# Chancellor Jeremy Hunt and Work and Pensions Secretary Mel Stride Encourage Pursuit of Job Opportunities Amid High Vacancy Rate



Chancellor Jeremy Hunt and Work and Pensions Secretary Mel Stride have encouraged the unemployed to pursue job opportunities, highlighting that there are nearly 900,000 unfilled vacancies in the UK economy. The ministers acknowledged the recent challenges posed by Covid-19 and the Ukraine war but emphasized that the job market remains resilient.

In an article for the Times, Hunt and Stride stated that unemployment benefits should serve as a safety net rather than a lifestyle choice. They cited figures showing that employment has not fully rebounded from the pandemic, with a current employment rate of 74.5% compared to 76.2% in early 2020. The unemployment rate has slightly increased to 4.3% from 4.1% pre-Covid.

Despite these figures, the ministers noted that wages have surpassed inflation for the last ten months, making employment more rewarding. They countered concerns about economic inactivity, claiming that the UK's inactivity rate is lower than in 2010 and better than many international peers.

The government plans to implement significant welfare reforms, including a £2.5 billion Back to Work Plan and initiatives like WorkWell to support long-term ill individuals back into employment. These measures aim to address the high number of people classified as economically inactive due to long-term sickness, particularly in areas like Birmingham, Manchester, and north London.