Kate Green MP

18th March 2015

Dear Kate

Voluntary and Community Sector organisations and the Work Programme

During the debate on Mental Health and unemployment held on 24 February 2015, you raised concerns about payments to Work Programme providers where Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations and other local partners such as the NHS are involved in supporting Work Programme participants into work.

The Work Programme was designed so that providers would receive outcome payments for any claimant who had spent sufficient time in work, no matter the activity that got them into work or kept them there. This is the case whether a provider or a third party got them into the job, the claimant found the job without assistance or any combination of these. The same also applies for interventions and activities funded by the NHS which bring people along to a point where they are able to look for work and they are then successful in finding employment.

Moving claimants into work is complicated and it is often impossible to say exactly what intervention, activity or support actually made the difference – usually there will be a combination of factors that lead to the claimant getting a job, including of course the local labour market, and the conditionality regime placed on claimants.

Attempting to make judgements about which intervention led to a job outcome would become an art rather than a science, and would also require an expensive, bureaucratic process. Every pound spent on such validation and decision making would be a pound less to spend on supporting claimants into work.

We wanted to keep the system simple, and decided that the fact that providers would sometimes be paid for outcomes they didn’t directly achieve (so called non-intervention outcomes) would be reflected in the price we pay for outcomes rather than look to develop some complicated system for making these judgements.
I have placed a copy of my reply in the House of Commons library.

Yours ever

Mark Harper MP

Minister of State for Disabled People