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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DRC backs Chancellor's approach to incapacity benefit reform.

Government plans to expand a pilot scheme to help people receiving incapacity benefit back into work announced in the Chancellor's Pre Budget Report received the support of the Disability Rights Commission today.

Pathways to Work - a scheme offering mandatory work focussed interviews in conjunction with rehabilitative help and financial incentives - has produced impressive results in the seven areas of the country where it has been piloted.

Initial data on the effectiveness of the pilot have found that:

- One in seven people have attended programmes that aim to help them manage their condition or help them find work
- Five times as many disabled people are participating in the scheme than are nationally
- Almost 1 in 10 people who have taken part in Pathways to Work have been successfully employed - double the national rate

The pilot has also seen higher numbers of incapacity benefit recipients volunteering to attend Pathways programme - 1 in 10 participants joined without being required to -and a higher proportion of these voluntary participants getting work than those participating under the compulsory scheme.

Speaking after the release of the data Bert Massie, DRC Chairman, said:

'We have always said that more disabled people would be able to work if they were given the the support to do so. The success of the Pathways to Work pilot programme vindicates that opinion. I welcome the decision to extend the programme to other areas of the country and to continue them where they have already proven successful.

Mr Massie concluded:

'The way forward is not to attack the social security benefits of those who need them but to support disabled people so they can acheive the economic and social independence to which they aspire.'