

Research report

Evaluation of Support for the Very Long-Term Unemployed Trailblazer

by Nilufer Rahim, Mehul Kotecha, Jenny Chanfreau,
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Sarah Haywood

Department for Work and Pensions

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Glossary of terms

Sector Based Skills Academies	A 'Get Britain Working' measure available in England. Aimed at meeting businesses' immediate and future recruitment needs as well as to recruit a workforce with the right skills. SBWA usually last up to six weeks and have three key components: Pre-employment training; a work experience placement; and a guaranteed job interview. Participants will remain on benefit throughout the period of the sector-based work academy and Jobcentre Plus will pay any travel and childcare costs whilst they are on the work experience placement. There is no direct cost to an employer for sector-based work academies as the costs are covered by government funding.
Mandatory Work Activity	MWA is a four week placement of up to 30 hours per week. It aims to help JSA claimants to re-engage with the system, refocus their jobsearch and gain work-related disciplines. It is delivered by contracted providers who source placements. DWP does not specify what the placement should be, but does expect that every placement will offer people the opportunity to gain fundamental work disciplines, as well as being of benefit to local communities. Providers are responsible for reasonable travel, childcare and additional support costs while the claimant is undertaking a placement. Jobcentre Plus advisers can refer claimants to Mandatory Work Activity where they feel it is appropriate. Failure to complete a Mandatory Work Activity placement without good cause can result in the sanction of Jobseeker's Allowance.
Mandation	Mandation is a tool to be used to encourage participation in a programme/activity with non-compliance resulting in referral to the Decision Making Activity team with possible sanctions to benefit

New Enterprise Allowance

NEA is available to JSA claimants aged 18 and over. Participants get access to a volunteer business mentor who will provide guidance and support as they develop their business plan and through the early months of trading. Once a claimant can demonstrate they have a viable business proposition with the potential for growth in the future, they will be able to access financial support. This will consist of a weekly allowance worth £1,274 over 26 weeks, paid at £65 a week for the first 13 weeks and £33 a week for a further 13 weeks; and the facility to access a loan of up to £1,000 to help with start-up costs, subject to status. The total package of support could be worth up to £2,274 to each participant who starts their own business.

List of abbreviations

CAP	Community Action Programme
CPA	Contract Package Area
CSCS	Construction Skills Certification Scheme
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FJR	Fortnightly Jobsearch Review
FND	Flexible New Deal
FSF	Flexible Support Fund
HB	Housing Benefit
IB	Incapacity Benefit
IS	Income Support
JCPO	Jobcentre Plus Offer
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
JSAg	Jobseeker's Agreement
LA	Local authority
MWA	Mandatory Work Activity
ND	New Deal
ND25+	New Deal 25 Plus
NDYP	New Deal for Young People
NEA	New Enterprise Allowance
OCM	Ongoing Case Management
PA	Personal Adviser
TPPM	Third Party Provision Manager
WP	Work Programme

Summary

Introduction

This report presents findings from an evaluation of the Support for the Very Long-Term Unemployed (SVLTU) trailblazer scheme, a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) programme which ran from November 2011 to July 2012. This small-scale trailblazer was designed to test potential support strands for long-term claimants who remain on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) after completion of the Work Programme. The trailblazer ran for nine months¹ and consisted of two trial SVLTU treatment strands and a 'control group', who continued to receive ongoing standard flexible support from Jobcentre Plus (the Jobcentre Plus Offer (JCPO)). The trailblazer was designed as a Randomised Control Trial and JSA claimants were allocated to one of the three SVLTU strands randomly so that differences in outcomes would be a result of any treatment effect rather than differences in the three groups of participants. Participation in each strand was mandatory, and claimants who failed to comply with mandatory elements could have their benefits withdrawn.

In summary the SVLTU consisted of two treatment groups and one control group as described below:

- **Community Action Programme (CAP):** a six-month work placement complemented by provider-led supported jobsearch. Providers were contracted by DWP to source placements for claimants which delivered a community benefit;
- **Ongoing Case Management (OCM):** a more intensive offer of flexible and personalised adviser-based support, as well as a set of mandatory activities, delivered by Jobcentre Plus through increased adviser interventions for six months;
- **The control group (JCPO):** fortnightly jobsearch reviews plus additional appointments with advisers based on advisers' discretion and access to a menu of back to work support².

DWP commissioned NatCen Social Research to carry out an evaluation of the SVLTU trailblazer to help develop a better understanding of how best to support very long-term JSA claimants and inform decision-making ahead of potential national delivery of SVLTU in 2013.

The specific research objectives were to:

- compare hard and soft outcomes for OCM and CAP with the control group;
- identify the different types and levels of support offered to participants in the delivery of the OCM strand and compare this with the control group;
- explore the views of staff involved in the operational delivery of each strand on what has worked well, challenges faced, and lessons for ways of working;
- gather views from participants on their experience of taking part in CAP or receiving support from OCM or the JCPO; and
- map the range and nature of participant responses to their allocation to each strand of the trailblazer prior to starting on the strand, including effects on stopping benefit claims.

¹ Starts on the six month programme were spaced over a three month period consequently the trailblazer ran for nine months to allow all customers to complete their six months.

² This includes Work Experience, training, volunteering opportunities, access to the Flexible Support Fund and employability courses.

The findings are based on: a) a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews among claimants taking part in the programme; and b) a programme of qualitative research among Jobcentre Plus staff, external CAP providers and CAP placement hosts.

Description of trailblazer participants

The majority of trailblazer participants were male, nearly half were aged 40 or over and a third reported having a long-term illness or disability. The most common barriers to paid work reported by participants were a lack of suitable jobs, not having the right skills, transport difficulties and insufficient work experience. Around a quarter (23 per cent) had not worked for five years or more, and a further seven per cent had never worked. These features are characteristic of the very long-term unemployed claimant group.

Jobcentre Plus and provider staff reported that the participant group tended to have complex needs and a range of different challenging barriers. These included very low motivation, low confidence, ill-health and disability (including mental health problems and learning disabilities), drug and alcohol dependency, low literacy and numeracy, and criminal records.

Description of trailblazer support

OCM

Since starting OCM, 66 per cent of participants reported that they had more frequent contact with their Personal Adviser (PA) and 43 per cent had met with their PA once a week. This compared to only six per cent of the control group reporting that they had met with their PA once a week. A quarter (25 per cent) of OCM participants reported more personalised support on OCM than prior to starting on the programme, and 25 per cent also reported going on Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) (a compulsory four-week work placement), compared to 14 per cent of the control group. There was a strong view from staff and participants that OCM generally offered a more intensive, tailored and active kind of support from PAs to participants compared to their previous interactions with Jobcentre Plus, as well as continuity of support from a single adviser.

A third of OCM participants, however, reported no difference in their support from Jobcentre Plus since the start of the programme. This may reflect the view of some Jobcentre Plus staff that there were offices where OCM did not differ significantly from the standard JCPO. Staff tended to feel this where large caseloads made it difficult for PAs to work with OCM participants in a very intensive way, or where it was already standard practice for Jobcentre Plus participants to have greater frequency and continuity of PA contact.

CAP

Around 60 per cent of claimants who started CAP reported that they had been placed on a work placement during the six-month CAP period. Evidence from providers suggested that some CAP participants were difficult to place, which may help explain this finding (discussed further below). Half of the CAP participants had been on a placement for six months or more. A small percentage (13 per cent) of participants had changed placement, but the large majority of these had done just two placements.

Approximately half of CAP placements were with charities, and a further third served the local community or environment. Analysis of placements where full details were available indicates that the community benefit criteria were being met. Of all placements, around half were working in the 'elementary' occupations, which includes cleaner, shelf-stacker or warehouse operator, and just

over a third were in 'customer service' occupations, covering roles such as shop and café work. The majority of CAP participants were dealing with the public/serving customers on their placement, with between a third and a half dealing with stock and/or using a till. Smaller proportions were doing manual or physical work.

The majority of participants who were not placed in a work placement said they had been looking, and applying, for work while on CAP. Participants who were not placed were more likely to have been out of work longer, have lower qualifications and/or have a criminal record, compared with participants who were placed.

Of the participants who were not placed the majority said they had received jobsearch help from their CAP provider (61 per cent had received help); where they had, 79 per cent had received help at least once a week. Participants who were not placed were less likely to have received jobsearch support from their provider. This may reflect that they were not suitable for, or that they had disengaged from, the programme.

Impacts on benefit receipt and employment

The majority of participants reported being in receipt of JSA at the time of the survey, with fewer participants on OCM and in the control group claiming JSA (73 per cent and 76 per cent) compared with 80 per cent of participants on CAP. The survey findings are based on self-reported benefit status six to seven months after starting on the trailblazer³. Because these findings are based on participants' perceptions of what benefit they were receiving, more reliable statistics on the claimant rate for each programme can be drawn from analysis of benefit outcomes based on DWP administrative data for all programme participants. DWP statistics to be published alongside this report found statistically significant lower levels of benefit receipt for both CAP and OCM participants compared to the control group at a point 41 weeks after random allocation (roughly 26 weeks after start)⁴.

Fifteen to eighteen per cent in each programme strand entered paid employment, became self-employed or were waiting to start work at the time of the survey. These job outcomes did not vary significantly between programme strands, and the majority of participants in each programme described their current working status as unemployed and looking for work. The types of jobs entered, take home pay and hours worked did not vary depending on which strand participants were on. However, the proportion of survey participants in 'other voluntary or unpaid work' was higher for participants on CAP and OCM compared to the control group.

For participants on OCM, when controlling for participant characteristics, those who reported receiving more personalised support to their individual needs were significantly more likely to be in work at the end of the programme. However, for CAP participants, neither attending a placement nor receiving jobsearch support were significantly associated with a job outcome around the end of the programme, when controlling for participant characteristics.

It is important to note that these findings are based on self-reported job outcomes data collected six to seven months after starting on the trailblazer (i.e. at the end of the programme). It is possible that a different pattern will emerge in the months following programme completion. DWP are planning to publish administrative data on job outcomes in 2013, which will provide a longer-term picture of the job outcomes of all trailblazer participants.

³ The higher level of self-reported JSA receipt in the CAP group may partly be a result of the CAP participants being interviewed ten days earlier in their programme participation compared to the OCM and control group participants.

⁴ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=adhoc_analysis

Impacts on soft outcomes

Participants on OCM were more likely to feel the programme had helped them to overcome their barriers to work and to get closer to work, compared to the control group, while participants who had not been on a placement were less likely to report that the programme had helped. CAP participants who had not been on a placement were the least likely to feel the programme had helped them overcome their barriers. The groups who were less likely to feel the programme had helped them included men, owner-occupiers and people with mental health problems.

When asked what it was about the programme that had helped them to feel closer to work, a higher percentage of OCM and the control group attributed the change to support and encouragement from their adviser, compared with CAP, while a higher percentage of participants on CAP than on the other strands attributed it to an increase in confidence. CAP participants' experiences on their placements can help explain their increased confidence: 76 per cent felt they had gained satisfaction from being in a routine while on their placement and 69 per cent cited a sense of achievement.

Participants on OCM and CAP placements were more likely than other participants to say that the programme had achieved a positive impact on their motivation to work. As a result of increased motivation, a higher percentage of participants on OCM reported 'doing/considering training courses and qualifications'. A higher proportion of participants on CAP placements and OCM reported that the programme had raised their work-related ambitions, compared with the control group and CAP participants not on placements. A minority of participants in each strand reported a negative shift in their views about work; this was highest among CAP participants not placed and lowest among placed CAP participants.

There was no difference in the average wellbeing scores of participants on each strand, on the measures of general happiness, life satisfaction and the extent they felt things in life were worthwhile. However, CAP participants on placements reported lower levels of anxiety, on average, compared with other participants. This suggests that taking part in a sustained period of work placement was having a positive effect on the wellbeing of some CAP participants. This resonates with participants' general views that they would be happier in work.

Participant experience

Impact of advance notice

A considerable proportion of participants on both CAP and OCM had poor recall of the advance notice of the programme: fewer than half of each group recalled having notice of more than one month. Also, a higher proportion of OCM than CAP participants reported not having been made aware of the change in support or not knowing how much notice they had been given. This may reflect the less obvious transition from Jobcentre Plus to OCM support.

Although the advance notice did not generally appear to have made an impression on participants, qualitative interviews provided evidence that some JSA claimants responded negatively to being allocated to the trailblazer, particularly to the CAP option, and some had signed off JSA and were not, therefore, taking part. Staff experience indicated that some claimants may have signed off benefits during this period in order to avoid going on the trailblazer, particularly in the days just before they were due to start.

Participant views of programme strands

Having been on the programme, participants' overall rating of the programme varied by programme strand, with 59 per cent of OCM participants rating their programme as good or very good (a similar proportion to the control group). CAP participants were less likely to rate their strand highly, but this was a result of the high proportion of CAP participants who had not been placed on work placements being more likely to feel negatively about the programme.

The extent to which participants had a positive view of OCM and CAP depended partly on differences in the support offered to them, but also on personal factors: a) their personal needs/circumstances (including complex health needs, the complexity of their work barriers, needs around their basic skills or for those with higher qualifications) and b) their orientation to work (how willing they were to enter work and their work aspirations).

The role played by staff delivering the trailblazer was a key factor in participants' experiences of the programme. With both OCM and CAP, the following qualities of adviser support particularly contributed to favourable experiences:

- continuity in adviser support;
- personally tailored support: advisers demonstrating understanding of and empathy towards a participant's circumstances;
- a collaborative relationship between participant/adviser;
- advisers seeing participants more frequently and for longer to maintain motivation and momentum;
- advisers taking a proactive approach to addressing barriers.

Participants tended to reflect unfavourably on adviser support where a 'one size fits all' approach was used which did not take account of the needs and aspirations of individuals and where advisers were felt to be condescending towards participants.

Access to training was also a key factor which contributed to participants' experiences of both interventions. Training and support was valued where it addressed basic skills levels (e.g. literacy or numeracy issues) and/or moved participants closer to work (i.e. courses specifically related to their work), but seen less favourably when it was not offering anything new or relevant.

Work placements were a defining feature of CAP. The following factors were felt by participants to have resulted in a more positive experience of work placements:

- where providers had taken the time to select appropriate placements, with participants having some degree of involvement in the process, so that the types of placement selected fitted with participants' needs and/or work aspirations;
- where their role within placements suited their way of working, was varied and interesting and/or carried a degree of responsibility;
- where the level of supervision they received by placement managers/other staff was flexible enough to meet their needs, collaborative in nature and/or they were treated equally to other staff; and
- having a sustained six-month period of work experience, although there was some disagreement around whether 30 hours a week was too long.

Participants were critical of their placements where they felt these had been hastily arranged with little regard for their needs and work aspirations and where there was a lack of continuity in the supervision they received by the placement host. There were also participants who objected to placements on principle as they did not want to ‘work for free’.

The majority of participants in the survey said they had not had any benefit sanctions (for example for missed appointments or not actively seeking work) during the course of the programme. OCM participants were more likely to have had their benefits stopped compared to CAP participants and the control group.

Sanctions tended to have a heavy financial impact on participants when imposed for a longer time period, including challenges in buying groceries and paying for rent. Half of all those sanctioned reported that it made a difference to their behaviour, with just over a third saying it would make them more likely to do what they were asked to by Jobcentre Plus. Where participants reported it made no difference, this may be due to the reported low levels of understanding as to why they were sanctioned.

Achieving positive outcomes

Qualitative interviews with staff involved in the delivery of OCM and CAP identified a range of ways in which each programme strand lent itself to achieving positive outcomes (such as increased motivation and an increase in work-related activity) for participants.

OCM

Aspects of OCM seen to both distinguish the programme from the standard offer and to accelerate favourable outcomes for participants included: the intensive case management approach and the tailored approach to delivering support.

The intensive approach was characterised by participants seeing the same adviser throughout the six-month programme and seeing them more frequently. This approach enabled advisers to understand each participant’s needs and barriers better and to tailor support around these needs. Receiving long-term support from one adviser also increased participants’ confidence and motivation because a known individual was interested in them and was encouraging them to progress.

As a result of more frequent contact and the potential for advisers to intensify contact when desirable, PAs were better able to provide more practical help and support and maintain the momentum on jobsearch activity. More frequent appointments and regular tasks also resulted in participants taking more responsibility for their progress.

Advisers’ capacity to personalise support was facilitated by increased flexibility and discretion in relation to the timing and ordering of support and the support options advisers decided to use. Increased flexibility and time also enabled advisers to develop new support options that were specifically tailored to OCM participants.

Advisers felt that approaches such as pre-formulated itineraries of support were considered less helpful, because they did not allow advisers to tailor the support used and the timing of support to individual participants. For similar reasons, core elements of the strand such as compliance interviews which were required of all OCM participants were considered unhelpful in many cases. Daily signing on OCM was difficult to manage and only considered necessary for ‘hardened’ claimants. Similarly compliance interviews were thought to take up valuable resources and alarm compliant claimants unnecessarily.

Advisers thought mandation and associated risk of sanctions worked well where they were able to apply discretion about which participants needed mandation. OCM advisers were generally given increased discretion to mandate certain aspects of the programme by using Jobseekers Directions. This helped motivate participants to comply with the programme and build collaborative participant/adviser relationships. Advisers also used a 'softer' approach where appropriate.

CAP

The work placement element appeared to be the real strength of the CAP strand in achieving positive outcomes for participants. Placements helped increase participants' motivation to work, employability and wellbeing. Some participants were offered paid jobs by their placement hosts, particularly those with related career interests, work histories and skills. Providers and placement hosts felt that the six-month placement length was seen to imitate real jobs well, providing participants with viable work experience for their CVs as well as up to date references.

The features of jobsearch support offered by providers which were felt to be successful included more frequent contact time with Job Coaches, tailored jobsearch support to specific participant needs and help with proactive and intensive jobseeking.

OCM and CAP staff were enthusiastic about the programme strands having helped participants move closer towards work (including seemingly harder to help participants). However, although the programme achieved a range of softer outcomes, the capacity of both strands to achieve job outcomes within the timeframe were viewed as being limited by:

- the length of the trailblazer: with the exception of the work placement element of CAP, six months was not felt by staff to be long enough to achieve hard outcomes for many customers because the participant group typically had significant barriers to work; and
- adverse labour market conditions: which meant long-term participants without recent paid work experience and with underlying and complex barriers to work were not favoured by employers in a market where the supply of potential employees was plentiful.

Interviews with staff also suggest that each of the SVLTU strands met slightly different needs with OCM benefitting claimants with complex and multiple barriers and CAP helping claimants whose main barriers were around a lack of recent work experience or motivation.

Staff working on both SVLTU strands identified several claimant groups for whom they thought CAP and OCM could only lever limited progress in moving towards work. They included claimants who were unwilling to work and claimants with learning disabilities, basic skills needs or serious health conditions.

It was felt that the number of placement hours should be reduced, where appropriate, in order to allow providers time to address basic skills needs. There was a call to exclude claimants with serious health conditions and claimants with severe restrictions due to criminal offences from the CAP strand if it is rolled out nationally.

Implementation lessons for OCM

PAs would have liked earlier information about OCM, more training on dealing with claimants with entrenched problems related to very long-term unemployment, and greater opportunities to share good practice. Such training and preparation will be more important in the future given that it was mainly experienced PAs who worked on the pilot.

Staff felt that the key qualities for a PA to work on OCM were:

- confidence to challenge participants;
- firmness balanced with sensitivity;
- patience alongside tenacity;
- the ability to think outside the box.

Where possible, dedicated OCM advisers were preferred to ensure knowledge of the claimant group, and also enable greater continuity with participants to build trust and rapport. Smaller than usual caseloads were needed to deal with the intensive nature of OCM and the extent of follow-up with participants. Suggested ways that caseload size might be increased if rolled out included greater discretion for PAs on frequency of signing and more administrative and IT support to assist in the management of caseloads.

Referral to external provision was considered to be challenging in some areas due to difficulty finding suitable provision in the locality and/or market saturation in MWA placements (especially in rural areas). Perceived gaps in provision related to people with learning difficulties, drug or alcohol problems, mental health problems and lack of basic skills (e.g. literacy, numeracy, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), IT and time management). Some provision such as the Flexible Support Fund and working with work psychologists was said to be more difficult to draw on within the six-month timescale of the pilot.

Implementation lessons for CAP

Third Party Provision Managers (TPPMs) and providers thought that current funding arrangements produced a significant financial challenge for providers and therefore, should not be replicated in the future. This was because the number and type of participants referred to providers had led to fewer participants for whom they were able to claim placement or job outcome fees than they had expected. These participants included people who: dropped off JSA after referral; had severe restrictions on work they could do due to past criminal convictions; or who placement hosts did not want because of their failure to engage with the placement.

There was a widespread view that the three-month period from award of contract to referral to CAP was not long enough to engage placement hosts due to multiple factors effectively delaying the process. Better profiling of the number of placements needed and a better flow, or 'staggering', of referrals would also help ease the placement process.

The 15-day timescale for placements could generally be met where there was an even flow of referrals but could lead to unsuitable placements and the need, subsequently, to find alternative placements without any extension in the time. Thirty days to set up a placement was considered more realistic. Practical issues such as CRB checks also meant that the 15-day timescale was very challenging to meet for some participants.

Provider and Jobcentre Plus staff felt that some of the participants referred to CAP were unsuitable for placement hosts. This may be because claimants were referred on the basis of random assignment to each programme strand rather than suitability criteria. Staff also felt there needed to be clearer responsibility and procedures for what happened in cases where participants who could not be placed were caught in 'limbo' between providers and Jobcentre Plus offices. Feedback from Contract and Performance Managers suggests some concerns about a lack of data on participants who had not been placed.

Hosts and some providers felt that there needed to be greater discretion about the circumstances under which a referral to the Decision Making Activity (DMA) team, responsible for imposing benefit sanctions, should be made. Providers were sometimes reluctant to refer because they regarded some participants as unsuitable for CAP or because of an unsuitable placement, which was not seen as the fault of the participant. Other infringements such as failure to complete the required number of hours were seen as minor and not worth a referral.

DWP staff also reported that a backlog of referrals for DMA, and a lack of clarity about CAP being mandatory in letters from providers to participants had also deterred referrals for sanctioning to the DMA. This was because referral was seen to be labour intensive but not sufficiently timely to be effective.

Conclusions

DWP administrative data published alongside this report found a statistically significant reduction in benefit receipt among OCM and CAP participants 41 weeks after random allocation (roughly 26 weeks after start) compared to the control group. DWP data on job outcomes is to be published following longer-term analysis of the governments' administrative records. Evidence from this evaluation suggests that while there was no significant difference in job outcomes at the end of the programme the OCM and CAP trailblazer strands were successful in achieving soft outcomes such as increases in motivation, confidence, jobseeking behaviour and a positive change in attitudes towards work. These softer impacts may yet translate into job outcomes and sign off from JSA. On the basis of these findings we recommend that very long-term claimants are assessed in terms of their support needs and that claimants with the most severe and persistent barriers are provided with tailored and intensive support from Jobcentre Plus advisers, and if deemed appropriate, an element of protracted work experience that is relevant to their skills and career interests.

A number of service delivery lessons can be drawn from the evaluation which are discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

1 Introduction

This report presents findings from an evaluation of the Support for the Very Long-Term Unemployed (SVLTU) trailblazer scheme, a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) programme which ran from November 2011 to July 2012. The programme was designed to test potential support options for claimants who remain on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) following the completion of the Work Programme. There were two support options delivered under the programme, one option delivered by Jobcentre Plus and the other by external contracted providers.

DWP commissioned NatCen Social Research to carry out an evaluation of the SVLTU trailblazer. The findings are based on a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews among claimants taking part in the programme, and qualitative research among Jobcentre Plus staff, external contracted providers and work placement hosts.

This chapter describes the background to, and details of, the SVLTU trailblazer programme. It also outlines the aims of the evaluation and the research methods used in the evaluation.

1.1 The SVLTU programme

1.1.1 Policy context

In summer 2011 DWP launched the Work Programme, a single welfare-to-work programme to help all unemployed people, regardless of the benefit they claim, back to work. Most claimants are referred to the Work Programme by the end of their first year on benefits and can stay on the programme for up to two years. By summer 2013, there will be claimants who have reached the end of the Work Programme and not secured sustained employment. These people will have been unemployed for a number of years and may have multiple barriers to work. In order to understand best how to support these claimants, DWP devised a small-scale trailblazer to run from autumn 2011 in four Jobcentre Plus districts⁵. Participation in the trailblazer was mandatory, and claimants who failed to participate could have their benefits withdrawn.

The trailblazer consisted of a six-month Randomised Control Trial of two SVLTU treatment strands and a 'control group', who continued to receive ongoing standard flexible support from Jobcentre Plus⁶. Within the four Jobcentre Plus districts, long term claimants who had completed Flexible New Deal were randomly allocated to each of the three SVLTU strands. The aim of the design was to allow the outcomes and experiences on the two new support options to be compared against each other and against the 'control' (the JCPO).

⁵ Derbyshire; Lincolnshire, Rutland & Nottinghamshire; East Anglia; and Leicestershire & Northamptonshire.

⁶ The Jobcentre Plus Offer (JCPO) for JSA claimants consists of fortnightly jobsearch reviews plus – additional appointments with advisers based on advisers discretion; access to menu of back to work support such as Work Experience, training, volunteering opportunities; access to the Flexible Support Fund and employability courses.

In outline, the two strands consisted of:

- **Community Action Programme (CAP):** a six-month work placement complemented by provider-led supported jobsearch. External providers were contracted by DWP to source six-month placements which delivered a benefit to the local community. The aim of CAP was to equip jobseekers with a valuable period of work experience, enabling them to develop the disciplines and skills associated with sustained employment and capitalise on experience gained and maintain an employment focus through additional provider-led jobsearch support;
- **Ongoing Case Management (OCM):** a more intensive offer of flexible and Personal Adviser (PA)-based support, as well as a set of minimum required activities, delivered by Jobcentre Plus for six months. The OCM core elements were more frequent attendance and referral to a compliance review. In addition, advisers had more capacity to ensure claimants could access the wide range of support available through the JCPO including, for example, the Flexible Support Fund.

The aim of the trailblazer was to allow DWP to test elements of support for the very long-term unemployed in a live setting to inform future policy development and to gain a greater understanding of how best to support very long-term JSA claimants to move closer to the labour market and ultimately find sustained employment. A secondary objective of the trailblazer programme was to test the extent to which participants were motivated to sign off benefits in order to avoid the disruption on their lives caused by the mandatory and intensive elements of the programme. In addition to the OCM and CAP strands, the trailblazer also had a three month pre-programme notification period, designed, in part, to test this objective.

1.1.2 SVLTU trailblazer programme design

There were a number of key features and minimum requirements of the SVLTU programme: First, a **three-month notification period** preceded both the OCM and CAP strands during which claimants received monthly letters informing them about their allocation to one of the three trailblazer strands, and outlining what would be involved. This period ran from November 2011 to January 2012. Findings on this aspect of the programme are reported in Chapter 4.

In relation to the OCM strand, while advisers could generally tailor the offer of support to individual claimants, OCM had two **core elements** (discussed further in Chapter 5). These were required for all OCM participants and included: a) a compliance interview, where claimants were referred for an appointment with a Compliance Officer who checked the accuracy of the personal information held on them; and b) more frequent signing, daily or weekly, at the discretion of the adviser.

With regards to the CAP strand the contracted provider was responsible for finding a suitable **work placement**, which had a benefit to the community and did not displace paid jobs, for a maximum of 30 hours a week. The provider also needed to maintain weekly contact with participants and provide up to ten hours a week of **jobsearch support**. The programme could involve more than one placement, but participants were required to spend at least 21 weeks on placement overall. Claimants still had to attend Fortnightly Jobsearch Review (FJR) meetings at Jobcentre Plus.

If participants failed to attend their work placement or participate in mandatory activities as part of OCM or JCPO, they could have their benefits stopped for up to 26 weeks. Providers were responsible for referring participants for a **benefit sanction** if they failed to attend the CAP placement.

In Jobcentre Plus offices in Nottingham city, the OCM strand was designed to enable advisers to work in **partnership with Nottingham City Council**. The aim was for advisers to refer OCM participants to the City Council to offer local authority support to people with work barriers that could be tackled by local authority input (for example, housing, substance misuse, childcare or debt issues). Details of this aspect of the trailblazer design are described in Appendix (Feedback on the Nottingham Model, page 115).

1.2 The SVLTU evaluation

1.2.1 Aims and objectives

The overall aim of the evaluation is to provide information to enhance DWP's understanding of how best to support claimants who complete two years on the Work Programme and inform policy development for the future.

The research findings presented here are part of a broader evaluation of the SVLTU programme which draws on a number of different strands of evidence. DWP are publishing off-flow statistics alongside this research report and will be publishing job outcome statistics in 2013. The findings presented in this report are based on qualitative research and a quantitative survey of trailblazer participants.

The specific research objectives were to:

- compare hard and soft outcomes for OCM and CAP with the JCPO control group;
- identify the different types and levels of support offered to participants in the delivery of the OCM strand and compare this with the JCPO;
- explore the views of staff involved in the operational delivery of OCM, CAP and JCPO⁷, on the nature of the support offered, what has worked well, challenges faced, solutions developed; lessons for ways of working and claimant response to participation;
- gather views from participants on their experience of taking part in CAP or receiving support from OCM or the JCPO; and
- map the range and nature of participant responses to their allocation to each strand of the trailblazer prior to starting on the strand; specifically, to explore attitudes and behaviour prompted by their allocation, including effects on stopping benefit claims.

1.2.2 Design and methods

The evaluation was carried out using a quantitative survey of participants and qualitative methodologies to explore the views and experiences of the SVLTU trailblazer among key populations of interest, namely DWP and Jobcentre Plus staff, Nottingham City Council staff, trailblazer participants, CAP providers and work placement hosts.

Qualitative fieldwork

The qualitative fieldwork was carried out in two separate waves and across all four participating districts. Further details on the sampling and recruitment of these interviews can be found in Appendix C of the technical appendices published alongside this report.

Wave 1: The aim of the first wave was to provide an opportunity to gather early feedback on and responses to the trailblazer from Jobcentre Plus staff and JSA claimants. Telephone interviews were conducted with 30 claimants who were allocated to, but did not participate in, the CAP and OCM strands and 21 claimants who were participating in the programme. These interviews captured early responses to allocation and experiences of the programmes. Telephone interviews with 19 Jobcentre Plus advisers delivering OCM and eight managers⁸ were also carried out at this stage to explore early feedback on set-up and implementation. This took place in February and March 2012.

⁷ Including DWP, Jobcentre Plus and Nottingham City Council staff involved in the delivery of OCM and JCPO, and DWP, provider and host organisation staff involved in the delivery of CAP.

⁸ A Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for the programme and a District Manager in each district.

Wave 2: The aim of the second wave of qualitative fieldwork was to explore views and experiences of the programmes at a later stage from the perspectives of staff and participants in the three strands. The participant fieldwork involved telephone and face-to-face in-depth interviews with 70 participants in total, 30 on OCM, 25 on CAP and 15 on the JCPO.

Interviews with staff involved in the delivery of OCM and JCPO included:

- 17 depth interviews with PAs, four in three districts and five in one district;
- 12 individual or group interviews with Jobcentre Plus Managers, three interactions in each district;
- eight interviews with Compliance Officers, two in each district; and
- three group discussions with Jobcentre Plus and Nottingham City Council staff involved in the joint delivery model.

The CAP component comprised in-depth interviews with the CAP Performance Managers for each of the two Contract Package Areas (CPAs) and Third Party Provision Managers (TPPMs) for each district. Prime and subcontractors for each CPA and 16 CAP placement hosts were also interviewed.

Wave 2 fieldwork took place between April and August 2012.

Each interview was conducted with the use of a topic guide. Topic guides were designed in collaboration with DWP (see Appendix C of the technical appendices published alongside this report for further details of the themes covered in topic guides). All interviews were digitally recorded with participants' consent.

Quantitative survey of SVLTU participants

In total telephone interviews were conducted with 1,565 individuals. The following provides an overview of the survey methodology, focusing upon the sample, questionnaire content, fieldwork and weighting.

Sample

The sample was drawn from DWP records with the aim of achieving 500 interviews each with participants on CAP, OCM and the JCPO.

The issued sample consisted of all participants who started on these programmes between 1 November 2011 and 14 February 2012 who had not been approached to take part in previous research. This consisted of 5,836 cases: 2,009 OCM participants, 1,781 CAP participants and 2,046 JCPO participants. The sample was issued in two waves according to the date participants started on the programme, with the aim of conducting the interview around six to seven months after starting on the programme.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire covered the following topics, routing respondents through the relevant blocks of questions according to the type of provision that had started:

- participants' understanding of their support option when starting on CAP/OCM;
- details of the support they received under OCM or Jobcentre Plus and any potential gaps in provision;
- details of their CAP placement and activities undertaken;
- participants' overall rating of the provision;

- current benefit/employment status;
- background socio-demographics and wellbeing.

On average the interviews lasted between 20 and 25 minutes.

Prior to the main fieldwork, a short pilot was undertaken after which the questionnaire was revised.

Fieldwork and response rates

Prior to the start of fieldwork all sample members were sent an opt-out letter which introduced the study and explained that NatCen would like to make contact to ask them to participate. The letter gave recipients the option of informing NatCen that they did not wish to participate by a given date (ten days after the letter was posted).

At the end of this period, those sample members who had not opted out were issued to the telephone unit to be contacted. The fieldwork took place between 26 June and 13 August 2012. In total 1,565 interviews were conducted. The following table shows the breakdown by sample type and the associated response rates.

Table 1.1 Response rates

	OCM	CAP	Jobcentre Plus	Total
Sample selected	2,009	1,781	2,046	5,836
Opted out	306	290	309	905
Issued to telephone unit	1,703	1,491	1,737	4,931
Number not working/respondent moved or died	193	333	334	860
Total with valid telephone number	1,510	1,158	1,403	4,071
Fully productive interviews	507	514	544	1565
Response rate (% of eligible cases)	34	44	39	38
Response rate (% of eligible cases covered)	73	53	76	66

Weighting

The final data was weighted prior to analysis. In order to compare the three groups (OCM, CAP and Jobcentre Plus), the survey data for each were weighted so that their distributions matched those of the population of SVLTU trailblazer participants for a number of key measures: sex, age group, ethnic group (white compared to non-white), time on benefit (less than two years compared to two years or longer), whether disabled or not, number of sanctions (0, 1 and 2 or more), and the district. This was done by separately calibrating the survey data for each group to the marginal population distributions for each of these key measures.

1.3 Reading this report

1.3.1 Interpreting survey results

The results from the descriptive analyses of the quantitative survey are presented in the tables in Appendix A of the technical appendices published alongside this report, and interpreted in the text of this report. The bases for the tables include all of the respondents who were asked the particular question, excluding those who did not give a valid response (i.e. either refused to answer or did not know). Consequently the totals for some charts and graphs will not be 100 per cent. Statistical significance of differences was tested using a logistic regression and significant differences at the five per cent level are highlighted in the table.

1.3.2 Interpreting qualitative findings

The reporting of qualitative findings deliberately avoids giving numerical values, since qualitative research cannot support numerical analysis. This is because purposive sampling seeks to achieve range and diversity among sample members rather than to build a statistically representative sample, and because the questioning methods used are designed to explore issues in depth within individual contexts rather than to generate data that can be analysed numerically. What qualitative research does do is to provide in-depth insight into the range of experiences, views and recommendations. Wider inference can be drawn on these bases rather than on the basis of prevalence.

Verbatim quotations and case illustrations are used to illuminate findings. They are labelled to indicate respondent group, e.g. PA or participant. Further information is not given in order to protect the anonymity of research participants. Quotes and case studies are drawn from across the sample.

1.4 Report outline

The report presents integrated findings from the qualitative and quantitative elements of the evaluation. The findings are presented in the following chapters:

Chapter 2: a description of the characteristics of the trailblazer participants and the support and activities they had received during the six months on the two programme strands and the control group;

Chapter 3: a presentation of the survey findings on the reported outcomes of the trailblazer, both in terms of job outcomes, and other work-related outcomes and employability. This chapter compares outcomes across the two programme strands and the control group;

Chapter 4: a detailed description of participant views and experiences of the trailblazer, drawing on survey data and qualitative material, to explore responses to the programme and views about what was helpful about OCM and CAP in moving closer to work and what was less effective;

Chapter 5: a discussion of Jobcentre Plus and provider staff views about the programme, in particular drawing out what aspects of the OCM and CAP were felt to have made a positive difference in achieving successful outcomes, as well as aspects of the programme design which were less effective;

Chapter 6: a description of the operation and delivery of the two programme strands, presenting qualitative feedback from delivery staff on what worked well operationally, and what was more challenging. The chapter draws out lessons for implementation if the programme was rolled out nationally;

Chapter 7: a discussion of the evidence on how well the trailblazer worked in achieving successful outcomes, elements that facilitated and limited its ability to do so, and the implications of this evidence for potential national roll-out of a similar programme for the very long-term unemployed.

2 Description of support

Chapter summary

The majority of trailblazer participants were male, nearly one half were aged 40 or over and a third reported having a long-term illness or disability. Twenty-three per cent had not worked for five years or more, and a further seven per cent had never worked. These features are characteristic of the very long-term unemployed claimant group.

Jobcentre Plus and provider staff reported that the trailblazer participant group tended to have complex needs and a range of different challenging barriers. These included very low motivation, low confidence, ill-health and disability (including mental health problems and learning disabilities), drug and alcohol dependency, low literacy and numeracy, and criminal records.

Since starting Ongoing Case Management (OCM), 66 per cent of participants reported that they had more frequent contact with their Personal Adviser (PA), and 43 per cent had met with their PA once a week, compared to only six per cent of the control group. A quarter of OCM participants reported more personalised support on OCM than previously, and a quarter also reported going on Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) (a compulsory four-week work placement), compared to 14 per cent of the control group. There was qualitative evidence that OCM generally offered a more intensive, active and personalised support provided from PAs, as well as continuity of support from a single adviser.

A third of OCM participants, however, reported no difference in their support from Jobcentre Plus since the start of the programme. This may reflect the view of some Jobcentre Plus staff that there were offices where OCM did not differ significantly from the standard Jobcentre Plus Offer (JCPO). Staff tended to feel this where large caseloads made it difficult for PAs to work with OCM participants in a very intensive way, or where it was already standard practice for Jobcentre Plus participants to have greater frequency and continuity of PA contact.

Around 60 per cent of Community Action Programme (CAP) participants had been placed on a work placement during the 6-month CAP period, and half of these placements had lasted six months or more. A small percentage (13 per cent) of participants had changed placement, but the large majority of these had done just two placements.

Approximately half of CAP placements were with charities, and a further third served the local community or environment. Analysis of placements where full details were available indicates that the community benefit criteria were being met. Around half of the placements were in the 'elementary' occupations such as shop worker or warehouse operator, and just over a third were in 'customer service' occupations, covering roles such as shop and café work. The majority of CAP participants were dealing with the public/serving customers on their placement, with between a third and a half dealing with stock and/or using a till. Smaller proportions were doing manual or physical work.

The majority of participants who were not placed in a work placement said they had been looking and applying for work while on CAP. Participants who were not placed were more likely to have been out of work longer, have lower qualifications and/or have a criminal record, compared with participants who were placed.

Not all CAP participants said they had received jobsearch help from their CAP provider (61 per cent had received help); where they had, around two-thirds had received help once a week. However, participants who were not placed were less likely than participants on placement to have received support from the provider to help them find work.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides key contextual information relating to programme delivery to frame the following chapters on impact and experiences. This includes a description of the profile of participants on the programme strands, the types of support received on each strand and how these were delivered.

This chapter draws largely on the survey data with participants, with added insights drawn from qualitative interviews with staff and participants.

2.2 Profile of SVLTU trailblazer participants

2.2.1 Characteristics of trailblazer participants

The survey collected data on the self-reported characteristics of the very long-term unemployed in all three strands.

Demographic profile

The majority of the trailblazer participants were male (76 per cent), white (88 per cent) and nearly half were aged 40 or over (49 per cent). The majority (72 per cent) rented their home, and a relatively high proportion (35 per cent) reported having a long-term illness or disability. This is considerably higher than among the working age population in general; eight per cent of non-retired main household respondents in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) class themselves as long-term ill or disabled. The only personal characteristic that differed significantly between the three strands is parenthood status while just under a quarter of OCM (24 per cent) and CAP (23 per cent) participants had dependent children just under a third (31 per cent) of the control group were parents⁹ (Table A.2.1 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Position in the labour market and barriers to work

In addition to collecting basic demographic data the survey also collected information relating to participants' qualifications, length of spell without work and barriers to work. Figure 2.1 summarises this (for full details see Table A.2.1 in the technical appendices published alongside this report) and shows that in all three strands:

- the majority of participants had been unemployed for over two years (65 per cent of OCM and CAP respectively and 66 per cent of the control group), while a further seven to nine per cent had never worked (eight per cent of OCM, nine per cent of CAP and seven per cent of the control group);
- over a quarter of participants had no formal qualifications (27 per cent of OCM, 27 per cent of CAP and 29 per cent of the control group; this compares with ten per cent of respondents in the LFS) and the largest proportion of participants had GCSEs as their highest qualification (45 per cent of OCM and the control group respectively and 40 per cent of CAP participants).

⁹ Twenty-seven per cent of non-retired main household respondents in the Labour Force Survey who report having been unemployed for two years or more are parents.

Figure 2.1 Gap in work record and qualifications

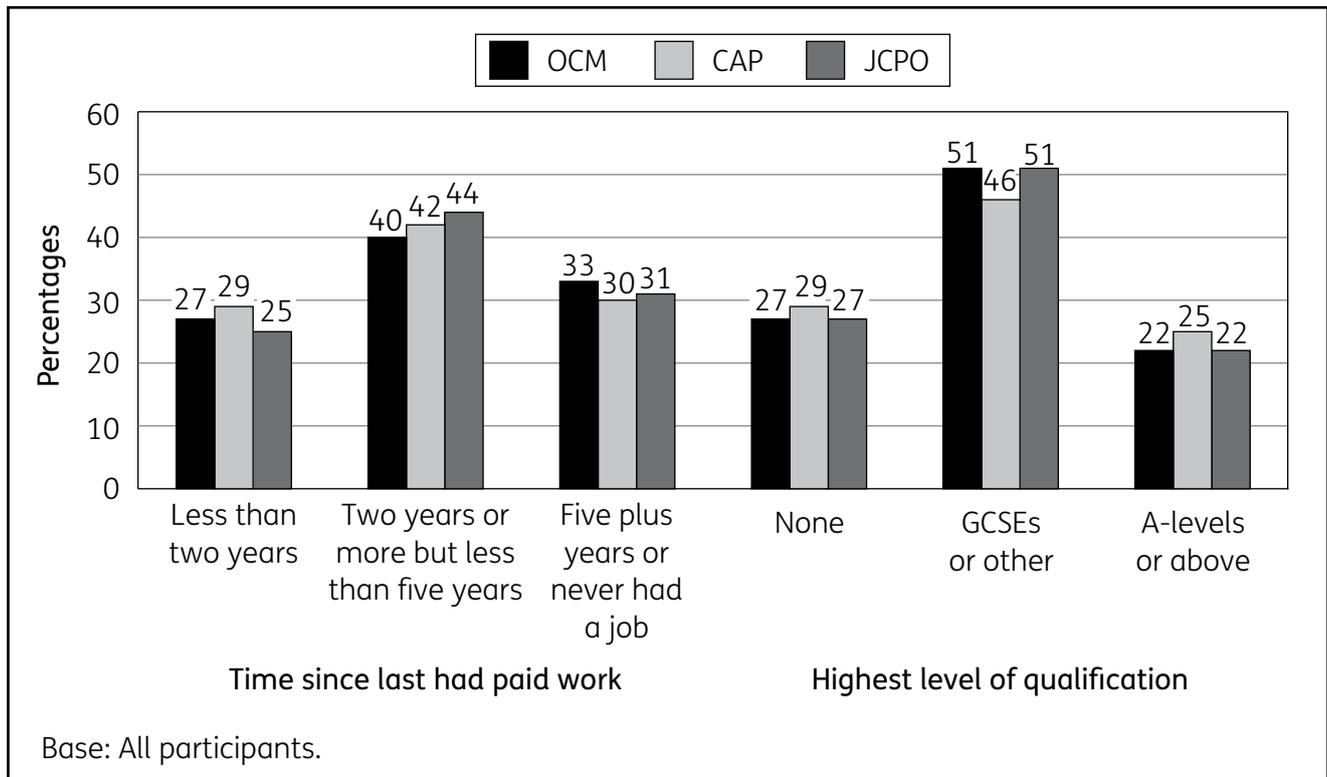
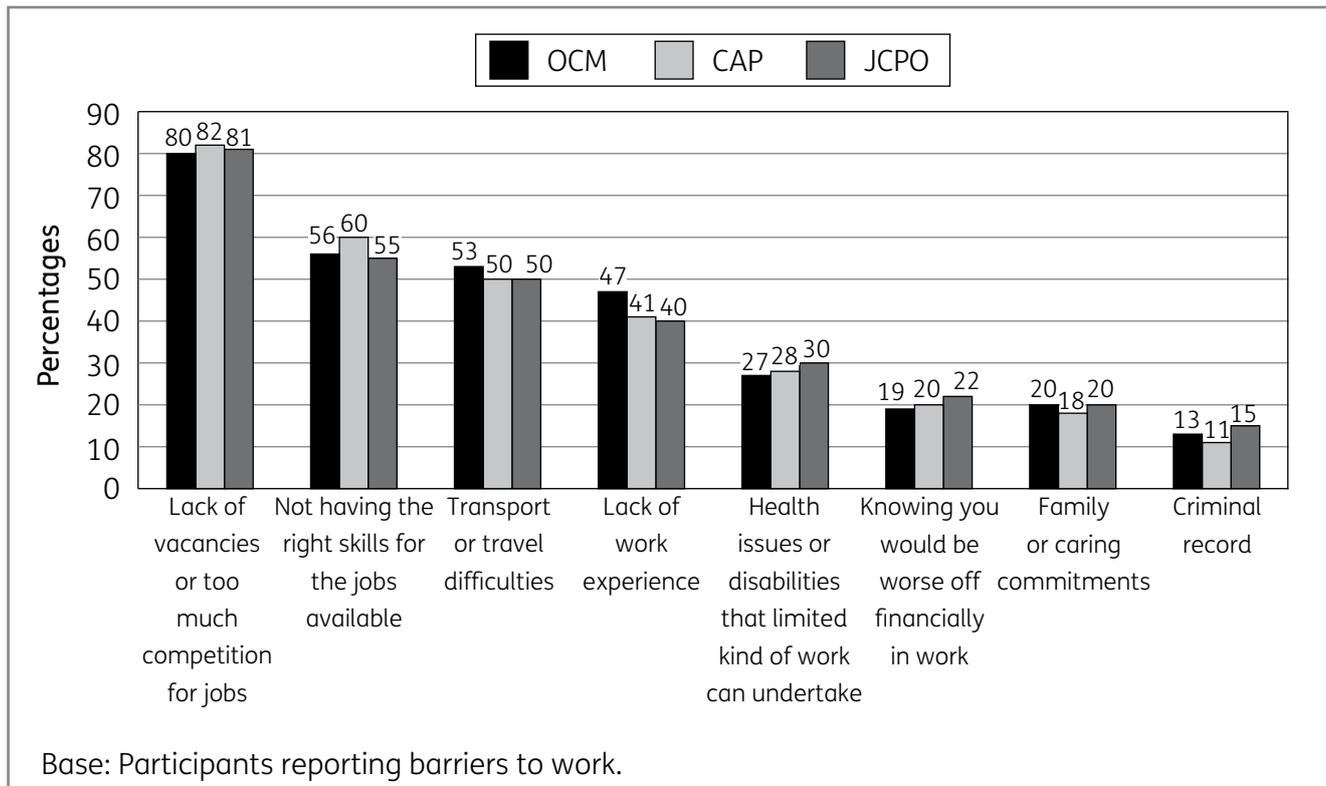


Figure 2.2 shows a number of the barriers to work participants reported having at the time of starting the programme, which to some extent reflect the personal characteristics discussed above. The most widely cited barrier (80 per cent of OCM, 82 per cent of CAP and 81 per cent of the control group) was a 'lack of vacancies or too much competition for jobs'. This relates to the situation in the wider economy, and can broadly be categorised as being 'external' to the participants themselves. All of the other factors essentially relate to personal factors affecting individuals. The most commonly cited of these was not having the correct skills for the jobs available (56 per cent of OCM, 60 per cent of CAP and 55 per cent of the control group), with a lack of work experience also figuring highly (47 per cent of OCM, 41 per cent of CAP and 40 per cent of the control group). These perceived barriers reflect the fact that the majority of trailblazer participants have been out of the labour market for over two years and also that, as a group, they are generally poorly qualified.

Figure 2.2 Barriers to work

Other important factors identified by participants that relate directly to their personal circumstances include transport or travel difficulties (cited by about half of participants in all three groups), work-limiting health issues (27 per cent of OCM, 28 per cent of CAP and 30 per cent of the control group) and family and caring commitments (20 per cent of OCM, 18 per cent of CAP and 20 per cent of the control group). None of the barriers reported varied significantly by programme strand, suggesting that the random allocation was successful in controlling for claimant characteristics.

Interestingly, whilst a fifth of participants also mention ‘*knowing [they] would be financially worse off in work*’ as a barrier to finding work, this doesn’t seem to translate into a lack of ‘motivation’; only three to four per cent of participants reported a general unwillingness to stop claiming benefits and move into work.

2.2.2 Staff perceptions of trailblazer participants

Jobcentre Plus and CAP staff felt that programme participants were a particularly challenging group to work with. Participants could be categorised as positioned along a spectrum, with two key challenging groups at either end: those unable to work (e.g. due to complex barriers) and those unwilling to work (e.g. due to long-term disengagement with the labour market). In the middle of this spectrum were participants who perhaps did not experience complex or substantial barriers to work but still needed support around confidence and motivational issues. The key barriers described by staff were:

- general lack of motivation;
- long-term disengagement from the labour market either due to long-term unemployment or no personal or family history of employment;
- low confidence;

- low levels of numeracy and literacy skills;
- learning difficulties;
- disabilities or chronic health problems;
- mental health problems;
- dependency issues, such as drug and alcohol abuse;
- homelessness and housing issues;
- family and childcare issues;
- lack of transport or an inability or unwillingness to travel;
- criminal records.

Of participants with criminal records, those with records for serious criminal offences were of particular concern to CAP providers. These participants were perceived as very hard or impossible to place given that they often had restrictions on the type of work they could do and represented a 'risk' to placement organisations.

2.3 OCM support

This section explores the support offered to participants under OCM including how this could vary and how, where appropriate, it compared to the standard JCPO.

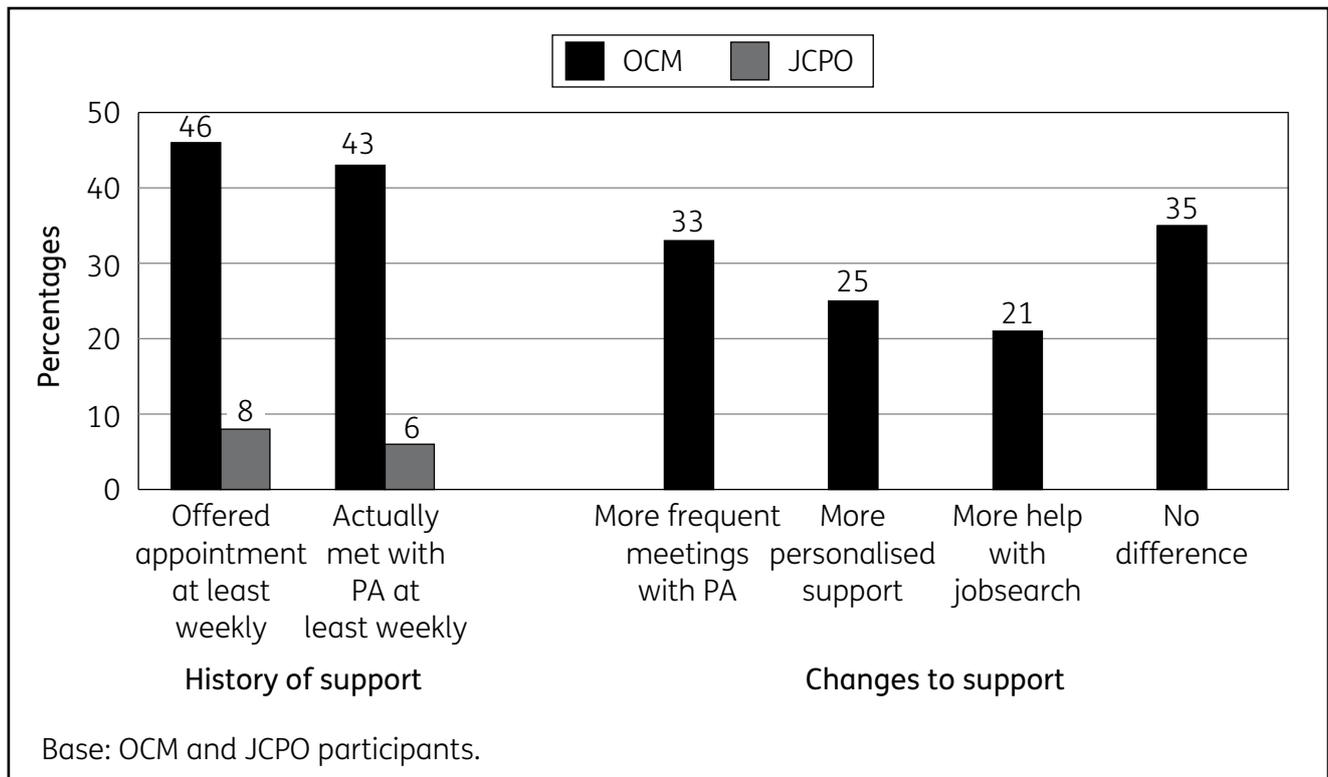
2.3.1 Description of support

A key feature of OCM is the intensity of the support it is intended to deliver to participants. Both the participant survey and the qualitative interviews with staff and participants suggest that OCM participants generally did report a difference in intensity of support compared to their previous experience.

In relation to **frequency of contact** with Jobcentre Plus, the participant survey shows that OCM participants had contact with their PA significantly more often than the control group. Forty-six per cent of OCM participants were offered appointments at least once a week and 43 per cent participants actually met with their PA this frequently, compared with eight per cent (offered) and six per cent (met) of the control group (Figure 2.3; Table A.2.2 in the technical appendices published alongside this report). When asked about the type of support received during the programme, more frequent appointments were mentioned by significantly more OCM participants (66 per cent of compared with 26 per cent of the control group; Table A.2.5 in the technical appendices published alongside this report). Also, within the OCM participant group, when participants were asked to recall how their support had changed under OCM, more frequent meetings with PAs was spontaneously reported by the largest proportion of OCM participants (33 per cent; see Figure 2.3 and Table A.2.3 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

In terms of the duration of sessions, on average the appointment times were slightly (but significantly) longer for OCM participants at 31.2 minutes, compared with 28.5 minutes for the control group (Table A.2.4 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Figure 2.3 OCM support



Participants were also asked in the survey about the **nature of the support offered**:

- significantly higher proportion of OCM participants had completed or started volunteer work (28 per cent), a work experience placement (26 per cent) or a compulsory four-week work placement (MWA) (25 per cent), compared with the control group (18 per cent, 17 per cent and 14 per cent);
- OCM participants were also more likely to report that they signed on weekly (37 per cent) or daily (ten per cent) compared with the control group (ten per cent and 1 per cent respectively);
- OCM participants were more likely to report that they had had their benefit eligibility checked by a specialist team (39 per cent compared with 17 per cent of the control group) and that they had completed a skills assessment to determine the kind of work they could do (34 per cent compared with 25 per cent of the control group);
- finally, OCM participants were also more likely to mention training. Thirty-five per cent of OCM participants had completed or started work-related training, while a third (33 per cent) mentioned training in jobsearch skills. This compares with 29 per cent and 25 per cent of the control group for work-related and jobsearch skills courses, respectively;
- a quarter of the control group reported not receiving any of the support types listed (24 per cent) compared with seven per cent of OCM participants (Table A.2.5 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). This also suggests that the OCM support was, on the whole, more intensive than that received by the control group.

When compared with the control group, OCM participants also mentioned a significantly higher number of different types of support (3.8 different types on average) compared with the control group (2.4). This suggests that in addition to more frequent and slightly longer appointments on average, the OCM strand also provided a wider range of support, possibly in an attempt to better tailor the support to participants' individual needs and circumstances. Indeed, a quarter (25 per cent) of OCM participants reported more personalised support and 21 percent felt they received

more help with jobsearch when commenting on how the support they received differed since the start of the programme (Table A.2.3 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

In the qualitative interviews with participants and staff, a strong feeling also existed that OCM offered something very different to what participants had received from Jobcentre Plus in the past, or from what the control group were receiving, namely contact between the PA and participant which was more frequent, intensive and flexibly offered and better access to work experience. The continuity of PA was also highlighted as a key difference. Participants who noticed changes to the support they received also pointed to the frequency and types of support as key to this. Table 2.1 sets out, in more detail, the range of differences described in these interviews.

Table 2.1 Range of changes in the support offered according to staff and participants

Intense adviser interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More frequent signing on – participants coming in on either a weekly or daily basis for some of their six months • Discretionary use of Jobseekers’ Directions to make elements of OCM mandatory, e.g. attending meetings or training • Continuity of PA – seeing the same adviser for all sessions • Case conferencing with PAs • PA support extending beyond just the monitoring of respondents’ jobsearch activities to active support in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) identifying and providing for training needs; b) bringing employment opportunities to the attention of participants; c) help meeting costs for work-related expenses (e.g. tools and clothing); d) helping respondents with their CV and submitting job application – i.e. going beyond signposting vacancies to helping participants follow-up on these; e) providing emotional support (e.g. helping to boost confidence, providing support); f) doing Better Off Calculations (BOCs) for participants; g) identifying funding to help participants into employment (e.g. New Enterprise Allowance, Flexible Support Fund)
Training opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This included opportunities directly relating to employment opportunities (e.g. CSCS health and safety certification for working on building sites, HGV licences, care training, IT skills and seminars on working in the retail sector) but also around other ‘softer’ skills (e.g. job interview skills, literacy and numeracy skills) • In-house jobsearch skills – e.g. mock interviews with participants to help them prepare for vacancies Referring participants to external providers for such courses or for additional jobsearch help and careers advice – e.g. local employers involved in delivering ‘mock interviews’ to participants
Work experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant receiving short-term work placements under OCM, either voluntary or part of MWA, typically lasting three to four weeks. Examples of placements included bar work and warehouse/library work
Meeting wider needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff liaising with Jobcentre Plus work psychologists or other employment advisers PAs liaising with Council services in Nottingham in relation to Housing Aid or Welfare Rights to improve outcomes for participants in relation to these areas Staff liaising with external providers (e.g. Family Support Services, Age Concern, GPs) to offer participants support around substance abuse issues (e.g. drug and alcohol issues), dyslexia, family issues and to ascertain whether they were on the right benefits In-house help around wider issues – e.g. ‘drop-in’ services within JCPs to help around housing and benefit issues

However, it is worth noting that not all participants and staff felt that OCM offered something significantly different, including in relation to the frequency and duration of meetings and the support they were offered compared with standard offer. Around one-third of OCM participants surveyed (35 per cent) reported no difference to their support since the start of the programme. In relation to work experience placements specifically, the participant survey suggests that OCM participants reported little change since the start of the programme, with just five per cent reporting going on placements and six per cent reporting more help with getting a work experience placement (Table A.2.3 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Likewise, whilst one strong staff view was to regard OCM as different because of the intensity of the PA-participant relationship, another was to view it as offering pre-existing options to participants in a slightly more structured format. Some Jobcentre Plus staff went further and did not feel that OCM was in any way very different to what standard Jobcentre Plus trailblazer participants were receiving. This was particularly the case where:

- large caseloads precluded PAs from working with OCM participants in a very intensive way;
- there was not felt to be any local provision which targeted the long-term unemployed in particular;
- it was already standard office practice for claimants to see the same PA each time and more frequently.

2.3.2 OCM delivery models

The qualitative interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff also provide insights into the delivery of OCM. Broadly speaking, PAs used the following approach with OCM participants:

- orientation interview to gain insight into participants' circumstances. The use of a Customer Assessment Tool (CAT)¹⁰ for this varied; whilst some PAs found this useful, others thought that more could be found out simply by talking to participants or through a detailed examination of their case history (for example, their previous employment patterns, records of applying for work and stated work aspirations). The recurrent view was that it was important not to rush into mandatory activities prior to understanding the participant's needs;
- typically, PAs then focused on ensuring that participants had an up-to-date CV and access to an email address. In some cases, PAs worked personally with participants on this and in others sent them to external providers;
- work on interview skills was also a common early intervention.

However, beyond this broad approach, OCM was not being offered in a standard way across sites or even between individual PAs. This reflects the design of OCM in which districts were actively encouraged to tailor OCM to meet local needs of different sites and caseloads. There were variations in particular as to how prescriptive or not the approach to the participant journey was. Accordingly, differences were reported around the extent to which flexibility was employed, what was offered to participants, and the use of mandatory options, such as more frequent signing in. These variations are summed up here:

¹⁰ Jobcentre Plus staff use the CAT during their advisory interviews to record the evidence gained from a work-targeted interview about key attributes found to give customers the best chance of finding work. CAT is a profiling, rather than assessment tool – which records, rather than generates, outcomes. CAT covers a full range of attributes, including skills.

- **The extent to which flexibility was employed within OCM:** in some cases, PAs were following a pre-arranged 'schedule' which set out what intervention they should be using with participants and when. At the opposite end of the spectrum, PAs talked about having total flexibility in what they used and the timings based on the needs of participants, as a 'one size fits all' approach was not seen to be helpful
- **Use of More Frequent Attendance (MFA):** whilst it was normal for participants to sign on weekly for at least some of their six months, there were differences in the extent to which this was mandated and prescribed, compared to being down to PA discretion. There were also differences in the use of daily signings. In some cases, PAs were specifically asked to have daily signings over a certain number of days and at certain times during the six months. Other PAs said that whether or not to use daily signing was down to their own discretion. As mentioned earlier, one key consideration which informed this was whether participants were suspected to be working while claiming
- **Use of MWA:** in one area PAs said they used MWA with all OCM participants after a set number of weeks. In other cases, its use was down to PA discretion and PAs said that they only used MWA for certain types of participants, particularly where placements were limited. These included in particular: participants who were felt to need a stronger 'push'; younger age groups (18-24), who were felt to benefit from early work-related interventions; those closer to work who, it was felt, would be helped by additional work experience to make the step into employment. Conversely, voluntary work was often felt to better suit those who needed a 'softer' approach involving support going into a familiar setting. Some PAs felt that they would have used MWA much more if more placements had been available locally.

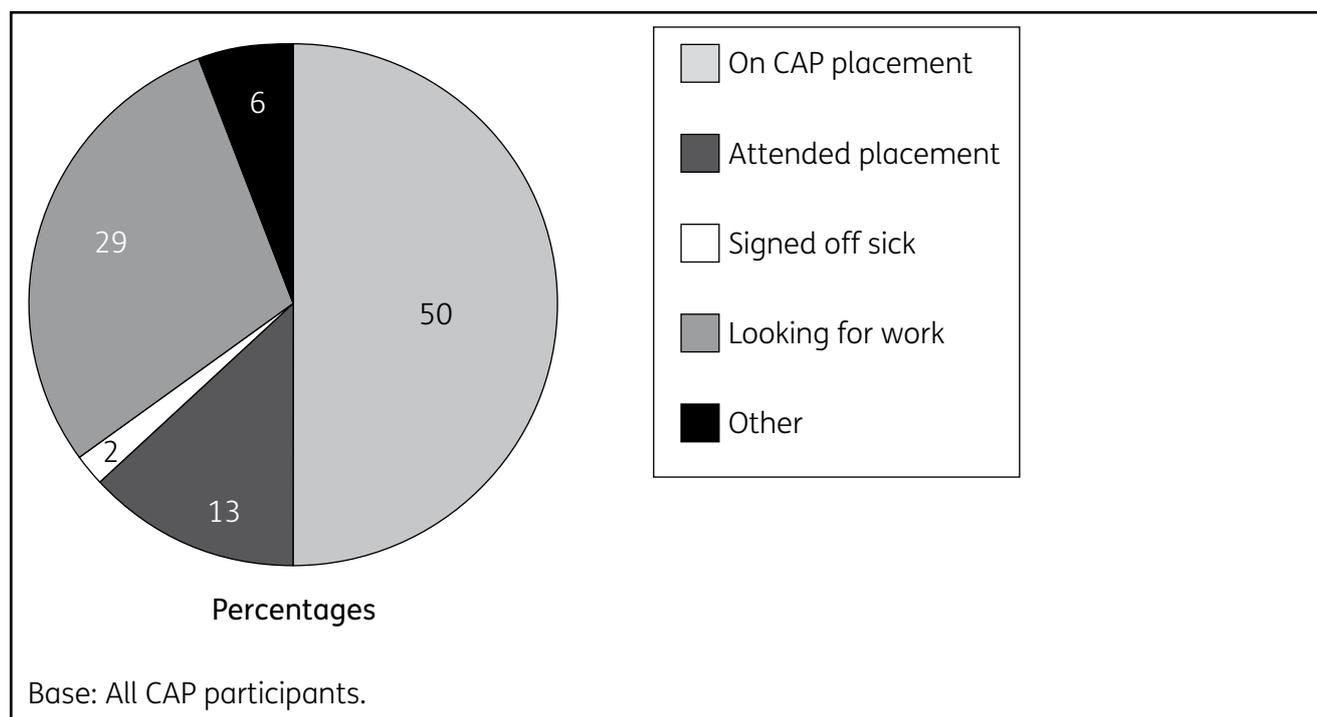
In addition to how prescriptive or not approaches were, there were also two other factors that underpinned this variability: a) the degree of choice and quality of local provision to refer to; and b) PAs' knowledge and experience. In relation to the former, staff responses ranged from strong satisfaction with the range and quality of local provision for the long-term unemployed, to feeling that it offered little new, was of poor quality or that there were gaps. Key perceived gaps included: ESOL courses, provision specifically for the long-term unemployed, basic literacy and numeracy training, good quality IT courses and support for those with learning difficulties. Offices away from urban centres also felt that there was a problem for their participants in having to travel some distance to reach appropriate providers (for more detail, see Section 6.2.4). In relation to the latter, PAs varied in terms of their experience in the role and knowledge of provision, for example in applying for low level procurement funding. This affected the support they were able to deliver to participants.

2.4 CAP support

This section describes the work placements given to CAP participants, as well as the support they received from both CAP providers and on the work placements.

2.4.1 Work placements

When asked, 50 per cent of CAP participants reported having been on a work placement or work experience (Table A.2.6 of the technical appendices published alongside this report; Figure 2.1). However, as outlined in Figure 2.1, when asked what they had done instead a further 13 per cent indicated that they had in fact had work experience, suggesting that they had been on a work experience placement. Therefore, we can conclude that up to 63 per cent of CAP participants had been placed on a work placement.

Figure 2.4 Whether on CAP placement, and activity if not

Number and length of placements

Those 50 per cent who did indicate that they had attended a work placement were asked to describe the length and intensity of their placements. Just over half (52 per cent) of these participants indicated that their placement lasted six months or more, with a fifth (21 per cent) reporting that it lasted less than ten weeks and 27 per cent reporting that it had lasted for between ten and 25 weeks (Table A.2.7 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Some of this variation can be explained by participants still being part-way through their placement, but in other cases this will have been due to participants either dropping out of placements, or changing placement mid-way through the programme or leaving benefit. In the survey 13 per cent of CAP participants reported changing placement (Table A.2.8 of the technical appendices published alongside this report), with 90 per cent of these participants reporting doing two placements.

Participants who reported changing placement were also asked why this had happened. The responses suggest there were two main reasons: not liking the first placement accounted for 44 per cent of responses, whilst 31 per cent reported that it was because they were no longer needed. In addition to this, six per cent reported that they had left JSA altogether and then rejoined before being referred back to the scheme and 27 per cent gave a range of other responses (Table A.2.8 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

The qualitative interviews with participants, staff and providers suggest that there were a number of explanations accounting for participants reporting that they were '*no longer needed at first placement*':

- in some cases placement hosts sent participants back to providers. This occurred for a number of reasons including participants being deemed unsuitable, concerns about a participant's behaviour or conduct, or other changes at placements meaning that participants could no longer be accommodated (discussed in more detail in Section 6.3.2);
- in other cases participants were removed from placements by the placement providers, either because the placements were deemed unsuitable or because there may have been health and safety concerns;

- there were also instances of placement hosts pulling out of the programme altogether. The general view among staff was that most of those who pulled out did so because of negative publicity around government work experience schemes but there were also instances of them pulling out because of problems with the participants they were sent;
- in the case of those who ‘*didn’t like their first placement*’, the qualitative interviews show that in some cases a change came about as a result of a discussion between participant and placement organiser. There were also cases of participants simply not turning up at their placement, or dropping out of the programme altogether.

Intensity of placements

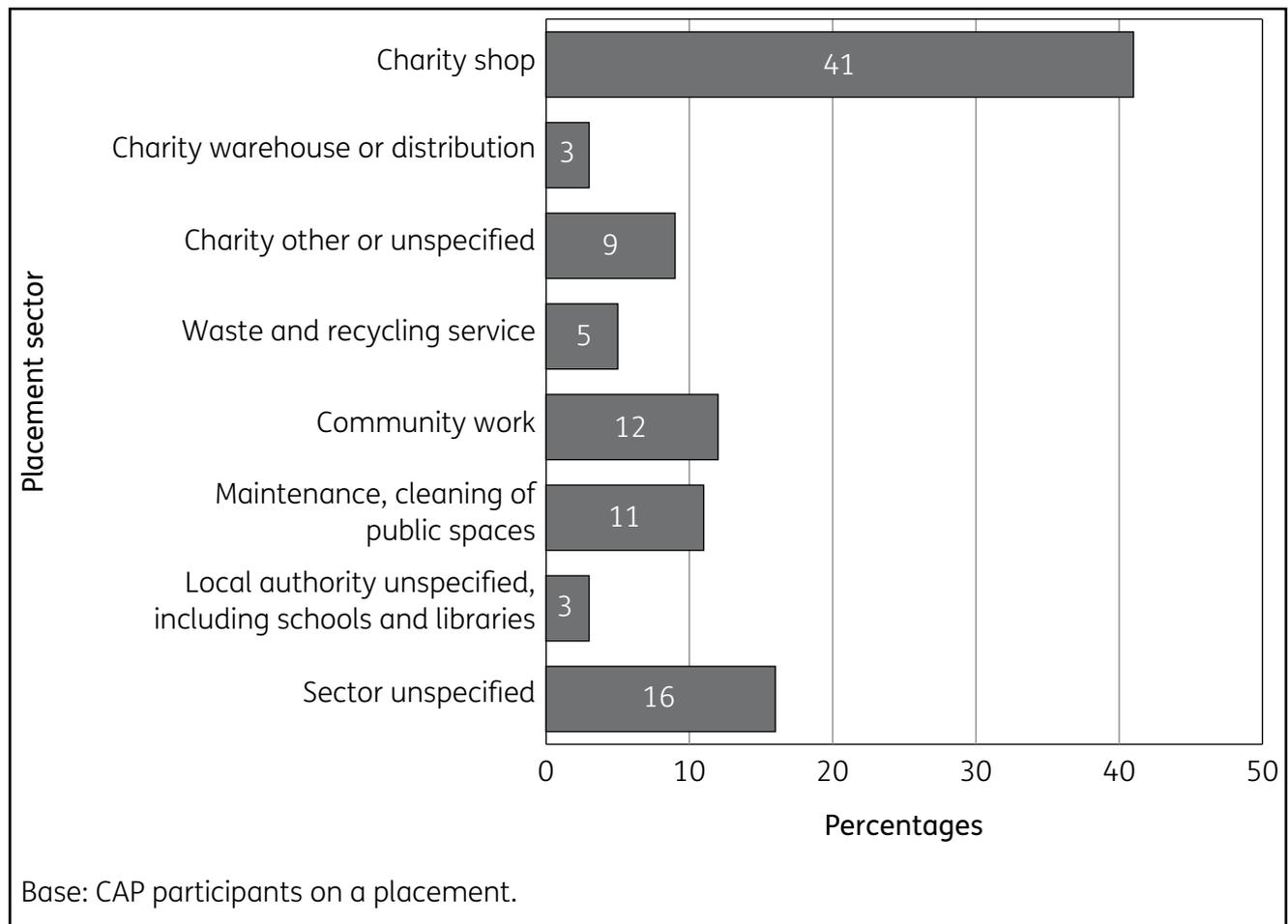
Participants who indicated they had been on placement were asked how many hours they worked each week in their placement. The majority of participants (67 per cent) worked between 30 and 39 hours per week on their unpaid placement, while a small minority reported working over 40 hours (six per cent) and about a quarter (26 per cent) worked part-time hours (Table A.2.7 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Interviews with staff, placement hosts and participants suggest that part of this variation in hours worked could be due to a degree of flexibility inherent to the process. Whilst there was a general awareness of the standard requirement for a 30-hour week arrangement, in some cases provisions would be made, either formally or informally, if placements or participants had specific needs or requirements¹¹. The interviews also suggest instances of atypical working patterns, including shift and weekend working. These tended to be driven by the needs of placements and to be negotiated on an individual basis, forming part of the core hour requirement, rather than being additional overtime.

Placement characteristics

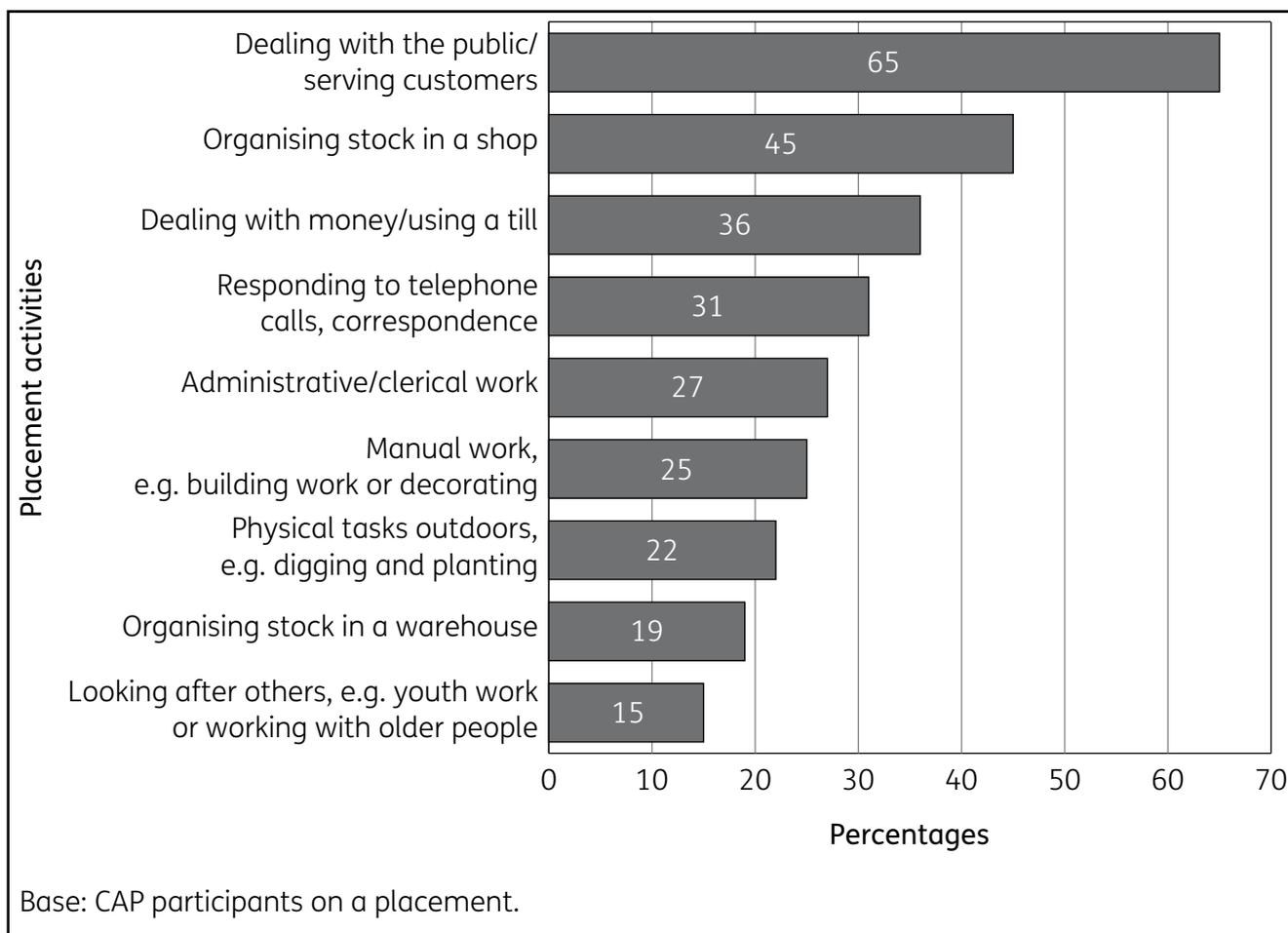
CAP placements were intended to be of benefit to the community and bearing this in mind the participants’ descriptions of what the placement host made or did was categorised into broad sectors (Table A.2.9 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). As shown in Figure 2.5, half of the placements were with charities (53 per cent), with the most common placement type being in a charity shop (41 per cent). Other common placements included community work, such as working in a community centre or in services for the elderly (12 per cent), and grounds work, maintenance, cleaning and gardening in public spaces, parks and social housing (11 per cent). The placement sector was not apparent from the answers of 16 per cent of the participants; it is possible that a large proportion of these placements were also in the charitable sector or of other benefit to the community. The large proportion of placements in the charity shop category reflects the feelings of staff in the qualitative interviews who expressed concern about an over-emphasis on charity shop work at the start of the programme, although this was felt to have broadened out over time.

¹¹ CAP participants are not required to work more hours than agreed in their Jobseeker’s Agreement.

Figure 2.5 CAP placement sectors

The roles performed by the participants on CAP placements mainly fell into two occupational categories: ‘Elementary occupations’ (49 per cent) and ‘Sales and participant service occupations’ (35 per cent) (Table A.2.9 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). Elementary occupations include work such as farm worker, construction labourer, cleaner, shelf-stacker or warehouse operator, whilst participant service occupations include categories such as shop and café work. These broadly reflect the placements described in interviews with both participants and providers.

In addition to the sector classification and job role, participants were also asked to describe the activities they performed whilst on placement (Table A.2.10 of the technical appendices published alongside this report; Figure 2.6). The majority of participants mentioned dealing with members of the public or serving participants (65 per cent), with other common tasks including organising stock in a shop (45 per cent) or in a warehouse (19 per cent). Dealing with money or using a till was mentioned by 36 per cent of participants, whilst clerical work such as responding to telephone calls and correspondence was mentioned by 31 per cent and other administrative tasks such as filing and photocopying was mentioned by 27 per cent. A considerable minority mentioned more manual activities such as building and decorating work (25 per cent) and other physical tasks outdoors such as digging and planting (22 per cent). These are broadly in line with both the sector classifications and job roles described above.

Figure 2.6 Tasks performed on CAP placements

Based on participants' descriptions of the placements, it seems reasonable to infer that the placements were generally of community benefit. Half of the participants (53 per cent) directly mentioned working for charities, many of which serve specific community groups, while a further third (31 per cent) described work that may have been through a local authority, housing association or private contractors but directly served the local community or local environment (Table A.2.9 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Selecting and setting up placements

Interviews with providers suggest that they had often sourced a set of placements before the start of the programme, and then worked to match participants to appropriate placements. This met with some success, whilst also being limited by a number of factors, described in more detail in Chapter 6.

Most placements were offered in a range of community settings in line with the objectives of the scheme, but there were instances of private sector placements being offered. This tended to be due to the specific requirements of participants, and the limited or non-availability of the types of work placement requested by participants in the voluntary sector (e.g. warehousing).

Interviews with both placement providers and participants suggested that during the programme inductions the placements would generally be offered in one of three ways:

- **solely by the provider.** Whilst this sometimes but not always entailed a conversation between the provider and participant, it would end up with the participant being 'sent' on a particular placement with no choice being offered. The interviews with staff and placement providers suggest that

this could either be the result of limited availability of placements in an area, or a need to place participants quickly in order to meet their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and was linked to the high volume of participants being referred to them in a short period (see Chapter 6);

- **through a dialogue between provider and participant:** In these instances participants would have a conversation with the provider, potentially discussing a range of factors including their strengths, weaknesses, experiences and preferences. Participants then tended either to have been offered a choice of placements by the provider or to have come to a mutual agreement about a type of placement that would be appropriate;
- **solely or mostly by the participant:** These included cases where the participant was already doing charity work which was then expanded or certified to satisfy the requirements of the programme, or where the provider's approach was to ask the participant what they wanted and then to provided them with as close a match as possible.

Ongoing support with placement

In addition to the selection and setting up of placements there were also instances of placement organisers providing additional support to the participants, either to ensure they have the correct equipment for their placements, or to ensure that the placements ran smoothly. Examples mentioned by both placement hosts and participants included:

- the payment of travel costs;
- providing clothing or safety equipment;
- discussing particular participant needs with placement hosts;
- dealing with issues or concerns that may arise on placement.

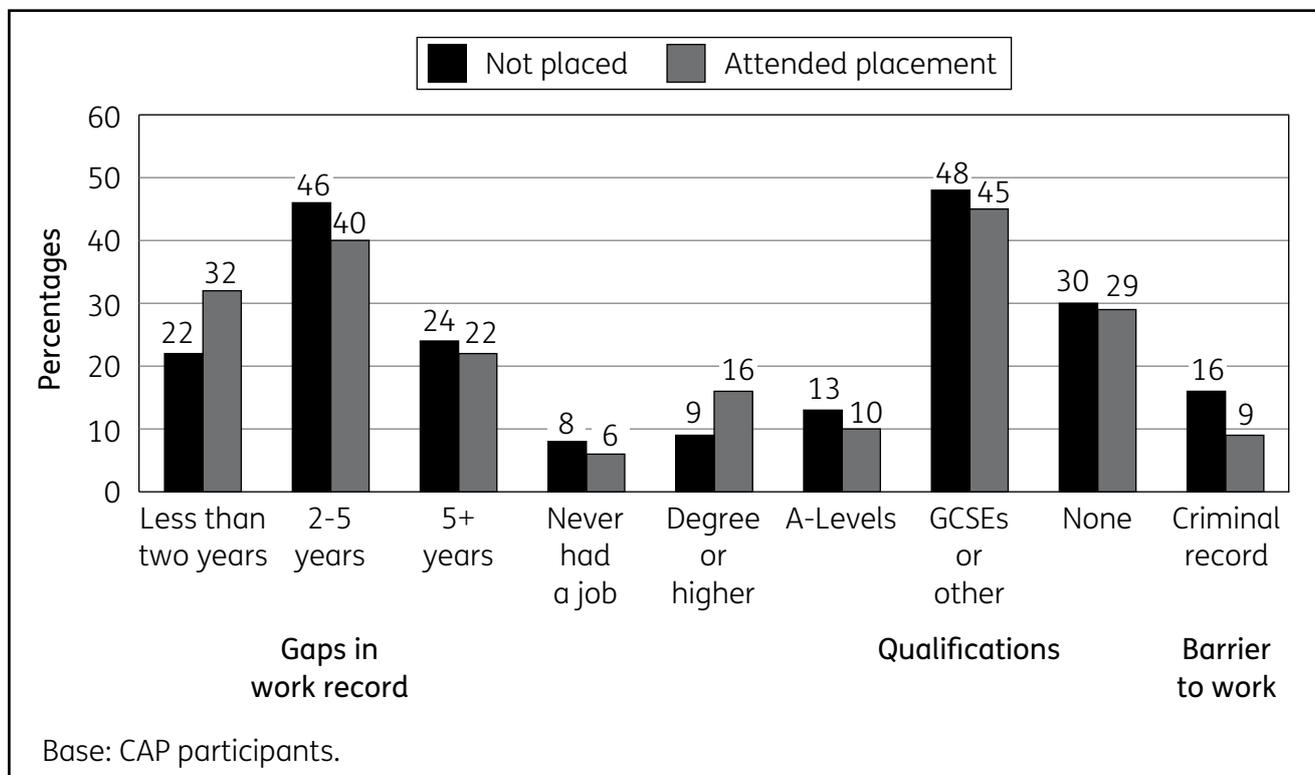
2.4.2 Participants not placed

CAP participants who reported not having been on a placement were asked what they had been doing during the programme. As outlined in Section 2.4.1 some participants (13 per cent) reported in response to a further question, that they had in fact been doing work placement activities such as unpaid or volunteer work, with many specifically mentioning work experience or work placements. Excluding these respondents, the majority of CAP participants who reported not having been placed indicated that they had been looking, and applying, for work as their main activity during the programme (77 per cent). A small minority (four per cent) had been signed off sick, while 22 per cent gave some other specific answer. Less than half a per cent said they had done nothing at all (Table A.2.11 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

While it is not possible directly to ascertain from the survey data whether some of the participants who were not placed might have dropped out of the programme before being placed, other information from the survey can shed some light on their engagement with the programme. The majority of the CAP participants not placed with a work experience placement were unemployed and claiming JSA at the time of the survey. As participants who have a break in their JSA claim and then return to JSA should have been re-referred to CAP, this suggests that disengagement from the programme is not the main reason for the high level of non placement. A comparison of the profile of personal characteristics of CAP participants who have and have not been placed on a work experience (Table A.2.12 of the technical appendices published alongside this report; Figure 2.7) showed that CAP participants that had not been placed were significantly less likely to have a short gap in their work record (22 per cent) or a higher qualification or degree (nine per cent) compared with 32 per cent and 16 per cent of those on placements respectively. On the other hand, CAP participants who had not been placed were more likely to have a criminal record (16 per cent) compared with participants on placements (nine per cent).

This suggests that the CAP participants who were not placed were further from the labour market and faced more complex barriers.

Figure 2.7 Placed and not placed CAP participants' position on labour market



This may reflect evidence from CAP providers that there were some participants who were either very hard or impossible to place because they had particularly challenging circumstances, or were subject to various restrictions, making them unsuitable for some or all of the placements available. A further explanation is the indication in staff and provider interviews of a tendency to focus support on those deemed more likely to find work. Whilst this tendency was predominantly discussed in relation to jobsearch support (see the next section) the evidence in Figure 2.7 suggests it may also have been present in relation to placement selection. These issues were also compounded by a broader shortfall of placements identified by a range of staff and placement organisers (discussed in more detail in Chapter 6).

There was an understanding among CAP providers that those not placed were instead expected to do 30 hours of jobsearching each week. This was reflected in the high proportion of unplaced participants who report doing jobsearch activities in lieu of a placement (77 per cent). Although providers did acknowledge that this should occupy participants for up to 30 hours, in practice not all participants were required to do this full amount. This was either because it was considered overly resource intensive or of limited value, and potentially demotivating.

2.4.3 Support for participants in finding work

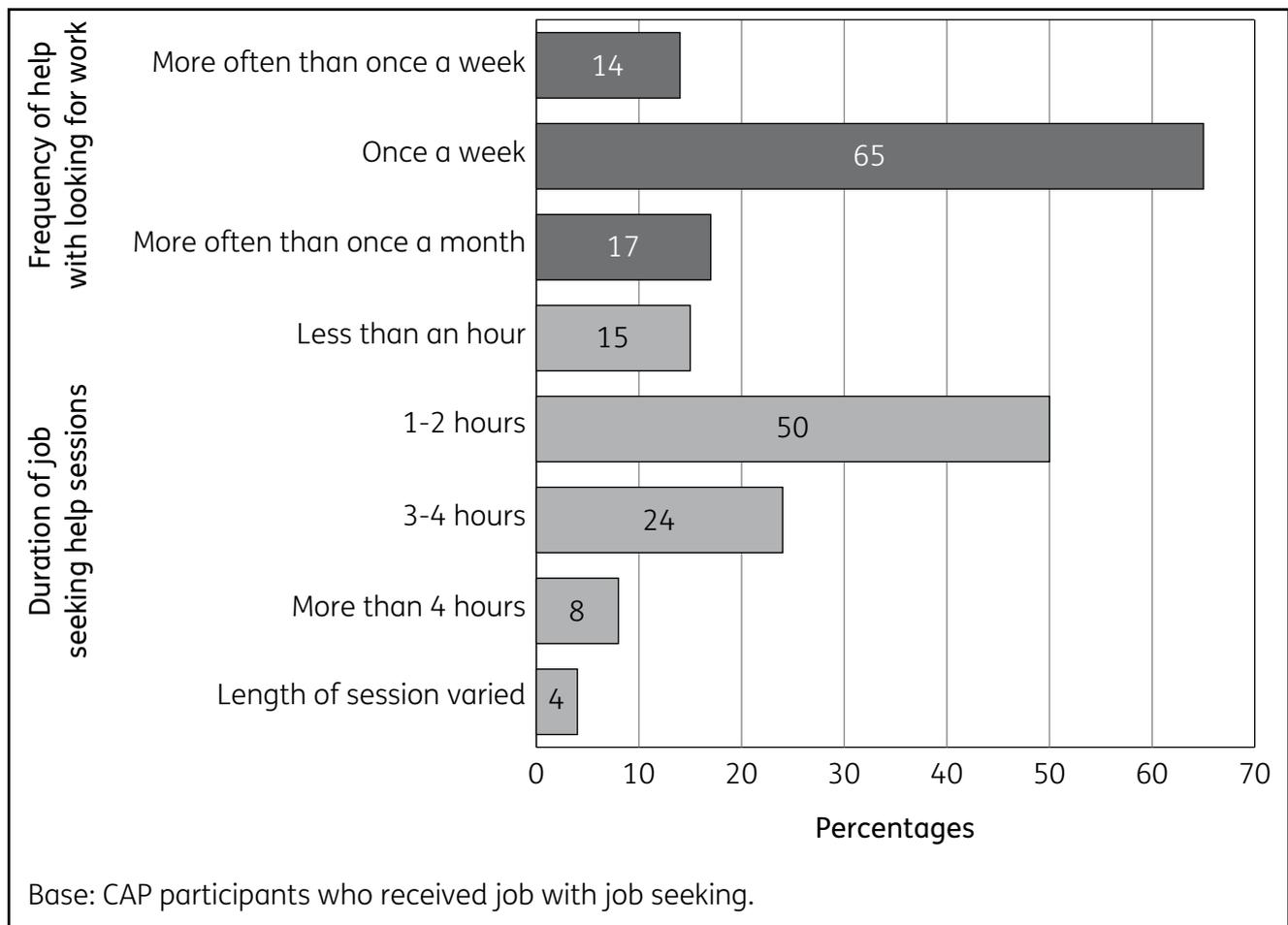
From CAP providers

All CAP participants, including those who had not been placed on work experience, were asked about the help and support they received from the placement organiser. Overall, 61 per cent of participants reported having received help with looking for work (Table A.2.13 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

The vast majority of the participants who had received some help with jobsearching had been asked to come to the provider's offices to do it (93 per cent). The majority received help once a week (65 per cent) or more often (14 per cent), but 17 per cent of participants reported receiving help less than once a week but at least monthly (Figure 2.8). Most of the participants reported that sessions lasted one to two hours (50 per cent) or up to half a day (three to four hours; 24 per cent), but 15 per cent of participants generally had short help sessions of less than an hour in duration (Table A.2.13 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Such variation is also evident from the participant and staff interviews. How often participants saw their adviser at the provider ranged from once or twice a week to every one or two months. In some cases these adviser sessions were linked to regular jobsearch sessions, with participants doing their jobsearches and then talking to their advisers, but in other cases this link was less clear with them having a schedule for jobsearches but having time with their adviser less frequently. In addition to face-to-face sessions, participants and staff also reported cases of 'out of office' support either in the form of email or telephone contact, or through providers texting specific job opportunities to participants as they became available. There were instances of these forms of contact being used in lieu of face-to-face sessions but in general they were a supplement to them. There was some suggestion that jobsearch would be intensified as participants came towards the end of their placements.

Figure 2.8 Intensity of jobseeking help sessions



In relation to the support given by providers with jobsearch and finding work more broadly, a range of experiences were reported in participant interviews from extensive and varied support at one end of the spectrum to very little support at the other.

Amongst those who did receive support, a wide range of ongoing support was described. The most commonly received type of help included access to computers (86 per cent), help with finding vacancies (64 per cent), help with completing application forms or writing a CV (58 per cent), help with preparing for interviews (30 per cent) or help with travel expenses (29 per cent) (Table A.2.14 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

The qualitative interviews provided more detail on the support offered. This was in some cases provided by the advisers themselves, but could also be run in groups or as training sessions and included:

- **Jobsearch support:** Participants would typically carry out the actual jobsearch on their own, with technical support available where required. The role of the adviser would then be to review and support this. As also evidenced in Table A.2.14 (see the technical appendices published alongside this report) this was the most common form of support and could include:
 - identifying places to search for jobs;
 - discussing the type of jobs available, and what participants should apply for;
 - setting up email addresses or accounts on jobsearching websites;
 - identifying specific opportunities for different participants which could then be shared either during sessions or via text or email;
 - setting targets or ensuring that participants are doing enough.
- **Supporting applications:** This included supporting participants in:
 - the writing of CV's and application forms;
 - practicing and preparing for interviews;
 - providing smart clothing for assessment days or interviews;
 - arranging CRB checks.
- **Support with wider barriers:** This involved an engagement with wider issues that may prevent participants finding work that could stem either from long-term disengagement or unpreparedness for work or result from specific barriers such as age or disability. It included:
 - funding haircuts or addressing personal issues such as personal hygiene;
 - support groups for those facing particular challenges e.g. groups for over-50s;
 - 'better off' calculations to demonstrate to participants that they would be better off in work.
- **Training:** There were also instances of security, construction health and safety or language training being made available. This seems to have been fairly sporadic and in some areas staff tended to feel that the relatively short length of the programme made referral to more extensive training problematic or not worthwhile. There could also be challenges associated with fitting training around the work placement.

Thirty-nine per cent of participants reported not getting jobsearch support¹² (Table A.2.13 in the technical appendices published alongside this report). In relation to participants who reported not receiving support with jobsearch and finding work more broadly, additional evidence as to why can be found in interviews with staff who in some areas reported that those deemed to have the best chance of finding work were prioritised over those felt to have little or no chance. Whilst there was limited discussion of what form this differentiation would take, the suggestion was that it

¹² Forty-nine per cent of these participants who reported not receiving jobsearch support were also not placed. This compares with 25 per cent of those who did report receiving jobsearch support not being placed. Possible reasons for participants neither being placed nor receiving jobsearch support are discussed at the end of this section.

would include giving those deemed more likely to find work more one-on-one time with advisers. An analysis of the quantitative data did not show any significant differences between reporting receiving support and reported distance to the labour market (i.e. time since last job, qualifications and reported barriers) and thus, there is no evidence of this happening systematically over all pilot sites.

Finally, one significant difference was that those who had been placed with a work placement host were more likely to say that they had received jobsearch support from their provider than those who had not; 70 per cent of participants placed on a work placement compared with 44 per cent of participants who had not¹³. We cannot say, using the data available, why this is but possible reasons include:

- those CAP providers who had the most difficulty sourcing placements may have had the least developed support mechanisms;
- participants who dropped out of the programme and/or had a break in their claim but later returned to JSA and were re-referred to CAP could have had missed out on both the placement and the jobsearch support for some or most of the six months after their initial referral;
- some participants who had a break in their claim but later returned to JSA may not have been re-referred to CAP if their PA deemed that there was insufficient time left of the trailblazer programme;
- it may also be the case that participants without placements became more disengaged from the programme and thus did not engage with support that was offered, or did not perceive the help available as support;
- it is possible that CAP providers did not put as much effort into supporting the hardest to help participants as these were deemed least likely to have a successful outcome, for which the provider would be able to claim a completion fee or job outcome fee.

Supervision and support within placement

Interviews with placement hosts and participants suggest that the placement hosts took differing approaches to both supervision and wider support. Taking supervision first, placement hosts tended to take one of three broad approaches:

- **Preference for independent working:** Some placement hosts stated a preference or need for participants who were able to work independently with little or no supervision. This was usually driven by a lack of capacity in placements to provide extensive supervision. This approach was often favoured in grounds maintenance or other practical placements involving manual work.
- **Ongoing ad-hoc support:** In these cases participants would not have close supervision from the hosts or any other specific individual but instead would be given guidance on specific tasks, and/or would have colleagues they could talk to if they had particular issues. These may have been formal arrangements or could relate to broad working practices in workplaces which allowed participants to ask colleagues for help. It could also include very basic on-the-job training including the use of tills or chip and pin machines. This approach was typical in office and retail placements.
- **More extensive support:** In other cases placement hosts would put a great deal of effort into systems of support. This approach was particularly common in placements run by organisations with a history of using volunteers, either as part of programme or recruited independently. This approach to supervision included one or more of the following:

¹³ It is important to note the distinction between participants' own jobsearch activity on the one hand, which the majority (77 per cent) of CAP participants who had not been placed reported doing as their main activity on CAP, and whether they received support from a job coach in their jobsearching (which 44 per cent of those not placed reported receiving).

- a more involved induction process where participants would be placed in specific roles to which they were most suited;
- job-specific training or development (e.g. animal care, asbestos awareness, food hygiene or equality and diversity training);
- policies of task rotation to give participants a broad breadth of experience, and to keep them engaged.

Whilst in some cases particular placements would adopt one specific approach, in others it would be more phased with, for example, extensive support at the outset gradually reducing in intensity as the participant became more used to the role.

In addition to job specific support and supervision, participants and staff were also asked about additional support that placements may offer participants in their broader search for work. As with the job-specific supervision and support, experiences varied widely with some offering no additional support (including placement hosts specifically stating that they did not offer anything as it would be done by providers) to others offering a range of support. The following were mentioned:

- Wider training opportunities, including wider on-the-job training, or other training from external providers. Examples are first aid, broader health and safety training, language courses or college courses leading to formal qualifications (e.g. NVQs). In some cases providers wanted to give participants access to this sort of additional training but were unable to due to limited time frames or funding.
- Time or resources being given to participants at placements to give them more opportunity to search for jobs.
- Staff and hosts at placements finding and publicising job opportunities, both internal and external to the placement organisation. These could then be presented to participants on an individual basis or posted on notice boards for all.
- Helping participants to complete application forms and CVs.
- Suggesting possible career routes for participants, and places where they may be able to find suitable jobs.
- Working to encourage a work ethic in participants and get them used to the idea of work. This could also extend to teaching participants about things like personal hygiene or looking to boost soft skills like personal confidence and communication.

2.5 Chapter conclusion

Both the survey of participants and qualitative interviews with participants and staff indicate that OCM generally provided a more intensive programme of support than the standard JCPO. This was the case both in terms of the frequency of contact with the PA and in terms of the range and types of support received.

On the CAP strand, only 63 per cent of CAP participants had attended a work placement. CAP placements were generally of benefit to the community, with half of the placements being in the charitable sector. The other key feature of CAP, the jobsearch support, was also received by a similar proportion of CAP participants (61 per cent). DWP is looking into the reasons why a proportion of participants were not placed.

The lower than expected proportion of participants placed and/or helped, is partly explained by the complex barriers and 'hard to help' nature of some of the participants but there are also some indications that staff prioritised those who were perceived to be closer to the labour market. The design of the trailblazer meant that claimants were referred to the CAP strand based on random allocation rather than their suitability for this type of support. The implementation challenges for both programme strands are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

3 Impacts

Chapter summary

The majority of participants were unemployed and on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) at the time of the survey. The proportion of participants claiming JSA at the time of the survey varied significantly by programme strand, with CAP participants being more likely to claim JSA at the time of the survey.¹⁴

A minority of participants in each programme entered paid employment, became self-employed or accepted a job offer. Job outcomes did not vary significantly between strands. However, within the OCM group, participants who reported having received tailored support were more likely to have a positive job outcome. Among participants with job outcomes the types of jobs entered, take home pay and hours worked did not vary depending on which programme participants were on.

Among participants not in work, a higher percentage of OCM participants said they had applied for work since the start of the programme compared to participants on CAP and in the control group. Participants on CAP applied for fractionally more jobs on average than participants on the other two programmes. CAP participants were also more likely to have applied for over 100 jobs. The proportion of survey participants in 'other voluntary or unpaid work' was higher for participants in CAP and OCM compared to the control group.

Participants on OCM were more likely to feel the programme had helped them to overcome their barriers to work and to get closer to work. CAP participants who had not been on a placement were the least likely to feel the programme had helped them overcome their barriers. When asked what it was about the programme that had helped participants to feel closer to work a third of OCM and control group participants said the support and encouragement from their adviser had brought about this change. A higher percentage of CAP participants reported feeling closer to the labour market because the programme had increased their confidence.

Participants on CAP placements and OCM were more likely to say that the programme had impacted positively on their motivation to work. As a result of increased motivation a higher percentage of participants on OCM reported '*doing/considering training courses and qualifications*'.

A higher proportion of participants on CAP placements and OCM reported that the programme had raised their work-related ambitions. A minority of participants on all strands reported a negative shift in their views about work, this was highest among not placed CAP respondents and lowest among CAP participants on placements.

CAP participants who had attended work placements were on average more likely to report lower levels of anxiety compared with other participants.

¹⁴ The higher level of self-reported JSA receipt in the CAP group may partly be a result of the CAP participants being interviewed on average 10 days earlier in their programme participation compared to the OCM and control group participants.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the impacts of the Support for the Very Long-Term Unemployed (SVLTU) support strands. It first presents survey findings on off-flows from JSA, paid employment outcomes and work-related activity. The latter part of the chapter looks at softer outcomes of the trailblazer programme.

3.2 Off-flows from benefit

All survey participants had been randomly assigned to the CAP or OCM programmes, or a control group receiving the standard Jobcentre Plus Offer (JCPO), three months before starting on the trailblazer. This section discusses the proportions of participants who signed off JSA after starting on one of the three strands. It compares the benefit status from the three strands, exploring work outcomes and the nature of work participants entered, as well as migration to other benefits.

3.2.1 Off-flows into work

Survey participants were asked what they were currently doing in relation to work. There were no significant differences between programmes in relation to participants who entered paid employment, became self-employed or had accepted a job offer. As shown in Figure 3.1 (and Table A.3.1 of the technical appendices published alongside this report), 11 per cent of OCM, ten per cent of CAP and nine per cent of the control group had entered paid employment. Two per cent of CAP and OCM participants and three per cent of the control group were self-employed. Also, a small proportion of participants on all three strands had found work but had not yet started (eight, five and seven per cent for OCM, CAP and the control group respectively).

It is important to note that this finding is based on self-reported job outcomes data collected six months after starting on a trailblazer strand, i.e. towards the end of the programme. It is possible that a different pattern will emerge in the months following programme completion. DWP are planning to publish administrative data on job outcomes in 2013, which will provide a longer-term picture of the job outcomes of all trailblazer participants.

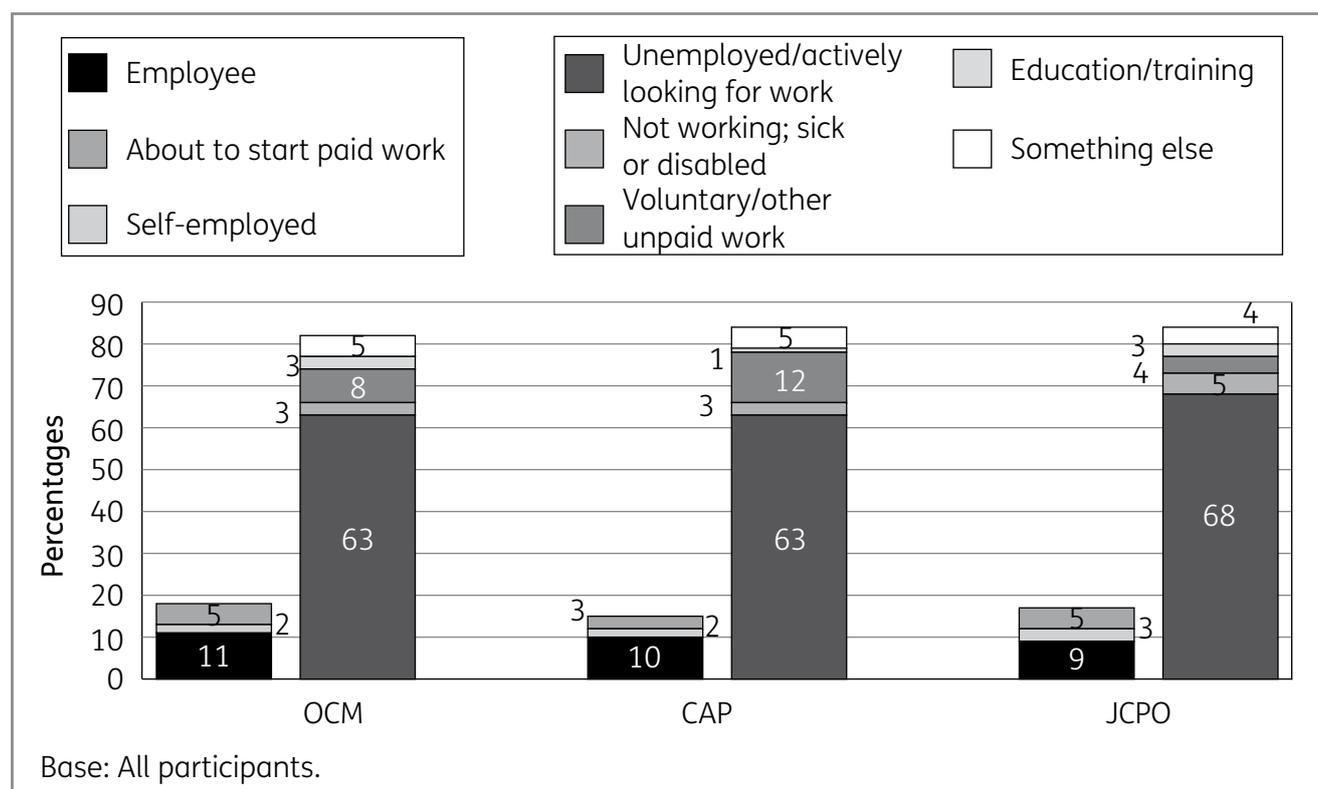
Participants who were in work, or about to start work, were asked the extent to which advice and support received through the programme helped them enter work. The perceived helpfulness of the programme in getting paid work varied significantly by SVLTU strand. OCM participants were more likely to report that their programme had helped a lot (43 per cent), followed by CAP participants (28 per cent). Control group participants were the least likely to report that the support they had received had helped a lot (18 per cent) (Table A.3.2 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Participants for whom the most time had lapsed since referral to the programme were more likely to enter work but this did not depend on programme strand.

The majority of participants on all three strands classed themselves as unemployed and actively looking for work¹⁵ and this did not vary significantly by strand (Table A.3.1 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

¹⁵ It should be noted that this is participants' self-reported assessment of their main activity and is not the same as their claimant status. While the majority of those who classed themselves as unemployed were in fact JSA claimants, this is also the case for the majority of participants who classed themselves as being in education or training, doing voluntary work or doing something else.

Figure 3.1 Daytime activity



A binary logistic regression model was used to investigate further the factors associated with the job outcome (being in employment, self-employment or about to start work). Although the participants on the trailblazer were randomly assigned to the three programme groups, and the survey weights adjust for any differences between the groups that may have arisen due to non-response, the multivariate regression allows for analysis by strand while including a number of participant characteristics and personal circumstances, including reported barriers to employment, which may impact upon the outcome.

The regression analysis confirmed that there was no significant difference in job outcomes by strand¹⁶ (Table B:3.1 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). However, irrespective of which strand a participant was on, the odds of being in work at the time of the interview were higher for participants who were parents compared with participants without dependent children. Interestingly, the odds of being in work at the end of the programme were also higher for those who had stated that knowing they would be financially worse off in work was a barrier to work. On the other hand, lower odds of being in work were associated with the following characteristics:

- being male;
- having a larger gap in work record (compared with less than two years);
- citing work-limiting health issues or disability as a barrier to work; and
- citing having a criminal record as a barrier.

¹⁶ The model was run both with all CAP participants in a single category and differentiating between CAP participants who had attended placements and those who had not. In neither model did the job outcome vary significantly by programme strand. The model discussed here includes all CAP participants in a single category.

Two further models were run looking at the two SVLTU programme strands separately to investigate programme-specific characteristics that might be associated with a job outcome. For OCM, when controlling for participant characteristics, participants who reported that the support they received from Jobcentre Plus differed since the start of the programme by them receiving more personalised support were significantly more likely to be in work at the end of the programme (Table B:3.2 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). For CAP participants, neither attending placement nor receiving jobsearch support were significantly associated with a job outcome at the end of the programme when controlling for participant characteristics (Table B:3.3 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Descriptions of jobs entered

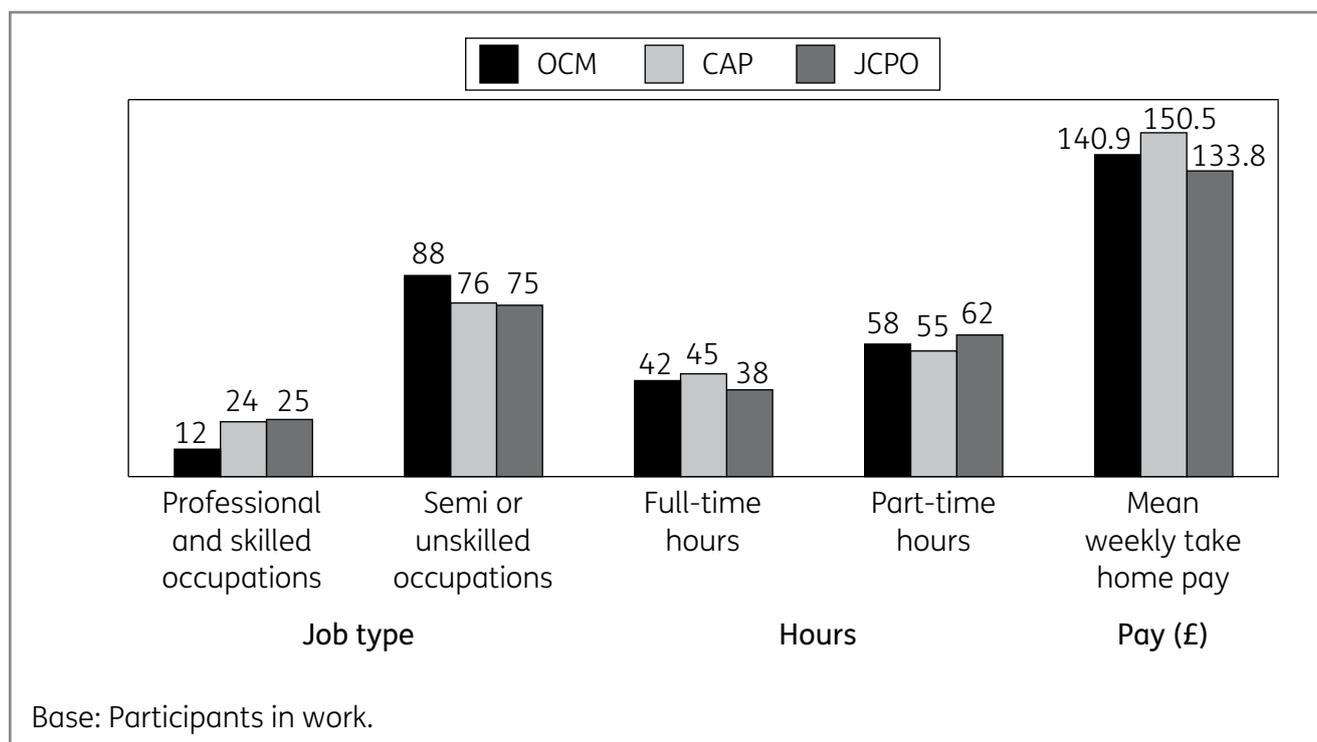
Participants who had found work were asked to use a number of categories to describe their job (Table A.3.1 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). For the purposes of analysis these occupations were divided into two groups: 'professional and skilled occupations' and 'semi- or unskilled occupations'.¹⁷ In all three strands the majority of participants who had obtained work had entered semi- or unskilled occupations rather than in 'professional and skilled occupations' with 88, 76 and 75 per cent in OCM, CAP and JCPO respectively having done so. The programme strand did not make a significant difference to the type of work respondents entered.

More than half of the participants in each of the three strands who had found work (58, 55 and 62 per cent on OCM, CAP and control group respectively) were working part-time (under 30 hours a week) (Table A.3.4 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

The weekly pay band with the highest proportion of participants was £100–£199 with 45, 34, and 35 per cent of participants in work from OCM, CAP and the control group respectively (Table A.3.5 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). This was followed by £50–£99 (with 18, 25 and 26 per cent of participants on OCM, CAP and control group respectively). Roughly a fifth of participants were on the £200–£299 pay band with 17 per cent of participants who were on OCM, 19 per cent on CAP and 23 per cent in the control group. As shown in Figure 3.2, the average weekly net pay ranged between £134 and £151 by strand but this variation was not statistically significant. The relatively low pay reflects both the types of occupations participants entered, and the high proportion of part-time workers.

¹⁷ Professional and skilled occupations included: managers, directors and senior officials; professional occupations; associate professional and technical occupation, administrative and secretarial occupations and skilled trades occupations.

Semi- or unskilled occupations included: caring, leisure and other service occupations, sales and participant service occupations, process, plant and machine operatives, elementary occupations.

Figure 3.2 Summary of jobs entered

The survey asked participants when they had started their job. Approximately 14 per cent of the participants with jobs (two per cent of all participants) indicated that they had been working since before the three-month notification period for the start of the programme. However, the majority of participants had started working at least three months after the start of the programme. The timing of job entry did not vary by strand (Table A.3.6 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). As noted above, DWP are planning to publish administrative data on job outcomes in 2013, which will provide a longer-term picture of the job outcomes of all trailblazer participants.

3.2.2 Benefit status

The survey also provides data on the benefits participants said they were receiving at the end of the programme. As all respondents sampled in the survey were, by definition, JSA claimants at the beginning of the programme, this information can be used for some off-flow analysis.

It is important to note that the survey findings are based on self-reported benefit status at a 'snap shot' point around seven months after starting on the trailblazer. Because these findings are based on participants' perceptions of what benefit they receive, which will not always be an accurate reflection of the benefits that are actually paid to them, more reliable statistics on the claimant rate for each programme can be drawn from analysis of benefit outcomes based on DWP administrative data for programme participants. The DWP statistics to be published alongside this report found significantly lower levels of benefit receipt for both CAP and OCM participants compared to the JCPO control group at a point 41 weeks after random allocation (roughly 26 weeks after start).¹⁸

¹⁸ The DWP report presenting the off-flow statistics based on analysis of administrative records is available [http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=adhoc_analysis].

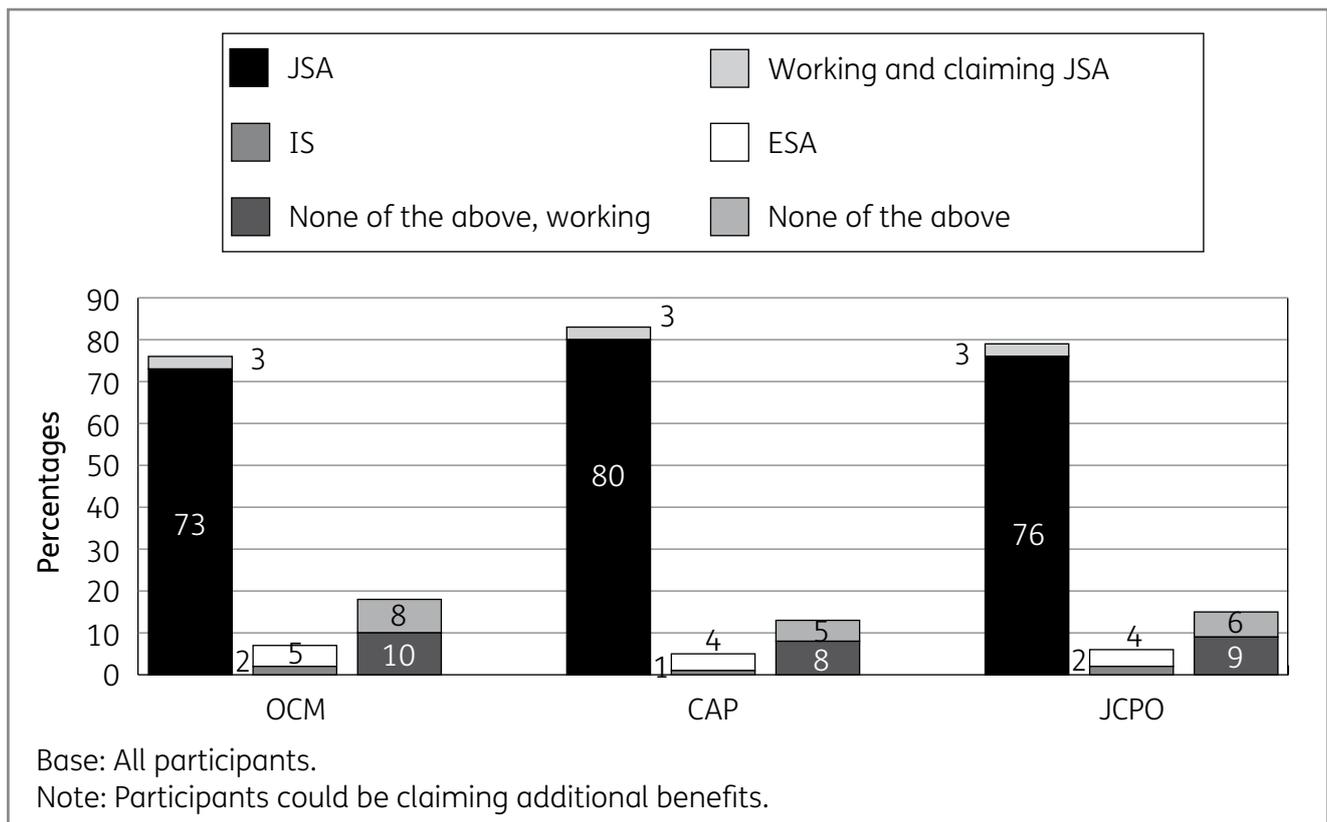
However, a strength of the survey data is that it includes more information about the types of participants that have remained on JSA, migrated to other benefits or stopped claiming primary benefits¹⁹ altogether.

The majority of survey participants reported being in receipt of JSA at the time of the survey, this varied significantly between programmes with fewer participants on OCM and control participants claiming JSA (73 per cent and 76 per cent) compared with 80 per cent of participants on CAP (Figure 3.3; Table A.3.7 in the technical appendices published alongside this report). A small minority of participants on each programme indicated that they were both working and claiming JSA. The higher level of self-reported JSA receipt for the CAP group may partly be due to the fact that CAP participants were interviewed, on average, ten days sooner after the programme start than the OCM and control group participants.

A minority of participants had migrated to another primary benefit. These benefits included Income Support (IS) to which one per cent of CAP participants and two per cent of OCM and control group participants flowed and Employment Support Allowance (ESA) to which five per cent of OCM and four per cent of CAP and control group participants flowed. The fact that similar proportions of participants migrated to these benefits from each programme suggests that programme strand did not have an impact on which out-of-work benefit participants migrated to after signing off JSA.

There were two groups of participants who signed off JSA and did not claim another out of work benefit. One group entered work (ten per cent of OCM, eight per cent of CAP and nine per cent of control group) and as discussed earlier, the strand had no bearing on this. The other group neither entered work nor migrated to IS or ESA. The percentage of participants fitting this description did not vary significantly by strand (eight per cent of OCM, five per cent of CAP and six per cent of the control group). The majority of these participants who reported neither working nor receiving a primary benefit (61 per cent) classed themselves as unemployed and looking for work when asked for their main activity.

Figure 3.3 Primary benefit received



The type of benefit claimed, if any, varied significantly by a number of participant characteristics and circumstances including: marital status; housing tenure; level of qualifications; illness or disability and whether the participant had had their benefits stopped in the past six months.

- **Employment Support Allowance:** A higher proportion of participants who had migrated to ESA (75 per cent) reported having a long-term illness or disability than participants in the other categories (for example 33 per cent of participants who remained on JSA and 18 per cent of participants who had moved into work). Seventy-two per cent of these participants reported having a health problem that limited the type of work they could do when they started on the trailblazer, 36 per cent reported having mental health problems and 24 per cent had learning difficulties (compared with eight per cent and seven percent of all participants respectively)
- **None of the above:** While a majority of participants in the group who had signed off JSA but not moved into work were not living with a partner (62 per cent), this figure was lower than in the other categories (81 per cent of JSA claimants; 76 per cent of those working). A considerably higher proportion of participants in this group were owner-occupiers (30 per cent) compared with eight, 12 and 16 per cent on JSA, ESA and those working. Although the highest proportion of participants with mental health problems was found in the ESA group, the proportion of participants who were neither claiming primary benefits nor working who had mental health problems (12 per cent) was higher than among participants who remained on JSA (six per cent) or had moved into work (four per cent). This group also had the highest proportion of participants who had had their benefits stopped by Jobcentre Plus in the previous six months: 40 per cent compared with 32 per cent of participants who had moved into work and 21 per cent of JSA claimants.

3.2.3 Work-related activity

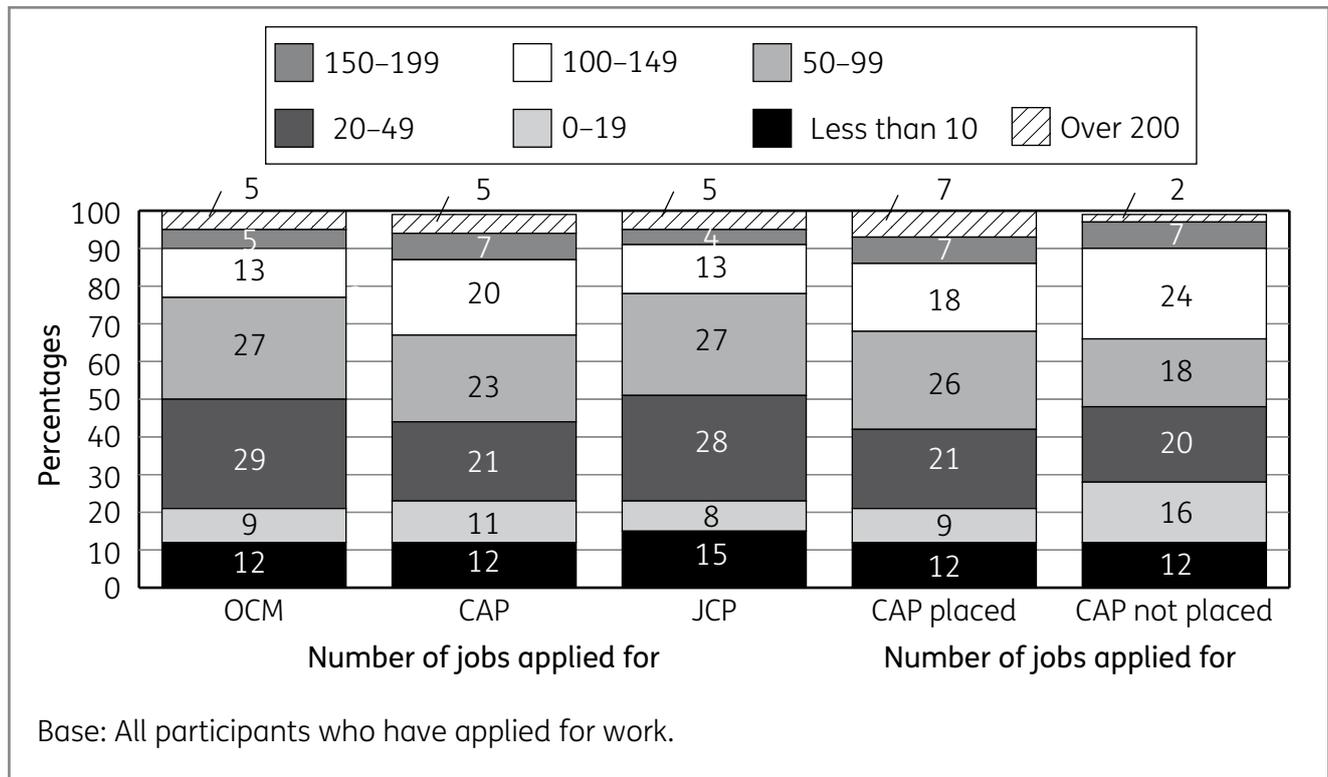
Participants in each programme were asked to describe the work-related activity they had engaged in since starting on the trailblazer programmes. This section presents data comparing job applications, job interviews and participation in voluntary or other unpaid work.

Job applications

The proportion of participants who said they had applied for work since the start of the programme varied significantly by strand, and whether CAP participants had been placed on a work experience placement. A higher percentage of OCM participants and placed CAP participants (95 and 94 per cent, respectively) had applied for work compared to 92 per cent in the control group and 88 per cent of CAP participants who had not been placed (Table A.3.8 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

The number of jobs applied for by those who answered 'yes' to the above question also differed by SVLTU strand and whether placed. On average, participants on CAP placements applied for the most jobs (69 applications compared with 61 by CAP participants not on placements, 60 on OCM and 56 in the control group). As shown in Figure 3.4 a higher proportion of CAP participants (32 per cent of placed participants and 34 per cent of not-placed participants) reported applying for over 100 jobs compared with 24 and 22 per cent on OCM and in the control group respectively (Table A.3.9 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Figure 3.4 Number of jobs applied for since start of programme



Job interviews

Approximately half of the respondents in each programme (55 per cent of OCM participants and 50 per cent of CAP and control group participants) reported attending a job interview since the start of the programme (Table A.3.10 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). The majority of participants reported attending fewer than five interviews (83, 86 and 80 per cent in OCM, CAP and the control group respectively). However the number did not vary significantly between the programmes (Table A.3.11 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Unpaid and voluntary work

As shown in Figure 3.1 (and Table A.3.1 of the technical appendices published alongside this report) doing ‘other voluntary or unpaid work’ differed significantly by strand. Twelve per cent and eight per cent of CAP and OCM participants, respectively, reported doing unpaid or voluntary work compared to three per cent of control group participants. This may be due to OCM participants opting to continue volunteering with their Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) host after completing their placements. Similarly, a quarter (26 per cent) of survey participants reported continuing in a voluntary role at their placement after completing CAP.

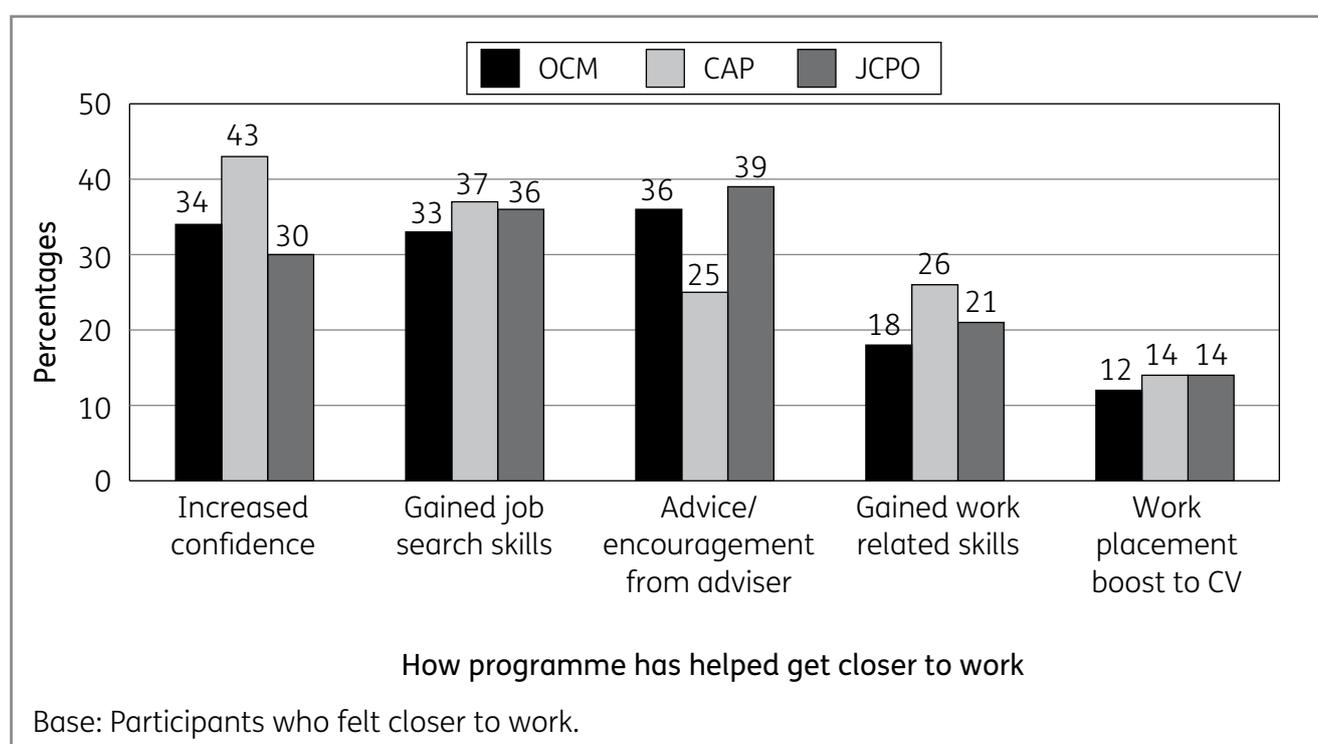
3.2.4 Perceptions of proximity to the labour market

Self reported proximity to the labour market varied by strand and by whether CAP participants had been placed. About half of OCM participants (54 per cent) and placed CAP participants (48 per cent) said that the programme had helped them to get closer to work, either a little or a lot. This compares to 44 per cent of control group participants and 32 per cent of CAP participants who had not attended a work placement (Table A.3.12 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

As shown in Figure 3.5, of the ways in which the programmes helped participants feel closer to work, ‘advice/encouragement from adviser’ and ‘increased confidence’ were the only factors that varied significantly between the three strands (Table A.3.13 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

- advice/encouragement from their adviser: Higher proportions of control group and OCM participants (39 per cent and 36 per cent respectively) reported that support and encouragement from their adviser had helped them get closer to work. This compares with 25 per cent of CAP participants;
- increased confidence: Higher proportions of CAP participants reported feeling closer to the labour market because the programme had caused their confidence to increase (43 per cent). In contrast 34 per cent OCM participants and 30 per cent of control group participants reported the same change.

Figure 3.5 How programme has helped participants get closer to work



3.2.5 Overcoming barriers to work

This section discusses participants’ views on the extent to which the programmes have helped them get closer to work in relation to a number of types of barriers to work.

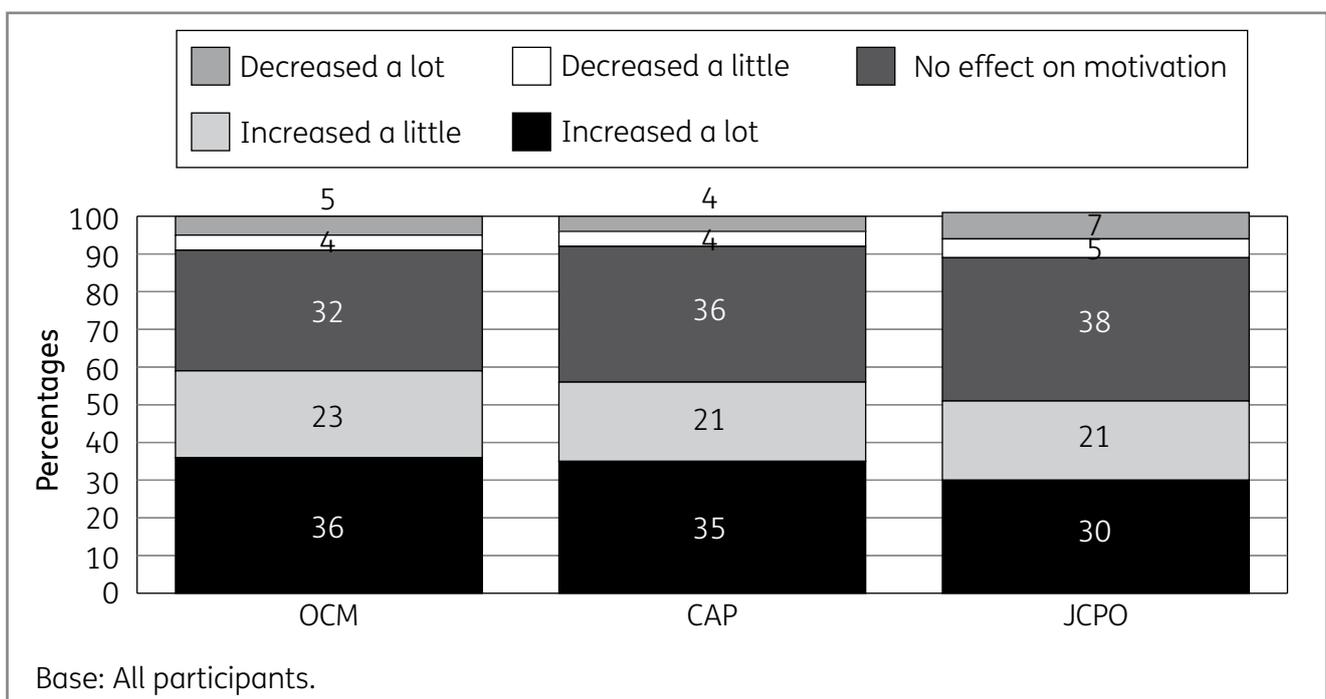
Motivation

Participants were asked a number of questions about their motivation to find work and to come off JSA. When asked generally the extent to which participants agreed with the statement that they were motivated to find a job, motivation varied significantly by strand. While placed CAP participants reported similar levels of motivation to enter work as participants on OCM and in the control group (96 per cent of placed CAP, 95 per cent of OCM participants and 94 per cent of the control group agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement that they were motivated to find a job) the proportion of CAP participants who had not been placed agreeing or strongly agreeing that

they were motivated to find a job was lower (86 per cent) (Table A.3.28 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

When asked more specifically whether the programme had affected their motivation, motivation to find work differed significantly by programme strand (Figure 3.6), and among CAP participants by whether they had been on a placement (Figure 3.7; Table A.3.14 in the technical appendices published alongside this report)²⁰. OCM participants and placed CAP participants were more likely to report that the programme had had a positive impact on their motivation to work with 59 per cent and 63 per cent reporting their motivation had increased a lot or a little respectively. This compared with 50 per cent of participants in the control group and 43 per cent of CAP participants who had not been on a placement.

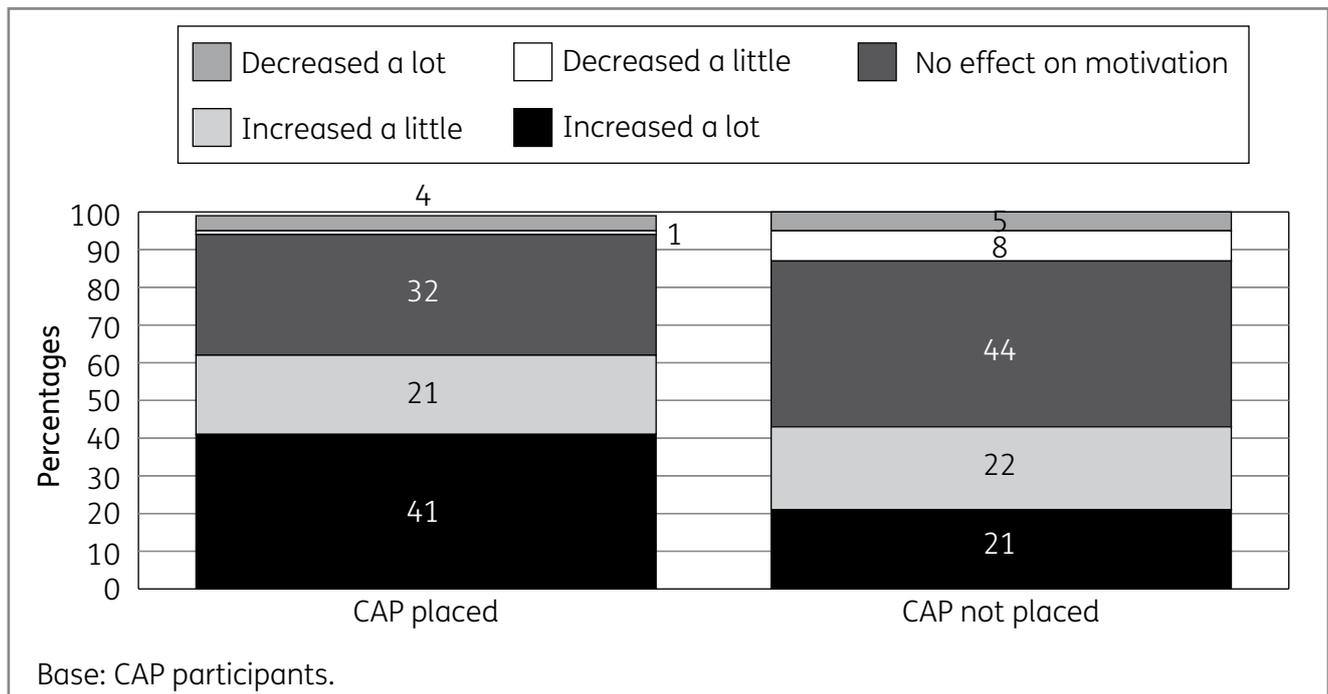
Figure 3.6 Impact on motivation to find work



CAP participants who had not been on a placement and participants in the control group were more likely to report a decrease in their motivation to find work (13 per cent and 12 per cent) compared with nine per cent of participants on OCM and five per cent of placed CAP participants. A substantial minority of participants reported no effect on their motivation to work (32 to 44 per cent).

²⁰ A very similar pattern emerges when looking at motivation to come off JSA (see Table A.3.17 of the technical appendices published alongside this report for impact on motivation to stop claiming JSA and Table A.3.18 of the technical appendices published alongside this report for reasons for increased motivation to come off JSA).

Figure 3.7 Impact on motivation to find work



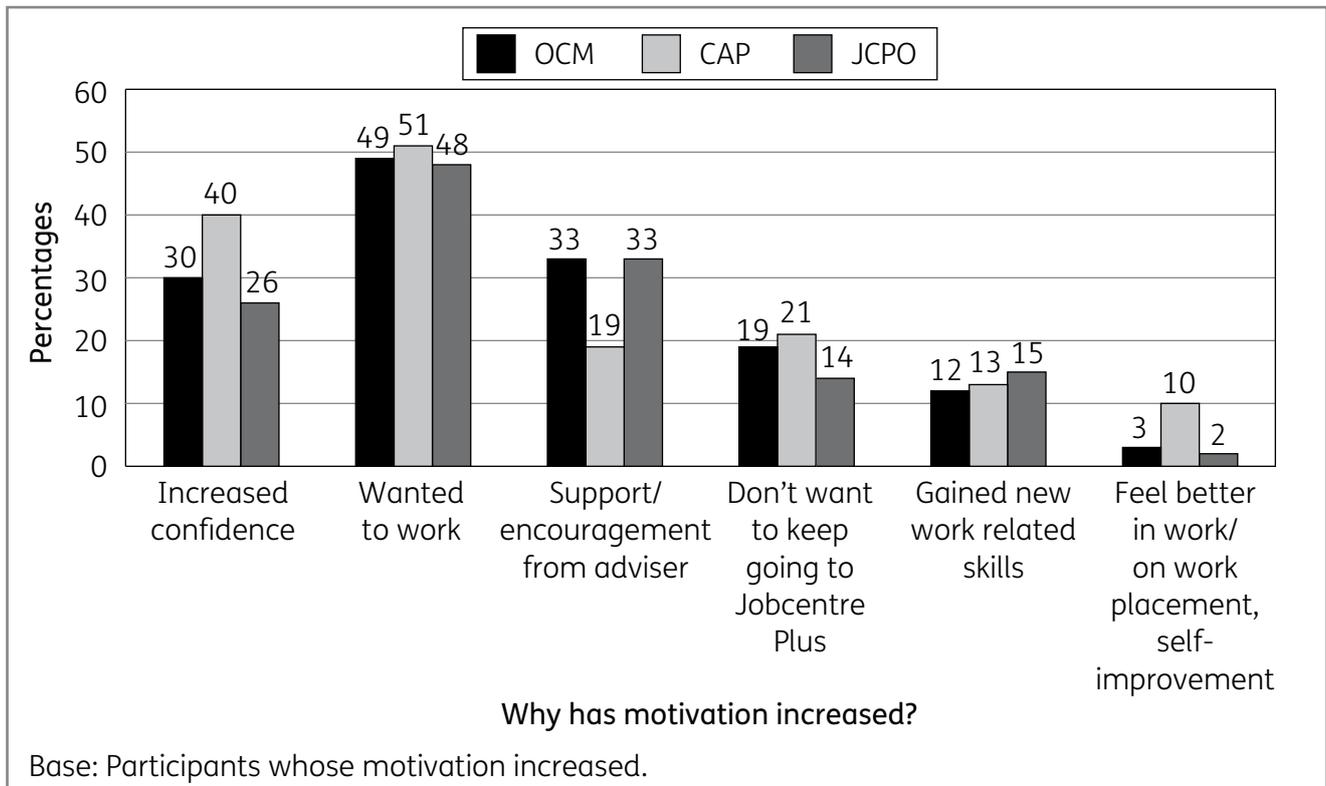
Participants were asked why their motivation to find work had increased since starting on the programme. Although higher percentages of participants on OCM reported increased motivation there was no single explanation for this (Table A.3.15 in the technical appendices published alongside this report). The reasons for increased motivation that differed significantly between programmes were:

- the level of support and encouragement received by their adviser;
- increased confidence; and
- feeling better in work/work placement or self-improvement.

Thirty-three per cent of OCM and control group participants reported increased motivation due to the level of support and encouragement received by their adviser. These contrast significantly with the 19 per cent of CAP participants who reported that their motivation had increased due to the level of support and encouragement received by their adviser. This may be because participants on CAP received less one-to-one support from job coaches and that being on placement was more of an influence to their motivation to find work.

Increased confidence was a further reason why participants felt their motivation had increased, particularly for CAP participants who had attended a work placement. Forty-four per cent of CAP participants who had been on a work placement, compared with 30 per cent of OCM and CAP participants who had not attended a placement, and 26 per cent of control group participants reported that they were more motivated to work due to a rise in their confidence. CAP participants' experiences on their placements can help explain their increased confidence: 76 per cent felt they had gained satisfaction from being in a routine while on their placement and 69 per cent cited a sense of achievement (Section 4.5.2; Table A.4.8 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

A higher proportion of CAP participants (ten per cent) said their motivation increased because they found that they felt better in work or on a work placement or gained a sense of self-improvement as a result of the programme. This compares with three and two per cent of participants on OCM and in the control group.

Figure 3.8 Why motivation has increased

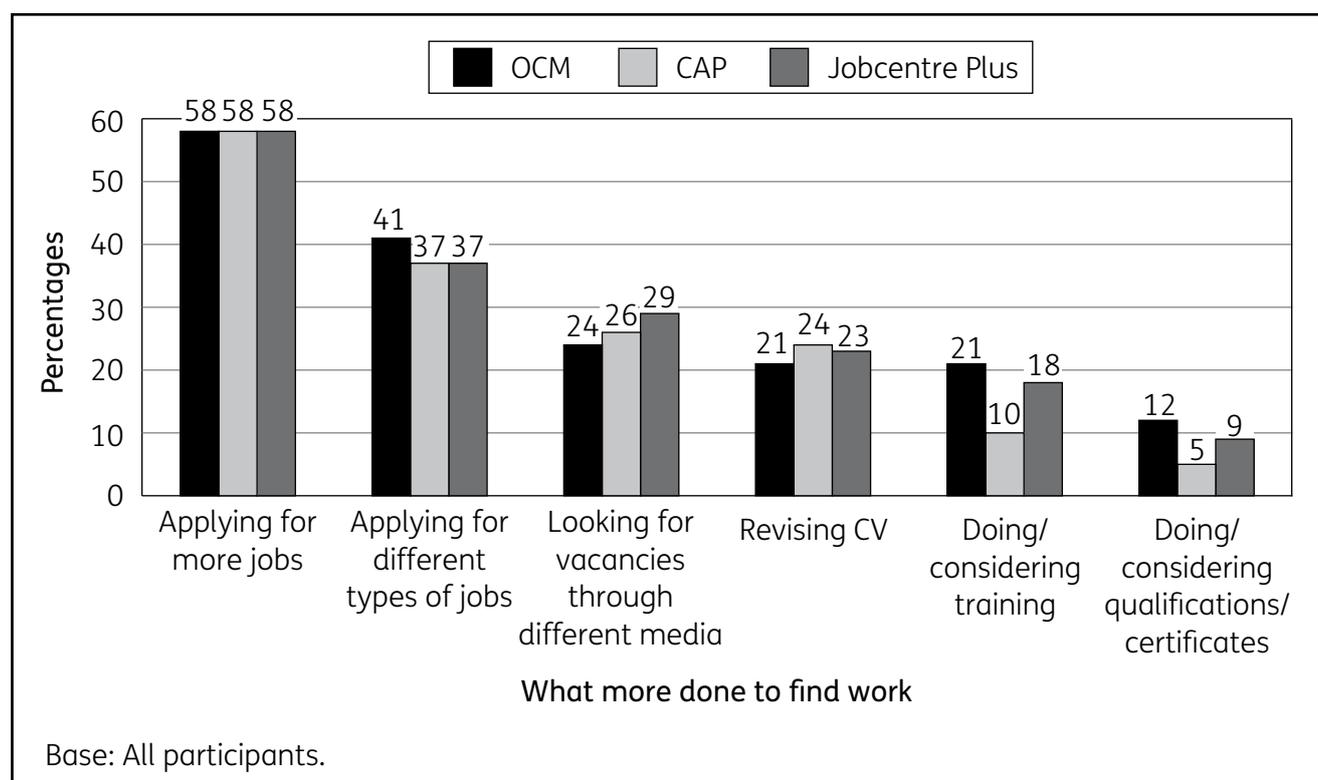
Participants who reported increased motivation were then asked what more they had done to find work as a result. The most common activities were:

- applying for more jobs (58 per cent on each strand);
- applying for different types of jobs (41 per cent on OCM and 37 per cent on CAP and control group);
- looking for vacancies through different types of media (24, 26 and 29 per cent on OCM, CAP and control group respectively); and
- revising CVs (24 per cent on OCM, 24 per cent on CAP and 23 per cent in the control group).

The proportions of participants citing these activities were similar in each programme.

The only activities that did vary significantly between programmes were 'doing or considering training' and 'doing or considering getting qualifications'. As shown in Figure 3.8 a higher percentage of participants on OCM reported doing/considering training courses (21 per cent) compared with 18 per cent of control group participants and ten per cent of CAP participants. OCM participants were also more motivated to do or consider getting qualifications (12 per cent) compared to participants in the control group (nine per cent) or CAP (five per cent) (Table A.3.19 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). These findings reflect Personal Advisers' (PAs') observations of a shift in participants' attitudes towards training and qualifications, with participants who were reluctant at the start of the programme later asking for more training opportunities.

It may be that CAP participants had less opportunity to do further training and qualifications because this programme was focused on the work placement and jobsearch elements. Staff views on the types of participants CAP was better suited for are discussed further in Chapter 5.

Figure 3.9 What additional things participants have done to find work

Participants who said that their motivation levels had not increased were asked why they thought this was. The most common reasons given were a:

- lack of support from adviser (44, 32 and 54 per cent on OCM, CAP and control group respectively);
- negative attitude from the adviser (35, 28 and 30 per cent on OCM, CAP and control group participants respectively); and
- lack of job opportunities (34 per cent of OCM participants, 32 per cent of CAP participants and 36 per cent of control group participants).

The numbers of participants giving these answers did not vary significantly between programmes (Table A.3.16 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Barriers in general

In addition to whether they thought the programme had moved them closer to work, discussed already, participants were also asked whether they thought the programme²¹ had helped them to overcome their barriers to work. Participants on OCM were more likely to feel the programme had helped a lot or a little (55 per cent) compared with 49 per cent of control group participants and 46 per cent of CAP participants (Table A.3.20 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). Again, further analysis showed that participants' assessment of the helpfulness of CAP varied by whether or not they had been placed on a work experience placement (52 per cent of placed participants compared with only 34 per cent of unplaced participants felt the programme had helped a lot or a little).

An ordinal logistic regression model (Table B:3.4 of the technical appendices published alongside this report) was also run to look at the factors related to participants' assessment of the extent to which

²¹ This model had CAP participants categorised separately based on whether they had been on a placement.

they felt the programme had helped them overcome their barriers to work. The regression confirmed that the type of programme strand attended was significantly related to participants' perception of the extent to which the programme had helped them overcome their barriers to work.

Like the analysis presented in Table A.3.20 in the technical appendices published alongside this report, the regression model showed that compared with the control group, OCM participants were more likely to report that the programme had helped a little rather than not at all or that it had helped a lot rather than a little or not at all. However, the regression showed that while CAP participants who had been on a placement did not differ significantly from control group participants in their assessment of the programme's helpfulness, CAP participants who had not been placed were less likely to report that the programme had helped a little rather than not at all or that it had helped a lot rather than a little or not at all.

The following types of participants in all programme groups were less likely to report that their programme had helped a little rather than not at all or that it had helped a lot rather than a little or not at all:

- men;
- owner-occupiers;
- participants with mental health problems; and
- participants who cited a lack of vacancies or too much competition for jobs as a barrier to work.

The analysis also investigated whether participants with certain types of individual circumstances or barriers found specific programmes more helpful. There were no such significant interaction effects.

Work-related attitudes and ambitions

Work-related ambitions varied according to which trailblazer programme participants were on and, for CAP participants, whether they had been placed on a work experience placement. As illustrated in Figure 3.9, over half of participants who had attended a CAP placement (56 per cent) and nearly half of OCM participants (46 per cent) reported that the programme had raised their work-related ambitions. This compared to 32 per cent of CAP participants who did not go on a work placement 39 per cent of participants in the control group (Table A.3.21 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

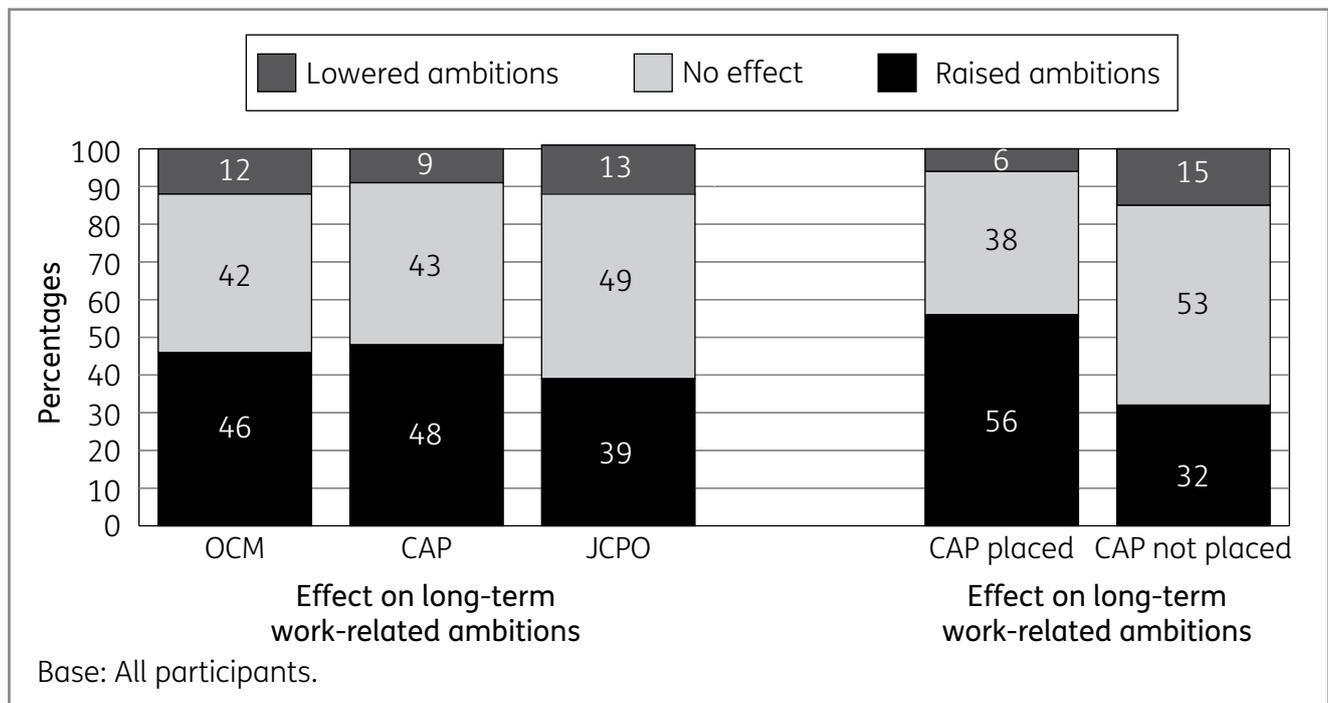
A minority of participants on each programme reported that their work-related ambitions had been lowered (12 and 13 per cent on OCM and in the control group), with the highest proportion being for CAP participants who had not attended placements (15 per cent) and the lowest being for placed CAP participants (six per cent).

Approximately half of the participants in each programme felt that the programme had had an impact on their thoughts about work (Table A.3.22 of the technical appendices published alongside this report); with the majority of participants (84 per cent of OCM and placed CAP participants, 71 per cent of CAP not placed and 76 per cent of control group participants) reporting a positive shift in their thinking (Table A.3.23 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). Higher proportions of participants on CAP without work placements (17 per cent) and in the control group (13 per cent) reported a negative shift in their views about work compared to four per cent of placed CAP participants and eight per cent of OCM participants.

As a result of the programme, over half of the participants in each programme felt a little or a lot more confident about entering work (Table A.3.24 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). While these numbers did not vary between programmes when the CAP participants were treated in the analysis as an homogenous group (57 per cent on OCM, 55 per cent on CAP and

52 per cent in the control group), there were significant differences when differentiating between whether the CAP participants had been placed: 62 per cent of placed CAP participants reported feeling more confident about entering work, compared with 42 per cent of CAP participants who had not been on a placement.

Figure 3.10 Effect on long-term work ambitions



Participants who had found work were asked if they were happier now compared to when they were unemployed. The vast majority of participants in each programme either ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ (93 per cent of OCM participants, 89 per cent of CAP participants and 95 per cent of control group participants) (Table A.3.26 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

3.2.6 Wellbeing

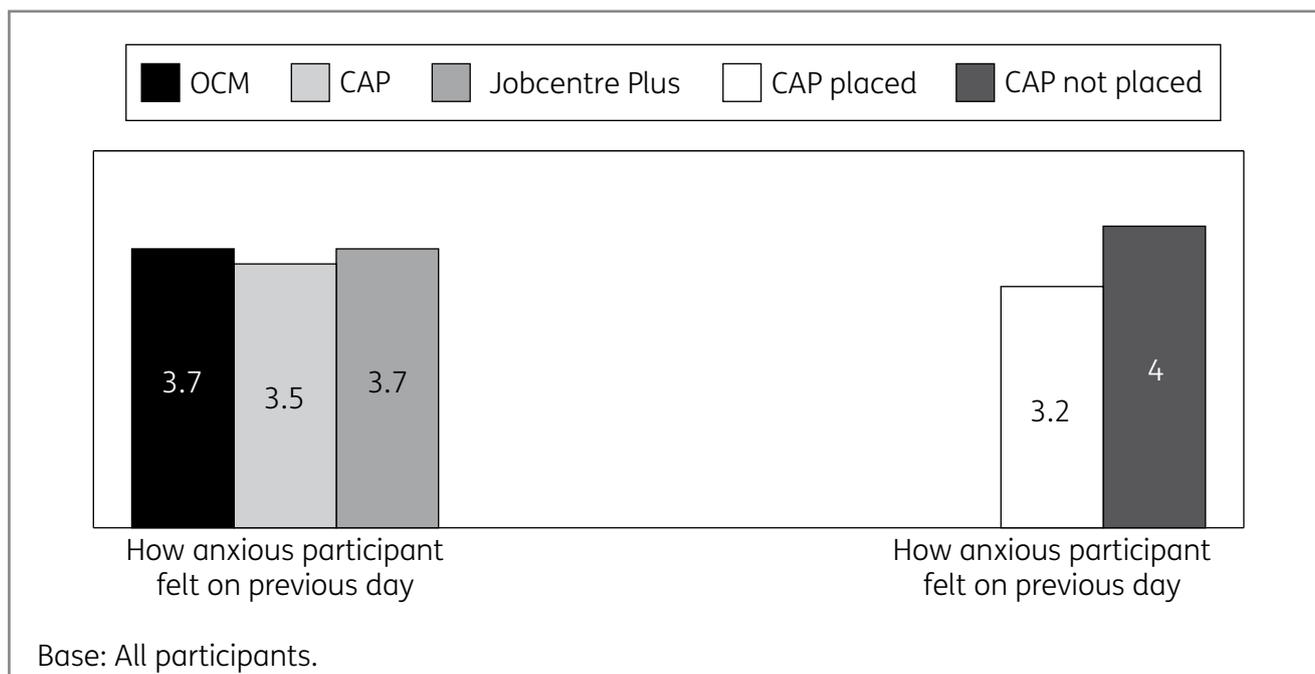
Participants were asked a number of questions in relation to their wellbeing. They were asked to rate on a scale of zero to ten (with zero being ‘not at all’ and ten being ‘completely’):

- the extent they felt the things they did in life were worthwhile;
- how satisfied they were with their lives nowadays;
- how happy they felt the previous day; and
- how anxious they felt the previous day.

The average (mean) wellbeing of participants did not vary by programme strand on the extent to which participants felt things were worthwhile, life satisfaction or happiness. However, the average anxiety score did vary significantly by strand when the CAP group was differentiated by whether participants had been placed (Figure 3.10; Table A.3.25 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). Participants who had been on a CAP placement rated their anxiety levels as lower than other participants. This could be related to sense of achievement, satisfaction from being in a routine and increased self-confidence reported by CAP participants who had attended placements (see Section 4.5.2, Table A.4.8 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

In addition to being asked about life satisfaction and happiness in general participants were also asked about happiness more specifically to being work. As noted above, the vast majority of participants who had moved into work or were waiting to start work reported that they were now happier as a result (Table A.3.26 of the technical appendices published alongside this report), this was mirrored by participants who were not in work; over nine in ten of whom also reported that they would be happier in work (Table A.3.27 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Figure 3.11 Extent participants felt anxious on previous day



On the other hand, the thought of being in paid work made up to a fifth of participants nervous (20 per cent of OCM and CAP participants and 17 per cent of control group participants). These figures did not vary significantly between strands (Table A.3.27 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).²²

3.3 Chapter conclusion

The majority of participants reported being in receipt of JSA at the time of the survey. Overall, approximately 16 per cent of participants had a successful job outcome, being in paid work or about to start paid work about seven months after the start of the programme. This did not differ significantly by SVLTU programme strand. For participants on the OCM, when controlling for participant characteristics, those who reported receiving more personalised support to their individual needs were significantly more likely to be in work at the end of the programme. However, for CAP participants, neither attending placement nor receiving jobsearch support were significantly associated with a job outcome at the end of the programme when controlling for participant characteristics. It is important to note that the survey findings are based on a 'snap shot' taken around seven months after starting on the programme and DWP are planning to report on longer-term job outcomes for all of the SVLTU trailblazer participants at the beginning of 2013.

²² For more information about the attitudes held by participants see Table A.3.28 of the technical appendices published alongside this report.

The vast majority of participants on all strands reported having applied for work during the course of the programme, although the proportion was lower among the unplaced CAP and control group participants and higher among placed CAP and OCM participants. CAP respondents who did report applying for jobs, applied for a higher number of jobs on average. However, these differences in job applications did not translate into differences in job interviews by strand; approximately half of participants on each strand had attended at least one job interview since the start of the programme.

The extent to which participants felt the programme had helped them overcome their barriers to work differed by strand. OCM participants were more likely to report that the programme had helped, while CAP participants who had not been placed were less likely to report that the programme had helped compared with the control group.

The participants' differing experiences on the SVLTU strands were also associated with their confidence, long-term work-related ambitions, motivation to find work and general levels of anxiety at the end of the programme. Participants who had attended a work placement reported the lowest average levels of anxiety and were particularly likely to state that the programme had raised their long-term work-related ambitions and increased their confidence about finding work. These positive attitudinal shifts may be related to these participants' views that the placement had helped them gain increased self-confidence, satisfaction and a sense of achievement. Conversely, a higher proportion of participants on CAP without placements, and control group participants, reported a negative shift in their views about work. While the analysis of the survey data did not show this effect of the placement on participants' ambitions and confidence translating into successful transitions into paid work at the end of the programme period, it may be too soon to detect such hard outcomes and these differences may emerge in DWP's follow-up analysis of administrative data in 2013.

4 Participant experiences of the SVLTU programme

Chapter summary

A considerable proportion of participants on both Community Action Programme (CAP) and Ongoing Case Management (OCM) had poor recall of the advance notice of the programme. Furthermore, a higher proportion of OCM than CAP participants reported not having been made aware of the change in support or not knowing how much notice they had been given. This may reflect the less obvious transition in support from Jobcentre Plus to OCM support.

Overall, participants seemed to have a quite a good understanding of what to expect from their strand, with a higher proportion of OCM participants expecting to attend appointments more frequently at Jobcentre Plus and a higher proportion of CAP participants expecting to be sent on work placement and to get some training in work-related skills. Expectations of positive job outcomes were relatively common, with half of participants in both strands expecting to get a job as a result of the programme.

Having started the programme, participants overall rating of it varied with type – with OCM participants rating their strand the highest, followed by the control group. Just under half of CAP participants rated their strand highly, although this reflected the high proportion of CAP participants not on work placements, who rated the programme negatively.

Participants' experiences of both CAP and OCM varied. This variation rested on differences on what was offered within and between districts, as well two other key issues particular to participants: their personal needs/circumstances (including their practical needs, complex health needs, the complexity of their work barriers, needs around their basic skills, age-related needs and needs for those with higher qualifications) and their orientation to work (how willing they were to enter work and the clarity of their work aspirations).

The role played by staff delivering the trailblazer was a key factor in participants' experiences of the programme. Within OCM the following factors particularly contributed to favourable experiences: continuity in adviser support, advisers providing hands-on support and advisers tailoring support to meet participant needs. CAP customers also favoured a personalised approach in terms of support they received from the providers including a collaborative approach in jobsearch sessions. Participants tended to reflect unfavourably on adviser or provider support where a 'one size fits all' approach was used which did not take account of the needs and aspirations of individuals and where advisers were felt to be condescending towards participants.

Access to training was also a key factor which contributed to participants' experiences of both interventions. Participants valued training and support that addressed basic skills levels (e.g. literacy or numeracy issues) and/or moved them closer to work (i.e. courses specifically related to their work). Participants reflected unfavourably on their training where they were offered courses which they had done before and/or which were not relevant to their needs and aspirations.

CAP participants reflected favourably on their experience of placements due to one or more of the following factors: a) providers had taken the time to select appropriate placements which matched needs or work aspirations, and had involved participants in the process; b) their role within placements was varied and interesting and/or carried a degree of responsibility; c) the level of supervision they received by placement managers/other staff was flexible enough to meet their needs, collaborative in nature and/or they were treated equally to other staff; and d) having a sustained six-month period of work experience (although there were some disagreements around whether 30 hours a week was too long). Participants were critical of their placements where they felt these had been hastily arranged with little regard for their needs and work aspirations and where there was lack of continuity in the supervision they received by the placement host. There were also participants who objected to placements on principle as they did not want to 'work for free'.

The majority of participants did not report receiving a benefit sanctions since their start on the Support for the Very Long-Term Unemployed (SVLTU) programme. A key reason for those that did was failing to attend; this was due to unavoidable and avoidable reasons, as well as error. Sanctions often involved benefits being stopped or reduced for variable lengths of time and had considerable financial impact for some participants. Half of all those sanctioned reported that it made no difference to their behaviour; this may, in part, be due to the reported low levels of understanding as to why they were sanctioned.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter follows on from the previous discussion on the impact of the SVLTU programme by detailing participants' experiences of, and views about, the delivery of CAP and OCM. In doing so, it draws predominately on the participant data, reporting on the qualitative interviews as well as the survey of participants. This chapter focuses largely on the positive experiences of both OCM and CAP in order to draw out key learning points for implementation, but it should be noted that not all participants reflected favourably on their experiences of the programme.

The chapter discusses participants' initial understanding and expectations of the programme (Section 4.2), decisions to leave during the notification period (Section 4.3), their overall views of the programme (4.4), their specific views on what was helpful about the programme (Section 4.5), their suggestions for improving the programme (Section 4.6) and their experiences and views on sanctions and failure to attend (FTA) (Section 4.7).

4.2 Understanding and expectations of the SVLTU programme

4.2.1 Awareness and understanding of notification period

Prior to the start of the SVLTU programme, participants were given a three-month notification period. This involved an initial meeting with a Jobcentre Plus Personal Adviser (PA) to notify them of their allocation to one of the strands of the programme followed by a reminder letter sent to participants each month leading up to the programme reminding them of their involvement and the requirements. The notice period was built into the design of the programme in order to see to what extent advanced notice influenced people to sign off Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) prior to starting one of the programme strands.

CAP and OCM participants were asked in the survey how much notice they were given before the start of the SVLTU programme that their support would change. A considerable proportion in both

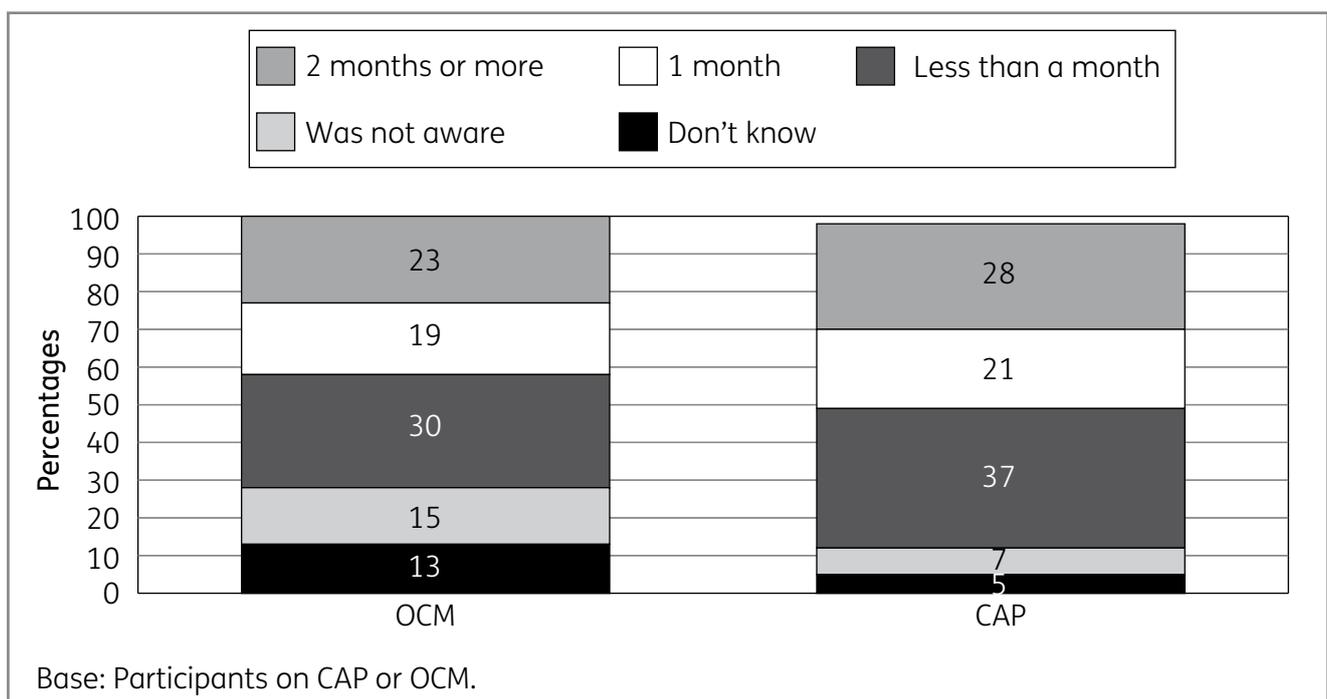
groups said they had less than one month’s notice of the planned change (30 per cent of OCM; 37 per cent of CAP). This would indicate that participants were not aware of receiving the notification letters. It should be noted that the survey did not include claimants who had been notified of CAP or OCM but had flowed off JSA prior to the start of their strand. It is possible that those who left during this notification period were the most affected by the advance notice while those who took part in the programme might be proportionately less likely to remember the notification and the impact that it had.

There were significant differences between the two strands in the proportion of participants who reported not having been made aware of a change or not knowing how much notice they had been given. As showing in Figure 4.1, a higher proportion of OCM participants (15 per cent) were not aware of any change in support ahead of time, compared with CAP participants (seven per cent). Likewise, a higher proportion of OCM participants did not know how much notice they had been given (13 per cent, compared with five per cent of CAP participants).

These differences could be because the transition from standard Jobcentre Plus support was less obvious for the OCM group and so it was more difficult for this group of participants to recall later whether and when they had been given notice of the planned change in support. On the other hand, it is also possible that advisers were more clear or explicit about giving notice to the CAP group as the change would, for them, involve a referral to an external organisation. However, as nearly half of the participants in both groups (45 per cent of OCM; 44 per cent of CAP) recall being given no notice or less than one month’s notice, this suggests improvements could be made to how and when changes to the support offered are communicated to participants by Jobcentre Plus advisers (Table A.4.1 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

The three-month notification period was generally viewed positively by staff. Their view was that it prepared participants for the six months ahead and enabled those unwilling to participate to find alternatives before the programme started. Staff felt that the notification period was helpful in generating early off-flows, most notably for participants allocated to CAP. Where they had noticed early off-flows, this tended to be in the period immediately before participants were due to start the programme.

Figure 4.1 Notice given that support would change



4.2.2 Expectations of the SVLTU programme

The survey asked participants what they had thought would happen on CAP and OCM prior to going on the SVLTU programme. Overall, participants seemed to have quite a good understanding of what to expect from their strand. A higher proportion of OCM participants expected to be asked to come in more frequently for appointments at Jobcentre Plus (66 per cent of OCM; 28 per cent of CAP), to receive a more personalised service from Jobcentre Plus (55 per cent of OCM; 42 per cent of CAP), and to sign on more frequently (36 per cent of OCM; 11 per cent of CAP).

Conversely, a higher proportion of CAP participants expected to be sent on a work experience placement (71 per cent compared with 48 per cent of OCM) and to get some training in work-related skills (63 per cent; 52 per cent of OCM). A majority of participants in both groups also expected to get help to look and apply for work (66 per cent of OCM and 71 per cent of CAP).

Expectations of positive job outcomes were relatively common, with almost one half of participants in both groups expecting to get a job as a result of the programme (46 per cent of OCM and 47 per cent of CAP).

While overall this suggests that participants had a fairly good understanding of what to expect from the SVLTU programme, there is evidence to suggest that communications could be improved in relation to what the programme will and will not include. For example, 42 per cent of CAP participants erroneously thought they were going to receive a more personalised service from Jobcentre Plus during CAP while half of OCM participants (48 per cent) thought they would be sent on a work placement (Table A.4.2 in the technical appendices published alongside this report). It is possible that some of these OCM participants were thinking of Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) or a work experience scheme when referring to work placement. The qualitative evidence also demonstrated that participants did not recall having received very detailed information about either OCM or CAP from their notification meeting or from the letters. Advisers attributed this to the fact that longer-term unemployed participants were so used to getting letters from Jobcentre Plus that they did not pay much attention to their content, and suggested that the letters could be worded more strongly.

There was generally a good understanding of the consequences of not participating in the programme, with the majority of participants in both groups reporting temporary withdrawal of benefits as a consequence of non-participation (67 per cent of OCM; 71 per cent of CAP) (Table A.4.1 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

4.2.3 Initial responses to being on the SVLTU programme

Initially, participants responded to the programme by focusing on three factors: how helpful they felt it would be to them; its mandatory nature; and the intensity of its requirements. The responses of OCM participants were less pronounced in comparison to those of CAP participants, possibly because CAP required a much more intensive time commitment than OCM due to the mandatory nature of the work placements. Across both interventions, participants had three broad reactions to the programme, which are categorised here in order of acceptance.

- **Objecting to the programme:** OCM participants who had done similar intensive programmes with Jobcentre Plus in the past questioned how different OCM was, and how helpful it was likely to be in helping them find work. CAP participants tended to focus on the intensive nature of the work placements, questioning the ‘ethics’ of working for ‘free’, and strongly objecting to being ‘forced’ to work under the threat of benefits being cut. They also expressed doubts about the usefulness of work placements either because they felt too old²³ for these and/or because they had found them of limited use in the past. Some of this group agreed with the usefulness of work placements but resented that they were mandatory and felt that 30 hours a week was too much time.
- **Going along with the programme/being indifferent to it:** Participants in this group did not express any strong feelings towards the programme but simply wanted to do what was necessary to ensure the continuity of their benefits. This group included those who felt, in relation to CAP, that it was fair for the government to ask benefit claimants to do placements
- **Welcoming the programme:** OCM participants sometimes welcomed the prospect of more frequent, longer and personalised job support from a PA and/or the opportunity to do work placements as a way of dealing with their barriers to work. This was particularly the case for those who felt that they were not getting the level of support they needed from Jobcentre Plus. Participants welcomed CAP placements for two main reasons: a) the opportunity to alleviate the boredom they experienced looking for work at home by having structure and purpose added to their day; b) the possibility of placements furthering their prospects of finding work, for example by developing skills and adding to their experience portfolio.

Respondents’ views did not always remain static; there was evidence of participants starting the programme with significant objections but becoming more accepting or welcoming as it progressed, either because they felt that it was helping them move closer to work, or because they felt they were gaining other benefits from involvement. These benefits are discussed further in Section 4.6 and Chapter 3. To a lesser extent, participants also moved from a position of acceptance based on positive expectations about the support they would receive to simply going along with the programme or even objecting to it when these expectations were not met.

4.3 Leaving the trailblazer during the notification period

In this section we report on the qualitative data which provides some evidence from participants and staff about claimants who left the trailblazer during the notification period, their reasons for doing so and what they subsequently did. The two most common reasons given for signing off JSA during the notification period were starting work and moving onto other benefits. This was not necessarily permanent work, and people who had taken, for example, Christmas jobs, had subsequently signed back on again. New benefit claims included claiming benefits for long-term or short-term sickness (including Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)), and claiming Income Support (IS) and/or Carer’s Allowance having taken on caring responsibilities for new babies, children, partners or elderly relatives.

Early qualitative fieldwork with claimants explored the extent to which they may have decided to sign off JSA during the three-month notification period in order to avoid going on the trailblazer programme. Thirty claimants whose decision to sign off JSA was influenced by negative feelings

²³ Older participants (40 plus) in particular felt that community-based work placements were more suitable for younger people who lacked work experience; with some older respondents who may have had careers and high profile positions in the past finding it ‘demeaning’ and of limited value to be asked to work for free.

about the programme were interviewed. Among these respondents, the extent to which not wanting to take part influenced their decision to sign off varied. The other factors which also played a part in their decision to sign off included the existence of other options, such as moving onto other benefits, starting up self-employment or borrowing money from their family. This indicates that notification was not generally the main driver for off-flow from the programme.

Staff perspectives on the causes of off-flows in this period mirrored the evidence from claimants, with staff believing that they came about during and soon after the notification period as a result of participants moving onto other benefits or into paid work or employment. Some staff observed that claimants tended to sign off towards the end of the three-month notification period, shortly before being due to start, particularly for CAP. Their belief was that those with underlying health issues regarded moving to ESA as a more effective strategy to avoid CAP than signing off JSA temporarily and risking being re-allocated to the programme after signing back on. Advisers tended to suspect that those who had moved into paid work or self-employment during or soon after the notification period had already been working. Otherwise, they felt it appeared too easy and too soon for someone unemployed for two years or more to find work so quickly.

The qualitative research with claimants who had signed off JSA during the three-month notification period cannot provide evidence on the numbers of those ending their claim before start. However, it does provide a detailed exploration of which aspects of the programme requirements they objected to. These are set out in relation to OCM and CAP below.

The reasons why participants placed on **OCM** did not want to continue on the programme and left during the notification period included:

- believing that OCM would not offer them anything new in relation to finding work, which encompassed, in some cases, the critical view that attending appointments would be a waste of time;
- dissatisfaction with the abilities of Jobcentre Plus staff: who were seen to lack the time, resources and training to help participants;
- frustration that the aim of the programme was to ‘check up’ on claimants;
- belief that the programme existed to find a ‘quick fix’ solution to unemployment: claimants holding this view did not expect to receive tailored and personalised support from the programme.

The reasons why participants placed on **CAP** did not want continue on the programme and left during notification period included:

- negative experiences of similar programmes: claimants did not expect providers to help them find work. These expectations were informed by previous experiences of attending provider organisations and how the programme had been described to them by Jobcentre Plus advisers. Claimants also reported negative experiences of previous work experience schemes such as MWA, in which they had been treated poorly by their placement hosts;
- having no choice or control over their work experience placement: because claimants did not expect to have a say in their placements, they were concerned about potentially being placed in an area of work of no interest to them, meaning they would not develop skills that were relevant to the type of work they wanted to do;
- being unlikely to secure full time work after the six-month placement: claimants did not think they would be offered paid work after doing their placements, believing that their placements hosts utilised free labour supplied by similar work experience schemes;
- being asked to give up existing work or learning commitments: claimants reported being told that ongoing entitlement to JSA would mean giving up part-time work, voluntary work or courses pertaining to their career aspirations to do CAP. One claimant felt that the requirements of OCM would also jeopardise her part-time work commitments;

- not being paid minimum wage: JSA was not seen as a fair exchange for the number of hours of work and jobsearch on CAP, particularly in light of the above two factors for some of the non-starters. Where reactions were strongest the scheme was likened to ‘slave labour’ and ‘community service’. For some claimants, participating was felt to be too costly because clothing, travel²⁴ and jobsearch costs would represent an unaffordable proportion of their JSA income.

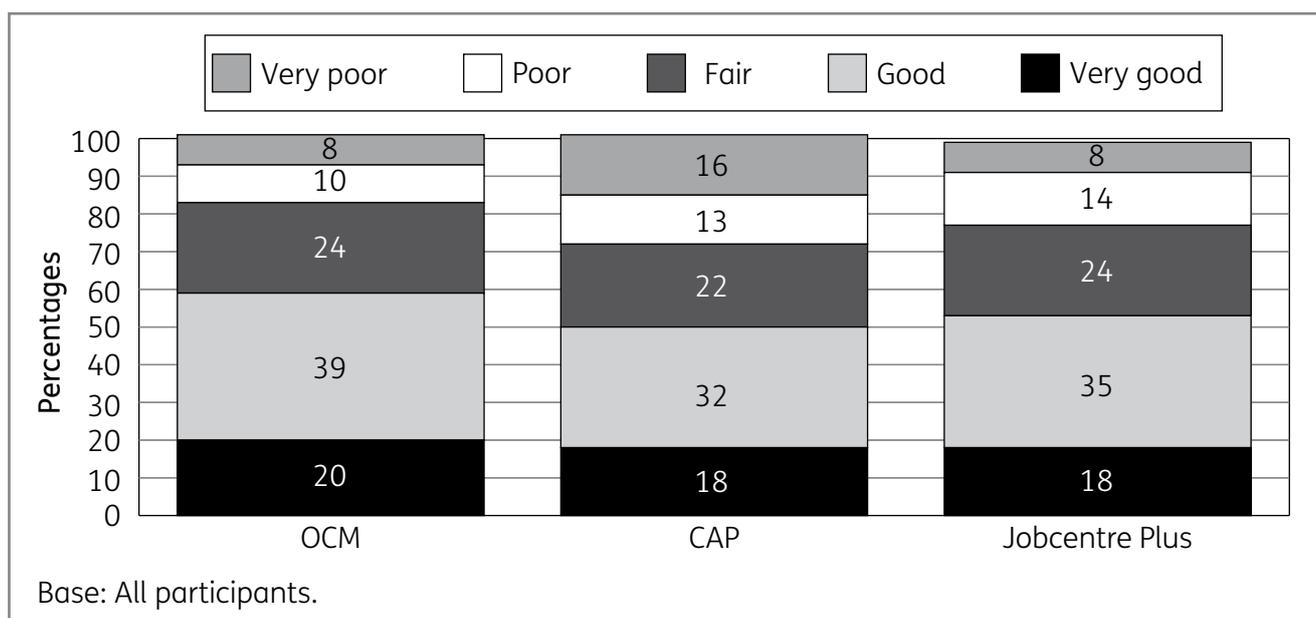
In relation to both OCM and CAP, anxieties around the impact of the programme on health conditions also contributed to the view that the requirements of the programme outweighed its benefits for this group of non-starters. Claimants in the sample who moved from JSA to ESA did so straight or shortly after being notified about their allocation to the programme. Not knowing the full details of their work placement or the activities they might be required to take, these claimants became anxious about being unfit to fulfil the OCM or CAP requirements and worried about the repercussions for their benefits if they could not. In a number of cases, claimants’ anxiety about OCM or CAP was reported by them to have brought on or exacerbated mental health issues, and they had signed off JSA as a result.

For claimants who signed off JSA without the financial contingencies of secure work or social networks, this tended to result in considerable financial difficulties. Anger was expressed towards Jobcentre Plus for forcing them onto a scheme that demanded numerous hours without paying minimum wage²⁵. These claimants had preferred to end their relationship with Jobcentre Plus than take part.

4.4 Participant rating of programme experience

Having started the programme, participants’ overall rating of their experience varied by programme strand. OCM participants rated their strand the highest, with 59 per cent saying it was good or very good while just over half of the control group (53 per cent) did so. While half of CAP participants (50 per cent) rated their strand as good or very good, and 16 per cent rated CAP as very poor (compared with eight per cent of OCM and Jobcentre Plus Offer (JCPO) participants respectively) (Figure 4.2; Table A.4.3 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Figure 4.2 Participant ratings of programme

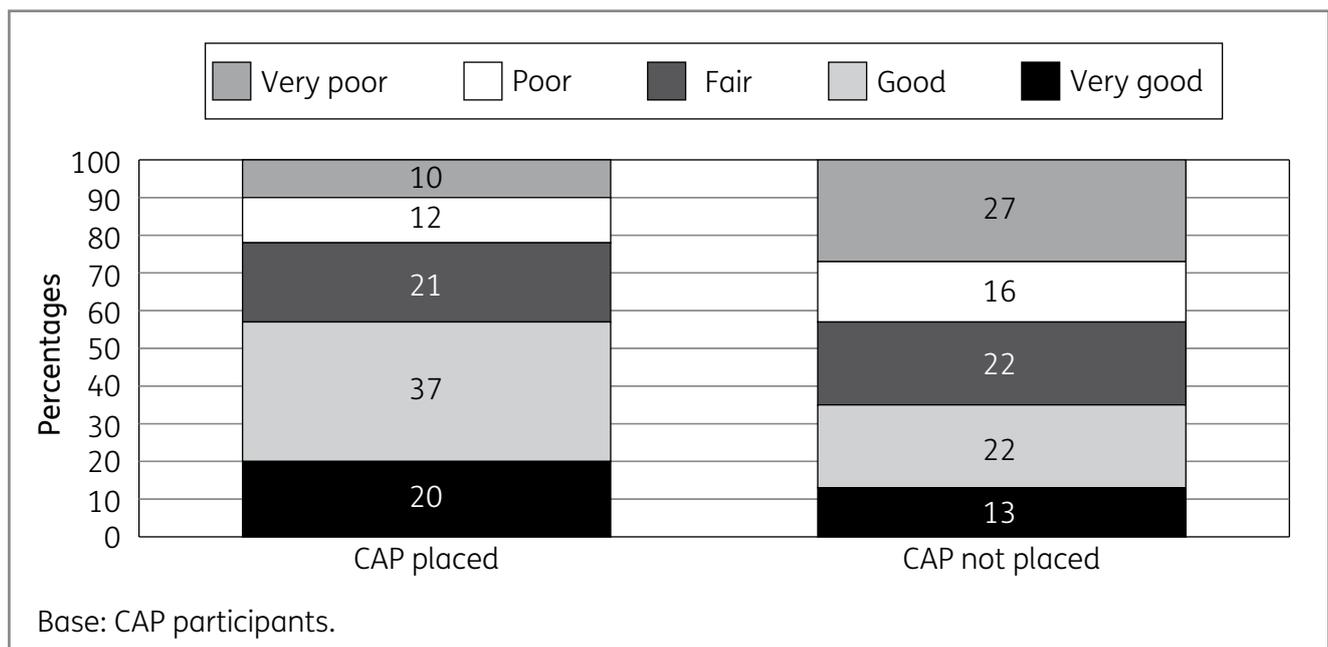


²⁴ Although it must be noted that travel costs were reimbursed for participants on placements.

²⁵ Travel and childcare expenses are covered by CAP but participants did not necessarily know this at the notification period.

Further analysis indicated that the rating of the CAP experience varied significantly by whether CAP participants had been placed on a work experience (Figure 4.3). While the ratings of participants who had been placed were in line with the ratings given by participants on OCM (57 per cent good or very good; ten per cent very poor), only 35 per cent of CAP participants who had not been placed on a work experience rated the strand as very good or good and over a quarter (27 per cent) rated it as very poor. The reason for the lower ratings by CAP participants who were not placed may be the mismatch between these participants' expectations and their experience, and possibly a feeling of missing out on a key aspect of the strand.

Figure 4.3 CAP participant ratings of programme, by whether placed



4.5 Participant views on what has been helpful

Evidence from the qualitative interviews suggests that participants' views on the helpfulness of the programme hinged on two main factors: the extent to which it met their personal needs and circumstances; and the fit of what the programme offered them with their orientation towards work.

In relation to the **extent to which the programme met participants' personal needs and circumstances**, six key needs and circumstances were evident. These were:

- practical needs (e.g. not having access to facilities, such as the internet);
- complex health needs (e.g. learning disabilities);
- complex work barriers (e.g. having a criminal record);
- needs around basic skills, such as numeracy, literacy and computer skills;
- age-related needs (e.g. older participants requiring less manually taxing work placements); and
- needs for those with higher qualifications (e.g. needing help from advisers to identify graduate jobs).

As a general pattern, the more complex the level of a participant's need, the more intense the support required from the programme.

There were two main facets of orientation towards work which had a bearing on the support that was needed. The first was how willing participants were to enter employment. For example, Jobcentre Plus/provider advisers reported that there were groups of participants who were resistant to finding work for various reasons and that this resistance coloured participant views of the programme and limited the difference that advisers were able to make. The second, where participants were willing to enter employment, was the level of clarity they had about their work aspirations. For example, advisers said there were participants who had specific ideas about their work aspirations which influenced their expectations and experiences of aspects of the programme, for example, the nature and type of work placement they were in.

These issues demonstrate both the importance of tailoring jobsearch and placement support to the needs and aspirations of individual participants, and how the value participants place on the support received can be coloured by their individual characteristics. The following sections go on to discuss which aspects of OCM and CAP were particularly valued, followed by participant suggestions for how these strands could be improved.

4.5.1 Views of OCM

As reported in Chapter 3, over half of participants on OCM felt that the programme had helped a lot or a little. Qualitative evidence suggests that the variation in participant views about the support they received under OCM was influenced by the two factors mentioned above: their personal needs or circumstances and their orientation to work. They were also influenced by the extent to which participants perceived OCM as involving a change to their support; as discussed in Chapter 2, not all did. This section begins by focusing on what participants who did experience a change under OCM felt worked particularly well, in order to draw out learning points for the OCM approach.

Aspects of OCM which were regarded as working particularly well

The qualitative evidence suggests that there were four elements of the OCM strand which participants felt worked particularly well and which served to differentiate it from the standard Jobcentre Plus support. These were: the quality of adviser support; continuity of adviser support; more frequent and longer visits to the adviser; and the training opportunities offered. These will be discussed in turn in the following paragraphs.

An integral part of the OCM was the interaction between advisers and participants. Participants reflected favourably on the quality of adviser support where advisers were perceived as having taken the time to listen to a participant's personal needs and circumstances and having shown empathy. Participants felt that where this approach had been taken, advisers were able to tailor their support and jobsearch advice more effectively because they had gained a good understanding of their participant's aspirations and sometimes complex barriers.

There was also a feeling that this approach resulted in collaborative working between the participant and adviser, which was highly valued and felt to foster trust. In particular, instead of thrusting unsuitable/inappropriate working options on participants to meet targets, advisers were perceived to be prepared to have an open dialogue around employment barriers and needs.

'It just seems like they're [adviser] trying to actually understand that my [criminal] record is an issue, even though it's spent. ... Because there's no point in me applying for a job and filling out an application form for three hours if that's just going to get thrown on the scrap heap.'

(OCM participant)

'They're [advisers] just nice. They deal with you as a person, not just a case number or someone that's trying to have them over to get money ... They speak to you civil. You feel like a person, you don't feel like someone that's been threatened ... They make allowances, they don't treat everyone as ... You're not cat-[cattle], they'll take the time to look through someone's case notes and see what they have been through or what they go through and how they cope with it.'

(OCM participant)

Participants also appreciated advisers providing the types of active support discussed in Chapter 2 that went beyond just simply the monitoring of their jobsearch progress. This particularly included proactive help around jobsearching (e.g. help with CVs and using the internet to carry out jobsearches) and training opportunities (e.g. providing, sourcing and/or funding these). This hands-on approach by advisers enhanced the experience of participants for two reasons: firstly, it made them feel that the adviser cared and was keen to help them get back into work; and secondly, there were participants who felt that they needed this proactive advice and support to make positive steps forward. This type of direct support was appreciated particularly, though not exclusively, by those who were less autonomous in their jobsearch, such as those with low basic skills.

A further facet of OCM that tended to be valued was continuity in adviser support, which involved seeing the same adviser during each visit and/or advisers following through on actions. Seeing the same adviser was often felt by participants to be instrumental in building up the rapport described above which enabled advisers to scope the most appropriate training and work opportunities. It also spared the participant the need to repeat information and to revisit sensitive and personal information with different people. However, participants who felt particularly autonomous in their jobsearch felt less strongly about continuity of adviser, and there were also participants who said they preferred to have input from different advisers in order to get a breadth of views on issues.

'I think the same person [adviser], if that's the one you feel comfortable with, then ... [it's better] ... they'll give you more help if, if it's the same person, you know, get to know you and they'll know what jobs you want to go for.'

(OCM participant)

More frequent and longer appointments were other facets of OCM that were often appreciated, for the following reasons: helping keep participants motivated around their jobsearch; facilitating the development of rapport and relationships between advisers and participants; and/or helping to ensure that advisers were more likely to follow-up on actions, thereby maintaining the momentum. A number of participants valued not only seeing their adviser more often but for longer, so jobsearches could be conducted in more depth and issues could be discussed at length. Increased frequency and duration of meetings was particularly, though not exclusively, appreciated by those who felt less autonomous in their jobsearch and so needed additional input. However, there were participants who felt that jobsearch sessions with advisers were too frequent. This view was held in particular by those who were more autonomous and by those who were strongly resistant to working.

'I just felt that it [job support] was, it was the continuity of it, you know, there was no gaps where you sort of, you fell into and you can get complacent ... She [adviser] would keep me going. I think that was, that's what was good about going there once a week.'

(OCM participant)

The survey results support the qualitative data to a degree. When participants were asked which Jobcentre Plus help had been the most effective in helping them move towards work, a higher proportion of participants on OCM (19 per cent, compared with eight per cent on JCPO) reported that

attending more frequent appointments with their adviser had been the most effective intervention (Table A.4.6 of the technical appendices published alongside this report) However, it should be noted that this is still only one in five participants, and the largest proportion in both support strands stated that none of the support listed (37 per cent of OCM and 43 per cent of the control group) could be rated as the most effective intervention in helping them move closer to work. A small proportion of OCM participants (three per cent) also reported that signing on weekly had been effective.

Training opportunities were the final aspect of OCM which participants expressed strong appreciation of. What was particularly appreciated about training was the opportunity to address basic skills issues (e.g. literacy, numeracy) and/or which had direct application to the types of employment they were seeking, equipping them with the necessary skills to move them closer to work. This was especially, though not exclusively, the case for participants who had a clearer idea of the type of work they wanted to enter. Those who wanted a change of direction also benefitted from this. Examples of the types of training support appreciated included literacy and numeracy courses at local colleges, health and safety certification for specific professions as well as training around industry specific software (e.g. accounting software). There was less appreciation of training where it was perceived by participants to be repeating what they had done in the past. For some long-term unemployed participants this related in particular to 'soft skills' training around CV help and interview skills.

'Alongside of the HGV, they [Jobcentre Plus advisers] also referred me to a company for my forklift licence as well ... that's where I come to brilliant ... because two years ago I discussed the same needs and I was basically told "look, there's no funding, no chance, you know don't even want to entertain the idea".'

(OCM participant)

Some respondents were referred to external providers for their job-related and/or basic skills training. In general, participants appreciated this experience for three reasons: a) external providers were seen to have better jobsearch facilities, such as more computers and better access to the internet; b) they were regarded as better able to provide specialist help (e.g. around CVs or careers advice); and c) they had contacts that could help participants develop their thoughts about work, for example, in relation to specific industries.

Aspects of OCM which were less well appreciated/received mixed views

The survey asked whether there was anything participants disliked about OCM. Whilst the majority of OCM participants reported that there was not anything they disliked about the programme, a third of participants (34 per cent) did mention disliking some aspect(s) of OCM. Of these, 29 per cent had had a negative experience working with their adviser or felt their adviser was not understanding of their needs or situation. Eight per cent reported not having received personalised support while a further eight per cent reported not having received any support more generally. A fifth of participants (21 per cent) who disliked something about OCM mentioned the frequency of signing on appointments (Table A.4.5 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). Furthermore, nearly half of OCM participants (46 per cent) also reported that the programme had not helped them get closer to work (Table A.3.12 of the technical appendices published alongside this report), although this was significantly higher among the control group (56 per cent).

A quarter (25 per cent) of OCM participants reported having been on a compulsory four-week work placement (MWA). The qualitative evidence suggests that amongst those who had experienced MWA under OCM, views about this were mixed. On the one hand there were participants who disliked what they regarded as the principle of working for free, and questioned the value of unpaid work in filling the gap relating to paid employment on their CV. On the other, there were those

who welcomed the opportunity to bridge gaps in their skills and experience through unpaid work. However, even amongst these participants, the value of MWA was questioned on four levels: a) whether four weeks experience was enough to fill experience gaps; b) the relevance of some of the placements to their job aspirations; c) whether placements fitted their skills sets and d) the lack of prospect in being taken on by placements at the end of the voluntary period. The qualitative evidence from PAs, however, was that they felt MWA was a valuable option for some participants (see Chapter 5).

It is worth noting from the survey evidence, however, that whilst not all participants had positive experiences of OCM, there was no evidence of even these participants wanting to leave the programme. This could be for two reasons: firstly, it could reflect the very long-term unemployed participants' willingness to adapt to Jobcentre Plus requirements in order to remain on benefits – especially those who have gone through a number of such programmes in the past. Conversely, in spite of experiences not being positive, some participants may have felt the programme was an improvement on previous support offered.

4.5.2 Views of CAP

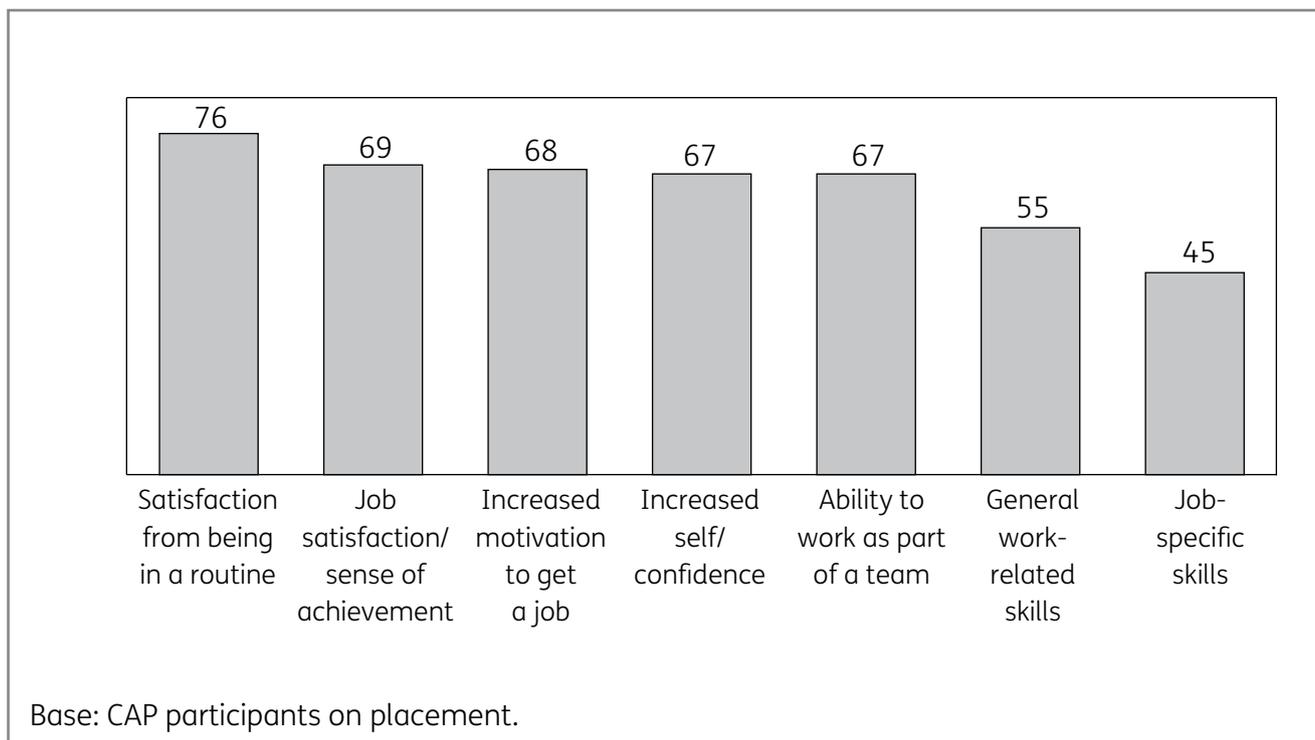
Participants' experiences of work placements and the jobsearch offered by providers will be discussed in turn below. As with the discussion of OCM, the sections focus on what participants felt worked well in order to draw out key learning points. Where experiences were less positive, as with OCM, this did not translate into participants wanting to leave the programme.

Work placements

Work placements were a defining feature of CAP. Overall, the majority of participants in the survey who had been on a work placement felt the experience had been fairly helpful or very helpful (30 per cent and 37 per cent, respectively). A fifth of participants reported that the experience had made no difference to their situation (22 per cent) while a tenth of participants thought it had been very unhelpful (ten per cent) (Table A.4.7 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Of those who had been on a work placement, the survey showed that the most tended to feel that they had gained from the experience (Figure 4.4). The majority of participants reported having gained satisfaction from being in a routine (76 per cent); job satisfaction or a sense of achievement (69 per cent); increased motivation to get a job (68 per cent); increased self-motivation (67 per cent) and the ability to work as a team (67 per cent). Only eight per cent felt they had not gained any of these (Table A.4.8 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). When asked if the placement had led to any other positive outcomes, 19 per cent mentioned improved personal skills and 13 per cent mentioned increased confidence (Table A.4.9 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). The generally positive view of the placement experience is also reflected in the fact that more than half of participants would either consider staying on their placement as a volunteer (32 per cent) or had in fact already decided to do so (26 per cent) (Table A.4.10 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

CAP participants were also asked if there were any negative aspects to the programme. While CAP placements were generally viewed positively by the majority of participants, 40 per cent of participants who had been on a placement felt there was something about the experience that they disliked. Of those who reported disliking something about the experience, 18 per cent mentioned the fact that the work was unpaid while 12 per cent mentioned not having enough time to do their jobsearch or not receiving jobsearch support (Table A.4.11 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). The following section on which aspects of CAP were appreciated also sheds additional light on why views were sometimes less positive.

Figure 4.4 What was gained from work placement

Aspects of CAP work placements which were regarded as working particularly well

This section sets out the aspects of CAP work placements that were particularly appreciated by participants as explored in the participant interviews. Where these aspects were not experienced favourably, views were less positive.

- **Participants' needs taken into account in the selection of placements:** Where providers spent time at the initial interview discussing placement options in the light of participant needs and experiences, this was generally appreciated. Conversely, where participants felt hurried and not listened to in the allocation of places, views were much less favourable. Participants also valued having a degree of control over the selection process, even if this was limited to the provider taking account of their experience, future job aspirations and travel time to placements. Beyond this, there was a large degree of variation, with some respondents valuing the opportunity to extend their involvement in current volunteering work, whereas others objected to suggestions that they find placement opportunities themselves.
- **Pre-visits to the placement:** Once in a placement, some participants also valued paying visits to the host accompanied by their CAP job coach prior to the start, particularly those who were anxious or lacked confidence.
- **Being offered the possibility of changing placement:** Participants also welcomed the possibility of being able to change their placements if they were unhappy. This gave them a sense of control and a feeling that providers were responsive to their placement experiences and needs. This is reflected in the survey findings discussed in Chapter 2, which suggest that a key reason why participants changed their placement was because they wanted to.
- **Good fit of placement with a participant's work orientation:** Participants who had a clear idea about work aspirations generally valued being assigned to placements that were either directly related to these and/or gave them an opportunity to develop transferable skills. Participants

less sure about their future work direction tended to value the opportunity to sample a working environment/role that differed from their previous working experience and so broadened their horizons. Those that were older and had job-specific skills and qualifications sometimes found it demeaning to work in low-skilled placements with no prospect of pay

'... because I am a skilled person and I know that they shouldn't send me to places like that [placement].'

(CAP participant)

Other positive experiences of placements shared by participants across the sample were the opportunity which placements provided in adding routine to their life and alleviating boredom and/or finding community placements as personally rewarding. Feeling valued as a volunteer by a community organisation and/or feeling they had made a difference to their community contributed to participants finding placements rewarding experiences. The participant below reflects on how worthwhile they found working for a charity that could not actually function without volunteers.

'When we got with [placement] we thought it was just one of these another things ... we'd go and work for nothing doing slave labour again. But when we worked for the charity place it was like "wow, this is not slave labour, this is like doing summat that needs doing for somebody that doesn't get paid" and you go to something really good. It literally goes to them [charity shop] ... And not like [previous placement in private sector], they could employ someone to pay them the wage to do what we was doing.'

(CAP participant)

Participants being given an appropriate role to perform during their work placement: Participants tended to value their role if it met one or more of the following three criteria: a) it reflected their personality (e.g. introverted individuals felt at ease where they were offered roles that were not participant focused); b) if there were a degree of diversity in what they did and there was scope for this to change as they grew in confidence; and/or c) roles carried a degree of responsibility (e.g. marking prices in a charity shop). Responsibility was important in helping participants to develop their skills within the placement and in making them feel trusted and valued by the placement host.

'I'd recommend to people who hadn't done that kind of thing before [community placement] and people who ... had like preconceptions about working in a charity shop, I just think that it's a decent environment to work in ... as long as you get in a shop where like, you get to do the whole range of things rather than just getting to do one job every day, so yeah I'd recommend that. I'd recommend kind of a participant service, participant-facing kind of job, that aspect of it, I'd recommend that to you because it's rewarding.'

(CAP participant)

Participants receiving an appropriate level of supervision on their work placement from placement hosts: the majority of participants in the survey reported that the amount of supervision received was about right (86 per cent) and that the quality of supervision received was good or very good (70 per cent) (Table A.4.12 and Table A.4.13 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). The qualitative interviews provide further insight into supervision needs. These differed between participants depending on their personality, the complexity of their needs and basic skills levels. However, those who reflected positively on their experience of placements noted one or more features of the level of supervision they received:

- **flexibility:** this involved supervision tailored flexibly to the needs of participants – usually participants being shown what to do with the opportunity to ask for further support should they need it – and/or given the opportunity to complete their 30 hours flexibly in the event of emergencies and other unforeseen circumstances. For example, one participant was able to take a week day off to attend a funeral and to make up their outstanding 30 hours by working at the weekend;
- **collaborative approach towards tasks:** as with PAs, participants felt valued where placement managers encouraged their input on tasks;
- **equality:** participants felt valued where they were treated equally as other staff/volunteers in placements, with some participants seeing this as a strength of doing placements in the community sector, which employs volunteers and has a track history of working with them.

Participants feeling supported and accepted by other staff/volunteers on the placement: in addition to managers, the interviews suggest that other staff/volunteers in placements were also important sources of informal, and at times, more accessible support for participants. Accordingly, their experiences were positive where they felt supported and accepted by other staff/volunteers. Indeed, meeting new and supportive people was one of the secondary benefits of being on placements cited by participants.

‘Yeah, I liked it when I got to know the staff and every ... the staff were quite friendly and helpful and stuff and, yeah, they like made you feel at home really, really welcome and stuff.’

(CAP participant)

Continued interest and support of providers in a participant’s placement: As mentioned earlier, participants also appreciated providers continuing to take an interest in respondents’ placement experiences once they had started and discussing these with them and the placement host. This made participants feel they were not forgotten once they were in placement and ensured that any issues could be dealt with, including whether the participant would benefit from another placement. Providers’ support around reimbursing travel expenses was also seen to be important in ensuring participants were able to attend placements, particularly where respondents had to travel significant distances to reach these.

Six-month time period for placement: With regards to duration of placements, participants tended to value the six-month time period on placements as this constituted a substantial period of work experience which could then be usefully added into CVs – although there were some who called for a shorter time period as they felt that they had learned all they could from placements before the six months was over.

Jobsearch by providers

The job support offered by providers tended to take less prominence in CAP participants’ interview accounts, which may reflect the importance of work placements in this intervention. Indeed, participants had mixed views on the time spent on placements, with some respondents feeling that the 30 hours they spent took time away from their own jobsearch activities.

However, when specifically asked in the survey about how helpful they had found the jobsearch sessions, the majority of respondents reported that these sessions had been helpful; 33 per cent felt they had been a lot of help while a further 32 per cent reported that the sessions had been of little help (Table A.4.14 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Aspects of CAP jobsearch support regarded as working particularly well

The qualitative interviews indicate that those who valued the jobsearch support did so for similar reasons as the OCM participants, namely, because of the quality of provider adviser (or ‘job coach’) support, continuity of job coach, duration of meetings and training opportunities, described above in relation to OCM. Indeed, some participants felt that the quality of jobsearch support received under CAP differentiated it from their normal Jobcentre Plus adviser support in helping them feel like a ‘person and not a number’ – particularly those participants who were unsatisfied with the level of support received from Jobcentre Plus in the past. Provider job coaches were sometimes seen to be more accessible, approachable and collaborative in comparison to Jobcentre Plus advisers who by contrast were sometimes seen as rushed and overly focused on their policing/monitoring role.

‘My adviser is very helpful, so ... I think they are, um, a lot more friendly [than Jobcentre Plus staff] and a lot more helpful than staff at the Jobcentre.’

(CAP participant)

Some participants also mentioned how much they valued the **material and financial support** either directly provided or sourced by the provider job coaches in helping them to purchase equipment they would need for courses/future work (e.g. work boots) or jobsearch (e.g. suits for interviews).

Participants further differentiated the jobsearch support they received under CAP with reference to **provider facilities**. In some cases, these facilities were compared favourably to Jobcentre Plus offices because they had more computer terminals, better access to the internet, access to stamps and/or were seen to be more relaxing spaces to conduct a jobsearch.

As with placements, it is also important to note that participants also derived **secondary gains** not related to employment from the provider job coaches. This included emotional support, feeling listened to and access to non-job-related support, such as advice on debt and housing.

Participants tended not to report receiving much jobsearch support from placement hosts, which generally was not expected. In instances where this support was received from placement hosts, it involved staff providing help around covering letters, applications and CVs.

Aspects of CAP jobsearch support which were less well appreciated

Less positively, there were participants who were critical of what they regarded as a ‘cherry picking’ approach used by some job coaches which they felt involved the more intensive support being targeted at those who were closest to work, in order to meet perceived targets.

‘...and they [provider job coach] do nothing but on the phone all the time ... I don’t think they’re very helpful. I’m getting the impression that they’re picking who they want to sit down and chat to.’

(CAP participant)

As discussed in Chapter 2, qualitative interviews with some provider staff corroborated this perception, with the suggestion that some participants deemed to have a better chance of finding work being prioritised. However, analysis of survey data did not show any significant differences in the demographic characteristics or reported barriers of participants receiving jobsearch support compared with those who did not receive support and thus, there is no evidence of systematic bias.

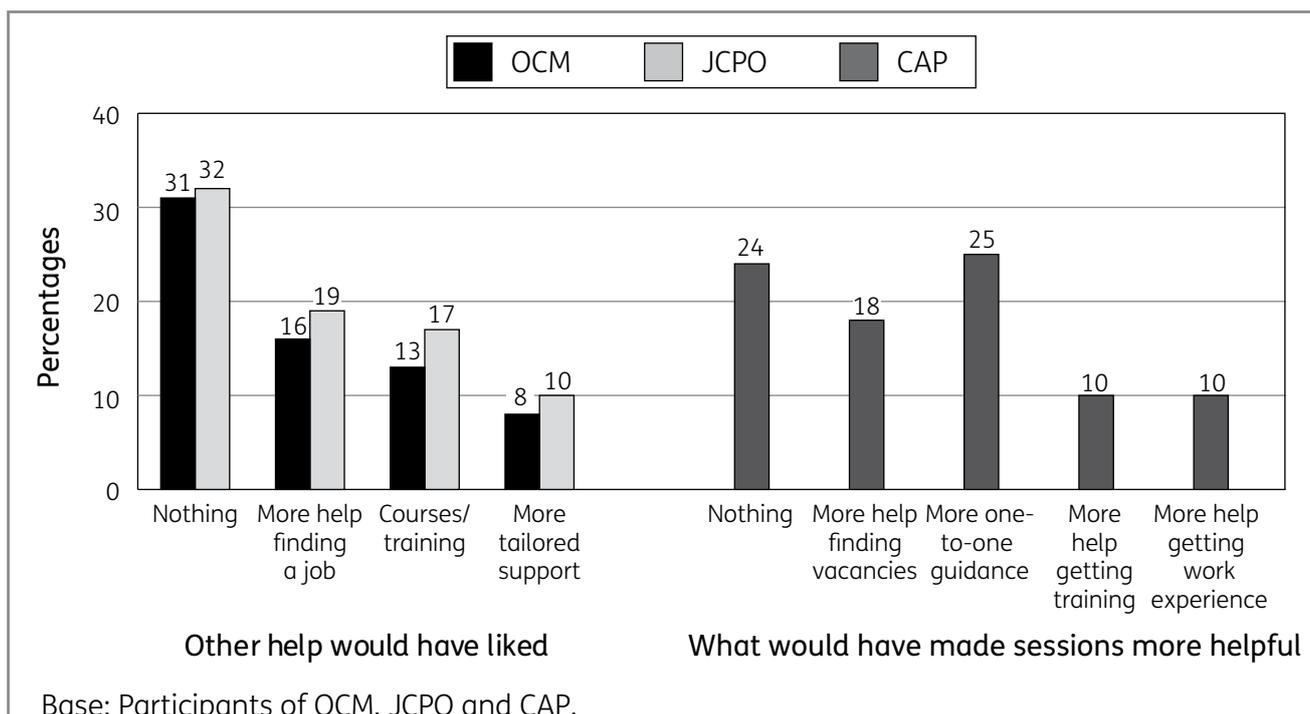
4.6 Suggestions for improvements (CAP and OCM)

In the participant survey, various ways were suggested in which to improve experiences of both OCM and CAP (Figure 4.5), although it should be noted that improvements to the experience may not necessarily result in improved outcomes.

In relation to OCM, when participants were asked what other help they would have liked to have received, the largest proportion reported that there was nothing more (31 per cent of OCM). The two most popular types of help that participants would have liked to have received included more help finding a job (16 per cent) or with jobsearching and courses or training (13 per cent). Findings were similar among those in the control group (Table A.4.15 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

When CAP participants were asked what would have made their jobsearch sessions more helpful, a quarter (24 per cent) reported that nothing would have increased their helpfulness. On the other hand, a quarter (25 per cent) of participants said they would have liked to have had more one-to-one guidance, while 18 per cent would have liked to have received more help with finding vacancies. (Table A.4.16 of the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Figure 4.5 Participants' suggestions for improvements



The qualitative interviews allowed for detailed exploration of participant views as to how OCM and CAP could be improved. Their suggestions related to improving three broad areas: a) work experience; b) jobsearch support; and c) training. Suggestions for improvements are summarised in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. It is important to note three key features of the tables: a) suggestions relate to improving participants' experiences, rather than the performance of the programme; b) not all participants shared all of these views; and c) some of the improvements suggested were already being experienced by other participants.

Table 4.1 Participants' suggestions for improving the participant experience of work placements and training in CAP and OCM

Area of improvement	OCM	CAP
Having work placements	Should provide work placements (including MWA). This will help long-term employed pick up skills and valuable work experience.	
Selecting & starting placements	Should not provide work placements (including MWA). Questions around the ethics of working for free.	
	Placement allocation should reflect participant needs. This includes their job aspirations, skills sets and personality so placements become more relevant.	
	There should be a possibility of securing paid employment after placement. This was seen to incentivise work placements for participants. For some participants, this meant having the option of placements in the private sector.	
Rewarding attendance/ making it convenient		<p>Time taken to select right placement. Placement allocation should not be rushed and should reflect participant needs.</p> <p>Minimise delays to starting placements once selected.</p> <p>Placements should be convenient to attend. They should not be too far from where participants live.</p> <p>Benefits should be increased once on placement. This was seen to compensate for 'working for free', as well as rewarding participants willing to be in placements.</p> <p>Better reimbursements. Participants should be reimbursed for lunch and other meal expenses, as well as for travel (DWP policy is to reimburse travel expenses whilst on placement).</p> <p>Having the opportunity to acquire qualifications whilst on placements.</p>
Length and duration	MWA should be longer than four weeks. This provides participants a longer period to pick up skills and improves CV.	Duration of placement should not be changed. Participants largely appreciated the six-month work placement period as it gave them substantial work experience.
Supervision in placements		Placements should be less than 30 hours per week. This would enable participants more time to do their own jobsearch.
More training opportunities	Participants across both interventions also called for more training opportunities geared towards their needs. This included training around work-related and jobsearch skills which they felt could help them move closer to employment.	Continuity of supervision. Having the same supervisor at placement host to ensure rapport is built and continuity of instructions.
Training tailored to needs	This suggestion came from participants frustrated at being offered training courses that they had done before and/or which were not relevant to their work aspirations.	

Table 4.2 Participants' suggestions for improvements to jobsearch sessions to improve participant experience of CAP and OCM

Area of improvement	OCM	CAP
Improving adviser support	<p>Improving continuity of support: Advisers follow through on promises of support and having the same adviser or provider 'job coach'.</p> <p>Tailoring support to meet participant needs: Ensuring support is tailored to need and jobsearches reflect participant skills, experiences and work aspirations</p> <p>Better knowledge of support available. This included what reimbursements participants could claim and the range of courses available to participants.</p> <p>More intense help from advisers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More hands-on jobsearch help to those with complex needs (e.g. dyslexia). • Helping to identify jobs and alert participants outside of formal meetings. • More intense help around CVs and job applications either provided directly or sourced by advisers. • Better monitoring of participants to ensure they attend job sessions and that they have applied for work <p>A more collaborative approach: Not being condescending and authoritarian towards participants and working together with participants to build action plans.</p> <p>Treating participants with respect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not keeping participants waiting or cancelling appointments to foster better partnerships. • Some CAP participants felt that staff treated them like a 'paycheck' in so far as they seemed more concerned about the funding received from having participants referred to them than actually helping participants find work. Some participants got this impression when staff were seen not to listen to them or spend enough time with them. 	<p>Not 'cherry picking' participants to support: Feeling that some advisers targeted one-to-one support to participants who were either closer to work or who needed more help.</p> <p>Better support for those with complex needs: Felt that Jobcentre Plus provided better support than CAP for those with learning disabilities (e.g. one Jobcentre Plus office had access to specialist advisers that can help those with learning challenges complete application forms).</p>
Improving facilities	<p>Increasing the time spent with advisers. Generally, anything less than 30 minutes tended to be too short. Some felt that seeing the advisers more often but for a shorter period of time was not helpful. They would rather see adviser for less often but for a longer period.</p> <p>Having access to internet in Jobcentre Plus offices.</p> <p>Having support online. For example, participants could have their own dedicated space online (e.g. within their Jobcentre Plus website) containing the jobs that they and the adviser have identified as appropriate.</p>	

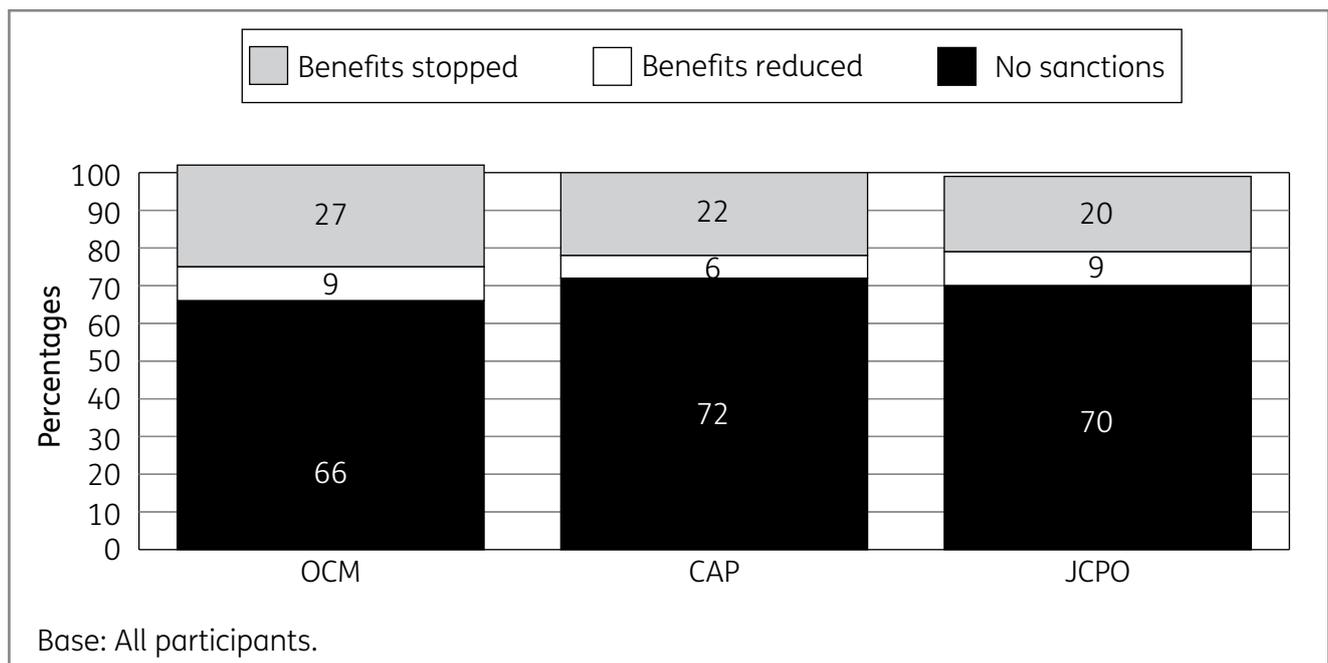
4.7 Sanctions

4.7.1 Prevalence and reasons for sanctions

SVLTU guidance stated providers should refer participants for benefits sanctions if they were non-compliant with the mandatory aspect of CAP (i.e. failure to attend or misconduct on placement). Likewise, OCM advisers were required to refer participants for a benefit sanctions if they failed to comply with OCM core elements such as attending a mandated training course, compliance interview or appointment.

The survey asked participants whether they had had their benefits stopped or reduced at any time during the programme. The majority of participants in all three groups did not report any sanctions (66 per cent of OCM; 72 per cent of CAP and 70 per cent of JCPO). Reports of having benefits stopped varied significantly by the three strands with 27 per cent of OCM participants reporting having had this type of sanction compared with 22 per cent of CAP participants and 20 per cent of the control group (Figure 4.6; Table A.4.17 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). This suggests that OCM staff may be more likely to refer participants for a sanction. It is possible that this is because OCM staff had more opportunities to identify non-compliance due to the more frequent contact with OCM participants, compared with those in the control group.

Figure 4.6 Reported sanctions



Those participants who had had benefit sanctions imposed upon them were asked for the reasons given to them for the sanctions. A range of reasons were reported, the most commonly cited was missing a signing on appointment (18 per cent of OCM; 19 per cent of CAP and 14 per cent of JCPO). Another common reason included missing another appointment at Jobcentre Plus (ten per cent of OCM; nine per cent of CAP and 14 per cent of JCPO). The only reason cited which varied significantly by programme strand was the participant not actively seeking work; this reason was cited by 14 per cent of OCM and 12 per cent of JCPO participants but only three per cent of CAP participants (Table A.4.18 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). This difference is unsurprising as CAP providers were only required to refer participants for sanctions for misconduct or FTA and were not required to monitor participants' jobseeking activity. However, Jobcentre Plus staff could refer CAP customers for a sanction if there was doubt about actively seeking work as monitored by the Fortnightly Jobsearch Review (FJR).

Only about half of the participants who had sanctions imposed reported that they fully understood the sanctions at the time (54 per cent of affected participants). This relatively low level of understanding of the sanctions may partly explain the fact that about half of all participants (51 per cent) who had had their benefits stopped or reduced reported that it made no difference to their behaviour. Less than two-fifths (35 per cent) of participants reported that it would make them more likely to follow instructions received from Jobcentre Plus (Table A.4.19 in the technical appendices published alongside this report).

Another possible reason for low proportion of sanctioned participants reporting that the experience would affect their future behaviour may be drawn from the qualitative evidence, which suggests that participants did not always see missing an appointment as their fault. The reasons for failing to attend can be grouped into three categories:

- **unavoidable reasons:** including health, bereavement, not being able to afford to travel to meetings, attending training or doing additional hours at work placements;
- **avoidable reasons:** which focused on participants deliberately missing meetings with advisers or failing to attend placements, for example because they became disillusioned with placement hosts; and
- **error:** either on the part of the participant, for example, not knowing Jobcentre Plus was open during the Christmas period or the adviser for example – not realising the participant had been waiting on the premises to be called up.

Complementing the survey findings, there was also some evidence from the qualitative interviews to suggest that CAP provider staff were more lenient in monitoring FTAs and, subsequently, implementing sanctions than Jobcentre Plus staff. The range of possible reasons why providers did not sanction is discussed in Chapter 6. However, as illustrated in the quote below, participants tended to attribute this to providers being more ‘understanding’ of the day-to-day pressures and circumstances faced by participants.

‘Whereas I do think [provider] themselves are probably more understanding than the jobcentre in terms of when sort of real life issues maybe get in the way – get in the way of you perhaps doing something that you previous said you’d do ... Whereas I do think the jobcentre are probably more strict on things like that [referring to sanction].’

(CAP participant)

4.7.2 Views and impacts of sanctions

The survey identifies the key impacts of benefit sanctions reported by participants (Table A.4.20 of the technical appendices published alongside this report). These included having to borrow money, use credit cards or incur debt (56 per cent of all participants of those who have been sanctioned); having to go without food or reducing the amount spent on food (71 per cent of OCM; 58 per cent of CAP and 61 per cent of JCPO participants); delaying the purchase of non-food items that they wanted to buy (49 per cent); going into arrears on rent or bills (53 per cent), and not affording to go out (48 per cent). Reducing the amount spent on food was the only impact that varied significantly by programme strand. As noted in Section 4.7.1, OCM participants were more likely to have benefits stopped, which could explain why this group of participants was more likely to need to reduce the amount spent on food as a result of having sanctions imposed.

Qualitative interviews with participants mirror the impression from the survey data, indicating that sanctioning often involved benefits being stopped. The level of sanctioning reported in the qualitative interviews varied, with some reporting benefits being stopped for a week whilst others experienced a more substantial level of sanctions, with benefits being stopped for two to three weeks or even up to three months. It is clear from the interviews that when benefit sanctions were applied they did heavily impact on participants, particularly when these lasted more than a week. This included challenges experienced in buying groceries and paying for rent, leading some to borrow from partners, friends and family members.

Participants' views on sanctions varied widely and can be grouped according to levels of agreement:

- **unconditional acceptance of sanctions:** seeing them as an integral part of a mandatory programme and a reasonable measure to motivate participants who otherwise would not move towards paid employment;
- **conditional acceptance:** broadly agreed with the principle of sanctions but felt that they should be applied sensitively to take account of a number of factors, including whether there were genuine reasons behind non-compliance, such as an honest mistake, and ensuring those sanctioning were able to differentiate between participants who are unwilling to work and those who have significant issues, for example, in relation to health or basic skills;
- **strong disagreement with sanctions:** seeing them at best as unnecessary because they would have been motivated to attend the programme anyway and, at worst, as a way of 'bullying'/ threatening participants and affecting individuals who are already financially vulnerable.

It is important to note that experience of sanctions did not necessarily determine where in the spectrum a participant's view lay, with those being sanctioned also likely to agree with them in principle.

Participants' suggestions for improving the sanctioning process revolved around ensuring that the most persistent offenders were sanctioned and the severity of sanctions were appropriate. These suggestions included introducing a system where participants were warned the first time they missed appointments without notification and taking into account participants' circumstances before sanctioning.

4.8 Chapter conclusion

Participants' experiences of the programme suggest key good practice points for supporting long-term claimants. The main features highlighted by participants on both strands as important to a positive experience included the use of collaborative approaches, support that was tailored to the individual and the continuity of support and supervision.

Collaborative and tailored approaches within, particularly, the context of OCM involved advisers listening to participants' needs, taking stock of their skills and aspirations and delivering 'hands-on', suitable support accordingly (e.g. appropriate training options). Conversely, where a 'one size fits all' approach was taken, participants felt that the programme at best did not further their pathway into employment and, at worst, worked against this (e.g. when participants were compelled to pursue inappropriate work options). In terms of CAP, placements were particularly valued where participants had some involvement in deciding where they went and felt this helped ensure the placement reflected their work aspirations and/or their personality. Once on placements, participants valued supervision that was flexible to meet their changing needs and collaborative in nature. In contrast, participants reflected unfavourably on placements that were perceived to have been hastily arranged with little or no regard for their needs.

The length of time on placements (six months) also seemed to contribute positively to participants' experiences of CAP as it offered a sufficient length of time on work experience to be a helpful addition to CVs. However, there was some disagreement among participants as to whether 30 hours per week was too long, and some participants objected on principle to 'working for free' on placements.

Continuity in support from a single adviser and/or placement supervision team was another key factor that contributed to positive experiences of the programme. Continuity enabled rapport and trust to be established, spared participants the need to repeat information, reassured them that agreed action points would be followed-up and ensured consistent ways of working.

Referral for benefit sanctioning was available as a support tool in both strands. It is not possible from the available data to conclude whether the relatively low use of sanctions was due to the threat of sanctions resulting in high levels of compliance. Information from the survey, however, suggests that having sanctions imposed does not necessarily lead to better future compliance.

5 Achieving positive outcomes

Chapter summary

This chapter discusses the ways in which the Community Action Programme (CAP) and Ongoing Case Management (OCM) strands were felt by staff to help achieve positive outcomes for participants.

OCM

The key strengths of OCM were that it provided participants with intensive and continuous support usually from the same adviser that was tailored to individual participants. This approach was seen to accelerate favourable outcomes for participants because it meant advisers could provide more personalised and practical help and support and intensify support for participants needing additional help. Participants' motivation and confidence grew because a known individual was interested in them and was encouraging them to progress.

Increased flexibility and discretion were essential to advisers' ability to deliver tailored support. The ability to decide which support options to use and when to use them was highly valued by advisers. Approaches considered less helpful were those that were less personalised such as prescriptive participant journeys, referral to the compliance team and daily signing. Increased discretion to mandate certain aspects of the programme were also found helpful in motivating participants to comply and build collaborative adviser/participant relationships. Increased flexibility, discretion and time enabled advisers to develop new support options that were specifically tailored to OCM participants.

CAP

The work placement was seen as the stronger element of the CAP strand in achieving positive outcomes for participants, with the other being the jobsearch element. The six-month placement length was seen to imitate real jobs well, providing participants with viable work experience for their CVs as well as up-to-date references. Placements also helped increase participants' motivation to work and their employability by improving their confidence, interpersonal and teamwork skills and workplace skills and qualifications. Some participants were offered paid jobs by their placement hosts, particularly those with related career interests, work histories and skills.

The features of jobsearch support offered by providers felt to be successful included more frequent contact time with Job Coaches, tailored jobsearch support to specific participant needs and help with proactive and intensive jobseeking.

Participants not benefitting from the programmes

Interviews with staff also suggest that each programme met slightly different needs, with OCM benefitting participants with complex and multiple barriers and CAP helping participants whose main barriers were around a lack of recent work experience or motivation.

OCM and CAP staff were enthusiastic about the programmes having helped progress participants, including seemingly harder to help participants, towards work. However, the capacity of both programmes to achieve job outcomes was seen to be limited by the relatively short programme length, adverse labour market conditions and the significance of participants' barriers to work.

Staff working on both SVLTU strands identified several claimant groups for whom they thought CAP and OCM could only lever limited progress in moving towards work. They included participants who were unwilling to work and participants with learning disabilities, basic skills needs or serious health conditions. There was a call to exclude participants with serious health conditions and participants with severe restrictions due to criminal offences from the CAP programme. CAP providers wanted to be able to address basic skills needs and felt that it should be possible to alter the number of placement hours to allow time to do this.

5.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 3, CAP and OCM achieved similar employment outcomes to the control group at the time of the survey. In comparison with the control group, the programmes did, however, help to increase work-related activity, boost attitudes towards work and remove barriers to work.

Qualitative interviews with staff involved in the delivery of both programmes identified a range of ways each programme lent itself to positive impacts on participants. This chapter first discusses these views in relation to OCM (Section 5.2) and then CAP (Section 5.3). It then considers views on the limitations of each programme in helping participants with particular barriers (Section 5.4).

5.2 Achieving positive outcomes through OCM

Participant survey data (see Chapter 3) found that OCM resulted in larger proportions of participants applying for work and engaging in voluntary or unpaid work compared with participants in the control group. OCM participants were more likely to say that the programme had resulted in a positive shift on their motivation to work and work-related ambitions. Compared with participants on CAP and the control group they also felt that the programme had helped them to overcome their barriers to work and that they felt closer to the labour market.

This section discusses the views of Jobcentre Plus managers and Personal Advisers (PAs) on the aspects of the OCM programme which were seen to bring about these outcomes.

While there were strong similarities between OCM and the standard Jobcentre Plus Offer (JCPO), in terms of the range of available support measures and the delivery of the programme, the following two key differences were identified which were seen to generate more favourable outcomes for OCM participants. The value of these two aspects was also reported by participants (see Chapter 4):

- an intensive case management approach; and
- a tailored approach to delivering support.

While these elements are explored separately below, it is important to note that a tailored approach could not have been achieved independently of the intensive case management approach. In addition neither approach would have been possible without smaller caseloads which allowed advisers to spend more time with participants.

5.2.1 Intensive case management approach

The intensive case management approach, unique to the OCM model, was characterised by participants seeing the same adviser through all or most of their participant journey and in participants attending the jobcentre for more frequent appointments with their advisers. These features were seen to bring about a range of advantages as discussed in the following sections.

Continuity of adviser

Reflecting the participant feedback discussed in the previous chapter, the fact that each participant saw the same adviser throughout the six-month programme was seen to bring about a stronger relationship between them. PAs and managers expressed, strongly, the feeling that the intensive participant/PA relationship was critical to the positive outcomes they had achieved, and was one of their most important tools in making a participant 'do things differently'.

PAs felt a long-term one-on-one relationship helped build rapport and trust which enabled participants to discuss their issues more openly and be more forthcoming about their barriers. The fact that PAs could get to know participants well meant that they felt more able to suggest potentially 'difficult' or challenging options to participants which might, nevertheless, be important in moving them forward; for example, seeking support with an alcohol issue, making improvements to appearance or hygiene and thinking 'outside the box' in terms of the sorts of jobs they wanted to find. It also helped them to identify participants who were on the wrong benefit.

Adviser continuity was felt by PAs to increase participants' confidence and motivation because they felt someone was there to support them. Participants felt more motivated than previously by the fact that a known individual was interested in them and was encouraging them to progress. One adviser commented that having the support of a trusted adviser caused a change in participants' behaviour:

'You can just see them that they slump over the desk to start with, and now they're sort of upright and they're paying attention they also turn up to appointments on time.'

(Personal Adviser)

Longer-term help and support from an adviser also helped some participant groups, such as those aged over 50 to stop feeling 'written off' by the employment market. Providing continuous support to participants offered a fresh, alternative approach that contrasted with previous programmes under which participants were referred to external provision. Advisers saw the case management approach help progress even those participants they considered hardest to help because of their growing hostility toward Jobcentre Plus for repeatedly referring them off to external providers.

'They surprise you because what they've wanted all along is for somebody to support them and not just send them off to this provision and that provision.'

(Personal Adviser)

As a result of all of the above, participants were said to be moving on more quickly than they otherwise would have done.

More frequent contact

PAs reported seeing OCM participants more often in contrast to standard offer participants and spending longer with them. PAs could be flexible with this contact; for example, book in appointments before interviews, intensify contact when desirable and generally ‘micro manage’ each case.

As a result of more regular contact with participants, PAs were better able to follow participants up on tasks they had set or directed, causing them to feel more ‘accountable’ for their actions than when they saw different participants less regularly. This was because PAs had more opportunity to follow their progress and highlight the risk of sanctions (see page 83).

The increased frequency of contact was also seen by PAs to underpin improvements to participant CVs, jobsearching techniques and interviews. The fact that PAs were able to work with participants on these aspects individually and in more depth and provide more practical help than previously was felt to have benefitted participants.

More frequent attendance and time with advisers helped participants to timekeep and order their lives around a structure with set goals. In contrast to daily or weekly signing, going into the jobcentre to see their adviser in relation to specific tasks and objectives with achievable timeframes helped participants to become more proactive and take on more personal responsibility for their progress.

Seeing participants more frequently had the added benefit of allowing advisers to test whether participants were engaged in work.

5.2.2 A tailored approach to delivering support

A further strength of the OCM model was the capacity for advisers to personalise the offer of support around participants’ individual needs. This was facilitated by the intensive case management approach discussed above through which advisers gained a better insight into participants’ support needs.

With a similar menu of support options to draw on as those available to participants in the control group, it was how the support was offered that distinguished the standard Jobcentre Plus Offer and OCM packages of support. While OCM was not being offered in a standard way across sites or individual PAs, with differences around the extent to which flexibility was employed and was offered to participants, increased flexibility and discretion was critical to the ability of advisers to decide how best to tailor support around participants’ needs. This is discussed below in relation to:

- the timing of support options;
- the use of mandatory support options;
- the use of innovative practices; and
- mandation and sanctioning.

Timing of support options

The level of direction provided to advisers in relation to the timing and ordering of support within the six-month participant journey varied. On one end of the spectrum, advisers were given a pre-arranged schedule which set out what intervention to use and when to use it. A less prescriptive approach involved advisers receiving a checklist of potential interventions. On the other end of the spectrum, advisers were given total flexibility over what intervention they used and when, with the exception of compliance interviews.

The overriding view among managers and advisers was that a flexible approach allowing PAs to develop a logical order of support tailored around participants' needs was most conducive to generating positive change for participants. In one example a decision was made not to use the structured participant journey provided because the ordering of support was not found to be suitable for all participants. The importance of treating all participants as individuals and personalising support around their needs was emphasised with the following words:

'Everybody has their own different barriers, different circumstances, so to put everybody into one process, it doesn't [work] ... one size doesn't fit all, everybody needs that little bit of flexibility.'

(Personal Adviser)

A further concern from managers was that structured participant journeys could impede the use of innovative practices.

The benefits of a more structured approach were, however, recognised by Jobcentre Plus managers as valuable for less experienced PAs to ensure that all requirements were covered and options were reviewed.

The support options used

As discussed earlier (see Chapter 2), the OCM model consisted of several core elements which were required of all participants. These included compliance interviews for all participants, more frequent attendance and periods of daily and weekly signing. Participating districts also adopted a number of measures as mandatory aspects of their own OCM models. While they varied between sites and offices these mandatory components included Better Off Calculations (BOCs); diagnostic tools or Customer Assessment Tools (CATs); skills assessments; and Mandatory Work Activity (MWA).

While having a menu of recommended support measures was valued, the key message emerging from interviews with PAs, compliance officers and Jobcentre Plus managers was that these should be optional rather than mandatory aspects of the OCM. A favoured approach was to let advisers judge which support options would benefit their participants on a case by case basis. This was based on the view that the participant group was not homogenous and the available support options were, therefore, not suitable or necessary for every participant.

Advisers, Compliance Officers and managers discussed the merits of adopting a flexible and tailored approach in relation to the following measures.

Compliance interviews

In general, Compliance Officers did not see value in referring every OCM participant for a compliance interview. While the interviews, or the expectation of the interview, led to a minority of participants signing off, they were not seen to achieve the expected rate of sign-off.

The interviews were said to bring about a number of unhelpful consequences. While the experience was not widespread, in areas with limited resources and high workloads trailblazer interviews were prioritised, causing low-level allegation cases to be abandoned. Some participants were also thought to have felt unduly alarmed by the requirement to do a compliance interview.

The view among Compliance Officers was that the interviews lacked any clear purpose, with the exception of updating participants on changes to benefit rules and entitlements, providing information about moving onto different benefits and challenging participants who were seen to have become complacent. Rather than rolling out mandatory compliance interviews for all long-term participants, Compliance Officers felt PAs should refer participants for compliance interviews on suspicion of fraud or non-compliance, as they would usually do under the standard offer, and update participants on benefits changes as part of their own role.

Daily signing

While the use of daily signing varied, as described in Chapter 2, a period of daily or weekly signing was mandatory for all participants. Experiences of the usefulness of daily signing in producing positive outcomes were mixed. Generally it was seen as unsuitable for use with every participant, and advisers emphasised the importance of using their own judgement, going forward, on which participants would benefit from it.

Participants for whom daily signing was seen as an effective tool were those who were suspected to be working and signing and those needing additional support. Prolonged periods, such as a fortnight of daily signing had motivated these participants to find work and sign off.

Daily signing was sometimes considered less effective with longer-term participants who had experienced it in previous programmes and become desensitised to it. In addition, daily signing was seen to unnecessarily disrupt the lives of participants who did not lack motivation and were spending much of their time jobseeking or doing voluntary work. In this sense daily, and sometimes weekly, signing was seen as putting too much of a burden on the participant, and as being unnecessarily frequent in terms of the optimum participant/PA relationship; this was particularly the case given that PAs felt they had the flexibility to call participants in whenever they wanted to in any case.

Generally, there was much more support amongst PAs for weekly signing rather than daily signing. Whilst it had achieved some positive outcomes, there was a sense among managers that it was unlikely to produce off-flows and did not justify the resource involved.

Work experience

Some form of work experience was strongly felt to be critical in helping a participant to progress towards work or softer positive outcomes; particularly given that lack of recent work experience was often a key barrier. Some PAs utilised MWA a lot, or as a matter of course with all participants. Others employed discretion over whether to use MWA or to encourage participants towards voluntary work or Work Experience places instead.

Favourable impacts of work experience or MWA on participants included:

- **participants being taken out of their normal routine** which was important in demonstrating to participants that it was possible to live in a different way thereby helping them progress towards paid work, voluntary work or training;
- **improved CVs and job applications** which resulted from having recent experience, good references and a better understanding of what work entails;
- **increased motivation for finding work** as a result of enjoying their experience at work, and gaining confidence. In some cases, MWA was felt to have completely turned a participant around (as demonstrated by Case illustration 1);
- **increased workplace activity**, for example participants choosing to volunteer with their MWA setting. This is supported by survey findings showing that participants on OCM were more likely than those on the standard offer to describe their main daytime activity as doing in unpaid or voluntary work (see Figure 3.1);
- **increased self-confidence and self-respect** as a result of participants' experiences of themselves in the workplace; and
- **participants considering a broader range of jobs**, for example, a participant who was a gaming addict was referred to MWA. He had insisted on only working in shops selling games but his MWA experience encouraged him to apply for other types of work.

MWA or voluntary work experience also allowed advisers to test participants' capabilities and willingness in terms of work. (The above impacts mirror those described as resulting from CAP placements, discussed below.)

However, work experience or MWA was not considered suitable for every OCM participant, at least not immediately and for some not within the six months of the programme. Advisers emphasised the importance of using their judgement over which participants to send on work experience and when.

Exercising discretion over the length of the placement was also seen as useful and sometimes introducing participants to a shorter voluntary work experience placement (e.g. four weeks) helped to ease participants into the idea of work. One adviser explained that this approach worked well with a participant who at first was resistant to any work experience but after a four-week placement was then open to a placement of another 12 weeks and generally less anxious about the idea of work.

These factors may help explain why there were mixed feelings from participants about MWA (see Chapter 4).

Case illustration 1

A participant who had been out of work for eight years began on OCM by being resistant to the programme and opposed to the idea of work experience. The staff found him rude and impatient and when he was told about having to do MWA he refused. After starting on MWA with a charity shop, the participant returned to the Jobcentre Plus office with a different attitude towards the placement and work in general. The adviser recalled him saying, *'Do you know? That was the push I needed.'* The adviser felt MWA was one of the strongest tools she could draw on to change participants' perceptions about work.

Diagnostic tools

Jobcentre Plus offices differed in the methods used for gathering information about participants' needs; advisers in one district were using the Customer Assessment Tool (CAT), a cluster of offices in another district had designed their own diagnostic questionnaire, while elsewhere simply talking to participants was the preferred approach.

Whilst CATs were seen as helpful tools, there were mixed views about whether it was always necessary to use them. CATs were not used where advisers were confident in their abilities to determine the appropriate level and type of support to offer participants simply by talking to them. Some believed they could find out more this way.

Funding

While this varied from site to site, PAs generally had greater autonomy over sources of funding such as the Flexible Support Fund (FSF) than in the past (difficulties accessing the FSF are discussed in Chapter 6). This form of funding was found helpful in moving participants towards jobs by covering small expenses such as travel and clothes for job interviews. In some cases it helped to pay for costs participants were not previously aware could be covered by Jobcentre Plus. One adviser described providing funding to help a participant pay for a HGV driving test:

'I've got an HGV driver, who never thought in a million years that we would help him. He's got a job waiting to go to, which he should start in the next couple of weeks. Just has to pass that last test. It's, it's been amazing, but they didn't know that that help was there.'

(Personal Adviser)

Due to the programme facilitating a closer PA participant/adviser relationship in which participants were more open about their interests, PAs also had better insight into which of their participants could benefit from funding from the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) to go toward starting their own businesses.

Innovative practices

More flexibility, discretion and time enabled advisers to develop new support options that were specifically tailored to OCM participants. This was both in terms of creating possible job opportunities for their participants and in customising provision to meet participants' needs, as demonstrated in the following case illustrations:

Case illustration 2

A PA identified interview skills training as a common need among several of her OCM participants. In order to give her participants some interview experience she asked the Employer Engagement Officer in her office if she knew of any local employers who would be willing to carry out some mock interviews with her participants. The Employer Engagement Officer put her in contact with the owners of a local bakery who were willing to hold mock interviews with participants and also place those who performed well onto their reserve list of employees. The bakery then decided they wanted to recruit some additional employees for a new shift they had set up and the PA organised a sector based work academy with them in which some of the posts would be ringfenced for her participants. The PA spent a day teaching interview techniques with her participants in preparation for their interviews. This led to one of the two nominated participants entering paid work at the bakery.

Case illustration 3

In one Jobcentre Plus office OCM advisers worked closely with Employer Engagement Officers whose main role involved making links with local employers, sourcing job vacancies and organising schemes such as Work Trials. The Employment Engagement Officers contacted local employers to let them know about OCM and its participant base and asked if they would be willing to provide any work experience opportunities. This led to two participants getting jobs.

OCM enabled PAs to develop training courses tailored to the needs of their participants in collaboration with external providers. Jobcentre Plus managers in one area described an OCM adviser visiting all of the local interview skills providers and sitting in on sessions to work out which course was the best and most suited to her participants. She then worked closely with a chosen provider to tailor a course specifically around her participants' barriers. Another example is provided in the following case illustration:

Case illustration 4

One Jobcentre Plus office set up a series of customised courses in collaboration with a training provider. The course was based on the typical job goals and barriers of the office's OCM caseload. They designed a four-week course that simulated the experience of work, and helped build all the skills necessary for a job such as teamwork skills and confidence. Only selected participants were chosen for each course with similar skills so that nobody would fall behind. Participants were responsive to the training and found it very helpful. As a result of the course they were given a certificate to say that they had been on the course as well as an up-to-date reference for their CVs.

Advisers also described doing more case conferencing with managers to share good practice with others and to develop more creative suggestions to address barriers.

More discretion over sanctions and mandation

In contrast to standard JCPO advisers, PAs delivering OCM were encouraged to use increased discretion in mandating aspects of the programme. Alongside the intensive relationship with participants, PAs often felt that the use of mandatory activities and possibility of sanctions was an important tool in providing clear expectations on both sides which helped participants to progress and do things differently.

Specifically, the use of mandation and sanctioning helped to force a participant to keep to their side of the bargain and carry out the activities prescribed by the PA. The use of mandation in relation to MWA, More Frequent Attendance (MFA) and sanctions was also seen as important in achieving off-flows of those who were not prepared to comply.

Under potential future roll-out, a regimented programme of mandatory activities was suggested by one PA as potentially helpful in motivating participants to find work. However, PAs generally appreciated the ability to use discretion about how much, and when, to mandate activities using Jobseekers Directions and the associated risk of sanctions. This enabled them to pick and choose which participants they felt needed to be mandated to carry out activities or attend appointments, and which participants, by contrast, needed a 'softer' approach.

Importantly, PAs often emphasised that whilst introducing mandatory activities and risk of sanctions could create conflict in the short term, it could also often aid rather than threaten the building up of a collaborative relationship between the participant and the PA by providing clear expectations on both sides. This in turn acted as a catalyst for more openness and honesty as participants decided to 'come clean' and admit to/tackle barriers. This was particularly the case where participants were young and responsive to a degree of mandation, or intransigent and needing a degree of force in order to change the way that they interacted with Jobcentre Plus and/or their attitudes towards moving forwards.

The preference for a softer approach rather than mandation depended on advisers' individual style and participant traits. A softer approach was also favoured by advisers for participants who could be helped more effectively by understanding their underlying barriers and reasons for non-co-operation. A 'softer' approach was also seen to work better than punitive measures with participants lacking confidence rather than lacking motivation. These participants benefitted from an encouraging and supportive relationship to help build up trust and confidence rather than force and firmness.

5.3 Achieving positive outcomes through CAP

As discussed in Section 3.2 the work outcomes generated through CAP were not significantly different to those achieved on OCM or the control group. There were, nevertheless, several areas in which CAP participants appeared to be experiencing positive impacts in contrast to their counterparts on OCM and the control group.

While the programme with the highest proportion of participants applying for work was OCM, overall, the number of applications was highest for CAP participants. Like OCM participants, participants on CAP were more likely to be doing voluntary or unpaid jobs and to have reported a positive shift in their work-related ambitions compared to participants in the control group. CAP participants who attended work placements also reported lower levels of anxiety.

This section discusses the views of Third Party Performance Managers (TPPMs), Performance Managers, providers and placement hosts on the ways in which CAP has helped to achieve positive outcomes for participants.

5.3.1 Work placement

The work placement element of CAP was a key strength of the programme in terms of its capacity to achieve positive outcomes. In addition to providing participants with recent work experience, which was for many long-term participants seen as a key barrier to employment, other positive features were the length of the placement and the community value.

The six-month duration, notably longer than similar schemes such as MWA, was considered apt in emulating ‘real jobs’ and gave participants both sufficient time to acclimatise to, and develop in, their roles; as well as viable experience for their CVs. Six months also allowed placement hosts to mentor participants for longer and to be able to invest more in them in terms of time and training.

In contrast to this view some placement hosts felt six months was a long-term commitment and providers reported that this could make them harder to sign up (discussed in more detail in Chapter 6). Concerns were, however, raised that the momentum could be lost after the six-month programme had lapsed and that the progress made could be undone. The fact that all placements were intended to be of benefit to the community was rewarding for participants and improved their self-esteem by enabling them to ‘give something back’ to their communities.

The range of positive outcomes observed by providers and placement hosts are discussed in turn here.

Motivation to work

Providers and placement hosts observed that the experience of work provided structure to participants’ days and gave them a sense of job satisfaction and achievement. This led to increased motivation to work even among participants initially opposed to the idea of a work placement. Placement hosts described a noticeable change in which the resentment and hostility seen in the first few weeks due to feeling forced to work for benefit and working unpaid alongside paid colleagues gradually subsided.

Employability

Placement hosts noticed improvements in participants’ employability resulting from their placements. Participants were seen to have developed the following skills and characteristics:

- **Confidence:** Placement hosts and providers saw participants’ confidence grow as a result of feeling valued and appreciated at work, making their own decisions, being given responsibilities and by discovering their own abilities and strengths. One placement host gave the example of a participant who he would not have employed based on his initial interview for the placement because of his lack of confidence. After a few months of the participant being on placement and seeing the participants’ confidence grow, the host changed his mind and was now happy to consider employing the participant.
- **Interpersonal and teamwork skills:** participants were seen to have developed teamwork skills as they formed working relationships with their colleagues, developing friendships and a sense of camaraderie. Their interpersonal skills were improved because they were interacting with a wider cross-section of society on their placements than they would in their every day lives.

- **CVs and jobsearch skills:** Providers and placement hosts thought recent work experience made participants' CVs more competitive and that participants had also developed a better understanding of what employers were looking for and were able to tailor their CVs and interview skills accordingly. The view that the placement had impacted positively on participants' motivation to seek work is supported by participant survey data which found that CAP participants who were working on a placement were more likely to be applying for work compared to those who were not placed (see Section 3.1.3).
- **Workplace skills and qualifications:** Placement hosts felt participants' skills had improved through learning from their colleagues while carrying out their day to day work. There were also hosts who had put participants forward for qualifications such as NVQs.
- **Discipline and timekeeping:** The structure and routine of working everyday was seen to have brought about more discipline and improved punctuality.

Wellbeing

Placement hosts described an improvement in the mental wellbeing of participants who seemed depressed and negative at the start of programme. This change was reportedly brought about by the experience of work because it gave participants something to 'get out of bed for', provided structure and focus to their lives, increased their social interaction with others, and improved their self-worth and confidence.

Job outcomes

According to the participant survey 15 per cent of CAP participants had entered or were about to enter paid work, a figure not significantly different to that achieved on OCM and the control group. Insights from providers and placement hosts, however, identified a range of ways CAP work placements helped participants gain work. First, participants were offered work as a result of having relevant work experience. Secondly, some participants were offered work by contacts they had made on their placements. Finally some participants were offered work by their placement hosts.

Interviews with providers and placement hosts indicate a link between matching participants' work-related interests and skills to their placement, maximising engagement with their placement and potentially leading to paid work being offered to participants by their placement hosts. Placement hosts willing to employ participants valued relevant work histories, skills, and related career interests alongside strong motivation and dedication. This is demonstrated by the following three case illustrations:

Case illustration 5, Local council

Mark was offered a six-month temporary contract with his placement host with the potential for the role to become permanent. Mark lost his job due to the recession and had work experience and skills relevant to his placement organisation. His placement host said he would not have employed him when he first met him because he was nervous, under-confident and had hygiene issues. Whilst on his placement Mark proved himself to be highly motivated, helpful, reliable and trustworthy. Over time the placement increased his confidence, sociability, eased his nerves and encouraged Mark to improve his personal hygiene. It also helped to refresh his existing skills.

Case illustration 6, Housing organisation

David used to run his own painting and decorating business until the recession caused him to close it down. At the same time he developed health issues and became his partner's carer and could not take on full-time work. David's placement host considered him employable from the start of the placement because he had good skills and did not require additional training. He described David as very keen and willing, as demonstrated by him getting in early, being friendly with staff and customers and thoroughly enjoying his work. His host feels the placement has helped to improve his confidence and hopes to employ him one day.

Case illustration 7, Animal care centre

In his initial interview for the CAP placement Jack demonstrated that he had the relevant skills for a paid job but lacked good interview techniques and undersold himself. When he started the placement he impressed his placement host with his eagerness and by going over and above his duties. He was prepared to get involved wherever necessary and often put in extra time, even coming in on his days off to help his colleagues. As well as doing the day-to-day work expected of him, Jack used his IT skills to help set up and monitor a new organisational system. His placement host felt Jack was a good fit, both socially and in terms of work, and felt he would be an ideal candidate for paid work.

While there appeared to be a link between job outcomes and existing relevant interests or skills, providers also observed a broadening of the types of work participants would consider if they enjoyed a placement outside of their initial interests. In one example a participant was placed in a kitchen and had since enrolled in catering college to pursue a career in food.

Interviews with staff and Case illustrations 5 to 7 suggest that the work placement element of CAP may be more effective in achieving job outcomes for participants who were relatively close to the labour market with pre-existing skills, a shorter time away from the labour market and motivation to work. Although this is not a conclusion that can be drawn from the survey, it did find participants who were more likely to get a job included participants with a shorter gap since they were last in paid work (see Section 3.2.1).

Interestingly the survey also found that CAP participants who were not placed were less likely to feel the programme helped them get closer to work compared to CAP participants who were placed and to participants on OCM and the control group (see Section 3.2.4).

5.3.2 Jobsearch support

While TPPMs and Performance Managers provided positive feedback about the weekly jobsearch support offered to CAP participants, this element of the programme did not appear to be as strong as the work placements in bringing about positive participant outcomes. There were, nonetheless, several ways in which the jobsearch element reportedly helped participants.

Firstly, participants had more frequent contact time (weekly) with provider Job Coaches, as observed by providers compared with under the standard JCPO. Mirroring thoughts about OCM, this more frequent contact enabled provider Job Coaches to get to know their participants and as a result suggest jobs based on participants' hobbies. For example, an adviser helped a participant who enjoyed pole dancing to become a pole dancing instructor.

Tailored support was also an approach adopted by providers in delivering jobsearch support. Participants were divided into small groups according to their support needs and given more

customised support. A common approach was to split participants up according to their support needs; those closer to the labour market and more motivated and the harder to help groups. One provider also described matching Job Coaches with particular participants. For example, an older male adviser who engaged well with older age groups delivered group sessions to over-50s.

A strong emphasis was placed on proactive and intensive jobseeking, with providers encouraging participants to send speculative CVs to prospective employers rather than simply respond to job advertisements. As the programme progressed and as jobstarts began to take priority, innovative jobsearch methods were developed such as ‘buzz days’ where participants rotated around different jobsearch tools in one day. This technique was said to produce employment outcomes. Providers also engaged with employers directly to source vacancies and this proactive approach was viewed by one provider as more effective in achieving job outcomes than participant-driven jobsearch.

The jobsearch element was reportedly limited in addressing barriers in two ways: Firstly, the number of placement hours did not leave sufficient time for providers to address other, sometimes more powerful, barriers to work. For example, participants could not be sent on courses such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and basic skills courses because they could not fit this in alongside the 30 hours of required placement working hours. Secondly, the six-month programme was not long enough to address complex and multiple barriers and insufficient to achieve job outcomes for participants experiencing them.

5.4 Participants not benefitting from the trailblazer

Staff from both programmes were generally enthusiastic about the potential for the trailblazer to progress participants toward work. Both CAP and OCM had helped achieve positive outcomes for participants with significant barriers, and to the surprise of advisers, some of the hardest to help. Staff on both strands did, however, feel they needed longer than six months to progress participants with complex and multiple barriers and longer still to achieve job outcomes for these participants. Staff interviewed also emphasised the significance of the challenge posed by the difficult labour market of getting long-term unemployed participants with serious underlying barriers into work.

Although the multivariate modelling carried out on participant survey data (see Section 3.2.1) did not identify either strand as more helpful for any particular barrier or participant type, interviews with staff suggest that each programme met slightly different needs:

- OCM was seen as more helpful for participants with persistent, complex and multiple barriers who were in need of the intensive and tailored approach characteristic of OCM;
- CAP was seen as more effective for participants whose main barriers were around a lack of recent work experience, motivation or work ethic, or who were suspected of working already.

Under future roll-out staff expressed support for participants being referred to either programme based on this categorisation.

A number of participant groups in each strand were felt to be particularly difficult to move forward or to achieve any positive changes for at all, as discussed in the following sections. These groups were broadly similar across both of the programmes.

In general while these groups presented a challenge for OCM advisers, PAs regarded their role as being to help them make ‘tiny steps’ forward rather than move them into work. Having achieved these tiny steps, advisers felt there was little more they could do and suggested referring them to more specialist provision.

The design of CAP, however, meant that the programme was mainly limited to progressing these participant groups through the work placement rather than addressing their complex barriers. In addition, a subgroup of referrals existed who were viewed as completely unsuitable for CAP.

Participants unwilling to work

A minority of CAP participants continued to be resistant to the programme and either refused to engage at all or deliberately disrupted their placements by absconding or through misconduct. Placement hosts described participants deliberately playing up to be dismissed from their placements, by stealing or turning up intoxicated, and expressed the belief that CAP only worked for participants with some motivation to work.

OCM advisers also identified a group of very long-term unemployed participants who were firm about not wanting to work and who were well versed in the Jobcentre Plus system. There was a feeling that whilst these participants might comply with what they were asked to do, there would not be a positive outcome at the end.

Participants with learning disabilities

PAs delivering OCM experienced difficulty in progressing participants with severe learning disabilities and threw doubt over whether Jobcentre Plus advisers, as well as the available external providers had the expertise to help these participants. In the words of one PA:

‘[There is] one [participant] who’s got serious learning disabilities. [...] And he comes in, and he brings his jobsearch in, he can hardly, he can hardly read and write. Erm, and it doesn’t matter how many courses you try to send him on, it wouldn’t make any difference.’

(Personal Adviser)

Participants with basic skills needs

As discussed above, the required number of weekly CAP placement hours was thought unhelpful for participants with basic skills needs because it meant that these needs went unaddressed. It was difficult to find work that did not require literacy and numeracy for these participants making job outcomes additionally challenging. Providers called for the ability to reduce the number of placement hours on a case-by-case basis so that these needs could be addressed.

Participants with health conditions

As found in the participant survey, OCM and CAP staff felt the programmes were less effective for participants who felt their barriers to work were related to mental health conditions.

OCM advisers felt limited in their ability to help participants with mental health conditions and felt that long-term specialist support such as ongoing case management from a Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) would be more appropriate. Advisers were, however, conscious that existing workload pressures would make it difficult for DEAs to take on this sort of a role. They also suggested that these participants may benefit from referral to more specialist providers with better links with employers who were open to recruiting participants with such barriers.

CAP providers reported that a minority of participants had been referred to them with behavioural disorders, other mental health issues or significant health problems such as physical disabilities, cancer and stroke (as discussed in Chapter 4). These participants were considered unsuitable for the programme.

Participants with restrictions

CAP providers saw participants with restrictions on their activities due to criminal offences as unsuitable for the programme. Under random allocation providers had been referred participants including Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) cases²⁶ who could not be put on a placement and for whom finding work was extremely challenging (also discussed further in Chapter 6).

5.5 Chapter conclusion

Staff feedback on the effectiveness of the trailblazer strands in advancing participants towards paid employment highlights clear lessons about effective practice for long-term participants. Continuous support from one adviser that can be intensified where and when appropriate and tailored around individual participants' needs appeared to be an effective strategy. Alongside this, greater adviser autonomy about how to support participants including when to use sanctions and mandation as well as more 'pastoral support' was important. Positive accounts from staff of the use of work experience on OCM and particularly the lengthier CAP placement indicate, perhaps unsurprisingly, that this type of support addresses a clear gap for long-term claimants and is an important tool in the package of back-to-work support.

The experiences of both strands point out the drawbacks of a blanket or 'one size fits all' approach that is not tailored to claimants' individual needs. This is demonstrated by negative feedback about the OCM core elements that were a requirement for all participants and by CAP appearing to be particularly effective where participants were matched to placements.

In spite of the positive progress made by participants, both programme strands were constrained by the relatively short programme length and the challenging economic backdrop in achieving job outcomes. While both strands were thought less effective for participants with more entrenched and severe barriers, the OCM approach was felt to advance these participants further perhaps it could be delivered in a more tailored and flexible way. Groups of participants OCM advisers found challenging to help within the six-month timeframe included participants who were firmly unwilling to work, participants with learning disabilities and mental health conditions. These participants were considered unsuitable for CAP, along with claimants with serious limiting health conditions and restrictions due to criminal offences.

²⁶ Registered sex offenders or offenders who pose a serious risk of harm to the public.

6 Implementation lessons

Chapter summary

This chapter discusses the implementation lessons arising from the Ongoing Case Management (OCM) and Community Action Programme (CAP) strands.

OCM

Advisers would have liked earlier information about OCM and how to track participants, more training on dealing with participants with entrenched problems related to very long-term unemployment, and greater opportunities to share good practice.

Personal Advisers (PAs) were selected to deliver OCM if they had they had the confidence to challenge participants, could balance firmness with sensitivity, possessed patience alongside tenacity and had the ability to 'think outside the box'. These were generally seen as the key qualities best suited to delivering OCM.

Where possible, dedicated OCM caseloads were preferable in order to ensure greater continuity with participants and to build trust and rapport. Smaller than usual caseloads were needed to deal with the intensive nature of OCM and the extent of follow-up of participants necessary.

Referral to external provision was considered to be challenging in some areas due to difficulty finding suitable provision in the locality and/or market saturation in MWA placements, especially in rural areas. Perceived gaps in provision related to people with learning difficulties, drug or alcohol problems, mental health problems and lack of basic skills.

CAP

Third Party Provision Managers (TPPMs) and providers thought that current funding arrangements produced a significant financial challenge to providers and therefore, needed to be reviewed. This was because the number and type of participants referred to providers had led to fewer participants for whom they were able to claim placement or job outcome fees than expected. These participants included people who: dropped off JSA after referral; had severe restrictions on work they could do due to past criminal convictions; or who placement hosts did not want because of their failure to engage with the placement.

There was a widespread view that a longer lead-in period than three months before the trailblazer went live was needed to engage placement hosts due to multiple factors effectively delaying the process. Better profiling of the number of placements needed and a better flow, or 'staggering', of referrals would also help ease the placement process. Spikes in referrals may have occurred because of the significant number of referrals within a short period of time.

Providers reported that the 15-day timescale for placing participants could generally be met where there was an even flow of referrals but if not could lead to unsuitable placements and the need to subsequently find new placements. 30 days was considered more realistic. Practical issues such as CRB checks also meant the 15-day timeframe was very challenging.

Staff considered that random allocation had resulted in some CAP participants to be completely unsuitable for placements and felt the responsibility and procedures for these participants needed to be revised. Performance Managers expressed concern about a lack of data that could inform them about what had happened when participants had not been placed; apart from this they were mostly happy with the performance in terms of the types and range of placements secured.

Hosts and some providers wanted greater discretion about the circumstances under which a referral to the Decision Making Activity (DMA) team (who are responsible for imposing sanctions) should be made. They were sometimes reluctant to refer because they saw some participants as unsuitable for CAP or because of an unsuitable placement, which was not seen as the participants' fault. Referrals for minor infringements, e.g. lateness, were thought unwarranted.

Problems relating to a backlog of referrals and poor communication by providers about the mandatory nature of the programme in letters had also deterred referrals because they were seen to be labour intensive but not sufficiently timely to be effective.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter draws out the key implementation lessons from the trailblazer in relation to OCM in the first part and CAP in the latter part. It covers what worked well and which aspects of the programme need further consideration and development in order for it to work better both as it currently stands as well as if the trailblazer programme is rolled out more widely.

6.2 Implementation lessons from OCM

This section looks at the implementation lessons of OCM in relation to the amount and timing of training; selection and development of advisers to deal with the challenges faced and posed by this participant group; and management of intensive working in relation to caseloads. Finally, it looks at whether any issues related to implementation stem from the timing and characteristics of the pilot itself – a 'pilot effect' – and would need to be taken into consideration if the programme is rolled out nationally.

6.2.1 Training and preparation

Training and degree of adviser experience

Training and preparation of advisers for OCM tended to be limited to guidance on the Support for the Very Long-Term Unemployed (SVLTU) strand itself in some offices. This was for two reasons: first, because Jobcentre Plus managers believed that advisers already had the necessary interviewing skills; and second, because they tended to 'cherry pick' those with more experience of working with the long-term unemployed to work on the pilot (see Section 6.2.2). Training and guidance that was provided largely related to the aims of the strand and specific aspects of OCM processes such as more frequent attendance, weekly signing and compliance or CAP referrals. There were also examples of district-wide informal training on the participant journey through OCM and 'job shadowing' for advisers and local authority staff working in the Nottingham delivery model to try to ensure appropriate referrals and a smooth referral process.

Advisers noted that OCM often required a great deal of flexibility and discretion. As a result of this, less experienced advisers particularly valued the training they received to help them ensure that all requirements were covered and that all options were reviewed.

Good practice in training and preparation

Advisers valued the opportunity to share good practice in relation to the operation of OCM and dealing with SVLTU participants. Where district and cluster level meetings and discussion groups had taken place, advisers thought they had learnt valuable lessons from them and in some cases said that learning from the trailblazer had changed the way they worked with other Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) participants by adopting a more 'hands on' approach.

Sharing understanding of typical OCM participant journeys and success stories was a particularly valuable part of learning for Jobcentre Plus managers and advisers, particularly advisers in smaller offices where there was one PA working on OCM. Sharing of good practice between PAs within an office was helpful but, where this was not possible, greater sharing across Jobcentre Plus offices could have helped fill this gap. Advisers felt that more opportunity to share practice should have taken place and suggested that in the future time to do this is built into workloads.

Considerations when improving training and preparation

Two specific areas for the improvement of training and preparation for OCM were identified:

- **earlier information and guidance on specific elements of OCM and CAP:** some Jobcentre Plus staff said they would have liked better quality information and more in-depth guidance provided prior to the trailblazer starting. This included more time to read and disseminate the information as some felt it had been too rushed. Keeping track of participants was thought to be one procedural element of the programme that needed more consideration and additional training for advisers, especially where this involved referral to provision undertaken by other providers. Jobcentre Plus advisers also wanted clarification on the extent of their responsibility for keeping updated on the progress of participants referred to CAP;
- **how to deal with participants with more entrenched problems:** because working with the very long-term unemployed often meant that advisers spoke to participants with criminal records, drug and alcohol problems or mental health problems, some wanted more training on how to deal with these participant groups. In particular, this meant understanding restrictions on employment related to criminal convictions, signposting to suitable additional support and ways in which to motivate participants who had become 'set in their ways' to do things differently. For some less experienced PAs it also meant improving understanding of how to be firm in applying the core elements of the strands in ways that did not lead to participants behaving angrily towards advisers.

6.2.2 Adviser qualities needed to work with OCM

Advisers began work on OCM in a number of ways: they were selected or asked to do the job by Jobcentre Plus managers; they responded to an advertisement; or they volunteered to take on the role. In all cases consideration was given by Jobcentre Plus managers to whether advisers were suited to the role with reference to their length of experience of working as a PA, previous experience of working with the frequent signers and/or experience of working with the long-term unemployed. In addition, Jobcentre Plus managers and PAs interviewed discussed a number of other qualities that they thought were important to work with this participant group:

- **good interviewing and listening skills:** the ability to listen and be responsive to participants in terms of the new OCM approach and the provision available;
- **confidence to challenge participants:** confidence to challenge participants who were set in their ways was a recurring theme. This was also associated with being 'thick skinned' so that verbal attacks made against advisers by participants who reacted badly to OCM were not taken personally;
- **firmness balanced with sensitivity:** PAs said it was important that that they pressed home the mandatory aspects of OCM in order to try to help participants towards work. They felt they needed to tread a careful balance between, on the one hand, not being a 'walk over' but on the other, responding sensitively to circumstantial difficulties and barriers to work that participants faced:

‘... it’s being firm when you need to be but also a shoulder to cry on ... when you need to be as well.’

(Personal Adviser);

- **flexibility and imagination:** working with challenging participants was thought to require flexibility and an ability to ‘think outside the box’. PAs needed be able to tailor their approach to each participant rather than having a ‘standard patter’;
- **patience and tenacity:** some PAs recognised that it could take time to change participants’ behaviours and habits that had been set up over many years. They suggested taking ‘small steps’ with them, gradually reintroducing them to the idea and experience of working. This required being tenacious in terms of persisting with attempts to move the participant towards work and being proactive and determined in monitoring their progress;
- **other useful qualities:** good knowledge of the local labour market and training provision and enthusiasm for the OCM approach.

6.2.3 Caseloads

Two interrelated issues arose in terms of the implementation lessons arising from adviser caseloads: (a) whether it was better to have dedicated or specialist adviser roles or to mix OCM and standard JSA claimants; (b) the need to have a smaller than usual caseload to provide the intensive support required by OCM and how to manage them better in future.

Dedicated or specialist OCM advisers?

There was variation in whether OCM caseloads were spread across all PAs in an office or carried out by a single PA or team of PAs dedicated to its delivery. Jobcentre Plus managers and PAs tended to support dedicated or specialist roles where they were in larger Jobcentre Plus offices with more PAs or felt that the intensity of OCM required greater development of experience and focused working with the participant group.

There was some evidence from PAs to suggest that having dedicated advisers working on OCM had advantages in terms of improving continuity of the participant journey and helping to build better rapport between the participant and PA that led to a more effective relationship built on trust. At the same time, the disadvantages to dedicated advisers were seen as practical problems such as difficulty managing staff absences and the fact that in smaller Jobcentre Plus offices with part-time advisers it would be difficult to manage this approach. A lack of caseload variety and the on-going intensive nature of the work was put forward by one manager as a reason why a PA did not want to continue with OCM.

Smaller than usual caseloads and ways to manage them

PAs tended to have an ongoing caseload of around 50 participants for a full-time member of staff (around half of a standard caseload). There was general agreement that this size of caseload was essential to be able to provide the intensive support, (e.g. frequent contact, participant tracking, etc.) described in Chapter 5 as helping to move participants closer to work. Dealing with OCM was regarded as hugely time intensive and there was some concern about whether the perceived positive impacts of OCM would be maintained if OCM was rolled out nationally but with larger caseloads (see Section 6.2.7).

A further advantage of smaller caseloads with more frequent participant contact mentioned by advisers was that this way of working allowed time for the development of innovative practices that could then be shared with other advisers, such as setting up group work with participants, doing

mock interviews, additional use of the Flexible Support Fund (FSF) and greater investment of time in building relationships with local providers.

Some compromises in the frequency of signing had already been made in order to manage OCM caseloads, such as reducing daily signing to less regular signing. A useful approach in this respect was where PAs had used their interviewing skills in order to assess suspicions arising that participants might be working as well as claiming JSA, to decide who needed daily signing and who might be given more leeway. Greater use of discretion in the frequency of signing was, therefore, one way in which PAs were able to manage caseloads better.

In addition to greater discretion for PAs on the frequency of signing, advisers suggested that providing them with more administrative or IT support in relation to the various letters that had to be sent to participants on OCM might enable them to work with larger caseloads in the future. In particular, it was thought that letters could be automatically generated and that administrative staff could then take on a greater role in tracking and flagging when PAs needed to follow participants up. This approach was felt likely to free up adviser time to enable them to concentrate more on interviewing participants.

There may, therefore, be ways in which it would be possible to make caseloads more manageable or increase them slightly, provided these aspects of the delivery of the programme are addressed.

6.2.4 Access to external provision

There was wide variation of views among Jobcentre Plus staff about their opportunity to access suitable external provision as part of OCM. Those managers and PAs who felt that access to provision was good emphasised the range of existing provision, variously described as ‘comprehensive’ or providing ‘something for everyone’; and that it had become easier or quicker to refer participants to existing provision. Where Jobcentre Plus staff felt that access to external provision was not good, a number of reasons for this emerged.

First, a range of Jobcentre Plus staff observed that no distinctive new provision had been made available specifically to address issues faced by the long-term unemployed such as having past histories of criminal convictions or violent behaviour and how to overcome barriers to employment related to this; having severe or fluctuating mental health problems that needed to be addressed before they could properly seek work and dealing with issues of appearance and hygiene. There was therefore a perceived need for new provision that addressed such needs.

Related to this point, some advisers felt that previous welfare-to-work programmes had failed to adequately address the real barriers to work that some long-term claimants had. Ongoing gaps in provision identified were:

- support for people with learning difficulties;
- support to help people deal with serious drug and alcohol addiction or mental health problems;
- basic skills courses related to adult literacy and numeracy, ESOL, basic IT skills and support needed to help people remain in work into the future (e.g. time management and organisational skills).

The gaps in provision identified above were thought to be particularly bad in some rural areas because suitable providers could not be found or participants would have to travel unacceptably long distances to access them. Without such provision in the right localities some PAs felt that it was impossible for participants to get the help they needed.

Some PAs said they would have liked to use Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) placements more but the number or variety of placements in their area had not allowed them to do so. This market saturation could be exacerbated in areas where external providers were competing with Jobcentre Plus and each other for placements and for CAP placements.

Finally, some advisers reporting experiencing difficulty accessing some provision within the timescale of the pilot, this especially applied to the FSF, which PAs said could take up to six weeks to access.

6.2.5 Mandating of work-related activity under OCM

The mandating of participants to undertake activities or attend appointments (with the associated threat of sanctions) whilst on OCM had a similar implementation and practical application as mandating participants who were on the standard Jobcentre Plus Offer. In general, sanctioning was felt to have worked well within the OCM model. The flexibility PAs had to use their own discretion about which support options to use meant that they could decide which participants needed the threat of sanctioning and which needed a 'softer' approach. In some cases, PAs felt that a more structured approach should be available for less experienced advisers so they could have further guidance around when to make activities compulsory for participants with the associated threat of sanctions. On the whole however, the reason that flexibility was felt to work so well for mandating activity was because participants' needs and attitudes differed so broadly.

6.2.6 The pilot effect

There were a number of ways in which the implementation of OCM was influenced by it being a pilot. For instance, some decisions taken about the way in which to resource the strand were felt by more senior Jobcentre Plus staff to have helped in smoothing its delivery and contributing to successful outcomes. Staff also talked about an interest and enthusiasm among PAs in delivering the pilot, although this was not necessarily the case in all the participating Jobcentre Plus offices. There were also ways in which the OCM strand being a pilot was felt to be detrimental to its successful implementation.

The relative balance of factors limiting or increasing the success of OCM due to effects from the pilot are discussed respectively as positive and negative effects in the sections that follow. These effects will be important to take into consideration so that any positive or negative influences arising from the 'pilot effect' do not adversely affect a successful outcome if OCM is rolled out nationally.

The positive effects arising from the trailblazer being a pilot were:

- **dedicated advisers with smaller workloads:** PAs tended to be working with much smaller caseloads than their standard work pattern. A caseload of around 50–60 participants was typical for the pilot, whereas caseloads in excess of 150 were standard. Having this small caseload was considered critical in allowing PAs to spend more time with participants and provide the level of intensity to make OCM work. Some managers had taken the decision to staff the pilot by allocating dedicated advisers to work solely on OCM. This was done in the knowledge that it was a pilot and because Jobcentre Plus staff wanted the programme to work. This is not to say that under potential national roll-out Jobcentre Plus managers could not use the same approach for their post-Work Programme caseloads and assign their 'best' advisers to them;
- **picking the best advisers:** Jobcentre Plus managers admitted that they deliberately 'cherry picked' their best advisers in order for the pilot to be a success. The 'best' advisers were considered to be those who had the most knowledge and the right approach to working with the long-term unemployed (which consequently meant that they did not need much training). Dedicated advisers working in small teams also supported and coached each other, increasing levels of expertise and engagement throughout the pilot;

- **greater opportunities to reflect on best practice:** Jobcentre Plus staff said that the pilot had created an opportunity for managers and PAs to reflect on practice and to approach things from a fresh perspective. This was partly due to there being smaller caseloads and therefore, more time, but was also linked to the trailblazer being a pilot and staff therefore being conscious of developing something new and different. This had led some offices to develop innovative practices such as setting up group work with participants or doing mock interviews and greater investment of time in building relationships with local providers.

The negative effects arising from the trailblazer included:

- **requirement of intensive administrative support in early set-up:** the set up of the trailblazer strands was described as very time consuming and process-led, with lots of administration related to paperwork and referrals. Administrative support for the programme was, therefore, particularly important in the early stages before participants had begun to sign off and the caseloads lessened;
- **the six-month timescale and its impact on the referrals made:** there appeared to be a disincentive to refer participants to work psychologists whilst on the trailblazer because their work with participants tended to be longer-term and would not be completed within the six months of the strand. This was frustrating for Jobcentre Plus advisers as the work psychologist was seen as a valuable resource. Similarly, although the FSF was seen as a helpful support option, it could take six weeks to process, which meant that there was not always the time within the pilot to fully utilise it;
- **prioritisation of OCM and its impact on other programmes:** having dedicated trailblazer staff for the pilot had a knock-on effect on the ability of staff to achieve other Jobcentre Plus work such as having time available to spend with other participants or time for developing other initiatives. This created a tension for managers in light of the fact that off-flows from the pilot were not contributing to their overall performance targets. If OCM is rolled out nationally, there would, therefore, appear to be the need to consider the prioritisation of resources and work on other programmes so that other Jobcentre Plus participants are not disadvantaged.

6.3 Implementation lessons from CAP

This section addresses lessons relating to the implementation of the CAP from the perspectives of DWP and Jobcentre Plus staff, CAP external providers, and the placement hosts who had taken on participants. The section covers contractual and funding arrangements for CAP; referral processes and the setting-up of placements according to proposed timescales; what placement hosts thought about becoming a host; monitoring of the quality of placements; and views about sanctioning for participants who did not start their placement, dropped out or were guilty of misconduct.

6.3.1 Contractual arrangements and funding model

Providers had agreed to funding arrangements by submitting their preferred funding models in their bids for the CAP contract within the overall funding parameters set out in the Invitation to Tender (ITT). The providers were contracted to engage placement hosts and manage the co-ordination of a range of placements. The chief areas of concern emerging in discussion with providers and their performance managers in the study related to the funding model providers had agreed to and their associated internal targets. Two issues emerged in relation to this:

Balance of risk and costs to providers

Providers were paid a number of fees for each participant referred to them depending on activities that the provider undertook and how far the participants progressed in the process which included a:

- start-up fee paid when the provider engaged with the participants and started them on the programme (one provider had submitted a bid that required no start-up fee);
- fee for completion of each placement with different rates depending on how long a participant remains on the placement or in employment; and
- job outcome fee payable when a participant referred to CAP entered sustained employment.

On reflection, the funding parameters for targets set by providers in their bids were felt to be too optimistic both by providers and TPPMs. This was because they were seen to pose a difficult balance of cost and the risk of unsuccessful outcomes and this could potentially disincentivise engagement with similar future contracts.

Two specific issues of concern arose in relation to the balance of risks and costs: First, providers received fewer referrals than they thought they could realistically get into work. Providers in the two Contract Package Areas (CPAs) had aimed to achieve job outcomes for 30–40 per cent of participants at the start of the programme. For the reasons set out below, they no longer expected to meet these targets, which put them at a financial disadvantage:

- there had been fewer referrals than expected in the earlier part of the programme in some areas meaning that providers would receive less in fees across the board;
- some participants who were referred decided to no longer to claim JSA and so were lost from the programme further reducing, completion and job outcome fees, and where relevant, start fees, for providers;
- a proportion of participants had severe restrictions due to health or other issues such as past criminal convictions (estimated by TPPMs and providers to be about ten per cent) and this not only affected their chance of being placed but the likely job outcomes of this group;
- a proportion of participants referred to CAP refused to engage with the programme and proved impossible for providers to contact, meaning that none of the potential fees could be claimed. Random allocation in the pilot was seen to have compounded this problem by referring participants who were viewed by hosts as unsuitable for placements.

This was particularly challenging where providers did not include a start fee in their funding model deciding instead to rely on completion fees and expected job outcome fees.

Secondly, providers bore additional costs in order for participants to prepare for their placements or gain paid work. These costs included paying for training for participants who lacked basic literacy, numeracy or language skills without which they would not be easily placed or offered work. These costs were also borne by placement hosts. Providers also covered travel and childcare costs so that participants could attend their placements.

Payment of fees to providers but not placement hosts

Placement hosts with greater awareness of the funding arrangements also questioned the costs that they bore in order to take on placements. Some hosts noted that they had to provide basic training, health and safety training or increased levels of supervision, especially in relation to labouring or construction work. Where the costs of such training and supervision were not met by the provider they were borne by the placement host.

Some placement hosts thought there would be a greater incentive for them to continue taking on placements if they had some financial recompense for any atypical expenses of taking someone on a placement. A few hosts also questioned the fairness of the provider receiving a job outcome fee, if the host themselves had provided a job at the end of the placement.

6.3.2 Referral process and timescales

Overall, Jobcentre Plus staff and providers thought that the CAP referral process worked well once it was up and running, but that there were three areas in which it could have been significantly improved:

A longer period to engage placement hosts

Providers had a three-month period after being awarded their contracts and prior to going live in which to engage placement hosts and set up prospective placements. While Jobcentre Plus managers and advisers tended to consider this a sufficient period for set-up, TPPMs and providers discussed a number of challenges related to this timescale and the volume of placements required. These were that: (a) the number of placements to organise was particularly high; (b) providers experienced difficulty finding organisations who could accommodate large numbers of participants; and (c) providers were competing with other organisations seeking work placements (such as MWA) in the same area.

Providers found that opportunities to engage new placement hosts and to find new placements increased over time. At the time that referrals started providers were also still trying to engage further placement hosts. This meant that provider time was divided between engagement and placement in a way that created a backlog of placements.

Better profiling of placements and the timing of referrals

The spread of referrals over time had also been an issue for providers. In both the CPAs, the pattern of referrals from Jobcentre Plus was unexpectedly uneven with very few referrals early on and high volumes coming through later in the pilot. The period of higher referrals from Jobcentre Plus also coincided with the Christmas period which meant that the provider organisations and many host organisations were closed. There was also evidence to suggest that where there were higher rates of late referral, fewer participants were subsequently able to be placed in the same period.

Jobcentre Plus managers, TPPMs and providers shared the view that there was, therefore, a need for better profiling by providers of the number of placements that would be available in an area and that referrals should be managed in partnership with Jobcentre Plus accordingly. There was also a need for Jobcentre Plus offices to ensure that referral to CAP was 'staggered' so that referrals were more manageable, avoiding peaks and troughs wherever possible.

Responsibility for participants who could not be placed

An important issue was that responsibility between Jobcentre Plus and providers was not clear when participants were regarded by providers and/or hosts as unsuitable or there was simply no available placement in the locality. Differences in views between Jobcentre Plus staff and providers in terms of where this responsibility lay meant some participants referred to CAP experienced a long period without any placement. There were two stages at which this lack of clarity about responsibility arose:

- **Assessment of the suitability of participants for CAP:** A widely held view among providers and some Jobcentre Plus staff was that the placements were not suitable for a minority of participants. These participants included those who had ‘restrictions’ relating to past criminal offences that barred them from many areas of work placement. In these cases attending a CAP placement was considered unsafe either for the participants themselves, for the placement hosts, or because of the risk participants posed to the public. Providers said that other participants could also not be placed because they had severe basic skills needs and ESOL needs, learning difficulties, behavioural disorders, other mental health issues or significant health problems or were very strongly opposed to the idea of work. Some of these problems of unsuitability were seen to stem from random allocation to CAP. The trailblazer had been designed as a Randomised Control Trial in that participants were randomly allocated to strands; appropriateness to each of the strands was not part of the allocation process. While the reason for this in terms of wanting to provide a robust evaluation was understood by providers, the result was that because of the lack of a suitable triage process that matched provision to participant needs, inappropriate participants were referred
- **Reverse referrals:** Jobcentre Plus staff said that in some cases providers had tried to refer participants back to Jobcentre Plus where they regarded them as unsuitable for placement. Jobcentre Plus managers and PAs resisted such reverse referrals where they believed that providers were supposed to take greater or full responsibility for all participants following referral. They emphasised that in this respect providers were aware that they would be dealing with a challenging group and some suggested that reverse referrals represented a failure to take responsibility. Responsibility for participants in this position was, therefore, contested, which meant that participants could become caught in the system. Some providers said that participants who were caught in this way were doing 30 hours of jobsearch activity a week either independently or at the provider organisation. In other cases providers said they had tried to ‘hand back’ the participants to Jobcentre Plus offices but it appeared that participants had been left in a kind of limbo because of a lack of clear and agreed processes for dealing with them.

6.3.3 Setting up placements to timescale

Overall, DWP, Jobcentre Plus and provider staff thought engagement of hosts and matching of participants to placements had worked reasonably well considering the six-month timescale, restrictions on placements and the challenging nature of the participant group. They felt positive about what providers had achieved in terms of the number, range and quality of hosts, and the type of placements set up. Despite this generally positive view, there were still some concerns among Jobcentre Plus staff about the amount of time it had taken for providers to contact some participants after referral and to match them to a placement. Two issues emerged in relation to the ability of providers to place participants: (a) how easy or difficult it had been for them to engage hosts; and (b) how easy or difficult it was to match participants within the proposed timescale.

Engagement of hosts

There were a number of factors that affected the ability of DWP, Jobcentre Plus and provider staff to engage sufficient placement hosts of an appropriate range to be able to set up necessary placements. These were:

- **communication and planning between Jobcentre Plus and providers to inform the need for placements:** the experience of engaging hosts and ensuring the correct range of hosts tended to be better where there was regular contact between Jobcentre Plus staff and providers about the likely profile of CAP referrals and ways to manage referrals. This ensured that the correct balance was struck between time to engagement hosts and time to manage day-to-day referrals;

- **local knowledge:** there was some evidence that provider organisations who had done previous work in a specific geographical area on similar contracts were able to engage placement hosts and set up placements with relative ease using existing contacts. In one area there had been some local resistance to a national provider perceived by some hosts to lack local knowledge. This suggests that there may be a need to allow some additional engagement time for contracted providers who are less familiar with a local area;
- **market saturation of placements:** a key challenge in engaging placement hosts was that many of the organisations that providers contacted were involved in similar schemes such as MWA and the Work Programme and had no capacity for additional placements. This was a problem reported across both CPAs. Better management of the profiling of available placements was suggested as a way to avoid this issue;
- **the requirement for placement hosts that deliver a community benefit:** the placements secured by providers met the requirement to provide community benefit (as discussed in Chapter 2) however, this stipulation was felt, by some providers, to restrict organisations that could be approached to take placements. Providers responded in this respect by trying to think more broadly about the type of organisations that could deliver a community benefit beyond voluntary sector organisations (e.g. social landlords). However, it was not always easy to find suitable ‘social’ host organisations to fit the aspirations of participants for placements and work, particularly where the type of work experience that participants wanted was more prominent in the private sector, for example, warehousing;
- **negative media coverage of work placements that hosts felt conflicted with their values:** negative media attention surrounding government work placement programmes in early 2012 was reported to have created difficulties engaging placement hosts. A particularly difficult issue for some hosts was that the CAP appeared to conflict with their view that the work the participant does should be voluntary and not mandatory. The result was that a handful of hosts providing CAP placements became uncomfortable with providing them and pulled out;
- **lack of flexibility in the length of placements:** some placement hosts were difficult to engage because they felt a six-month placement was too long or too short. These tended to be hosts already engaged on MWA who said that six months was ‘a much bigger ask’. The six-month placement period was also a barrier to potential hosts who had wanted shorter work experience placements, for example, over the Christmas period. Conversely, others said that it would not be ‘worth the aggravation’ of a shorter placement where the work placement required greater training, checks or supervision up front, for example in relation to office work, animal care, work with children requiring CRB checks, work in construction or ground work requiring health and safety inductions;
- **lack of flexibility in the number of weekly work placement hours:** some providers felt that there was currently insufficient flexibility to adapt the number of weekly work placement hours to a participant’s circumstances. For example, one provider said that a major barrier to work for one participant was poor English but it had not been possible to reduce his work placement hours to do a weekly 15 hours ESOL course. In this case the most effective way of overcoming the participant’s barriers to work was first addressing the ESOL needs. Related to the above point, placement hosts thought that ‘forcing’ people with lots of past skills to go on placement for six months was inappropriate because it prevented them from spending more time on jobsearch. A reduction in placement hours to free up time for jobsearch would have been valued for these participants. As discussed above the instances of inappropriate referrals to CAP would have been, in the most part, due to the need to randomly allocated participants in order to provide a scientific test of the two treatment options.

Matching participants to placements

In Section 6.3.2 we discussed the reasons why it had been difficult to deal with referrals within the specified timescale. In addition, two other issues affected the ability of providers to match participants to placement hosts in a timely way.

A consistent view among providers was that 15 days was insufficient to find an appropriate placement for each participant as this would depend on participants' individual needs and aspirations and the availability of suitable placements and placement hosts willing to accept them. Providers sometimes felt obliged to put people into less suitable placements in order to meet the 15-day deadline. Even though they moved them to better placements later, this led to a worse experience for participants. At the same time, some participants dropped out of their placements because they did not like them or because their host was unhappy with their work. This meant that there was some churn in placements and that they had to be sourced over again. There were also some practical barriers experienced to meeting the deadline, for example, hosts wanting placements to start after the deadline or requiring a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check which could take weeks or months. Providers felt that 30 days was a more realistic timescale for matching participants to placements.

On-site meetings between providers and placement hosts emerged as important for hosts to understand the nature of CAP and for providers to explain fully the requirements of the CAP to hosts. Where site visits had happened, placement hosts felt that providers were better able to understand their needs and any restrictions in relation to the type of participants they could or could not accept. In the few cases where site visits had not happened placement hosts said that they had less understanding of the CAP placements, that engagement had felt 'rushed', and that they were more dissatisfied with the people referred to them.

6.3.4 Becoming a placement host

Placement hosts said that they had originally been contacted by email or telephone by the provider to invite them to become a host, which had usually been followed up by a face-to-face visit to the organisation for the provider to get to know their requirements and fully explain the programme. The value of such face-to-face site meetings has been discussed in Section 6.3.3.

Two main benefits to being involved in CAP as a placement host were identified, namely that they:

- helped them fulfil a broad commitment to help their community or a more specific commitment to helping people on benefits and/or the long-term unemployed;
- addressed their need for human resources to run their social enterprise successfully. CAP was especially valued in this respect because it guaranteed such resources for a longer time than other work placements such as MWA.

There was some evidence that the desire for human resources was more prominent in areas of work where it was more difficult to recruit volunteers such as warehousing, distribution and ground works. Both reasons for accepting placements facilitated loyalty to the strand provided that hosts felt that the participants sent to them were willing to engage with the placement immediately or within the first few weeks.

Three main concerns were expressed:

- **whether they would receive the right type of people:** some hosts felt they could not accept people with certain types of criminal convictions such as violent offences or stealing where cash would be handled. Others felt that it was not worth investing time and energy in people who were not willing to engage with the placement. In particular, they emphasised the negative impact of non-engagement on staff and volunteers who wanted to be there. Providers, therefore, played an important role in filtering participants for placements to address specific concerns of host organisations;
- **whether participants were on the placements voluntarily:** there was evidence of hosts growing concerned about placements where participants told them they had been ‘forced’ to take part in them. This did not fit with the ethos of the organisation that people working for them should be ‘volunteers’. These concerns could be overcome provided that hosts saw evidence that participants’ views became more favourable after they started to feel the positive effects of the placement, for example, increased confidence and sociability, better structure and routine to their lives and gaining new skills;
- **whether they had sufficient work to sustain the placement(s) for six months:** hosts thought that it was important that the work they could offer was sufficient to provide participants with new skills and/or an engaging experience that would sustain them over six months.

Where these concerns were addressed the placement hosts were generally happy with their placements.

6.3.5 Monitoring placement quality, supervision and support

Performance Managers were generally happy with the level of information they received about the number of successful referrals and placements within the designated timescale. However, there was concern amongst them and Jobcentre Plus staff more broadly (Jobcentre Plus managers and PAs) about what was happening with participants who were regarded as unsuitable for CAP or who could not be found an appropriate placement. This was reflected in the contrasting views that PAs heard from participants about CAP and the quality of placements; while some heard that participants were on high quality, worthwhile placements, others had received complaints from participants that they had not been placed after some considerable time and felt that they had therefore ‘fallen by the wayside’.

As discussed in greater detail in Section 6.3.2, concerns among Jobcentre Plus staff about placements and their quality appeared to have emerged from a lack of clarity about who had responsibility for monitoring the number and quality of placements for participants on CAP rather than how providers met targets to achieve payment of fees. Notably, some TPPMs and Performance Managers were aware of the lack of clarity in relation to responsibility for participants who were more difficult (or impossible) to place and had begun to ask for ‘action plans’ on how prime and sub-providers would address them. Nonetheless, they still felt that the contracts needed clarifying and tightening up in these respects.

Concerns about the number and quality of placements were less pronounced where there was good communication between Jobcentre Plus staff and providers. Good communication was seen to be characterised by:

- face-to-face contact between both organisations whenever possible;
- good feedback from providers on performance management data;
- a single point of contact at each provider who was easily available; and
- evidence of provider commitment to development of the programme through proactivity and flexibility in addressing problems with placements when they occurred.

By contrast poor communication was experienced when it was difficult for Jobcentre Plus staff to contact providers or where providers felt that the onus on solving problems relating to participants who could not be placed was left entirely to them and was not shared by Jobcentre Plus staff.

Provider checks on the quality of placements

Providers said that monitoring the quality of placements (rather than numbers of them) largely fell to them rather than the DWP or Jobcentre Plus. They described checks in terms of: on-site visits during host engagement; on-site or telephone follow-up with hosts about specific participants to find out how particular participants were settling in and progressing; and responses to placement host complaints about some participants who they regarded as unsuitable or who had failed to engage. Discussion of timesheets, that all participants had to complete, and which hosts sent to providers weekly, also provided an opportunity for providers to speak to placement hosts about any problems identified or for hosts to do so at their own instigation.

Overall, placement hosts confirmed that they had received good support and supervision from providers. The quality of supervision for hosts related to whether providers had:

- telephoned them weekly to monitor how well participants were doing until they were settled;
- provided the hosts with the contact details of a named person who was responsive to their concerns when placements were unsuitable for the role or not working out due to lack of engagement by the participant;
- fully informed them about their responsibilities as a placement host, including completion of timesheets for individual participants and opportunities to discuss them with the provider.

Even where hosts were satisfied with the general monitoring of the quality of placements, they sometimes felt that they would have liked more contact across the whole course of the placement rather than just at the start. In particular, hosts were unsure about whether there would be an opportunity for them to debrief providers at the end of six-month placements. They thought this would be important so that they could give formal feedback on the experience of placement for them and the participants referred.

6.3.6 FTAs, non-starters, drop out and misconduct and sanctioning

There was a broad view among Jobcentre Plus staff that referrals to the DMA team and sanctioning were not happening in any great numbers for participants who did not start their placements, dropped off them or were guilty of misconduct. Although some participants had been referred to for DMA by providers a reluctance to highlight problems among placement hosts, and to make such referrals among providers, occurred for a number of reasons:

- **lack of suitability of the participant for CAP:** providers said that some participants were virtually impossible to place because of a complete failure to engage with the placement. Lack of engagement consisted of a failure to turn up to the placement, a poor attitude when at the placement (e.g. poor work, talking on the phone to family and friends at every opportunity) and abusive behaviour to staff and other volunteers. Providers reported that a few participants had committed offences in order to be expelled from their placement and/or had challenging behavioural issues that were sometimes linked to past criminal convictions. When asked their views about participants being 'forced' to undertake the placement through sanctioning they felt this was pointless because of the negative effect such participants had on the organisation, staff, volunteers and other placements. On balance, hosts also thought that a sanction would have the perverse effect of making these participants even more difficult and disengage them further. Instead, these participants were seen as unsuitable for CAP without considerable additional intensive support that was beyond the scope of CAP; therefore, another option needed to be found for them as part of the programme;

- **inappropriate placements:** providers and hosts were reluctant to refer participants to the DMA team where they felt they had been sent on an inappropriate placement which was not the participant's fault. Reasons that the placements became seen as inappropriate over time were that the work placement was not what the participant expected or wanted to get them back to work; and that it was too far and too costly for them to travel on a daily basis²⁷. In these cases it was thought to be more appropriate to try to find a new placement rather than make a referral to the DMA team;
- **infringements seen as minor:** providers and placement hosts observed that many of the problems they experienced with participants were minor, for example turning up late one time, sporadic periods of short-term sickness; they discussed these problems with participants when timesheets were being reviewed and preferred to find ways to try to deal with the participant more directly themselves, for example by 'having a word' with the participant. The participant was then only referred for DMA by the provider if the placement host told them that their behaviour had got worse and they became difficult and intransigent. Even in these cases it was sometimes considered better to remove the participant from the placement than to refer them to the DMA team;
- **need for greater flexibility in the 30-hour requirement:** it emerged during their placements that some participants had domestic or family problems (e.g. the ill-health of the participant or of a family member) that made 30 hours of work per week impossible. Although some allowances were made for caring responsibilities which allowed participants to reduce their placement hours if required, some placement hosts noted that there needed to be more flexibility around caring arrangements at the discretion of the host (e.g. allowing compassionate leave or allowing time taken off for caring to be made up at the end of an extended placement). Once again, the fault was not seen to lie with the participant but with inflexibility in the placement requirements. On this evidence, it would seem to make sense to consider whether greater flexibility and discretion in placement conditions could be incorporated into a type of placement agreement²⁸;
- **disagreement about the mandatory nature of placements:** in a few cases placement hosts were reluctant to ask the providers to refer participants for sanctions because they felt that placements should be voluntary rather than mandatory. Where they identified problems with participants they tried to deal with them themselves rather than involving what they considered an unwelcome sanctioning process;
- **backlog in sanctioning:** some providers were also reluctant to refer participants for DMA because they were aware of a backlog at the DMA team. In some cases the time elapsed to process the sanction was two to three months after the provider had made a referral, making them untimely and less effective. Consequently, providers tried to resolve the issues with participants themselves only making a referral when they thought it was absolutely necessary. Jobcentre Plus staff also noted that sanctioning on CAP took longer than on OCM.

²⁷ Claimants are reimbursed travel costs.

²⁸ Provider guidance states that restrictions agreed on a claimants Jobseeker's Agreement should be respected during CAP.

Administrative problems relating to referral to DMA

In addition to the problem of a backlog of sanctions discussed already, Jobcentre Plus staff identified other issues that had made the process less effective in relation to CAP. These were that:

- some providers had not clarified that CAP placements were mandatory when they had first contacted participants by letter after referral. The DMA required evidence that participants were fully aware of the mandatory nature of CAP before they were prepared to sanction because previous sanctions had been disallowed at appeal on this basis;
- unengaged participants also failed to co-operate with the DMA process when they were asked to provide evidence on what information they had received about their CAP placements prior to sanctioning.

6.4 Chapter conclusion

The reflections of Jobcentre Plus PAs and managers around their operational experiences of OCM have drawn out a number of lessons relating both to the performance of the strand and to potential wider roll-out. While OCM was not delivered uniformly across sites the key components of effective operational delivery appeared to include the sharing of good practice, the ability for advisers to spend more time with participants, the selection of advisers with skills most suited to supporting the participant group and the availability of appropriate and accessible forms of external provision. Where advisers were selected aptly or adequate training provided, where caseloads were reduced and administrative support provided to free up adviser time, where case conferencing on effective strategies took place and where favourable external provision could be sourced this was seen to have a positive effect on the programme strand. These practices may, however, have resulted from a 'pilot effect', whereby they were facilitated by the strand being pilot. Whether these practices are feasible if wider roll out were to occur will need consideration.

Provider, placement host, Jobcentre Plus and DWP staff discussed a number of challenges that arose during the delivery of CAP. These issues meant that the funding models proposed by providers were too optimistic and posed a financial risk. A key issue experienced resulted from providers receiving fewer overall referrals than expected, as well as fewer participants who could realistically be placed on, or sustain, a placement and who could be expected to enter paid work due to unaddressed barriers. This was, in part, the consequence of a 'pilot effect' where random allocation meant that participants unsuitable for the strand were referred to it. This highlights the importance of developing eligibility criteria for CAP if it is to be used more widely in the future.

Meeting the timescales and therefore, earning the associated fees was also made difficult by uneven referral patterns from Jobcentre Plus and challenges providers experienced sourcing the required volume of willing placement hosts. Challenging timescales for engagement and placement also meant that providers could not match participants to placements effectively, a strategy that was viewed as effective in maximising participant engagement with placements and demonstrated in Chapter 5 as generating better experiences for participants.

A reluctance among providers to refer customers to the DMA team for potential sanctioning suggests that the criteria for referral should be reviewed, and that administrative processes currently obstructing the timely execution of sanctions should be tightened up. It also highlights the importance of more clearly communicating the possibility of sanctions to participants.

7 Conclusions

The Support for the Very Long-Term Unemployed (SVLTU) trailblazer was designed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to test options for very long-term Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants. The programme consisted of two mandatory support strands lasting six months: Ongoing Case Management (OCM) and the Community Action Programme (CAP) to which long-term claimants were randomly allocated three months prior to the start of the programme strands.

This report presents the findings of a mixed method evaluation. It involved a survey of around 1,500 participants that compared the outcomes of the two SVLTU strands against claimants allocated to a 'control group', who continued to receive the standard offer of support from Jobcentre Plus. The survey was conducted around seven months after start. This was complemented by participant and staff insights about the impacts of the programme. Operational experiences were captured using qualitative interviews with staff involved in the delivery of the SVLTU support strands, as well as the standard Jobcentre Plus Offer (JCPO). The results from this evaluation will contribute to existing knowledge of how best to support very long-term claimants and inform DWP's decision-making in relation to potential national roll-out.

DWP administrative records published alongside this report indicate that participation in OCM and CAP, when compared to the control group, led to higher JSA sign-off. The quantitative survey of participants collected data on 'softer' outcomes which show that compared with the control group the SVLTU strands achieved increases in motivation, confidence and perceptions of overcoming barriers to work. While the support strands and job outcomes do not currently appear to be strongly correlated, these softer outcomes may result in job outcomes at a later date. DWP are planning to publish administrative data on job outcomes in 2013, which will provide a longer-term picture of the job outcomes of all trailblazer participants.

It is worth noting that the evaluation findings may have been tempered by variations in the way the pilots were implemented. For example, more CAP participants than expected were not placed on a work placement and there was qualitative evidence that OCM did not differ greatly to the standard JCPO in a minority of offices. Reasons for this are explained in this chapter.

This concluding chapter summarises evaluation findings and discusses their implications. It first explores the hard and soft impacts of the SVLTU strands and the factors affecting them. It then discusses the lessons learnt about the design of the two strands and the operational issues experienced during delivery. Finally, the chapter discusses the implications for potential roll-out of the policy.

7.1 Impacts of the SVLTU strands

7.1.1 Job outcomes

A key aim of the SVLTU programme was to help more JSA claimants leave benefit and enter paid work. At the time of the survey, six to seven months after participants started on the programme, analysis of survey data found that the percentage of job outcomes for these claimants did not differ significantly to the control group: a small proportion of long-term claimants (15 to 17 per cent) entered work regardless of the type of support offered to them by Jobcentre Plus. The implications of this finding for programme design and potential wider roll-out are discussed later in the chapter.

While the majority of participants on all three strands were still claiming JSA at the time of the survey, this picture was not straightforward. The survey data show that a higher proportion of CAP participants were still claiming JSA compared to participants on OCM and the control group six to seven months after the start. However, DWP statistics published alongside this report identify lower levels of benefit receipt for both CAP and OCM customers compared to the control group at a point 41 weeks after the point of random allocation (roughly 26 weeks after start). The administrative statistics are more reliable than survey data on benefit status because they are not based on self-reported benefit information and cover the whole population of participants.

7.1.2 Factors affecting the impacts of the SVLTU strands

There were a number of interrelated reasons why OCM and CAP did not appear to have generated more job outcomes than the control group at this point. The characteristics of the claimant group, the relatively short programme length and the challenging economic environment limited the potential of the strands to bring about job outcomes at the time of the survey.

As the very long-term unemployed, the participant group consisted, albeit not entirely, of claimants described by OCM and CAP staff as having the most complex and severe barriers to work. Due to the nature of the barriers presented by some participants six months was not considered adequate to fully address barriers let alone achieve job outcomes. In light of this, advisers and providers were in support of extending the programme length with the exception of the CAP work placement element which was seen as sufficient. Concerns were also raised in relation to both strands that the momentum could be lost after the six-month trial programme had lapsed and that the progress made with individuals could be undone. This may impact on longer-term outcomes of the SVLTU participant group, statistics on which are due to be published next year.

Some OCM and CAP staff expressed surprise that some arguably basic barriers such as CVs, covering letters and interview skills had not already been addressed on previous programmes. This was particularly unexpected for very long-term claimants who had completed numerous employment schemes prior to the SVLTU programme and this raised questions about the quality of previous provision. In effect, the necessity to first address these basic needs meant less time could be spent addressing more entrenched barriers or focusing on jobsearch. It was suggested that for claimants who were referred without having had basic barriers addressed, six months of intensive and tailored provision on OCM or a six-month work placement and jobsearch on CAP was not ‘time well spent’.

Both staff and participants emphasised the significance of the challenge posed by the difficult labour market of getting long-term JSA claimants with serious underlying barriers into work. These wider economic conditions were seen to make job outcomes within a six-month trial period all the more difficult. In relation to this, it may be that the softer outcomes of the programme will take longer to translate into paid work and that collecting data on employment outcomes at the end of the six-month programme is too soon.

7.1.3 Impact of SVLTU on employability

Despite limited job outcomes the participant survey identified a number of ways in which the two SVLTU strands, compared with the support received by the control group, progressed participants further towards work. The ‘softer impacts’ resulting from the two strands were considered important achievements by staff given the severe nature of the barriers experienced by some long-term claimants, and the relatively short programme duration.

As reported in Chapter 3, survey data found that OCM participants and those CAP participants who had been placed on work experience were engaging in higher levels of work-related activity by applying for work and engaging in voluntary or unpaid work, compared with participants in the control group. The work-related ambitions of participants on the two support strands had also

increased as a result of the support they had received. OCM participants and placed CAP participants also experienced positive shifts in terms of how close they felt they were to the labour market. It is possible that these positive changes in jobseeking behaviour, attitudes and aspirations may translate into job outcomes in the months following programme completion.

The differences in the softer impacts experienced by participants on the two strands indicated that OCM resulted in higher levels of motivation while CAP had a more notable positive effect on confidence and for those who were placed, on feelings of anxiety. Qualitative interviews with providers and placement hosts also suggest that job satisfaction and the work routine of CAP work placements resulted in increased motivation to work even among participants initially opposed to the idea of a work placement. Participants' confidence in their own abilities, their interpersonal and teamwork skills, CVs and jobsearch skills and in some cases skills and qualifications were also greatly enhanced by the experience of work.

7.2 Lessons learnt: programme design and implementation

7.2.1 Lessons learnt from OCM programme design

As a programme that offered more intense and continuous support from the same adviser in a way that was tailored to individual participants, OCM was seen to bring about the positive differences described above and at a faster rate than possible on the standard JCPO. Having more contact with participants enhanced advisers' understanding of participants' needs and helped them to personalise the offer of support around those needs. Receiving long-term support motivated participants in their quest for work and resulted in participants taking more responsibility for their progress and in advisers being able to follow them up on directed tasks.

Greater autonomy in the way advisers chose to support participants appeared to be instrumental in helping advisers to tailor support around participants' individual needs and also to develop new support options designed specifically to address participants' barriers. Underpinning the importance of personalised support was the fact that the long-term unemployed group consisted of claimants with very different levels of need and types of barriers, making a 'one size fits all' approach inappropriate.

Though there were different permutations of the OCM model, with varying degrees of flexibility, this support strand generally afforded advisers greater discretion in relation to the timing and use of support options than the standard JCPO. Requirements that did not allow advisers to tailor the timing and types of support to individual participants were considered less helpful. For example the core elements of the programmes which were blanket requirements for all OCM participants, such as mandatory compliance interviews and periods of daily signing, were seen as unnecessary. Daily signing on OCM was difficult to manage and only considered necessary for 'hardened' claimants. Similarly compliance interviews were thought to take up valuable resources and alarm compliant claimants unnecessarily. Compliance officers suggested that OCM participants should be referred only if suspected to be non-compliant, but that advisers update long-term claimants on recent changes to benefits entitlements as part of their own roles.

As part of OCM, advisers were generally given increased discretion to mandate certain aspects of the programme with the associated risk of a benefit sanction. This helped motivate participants to comply with the programme. Interestingly whilst introducing mandatory activities or risk of sanctions could create conflict in the short term, it also helped to aid rather than threaten the building of a collaborative Personal Adviser (PA)/participant relationship by providing clear expectations on both sides. This in turn acted as the catalyst for more openness and honesty as participants opened up about barriers.

Advisers also used a 'softer' approach where appropriate, such as providing encouragement and emotional support or discussing issues in depth to uncover underlying reasons for non-co-operation.

7.2.2 learnt from OCM operational issues

A number of operational decisions and experiences impacted on the success of the OCM model. Firstly, there was a general consensus that smaller caseloads were essential to the delivery of intensive and tailored support. While there was variation between sites, OCM caseloads were typically around half the size of standard Jobcentre Plus caseloads. Secondly, evidence suggests that Jobcentre Plus managers deliberately 'cherry picked' their best advisers to deliver OCM to ensure they were well suited to working with the claimant group.

More case conferencing, sharing of good practice and success stories took place between advisers and managers involved in the delivery of OCM than would usually happen under the standard offer. Advisers who attended district or Jobcentre Plus cluster level meetings and who shared experiences of delivery with peers and managers provided positive feedback about the usefulness of these opportunities. While training was generally limited because the advisers selected to deliver OCM were relatively experienced, additional training to help build confidence in using the more flexible approach and in the available support options was valued by less experienced advisers.

The operational decisions to resource and build capacity for the pilots in this way may have been influenced by the strand being a pilot, thus creating a 'pilot effect'. This raises questions about whether the positive effects of OCM would persist if rolled out, and the need to consider effective resourcing.

There were a number of operational issues that may have limited the achievements of the OCM strand. As discussed already advisers, particularly if they were more experienced, did not require any training beyond the standard training for Jobcentre Plus advisers. Nevertheless, advisers suggested that training and preparation could have been improved with earlier information and guidance on specific elements such as dealing with participants with more entrenched problems.

Where advisers experienced difficulties managing their caseloads, greater support in relation to the administrative aspects of their roles was called for to help advisers spend more time supporting participants.

Gaps in suitable external provision were reported by advisers and managers. These were experienced particularly in relation to the scarcity of suitable support in rural areas and insufficient MWA placements to meet demand. In relation to this advisers suggested more systematic profiling of MWA placement needs. Some support options such as the Flexible Support Fund and Work Psychology were said to respectively take some time to access and to have an impact within the six months available and this sometimes discouraged advisers from using them.

7.2.3 Lessons learnt from CAP programme design

CAP offered participants a six-month work placement lasting up to 30 hours a week alongside help with jobseeking. CAP participants who took part in the survey were more likely to report positive changes if they had been on a placement. This suggests that in terms of bringing about favourable participant outcomes, the work placement element was the key strength of the CAP support strand. Positive changes reported in the survey include CAP participants applying for more jobs, feeling more confident and closer to the labour market as a result of the programme and CAP participants who were placed feeling less anxious.

There was widespread support from providers for the six-month duration of the placement because it was considered effective in simulating 'real jobs'. This longer placement time, compared to that of other work experience schemes, enabled participants to develop in their roles and gave them viable experience for their CVs. Insights from providers and placement hosts indicated that in some cases the work placements had led to offers of paid work. Matching participants in terms of their skills, work histories and interests appeared to be a useful strategy in both maximising participant engagement with their placements and the possibility of receiving a job offer.

While the placements appeared to have some positive impacts on participants, CAP seemed to be less successful than OCM in benefitting the full range of participants allocated to it. While random allocation of claimants is not an approach that would be utilised outside of pilot conditions, its use did highlight that in comparison to OCM, CAP appeared to be less suitable for certain types of long-term JSA claimants.

A widely held view among providers and some Jobcentre Plus staff was that the placements were not suitable for a minority of claimants with 'restrictions' relating to past criminal offences but also for claimants with learning difficulties, behavioural disorders, other mental health issues or significant health problems. This led to a number of participants who could not be placed and a portion of participants whose placements could not be maintained. The essential distinction between the two strands which may explain this difference is that OCM was a more flexible and less of a 'one size fits all' approach in which advisers could decide how and when to support participants with the ability to draw on options involving work experience if and when appropriate.

7.2.4 Lessons learnt from CAP operational issues

Operationally there were a number of reasons why the delivery of CAP was not entirely smooth and this may have negatively influenced the achieved outcomes. While these issues may be unique to this trial and may not be repeated outside of pilot conditions they provide useful lessons about implementing similar programmes.

First, a number of issues arose during the referral process. Providers received fewer referrals than expected due to early participant sign-off from JSA. A proportion of participants had restrictions on where they could be placed because of health and other issues. An estimated ten per cent had severe restrictions related to past criminal convictions, and a further group of participants refused to engage with the programme and proved impossible for providers to contact. The referral of fewer participants for whom job outcome fees could be achieved created the possibility of perverse incentives to focus jobsearch support on participants closest to the labour market.

Providers had a three-month period prior to the start of CAP in which to engage placement hosts and set up prospective placements. In general the timescale provided was not considered sufficient, particularly given the high volume of participants to be placed, the scarcity of organisations who could accommodate large numbers of participants and market saturation of placements. A longer time window for organising placements would have been appreciated.

The spread of referrals over time was also an issue in both the Contract Package Areas (CPAs). The pattern of referrals from Jobcentre Plus was uneven with very few referrals early on and unexpectedly high volumes coming through later in the referral period, coinciding with the Christmas period. This meant that at the times of higher referral rates there was a mismatch in staff resources and placement host availability. This resulted in problems placing participants within the required timescales.

There was a shared view of a need for better profiling by providers of the number of placements that would be available in an area and that referrals should be managed in partnership with Jobcentre

Plus accordingly. There was also a need for Jobcentre Plus offices to ensure that referral to CAP was 'staggered' so that referrals were more manageable, avoiding or forewarning of possible peaks and troughs wherever possible. The 15-day deadline for placing participants also created difficulties in terms of sorting out practical issues such as CRB checks and matching participants to suitable placements. Thirty days to set-up a placement was considered more realistic.

While the guidelines state that participants who had not been placed should be engaging in 30 hours of jobsearch per week this appeared not to be implemented in all cases. An important issue for future consideration is that responsibility between Jobcentre Plus and providers for unsuitable participants should be reviewed and reverse referrals made possible. To avoid improper referrals altogether staff interviewed suggested applying eligibility criteria to CAP.

There was a broad view among Jobcentre Plus staff that referrals to Decision Making Activity (DMA) for sanctioning and timely administering of sanctions were not happening in any great numbers for participants who did not start their placements, dropped off them or were guilty of misconduct. Although some participants had been referred to DMA, reluctance among providers to sanction participants was broadly based on the following:

- lack of suitability of some participants for CAP or their placement;
- disagreement about the mandatory nature of placements;
- preference to deal with infringements more informally;
- administrative problems such as backlogs in the processing of sanctions at the DMA.

It may be useful, therefore, to consider providing greater discretion to hosts and providers about when they refer participants, whilst also tightening up the guidelines over referral, possibly in line with a more flexibly defined work placement agreement related to specific participant needs and host conditions. There is also a clear need to tighten up the administrative processes related to sanctioning and information about mandatory requirements of CAP.

Among placement hosts with greater awareness of funding arrangements between DWP and providers, there was a view that hosts should be financially compensated for resources spent on training and mentoring of participants. The case for financially incentivising community and voluntary sector hosts should be weighed up against findings on other ways to achieve better overall experiences of hosting CAP placements: through face-to-face contact with hosts, detailed briefing about the programme and the nature of the participant group and matching of participants with hosts. Finally placement hosts reported wanting an opportunity to debrief providers and Jobcentre Plus advisers at the end of the six-month placements. They thought this would be important so that they could give formal feedback on the experience of the placements for them and the performance of participants.

7.3 Key learning and implications for potential roll out

This final section discusses key learning emerging from the evaluation in relation to how the SVLTU strands may be rolled out. It also considers a range of operational issues relating to potential wider roll-out.

The experiences of implementing the pilots demonstrate that while the group of claimants allocated to the two support strands (and also to the control group) can be broadly defined as the 'very long-term unemployed', the claimant group was in fact far from homogenous. It was comprised of claimants with varying levels of support needs and barriers to work; from relatively recently unemployed 'professionals' to claimants who had never worked and lacked basic skills.

Unsurprisingly, the variety in the claimant group, therefore, has implications for the level and types of support offered to very long-term unemployed claimants. The very long-term unemployed group can be divided into three broad groups of claimants, described in turn below, which vary in relation to their barriers to work and proximity to the labour market:

- claimants with low-level barriers;
- claimants with longstanding barriers; and
- claimants with entrenched and severe barriers.

7.3.1 Claimants with low-level barriers

This group is comprised of claimants with low-level rather than severe barriers to work who are likely to achieve a job outcome without much need for intensive support. This group is likely to include the 15 to 17 per cent of participants who entered work from each of the three support strands. The participants identified by the logistic regression model as more likely to get a job outcome were female, parents with dependent children, more recently in work, and/or less likely to cite having a criminal record or a disability or illness as a barrier to work. It may follow that since a similar proportion of participants on each programme entered work regardless of the support they received, long-term returners from the Work Programme, identified through a diagnostic interview to fit this type, may benefit simply from receiving the standard JCPO of support in the future. Closer examination of administrative data will be useful in ascertaining how sustainable jobs entered by this group are and whether they may benefit from in-work support to avoid a cycle of recurrent unemployment.

7.3.2 Claimants with longstanding barriers

The claimant group with longstanding barriers to work consists of those with characteristics more typically associated with the long-term unemployed. These claimants may have had less recent or no existing work histories and longstanding and potentially multiple barriers to work. This group may consist of claimants initially resistant to the two programme strands but who experienced softer outcomes and who it was possible to progress towards work.

Evaluation findings suggest that the SVLTU support strand that appeared to help the widest range of long-term claimants was OCM. This was because it provided participants with the more intensive help necessary at this stage of the claim as well as the ability for support to be tailored around individual participants' needs. It may, therefore, follow that claimants identified as belonging to this group would benefit from an approach similar to OCM.

The CAP strand, however, appeared to benefit participants whose main needs were around developing a work ethic and a lack of recent work experience. Referral to a work placement may also be timelier once other higher priority barriers such as basic skills needs are addressed through the increased skills conditionality. The flexibility of future pre-Work Programme Jobcentre Plus support should also mean that fewer claimants complete the Work Programme without resolving basic needs. A useful approach nonetheless may be for OCM advisers to be made primarily responsible for the whole claimant journey and to refer claimants deemed ready to do a CAP-type placement. This would typically be a longer placement of around six months.

7.3.3 Claimants with entrenched and severe barriers

The final group, those with entrenched and severe barriers to work includes claimants who were viewed as hardest to help and who can be broadly categorised as unwilling or unable to work. This includes participants on both support strands who strongly opposed working and either disengaged from their placements or who were perceived to comply with the requirements of OCM without the

intention of entering work. It may also include claimants considered completely unsuitable for CAP such as those with restrictions and serious health problems as well as claimants with mental health conditions and learning disabilities who were not seen to benefit from OCM.

These participants presented a considerable challenge to staff on both CAP and OCM who were not confident about progressing them, even in small ways, towards work. OCM advisers recommended that some claimants, such as those with criminal convictions, learning disabilities and health conditions, may benefit from more specialist provision, either to address their barriers or to draw on a wider network of employers willing to engage with this claimant group. For claimants lacking any desire to join the labour market it may be that a longer period of tailored and intensive OCM support may be needed to break down barriers, understand support needs and help create motivation to work. This group of claimants will undoubtedly require careful consideration around the type of support that will be effective in moving them closer to employment.

7.3.4 Operational issues for consideration in potential wider roll-out

A key point of consideration relating to potential wider roll-out of OCM is the requirement for smaller caseloads, which were consistently thought to be essential to the delivery of intensive support. Concerns were raised about whether smaller caseloads would be feasible under potential national roll-out and whether the positive impacts of OCM could be maintained if caseloads were larger. While advisers employed strategies for managing their caseloads effectively they needed the flexibility to intensify contact based on participants' individual needs. This will clearly have resource and cost implications for the Department if the strand is rolled out. While there was understandable support for reducing caseload sizes on all mainstream Jobcentre Plus provision, a useful approach to this issue may be for advisers to spend longer with only those claimants typified as having longstanding and entrenched barriers.

Evaluation findings point strongly to the effectiveness of an OCM model allowing PAs complete flexibility and discretion to tailor support to individual participants including the core elements of OCM. What may in effect be a potential black box design for Jobcentre Plus advisers will have implications for the consistency and quality of support provided if the strand were to be rolled out more widely.

Evaluation evidence found that in some sites the best advisers were picked to deliver OCM because they had qualities associated with working effectively with the long-term unemployed group. These advisers could be relied on to use sound judgement on which support options to use with participants and to decide whether to use a 'carrot' or 'stick' approach. Because of this the training delivered to advisers was generally limited.

If OCM is rolled out, however, it may not be possible for only the 'best' advisers to deliver OCM support and therefore, consideration will need to be given in how to ensure consistency in the quality of support provided by PAs. More training and case conferencing for sharing of good practice, which worked well for less experienced advisers while OCM was being piloted, should continue. In addition more general training on updating participants about benefit entitlements, balancing a firm and supportive approach to working with long-term claimants and spotting less obvious signs of non-compliance. Gaps in the quality and accessibility of local skills and training provision should be addressed to more effectively overcome the specific barriers of long-term claimants and, in line with the employment and skills agenda, equip claimants with the skills required by local employers. Further use of proactive approaches to sourcing vacancies and more joined up work between OCM advisers and Jobcentre Plus employer engagement staff, tapping into their knowledge of local employers' skills requirements, may also be helpful.

In addition the partnership delivery model (trialled in Nottingham) provided PAs with a better understanding of local authority (LA) support services and helped them to provide more holistic support for the participants that were referred to the City Council. However, barriers to work which required LA support did not prove to be as prominent in the claimant group as anticipated, and this may be one reason for the significantly fewer referrals to LA services than expected. Despite the benefits of better adviser knowledge of LA services the low referral rates raise doubts over whether the challenging operational process of setting up a secure referral system was worthwhile. In the event of wider roll-out the Department may want to consider ways in which adviser familiarity with local support services could be increased and claimants encouraged to access them, perhaps through mandation, without the need for a formalised referral system.

The evaluation pointed to the CAP strand not working as a blanket approach to all participants but benefitting many of the participants who went on placement. As mentioned above, if CAP were to be rolled out it may work better as an option which Jobcentre Plus advisers can refer claimants to much in the same way as MWA. This may bring about a number of benefits. Jobcentre Plus advisers could first address other barriers such as low motivation and confidence or basic skills and ESOL, although as discussed above these are likely to be addressed effectively by the Work Programme. Advisers could also spend longer getting to know claimants and their career aspirations better which would enable them to suggest more appropriate placement options. This may lead to less demand for, and subsequent saturation of, particular placement types, e.g. warehouse jobs. It may also ensure that only participants judged by advisers to be 'ready' to go on a placement are referred. Greater engagement and quality of work by participants may lead to a fairer exchange in terms of investments in training provided by hosts and potentially help hosts who feel the need for financial recompense for their placement costs.

In line with the importance of flexibility and tailoring of support to participants, there may be value in introducing flexibility to the overall length of the placements and in the number of weekly placement and jobsearch hours. Greater flexibility in lengths of placements could potentially incentivise more organisations to host placements by taking into account the different needs of hosts. Whether or not claimants are placed in an organisation that delivers a benefit to the community could also be tailored to claimants' needs, particularly claimants hoping to gain specific types of skills or work experience in other sectors.

The overall evaluation findings and the statistics held by DWP suggest that the SVLTU strands have helped some claimants sign off JSA and have benefitted long-term claimants by improving employability and producing positive changes in jobseeking behaviour, attitudes and aspirations. At this stage the success of the programme in generating paid and sustained work outcomes is unclear. Further monitoring of DWP's administrative data at later intervals is recommended to ascertain the translation of softer impacts into sustained work outcomes.

Appendix

Feedback on the Nottingham delivery model

The Nottingham delivery model was the pilot of a partnership model between Jobcentre Plus and the City Council designed to offer the very long-term unemployed a more holistic model of support. City Council staff did not necessarily have a fixed idea of the numbers to expect, but had thought that around 50 referrals would have been likely. At the time of fieldwork, there had been around 12 referrals made. This had been a disappointing level of referrals for those City Council staff that had made investments in setting up the joint working partnership and had hoped it would generate more outcomes. Factors facilitating and limiting referrals are discussed below.

Factors facilitating successful referrals

There were some key aspects of the implementation of this model which were considered to be crucial to the facilitation of successful referrals. Specifically:

- **Early establishment of working relationships:** at an operational level, establishing good working links at an early stage in the process had been achieved through site visits where PAs had shadowed colleagues at the City Council. This was felt to have worked well and helped to develop personal relationships as well as improving PAs' knowledge surrounding the potential to help participants. One perceived disadvantage of establishing personal relationships however, was that it was felt PAs may only refer to the departments and individuals that they know.
- **Early establishment of key members of staff:** at a strategic level the importance of identifying the 'right' members of staff to be involved in implementation at the City Council was stressed. By this, it was meant that the partnership model would work most successfully with somebody who had sufficient knowledge of council departments in order to identify and refer participants who would benefit from help, be aware of what type of help was appropriate and valuable and to establish which departments and individuals were the best placed to provide such help.

Factors limiting the number of referrals

There were a variety of reasons suggested as to why the number of referrals had been limited. Factors limiting thought to have limited the the number of referrals were:

- **Absence of need for Jobcentre Plus to refer to the Council:** there was some discussion among operational staff about whether this particular group of participants had widespread need of the council services identified as having the potential to help (departments such as housing support, benefit advice, support for children and families). Rather, they thought that, the trailblazer participant group was largely characterised by those in their 50s, without children and with stable housing and benefit circumstances. It was also suggested that as these participants had been unemployed for a long period of time that they may have been already working with the Council or had previously been on support programmes such as Flexible New Deal and so any support needs of this type would have been identified and resolved previously.

- **PAs felt able to support participants without referral:** there was also a view at a strategic level that PAs were not referring because they felt able to deal with the range of barriers themselves. This suggests that ensuring PAs are fully aware of the additional help available for participants early on could be more effective. At the time of fieldwork there was discussion about there being a review of how the advisers were approaching the consideration of referral to external organisations.
- **Participants may not have wanted formal referral:** Jobcentre Plus managers mentioned that perhaps participants did not want to be referred and therefore did not give the necessary consent. Whilst there was not strong evidence from PAs or from participants that this had been a particular issue, it was raised by a manager who suggested that participants did not want a formal referral as they did not want the council to be involved in personal issues. It was reported that in some cases the participant had resolved issues themselves or with the help of their PA alone.
- **Appropriateness of the council to provide relevant support:** discussions with Jobcentre Plus and City Council staff also raised the question of what is the most appropriate support to be provided by a local authority. The evidence suggested that referrals that tended to be made were for a minority of participants who had fairly significant identifiable ‘blocks’ to finding employment. It may therefore be that other, perhaps more common issues such as the management of money or parenting problems were not seen by Jobcentre Plus staff as relevant for referral but could provide more scope for joint working in the future.
- **Establishing a secure system for referrals:** it had been a significant technical and administrative challenge for the City Council to set up a secure email referral to transfer the written consent needed in line with DWP requirements. This was thought to need further consideration should implementation of this model be considered on a wider basis.

Challenges of the joint working model

Respondents felt that it was difficult to draw any conclusions about how successful the joint working approach had been due the low numbers of referrals. It was considered that it had been straightforward to deal with small numbers of participants but may have been far more challenging if the number of referrals had been large enough to impact upon the caseloads of council staff. It was also thought that if there were to be large numbers of referrals this may affect the extent to which they could work proactively with participants and that prioritising Jobcentre Plus customers would be difficult to justify. Other challenges of implementing the joint working model were:

- **Differing approaches to participant support:** council employees felt they sometimes approached participants’ personal situations or support needs from a different perspective to Jobcentre Plus staff. For instance, in specific cases Council staff were appealing against a compliance decision where they thought that a participants should be ESA, not JSA. Their main focus was therefore not always getting the participant into work but ensuring they were on the right benefits according to their needs and circumstances;
- **Lack of personal contacts:** there was a sense that the partnership was not effectively working both ways. Staff dealing with benefits would have liked to have key individuals identified from Jobcentre Plus who they could call and get information or decisions from quickly rather than having to go through the standard ‘contact centre’. It was recognised, however, that having these contacts in the right place and building these effective relationships takes time but better contact between organisations would have improved working relationships;

- **Inability to share data:** there was a strong sense that there would be more scope for the council to work with Jobcentre Plus if the two agencies were able to share existing data about participants. It was felt that this would enable staff proactively to identify people who were currently under the radar and to share an understanding about participants with whom the City Council were already working with;
- **Limitations of consent forms:** City Council staff felt frustrated that they were unable to just talk to someone at Jobcentre Plus about a participant without firstly having to have a consent form sent over. They felt that it limited their ability to get things done and that it could have potentially limited cross-council working as the forms were held within different departments.

Positive impacts arising from referrals

Despite low numbers of referrals, there were views about the potential positive impacts that had been made from the delivery model. These were:

- **Referrals being made were appropriate and often successful:** it was noted that above all referrals relating to benefits, homelessness or housing crisis had worked successfully within the partnership working model. In specific cases, referrals were made to Housing Aid and participants were prioritised and quickly moved into more suitable accommodation. It was believed that by removing the barriers to work it allowed the participant instead to focus on jobsearching.
- **Working relationships and organisational partnerships were improved:** it was recognised that feedback concerning participants had improved between the Council and Jobcentre Plus and therefore, participants were not 'slipping through the net' in terms of not completing tasks they were asked to do or not turning up to appointments which had been arranged for them. It should be noted, however, that some PAs felt that they wanted more feedback from the Council about whether a participant had been fully utilizing their services. It was also recognised that having a dialogue between the job centre and specific key workers (such as social workers) was valuable to PAs. Greater awareness of a participants' personal circumstances allowed them to not only provide the participant with consistent information in line with other key workers but to provide them with additional support appropriate within the context of their current personal situation.
- **PA's knowledge was improved:** PAs felt they had more knowledge about the different departments at the Council and felt more confident in advising participants themselves or recognising when, and to whom, a referral should be made.

On the whole, the building of personal relationships between the two organisations and the improved knowledge amongst PAs meant that a more holistic model of support could be offered to participants. Participants working for council services felt that their role was to remove sizeable and specific barriers to work such as homelessness, debt or family issues which in turn enabled participants to focus upon looking for work.

The research presents findings from the Evaluation of the Support for the Very Long-Term Unemployed (SVLTU) trailblazer involving qualitative and quantitative research with providers, Jobcentre Plus staff and customers undertaken February to August 2012. The report provides details of the support delivered under the Ongoing Case Management (OCM) and Community Action Programme (CAP) strands of the SVLTU and evidence on hard and soft outcomes for participants. The report also provides details of customer experience and lessons learnt from delivery. The report provides a number of recommendations for consideration in the policy design of post-Work Programme support.

This research report supplements the Department for Work and Pensions off-flow statistics to be published alongside this research.

If you would like to know more about DWP research, please email:
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