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## **"Employment First": the British Governments Employment Strategy and Welfare Reform**

Abstract:

Since 1997 Britain's New Labour Government has reshaped the welfare state with employment becoming the central feature of provision for people of working age. New Deal and 'make work pay' policies have been implemented, Jobcentre Plus created, and 'Work Focused Interviews' extended to working age claimants. The reform process is now accelerating.

In 2008 Incapacity Benefit will be replaced by an Employment Support Allowance and new claimants with health problems or disabilities will participate in 'Pathways to Work' programmes. A plethora of recent official reports chart other radical directions for reform that will include a major new role for the private and voluntary sectors in the delivery of case management services.

This presentation assesses these developments and the challenges to be met if the Government of Prime Minister Brown is to realise its aim of an 80% employment rate.

Dan Finn is Professor of Social Policy at the University of Portsmouth and Associate Research Director of the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion. He was a Special Adviser on the inquiry into the 'Government's Employment Strategy' undertaken by the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee.

(at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmworpen/63/63i.pdf> ).