



National Audit Office

DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS
**Using leaflets to communicate with the
public about services and entitlements**

LONDON: The Stationery Office
£10.75

Ordered by the
House of Commons
to be printed on 23 January 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



1 The Department for Work and Pensions provides services to some 28 million people. It communicates with them face to face through more than 1,000 local offices and around 70 contact centres and through letters, leaflets and its websites. Despite the development of new technology, printed materials, in particular leaflets, play an important role in ensuring that customers are informed of services and entitlements. It is vital that customers can rely on the accuracy of this information to make informed choices about their lives.

2 This report examines how effectively the Department manages the risk of providing inaccurate information in its leaflets. It also considers whether the Department communicates clearly and effectively about benefits and services in the leaflets it issues to customers (such as those in **Figure 1 overleaf**). In particular, it asks:

- how the Department manages the risks associated with producing and issuing inaccurate leaflets (Part 1);
- whether it can ensure that the information in leaflets is accurate and accessible (Part 2); and
- whether leaflets are easily available for customers (Part 3).

The Department has already made progress in these areas and our work shows how it could further improve these functions for the customer and highlights areas for further efficiency savings.

3 The report does not examine other means of communicating with the public such as contact centres on which we will report separately.

The importance of accurate and complete information easily available to citizens

4 Government needs to communicate effectively with citizens. Successful and efficient dealings between citizens and government departments require clear and accurate information to flow both ways. Government departments must understand the needs of citizens and so should, for example, have suitable ways of gathering and handling information such as well-designed forms.¹ In order to be able to provide this information, citizens must know what services are available and how to access them, and be aware of their rights and responsibilities. Often citizens obtain such information through published leaflets.

5 The need to convey often complex information in accessible formats is a constant challenge for the Department, on the one hand ensuring that information is complete and accurate, but on the other, that often complex information is concise and accessible. Our report *Dealing with the complexity of the benefits system* (HC 592, 2005-06) found that good communication is one way to help customers better understand the benefits

¹ Our report *Difficult Forms: How Government agencies interact with citizens* (HC1145, 2002-03) showed the importance of well designed forms.

system. The Department designs leaflets to encourage customers to claim benefits to which they may be entitled. The claim process is designed to ensure the Department gathers the relevant evidence and correctly establishes a customer's entitlement. When a customer becomes entitled to benefit, they are advised of their responsibility to notify the Department should they have a change in their circumstance. Providing inaccurate or out of date

information in any communication can have consequences for both customers and the Department (**Box 1**). These are not theoretical risks. In the 1990s, for example, the Department's failure to inform the public following a change in legislation about the Inherited State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme (SERPS) led to people being misled about their future pension entitlement, with a total cost to the Government of lost savings of £8 billion by 2050.²

1 Core Department for Work and Pensions leaflets for key customer groups

The work you want, the help you need (JPS1) – October 2004

451,000 copies printed in 2004-05

Produced for: All working age customers

This 65 page guide to benefits and services is produced by Jobcentre Plus and includes details of the services offered to working age customers through Jobcentre Plus and other agencies across government.



Access to Work: Information for Disabled People (DS4JP) – July 2004

51,000 copies printed in 2004-05

Produced for: Disabled workers

This leaflet provides details of the Access to Work scheme available to working age customers with a disability who are about to start work or are in work.

Pensioners' guide – England and Wales (PG1) – October 2004

300,000 copies printed in 2004-05

Produced for: Current and future pensioners

This 64 page guide produced by The Pension Service provides information on the range of benefits and services available through The Pension Service as well as across Government.

Bringing up children on your own? (LP15) – February 2005

428,000 copies printed in 2004-05

Produced for: Lone parents

A six page leaflet providing information about the New Deal for Lone Parents programme.

Source: Department for Work and Pensions

2 State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme: The failure to inform the public of reduced pensions rights for widows and widowers (HC320, 1999-2000) and Improving Service Quality: Action in response to the Inherited SERPS problem (HC497, 2002-03).

BOX 1

The impact of inaccurate and incomplete information

Providing inaccurate and incomplete information can impact on the efficiency of the Department. This can include:

Inappropriate decisions by customers – Inaccurate information may lead to customers making inappropriate decisions about their future financial plans, as demonstrated by the Inherited SERPS problem, or customers not claiming something to which they are legitimately entitled.

Inappropriate claims by customers – Failure to correctly advise customers of the rules of entitlement may lead to some customers claiming something to which they are not entitled. This could lead to unnecessary and wasteful processing of claims and decisions by the Department.

Social exclusion and confusion – Lack of awareness of services and poor availability of information in different languages has been shown to contribute to low take-up of benefits.

Sources: *State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme: The failure to inform the public of reduced pension rights for widows and widowers*, HC 320 1999-00; *Tackling Pensioner Poverty – Encouraging the Take-up of Entitlements*, HC 37 2002-2003; *Delivering benefits and services for black and minority ethnic older people*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report 201, 2003; and *Department for Work and Pensions Channel Strategy*, 2005

Help with your Council Tax. In 2004-05, the Department printed over 24 million leaflets. This suggests that there are likely to be many millions of leaflets held or retained by customers or available to them in a variety of public places. The Department spent around £110 million on communication activity in 2004-05. The total costs associated with the preparation, revision, storage and circulation of material are not known exactly but we estimate them at £31 million a year (**Figure 2 overleaf**). On average leaflets cost £385 per thousand for English versions and £1,580 per thousand in Welsh.

8 The information provided must be accurate and up to date. A key objective of the Department for Work and Pensions is to ensure that accurate and timely information is provided to its customers and the wider public. Welfare and employment policies are unlikely to work if target groups such as lone parents, jobseekers and pensioners do not know about their rights and responsibilities. Ensuring accuracy and completeness is not straightforward. The laws and regulations governing work programmes and benefits can be complex and can change frequently, meaning that leaflets must be updated. The Department also has to decide what information is relevant to particular groups and make sure they balance accuracy with the need not to overburden readers with overly technical and legalistic language. It must also take account of the requirements of an increasingly diverse population.

9 Communicating with the public involves a large amount of staff resource and activity to ensure up to date leaflets are in stock. Leaflets are held at over 1,000 offices which the public can visit (including Jobcentre Plus and Social Security offices), as well as many of the Department's contact centres. Jobcentre Plus recently published Customer Information Display Standards on how information materials should be placed in offices. However, this guidance does not yet identify which of the 245 different Departmental leaflets each office should have available for all of the Department's customers. Staff at local offices decide when to order more leaflets and are responsible for maintaining the currency of the stock they hold. To conserve the stocks of some leaflets, and to prevent local stock piles, some leaflets have restrictions on the number that can be ordered at any one time. The Department is now working on revised arrangements that would allow business users of printed products, including leaflets, to access supply arrangements through a single provider or network of providers. It plans to award a contract in Autumn 2006.

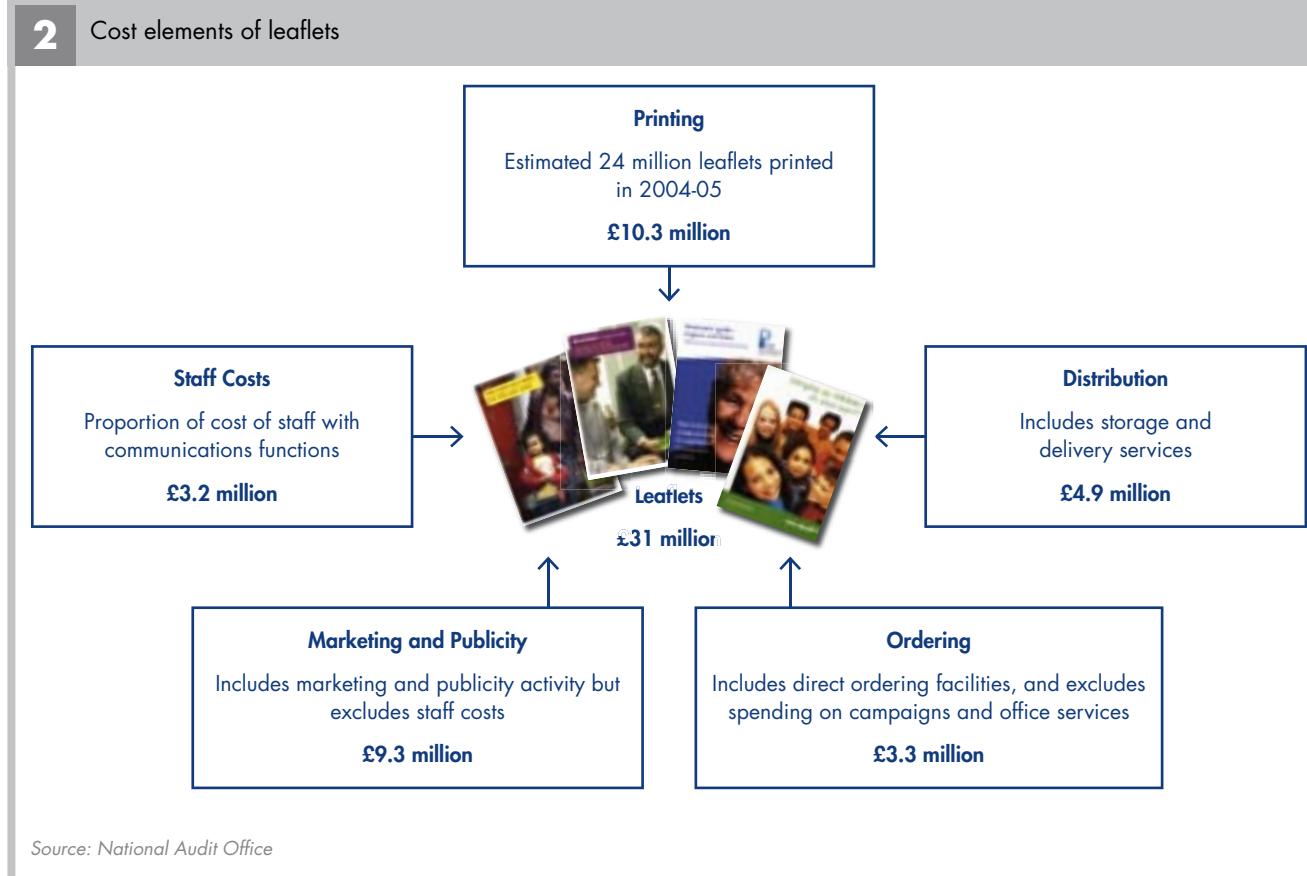
6 Written documents still play an important role.

Despite increased use of new technology, including through contact centres, established means of communication – in particular, in the form of letters or leaflets – remain essential. In many cases, the Department may need to provide a customer with detailed written information as confirmation of a discussion, and some people may wish to have a document they can keep for reference. Even the introduction of contact centres has not ended the need for leaflets because the result of many telephone contacts is that the Department sends out information in written form. The Government is aiming to make services available online although the internet will not always be a suitable alternative for all of the Department's customers. A previous National Audit Office report³ highlighted that there are potential savings for Government from the development of e-services but use varies significantly according to characteristics such as age, income and location.

7 To fulfil its responsibilities, the Department needs to make a range of information available to the public.

It does this on a large scale and currently provides information using 245 separate leaflets. These include general information products, such as *A Guide to State Pensions*, and leaflets for specific issues, such as *Getting*

³ *Progress in making e-services accessible to all – Encouraging use by older people* (HC 428, 2002-2003).



How does the Department manage the risks of misinforming the public?

10 All government departments are now required to identify and record their key risks in order that they can manage them. The Department for Work and Pensions identifies and records its risks via a strategic risk register, which is reviewed routinely by its Strategic Risk Review Board. This register lists “providing unreliable advice or information to the public” as one of its 17 key corporate risks.

11 At the time of our study, the Department was considering the risks around the accuracy of verbal and written information provided to the public and how to mitigate these. We held a workshop, attended by a wide range of Departmental stakeholders, to examine the key risks along the leaflet life cycle, building on workshops held by the Department. The key risks identified were:

- a lack of clarity regarding responsibility for communicating with the public;
- a lack of clarity as to responsibility for ensuring the effective distribution and availability of leaflets once the content is agreed;
- weaknesses in managing the review process to ensure that the information contained in leaflets remains correct;
- a lack of understanding by operational staff about their responsibility for ensuring the leaflets they make available to the public are up to date;
- information in leaflets not always being fit for purpose or not being understood by those using them; and
- complex supply arrangements for both internal and external customers with a lack of corporate knowledge and control of products and lack of standard process leading to waste and duplication.

12 The Department as a whole has recognised the risk of issuing inaccurate information. It has introduced a number of actions to mitigate these risks including the recent development of a single Department wide corporate communications strategy; a redesign and rationalisation of working age leaflets based on customer research; and a review of the variety of brands used on information products. The Department is also currently concluding a complete review of the processes intended to ensure accuracy. Work is now ongoing at a strategic level to establish a better understanding of the Departmental risks associated with communicating with different customer groups, and to better define the responsibilities of everyone involved in the production, distribution, and accessibility of leaflets. The Department acknowledges that there is a potential risk of providing inaccurate or incomplete information and is developing action plans to ensure that these are addressed across individual agencies. In addition, the Accounting Officer has, since July 2005, allocated responsibility for managing the overarching risk for the whole Department to the Director of Communications, who provides assurance to the Department's Executive Team that the risk is managed effectively.

Are leaflets reliable and accurate?

13 The Department manages the risks of providing inaccurate information through the introduction of its Accuracy of Information content review process, established following reports by the National Audit Office and Committee of Public Accounts in 2002. This requires each leaflet to undergo a review every six months, in time for reprinting in April and October.

14 Although reviews take place, they could be more valuable. We examined the reviews carried out on 20 key leaflets and concluded that, whilst covering the substantive issues, improvements could be made by:

- ensuring reviews are implemented consistently across the Department;
- ensuring all reviews are well documented, so that it is always possible to identify the source of changes or whether key information owners have been consulted;

- reviewing leaflets according to risk;
- ensuring the consistency of the key messages across all leaflets rather than focussing on individual products; and
- ensuring the continued need for specific leaflets is reviewed consistently.

15 Only eight of the 20 leaflets we examined had been reviewed every six months. We recognise that given the current large number of leaflets, and a need to consult a range of individuals to check the accuracy of specific pieces of information, undertaking frequent reviews can be resource intensive. A review may take six to eight months a year. Where updated leaflets are not available on time, there is an increased risk that staff and customers will refer to out of date versions of leaflets they may already hold. Identifying the severity of risk and likelihood of each leaflet being inaccurate would help to determine which leaflets must be reviewed twice a year and which could, where resources were not available, be reviewed less frequently. From April 2005 Jobcentre Plus started to stagger the reviews of its leaflets to spread the workload throughout the year and to try to ensure that those leaflets containing benefit information will be reviewed for April and October reprints. Other leaflets will continue to be reviewed every six months throughout the year.

16 Some parts of the Department are tackling the problem in different ways. Focusing on making sure pieces of information rather than leaflets are correct is the most sensible approach. The Pension Service has taken the most comprehensive approach and has demonstrated good practice in managing the risks of inaccuracy. It has developed a Content Management System to hold details of all the leaflets and information products across government departments containing references to pensions information, more than 1,000 products. The system records who is responsible for pieces of information, as well as different products. This has enabled its review team to identify where changes made in one leaflet will impact on others and initiate review activity where necessary. In April 2005 Jobcentre Plus transferred responsibility for monitoring and coordinating the review process for all working age leaflets to five Marketing Account Managers.

Are leaflets easy to understand?

17 It is essential that the information in leaflets can be understood by customers from a wide range of backgrounds and levels of education. We conducted in-depth interviews with a small sample of the Department's customers to explore with them the accessibility of the information provided by the Department, using 11 of the Department's leaflets. During interviews, customers were asked to complete simple tasks using the leaflets as sources of information. We found that:

- **Some simple design measures would make some leaflets easier to understand.** Many of the leaflets examined as part of our review, in particular, recent ones such as the new Jobcentre Plus leaflets, displayed elements of widely recognised best practice, as suggested by the Plain English Campaign and the Basic Skills Agency. However, interviewees frequently said the information presented in the leaflets was very useful to them but the layout made it more difficult to access information. Improvements could be made in signposting; for example: contents pages were not always used even for very long leaflets; and titles and front cover images sometimes do not make it clear who the leaflet is for and what is in it (**Box 2**). The Department has guidance about design standards, but no mechanism for ensuring they are followed. We asked 28 customers to complete simple tasks using the information provided in leaflets appropriate to their customer group. Only four of the 16 tasks were successfully completed by these customers. This indicates that the information in leaflets may be inaccessible to some intended readers. Often, simple improvements such as the addition of a contents page or clearer headings would have made a big difference.
- **The readability of the text in leaflets may also cause difficulties.** The Department works closely with the Plain English Campaign to ensure that its information products meet the standards required for the Crystal Mark and that information is accessible to its customers. However, the use of some words, specific to the Department's business, for example disability, incapacity and entitlement, can have an impact on readability. During our

examination, and to complement our sample of in-depth interviews with customers, we used an internationally recognised readability test, SMOG (Simple Measure of Gobbledygook),⁴ to test the readability of 13 core leaflets. The Department for Education and Skills⁵ estimates that 56 per cent of the adult population has literacy skills lower than those needed to obtain good GCSE passes (grades A-C). Around 16 per cent, over five million adults in the UK, have literacy skills equivalent to that expected of an 11 year old. Our test revealed that all 13 leaflets required a reading age higher than the national average and that eight required a reading age of at least 16, or equivalent to five years of secondary schooling. This in part could be due to the words the Department needs to use and although it has plans to review all of these leaflets as part of its ongoing programme, it is unlikely that all of the words used could be simplified. Overall, we consider that some information will not always be accessible to many of the Department's customers, for example, those for whom English is not their first language.

BOX 2

Customers' views on the design of leaflets

Customers liked leaflets where:

- Information help-line was on front cover
- Leaflets had a clear contents page
- Important information was in bold
- Information was in the form of questions and answers
- A glossary of terms was included

Customers disliked leaflets where:

- The title was misleading or unclear
- The leaflet was long
- No contents page was included
- Pale headings were used or white text on coloured background
- Inappropriate images were used

⁴ The Simple Measure of Gobbledygook (SMOG) is a readability test designed to match the reading level of written material to the 'reading with understanding' level of the reader.

⁵ *Skills for Life: Annual Review 2003-04*, Department for Education and Skills.

Are leaflets easy to obtain?

18 We selected four of the most important leaflets containing vital information for customers, one for each of the Department's main client groups (pensioners and those planning to save for a pension, people of working age, disabled people and people with children), and tested their availability at 100 Departmental outlets (Jobcentre Plus offices, Jobcentres and Social Security Offices), as well as 100 other sites where customers might seek information throughout Great Britain, such as libraries. We found that:

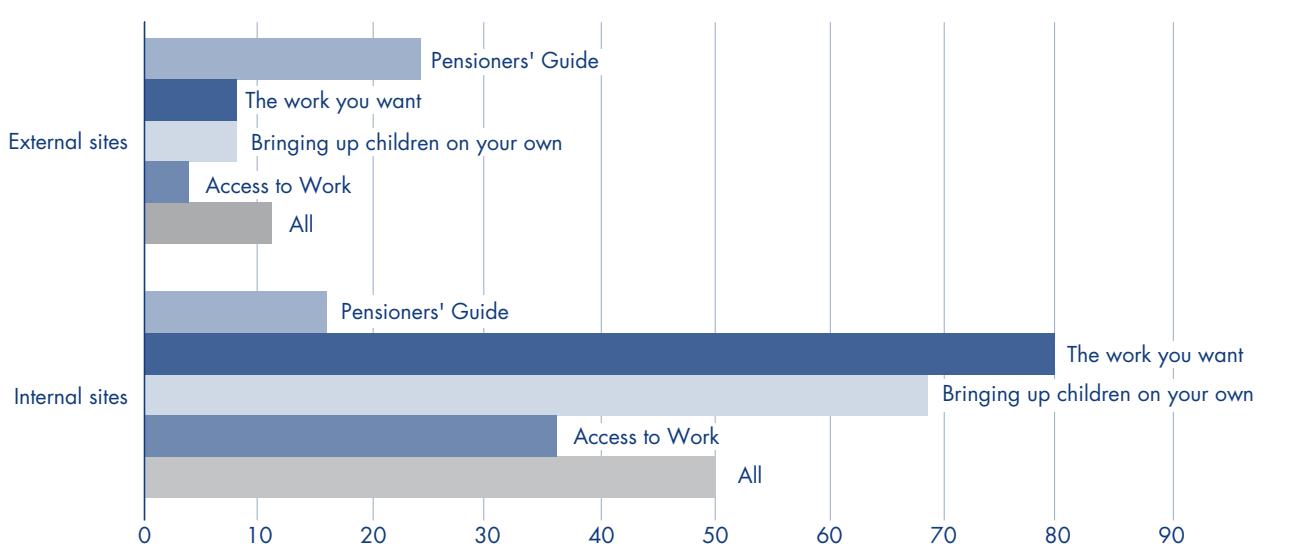
- **Many of the leaflets were not available at the Department's sites, and were difficult to obtain elsewhere (Figure 3).** Key leaflets for pensioners and disabled people were available at around 20 per cent of all sites, and 26 per cent of the Departmental sites where we requested them. However, we have noted that Jobcentre Plus does not expect all of the leaflets tested to be widely available in its offices.
- **In the majority (83 per cent) of the Department's offices, leaflets were easily accessible to the public.** In the majority of the Department's offices we visited, we found that the leaflets were well laid out and physically accessible. Overall, customers could easily reach the leaflets they wanted, although we found that in a minority of them (25 per cent) it would be difficult for customers in wheelchairs to

access leaflets without help. At around three quarters of the Department's sites, leaflets were available to customers without first having to speak to a member of staff.

- **Even where leaflets were available, they were not always up to date.** This was a particular problem for the leaflet aimed at lone parents which we tested, where in March 2005 the correct February 2005 edition was only available at four of the 44 locations which stocked this leaflet. In general, leaflets for working age customers and those which had not recently been revised were more likely to be up to date. We also found that six of the 60 Jobcentre Plus offices we visited held different versions of the same leaflet.

19 Senior management attention has had an impact. In 2003-04, out-of-date stocks of leaflets were a particular problem in The Pension Service, and over 60 per cent of the leaflets distributed to customers from the seven Pension Centres visited by Internal Audit were out of date, some by up to two years. In response to this problem, the Chief Executive nominated herself as a 'leaflets champion' and guidance has been issued to staff locally on how to manage stock. Subsequent visits to Pension Centres have seen significant improvements in the currency of the leaflets held, with some 90 per cent being up to date, indicating the success of such direct action by senior managers.

3 Availability of core leaflets at sites where specifically sought



Source: National Audit Office

20 Problems with the availability and currency of leaflets result from a number of factors relating to ordering, printing and distribution processes. The Department for Work and Pensions inherited different arrangements from predecessor bodies which have not been revised. The Department is now working on revised arrangements that would allow business users of printed products, including leaflets, to access supply arrangements through a single provider or network of providers. This provider would be responsible for sourcing, managing and maintaining the Department's stock of information products. It plans to award the contract for this in Autumn 2006. Until the contract is let, those ordering leaflets must navigate a number of different systems. The main problems are:

- **staff locally may not always know how to obtain leaflets.** During our research we visited a selection of 200 of the Department's offices, voluntary bodies and other government departments. We found the leaflets we required in half of the Department's 100 sites we visited. In the remainder, staff found it difficult to help customers to obtain leaflets where they were not available off the shelf, and none were able to provide a copy at the time of the visit. On four occasions staff offered to obtain and post the leaflet on and a further 19 sites provided a range of telephone numbers from which customers could have tried to obtain leaflets. At the remaining 27 sites, staff had difficulty providing customers with any information on how to obtain leaflets beyond those published by their own business area or they were unaware of how to obtain them if they were not on display. This is despite customers being advised in leaflets that they are available from Jobcentre Plus and informed on the Department's website to contact Jobcentre Plus to obtain leaflets. We are pleased to note that the Department is already acting on the findings of this review and is undertaking a full examination of all its information channels to ensure accuracy of signposting information for the public.
- **there is no mechanism to ensure that leaflets are up to date.** There is no single up to date list of which products are available and most current. We found the electronic catalogue on the Department's internet site was incomplete and referred to some out-of-date products.
- **distribution of leaflets to internal and external sites is not based on any agreement on what should be available at local level.** Except for specific campaigns, such as the one for Pension Credit, local staff order and maintain stocks of leaflets as required. There are agreements between the Department's agencies to provide basic information on each other's services, but the standards Jobcentre Plus has set for customer displays in its offices only refer to leaflets aimed at its own customers.
- **failure to agree the content of leaflets in time for reprinting.** In April 2005 for example, only one of The Pension Service leaflets was signed off in time to be reprinted despite close monitoring by the Chief Executive. Where updated leaflets are not available on time, there is an increased risk that staff and customers will refer to out of date versions of leaflets that they may already have.
- **the supply arrangements are complicated, and printing arrangements have become fragmented.** The Department has contracts with two printers and has access to others through framework agreements. It underwrites three months of stock of each leaflet at its two main printers. A distribution company manages stocks for ex-Employment Service offices. Not all printing is managed within these arrangements, however, leading to duplicate stocks being maintained. This also means the Department is not using its full buying power, and makes stock more difficult to manage. The Department has, for some time, been examining how to reduce duplication of storage arrangements and expects that efficiencies will be made with the appointment of a single provider during the next financial year.

■ **the ordering system is inflexible, giving rise to waste.**

Neither internal nor external customers can always obtain the number of leaflets they want. Some leaflets have to be ordered in batches of 50. Offices may therefore maintain excessive local stocks to meet occasional individual requests. External customers, like internal ones, have to navigate a variety of routes to obtain different leaflets. Stocks of leaflets held centrally for distribution are run down and destroyed when they become out-of-date. Recycling out-of-date leaflets has cost the Department around £800,000 each year since 2002. In some instances the availability of leaflets will, where budgets are held by information owners rather than centrally, depend on owners having sufficient funds to reprint leaflets to replenish stock. Again the Department expects that the appointment of the single provider will enable greater efficiencies in the leaflet life cycle.

21 In contrast to the Department's system for distributing information (a 'pull' approach) we found that those private and public sector organisations we examined actively distributed leaflets to sites as necessary (a 'push' approach) (**Figure 4**). Branches, offices and other users of information are told what leaflets they should have and what they should do with them. Leaflets sent to local branches are accompanied by guidelines to staff locally on whether these replace previous stock or are new products.

4 Private sector and Departmental management of leaflets

	Private sector	Department for Work and Pensions
Consultation	Customer panel receives samples of new leaflets – views sought by interview	Leaflets not required to be tested before launch. Some campaign specific leaflets are tested. Some leaflets now include customer feedback forms
Printing	Service Level Agreements with selection of external printers	Contracts with two main printers and additional printers through framework agreements. Some ad hoc printing arrangements developed where printing not managed through existing contracts
Distribution	Leaflets distributed to branches at set times with instructions on how to display. Quantities based on central assessment of demand. Distributor checks that correct quantities received	Each local office decides what the local need for leaflets is and orders as required. Each office is responsible for ensuring stock is available and current
Re-order	Forms to re-order leaflets available on staff intranet	Separate arrangements depending on supplier
Audit	Internal audit spot-checks	Internal audit checks introduced successfully in The Pension Service
Maintaining stock up to date	Centralised database of information in leaflets used to identify when they need updating	Changes identified through leaflet review process. Central stocks of old leaflets destroyed. Local offices decide which new leaflets to order

Source: National Audit Office

RECOMMENDATIONS

22 The Department makes considerable efforts to provide the public with detailed information about its services, and ensure it is accurate and made available. It spends more than £100 million on communications, including more than £30 million on producing leaflets. However, information can be difficult for the public to access, and the Department is not yet effectively managing the risks that it is inaccurate or out of date. In particular, it lacks data about the quantity of leaflets in circulation, costs, their location and how they are used by customers.

23 Consequently, there is a risk that the material is not put to effective use and does not fully serve its purpose of ensuring efficient and effective contacts between the Department and its customers. Tackling these issues would make better use of the resources invested and reduce misunderstandings amongst the public about rights and responsibilities. The Department should:

- a Review the need for each of the current leaflets and significantly reduce the number published.** The Department should review all the leaflets it currently produces and identify scope for rationalisation. It is hard to believe it needs nearly 250 separate products and a smaller range would be cheaper to maintain. The Jobcentre Plus working age leaflet review has gone some way to reducing the number of leaflets published, reducing the number of working age leaflets from 212 to 87. Subsequently, there should be regular reviews to ensure that there is a continued

need for each leaflet across each client group and that they continue to meet a customer and service need. This should include consultation with intended users. We note that the new working age leaflets have customer feedback forms which will enable some customers to comment on their usefulness.

- b Consider cheaper and more easily updated alternative products.** The new tier 3 leaflets being introduced by Jobcentre Plus offer an opportunity to make use of IT and printing facilities available in local offices to provide an on-demand service for customers wanting leaflets. The Department should consider whether this approach could be introduced across all businesses for all core leaflets. This could substantially reduce the printing cost of £385 per thousand leaflets, and reduce the risk of leaflets being out of date locally.

- c Ensure all its agencies treat inaccurate and incomplete information as a key risk.** The Department must better identify the risks associated with communicating with the public and ensure all its agencies include the issue on their risk registers and monitor actions to manage the risks regularly. Agencies should oversee the risks throughout the entire leaflet life cycle, from conception to disposal, allocating clear responsibility for reporting on action to mitigate the risks at each stage and for the process as a whole.

- d Improve the management of information products.** The Department should establish a central database of all its leaflets to enable it to identify which have been reviewed, by whom and when a review is overdue. It should use the Content Management System to allow more efficient management of the accuracy of the information in its leaflets, shifting to managing the information itself rather than specific products, to avoid duplication of review effort. Using The Pension Service model, it should develop a single database to ensure changes made to individual leaflets are identified and made, as required, in other products. The Department should also make it easier for local offices to know when leaflets have been changed and must be re-ordered, perhaps through having a dedicated space for this on the Department's internet site. Having a single database of leaflets should help staff identify which are the most up to date versions available.
- e Adhere to agreed design standards.** The Department should agree a set of core standards, based on the needs of each agency, and ensure that the design of all new products adheres to them. Responsibility for quality assuring the design of each new product should be given to a central team and existing products should be reviewed and redesigned as necessary. Standards should be overseen by a senior manager with the ability to challenge decisions and resolve disputes.
- f Carry out leaflet reviews based on risk.** The Department should assess the potential risks and significance of inaccuracy in each leaflet and (once the Content Management System permits) each piece of information, to enable it to prioritise the review timescales and schedule an appropriate review period.
- g Clarify what material should be held in local offices.** Whilst impractical and wasteful for each office to stock every leaflet available, the Department should make clear which core products should be available at all times. Other leaflets should be available for staff to print locally, as needed, so they can respond quickly to customer requests. Practical guidance should be issued to all local offices on the standards for displaying leaflets and how to manage stock and respond to requests for core and non-core products. References to sources of further information in printed material should reflect these agreements.

- h Take short-term action to deal with out-of-date and missing stocks.** Following the success of the direct action taken by the Chief Executive of The Pension Service, other senior managers should follow suit to highlight the importance of what may be regarded by some staff as a mundane issue. The Department and its agencies should regularly monitor progress in achieving improvements in providing information to the public, drawing on the current mystery shopping programmes. They should assess whether this work provides sufficient evidence of the distribution and availability of leaflets, and consider extending its scope along the lines undertaken in the past by The Pension Service.
- i Rationalise supply and distribution arrangements.** The Department is already planning to use a single provider to source information products and manage print contracts. In order to achieve efficiency savings the Department needs to ensure that it:
- ends duplicate supply arrangements;
 - reviews distribution arrangements to cut out duplicate stock holding;
 - ensures printing is done under centrally negotiated contracts;
 - undertakes print runs based on assessment of need, not uncontrolled ordering; and
 - replaces some stocks with web-based fact-sheets which can be printed in single copies on demand.
- This may need to be done by a separate team working closely with the proposed single provider to ensure that leaflets are widely available to customers and that they are the most up to date versions, using the most appropriate distribution strategies.
- j Spread good practice within the Department.** There are many high quality products issued by the Department but others could learn from them. Our work has identified key elements of good practice at each stage of the process (Annexes A and B to the Executive Summary).

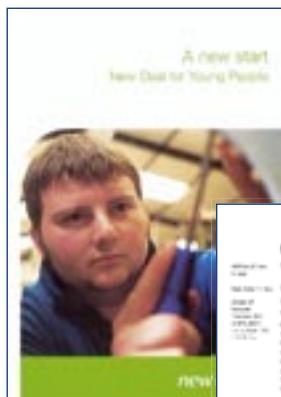
ANNEX A

Actions to improve the accessibility and availability of leaflets

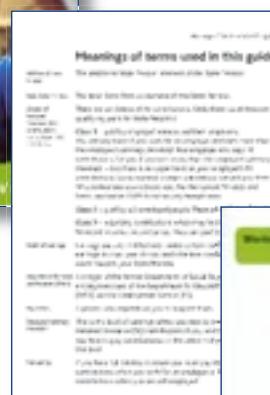
1 Concept: is there a need to provide information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consider the need for all new products using a full needs analysis and customer research in line with an overall communications strategy ■ Review existing leaflets regularly to determine whether they meet business and customer needs ■ Base the frequency of review on assessed risk associated with inaccuracy
2 Assessment: how should the information be communicated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify through customer research how best to communicate new information to the intended audience ■ Identify how best to communicate key messages in the format chosen, in particular in relation to the language and layout of the information ■ Using information on local demographics, assess the likely demand for the leaflet
3 Design: what should the leaflet look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Design leaflet according to the needs of the target audience as part of an overall communications strategy ■ Pilot leaflets with selection of target audience ■ Use established best practice principles when designing new leaflets as demonstrated below ■ Convert all leaflets into printer and web friendly versions for customers and staff to access
4 Production: how should it be produced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Make full use of existing printing contracts to ensure value for money ■ Establish a clear and efficient supply chain, making sure that leaflets are available without unnecessary delays ■ Arrange for sufficient leaflets to be printed to fulfil distribution to each office and expected demand
5 In use: how should it be made available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Make hard copies of leaflets easy to obtain internally and externally by using existing printing and distribution network ■ Make sure staff locally know which leaflets should be available to the public, covering all the Department's agencies, and how they can obtain them ■ Make all leaflets accessible electronically to enable staff locally to print copies of leaflets as requested by customers
6 Disposal: how and when should it be withdrawn?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish clear procedures locally for maintaining the currency of leaflets and regularly check compliance ■ Make sure that staff and third party organisations are informed when leaflets are superseded or are no longer in circulation ■ Actively distribute up to date leaflets to offices and third parties at set times

ANNEX B

Example of best practice found in some of the Department's leaflets



Front page makes it clear what the leaflet is about



Include a glossary of key phrases and words used in the leaflet



Use large plain text with important information in bold

Include a clear contents page

Contents	2
I Money and tax	3-32
II Health and social services	33-39
III Home - keeping warm and home improvements	39-37
IV Learning	38-39
V Services, crime and security and leisure	40-44
VI Work and part work	45-47
VII Local area	48-53
VIII Equality	54-55
IX Miscellaneous	56-57

Include an index if the leaflet is long



Use a consistent design to show that leaflets are part of a series