

# **WELFARE REFORM AND PENSIONS ACT 1999**

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## **EXPLANATORY NOTES**

### **OVERVIEW**

#### ***Welfare to Work***

##### ***The measures in the Act***

The Welfare to Work measures in the Act are contained in Part V, sections 57 – 60, and Schedule 7:

Sections 57 and 58 contain the provisions for the ONE service. This will require individuals claiming certain benefits to take part in work-focused interviews as a condition of receipt. It will not place any requirement on them beyond taking part in interviews. (For example, they will not be required to attend training courses or seek work other than where the claimant is on JSA, where such requirements are already in operation.)

The powers in the Act will enable the Government to require people to take part in a work-focused interview with a personal adviser at the point of claim, and further interviews while they are on benefit at specified times. These further interviews would be triggered by a change in their circumstances that might have a bearing on their employability (for example, their children reaching a certain age or the claimant taking up or leaving part time work). Section 58 ensures that local authorities can carry out such interviews with claimants who take part on a voluntary basis. This is over and above the requirements in section 57.

Section 59 and Schedule 7 contain provisions that will require childless couples to make joint claims for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). It is intended that regulations will prescribe that joint claims will apply to those born after a certain date, with the effect that joint claims will initially apply to young childless couples but gradually extend to cover older childless couples.

The intention of joint claims is to ensure that both partners in childless couples are directly involved in the labour market, to prevent them from becoming dependent on benefit from an early age. Under the new scheme both members of the couple will be claimants with equal rights and responsibilities, rather than the partner being a dependant on the claimant. Those between the ages of 18 and 24 who remain unemployed for six months will go onto the New Deal for Young People. Couples with children will continue to be offered help on a voluntary basis, through the New Deal for Partners of Unemployed People.

Section 60 contains the provisions for implementing Employment Zones. Prototype Employment Zones have been operating under earlier legislation. The new powers in the Act enable schemes to be set up in designated areas where special benefit rules can apply. In order to help participants back to work, the schemes allow them to anticipate funding for up to 6 months' worth of spending on training and jobsearch, combined with money equivalent to the payments they would normally receive from JSA. The powers in the Act also enable the Secretary of State to provide a wider range of support for

*These notes refer to the Welfare Reform and Pensions Act 1999  
(c.30) which received Royal Assent on 11 November 1999*

activities within the Zones which help people to get and keep work, including support for unemployed people who are seeking to become self-employed.