Claimant responsibilities

Work-related requirements: introductory

Clause 13

THE EARL OF LISTOWEL
LORD MCKENZIE OF LUTON
BARONESS HAYTER OF KENTISH TOWN

Page 6, line 8, at end insert—

“(1A) The Secretary of State shall, when imposing work-related requirements with which claimants must comply, ensure that claimants have the necessary type and level of personalised support, and access to localised support, to enable them to obtain employment, or to undertake work or work related activity.”

Effect

Action for Children believes this amendment is necessary to ensure that claimants, in receipt of Universal Credit, have the necessary type and level of personalised support, and access to localised support, to enable them to obtain employment, or to undertake work or work related activity.

Reason

Action for Children believes that claimants, in receipt of the proposed Universal Credit, must have the necessary type, and level, of personalised support, and access to localised support, to enable them to obtain employment, or to undertake work or work related activity. We believe that the UK Government must, therefore, amend the Welfare Reform Bill to ensure that it includes clear statements on the face of the Bill specifying claimants’ entitlement to support, and the type and level of support which will be available for difficult to reach claimants, including young people. Action for Children’s experience from our Youthbuild model highlights the need for the UK Government to recognise that some claimants will require intensive support to participate in schemes to assist them to obtain employment, or to undertake work or work related activity.

Action for Children’s Youthbuild Programme

The example of Action for Children’s successful Youthbuild model, which offers training and employment opportunities in the construction industry for disadvantaged young people, highlights the need for such support. Most of the young people who participate in Youthbuild have had no previous experience of paid work. Indeed, the young people involved in Youthbuild generally come from the most deprived and difficult backgrounds, and face multiple challenges in finding work. This can include poor or non-existent
family support, issues around leaving care, homelessness, specific learning
difficulties, alcohol/substance misuse, offending and poor social/personal
skills. Action for Children believes that getting these young people into work is
vitally important in helping them to move forward with their lives, and to fulfil
their potential.

Disadvantaged young people lack basic opportunities to fulfil their potential.
They face barriers which are often insurmountable, unless targeted support is
available through services such as Action for Children’s Youthbuild, which
focus on early intervention and prevention. Action for Children’s Youthbuild
service supports young people, including those who have offended or are at
risk of offending, to secure training and employment opportunities in the
construction industry. We believe that projects run by voluntary organisations,
including Action for Children, which focus on providing employment and
training opportunities for difficult to reach young people, can offer an effective
alternative to custody, and divert young people from offending and antisocial
behaviour and from other negative life choices.

Action for Children is working in partnership with a number of agencies
through Youthbuild to show how the problem of youth unemployment can be
positively addressed for the benefit of the young people concerned, their
families, the local communities and for society as a whole. Our partners
include the Scottish Government, the EU (through European Structural
Funds), Inspiring Scotland, local authorities, housing associations and large
construction companies. Youthbuild was piloted in Glasgow and in Inverclyde,
and an independent evaluation conducted during the pilot stage highlighted
the following key findings:

- a 70% success rate across the projects for helping young people move
  into employment following their involvement in the programme;
- high completion rates for the programme, with 111 of the 150 young
  people who entered the Action for Children Youthbuild programme
  completing and moving into either construction, or some other form of
  employment; and
- considerable savings of working with this cohort – for example, the
  annual cost for a male in a youth offenders’ institution is estimated at
  £31,106 per annum.

Since then, Action for Children and our partners have rolled out Youthbuild to
a further five local authority areas, including West Dunbartonshire, Edinburgh,
Perth and Kinross and East Ayrshire.

The young people Action for Children works with require extra support to take
the crucial first steps on the employment ladder, and a key aspect of the
Youthbuild model is the support provided by Action for Children staff to the
Youthbuild trainees. Youthbuild provides one-to-one support for young people
to help them make the move into work. Key elements of the project focus on
induction and preparation, work experience, relevant training, personal
support, and core skills and development. Action for Children’s Youthbuild
projects have already been successful in securing training and employment
opportunities in the construction industry for young people. Seven of our
Youthbuild trainees were nominated as finalists for Youthbuild UK’s 2010
Young Builder of the Year Awards. These prestigious awards are sponsored by NHBC, Coastline Housing and Nottingham Community Housing Association. This shows what can be achieved when different agencies work together to support, and invest in, young people. Action for Children believes that the UK Government must put in place similar levels of support for claimants if their participation in work or work related activity is to be both sustainable and successful.

Case Studies

Shaun, Aged 19

Shaun was involved in offending behaviour from the age of 12, which escalated through drug and alcohol misuse. By the age of 16 Shaun had picked up a number of charges which led to him being given 3 years’ probation and 240 hours’ Community Service. Shaun, by his own admission, had narrowly avoided a custodial sentence, and faced ending up in jail if he did not address his offending behaviour.

Shaun found out about Youthbuild from a worker at the Probation Office. He was then referred on to Youthbuild where he successfully completed his training, and achieved all certificates relating to the construction trade. Shaun was given a work placement with RJ McLeod, and reports from site visits and site visit forms showed that he was immersing himself fully in his duties, and was also making small differences to his normal behaviour patterns as he started to stay in during the week nights and reduced his alcohol intake at weekends. Shaun also worked extremely hard to reduce his offending behaviour, and completed his Community Service Order without missing a day.

This led to Shaun being offered a position as a trainee chainperson, working along side the engineers, and one of his ambitions is to train as a civil engineer. He has also applied for his provisional driving licence, and is in the progress of learning to drive. Youthbuild has helped Shaun to turn his life around. Indeed, Shaun’s hard work and commitment were officially recognised in his nomination as a finalist for Youthbuild UK’s 2010 Young Builder of the Year Awards. These prestigious awards are sponsored by NHBC, Coastline Housing and Nottingham Community Housing Association.

Jamie, Aged 21

Jamie first applied to Youthbuild in June 2007 while awaiting sentencing in the High Court for a serious assault charge. He found out about Youthbuild through the Careers service, and it captured his imagination. In the run up to his court case, Jamie drank heavily which impacted upon his personal life, and he ended up homeless and living in a hostel. During this period he did, however, really enjoy working on Youthbuild and, despite facing an extremely serious charge, remained motivated to achieve. Jamie worked through Youthbuild as a labourer with Persimmons right up until sentencing.

Staff supported Jamie through this and, after receiving a custodial sentence of 46 months, it was agreed he would return to Youthbuild upon his release from custody. Contact was kept with Jamie via agency visits. This helped him to stay focused on his release from custody, and on picking up where he left off with Youthbuild. Jamie took his punishment, and was quickly transferred to an
open prison where he was allowed opportunities to work. He left custody on licence at the earliest opportunity, and with a desire to rebuild his life with the support of his family. This, and working on Youthbuild, helped Jamie to gain confidence, and optimism for his future.

Upon his release, Jamie returned to Youthbuild, and excelled during training. Jamie displayed as much commitment as he did previously, and successfully completed and was awarded all of his training certificates. In May 2010 Jamie started a work placement with ARDS (a demolition company working on removing all the asbestos from the Red Road Flats in Glasgow). Jamie did really well during this placement and, after 6 weeks, was offered employment as an operative, as his potential was apparent to his new employer.

Jamie can be seen as a typical young person that Youthbuild works with. He has faced significant barriers to employment, but has shown motivation and a desire to move on, and to make the most of his life. Jamie has shown great resilience, and strength of character. He has also managed to avoid negative life choices, and has instead chosen to earn, and to work hard, for every achievement he has acquired. Jamie has always put his full commitment into every aspect of the Youthbuild programme, his self motivation is clear from his spotless attendance and time-keeping record, and his work ethic has been commendable. Youthbuild has helped Jamie to turn his life around. Jamie’s hard work and commitment have also been officially recognised, and he was one of the Action for Children Youthbuild trainees nominated as a finalist for Youthbuild UK’s 2010 Young Builder of the Year Awards.

Assessing the need for support

Action for Children believes it is essential that the Minister for Welfare Reform should accept Amendments Nos 51CAA and 71F during the House of Lords’ Committee Stage of the Welfare Reform Bill to confirm the type, and level, of support which will be put in place for individual claimants as part of UK Government’s welfare reform proposals. The need for these amendments has been underlined by the House of Commons’ Work and Pensions Select Committee’s recent report, Work Programme: providers and contracting arrangements. This report concluded that there is a risk work programme providers will focus their efforts on claimants who are, by their skills experience and background, closer to accessing work, and will ignore the more difficult to reach claimants, such as, for example, young people who have offended or are at risk of re-offending, young people with issues around alcohol and drugs misuse, young people from BME communities, care leavers and young people with mental health issues. The report states:

“Previous contracted employment programmes have experienced “creaming and parking”, whereby providers focus their attention on the participants who are most likely to gain sustainable employment, at the expense of those who face greater challenges to finding work. The Work Programme attempts to incentivise prime contractors to provide support for all participants through the differential payments model, an approach recommended by our predecessor Committee. It is based on eight customer groups. Prime contractors will receive higher payments for participants in the customer groups assessed as more difficult to help, for example, former Incapacity Benefit claimants. However, there is a risk
that creaming and parking may still take place under this model, since it remains open to providers to continue to focus on the easier to help participants within each customer group. The Government must monitor this closely and may need to change the payment model to address failure to provide support for all clients, where necessary”.

Against this background, Action for Children believes it is essential that the UK Government should amend the Welfare Reform Bill to ensure that difficult to reach claimants receive appropriate support to help them to access work and work related activity and to sustain work, and are not left behind by work programme providers focusing on the more lucrative payments available for supporting claimants who are more able to access, and to sustain, work.

Action for Children also believes it is essential that the full life circumstances of individual claimants must be taken into account when assessments are made about the type and level of support individual claimants will require. This is vital if the participation of individual claimants in work or work related activity is to be both sustainable and successful. The type and level of support will be particularly important for those groups which face the greatest barriers in entering or re-entering the labour market, including vulnerable and difficult to reach young people, people with a disability, lone parents and people from the BME communities. The Minister for Welfare Reform should also specifically clarify the criteria/assessment tools which will be applied in assessing difficult to reach claimants ‘ individual support needs, and in assessing the specific life barriers which individual claimants face to access work or work related activity.

Part 2 – Jobseeker’s allowance

Claimant responsibilities for interim period

Claimant commitment for interim period

Clause 44

THE EARL OF LISTOWEL

71F

Page 21, line 36, at end insert—

“(4A) A claimant shall not be invited to accept a claimant commitment by an employment officer unless the employment officer has taken steps to ensure, and is satisfied, that the claimant will have the necessary type and level of personalised support, and access to localised support, to enable them to comply with the claimant commitment and to obtain employment, or to undertake work or work related activity.”

Effect

Action for Children believes this amendment is necessary to ensure that claimants, in receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance, have the necessary type and level of personalised support, and access to localised support, to enable them to obtain employment, or to undertake work or work related activity.

Reason
Action for Children’s experience from our Youthbuild model highlights the need for the UK Government to recognise that some claimants will require intensive support to participate in schemes to assist them to obtain employment, or to undertake work or work related activity (further information about Youthbuild is attached). We believe this amendment is necessary to ensure that vulnerable claimants receive the appropriate type, and level, of support to help them find employment, or to undertake work or work related activity.

In this respect, Action for Children believes it is essential that the full life circumstances of individual claimants must be taken into account when assessments are made about the type and level of support individual claimants will require. This will be vital if the participation of individual claimants in work or work related activity is to be both sustainable and successful. The type and level of support will be particularly important for those groups which face the greatest barriers in entering or re-entering the labour market, including vulnerable and difficult to reach young people, people with a disability, single parents and people from the BME communities.

The example of Action for Children’s successful Youthbuild model, which offers training and employment opportunities in the construction industry for disadvantaged young people, highlights the need for such support. Most of the young people who participate in Youthbuild have had no previous experience of paid work. Indeed, the young people involved in Youthbuild generally come from the most deprived and difficult backgrounds, and face multiple challenges in finding work. This can include poor or non-existent family support, issues around leaving care, homelessness, specific learning difficulties, alcohol/substance misuse, offending and poor social/personal skills. Action for Children believes that getting these young people into work is vitally important in helping them to move forward with their lives, and to fulfil their potential.

The young people Action for Children works with require extra support to take the crucial first steps on the employment ladder, and a key aspect of the Youthbuild model is the support provided by Action for Children staff to the Youthbuild trainees. Youthbuild provides one-to-one support for young people to help them make the move into work. Key elements of the project focus on induction and preparation, work experience, relevant training, personal support, and core skills and development. Action for Children’s Youthbuild projects have already been successful in securing training and employment opportunities in the construction industry for young people. This shows what can be achieved when different agencies work together to support young people.

Action for Children believes that the UK Government must accept these amendments to ensure that claimants receive appropriate levels, and types of support. This is vital if vulnerable claimants’ participation in work or work related activity is to be both sustainable and successful.

Further information about any of the issues raised in this briefing paper can be obtained from:

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