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for Work &  
Pensions

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Baroness Sherlock, Baroness Noakes  
& Viscount Chandos  
House of Lords  
London  
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1<sup>st</sup> March 2024

Dear Baroness Sherlock, Baroness Noakes & Viscount Chandos,

Thank you for all your contributions in the House during the debate on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> February on the Lords Economic Affairs Committee report '*Where have all the workers gone?*'. As promised, I am writing on two topics which were raised throughout the debate, the Workforce Participation Review and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

#### Workforce Participation Review

In relation to the Workforce Participation Review which was raised by Baroness Noakes, Viscount Chandos, and Baroness Sherlock I am keen to emphasise that though the cross-government package of measures announced at Spring Budget 2023 represented the conclusion of the Workforce Participation Review, this is of course not the end of the government's ambition to increase workforce participation.

Since the Spring Budget 2023 announcement, the government has announced the Back to Work Plan, providing an additional £2.5 billion of funding to support the long term unemployed and those who are long term sick or disabled into work. We remain committed to delivering both of these substantial packages which will support thousands of people into work and continue to consider how we can further meet our aim of increasing workforce participation and maximising employment.

Beyond these measures we also continue to analyse key trends across the labour market including economic inactivity and out of work trends using a wide range of data and evidence from various sources. This forms a crucial part of policy development across the department and ensures our labour market offer remains relevant to the economic circumstances.

#### The use of AI in DWP

In relation to AI and emerging technology, I would like to update peers on how DWP is using new technology to improve our services.

DWP has a strong track-record of designing and delivering digital innovation and automation to deliver our services efficiently to our customers. AI is the next step in digital transformation, and we have adopted a test and learn approach so we can build evidence to support whether AI use cases can add value for customers and colleagues. This includes:

- Piloting AI to scan our inbound contact channels to alert for potential risks of harm. Our 'White Mail' AI technology has further increased the speed at which we are able to identify vulnerable people from the around 22,000 letters the department receives each day. This process, which now takes a day rather than weeks, means those most in need can be more quickly directed to the relevant person who can help them.
- Exploring how Generative AI can be used across the Department through our Lighthouse Programme. The programme is exploring the use of AI in several use cases which include:
  - Trialling AI-enabled projects to complement the services work coaches provide to customers in job centres;
  - Trialling how AI can write, update, or organise code to address the current digital skills shortage in areas like software engineering;
  - Trialling productivity tools for all colleagues to use, such as rapidly summarising meeting outcomes and documents or providing simple tools to gather information for frontline colleagues.

I trust that this addresses your questions, and I will place a copy of this letter in the House library.

*With best wishes,  
James*

**VISCOUNT YOUNGER OF LECKIE  
PARLIAMENTARY-UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE**