



Department
for Work &
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Dear Ms Riddall-Carpenter

As you are aware, your letter of 14 June to the Prime Minister has been forwarded to this Department. You wrote calling for the Government to introduce an Opportunity Guarantee to help people get back into work following job losses during the coronavirus pandemic. I am replying to you as the Minister for Employment and I apologise for the delay which is due to a high volume of correspondence.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to write in raising this issue. I write to you with the latest update and I hope you will find the following comments to be helpful.

The Department for Work and Pensions' primary focus has been to ensure that basic income protection is available to people affected by coronavirus. There is a strong package of support in place which ensures that people can access financial help through sick pay and the welfare system.

The Chancellor has announced an unprecedented series of measures to support businesses and their employees to mitigate the impact of coronavirus. This includes over £9.3 billion of extra support through the welfare system.

The Department for Work and Pensions is continuing to work with HM Treasury and other Government Departments to monitor the evolving economic and labour market situation to identify the most effective ways to help people stay in or move close to work both now and in the future.

The Department for Work and Pensions is actively reviewing all measures at its disposal across Jobcentre Plus, contracted employment programmes, European Social Fund, digital support and communications, and is in discussions with local partners and other external organisations to identify how it can best support economic recovery and ensure that the best possible employment support offer is in place. The Department continues to engage across government to understand supply and demand across the labour market throughout and beyond the coronavirus crisis.

It is working closely with the Departments responsible for key sectors, such as agricultural seasonal work and adult social care, to understand and develop clear cross-government messaging on how people can enter work safely in critical sectors and support the nation's response to coronavirus.

To enable this and to allow government to effectively monitor labour supply and demand, we are encouraging Departments to share available data and intelligence on a regular basis.

The Department for Work and Pensions has also been working with other Government Departments, Mayoral Combined Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, sector bodies and communications colleagues to promote Find a Job as the central place for employers to post their vacancies, and as the main channel to match people with vacancies, including where there are sectoral shortages.

Find a Job is the Government's official job matching service with more than 1.7 million people already registered on the site. It is one of the most consistently used online services at gov.uk.

More than 145,000 private and public sector employers large and small have already signed up, and the service is open to employers and recruitment agencies who recruit on their behalf.

By ensuring we advertise all urgent vacancies on one government-owned service, we shall be able to better direct jobseekers and those who have been furloughed and looking for temporary employment to available vacancies. The Department for Work and Pensions has also taken immediate action to put in place various digital and communications tools to support jobseekers and those who are furloughed and looking for temporary employment.

They have been promoting Find a Job (www.gov.uk/find-a-job) as the central place for employers to post their vacancies, and as the main channel to match people with vacancies. However, we also recognise that some jobseekers and employers will need additional information to align new and existing skills with current labour market requirements and have therefore launched two new websites: Job Help (<https://jobhelp.campaign.gov.uk>) and Employer Help (<https://employerhelp.dwp.gov.uk>) on 27 April.

These websites promote a range of guidance and advice, including support on identifying transferrable skills. They also promote other gov.uk provision such as the National Careers Service and the new Department for Education online skills training initiative, the Skills Toolkit, which launched on 28 April.

The Government has introduced the Kickstart Scheme to fund the direct creation of jobs for young people at risk of long-term unemployment. It will give young people the chance to build their confidence and skills in the workplace, and to gain experience that will improve their chances of progressing to find long-term, sustainable work.

A £2 billion fund will be used to create hundreds of thousands of quality six-month Kickstart roles that may also include wider support for participants to improve their longer-term employability. Funding available for each job will cover 100 per cent of the relevant National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week, plus the associated employer National Insurance contributions and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions.

Since the Chancellor's announcement we have been rapidly developing the Kickstart Scheme and considering key policy questions to ensure its success, such as: how to support smaller businesses and organisations to engage with the scheme; how to ensure that Kickstart jobs are additional and; how the Kickstart Scheme sits amongst other initiatives in the youth provision landscape.

To support policy, we have also engaged with a wide range of stakeholders including: employers; business representative organisations; trade unions; third sector organisations; devolved administrations; and, local and regional representatives. It is extremely positive to hear that your constituent is eager to take on staff under the scheme. This reflects wider feedback we have received as part of our engagement, and we are keen to issue employers with further information at the earliest availability.

The Kickstart Scheme launched in September and is now open to receive applications. We expect to see the first participants starting their role in November. The scheme will then remain open for applications until December 2021, with the final cohort of participants finishing the scheme in Summer 2022.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mims', written in a cursive style.

Mims Davies MP

Minister for Employment