

Meeting of  
Lanarkshire NHS Board  
January 2009

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**SUBJECT: NHSL's RESPONSE TO WELFARE REFORM AND TACKLING  
HEALTH INEQUALITIES**

**1. PURPOSE**

To inform the Board of the recent changes within the welfare system and inform members of NHSL's related activity.

**2. BACKGROUND**

The Welfare Reform Act (2009) contains reforms to the welfare and benefit system to improve support and incentives for people to move from benefits into work. It informs how the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) will move to a two benefit system (Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) & Employment Support Allowance (ESA)) abolishing Income Support and Incapacity Benefit.

DWP have engaged NHS providers across the UK via their Pathways to Work programme to assist individuals claiming Incapacity Benefit (IB) become "healthy" enough to gain & sustain employment.

Following the publication of Dame Carol Black's review of the health of the working population (Working for a Healthier Tomorrow (2008)) DWP have also recognised the key role of the GP in determining ability to work, and also that Small & Medium Enterprises require occupational health/sickness absence support.

NHSL's Return to Work services support approximately 3,000 individual's per annum with health related barriers to work, of whom approximately 1,000 gain employment each year; resulting in substantial health gain and significant savings to the Treasury.

This is achieved via NHSL's:

- Condition Management Programme (CMP) – a Cognitive Behavioural programme ("talking therapies") delivered in partnership with Job Centre Plus (JCP) aimed at recipients of Incapacity Benefit.

- Case Management Services – de-medicalising approach delivered in partnership with both Lanarkshire Local Authorities via Community Planning Partners. Supports Routes to Work organisations and specific populations including Offenders, Keep well clients, Stroke Rehab etc.

### **3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES**

Pathways to Work (DWP flagship Incapacity Benefit programme), which is deemed to be partially successful, will be replaced in April 2011 with JCP led “personalised” interventions. From 2011 the current government intend to limit the time on benefit for those deemed fit to work at 2 years. If the individual is still unemployed, s/he will be offered a government-funded job, which if refused will result in loss of benefit entitlement.

All IB recipients will be screened and put on other benefits and IB will be withdrawn by 2014.

The Fit note has been introduced to encourage GPs to consider an individual's ability to work whilst recovering from their health problem.

The Condition Management Programme provided by NHSL will change to a broader “Health Related Support” service and receive significantly less funding via a partnership agreement between JCP and NHSL.

NHSL is leading the Scotland-wide Fit for Work Pilot programme (Working Health Services Scotland). This is aligned to the Fit Note and supports employees of Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to return rapidly to work following sickness.

### **4. ACTIONS**

NHSL is engaged in a number of activities including:

1. Undertaking service review in order to meet new challenges within Welfare Reform. It is likely that NHSL will be asked to configure services to offer broader spectrum of support e.g. telephone advice, self-help resources etc. However this will be dependent upon funding made available from DWP.
2. Proactively engaging with DWP and Scottish Government to influence future service design.

3. Ensuring 35% of all clients gain work, with a further 20% engaging in training or further education
4. Reducing anxiety levels by over 33%, and depression levels by 40% in relevant clients
5. Ensuring a minimum of 75% of clients self report improvement in physical function

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

NHSL is one of the leading health organisations in the UK in supporting Health & Work activities. This activity has a significant role in reducing both **health and financial inequality** and contributes significantly to the NHSL Equally Well test site. The service aligns closely to “Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland”, “Health Works” and “Better Health, Better Care: Action Plan” strategies.

The next year will be a challenging one in terms of finance available and the maintenance of high quality services.

The Board are asked to note the proposed changes within the welfare system and support future partnership working in this area.

## 6. FURTHER INFORMATION

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