research Questions Include

- 1.1 What are the different ways to define and measure labour market progression? How does this vary between groups and over an individual's lifetime? How can DWP best support progression, including amongst the self-employed?
- 1.2 How should DWP work with employers, and other third parties, to deliver its labour market objectives?
- 1.3 What types and combinations of support, conditionality and financial incentives most effectively enable and encourage people with multiple disadvantages and/or barriers to employment move into sustainable employment with opportunities for progression?
- 1.4 How can we increase and improve our use of digital tools and big data to personalise support in the most cost effective way?
- 1.5 What impact does Universal Credit (UC) have on individuals' and households' employment and earnings compared with the legacy benefits and systems it is replacing? How does the impact vary between different groups? How could this be improved?
- 1.6 How does support for housing costs influence labour and housing markets, work incentives, and household circumstances?
- 1.7 How is the labour market likely to evolve, e.g. because of Brexit, technological change, demographics, changing forms of work, and other policy developments such as the National Living Wage etc.? What are the implications of these changes for DWP?

## Objective 2

**Help reduce the disadvantages faced by disabled people and people with health conditions through the welfare system and labour market.**

### Context

*We want to better understand transitions and fluctuations in health and disability over people's lives and how they affect people's employment, wellbeing and the support they need. We want to improve our understanding of the challenges disabled people or those with health conditions face in finding and/or sustaining employment. We also want to learn more about what roles different partners should play in providing an integrated approach to improving health and work outcomes, including employers and health professionals, in addition to the benefit system. We would like to better understand how we can best identify and support those who are unable, temporarily or permanently, to work.<sup>2</sup>*

### Research Questions Include

- 2.1 What are the current and future trends in disabilities and health conditions that working-age people face that require targeted policy measures to improve employment, health and wellbeing outcomes?
- 2.2 What barriers prevent people with disabilities and/or health conditions from moving into and progressing in work, and which interventions are most effective at addressing these barriers?
- 2.3 What new and better approaches are there, including in how we assess capability, for delivering joined-up, tailored and personalised health and work support? How can we effectively engage employers, health professionals and other stakeholders to improve work and health outcomes?
- 2.4 What works to support people to remain in work, or once on sick leave, to return to work? Who is best placed to deliver this support?

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<sup>2</sup> *These research questions include the interests of the Work and Health Unit, jointly sponsored by DWP and the Department of Health. The joint Unit exists to drive action across society to prevent health-related job loss and support people with health conditions or disabilities to enter and progress in work, and enjoy the benefits of good employment. In 2018 the Unit plans to set out its comprehensive approach to building and disseminating evidence over a ten year period aligned to the strategy set out in *Improving Lives: The Future of Health, Work and Disability*, and working closely with academic and research partners to build a collective approach.*

## Objective 3

### **Increase saving for, and financial security in, later life.**

#### **Context**

*We want to better understand: what determines how much people need and how much they save for their retirement; when they choose to retire; and how they use their savings in later life. We would like to learn more about what deters and prevents some people from saving more for their retirement and how they can be encouraged and enabled to save more. An important aspect is how life expectancy and healthy life expectancy are changing now and in future. We also want to better understand how the many cultural, demographic, economic, social and policy factors affect how long people work and how much they save.*

#### **Research Questions Include**

- 3.1 How much do different people have to save during their working lives to enjoy the standard of living they need, expect or want in retirement? What does this imply for how long people should work and how much they should save?
- 3.2 What factors prevent or discourage people, including the self-employed, from saving enough for their retirement? What things can encourage and enable people to save more and/or work for longer and what role do employers play? How does this vary between groups, and why?
- 3.3 How do individuals make decisions about how to use their private savings to provide income in later life? What support do people need to make informed decisions?
- 3.4 How could regulation of the private pensions industry be improved to deliver better outcomes for savers whilst minimising the costs to businesses?
- 3.5 What are the future trends for demographics and working/saving behaviour? What further reforms to state and private pension provision might be required to ensure financial security in a sustainable way?

## Objective 4

**Maximise the number of children benefiting from an effective child maintenance arrangement, encouraging family based arrangements where appropriate and reduce parental conflict in families.**

### Context

*We would like to develop a richer picture of how: disadvantages combine, reinforce one another, manifest themselves throughout someone's life, and affect opportunities and outcomes. We want to better understand what factors, including the stability and quality of family relationships, can facilitate and hinder children's prospects. We would like to find out more about what types of support are most effective at helping to overcome family conflict and the myriad of other factors that can prevent children, and adults, from fulfilling their potential. This includes improving our understanding of the most effective ways of delivering support to improve families' opportunities and outcomes.*

### Research Questions Include

- 4.1 What support is most effective at helping adults and children work through family breakdown, resolve family conflict, and address deep-rooted problems so that they do not permanently affect opportunities and outcomes.
- 4.2 What is the most effective and efficient way to provide support, across Government and with third parties, to disadvantaged families?
- 4.3 How effective are child maintenance policies at encouraging family based arrangements, reducing family conflict and ultimately at helping adults and children to achieve better outcomes?
- 4.4 How effective are the child maintenance arrangements and wider welfare system at ensuring parents have the financial support they need to achieve the best outcomes for them and their children?

## Objective 5

### **Transform the way we deliver our services to improve quality and reduce costs.**

#### Context

*We want to better understand what our wide range of different customers need and expect, and how and why this is changing, for example, in light of the continued rapid developments in technology and digitalisation.*

*We want to learn how we can improve how to measure and manage operational performance and productivity across the different parts of the business and identify and exploit opportunities to make delivery more effective, efficient and economical to reduce costs and ensure value for money for the taxpayer. We also want to better understand how to minimise the opportunity for fraud and error to enter our systems, and how to improve the speed and accuracy with which we detect it if/when it does.*

#### Research Questions Include

- 5.1 To what extent can we better segment customer services to reflect both different needs and capabilities and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our customer services through better targeting?
- 5.2 What can we do to increase digital take-up? What are our customers' needs, abilities and propensities to use different channels and services? How do they vary between different groups and over time?
- 5.3 How can we improve the effectiveness and efficiency of DWP customer service through, for example, digitalisation, automation (including use of automated bots), predictive modelling and machine learning?
- 5.4 What are the best ways to design systems and policy to minimise fraud and error? How can we use new technologies, such as machine learning, social network analysis and distributed ledgers, in this area?
- 5.5 How can advances in cryptography, distributed ledgers, personal data lockers and identity authentication be used to increase the resilience and efficacy of government services?
- 5.6 How can Government maximise customer service value by delivering across the public, private and third sectors?