

House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee Call for Evidence, Get Britain Working:

Pathways to Work

Response from Propertymark

April 2025

Background

1. Propertymark is the UK's leading professional body of property agents, with over 19,000 members representing over 12,800 branches. We are member-led with a Board which is made up of practicing agents and we work closely with our members to set professional standards through regulation, accredited and recognised qualifications, an industry-leading training programme and mandatory Continuing Professional Development.¹

Overview

2. The Work and Pensions Committee is undertaking a short inquiry into the impact of the Government's proposals to reform the disability and health related benefits system, as set out in the Pathways to Work Green Paper. Propertymark responded to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper². Propertymark has also written a position paper, Improving Access to the PRS for welfare dependent tenants³, outlining our key policy positions on welfare reform and improving access to the Private Rented Sector for tenants in receipt of benefits.

Questions

Exploring the issues with the social security system the Green Paper is seeking to address

3. The Department for Work and Pensions Green Paper sets out plans and proposals to reform health and disability benefits and employment support. This Green Paper is an important staging post on a journey of reform, building on the vision and approach set out in the Get Britain Working White Paper in November 2024. It sets out the departments vision, strategy and proposals for change. On this basis, Propertymark is supportive of many of the key proposals the DWP are considering.

¹ <https://www.propertymark.co.uk/>

² [Pathways-to-Work-Reforming-Benefits-and-Support-to-Get-Britain-Working-Green-Paper-Propertymark-response.pdf](#)

³ [Improving access to the PRS for welfare-dependent tenants | Propertymark](#)

The Green Paper recognises several barriers to get more people into work including high levels of economic inactivity, disability and long-term health conditions, inadequate Support and Incentives for Job Seekers, lack of employer engagement, a complex and fragmented welfare system, training and skills gaps and youth unemployment.

4. While we agree that these areas are undeniably significant barriers to getting people into work, we concluded that there is a lack of focus from the Green Paper on housing. Ultimately, we think that housing is a critical mass and individuals, and their families are unlikely to enter the employment market if their housing needs are not being met. Similarly, if people's housing needs are not being met, they are just as unlikely to be able to train for new skills to support them to enter the workplace.
5. Provisions in the Renters' Rights Bill⁴ will prohibit landlords or their property agents in the private rented sector from discriminating against tenants in receipt of benefits (and those with children) from housing options. While Propertymark welcomes this proposal, and the UK Government's pledge to build 1.5 million, mainly social and affordable, homes over the parliamentary term, more must be done to support landlords to offer accommodation in the medium term. Failure to do so may result in vulnerable people continuing not to have their housing needs met and subsequently continuing to face greater barriers to employment.
6. Other than direct grant funding to landlords, one solution Propertymark outlined in our 2024 Budget Representation to HM Treasury⁵ could be the reversal of Section 24 of the Finance Act 2015⁶ with taxation incentives for landlords who provide access to vulnerable tenants especially those in receipt of benefits.

To explore the evidence of the impacts of welfare changes on poverty and employment

7. Propertymark welcomes many of the Green Paper proposals. However, given the scale of the cost of living crisis, and high regional levels of economic activity, we remain concerned that not enough is being proposed to limit high levels of poverty, and that radical welfare reform is drastically needed. We have three points to make:

⁴ [Renters' Rights Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

⁵ [Propertymark 2024 Spring Budget representation | Propertymark](#)

⁶ [Finance \(No. 2\) Act 2015](#)

- **Impact of Universal Credit** - Propertymark was pleased to see that the Green Paper recognises that navigating the benefits and support systems can be difficult, particularly for those moving between work and benefits. While we are equally pleased that the Green Paper will reduce potential disincentives to work by making transitions from benefits into work less risky, we are continuing our call for urgent reform of Universal Credit, which is accessed by those seeking employment and those on low wages. We fundamentally think that by reforming the existing Universal Credit system, many claimants would be incentivised to access work and those on low paid employment may have better opportunities to find higher paid employment. Universal Credit should be reformed by removing the five-week waiting time for initial payment, converting advance payments into grants from loans and giving tenants the option of their rent being paid directly to private landlords rather than factors being considered by DWP staff.
- **Impact of Local Housing Allowance** - in our response to the first area of the inquiry, we outlined that housing is a critical mass and it is essential that for those seeking employment that their housing needs are met. As we demonstrated, if an individual's housing needs are not met, they are significantly less likely to find sustainable employment. Propertymark was disappointed that neither the Green Paper nor the recent Budget sought to address the issue of improving housing option by increasing the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Rate. The LHA is designed to provide people with enough support through the benefits system to afford the cheapest 30 per cent of housing in an area, adjusted for household composition. With LHA having been frozen since 2020, however, this is far from the case. While low LHA rates is an issue across the UK, research in Wales from the Bevan Foundation⁷ found that only 1.2 per cent of properties that were advertised for rent between 3 February and 17 February 2023 were available at or below LHA rates. In total there were only 32 properties advertised on the market that were fully covered by LHA rates, with no properties at all being on the market at LHA rates in 16 of Wales's 22 local authorities. Accordingly, Propertymark has had the long term policy view that LHA should be set at the thirtieth percentile and annually topped up to keep up with market rents. Furthermore, when the public finances improve, the UK Government should consider setting rates at the fiftieth percentile.

⁷ [Wales' Housing Crisis: Local Housing Allowance and the private rental market in Wales, Winter 2023 - Bevan Foundation](#)

- **Impact on Shared Accommodation Rate** - Propertymark was also pleased to see that the Green Paper identifies tackling youth unemployment as a priority focus. The Green Paper highlights that young people, especially those not in education, employment, or training (NEETs), face additional challenges in entering the employment market. The Green Paper also seeks to remedy this by offering targeted support to young job seekers, including apprenticeships, traineeships, and mentoring. Propertymark welcomes the targeted and supportive approach. However, this approach will have little impact if young people's housing needs are not adhered to. Propertymark understands that young people have been especially hit hard from employment opportunities since the pandemic and the continued cost of living crisis. We think the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) should be suspended to support young people under 35 to secure tenures in the Private Rented Sector which would further help them access work opportunities and improve access to housing.

To explore the experience of sick and disabled people of the current welfare system and their views on the impacts the changes could have on them

8. Propertymark is very supportive of making the benefits system simpler and easier to navigate, especially for those who are impacted by disabilities or mental health problems. We have highlighted that tenants in social housing have greater support than those in the Private Rented Sector as social housing tenants have officer support from Registered Social Landlords (RSL) to support them on benefit entitlements and administration. Additional support is also often provided by RSLs on employment opportunities, welfare and budgeting to name a few areas. Unfortunately, landlords in the private rented sector and often agents do not have these skills to support tenants in this regard, and private tenants either source help from local charities or authorities or support themselves.
9. The DWP can improve the provision in support in both housing sectors, by continuing to improve communication and engagement between the department and private landlords and their agents. We were pleased that following Propertymark campaigning, the DWP PRS Forum has continued which facilitates engagement between membership bodies for landlords and property agents. This has historically led to improvements in benefit systems that have aided private tenants in receipt of benefits such as the digitalisation of the UC 47 form and the improved managed payments system. Any changes from welfare reform must be communicated with membership bodies such

as Propertymark and those that support landlords or private tenants could continue to be disadvantaged.

10. Propertymark does have some concerns on the Green Paper proposals to have a more robust system of sanctions which could impact the most vulnerable including those with disabilities and mental health problems. While we recognise that some conditions need to be attached to the payment of benefits, the conditions need to be considered carefully especially when they are issued to the most vulnerable in society. We welcome the focus on early intervention to support people into work as quickly as possible. However, while we acknowledge sanctions may be required if claimants fail to engage with work coaches, we believe these sanctions should not impact the payment of rent as this will further jeopardise claimants housing sustainability. We also think that professional property agents such as those who are members of Propertymark, should have a closer relationship with claimants work coaches to help them understand their housing needs or to support the agent if there is any issues with their benefit entitlement.
11. Finally, we also think that the relationship between DWP work coaches and landlords and property agents with tenants impacted by mental health and disabilities could be further improved. DWP Work coaches should communicate any housing adaptations a claimant may require and to signpost where landlords and agents could get the support to fund and implement adaptations.

To explore the link between health status and worklessness, and the potential impacts of the welfare changes on health status

12. We do think the overall benefits of getting people into work and off a dependency of benefits will have an overall positive impact on claimants' health. However, for the most vulnerable this must be done carefully, and the prospect of sanctions and mandatory requirements should be considered on a case-by-case basis and consider the individual circumstances. In order for the proposed reforms to be implemented safely to ensure minimal impact for the most vulnerable, the DWP must communicate reforms to housing providers and their membership bodies. To protect the most vulnerable, multi-agency forums should be set up which include property agents and landlords to discuss solutions for individual cases.