

## **WELFARE REFORM COMMITTEE**

### **THE FUTURE DELIVERY OF SOCIAL SECURITY IN SCOTLAND**

#### **WRITTEN SUBMISSION FROM WORKING LINKS**

1. Working Links is a public, private and voluntary (PPV) company with over 15 years' experience of successfully delivering employment support services in Scotland.
2. Working Links have supported over 350,000 individuals into sustainable employment with over 100,000 in Scotland supported on their journey towards employment.
3. Working Links is committed to collaborative working and currently delivers the Work Programme in partnership with leading organisations from across the third, public and private sectors (Wise Group, Lennox Partnership Routes to Work North, Lifeskills Centres, Lennox Partnership and Triage Central).
4. Working Links is very proud of our success and of our role in currently delivering the best performing sustained job programme there has been. To date, Work Programme has supported over 70,000 individuals in Scotland into employment. Working Links is pleased to deliver a programme that has supported more long-term unemployed people into work than any previous programme and one that provides new levels of value for money for taxpayers. Following the recent House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee report on welfare to work, Frank Field, Chair of the Committee, commented: "DWP deserves credit for implementing a programme which, in general, produces results at least as good as before, for a greatly reduced cost per participant."<sup>1</sup>
5. While Work Programme has been an overall success, we recognise that improvements can be made and recommend that the successor programme is finessed (rather than changed wholesale) to deliver successfully in what is now a substantially different customer environment since the original programme's inception. That is, there are now less people on Work Programme on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and an increasing portion of people who are long-term unemployed, including many Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) customers.
6. There is a requirement to revisit the level of investment in those that need the most support to secure employment. In order to make the positive change in

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmworpen/363/36302.html>

performance and further enhance the levels of support we need to utilise all available resources from the public, private and third sectors

7. It is imperative that the employment support sector plays a key role in bringing its experience and learning, and crucially the evidence, of 'what works' to inform future employment support services in Scotland.
8. DWP contracted provision (Work Programme and Work Choice) accounts for <10% of overall spend of c£660m on employability and skills in Scotland and whilst that is an important and significant investment, it needs to be considered within the overall Scottish context.
9. The timeframe of having successor programmes in place for April 2017 is incredibly challenging and Working Links believes a phased approach is the most practical strategy to ensure the continuity of quality provision, high performance and value for money.