

Department for Work and Pensions

Question type

Ordinary Written

For Answer on:

Wednesday 11 November 2009

PQ/09/299982

Date of dispatch:

Thursday, 12 November 2009

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department takes to assist adults with autism into employment. [299982]

Mr Jonathan Shaw:

We are fully committed to supporting disabled people, including those diagnosed with autism, to find suitable and sustainable work. The Department will, following the recent consultation exercise on the Autism Bill, work closely with the Department of Health and others across government on the planned Autism Strategy.

The Department offers a number of programmes and services which help people with autism to find, and stay in employment.

Disability Employment Advisors in Jobcentre Plus, for example, can advise a customer about suitable job opportunities and specialised support available to disabled people. If necessary they can also advocate on a customer's behalf (by negotiating with employers), refer customers for an occupational health assessment, and use the professional expertise of Work Psychologists, who specialise in working with disabled people.

The Department has a number of specialist programmes that help disabled people move into paid work, some of which are only accessible through Disability Employment Advisors. These programmes include Work Preparation, Residential Training and WORKSTEP (a programme of supported employment).

Disabled people going into paid work may also be able to benefit from Access to Work, which provides practical advice and support to disabled people and their employers to help overcome work related obstacles resulting from disability. Access to Work provides a system of grants which contribute towards the cost of providing support, such as a job coach for a short period to help settle an autistic customer into work. Support can also be given to the customer in the form of awareness training on autism which can be delivered to the customer's colleagues.

Jobcentre Plus staff are also provided with training in the skills required to manage a range of behaviours demonstrated by customers, covering a variety of health conditions. This approach ensures that they are equipped to deal with diverse circumstances whilst treating customers as individuals. Advisors look at the interaction between the person, the job and an individual's ability and ensure that job goals relate to the customer's abilities and that work solutions are sought to overcome any challenges a customer might face in a particular job.