In work, better off: next steps to full employment

July 2007
Department for Work and Pensions

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Ministerial foreword

Ten years of reform and economic stability under this Government have transformed work and opportunity in Britain. Today, the achievement of full employment and the eradication of child poverty are no longer simply seen as rallying calls for change, but as real ambitions that people expect to be delivered.

If we are to reach these goals – at a point when the global forces of economic and demographic change present new and ever greater challenges for our economy and flexible labour market – then we must push forwards with further reform, revitalising the partnership between Government, employers and individuals, focusing on the 4.5 million people of working age on out-of-work benefits.

This Green Paper delivers a step change in the employment and skills support we offer to those who are most disadvantaged in the labour market. It builds on the measures in this year’s Welfare Reform Act to ensure that those with health conditions and disabilities are never again written off. And it reinforces our strong commitment to the values of equality and opportunity, and to the principle of rights matched by responsibilities, with work for those who can and security for those who can’t.

Together with ‘World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England’ also published today, this Green Paper sets out proposals for a newly integrated employment and skills system, with a more personalised, flexible and responsive New Deal offering new support to job seekers in return for new responsibilities to do all they can to help themselves. We will support the family, not just the individual; and a new social contract for lone parents will put tackling child poverty at the heart of our welfare system.

Our proposals are underpinned by a more extensive partnership at the heart of welfare delivery which makes greater use of expertise across the public, private and voluntary sectors at both national and local level. And a renewed partnership with employers, including a ground-breaking new Jobs Pledge, will aim to find job opportunities for over 250,000 people currently on benefit who are ready and prepared to work.

A successful welfare system can only be built on consensus. I hope that everyone who shares our commitment to delivering full employment in Britain will contribute to the consultation on these proposals.
If we act now, we can, together, lay the foundation for the eradication of child poverty and ensure that every child in Britain can have the best possible opportunity in life. There is no greater social imperative in our time – and no better opportunity to get this right.

Peter Hain
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions