

## Work Programme Performance Report

This report is the latest in a series designed to provide statistical information on the performance of the Work Programme. It has been produced by the Employment Related Services Association (ERSA), the sector body for those organisations delivering or with an interest in employment support services. More information on the employment support sector and ERSA can be found at [www.ersa.org.uk](http://www.ersa.org.uk). All enquiries should be directed to [policy@ersa.org.uk](mailto:policy@ersa.org.uk) / 020 3757 9416.

### Executive Summary

- **Over 856,991 individual jobseekers have now entered employment via the Work Programme from its inception in June 2011 to end December 2017.** This compares to 852,095 people at end September 2017. This means that, over the last three months, more than 4,896 long term unemployed jobseekers gained some employment through the Work Programme. Figures showing the numbers of jobseekers referred to the programme to end December 2017 are classed as official data and will be released by the government on 22 March.
- **206,522 young people have now found at least one job on the Work Programme, up from 205,225 three months before.** This means that the Work Programme helped 1,297 young long term unemployed jobseekers gain some work between end September and end December 2017. The majority of these will turn into sustainable jobs, while others will have gained crucial work experience which will help them with job search in future.
- **Overall, 61,489 jobseekers on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) have now gained work through the programme.** Many of these jobseekers have complex barriers to work and will never have received intensive support before.

### Introduction

This report contains the most up to date statistics on Work Programme performance in the public domain. The release by Government of official Work Programme statistics will be published in March 2018. These official figures will show the number of individuals on the programme who have achieved sustained employment, which in most cases is work of at least six months in duration.

Although this is the key official measure of success for the programme, there is a time lag between an individual entering employment and then being registered in official statistics. This means that official statistics only show a partial picture of performance to date. To supplement this picture, ERSA collects figures on the number of individual jobseekers who have gained employment while on the Work Programme, known as 'Job Starts'.

It should be noted that the figures contained within the report are not intended as a proxy for government statistics, but rather as useful contextual information that provides a more up to date picture of how the programme is performing.

### Changes post April 2017

As of April 2017, referrals to the Work Programme have now ended. However, providers will have up to two years to work with those already on the scheme to help them increase their employability, enter and sustain in work. As such, although the programme will be closed to referrals, the numbers of those moving into work will continue to increase as the programme works through the remaining 'tail' of users.

The Work and Health Programme commenced in England in November 2017. Fair Start Scotland will commence in Scotland in April 2018.

In England, the Work and Health Programme is being commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions in most areas, but will be co-commissioned with the Combined Authority in Greater Manchester and with the boroughs in London. Outside Greater Manchester and London, the programme is set to be approximately 75% smaller than the current provision in place.

Further information about the Work Programme, including how it operates and the financial model, is available in a Policy Briefing via [ERSA's website](#) or from ERSA direct ([policy@ersa.org.uk](mailto:policy@ersa.org.uk)). Further information on the Work and Health Programme is available [here](#).

## Background to this report

The figures contained in this report are for the number of people who have entered work (referred to as Job Starts) up to the end of December 2017. It has been collected from all prime contractors of the Work Programme and although it does not constitute official data it is deemed to be robust.

Figures on the number of referrals to the Work Programme, from which percentages starting work can be derived, will be released by government as part of the official release of data in March 2018.

## Work Programme performance to date

**856,991 individuals have entered employment via the Work Programme so far with most expected to stay in employment.**

856,991 individuals referred to the Work Programme had entered work by the end of December 2017. This is an increase of 4,896 in the quarter ending December 2017. This represents a small increase on the previous quarter; however referrals to the programme have stopped altogether as of April 2017.

## Performance by Payment Group

**Over 206,470 young people have found a job on the Work Programme, with over half of those who have been on the scheme for two years having found work.**

The Work Programme has been successful in tackling youth unemployment. A total of 206,470 young people on Jobseekers Allowance have so far been assisted into employment making it the best performing Payment Group on the Work Programme. Sustainment levels for younger jobseekers tend to be slightly lower than for older jobseekers, but the majority of these do turn into sustainable jobs.

**The Work Programme is having a positive impact on older jobseekers too.**

Of the JSA 25+ Payment Group, a total of 415,211 people had been found work. There is clear evidence with this group that the longer a jobseeker is on the scheme the more likely they are to find work.

**The Work Programme is continuing to succeed in helping people leaving prison into work.**

Since commencing, the Work Programme has helped 21,371 prison leavers into work. This can be a challenging group to support, but the Work Programme has had a demonstrable impact in getting them into employment. It should be noted that the programme will have helped a far higher number of people with an offending record find work. However, these will be included within the JSA and ESA groups and are not counted separately.

Considering the progress that has been made with this group, ERSA welcomes the government's decision to include prison leavers as an 'early entry' group to the new Work and Health Programme, and to place an increased emphasis on training and employment outcomes in the prison estate through the prison core education framework. However, there is concern that the small financial envelope for the Work and Health

Programme will only provide sufficient funding for a very small number of individuals leaving prison to be referred to the programme. This raises the spectre of a large number of prison leavers not being referred to specialist employment support on release.

#### Performance for jobseekers on Employment and Support Allowance is increasing steadily.

Performance for jobseekers on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) has increased to 61,489 job starts. Although this remains lower than for those on Jobseekers Allowance, this figure continues to rise. ERSA data also shows that sustainment rates for those on ESA are good, whilst government data has shown that performance targets are being met.

It should be remembered that many of the jobseekers in this group will have never received intensive employment support before and are a considerable distance from the labour market. Performance in this group is rising, but it takes far longer to help these jobseekers back into employment.

It should also be noted that at the programme's outset only those jobseekers whose Work Capability Assessment had indicated that they could be work ready within three to six months of referral to the Work Programme were put on the scheme. In November 2012, jobseekers whose WCA findings had judged they could be ready for work in 12+ months were also added to the programme. These two groups are referred to, for ease of reference, as those with a 3-6 month and 12+ month prognosis.

As part of the Work and Health Programme, jobseekers with health issues and disabilities will be able to volunteer for the programme if they are deemed to be able to enter work within 12 months. This raises two concerns. First, that the small size of the budget will not cater for all those who volunteer for the programme; and second, that those who are deemed further from the labour market will not be able to access specialist support. ERSA's report with WPI Economics, [More than Words: Rethinking Support for Disabled Jobseekers](#), expands on the need for greater investment in the successor Work and Health Programme.