

DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS – EVIDENCE, RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS STRATEGY

Introduction

This paper forms the basis for the Assessment of the Department for Work and Pensions Science and Innovation Strategy.

The paper sets out:

- The Departmental strategic aims and also its key deliverables in terms of PSA targets. (and shared targets)
- the role of research in the Department;
- the research strategy and priority setting
- budgets for Research and Evaluation
- statistics
- horizon scanning
- research Peer Review
- procurement
- SMEs and Research Framework
- skills strategy

The Departmental Strategic Aims and key deliverables in terms of PSA targets. (and shared targets)

Mission Statement

The Department for Work and Pensions exists to promote opportunity and independence for all. We provide help to individuals and support the country's economic growth and social cohesion.

The Department helps individuals to achieve their potential through employment, to provide for themselves, their children and their retirement. We work with others to combat poverty, both of aspiration and outcome.

This overarching mission is reflected in DWP's PSA targets for 2005 - 2008 as follows (full details in Annex A):

- ensure the best start for all children and end child poverty by 2020;
- promote work as the best form of welfare for people of working age, while protecting the position of those in greatest need;
- combat poverty and promote security and independence in retirement for today's and tomorrow's pensioners;
- improve rights and opportunities for disabled people in a fair and inclusive society; and
- ensure customers receive a high quality customer service, including high levels of accuracy.

Function of Research in DWP.

The Department is a major commissioner of external Social Science Research. However, it does not engage in, or commission, research in the Natural or Physical Sciences. All the research which is carried out flows directly from the policy agenda; there is no 'blue skies' research. None of it leads simply into new industries, and it is all published; there is no link to 'innovation' as the word is generally used by DTI. As such DWP does not have a Science and Innovation Strategy in the normal formal sense of the term.

But, DWP is an acknowledged leader in adopting an evidence-based approach to policy making, and this is recognised both in the UK and by international organisations such as OECD. Social Science Research is a key element, alongside other analytical activities, in providing the evidence base needed to inform departmental strategy, policymaking and delivery. The overall analytical activity which feeds into policy is provided by:

- Administrative statistics provided by the IAD Information Centre , in particular the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study
- Regular surveys, usually undertaken by the Office for National Statistics, including the Family Resources Survey and the Labour Force Survey
- Economic and statistical analysis, modelling and forecasting undertaken by in-house analysts
- Operational research focussed on business systems and operations;
- **Economic and Social research** projects that are commissioned from external organisations, and those undertaken by in house analysts

The distinctive feature of this research is that it collects and interprets systematic data on the "outside world", for example on the knowledge, behaviour, views and perceptions of customers (actual and potential) and partner organisations. Social research is focused on specific issues, client

/ partner perspectives and policy problems and complements the administrative statistics and regular surveys that are undertaken. It also provides key data to the economic modelling that is undertaken.

Research combines in-house expertise with commissioned external research to meet departmental needs. Ministers and directors are agreed that both commissioned research and in-house research support can be divided into the following seven elements:

- **Policy development** research and briefing based on research to support the Department's strategy work – including both day-to-day enquiries, major in-house demands (Bill teams) and development of new policies and the way they are delivered
- **Monitoring and analysis** of policy progress and also policy - relevant developments in the wider economy and society.
- **Strategic and cross-cutting research** which underpins a variety of analytical uses across the department. For example, our Families and Children Longitudinal Study not only covers working age families with children but also saving, which will have implications for income in later life. English Longitudinal Study of Ageing will provide data on the implications of labour market history for health and financial circumstances in later life. DWP contributes to the long running British Social Attitudes Survey that monitors changes in societal views over time.
- **Policy and Programme Evaluations** For example the range of New Deals, Employment Zones, evaluation of changes to maternity rights provisions. European Social Fund Evaluation work is also partly funded from the research budget;
- **Expert advice** can be provided in-house by departmental staff or by national experts funded by the research budget.
- **Reviews of evidence** – These are important to synthesise evidence on particular topics. "Systematic" reviews (that use robust review methods) are an area of growing interest
- **Good practice guidance** - One useful product from some research projects is good practice guidance for staff in our businesses and for our partners (LAs).

This introduces a further reason for adopting a slightly different approach to a Science and Innovation Strategy for DWP; some of the evidence base would not meet international criteria for 'science' or 'research' such of those of OECD and the EU. Examples are statistics and basic evaluation work. But, they are an important part of the evidence base for policy in themselves, and a vital underpinning for activities which are undeniably science and research.

Priorities and how research is organised.

From 2005/06 departmental research is subdivided into three programmes, Work, welfare and equality (WWEG), Pensions and Central Strategic and

Cross-Cutting research to align better the relationship between research, the relevant evidence bases and the policy and delivery strategy for the key areas of the department's business and delivery targets. Jobcentre Plus also commissions its own programme of research and the other delivery businesses commission mainly customer satisfaction surveys.

The sub-programmes that form the overarching strategic research programme are:

- Work, Welfare and Equality Strategy covering: unemployed people; deprived areas and worklessness; disadvantaged groups; skills; lone parents, families and childcare; partners of benefit claimants and couple households; health and disability; disability rights; child poverty and financial support; minority ethnic groups; labour market issues and Jobcentre plus; extending working lives; contestability; European Social Fund Evaluation. (PSA 1, 2, 4 and 5)
- Pensions strategy including: increasing provision for retirement; improving saving through the workplace; extending working lives; facilitating informed choice; alleviating pensioner poverty (PSA 3)
- A Cross-DWP programme that covers cross-departmental surveys such as Families and Children Study run by the Department but with contributions from and collaboration with OGDs. The British Social Attitudes Survey, General Household Survey, and the Millennium cohort run externally but to which the Department contributes. (All PSAs)

Responsibility for developing these programmes, apart from strategic and cross-cutting research, will, from 2005/06 rest with analysts in respective client directorates.

There are mixed divisions of analysts, economists, statisticians/statistical officers, social researchers and policymakers in the Work, Welfare and Equality Group. Analysts in this group are headed by a SCS PB2 Chief Economist. In the Pensions Group there is a discrete multi-disciplinary unit of analysts – economists, social researchers and statisticians similarly headed by a SCS PB2 Economist. Additionally, in the central strategic analytical unit, (also headed by a SCS PB2 economist) there is a Social Research Unit that deals with cross cutting and strategic research.

The integration of research programme development in these divisions and units within policy directorates has provided more coherence between the various parts of the analytical enterprise and a closer alignment with policy strategy and delivery. The central research unit budget ensures that strategic, long term and cross cutting issues are addressed.

Research Strategy and Priority Setting

Priority Setting for Strategy

Research programme development takes place, on an annual basis, between analytical and policy staff at Division and Directorate level as well as at Ministerial level. This is increasingly linked to the spending review cycle, but an annual process allows finer tuning to reflect the developing policy agenda, and the progress and results of previously agreed research projects.

Research priorities are agreed between all stakeholders in the Department. This prioritisation takes account of a number of factors:

- an assessment of policy priorities;
- an assessment of evidence needed in the identified policy priority areas;
- the identification of gaps in the evidence base;
- identification of ways in which the evidence base can be strengthened (in house analysis of existing data; existing external research syntheses etc)
- the development of a research bid for resourcing that is designed to fill the evidence gaps.

In developing research bids, social research professionals will take account of the policy question to be answered as well as the current evidence available whether from Departmental or external sources. Current evidence and potential analysis of administrative databases will be examined before developing any bid for the Department's research programme.

In house, professional staff are expected to keep abreast of all external research whether published or, currently being conducted in respect of their specific areas of responsibility. In particular, effective liaison with other Government Departments is imperative. Where appropriate joint development or financing is arranged.

As an example of the process, in the Work, Welfare and Equality group, responsibility for setting the overall research strategy rests with an Evidence and Analysis Steering Group (EASG), a committee chaired by the Chief Economist and comprising analysts and policymakers. Treasury Officials are also invited to key meetings. This has a specific process for developing the research strategy for on an annual basis and also for priority setting research activity. It also has responsibility for budget allocation and monitoring for the consolidated research and evaluation budget (see section below). The process is as follows:

- Strategy papers are drafted for each major policy area; these are joint between analysts and policy people, but with analysts generally taking the lead – they are evidence-led and conform to a common format.

- 'Priorities' papers are drafted from the strategy papers – these draw out the implications for analytical work and prioritise the areas where evidence is needed. These papers are scrutinised and discussed by EASG.
- Research bidding – specific research bids are then made that are again discussed and approved (or not) by EASG. This approval process includes assessing the priority of the policy area as well as how crucial the information requirement. Additionally, it would be expected that all internal avenues to fill the gaps had been explored before suggesting a bid for external research. PSA targets are embedded into all of this activity and drive the prioritisation process. The highly prioritised projects, together with ongoing projects from previous annual rounds, constitute the research programme that is then put to Ministers for approval.
- In-year, and especially mid-year, proposals are also considered by EASG; typically there are very few of these.

For shared delivery targets, or where there are shared interests with other Government Departments, there are a range of liaison arrangements. Day to day liaison is primarily at analyst and policy team leader/G7 level. Higher level liaison ie. at G3 level exists for strategic liaison where there is a joint interest ie. for Children policy with DfES where we have a joint Minister. DWP interest is primarily in respect of Sure Start and poverty alleviation and in respect of childcare and facilitating labour market participation by our clients. Treasury officials are kept in close touch with activity on joint targets and are both consulted on individual projects as well as programmes of work through membership of EASG. An example of such liaison is our establishment of a delivery and planning group with the Sure Start Unit to develop the delivery plan for the light touch childcare scheme This group meets every two months and once the plan and monitoring arrangements are confirmed the group will meet quarterly to review progress.

We have also collaborated on joint projects even where these are not related to DWP targets. For example, the Community Sentencing and benefit sanctions evaluation that is, primarily, a Home Office policy area aimed at reducing breaches of community sentences.

Pensions research development followed the following process.

Taking the five key objectives from the Green paper, Simplicity, Security and Choice (2002), a number of key questions were identified.

Discussions were conducted with external experts, stakeholders across DWP and government.

Existing work and evidence was reviewed and, from this, key knowledge gaps were identified.

Exploratory work was then undertaken to consider what research and analyses would be feasible and what mix of internal and external work would be most appropriate to fill these gaps.

Potential research will then be prioritised taking account of PSA targets, key policy development needs and Ministerial requests.

Six research themes have been derived from this process:

- Drivers of savings behaviour
- Exploring the role for employers in improving savings through the workplace
- extending working lives
- information, education and activation for informed choice in pension decisions
- pensioner poverty and service delivery.

Work is underway currently to develop and prioritise specific projects for 05-06 around these themes.

The Pensions Commission has produced a major analytical report, a comprehensive analysis of the private pensions landscape. This is part of its remit to keep under review the regime for UK private pensions and long term savings, taking into account the proposals in the Green Paper, (Cm5677), assessing the information needed to monitor progress and looking in particular at current and projected trends.

Budgets for Research and Evaluation

We have an indicative settlement for the 'consolidated research and evaluation budget' (covering WWEG) of £7.6m annually, and for Pensions and other programmes, £3.9 million annually. Last year, Pensions Group spent £2,7m on externally commissioned research and data gathering. This figure also includes evaluations of policies and pilots from programme funds.

In developing the research programmes, individual project bids are considered as per the method described in the section above and ranked in priority order. This listing is over-programmed, above budget so that if there are changes during the year, projects that are initially 'beyond budget' are able to be started. Ministerial consent is sought for the priority order and the budget allocation by project.

The sub-division of the programme and its development ensures that funding is available across key business areas and that prioritisation of individual projects can take place sensibly within key topic areas rather than across them at a detailed level. ie. Ministers are not asked to choose between a project on service to pensioners versus a child poverty project.

Priorities are considered annually and money is allocated accordingly. This prioritisation depends upon a range of factors. Specific emphasis this year in the Work and Welfare area is being placed on the diversity agenda to enhance the evidence base for those where there is significant labour market disadvantage – on the basis of ethnicity, health and disability, age and gender.

Budgets for research and evaluation are the responsibility of the analytical heads rather than policymakers and thus are not subject to pressure for alternative use. These are subject to normal auditing and accountability processes and there are very clear lines of accountability for budgets and delegated authority. Over the past two years, budgets have tended to be underspent. This is a result of changes of staff and to some extent shifting policy priorities.

We have agreed to monitor overall spending within the budgets agreed during the Spending Review process, and to make the results available to OST. We intend to comply with the requirement that any virement should only be with the agreement of the Chief Scientific Adviser and the Chief Secretary.

Following from the development process, the administration of the research programmes are also the responsibility of analytical heads and almost all social research projects are commissioned externally via our Social and Economic Research Framework (detailed below). Projects are managed by internal researchers, and research design is carried out jointly by internal and external researchers. Internal researchers are expected to be expert in their areas of work and to work with contractors in producing robust and reliable evidence from research projects. Very few projects are carried out wholly by internal researchers.

The development of subject and methodological expertise in the department is developed on an interactive basis with external experts and evidence. Our internal analysts are expected to know what relevant research exists in their fields whether in the UK or internationally. Additionally, our research is commissioned from external experts who, in turn, contribute to the development of the research programmes and this facilitates direct expert input into key areas. This activity is being built upon by a Knowledge Management initiative to facilitate identification and access to external sources of relevant sources of data, information and knowledge to systematise, and ease accessibility to, key findings and developments.

In addition to contact with academics, our contractors and other external experts, we also liaise regularly with other funders of relevant social science research such as ESRC and Joseph Rowntree Foundation that are the other main funders of Social Policy research.

The department is also a member of the International Social Security Association (ISSA) and is represented on its research committee. A departmental representative also is a member of the governing board of the

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, an EU research foundation. The department is regularly involved with OECD projects and commissions cross national projects in its own right.

National Statistics

The development of statistical resources for research is coordinated through the inter-departmental 'Theme Groups' sponsored by the Office for National Statistics. This ensures good communications between departments and an overarching concern to use common definitions, etc. Much of the latter is also coordinated through a specific 'Harmonisation Committee' - also run by the ONS. Most Social Research surveys commissioned by DWP are handled by members of the Government Social Research Service and are not generally National Statistics. Their links to wider work are described elsewhere.

Nevertheless, DWP undertook a major review of the statistics available to the wider community in 2004, particularly involving consultation with the research user community. The results of the consultation can be found at http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/stats_consultation/stats_consultation.asp The implementation of the review is now underway and we expect radically to overhaul the presentation and accessibility of DWP data during 2005. This will involve both the introduction of new, more comprehensive data sources and the use of internet based interrogation tools able to access microdata allowing the user to design their own tabular outputs.

The review was carried out in-house though there was extensive consultation with colleagues in other departments.

In-house research is coordinated centrally for each of the department's client groups. Statistical development work is concentrated in a single directorate and coordinated through routine management processes.

Horizon Scanning

DWP forecasts benefit costs for the next five years, with pensions projections for up to fifty years assuming no policy changes. We therefore assess demographic changes likely to affect benefit levels over those periods. There is a programme of short and long-term research attached to this forecasting, which has spanned both the Working Age and Pensions sides of the Department, together with some central strategy development. Longer-term elements include the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, which will (amongst other issues) yield information about the changing pattern of disability with age over the next five to ten years; the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study; and we are considering a similar long-term survey examining pensioner wealth.

We recognise that the issue of ageing can be seen as a great challenge for government as a whole. We are seeking to link our work to the Health and

Safety Executive, with its interest in older workers and the particular measures needed to ensure their health and safety; to DTI, which carries responsibility for implementing EU directives on ageing and has interests in new technologies; and to the Department of Health with its interests in health technology, the likely impact of medical discoveries, and the demand for health and personal social services. We aim to contribute the scanning which we are doing and hope to draw on their work which could affect our results.

As our new structure for managing research and strategy develops, we will consider how our scanning needs to link with issues such as housing, transport and energy.

Research peer review – Dissemination.

The decision making process for developing the research strategy has been described above. This consists of stakeholders at G5 level and above, analysts and policymakers at a variety of grades in different parts of the organisation. Informal consultation is also undertaken with external research and subject experts. Finally, Ministers approve the programme.

The complete research programme is published annually on the Department's website.

Research projects are then commissioned externally to contractors on our Social and Economic Research Framework detailed below.

Research liaison officers who are specialist social research staff are responsible for ensuring the quality of externally commissioned research for which they are responsible. We have a policy of active management of research so that both specialists and policy makers are involved closely at the outset as well as during the progress of research projects to ensure that the design, implementation, research materials, as well as the final report all meet quality standards. It is via this early and ongoing engagement and management by expert staff that, fit for purpose and quality results, are ensured, as far as is possible.

All research is published in the Department's research series and is available in both hard copy and on the website on a free download basis. A four page flyer is produced for each report to provide a quick synthesis of scope, content and conclusions.

We provide all Ministers with monthly synopsis updates of research reports to be published in a way that is user friendly and can easily be assimilated given the vast amount of information that they have to read. We also provide quarterly updates of evidence from relevant research whether commissioned by the Department or not.

We are taking steps to improve the research website so that it is easier and more attractive for a variety of audiences to use. This is being taken forward during 2005.

The Department encourages its research contractors, internal analysts as well as Ministers to use the findings in public presentations and conferences and seminars. We also encourage publication in peer-reviewed literature so that academic work can receive appropriate RAE recognition

We fund an external seminar series as well as organise specific conferences and seminars. Examples include:

- a regular seminar series at the LSE, funded by DWP, on Welfare and Policy Analysis. It is attended by academic researchers, DWP analysts and policy makers. The agenda is developed by the researchers and covers the range of DWP issues.
- a research conference in January 2005, hosted by the Department, on 'Challenges in Pensions Research'
- a workshop planned with Bath University with academics and policy colleagues to consider and comment on 'part-time working' following an internal review of literature and to propose new areas to take forward.
- workshops taking place in January, with academics, to brainstorm evidence on lone parents and their barriers to labour market participation, ultimately to develop effective survey measurement tools.
- internal research staff also regularly attend, and give papers at, conferences both in the UK and internationally.

In respect of encouraging innovation beyond our publication and dissemination functions, we place, into the ESRC data archive, the data sets from our key surveys, the Family Resources Survey and the Families and Children Study. Any social science researcher can use these data subject to ESRC protocols.

Additionally, for FACS we fund a secondary analysis programme where we seek external ideas and bids for analysis of these data that also include combining analysis with other longitudinal datasets.

DWP is represented on a Research Commissioning and Funding group that is coordinated by the Social Research Association and includes the main funders of social policy research, Rowntree, ESRC, DfES, etc as well as representatives of contractor organisations. It also included the Government Chief Social Researcher and OGC.

Procurement

DWP Social and Economic Research Framework

The DWP Social and Economic Research (Procurement) Framework was established, on 1 July 2004, as a result of the need to streamline research procurement across the Department. It is one of a suite of frameworks that have been established as part of DWP's Commercial Strategy to provide for coherent and robust procurement to support the Department and its businesses. The Strategy sets the high level context for: DWP commercial activity; its links to DWP business objectives and values: alignment with Office of Government Commerce (OGC) strategy and policy, and to cross-Government activity on Efficiency Review, particularly the procurement strand. The Strategy also supports the NAO Recommendations to departments from the "Improving Procurement" report dated March 2004.

A large, two stage tendering process was undertaken during 2003 and early 2004. Following wide scale advertising, expressions of interest were received from around 400 organisations. A pre-qualification questionnaire was issued and using the information received around 200 organisations that were able to meet the minimum standard in terms of quality were invited to tender. Tenders were received from about half and, following evaluation, 62 organisations were selected for inclusion on the framework of which 25 are Small or Medium Enterprises. (SMEs)

We have established a 'Centre of Expertise' for research procurement in our Information and Analysis Directorate to manage the framework on a professional, pro-active basis. This is headed by a procurement professional who is responsible for all research procurement. Only those in the four designated research procurement posts (4) have the authority to issue contracts and this ensures that effective procurement processes have been adhered to and that budget availability is appropriate. The new arrangements and the pro-active engagement with contractors, will enable the Department to achieve more effective links with its social research contractors and achieve efficiency savings through better quality research procurement processes.

Small and Medium Enterprises in Research Delivery.

A pro-active approach to managing our framework will ensure that both newer, as well as longer standing, contractors are awarded project contracts. Additionally, with a number of larger scale projects, contractors are encouraged to form consortia so that we can maximise expertise and also ensure that SME's are able to engage with research that might otherwise be of too large a scale for them to undertake.

Given the number (25) of SMEs on the framework and our pro-active management arrangements we expect DWP above the compliance level set by SBRI that 2.5% of its research budget will be spent on SMEs. We

shall monitor this requirement closely and report to Small Business Service accordingly.

Results from all research will be published by the Department in its research series – at no cost to contractors. This will ensure widespread dissemination of research results from all contractor sources including SMEs. During 2005, we will further develop the research element of the Department's website to make it more user friendly to both contractors and stakeholders alike.

We will continue to hold regular workshops with all contractors to discuss contracting and research issues as well as correspond regularly with them with opportunities and updates.

Skills Strategy

DWP makes a significant contribution to the skills strategy by leading on policy initiatives aimed at benefit claimants with low levels of skills. The objective is to help those with low levels of skills into employment by improving their level of skills or qualifications. For example DWP/Jobcentre Plus screens all benefit recipients to see if they have a basic skills need, those that do are referred to basic skills provision.

DWP and DfES are currently jointly responsible for the development of the New Deal for Skills which will mainly target those on inactive benefits for whom lack of skills is a barrier preventing them from moving into employment. In February, the Government will publish a Skills White Paper. This will continue to focus on ensuring that employers have the right skills to support the success of their business and that individuals have the skills that they need to be employable and personally fulfilled.

When commissioning research, DWP takes account of the CVs of the individuals proposed to carry out the work. The Research Framework database has been developed so that full details on contractors are available to research managers. A key part of the selection process involves ensuring that contractors have appropriate skills and expertise to undertake the projects. The framework also enables us to build stronger links with our contractors and following evaluation of performance, explain where we feel there are strengths but also weaknesses that can be improved upon

Annex A

DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS – AIM, OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

The Department for Work and Pensions overarching aim is to promote opportunity and independence for all. Through this objective the Department is committed to providing people of working age, pensioners and children with the advice and help they need to achieve financial independence and make the most of life.

This key objective is reflected in DWP's PSA targets for 2005 - 2008 as follows:

OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE TARGETS

Objective I: Ensure the best start for all children and end child poverty by 2020.

1. Halve the number of children in relative low-income households between 1998-99 and 2010-11, on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020, **joint with HM Treasury**, including:
 - reducing the proportion of children living in workless households by 5% between spring 2005 and spring 2008; and
 - increasing the proportion of Parents with Care on Income Support and income-based Jobseeker's Allowance who receive maintenance for their children to 65% by March 2008.
(The Government will also set a target as part of the next Spending Review to halve by 2010-11 the numbers of children suffering a combination of material deprivation and relative low income. The target will be met if there is an equivalent proportional reduction to that required on relative low income between 2004-05 and 2010-11.)
2. Improve children's communication, social and emotional development so that by 2008 50% of children reach a good level of development at the end of the Foundation Stage and reduce inequalities between the level of development achieved by children in the 20% most disadvantaged areas and the rest of England. Sure Start Unit target, **joint with the Department for Education and Skills**.
3. As a contribution to reducing the proportion of children living in households where no-one is working, by 2008:
 - increase the stock of Ofsted-registered childcare by 10%;
 - increase the take-up of formal childcare by lower income families by 50%; and
 - introduce by April 2005, a successful light-touch childcare approval scheme.
Sure Start Unit target, **joint with the Department for Education and Skills**.

Objective II: Promote work as the best form of welfare for people of working age, while protecting the position of those in greatest need.

4. As part of the wider objective of full employment in every region, over the three years to Spring 2008, and taking account of the economic cycle:
 - demonstrate progress on increasing the employment rate, **joint with HM Treasury**;
 - increase the employment rates of disadvantaged groups (lone parents, ethnic minorities, people aged 50 and over, those with the lowest qualifications and those living in the local authority wards with the poorest initial labour market position); and
 - significantly reduce the difference between the employment rates of the disadvantaged groups and the overall rate.
5. By 2008, improve health and safety outcomes in Great Britain through progressive improvement in the control of risks in the workplace.

Objective III: Combat poverty and promote security and independence in retirement for today's and tomorrow's pensioners.

6. By 2008, be paying Pension Credit to at least 3.2 million pensioner households, while maintaining a focus on the most disadvantaged by ensuring that at least 2.2 million of these households are in receipt of the Guarantee Credit.
7. Improve working age individuals' awareness of their retirement provision such that by 2007-08 15.4 million individuals are regularly issued a pension forecast and 60,000 successful pension traces are undertaken a year.

Objective IV: Improve rights and opportunities for disabled people in a fair and inclusive society.

8. In the three years to March 2008:
 - further improve the rights of disabled people and remove barriers to their participation in society, working with other government departments, including through increasing awareness of the rights of disabled people;
 - increase the employment rate of disabled people, taking account of the economic cycle; and
 - significantly reduce the difference between their employment rate and the overall rate, taking account of the economic cycle.

Objective V: Ensure customers receive a high quality service, including high levels of accuracy.

9. Improve Housing Benefit administration by:
 - reducing the average time taken to process a Housing Benefit claim to no more than 48 days nationally and across the bottom 15% of local authorities to no more than 55 days, by March 2008;
 - increasing the number of cases in the deregulated private rented sector in receipt of Local Housing Allowance to 740,000 by 2008; and

- increasing the number of cases in receipt of the Local Housing Allowance where the rent is paid directly to the claimant to 470,000 by 2008.
10. Reduce overpayments from fraud and error in Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance and in Housing Benefit.

Responsibility for delivery

- The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is responsible for the delivery of this PSA.
- The Chancellor of the Exchequer is jointly responsible for delivering the children in low-income households element of target 1 and the overall employment rate element of target 4.
- The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the Secretary of State for Education and Skills are jointly responsible for targets 2 and 3.
- The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is also responsible for delivering the agreed efficiency target set out in the Department for Work and Pensions chapter of the 2004 Spending Review White Paper.

The following operational priorities, which should help deliver DWP's PSA target have been identified as:

- a single point of delivery for jobs, benefits advice and support through a modern nationwide service - Jobcentre Plus
- to provide employers with a professional service for filling job vacancies
- a new Pension Service to provide information and support to today's and tomorrow's pensioners
- delivery of a simplified and efficient Child Support system
- equality of opportunity and social inclusion for all.