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Welfare to Workforce Development A Report by the National Employment Panel (NEP)

Minister for Work Des Browne and Education and Skills Minister Ivan Lewis today welcomed the publication of a new National Employment Panel report, *Welfare to Workforce Development*.

The NEP was invited to review ways in which collaboration between Jobcentre Plus (part of the Department for Work and Pensions) and the Learning and Skills Council could be strengthened, following publication of last July's Skills Strategy – *21st Century Skills, Realising Our Potential*.

The report clarifies how key partners should operate at a national, regional and local level, and its recommendations have the potential to substantially improve services to individuals and employers through more effective collaboration.

Some of the recommendations are very practical and easy to implement, while others are more far-reaching and will need time, detailed analysis and the active collaboration of many organisations.

Des Browne said: "The Government welcomes this NEP report, its general approach and objectives set out in it. We also agree with the broad thrust of the recommendations. It highlights what can be achieved for both individuals and employers through more effective joined-up working – linking help for people who are out of work with learning and training opportunities to support sustainable employment."

Ivan Lewis added: "The NEP report moves forward the debate on strengthening the links between placing people in jobs and supporting claimants in gaining skills for sustainable employment. It underlines the importance of skills in the labour market as a crucial element that determines peoples' ability to get jobs, the wages that they are able to command and the ability to advance throughout their careers."

The report says skills are crucial to achieving the DWP's objectives of reducing poverty and increasing employment rates. They are also necessary for DfES objectives of securing a labour force with skills and qualifications that employers want and need. In turn, this will help the Government's aim of raising national economic competitiveness.

Chairman of the NEP Skills Advisory Board Chris Banks CBE said: "The recommendations in *Welfare to Workforce Development* chart important new directions which will make a very real difference to the life chances of disadvantaged people and the productivity of the UK.

"I believe that improving the skills and qualifications of people on benefit in preparation for employment, as well as those already in the workforce, is vital to achieving a more productive economy and inclusive society."

Notes for editors

1. The National Employment Panel is an employer-led body which provides independent advice to Ministers on the design, delivery and performance of the UK Government's labour market policies and programmes.
2. The Chief Executives of Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council are to write to their District Managers and Executive Directors to set joint local delivery planning in motion.
3. Chris Banks is a former MD of Coca-Cola GB, and Chief Executive of food and drink company Bighoughts.
4. A full version of the report can be found on the NEP website at www.nationalemploymentpanel.org.uk
5. Publication of this report completes the action set out in the White Paper *21st Century Skills, Realising our Potential*, for the NEP to review the links between skills, training and jobs. A full version of the white paper can be found on the DfES website at www.dfes.gov.uk/skillsstrategy

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