

# Jobcentre Plus –Devon & Cornwall

## Update Special

Issue 6 – Winter

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Welcome to the sixth edition of our quarterly newsletter 'Update' designed to keep you in touch with Jobcentre Plus activities in Devon and Cornwall.

I have decided to concentrate this edition on what we are doing in Devon and Cornwall to support our customers and employers with the effects of the economic downturn and keep you informed of how we are positioned to deal with the challenges ahead. In view of the changing situation I will look to issue further 'Updates' monthly.

If you would like any more information after reading this newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact me.



Phil Weeks – District Manager for Devon and Cornwall

## The Economic Downturn

The latest Labour Market statistics show the effect the global economic slowdown is now having on the UK Labour Market.

Our priority is to ensure that we are dealing effectively with the increasing number of customers and that as many of our customers as possible are able to move quickly back into work.

We are currently in the process of recruiting an additional 62 staff across the Devon and Cornwall District. Whilst these people undergo the recruitment and training process, our existing staff are multi-skilling and working additional hours to ensure key roles are covered during periods of increased demand.

We have developed a range of measures to make our processes more efficient for our employers and customers. These include fast tracking the roll out of a number of LEAN (continuous improvement) initiatives; introducing key changes to the JSA Rapid Reclaim process to enable claims to be processed more quickly; expanding our Rapid Response service to employers and putting into place more effective communications to our customers and employers to ensure they are aware of our services and how to access them correctly.

## Vacancies

Despite recent rises in unemployment there are many jobs available. Jobcentre Plus takes over 10,000 new vacancies every working day and others can still be found with recruitment agencies and in newspapers. In Devon and Cornwall we currently have over 8,000 jobs available with almost 3,991 in Finance and Business and 1,926 in distribution, hotels and restaurants. Most people who lose their jobs only spend a short amount of time looking for work before they find a new one.

## Local Employer Partnerships

We are extending the successful Local Employer Partnerships to provide help for newly redundant people. In Devon and Cornwall we currently have 1,889 employers who have signed up to LEP and are taking a positive approach to employing our harder to help customers. Since April 1,474 people have already moved into work in Devon and Cornwall as a result of LEP.

## JSA Registers

Although we are seeing a significant increase in registers, we have responded to this and we are now back to seeing 75% of customers for their Work Focused Interview within 3 days and continuing to process claims for Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support and Incapacity Benefit within clearance target times.

Benefit	Target	Plymouth in month	Gloucester in month
Jobseeker's Allowance	11.5 days	9.7 days	11.5 days
Incapacity Benefit	15 days	14.55 days	13.7 days
Income Support	10 days	9.2 days	9.3 days
Employment Support Allowance	21 days	9.5 days	9.9 days

## Supporting our Employers

I wrote to you on 12 November about the additional support for people facing redundancy which will be provided through a new Rapid Response Service. Funding for this service has doubled in this financial year. The service includes:

- Jobcentre Plus contacting all employers declaring 20 or more redundancies but on stand-by to help employers of all sizes;
- a Job Kit for employees which has a set of guidance and support on benefits and how to look for a job;
- access to extra government support to boost job readiness preparation, job search activities and to increase skills training over the next 3 years;
- working with our partners such as Local Authorities and LSC to ensure that employers and individuals involved in redundancies have access to these packages.

Jobcentre Plus has just published a new leaflet for employers which will help them to help their employees. They can also visit our website ([www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)) which gives access to a large number of jobs available as well as job search aids. It also explains the financial help available.



Locally we have appointed two Rapid Response co-ordinators to work closely with local employers ensuring extra measures are in place to support people being made redundant with advice, information and practical support. All redundant workers will have access to personalised advice from Jobcentre Plus advisers who can give training and skills guidance as well as help match their needs to other job vacancies in the labour market.

We are following up any leads about potential redundancies and contacting employers to ensure they are aware of the support we can provide and where appropriate arranging an on site meeting to discuss the tailored support we can provide.

We have measures in place to deal with any large scale redundancy and will be working closely with local authorities and partners to provide a co-ordinated approach and ensure quick and easy access to services and information. If it is deemed appropriate we will fund an on-site presence offering a signposting service to the redundant workers.

Where there are large numbers of claims to benefit we have the facility to invoke clerical procedures. Our Benefit Delivery Centres are already prepared and equipped to deal with an increased number of clerical claims.

## Contacts

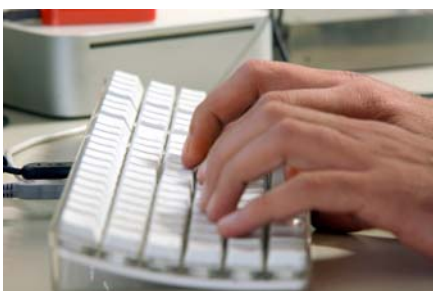
**Jerry Rice, Rapid Response Co-ordinator** tel: **07071 995048**  
**01404 403215**

**Alan Pearce, Rapid Response Co-ordinator** tel: **07971 995112**  
**01872 355067**

## Social Fund

There has recently been a massive increase in the number of Crisis Loan applications. We are in the process of retraining existing staff from our Benefit Delivery Centres and Contact Centres to help deal with these applications. This will double the current number of decision makers.

Our preferred method of accessing Crisis Loans is by the telephone; however vulnerable customers who cannot use the telephone will continue to have the option of a face to face interview at a Jobcentre.



## Additional Help

- We are providing earlier access to Programme Centre provision to help those who need it improve their CVs and job search skills.
- We are investing more ESF money in harder to help groups
- The Government is changing the benefit system to help people with mortgages stay in their homes; under the previous rules people losing their jobs only got help with mortgage costs up to £100,000 after 39 weeks of being unemployed. From January 2009 this will be brought forward to 13 weeks and the capital amount increases to £200,000.
- The Government has also announced extra funding for re-training and we are discussing a range of other ideas.

## Contact Us.....

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this newsletter with me, I will be happy to arrange a meeting. My Customer Service Operations Managers may also be able to advise you on what is happening locally with Jobcentre Plus in your area.

## Customer Service Operations Managers in Devon and Cornwall

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