

Work Programme providers to ensure there is real help for those furthest from the labour market.

- ◆ Establish a review of effective ways to promote ‘rainy day’ saving to improve people’s financial resilience, and reform hardship payments, making it easier for people to bring forward part of their benefit payments to deal with emergencies.
- ◆ Develop a package of specialist support for carers seeking part-time work or a return to full-time employment.
- ◆ Review sanctions procedures in Jobcentres. While sanctions can be a necessary last resort to ensure jobseekers are looking for work, they should not be used to cut benefit expenditure deliberately. Reductions in benefits may not always be the best way to improve claimants’ compliance: those with chaotic lives might be more successful in finding a job if they were directed to targeted support with their problems. We will ensure there are no league tables or targets for sanctions issued by Jobcentres and introduce a ‘yellow card’ warning so people are only sanctioned if they deliberately and repeatedly break the rules.

Liberal Democrats will protect young people’s entitlements to the welfare safety net, while getting them the help they need to get their first job. That means doubling the number of businesses that hire apprentices. It also means providing support that has been proven to work, like work experience placements that help them get a first foot on the career ladder. These placements should be tailored for those with disabilities or mental health problems and those with parental responsibilities and we will work to expand the availability of placements into new sectors including manufacturing, science and technology.

3.4 Making welfare work

Working-age benefits make up a significant proportion of public spending, and have long been in need of reform, which we have started in this Parliament. Through tough choices, we have found savings in the welfare budget and we must continue to do so as we balance the books. However, we do not support proposals for a lengthy freeze to working age benefits, and we will not protect benefits for the wealthiest pensioners at the expense of people working on low wages.

Our priority is to tackle the causes of rising benefit bills – high rents, low pay, sickness and unemployment.

We will:

- ◆ Introduce a 1% cap on the uprating of working-age benefits until