



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions



Government  
Social Research

# Kickstart Scheme - Process Evaluation

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DWP research report no. 1032

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Views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Department for Work and Pensions or any other government department.

# Summary

## Background

The Kickstart Scheme was one of the government's flagship employment programmes to help young people in the wake of the economic downturn caused by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The scheme provided funding to create new jobs for 16- to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit who were at risk of long-term unemployment. Funding applied to jobs starting between September 2020 to the end of March 2022. Employers of all sizes could apply for funding for 100% of the national minimum wage for 25 hours per week for a total of 6 months. This included the option of applying through 'gateway' organisations which acted as an intermediary to help employers manage their Kickstart Scheme grant. Further funding was available for training and support (up to £1,500) so that young people on the scheme would be more likely to get a job in the future.

More details about the scheme can be found on [the government's website about the Kickstart Scheme](#).

## Aims of the research

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) commissioned IFF Research to conduct an evaluation of effectiveness of the Kickstart Scheme as a means of supporting young people during the pandemic and preventing them from becoming long-term unemployed. The study aimed to evaluate how Kickstart was experienced by participants; early outcomes for Kickstart participants; how the experience had contributed to longer-term employment or career aspirations, and how experiences and outcomes differed for different groups.

## Methodology

This evaluation involved both qualitative (case study) and quantitative (survey) strands. Audiences for both strands included young people participating in Kickstart, gateways, and employers. Additionally, qualitative case studies explored the experience of Jobcentre Plus (JCP) staff — local authority leads, Kickstart District Account Managers (KDAMs), and work coaches — involved in the set-up and delivery of the scheme.

Quantitative interviews with young people took place approximately:

- one-to-three months after they started a Kickstart job ('Starters')
- seven months after they started a Kickstart job ('Leavers at seven months')

- a follow-up survey with those that took part in the Leavers at seven months survey, ten months after they started a Kickstart job which equates to around three months after completing ('Leavers at ten months')

## Main findings

### How did young people experience the Kickstart Scheme?

Most young people were satisfied with their Kickstart job. Seven-in-ten Leavers at seven months reported that they were satisfied. 'Working with friendly staff or having a good team' was the most common reason spontaneously offered as to why young people were satisfied with their Kickstart job (34% of Starters and 35% of Leavers at seven months who were satisfied).

Most young people reported that they worked for the 25 hours that Kickstart jobs were funded for (74% of Starters and 66% of Leavers at seven months), although small proportions worked more or fewer hours. Nearly all young people reported they were paid at least the National Minimum Wage (NMW) for their age in their Kickstart job (93% of Starters and 92% Leavers at seven months).

The majority of Kickstart jobs were with private sector organisations (70% of Leavers at seven months) and over half were with relatively small organisations (34% of Leavers at seven months had their Kickstart job with an organisation with two-to-nine employees, 23% ten-to-49 employees; for a small minority (4%) the Kickstart job was with a sole trader).

Nearly all young people (94% Leavers at seven months) reported having received some on-the-job training during their Kickstart role. However, over half (53%) of Leavers at ten months agreed they would have liked more training in their role. Much smaller proportions reported receiving employability support: only 37% of Leavers at seven months reported receiving support to develop soft skills, and 24% reported receiving support applying for jobs. When it was received, most young people found training and employability support useful.

Many young people who took part in the qualitative research had additional needs, including physical health conditions, mental health conditions, learning difficulties, neurological challenges, caring responsibilities, transport barriers, and language barriers. There were many positive examples where employers had made efforts to accommodate these either through day-to-day flexibility or formal reasonable adjustments. Anxiety was a widespread issue, and employers who reported this had tried to help through close mentoring, regular wellbeing calls, and taking a gentle approach to professional development review meetings.

#### Early Leavers

Among Leavers at seven months, nearly one-third (32%) had left their Kickstart job early. Receiving another job offer (22% of early leavers) or the employer terminating the role (21% of early leavers) were similarly likely to be a reason for leaving early.

### **Support from the Jobcentre Plus (JCP)**

Around three-quarters of young people had contact from their work coach or other JCP staff while on their Kickstart job (77% of Starters; 71% of Leavers at seven months).<sup>1</sup>

Not having any contact with their work coach or JCP staff was more common among young people who were dissatisfied with their Kickstart job (24% of Leavers at seven months who were dissatisfied, compared to 18% of those satisfied).

### **What were the early employment, education, and training outcomes for young people?**

Kickstart Leavers often had positive employment, education, and training (EET)<sup>2</sup> early outcomes. Two-thirds (65%) of Leavers at seven months reported that they were EET and three-in-five (60%) Leavers reported that they were in work. For Leavers at ten months, the proportion of EET young people increased to more than three-quarters (75%) and 63% reported that they were in work. Seven per cent of Leavers at seven months and 5% of Leavers at ten months reported completing an apprenticeship.

Three-in-ten (31%) Leavers at seven months and one-fifth (24%) of Leavers at ten months reported that they were not in education, employment, or training (NEET). DWP will be carrying out a separate quasi-experimental analysis of the impact of the scheme, which will allow for a greater understanding of the extent of the impact compared to the counterfactual (whether or not the young people would probably have remained NEET without the existence of Kickstart).

### **Continuing with their Kickstart employer**

Three-in-ten (31%) Leavers at seven months were in paid employment with their Kickstart employer. For Leavers at ten months, the proportion in work that were still with their Kickstart employer had reduced slightly to 27%. This indicates that some Leavers had only remained with their Kickstart employer for a short time beyond the Kickstart job and had then moved on to alternative employment or become NEET.

### **Job quality of those in work after Kickstart**

Most Leavers at ten months who were in work after Kickstart were satisfied with their current job overall (79%), hours worked (72%) and pay (61%). They also tended to agree with statements related to positive opportunities through their job, for example three-quarters (75%) felt their job offered opportunities to develop their career. A similar proportion (74%) were motivated to stay in their job.

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<sup>1</sup> Work coaches were expected to contact young people twice within the six months of their Kickstart job to offer a voluntary appointment for Jobcentre Plus support. As these appointments were voluntary, young people were not required to attend these – although the evidence from this evaluation did not capture whether young people who did not have contact with work coaches or Jobcentre Plus chose not to engage.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this report, figures referring to EET young people or young people in work include those that were due to start in the next month

Nearly half of Leavers at ten months (47%) were working over 35 hours per week. The vast majority of Leavers in work at ten months (93%) were earning *at least* the National Minimum Wage (NMW) for their age. Just over three-fifths (64%) earned more than the NMW at ten months.

### **In education or training**

A small proportion (5%) of Leavers at seven and (6%) at ten months went into education or training after their Kickstart job. Those in education or training were usually studying at degree level or above (54% at seven months, 62% at ten months).

### **Universal credit**

Approximately one-third of Leavers at seven and ten months (37% and 38%, respectively) were claiming Universal Credit (UC) and expecting or receiving payments. At seven months, a further quarter (25%) were claiming UC but not expecting payments (for example, due to income or earnings); 15% were doing the same at ten months. A third (31%) at seven months and almost half (45%) at ten months were not claiming UC at all.

## **How has the experience contributed to longer-term employment aspirations?**

Participation in Kickstart appears to have an impact on young people's views on their prospective careers. Just under two-thirds (63%) of Starters said they would like to develop their careers in the same area of work as their Kickstart job. Among Leavers at seven and ten months, the proportion agreeing was lower (54% and 55%, respectively).

The majority of Leavers at seven and ten months (63% and 66%, respectively) who were in work said that the skills and experiences they gained through Kickstart had been important in helping them find work.

## **What other benefits have young people gained from taking part?**

Self-assessment of employability and soft skills tended to be at high levels from young people one-to-three months into their Kickstart job through to Leavers at ten months. Qualitative interviews with both young people and employers indicated that Kickstart jobs tended to have the most influence on young people's confidence (generally and professionally) and teamwork.

The majority of Kickstart employers reported large improvements in various soft skills among the young people they employed as part of the scheme. The soft skill which employers were most likely to report a large improvement in was self-confidence (72%). This was closely followed by working with others (70%), in line with young people's qualitative accounts of where they felt they had strengthened.

## Did experiences and outcomes differ for different groups of young people?

Young people with a health condition, particularly those for whom it substantially impacted their daily life, tended to have poorer experiences and outcomes from the Kickstart Scheme (although they were still more likely to have positive outcomes than not).

Starters with a health condition that substantially impacted their daily life<sup>3</sup> recorded relatively high levels of dissatisfaction with their Kickstart job. More than twice as many Starters were dissatisfied (23%) compared to those without a long-term health condition (10%), with the same trend for Leavers at seven months. Starters with a health condition that impacted daily life substantially were also more likely to have left the job early (21% compared to 10% of those with no long-term health condition). When providing reasons for dissatisfaction, lack of support was more likely to be reported as an issue by young people with a condition that impacted daily life substantially (25% of Starters in this group, compared to 11% with no long-term health issues).

Regarding outcomes, young people with any long-term health condition were more likely to be NEET at seven and ten months (51% and 32%). Furthermore, among those in work at ten months<sup>4</sup> those with a health condition were less likely to be satisfied in their role overall (75% compared to 81% with no long-term health condition).

Young people with a long-term health condition that impacted daily life substantially were also more likely to be claiming Universal Credit and receiving or expecting payments at the end of Kickstart, both at seven months (61%) and at ten months (60%).

Young people who were from 'mixed or multiple ethnic groups' or who were 'Black, African, Caribbean or Black British' were more dissatisfied than others (24% and 27% of Leavers at seven months compared to 21% of those who were 'White (including White minorities)'), although the reasons given for dissatisfaction were similar between ethnic groups.

Other characteristics that were correlated<sup>5</sup> with satisfaction with Kickstart and outcomes include age, work experience prior to Kickstart and education level.

For Leavers at seven months, there was also a higher level of dissatisfaction among those who had at least 12 months' prior experience of work (25% compared to 18% of those with no prior experience) and those with degree-level qualifications (24%

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout this report, we have mostly drawn comparisons between people with a health condition that substantially impacted their daily life and people without a health condition (as opposed to those with a health condition with smaller or no impact on their daily life) since this is where the biggest differences occur.

<sup>4</sup> 54% with any long-term health condition were in work, compared to 70% without a condition.

<sup>5</sup> Please note that the correlation between characteristics is complex and does not equal causation.

compared to 19% of those with no or lower qualifications<sup>6</sup>). These differences were less evident for Starters, suggesting by the end of their Kickstart job, the experience started to feel less relevant or appropriate to these higher qualified / more experienced individuals.

NEET status at both seven and ten months was more common among the following groups of Leavers:

- those aged 18-to-21 (32% and 27%, respectively)
- those with lower or no qualifications (37% and 37%)
- those who had no prior work experience (37% and 29%)

However, when in work, these groups tended to be more satisfied with their job overall, including hours and pay, and were more motivated to stay in the job in the long term.

## **What were the experiences of Kickstart employers?**

### **Experience of employing young people through the Scheme**

Overall, nearly three-quarters (73%) of employers were satisfied with their experience of Kickstart, even though many were new to this sort of scheme (63% had neither advertised vacancies through Jobcentre Plus / Universal Jobmatch or taken part in any schemes run by JCP or DWP to provide employment). Direct employers (those employers who had a grant agreement directly with DWP) were more likely to be satisfied with the scheme than Gateway organisation employers (GOEs, those employers who engaged in the scheme through a grant holding Gateway organisation) (77% compared to 71%).

In qualitative interviews, some employers described struggling with young people with poor workplace etiquette and low motivation, initiative, and confidence. Yet, employers often felt able to overcome these issues through open discussions and coaching. In some instances, usually among smaller organisations, employers found it difficult to support young people with mental health conditions.

Three-quarters (75%) of employers that had a young person complete the full six months, made at least one job offer to a young person. The volume of jobs offered versus taken up were broadly aligned, showing the majority of these offers were accepted.

### **Application and set-up**

Gateway organisation employers (GOEs) tended to find the process of setting up as an employer via a gateway easy (74%), with many stating in qualitative interviews that the gateway ensured they were supported and informed throughout the process.

Overall, 71% of employers found it easy to get their Kickstart application approved and to demonstrate that they met the requirements.

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<sup>6</sup> In this report by 'No or lower qualifications' we are referring to those with fewer than five GCSEs (or equivalent).



Two-fifths (40%) of employers found the process of getting Kickstart jobs filled more difficult than expected; 18% found it easier than expected.

Being a GOE (as opposed to those employers who applied for and received grant funding directly from DWP, referred to as 'direct employers') was correlated with greater ease across all Kickstart processes, indicating that gateways may be having a positive influence on employers' experiences:

- Higher proportions of GOEs reported ease than direct employers in both the application itself (74% compared to 68%) and getting approved as a Kickstart employer (75% compared to 67%)
- GOEs were more likely than direct employers to have found getting Kickstart jobs approved easy (74% compared to 67%)
- GOEs cited greater ease in filling Kickstart vacancies; 20% of GOEs compared to 12% of direct employers found this element easier than expected

Many employers and gateways experienced a shortage of applications for Kickstart jobs. Three-in-five (60%) employers received too few applications and there was little variance in this proportion between different types of employers. In qualitative interviews, employers explained that poor engagement with the recruitment process (for example, not submitting a CV following application, not turning up to a scheduled interview) was an additional challenge. Employers and DWP Jobcentre staff collaborated to overcome these challenges in various ways, including attending job fairs, getting additional support from work coaches, and attending events where interviews could be done 'on the spot'.

## **Did the Kickstart Scheme deliver its intended outcomes?**

Evidence from this evaluation<sup>7</sup> suggests that the Kickstart Scheme delivered against its intended purpose. Most young people on Kickstart went on to employment, education, or training (EET). Although many felt they would have achieved an EET outcome in the absence of Kickstart, there are indications in the data and qualitative evidence that Kickstart provided young people with greater direction, experience, and confidence to take forward into future roles.

The extent to which the programme reached young people who were the furthest from the labour market can be questioned. For example, nearly half (46%) of Starters had a Level 3 or above qualification and three in ten (31%) already had more than twelve months paid work experience.

However, the Kickstart Scheme was created in the context of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which had created new challenges for both young people and employers. Impacts on young people meant that even those who may not have previously struggled to find work found it challenging (due to limited pools of vacancies, at least through the initial months of the pandemic). While employers were less likely able to hire new staff, let alone staff that were new to the workforce

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<sup>7</sup> A full assessment of the impact of the Kickstart Scheme is being carried out through quasi-experimental analysis by DWP, which was outside the scope of this evaluation.

and would require a lot of training and support. With this in mind, the scheme has worked well; it provided some innovative opportunities for both young people and employers that would not have been available otherwise. The scheme helped keep young people engaged in productive activity, mitigating against the negative impacts of prolonged unemployment in the challenging context of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The Kickstart Scheme seems to have opened access to a wider range of opportunities (job roles, sectors, and employers), which hitherto had been difficult for young people to access. As reported above, a majority of employers had not advertised vacancies through JCP or Universal Jobmatch or taken part in any other schemes run by JCP or the DWP to provide employment prior to Kickstart. The new reach and positive experiences of employers on Kickstart has opened the pool of employers willing to help and support young people through work experience (for example, 74% would engage with a DWP employability scheme in the future). JCP now has a stronger base to develop this potential.

A requirement for Kickstart positions was that they offered additionality. This means, Kickstart employees should not have displaced another employee or taken the role away from a potential paid employee. Furthermore, the role should be adding economic value. Qualitative interviews with both employers and young people had varying — and often incorrect — understandings of additionality. Many viewed this as a requirement to create a job where the young person would be delivering completely new tasks for the business. There were varying degrees of additionality in the positions filled through Kickstart.

An added success of engagement with employers was the encouragement and adoption of more 'flexible' approaches to recruiting and supporting young people into work. A key part of this was gateways and JCP working with employers to ensure they understood the ethos of the scheme. This allowed employers to feel reassured about the recruitment approach and, more generally, by recruiting a Kickstart employee. Gateways and JCP also worked to improve challenges around employer expectations of Kickstart candidates. Initially, some employers had too high expectations in terms of qualification levels and amount of experience desired from candidates. With these employers, gateways and JCP staff explored how job opportunities could be adapted.

# Contents

Summary .....	3
Background .....	3
Aims of the research.....	3
Methodology .....	3
Main findings .....	4
How did young people experience the Kickstart Scheme? .....	4
What were the early employment, education, and training outcomes for young people?.....	5
How has the experience contributed to longer-term employment aspirations? .....	6
What other benefits have young people gained from taking part?.....	6
Did experiences and outcomes differ for different groups of young people? ....	7
What were the experiences of Kickstart employers? .....	8
Did the Kickstart Scheme deliver its intended outcomes? .....	9
1. Introduction.....	15
Kickstart Scheme job role requirements .....	15
Role of gateway organisations .....	16
Additional employability funding .....	17
Overview of the research objectives .....	17
Methodology .....	17
Survey fieldwork .....	18
Case studies.....	19
About this report .....	19
2. Implementation of the Kickstart Scheme .....	21
Summary .....	21
Profile of employers who participated in Kickstart .....	22
Perceptions and experiences of Jobcentre Plus staff .....	23
Response to the introduction of Kickstart .....	23
Preparing for Kickstart and initial implementation.....	24
Recruiting employers and gateways.....	24
Initial Employer Engagement.....	25

Gateways' experience of recruiting employers onto scheme.....	25
Employers' Initial Concerns Related to Kickstart.....	25
Motivations to becoming a Kickstart employer .....	26
Setting up with a gateway.....	27
Application and approval process.....	27
Kickstart job approval .....	29
Offering and recruiting vacancies .....	31
Filling Kickstart jobs.....	31
Challenges with filling Kickstart jobs.....	32
3. Engaging young people in Kickstart .....	36
Summary .....	36
Characteristics of young people on Kickstart.....	37
Demographic profile of young people .....	37
Length of claim, prior employment and job search activity .....	39
Changes in the profile of Starters as Kickstart continued .....	40
Introduction to Kickstart.....	41
Motivations for taking part .....	41
Applying to Kickstart jobs .....	42
Searching for appropriate roles .....	42
Applying for Kickstart jobs .....	43
Views on the application process .....	44
Supporting young people with additional needs and barriers during recruitment	45
Difficulties in applying for Kickstart jobs.....	47
4. Experience of Kickstart jobs .....	49
Summary .....	49
Young people's experiences .....	50
Young people's satisfaction with Kickstart.....	50
Job specification.....	55
Perceived additionality of Kickstart jobs .....	58
Experience of those that left their Kickstart job before completing the full six months.....	61
Additional support and reasonable adjustments in Kickstart jobs.....	63
Support from Jobcentre Plus .....	65
Employer experience of Kickstart .....	67

Employer satisfaction .....	67
Experienced benefits for employers .....	69
Employer experience of gateways.....	71
Employers’ future intentions .....	72
Employers with young people who left before completing the full six months	73
Outcomes with Kickstart employees.....	73
Post Kickstart jobs offered by employers.....	75
Gateway experience of Kickstart .....	76
Benefits of being a gateway .....	76
Gateways’ future intentions .....	78
Training and employability support.....	78
Provision of employability support and training .....	78
Use of the Kickstart grant .....	81
Young people’s experiences .....	83
5. Kickstart Scheme Outcomes .....	87
Summary .....	87
Next steps for young people.....	88
Status following Kickstart.....	88
Continuing with Kickstart employers.....	89
Changes in outcomes for young people as Kickstart continued .....	90
Leavers with an employment outcome .....	92
Leavers with education and training outcomes.....	96
Leavers not in employment, education or training .....	96
Universal Credit.....	97
Relevance and influence of Kickstart for future plans.....	97
Skills gained through Kickstart .....	98
Employability skills.....	98
Vocational skills .....	104
6. Reflections and recommendations .....	106
Is the Kickstart Scheme delivering its intended outcomes?.....	106
Key learnings and recommendations for future programmes .....	109
7. Annexes .....	114
Annex A:.....	115
Glossary .....	115

Annex B: Kickstart website links .....	116
Annex C: Technical Detail .....	117
Methodology .....	117
Quantitative Methodology .....	117
Surveys .....	117
Employer and gateway surveys.....	122
Qualitative Methodology .....	123
Grouping and cross-break definitions .....	124

# 1. Introduction

The Kickstart Scheme was the government's flagship employment programme to help young people in the wake of the economic downturn caused by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The scheme provided funding to create new six-month jobs for 16- to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit (UC) who were at risk of long-term unemployment. Employers of all sizes could apply for funding, which covered:

- 100% of the national minimum wage for 25 hours per week for a total of six months
- associated employer National Insurance contributions
- employer minimum automatic contributions
- £1,500 per position of additional funding to cover set-up costs, training, and employability support

Employers could pay Kickstart employees a higher wage and for more hours, but the funding did not cover this.

The Kickstart Scheme was initially planned to run between September 2020 and December 2021. In November 2021, it was announced that the scheme would be extended for a further three months, to March 2022. Employers could spread job start dates up until 31 March 2022. They received funding for six months once the young person had started their job.

The Kickstart Scheme was part of the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) [Plan for Jobs](#): a range of government programmes, some of which offered financial incentives, available for employers who were considering hiring employees, offering work experience or the upskilling of existing staff. It was possible for a young person to move to another employment scheme when they finished their six-month Kickstart Scheme job.

## **Kickstart Scheme job role requirements**

The jobs created with the Kickstart Scheme funding were required to be new, *additional* jobs. This meant, they must not replace existing or planned vacancies, or cause existing employees, apprentices, or contractors to lose work or reduce their working hours.

The jobs needed to:

- be a minimum of 25 hours per week, for six months
- pay at least the [National Minimum Wage \(NMW\) or the National Living Wage](#) (NLW) for the employee's age group
- only require basic training

In each job, employers were required to help the young person become more employable. This support could include:

- looking for long-term work, including career advice and setting goals
- support with curriculum vitae (CV) and interview preparations
- developing their skills in the workplace

## **Role of gateway organisations**

Gateway organisations acted as an intermediary to help employers manage their Kickstart Scheme grant.<sup>8</sup> Employers could either apply to the scheme via a gateway (these employers are referred to as gateway organisation employers, or ‘GOEs’) or apply directly online (‘direct employers’).

Essential responsibilities of a Kickstart gateway included ensuring the employer had the capacity and capability to support the Kickstart Scheme workers; and paying employers funding from the scheme.

In addition, gateways had the optional responsibility of offering employability support to young people on the scheme:

- sharing expertise with the employers to help them onboard and train young people employed through the scheme, for example supporting those from disadvantaged groups or working in certain sectors
- providing employability support directly to young people employed through the scheme

Where employability support was provided, the Kickstart gateway and employer needed to agree on how this was done. Gateways were able to offer employability support to an employer outside of their grant agreement should they wish.

### **Gateway Plus**

A Gateway Plus was a specific type of Kickstart gateway. They helped smaller organisations, such as sole traders, with the Kickstart Scheme.

Alongside the essential responsibilities of a Kickstart gateway, they also:

- added the young person to their own organisation’s payroll
- paid the young person’s wages on the small employer’s behalf using the funding from DWP
- provided the employability support on the small employer’s behalf

A very small number of organisations signed up to be a Gateway Plus.

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<sup>8</sup> Novel in the sense that Gateways provided support to both private and public sector employers and was not underpinned by a payment-by-results (PbR) delivery model with a focus on sustained outcomes.



## Additional employability funding

Further to the wage and contributions, £1,500 of additional funding was available for training and support to make it more likely that young people on the scheme would get a job in the future. It was intended that this fund would be spent on set-up costs and supporting the young person to develop their employability skills. For example:

- training and employability support (provided by the employer, a Kickstart gateway, or another provider)
- IT equipment and software
- uniform or Personal Protective Equipment

For GOEs, this funding was paid via their gateway organisation. The structure of this additional payment was decided by the gateway and employer as the service provided could vary (for example the employability support might be provided by the employer or the gateway). DWP could ask gateways and employers for records to show that the funding had been spent as intended.

More details about the scheme can be found on [the government's website about the Kickstart Scheme](#).

## Overview of the research objectives

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) commissioned IFF Research to conduct an evaluation of effectiveness of the Kickstart Scheme as a means of supporting young people during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and preventing them from becoming long-term unemployed. The study aimed to evaluate:

- outcomes for Kickstart participants after they finished their Kickstart job
- what Kickstart was like, as experienced by participants
- what benefits were gained in terms of personal, employability and vocational skills through the Kickstart job
- how the experience contributed to longer-term employment/career aspirations
- what additional support young people might need
- whether there have been any negative or unintended outcomes from taking part
- whether, and how, experiences and outcomes differ for different groups

## Methodology

This evaluation involved both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (case study) strands with multiple audiences.

IFF Research conducted all quantitative fieldwork, and they conducted the qualitative fieldwork with the support of Professor Sue Maguire (Institute for Policy Research, University of Bath), on behalf of the DWP.

Data for all audiences have been weighted to reflect the population characteristics.

## Survey fieldwork

Three audiences took part in the surveys: young people who participated in Kickstart, gateways, and employers.

### Young people surveys

Interviews with young people who participated in Kickstart took place approximately:

- 1-to-3 months after they started a Kickstart job ('Starters')
- seven months after they started a Kickstart job ('Leavers at seven months')
- a follow-up survey with those that took part in the Leavers at seven months survey, ten months after they started a Kickstart job, so three months after completing 'Leavers' at seven months' survey ('Leavers at ten months')

IFF Research conducted fieldwork in monthly 'waves' by sending out an online survey link to Starters (seven waves, between November 2021 and March 2022) and Leavers at seven and then ten months (both twelve waves, Leavers at seven months in field between November 2021 and October 2022, and Leavers at ten months in field between February 2022 and January 2023). Leavers at ten months who did not complete online were then invited to take part via telephone. The surveys took around 10-15 minutes to complete.

The total numbers of interviews achieved were:

- Starters: 8,063 at a response rate of 17.8%
- Leavers at seven months: 11,665 at 16.8%
- Leavers at ten months: 3,396 at 40.8%

All cohorts included those who started Kickstart jobs but left early.

### Coverage of young people's surveys

The **Starters' survey** focused on young people's background and experience prior to starting their Kickstart job as well as the process of applying to their Kickstart role. It also asked about their current Kickstart role and future career aspirations.

The **Leavers' survey at seven months** focused primarily on young people's overall experience with the Kickstart Scheme and the specifics of their Kickstart roles. It also asked about skills and career aspirations.

The **Leavers' survey at ten months** followed up on their experiences, including their thoughts and feelings towards their current situation and career aspirations.

### Employer and gateway surveys

IFF Research conducted the employer survey among employers at least six months after they first employed young people via Kickstart. The survey included both direct employers and GOEs. The gateway survey was an attempted census, all gateways on record were invited to complete it.

The total numbers of interviews achieved were:

- Direct employers: 520 interviews at a response rate of 31%
- GOEs: 462 interviews at a response rate of 33%
- Gateways: 401 interviews at a response rate of 35%

There were two waves of surveys with employers and gateways. The first, in February 2022, The second, in July 2022.

### **Coverage of employer and gateway surveys**

Both surveys covered signing up to Kickstart, offering Kickstart jobs, providing support to young people, and overall views of Kickstart. In addition, GOEs were asked about their experience of working with a gateway.

### **Case studies**

IFF Research, with support from Professor Sue Maguire, carried out a total of 12 case studies. These were in a mix of Kickstart districts across England, Wales, and Scotland including rural, urban, and mixed rural/urban locations. The case studies involved interviews and focus groups with a range of Kickstart employers, gateways, and Jobcentre Plus (JCP) staff involved in delivery of the scheme. It also included qualitative research with young people, which comprised of a five-day online diary and follow-up interview about their experiences of the scheme approximately three to four months into their Kickstart job. As it was intended to capture ‘a week in the life’ of someone in Kickstart job, young people who had left their Kickstart job early were not included in online diaries. A small minority of young people left their Kickstart role early between their online diary and follow-up diary. This means qualitative insights from young people who left Kickstart early are very limited.

All qualitative fieldwork took place between December 2021 and June 2022.

## **About this report**

This report aims to inform DWP about the experiences of staff and participants involved in the scheme to date, reflect on whether intended outcomes were being achieved, and highlight what worked well or less well, with implications for future programmes in mind.

Throughout this report only statistically significant findings are reported between sub-groups — please note that it is not possible to infer causation from these, only that they are correlated.

Structure of subsequent sections of this report:

**Chapter 2** describes the experience of Kickstart implementation from the perspective of JCP staff, gateways, and employers.

**Chapter 3** describes the profile of young people who participated in Kickstart and why they chose to be involved.

**Chapter 4** explores experiences of the Kickstart Scheme, first presenting young people’s experiences before looking at employer and gateway perspectives.

**Chapter 5** presents the early outcomes young people participating in the Kickstart Scheme have experienced.

**Chapter 6** concludes the findings of the research, exploring the extent to which the intended outcomes have been achieved, and key learnings for future programmes.

## 2. Implementation of the Kickstart Scheme

This chapter describes views of Jobcentre Plus (JCP) staff, gateways, and employers about Kickstart implementation and the experience of signing up and recruiting young people onto jobs.

### Summary

Jobcentre Plus (JCP) staff viewed Kickstart as a good fit with existing provision for young people, particularly in England. JCP staff, employers, and gateways all reported some problems in the early stages of the scheme, particularly around trying to get responses from the DWP about how to run the scheme. Although they recognised the challenges of starting the scheme quickly, most staff agreed that launching in this manner and resolving issues as they emerged had been the right course of action.

Over half (56%) of gateways felt the time between submitting an employer application and hearing back from DWP was not reasonable. Three-in-ten (29%) felt it was reasonable.

Over two-thirds of gateways (68%) found filling their employers' Kickstart vacancies more difficult than they had expected. Among employers, two-in-five (40%) found the recruitment process for their Kickstart jobs more difficult than expected. Employers were more likely than gateways to have found the process of filling their vacancies 'as expected' (41% compared to 23% of gateways), and one-in-five employers (18%) found it easier than expected.

Gateways and JCP staff reported some challenges around managing employer expectations of Kickstart candidates. The most reported problem was employer expectations being too high in terms of qualification levels and amount of experience desired.

Employers, overall, felt there were not enough young people applying for the jobs. Three-in-five employers (60%) reported they received too few applications for each Kickstart vacancy, while a third (34%) received about the right number.

In the qualitative interviews, employers also reported that young people varied in their engagement with applying for a vacancy, and that low engagement could make jobs more challenging to fill. Examples of this included young people not submitting a CV after having been referred to a vacancy by a JCP work coach or not turning up for a scheduled job interview.

Employers overcame these challenges in a variety of ways, including: attending job fairs; receiving additional support from work coaches (for example, to arrange meetings with suitable candidates); attending JCP events with employers and young people, where interviews could be done ‘on the spot’ and jobs offered immediately.

## Profile of employers who participated in Kickstart

### Employers

Almost half of the employers who participated in Kickstart (46%) had under 10 employees<sup>9</sup> (excluding those taken on as part of the scheme). The scheme had also engaged larger organisations: a third of employers (34%) had between 10 and 49 employees; 11% had 50-to-249; 9% had 250 or more.

Direct employers were more likely to be large organisations (18% had 250 or more employees compared to 3% of GOEs. Half (53%) of GOEs had under ten employees compared to a third (35%) of direct employers. This indicates that smaller employers tended to access the scheme via gateways, which was the intention at the outset of the scheme.

Among participating private sector employers, a third (34%) had a turnover of no more than £250,000 in the UK in the previous financial year. However, just over a fifth (22%) had a turnover of over £1 million. The high proportion of employers who did not disclose their turnover (20%) to the evaluation makes analysis less straightforward. Of those who did disclose their turnover, 43% reported a turnover of no more than £250,000 and 27% reported a turnover of over £1 million.

Three-quarters (75%) of employers who participated in Kickstart were in the private sector, 20% were in the third sector and 4% were in the public sector. Compared to the profile of all organisations in the UK, private sector businesses were underrepresented among Kickstart employers (making up 96% of the wider business population) with third sector and public sector overrepresented (comprising 3% and 0.5% of the wider business population respectively).<sup>10</sup> GOEs were less likely than direct employers to be in the public sector (3% versus 7%).

Kickstart had employers across a range of sectors. Overall, the most common sectors were ‘health and social work’<sup>11</sup> (16%), ‘professional, scientific and technical’<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This includes sole traders with no employees.

<sup>10</sup> ONS IDBR data from 2021 retrieved from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/adhocs/14321privatepublicandthirdsectoraverageemploymentandturnover>

<sup>11</sup> For example, charities providing services for adults with learning disabilities, occupational health providers, podiatrists, and osteopaths.

<sup>12</sup> For example, quantity surveyors, energy consultancies, veterinary practices, accountants, and architecture firms.

(11%), 'education'<sup>13</sup> (10%), 'manufacturing'<sup>14</sup> (10%), and 'wholesale and retail'<sup>15</sup> (9%). The breadth of sectors reached was similar for both grant types, the majority of both direct employers (59%) and GOEs (54%) were in these five sectors.

Direct employers were more likely to be in the 'health and social work' or 'education' sectors (19% and 13% respectively compared to 13% and 9% of GOEs). Gateways appeared to have been more successful at engaging employers in the 'information and communication' sector (7% of GOEs versus 3% of direct employers).

Kickstart employers were based across Great Britain, as were young people on the scheme. Employers were most often based in the more populous South East (16%) and London (15%), and these were the most common regions where employers had Kickstart employees working (18% and 17% respectively). Employers were less likely to be based in the East of England (4%) and the North East (5%), and these were the regions where employers were less likely to have had Kickstart workers (each 7%).

## Perceptions and experiences of Jobcentre Plus staff

### Response to the introduction of Kickstart

Jobcentre Plus (JCP) staff viewed Kickstart as a good fit with existing provision for young people, particularly in England.

We asked JCP delivery staff, employers, and representatives from gateways to comment on how Kickstart fitted in with other provision available to young job seekers across their localities. Kickstart was reported to be unique in that it:

- was implemented at a time when there was an acute shortage of labour market opportunities due to the pandemic
- was targeted solely at young people
- offered paid and supported work experience, as opposed to intensive job-search support and/or job and is available to all groups of Universal Credit young claimants, regardless of their proximity to the labour market

While the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) staff mentioned programmes such as JETS (Job Entry Targeted Support) and the Work and Health Programme as alternative interventions, it was emphasised that these programmes focus on a wider age catchment with an emphasis on supporting harder to help/reach groups.

Moreover, it was asserted that, while there was adequate education and training provision available in most localities, access to paid and supported work experience opportunities was much more limited.

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<sup>13</sup> For example, educational consultancies, music schools, sports coaching, primary and secondary schools.

<sup>14</sup> For example, product design and development, factories, food manufacturers.

<sup>15</sup> For example, suppliers of equipment to industry, online and in store retail to the public.

JCP staff also noted that Kickstart helped to support the local economy. The scheme was seen as particularly beneficial to small companies that were significantly impacted by the pandemic. Such companies were seen as less likely to be able to independently afford to hire new staff, so having a young person as an 'extra pair of hands' benefitted both the employer and the young person.

## **Preparing for Kickstart and initial implementation**

Only a minority of the JCP staff interviewed were involved from its inception — many moved into their Kickstart roles after the scheme had started. Consequently, the rest of this section reports findings from a smaller pool of respondents. Of the staff who were involved in implementing the scheme, three common challenges were reported, although not universally consistent across areas.

The first of these was the time between the initial announcement of Kickstart in July 2020 and its implementation just two months later. This speed of implementation was felt to be necessary to address the workforce challenges created by the global Coronavirus pandemic. That said, it meant that staff felt rushed to understand and implement the scheme.

The second was perceived lack of clear guidance from central teams about exactly how the regional and local JCP staff should implement and run Kickstart. 'Lack of processes' was identified as an issue across many case study areas.

Thirdly, staff reported that the scheme grew more quickly than anticipated, so the initial number of staff allocated to the scheme (both centrally and at a local level) was insufficient to meet the resource demands, and others had to be quickly recruited to new roles.

Taken together, these three challenges meant that the scheme did not initially run as efficiently as it did later. However, staff generally acknowledged that the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic created a need for swift action and that there had been little time to plan the scheme more extensively and in more detail. Across all job roles there was general agreement that, despite a steep initial learning curve, their understanding quickly improved, processes were put in place, and the scheme then ran more smoothly.

## **Recruiting employers and gateways**

Across Kickstart areas, JCP staff (predominantly KDAMs) described a similar process for recruiting both employers and gateways. The process was often described as two-way, with some employers / gateway organisations proactively approaching JCP staff and vice versa. No substantial differences were reported in methods of recruiting employers versus gateways, so these are detailed together.

In terms of initial engagement, KDAMs generally reported initially reaching out to employers and relevant organisations (for example, Chambers of Commerce and local authorities) with whom they had good existing relationships. These early discussions focused on explaining the scheme, particularly the additionality requirement for all jobs, to gain buy-in.



For employers and gateways with which JCP staff had no prior relationship, staff utilised multiple methods of engagement. No single method was reported to be successful, but rather a range of approaches was felt to be key. Examples included:

- giving talks to local organisations (for example, local councils) to target as wide an audience as possible
- in-person employer events
- snowballing and networking — referrals through word of mouth
- setting up Twitter events, including gathering questions in advance and tweeting answers within the event
- setting up a webinar for employers/gateways to attend, so staff could explain Kickstart and answer general enquiries (this method was referenced by only one respondent and not reported as having been highly attended)
- advertising via LinkedIn or social media
- local recruitment/marketing campaigns (for example, local radio)
- sending posters and leaflets to local employers and potential gateway organisations

This local targeting and engagement activity was supplemented by national advertising activity and public relations. For example, there was a national communications and public relations campaign via press and social media.

## Initial Employer Engagement

### **Gateways' experience of recruiting employers onto scheme**

Three quarters (76%) of gateways found it easy to identify employers who wanted to offer Kickstart jobs.

The average number of employers that gateways supported was 80. Nearly two-in-ten (18%) had supported between one to nine employers, and a quarter (25%) had supported between 10 to 29 employers.

Gateways in the private sector were more likely to report having supported a higher number of employers: an average of 104 (compared to an average of 77 for gateways in central or local government and an average of 63 for gateways in the third sector).

### **Employers' Initial Concerns Related to Kickstart**

Before taking part in the scheme, three-in-five employers (63%) were concerned about how prepared the young people would be for work. Some had concerns about the application process, including the period between signing up to Kickstart and a Kickstart job starting (30%) and the likelihood of getting approved for the scheme (24%).

A smaller proportion had concerns relating to what they would be able to provide to the young people that would be given the Kickstart jobs. Nearly a quarter (23%) were concerned about having enough capacity to develop young people's employability skills, while over one-in-ten (13%) were concerned about having enough work to give to young people in the jobs. Gateway organisation employers (GOEs) were more likely to be concerned about having capacity to develop employability skills (26% versus 17% of direct employers).

## **Motivations to becoming a Kickstart employer**

The most commonly reported motivation for employers to sign up to Kickstart was being able to benefit young people. This was reported by nine-in-ten (89%) employers (Figure 2.1). Benefitting young people was also most commonly considered to be the main motivation (35%). Half of employers (50%) reported being motivated by the potential benefits to the community.

Employers were also commonly motivated by factors that would benefit their organisation. Four-in-five reported being motivated by the addition of subsidised employees (61%) and the opportunity to evaluate staff before offering them a job (60%).

Motivations for joining the scheme varied according to the size of employer. Larger employers were more likely to be motivated by benefits to others outside their organisation, medium employers by the chance to evaluate staff in a role, and smaller employers by gaining subsidised staff.



**Figure 2.1 What motivated your organisation to sign up to Kickstart?**

A2. What motivated your organisation to sign up to Kickstart? / A2A-All. And which was your main motivation? Base: All employers (1,008).

## Setting up with a gateway

Among employers that applied through a gateway, the majority found it easy (74%). Less than one in ten employers who applied through a gateway found the process difficult (10%).

## Application and approval process

### Applying directly or via a gateway

The majority of employers who took part in qualitative interviews applied to the Kickstart Scheme directly rather than applying via a gateway. Employers who applied directly reported three main reasons for doing so:

1. Having more control over the process
2. Assumption that the process would happen more quickly without a 'middleman'
3. Receiving more of the available funding

In making the applications, gateways were more likely to have found it difficult (42%)

to get employer applications approved than to have found it easy (38%). Almost a fifth (18%) found getting employer applications approved very difficult.

Gateways that supported a larger number of employers were more likely to have found it difficult getting employer applications approved. Over half (56%) of gateways that supported 100 or more employers found getting employer applications approved difficult compared to only 38% of those supporting fewer than 100. It is likely that because they made a higher number of applications, they were more likely to encounter difficult scenarios.

Employers, in contrast to gateways, were more likely to report their application process was easy than difficult. Overall, 71% of employers found getting their application approved or showing that they met the scheme requirements easy and 14% found it difficult.

Among GOEs, 75% found getting their employer application approved easy (compared to 67% of direct employers). This suggests that gateways had some level of influence on the ease of the process and likelihood to get approved.

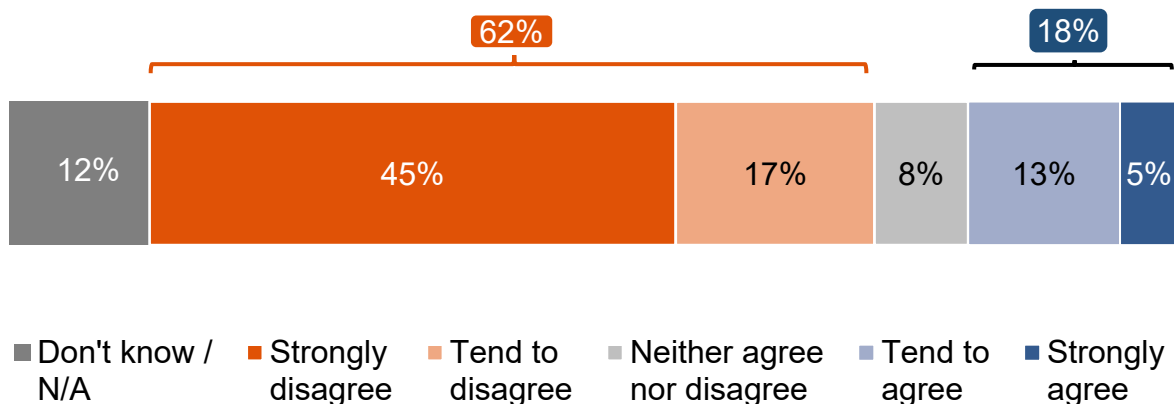
Fifty-six per cent of gateways felt the time between submitting an employer application and hearing back from DWP was unreasonable, with 29% feeling it was reasonable.

**Rejections of employer applications**

Only around a tenth (11%) of gateways had all their employer applications approved first time, the remainder had received at least one rejection. Three-in-ten (30%) gateways had over 90% of their employer applications accepted first time, but 14% had less than half accepted first time and 2% had none accepted initially.

Among the gateways who had not had all their employer applications accepted, most (62%) felt the reasons given for rejection were not valid, as shown in Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2 Whether gateways agreed that rejections of employer applications were for valid reasons**

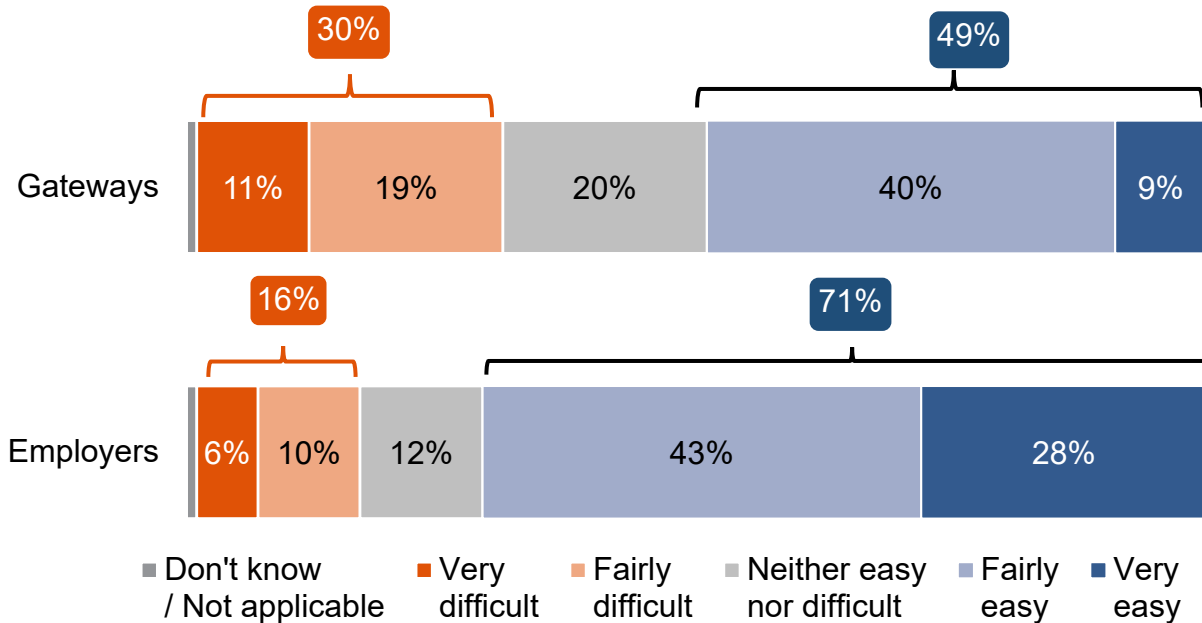


A14\_2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? When employer applications are rejected, the reasons given for rejection are valid. Base: gateways who had employer applications rejected (340).

## Kickstart job approval

Both employers and gateways were more likely to have found getting Kickstart jobs approved easy (71% and 49% respectively) than difficult (16% and 30% respectively). Gateways found getting Kickstart jobs approved more difficult than employers, as shown in Figure 2.3.

**Figure 2.3 Whether gateways and employers found it easy or difficult to get Kickstart jobs approved**



A9\_3. How easy or difficult do you find the following? Getting Kickstart jobs approved. Base: All gateways (401) / A4\_5. How easy or difficult did you find the following? Getting your Kickstart job(s) approved. Base: All employers (1,008).

Gateways who supported more employers were more likely to find getting jobs approved difficult (mirroring their higher likelihood of difficulties with employer applications). Half of gateways (50%) who had filled 250 vacancies or more found getting jobs approved difficult compared to 29% of those who had filled fewer than 30 vacancies. Similarly, the more vacancies employers had filled the more likely they were to have found getting them approved difficult (28% of those who filled 26 or more compared to 11% who filled one). This appears to indicate the issues were not due to misunderstanding the process or requirements the first time, but in perhaps trying to get a wider range of jobs approved. GOEs were more likely than direct employers to have found it easy (74% compared to 67%), suggesting that gateways were successful in their role as a support for employers.

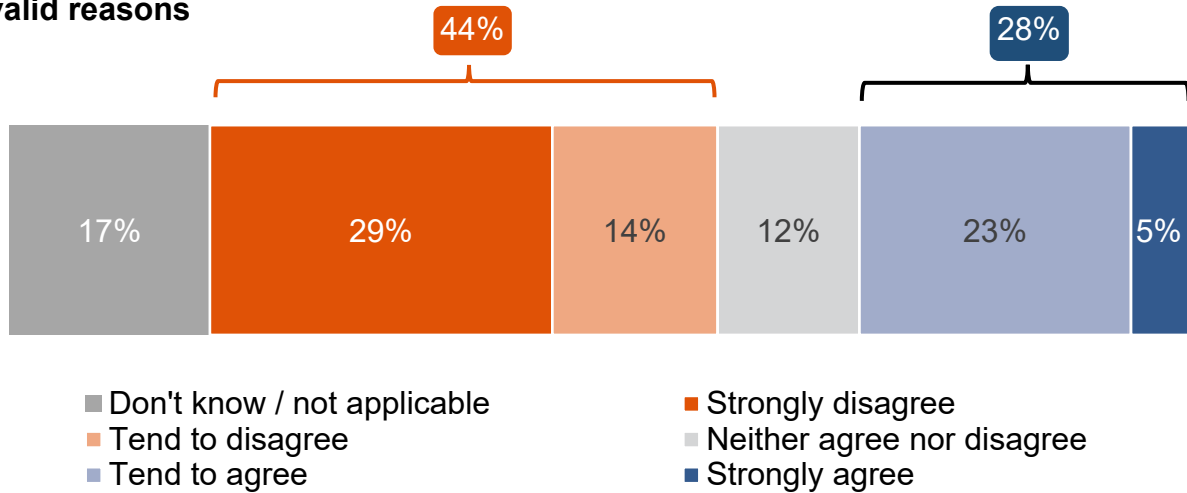
Gateways were more likely to disagree (49%) that the time between submitting Kickstart jobs for approval and receiving a response from DWP was reasonable than to agree (36%). Over a fifth (22%) of gateways 'strongly disagreed' that the DWP response time was reasonable. This was similar to, but a little less negative than, views about response times on employer applications.

### Rejections of Kickstart jobs

A quarter (26%) of gateways had all their Kickstart jobs approved first time, and almost half (47%) had nearly all<sup>16</sup> of their jobs accepted first time. However, seven in ten (69%) gateways had received at least one rejection.

Among gateways who had Kickstart jobs rejected, more disagreed that the reasons for rejection were valid (44%) than agreed (28%), as shown in Figure 2.4.

**Figure 2.4 Whether gateways agreed that rejections of Kickstart jobs were for valid reasons**



A14\_4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? When Kickstart jobs are rejected, the reasons given for rejection are valid. Base: gateways who had employer jobs rejected (279).

Lack of communication was the main reason for gateways feeling rejections were not valid. Of the 55% of gateways that had employer applications or Kickstart jobs rejected for what they felt were invalid reasons, 62% reported this was because they were not given any reasons for the rejection and 60% that they were given insufficient detail. Feeling that the rejection was wrong, invalid, or incorrect was reported by 7% of those who thought rejection reasons were invalid.

JCP staff, who had a good overview of the submission process, discussed in the qualitative research why some vacancies were initially rejected by DWP. Three main reasons were offered: 1) The vacancy was poorly worded (for example, misleading or inaccessible); 2) the vacancy did not offer employability support; 3) The vacancy was not seen as additional — for example, a low ratio of permanent job roles compared to Kickstart vacancies, suggesting that the Kickstart vacancies were taking the place of permanent roles rather than being additional. Both JCP staff and gateways reported helping employers to correct these where possible, so the second time a vacancy was submitted it was more likely to be accepted by the DWP.

Some gateways commented that the inability to create more vacancies<sup>17</sup> (if current vacancies were not filled) had impacted negatively on attracting the types of

<sup>16</sup> Over 90%

<sup>17</sup> Gateways applied for a grant agreement with a specific number of vacancies. The facility to increase the number of vacancies within a particular grant agreement was available in many cases but became more limited over the duration of the scheme.

vacancies that young people want. For example, if there was a large number of care positions entered into the system that were not filled (a sector with existing labour shortages), then there was not the scope to add further vacancies in a more popular sector, for example, construction.

## Offering and recruiting vacancies

### Filling Kickstart jobs

#### Number of Kickstart jobs filled

A quarter (26%) of gateways had agreed 250 or more Kickstart jobs and almost a further quarter (23%) had agreed between 100-249 jobs.

On average, gateways reported 88% of agreed job vacancies had been advertised, and half of gateways (50%) had advertised all agreed vacancies.

On average, gateways reported over half (56%) of agreed vacancies had been filled. A small minority (3%) of gateways reported all their agreed vacancies had been filled, a quarter (24%) had filled at least 70%. However, a third of gateways (34%) had filled less than half their agreed vacancies.

Turning to employers, they had an average of nine jobs approved and an average of six jobs filled. Overall, on average employers had 82% of their approved jobs filled.<sup>18</sup>

Direct employers were more likely to have filled more vacancies; 28% had filled more than five compared to 13% of GOEs. Two-fifths (39%) of GOEs had filled one job vacancy, compared to only 23% of direct employers. However, GOEs were more likely to have filled a higher proportion of their jobs: 61% had filled all agreed vacancies.

#### Factors considered when filling vacancies

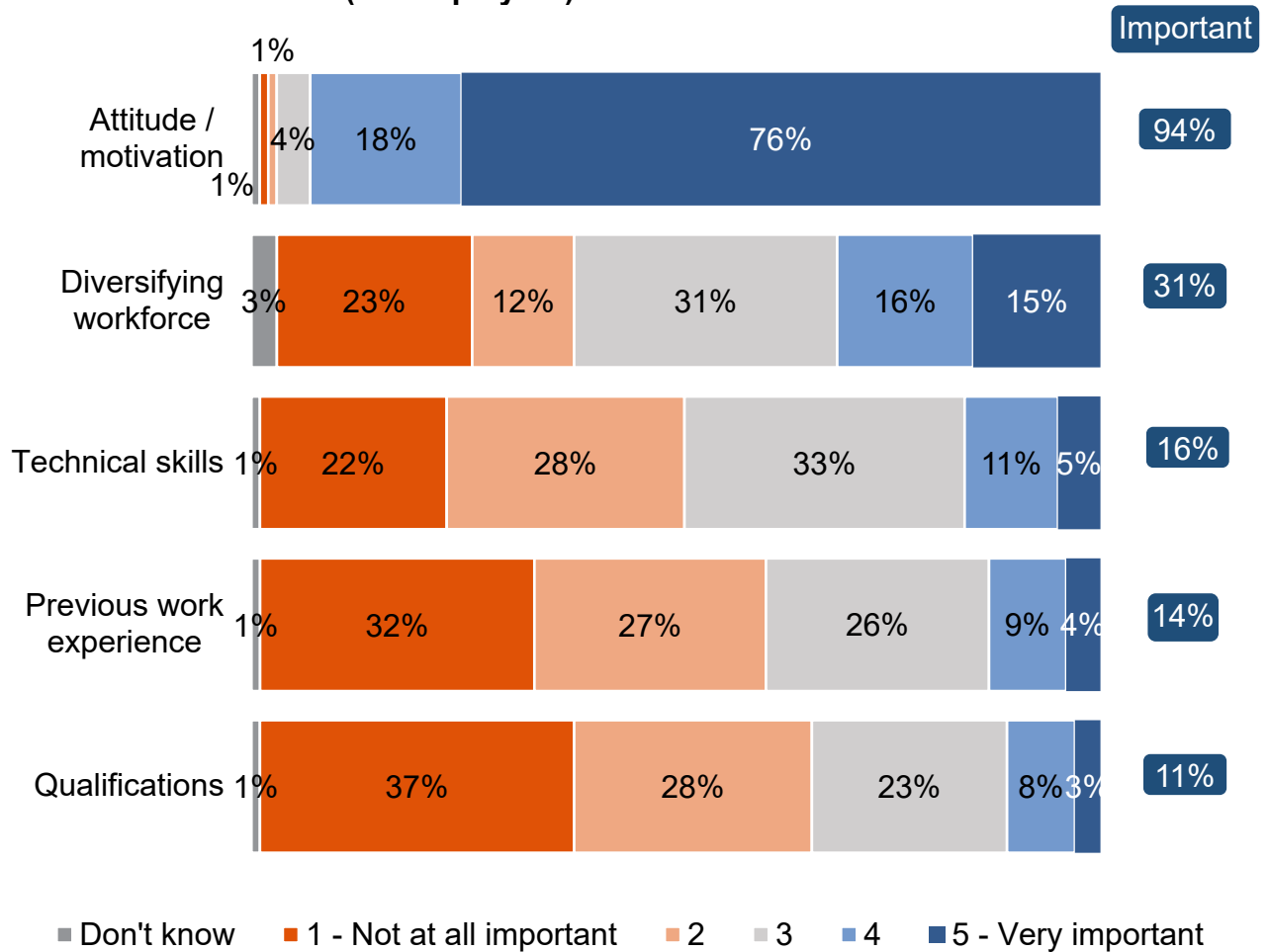
For nearly all employers (94%), a candidate's attitude or level of motivation was an important factor when selecting Kickstart employees. All other factors asked about were far less likely to be regarded as important, as shown by Figure 2.5.

Diversifying the workforce was the second of the listed factors most likely to be important when selecting young people (31% of employers). It was more likely to be important for public or third sector employees (37% compared to 29% of those in the private sector).

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<sup>18</sup> Please note, we only surveyed employers with at least one filled job – if other employers were included, the averages would be lower.

**Figure 2.5 Relative importance of listed factors when appointing young people for Kickstart vacancies (for employers)**



B6. How important were each of the following factors when deciding which candidate to appoint to a Kickstart job vacancy? As listed. Base: All employers (1,008).

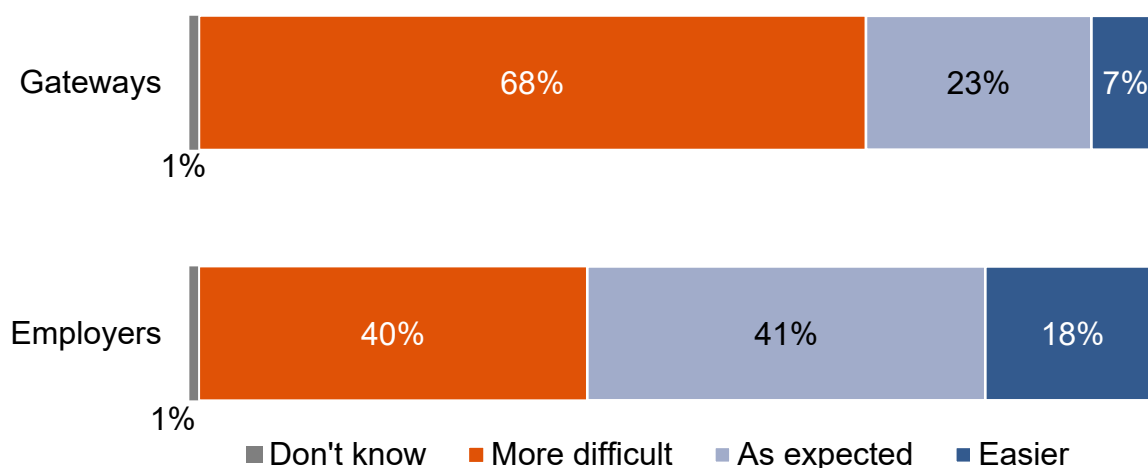
### Challenges with filling Kickstart jobs

How easy or challenging it was to fill Kickstart roles greatly varied. This depended on a variety of factors including sector, type of job, location of job, local labour market needs, existing skills gaps, and employer expectations.

Over two-thirds of gateways (68%) found getting their employers Kickstart jobs filled more difficult than they had expected (Figure 2.6). A smaller proportion of employers (40%) reported the same, and a similar proportion found the process of filling their vacancies ‘as expected’, 41% (compared to 23% of gateways).



**Figure 2.6 Gateways and employers’ experience of getting Kickstart jobs filled compared to their expectations**



B5. How did the ease or difficulty of getting your employers’ Kickstart jobs filled compare to expectations? Base: All gateways (401). / B2 How does your organisation’s experience of the process of recruiting your Kickstart young people to job(s) compare to expectations? Base: All employers (1,008).

Difficulty filling vacancies did not appear to vary by the number filled. However, the more employers that a gateway supported, the more likely they were to have found getting jobs filled difficult (77% of those who supported 100 or more, compared to 56% who supported fewer than ten).

A lack of candidates was the most common reason for difficulty (for 79% of gateways that found it more difficult to fill Kickstart jobs than expected). Poor quality candidates were also an issue for around half (52%).

Some employers reported challenges related to DWP, but these were mainly relating to earlier stages of the process as reported above

GOEs were more likely to have found recruitment for their Kickstart jobs easier than expected (20% versus 12% of direct employers), suggesting that the gateways successfully supported GOEs in this.

The following types of employers were more likely to have found the recruitment process more difficult than expected:

- larger employers (56% of those with 250 or more paid employees compared to 39% of smaller employers)
- public or third sector (45% compared to 38% of those in the private sector)
- filled a higher number of vacancies (53% of those who had filled more than 25 compared to 36% who had filled one)

The relationship between having a higher number of vacancies and finding the process difficult again indicates that difficulties did not appear to be due to “teething” issues that were ironed out over time. This contrasts to gateways, where there was little difference in views by number of vacancies filled.

Among the 40% of employers who had found it more difficult than expected to recruit young people to Kickstart jobs, the most common spontaneously reported difficulties were around the supply of young people: finding suitable candidates (31%) or too few referrals (16%). Some employers were of the perception that young people did not want the work, including not attending interviews or responding to job offers (27%). Too few referrals making applications (11%) may also indicate that demand from young people was higher than the number of jobs available or that the jobs on offer did not meet the expectations of young people.

Another theme for some employers was difficulty with the process, central operational DWP, or JCP staff. This included employers feeling work coaches were: not actively promoting the vacancies or sending unsuitable candidates (16%); a lack of support from DWP (9%); problems communicating with DWP (9%); and the timeframe, delays, or length of the process (8%).

In terms of the time taken, for half (49%) of employers, it took longer than a month to fill their Kickstart vacancies on average. Half of employers (49%) reported that the time taken was as expected, but it was longer than expected for 38%.

### **Quality and quantity of candidates**

Among employers who found recruitment difficult, GOEs were more likely to report difficulties finding suitable candidates (35% versus 23% of direct employers). This was possibly linked to having less control over the process.

Gateways and JCP staff reported some challenges around managing employer expectations of Kickstart candidates. Typically, the main reported problem was employer expectations being too high in terms of qualification levels and amount of experience desired. For example, some JCP staff reported that employers looking to recruit for roles in construction often wanted unrealistic amounts of experience from applicants. Requiring candidates to have a driving license was a commonly referenced stumbling block.

Gateways commented that the scheme was most successful when employers were able to look past their usual CV criteria when considering a young person for a Kickstart role. Examples of this included relaxing the typical minimum educational grades or previous work experience. When employers were able to adapt more 'traditional' recruitment process, for example replacing them with approaches such as employer 'speed dating', it exposed them to a wider range of potential candidates. In many cases, employers needed some encouragement to do this. It was usually achieved by Jobcentre staff presenting the scheme as also aiming to help the young person gain useful skills and experience, rather than just meeting their labour needs.

Some Jobcentre staff thought that matching young people to vacancies would have been easier if job creation had been targeted toward roles and sectors that matched young people's interests, rather than being driven primarily by employers' labour demand.

“[The Department for Work and Pensions] should have placed greater focus in the planning stage on identifying from young people what they wanted from the programme in terms of work experience placements. Instead, they focused

the marketing on identifying employers' needs - in hindsight, it should have been a better balance. Young people apply for what is available from employers."

(KDAM, Urban area)

In the qualitative interviews, JCP staff also felt that they needed to work to get employers to adapt their job descriptions for applicants with less confidence or lower qualifications.

"Initially, they saw it as just another job opportunity.... We needed to get through that this is somebody to add value, that we can invest in for six months, and you can get some value to your company. So, you can take any young person on as long as they've got the potential and the right attitude."

(District-level JCP staff, Urban area)

However, both gateways and JCP staff were able to overcome these challenges by taking the time to clearly explain the scheme to employers who initially held unrealistic expectations. After these employers understood that Kickstart was not simply a quick/cheap recruitment solution, and that helping to develop the young person was a key part of the scheme's ethos, their expectations became more realistic, and they became more accommodating in terms of their requirements for Kickstart roles.

Gateways and JCP staff also emphasised that Kickstart could act as an affordable way for a small business to trial a potential employee who may eventually be kept on in a permanent role and encouraged employers to take risks on young people they may not otherwise have considered. After understanding this, these employers become more willing to adapt roles to account for lower qualifications and experience.

Despite these interventions, employers, overall, felt there were not enough young people applying for the jobs. Most employers (60%) reported that they received too few applications for each Kickstart vacancy, while a third (34%) received about the right number.

## 3. Engaging young people in Kickstart

This chapter describes the profile of young people who participated in Kickstart and why they chose to be involved. It explores the application process for Kickstart jobs from the perspective of young people, including any challenges and support needed.

### Summary

Kickstart reached a wide spectrum of young people. A third (34%) were long-term Universal Credit (UC) claimants (over 18 months) and a similar proportion (35%) were short-term (six months or less) claimants. Almost a quarter had no prior experience of paid work at all. A quarter were qualified at Level 4 or above, but one in five had a Level 1 qualification or no qualifications at all.

Many young people had been struggling with their job search prior to being involved with Kickstart, finding it very difficult to find vacancies that interested them but did not require work experience that they did not have. By comparison, searching for Kickstart jobs often felt different because the adverts were more accessible, employers did not require experience and they were more willing to provide training.

Most young people found the application process for Kickstart jobs easy (75%).

Employers were often very flexible in terms of adapting their recruitment approaches to make them more accessible to young people including through more informal interviewing approaches. Jobcentre Plus staff often mentioned having to work with employers to encourage this.

Jobcentre staff felt that the longer appointments that they could offer under Kickstart were valuable in helping them support young people and give them the confidence to apply for the scheme.

# Characteristics of young people on Kickstart

## Demographic profile of young people<sup>19</sup>

### Gender, age and ethnicity

Just over half of Starters described themselves as male (53%), 45% as female. Half of Starters were aged 18-to-21 (50%) with almost all other Starters aged 22-to-24 (46%).

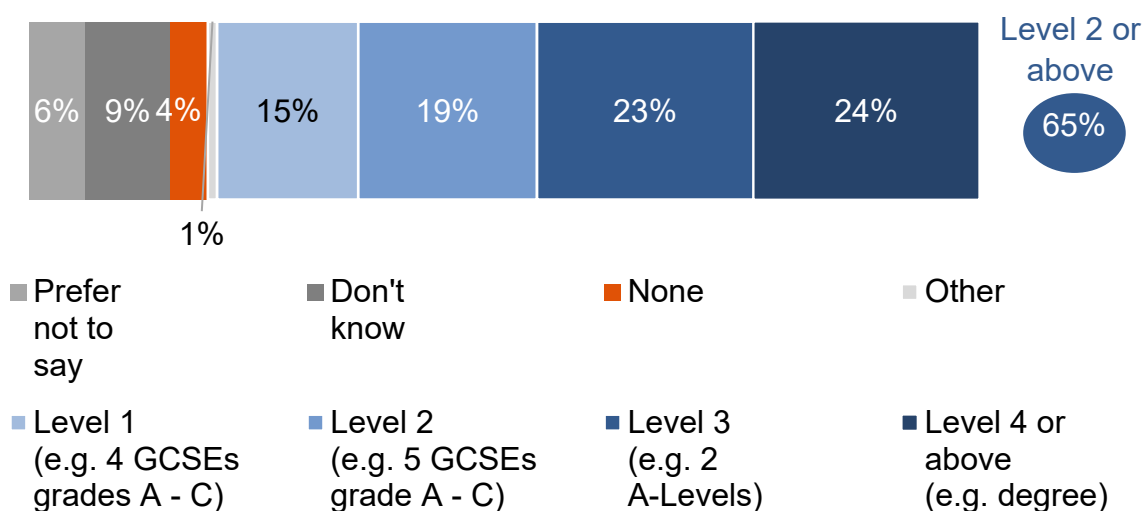
Three-quarters of Starters described their ethnic group or background as 'White' (or a 'White' minority).<sup>20</sup> Just over one-in-five (22%) were of another ethnic group or background (excluding 'White' minorities), most commonly 'Asian or Asian British' (9% overall).

Younger Starters aged 18-to-21 were more likely to be 'White' (including 'White' minorities) than those aged 22-to-24 (78% compared to 72%), while those aged 22-to-24 were more likely to be from an ethnic minority background (excluding 'White' minorities) than 18-to-21 (25% compared to 19%).

### Education

Young people taking part in Kickstart had a wide range of qualification levels. A fifth of Starters (20%) held only lower, 'other' or no qualifications. Almost a quarter of Starters (24%) held a Level 4 qualification or above, as shown in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1 Qualification level of Starters**



E3. Which of these is the highest level of qualification you have? Base: All Starters (8,063)

<sup>19</sup> The first Kickstart young people started their jobs in November 2020, however sample of Starters represented by our survey findings covers those who started Kickstart jobs between September 2021 and March 2022, and therefore is not representative of the complete population of Kickstart employees.

<sup>20</sup> This group includes all of those who identified as 'White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British', 'White Irish', 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' and 'any other White background'.

Starters from ‘Asian or Asian British’ ethnic backgrounds and from ‘Black, African, Caribbean or Black British’ ethnic backgrounds were more likely to hold a qualification at Level 4 or above (37% and 38% respectively, compared to 21% of ‘White’ Starters (including ‘White minorities’)), and were less likely to have only lower or no qualifications (12% each, compared to 22%). This may partly reflect that Starters from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely to be older. Both the age skew and the greater rates of higher-level qualifications may be due to greater participation in post-16 education among those from ethnic minority backgrounds overall.<sup>21</sup>

### **Health**

Overall, 30% of Starters had a health condition or illness expected to last for at least 12 months, and 22% of all Starters (74% of those with a health condition or illness expected to last for at least 12 months) were limited in their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

Female Starters were more likely to have a health condition or illness (36% compared to 25% of male Starters), and more likely to report this was limiting to some degree (77% of female Starters with a health condition compared to 70% of male Starters with a health condition).

‘White’ Starters (including ‘White minorities’), and those from ‘Mixed or multiple ethnic groups’ backgrounds were more likely to report a health condition or illness (34% and 30% respectively, compared to 15% of those from an ‘Asian or Asian British’ ethnic background and 16% of those from a ‘Black, African, Caribbean or Black British’ ethnic background). ‘White’ Starters (including ‘White minorities’) were more likely to report this was limiting (75% of ‘White’ Starters (including ‘White minorities’) with a health condition compared to 70% of Starters with a health condition from an ethnic minority background, excluding White minorities).

It was notable across interviews with Jobcentre staff, employers, and gateways that many flagged that anxiety, poor mental health, and low self-esteem were widespread among young people on Kickstart.

### **Living arrangements**

Two-thirds of Starters (66%) lived with their parents. The qualitative research suggested that many of the young people who lived with their parents were receiving financial or other support from their parents. A small minority of Starters lived with their children (7%), so may have had parental responsibilities and constraints on their time, and indeed in the qualitative research, young people who were carers emphasised that they required a job that was flexible enough to fit around their caring responsibilities.

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<sup>21</sup> Among pupils in England in 2020/21, 88% from White ethnic backgrounds were in education for at least six months of the year following their completion of year 11 study, compared to: 94% of pupils from Black or Black British ethnic backgrounds; 95% of pupils from Asian or Asian British ethnic backgrounds; 97% of pupils from Chinese ethnic backgrounds. Department for Education, Academic Year 2020/21 [Key stage 4 destination measures, \(October 2022\), Academic Year 2020/21 — Explore education statistics — GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-destination-measures-october-2022)

Starters with a health condition that impacted daily life substantially were notably less likely to live with their parents (58% compared to 70% of those without a health condition) and more likely to live alone (10% compared to 5% of those without).

## **Length of claim, prior employment and job search activity**

### **Length of UC claim**

Prior to starting their Kickstart job, a third of Starters (34%) had been registered for UC for over 18 months ('long-term'), 28% for seven to 18 months ('medium-term'), and 35% for six months or less ('short-term').<sup>22</sup>

Likelihood of being a long-term UC claimant decreased with qualification level. Less than one-fifth of Starters with a qualification at Level 4 or above (17%) were long-term UC claimants versus over two-fifths of those whose highest qualification was at Level 2 or had lower or no qualifications (43%). Less than a quarter of Starters with lower or no qualifications (23%) were short-term claimants versus half of those with a qualification at Level 4 or above (51%).

Starters with a health condition that substantially impacted their daily life were more likely to have had long-term claims (39% versus 31% without a health condition), and less likely to be short-term claimants (33% versus 38% without a health condition).

### **Prior experience of paid work**

Over seven-in-ten Starters (72%) had undertaken paid work before starting their Kickstart job. Two-fifths (42%) had done unpaid work (for example, shadowing, work placement, work experience, or volunteering), leaving only 13% reporting they had never worked.

However, less than a third of Starters (31%) had undertaken paid work for over a year and just over a quarter (28%) had no paid work experience at all.

Starters who were more likely to have had no work experience (paid or unpaid) prior to Kickstart included those who were:

- younger (16% aged 18-to-21 versus 8% aged 22-to-24)
- from an 'Asian or Asian British' ethnic background and from a 'White (including White minorities)' background (14% and 13% versus 9% of those from a 'Black, African, Caribbean or Black British' background)
- males (14% versus 11% of females)

The qualitative research provided further insight into the types of prior employment young people had held prior to Kickstart. Often, they had been employed on a casual basis on a zero-hours contract, and typically, young people described their financial situation as 'unstable' and 'unpredictable' as they were often not paid enough to

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<sup>22</sup> This is DWP administrative data, not from the survey. It is the number of months between young people registering on UC and starting their Kickstart job, rounded down. For approximately 3% of cases this information is not available.

cover their basic living expenses. Hence, even among those who had some work experience prior to Kickstart, this was often not felt to be meaningful or sustainable employment.

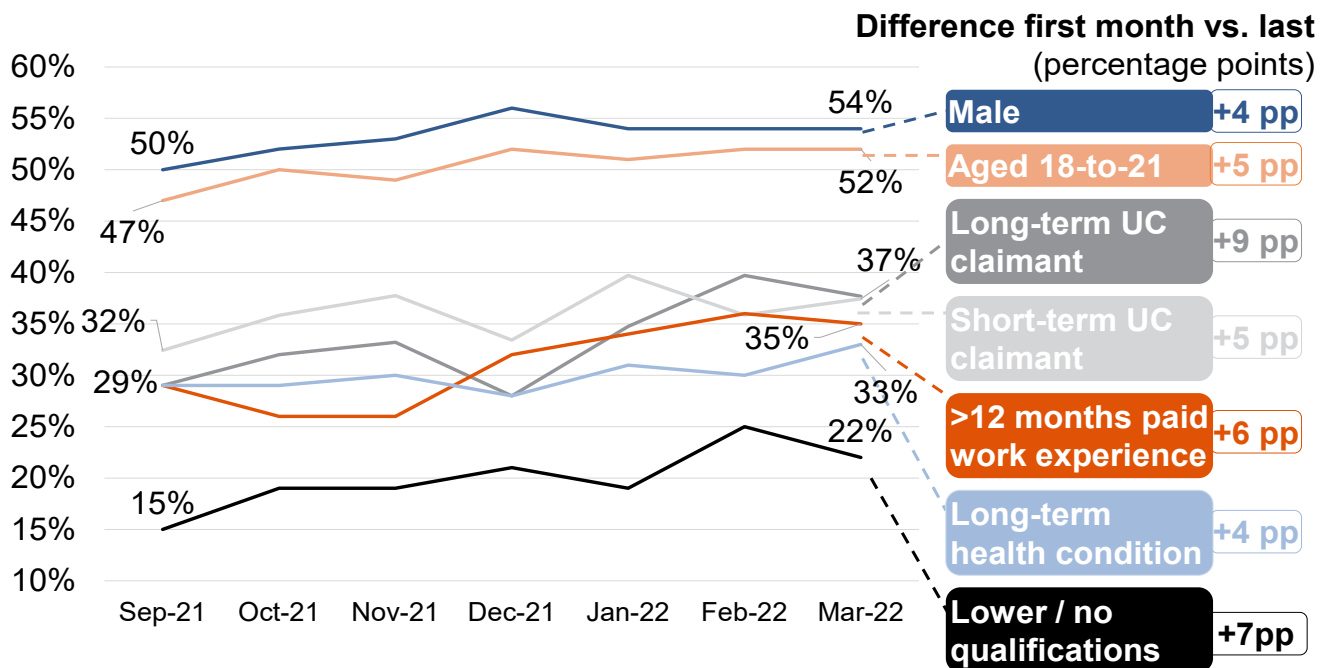
## Changes in the profile of Starters as Kickstart continued

The section above shows the average profile of Starters throughout the duration of Kickstart. However, some characteristics became more prevalent in the Starter population as the scheme continued.

The greatest increases were in the proportions of Starters in groups typically considered harder to help or reach. There was an increase of nine percentage points in the proportion who were long-term UC claimants prior to their Kickstart job (from 29% of those who started their Kickstart jobs in September 2021 to 38% who started in March 2022), as shown in Figure 3.. There was an increase of seven percentage points in the proportion who had lower or no qualifications.

Kickstart was also reaching groups who would not typically be considered harder to help. Nevertheless, these groups could be considered at risk of long-term unemployment in the context of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The proportions of Starters who had more than 12 months paid work experience; were aged 18-to-21; and who were short-term UC claimants also each grew by five or six percentage points as the scheme continued. Starters with medium-term prior UC claims accounted for a lower proportion of Starters as the scheme progressed (14 percentage point decrease, from 39% in September 2021 to 25% in March 2022).

**Figure 3.2 Characteristics which accounted for a higher proportion of Starter population as Kickstart continued (by month started Kickstart job)**





DWP RECORDS and survey responses Base: All Starters who started Kickstart jobs in September 2021 (1,144), in October 2021 (996), in November 2021 (1,382), in December 2021 (873), in January 2022 (810), in February 2022 (1,281), in March 2022 (1,577). Length of UC claim base: those for whom DWP hold records (7,784).

## Introduction to Kickstart

### **Motivations for taking part**

During the qualitative research, young people spoke about being motivated to take part in the Kickstart Scheme for various reasons.

Many young people described the difficulties they had experienced searching and applying for jobs outside of the Kickstart Scheme. When searching job sites, young people found it challenging to find a role that would both meet their interests and match their level of experience.

Some young people were looking for roles in a specific industry to apply specialist skills, while others described looking for anything with secure hours or within a certain travel distance.

Young people were attracted by the opportunity to gain transferable skills that they could bring to their future career and the offer of training was very appealing to them.

"I knew through Kickstart I would be given training for different things and I really wanted to get experience in different aspects of hospitality so that when I move on from this job I have plenty training and I know what I'm doing."

(Young person, 21, Hospitality)

There were a few young people motivated to join the Kickstart Scheme out of boredom.

"Truthfully I accepted the job because ... I was sick of sitting at home and wasting my days away, I wanted to learn, I wanted to progress and I wanted to make people proud."

(Young person, 22, Car Mechanic)

Many young people were driven to take part in the Kickstart Scheme to improve their mental health and wellbeing (see Chapter 5 for findings from the qualitative research relating to confidence and resilience). Prior to getting their Kickstart job, young people reported feeling frustrated and confused following repeated job rejections, which led to low confidence levels. Young people reported that the pandemic had also increased their level of social anxiety and many young people felt that they lacked resilience.

## Applying to Kickstart jobs

During the scheme a total of 2,969,000 referrals were made to Kickstart jobs, for 429,000 young people.<sup>23</sup> A referral is where a work coach had highlighted a Kickstart job vacancy to a claimant as an opportunity for them to consider. Multiple young people could be referred to, and apply for, each job vacancy.

### Searching for appropriate roles

Young people mainly found appropriate Kickstart vacancies through suggestions from their work coach, although some also searched online themselves. More than four-fifths of Starters (84%) reported that they had also actively been looking for other paid jobs in the wider labour market during the period when they were searching for a Kickstart vacancy.

In the survey, most Starters reported that they heard about the Kickstart job that they started through their work coach (76%). For three-in-five (59%), this was during a meeting or call. The UC journal was the source of information about the vacancy for one-in-eight Starters (17%).

One-in-ten Starters (9%) heard about their Kickstart job via online job listings and 6% through recruitment sources such as job fairs. Four per cent heard about the vacancy directly from employers.

Partway through the scheme, Kickstart jobs were added to the GOV.UK Find A Job service. The impact of this can be seen in an increase in the proportion of Starters hearing about their job online. In the final wave of Starters (who started their jobs in March 2021), 15% had heard about their Kickstart job this way.

### Kickstart jobs informed about through Universal Credit journal

Eighty-six per cent of Starters reported they were sent information about Kickstart jobs in their UC journal, 10% were unsure if this had happened and 4% reported they were not sent information in this way.

Three-fifths of Starters (62%) received information about between one and ten Kickstart jobs and 41% received information about up to five jobs. A quarter (25%) received information for more than 10 jobs and 11% received information for more than 20 jobs.

### Experience of independently finding Kickstart jobs

During the qualitative depth interviews young people provided feedback on independently searching for Kickstart jobs. In addition to the time-intensive referral process of matching job seekers with vacancies (via their UC journal), there were also examples of Jobcentres sharing all available vacancies. In one case, the Jobcentre had a physical jobs wall that job seekers were encouraged to browse. In another case, the Jobcentre printed a list of all the new vacancies that week for the

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<sup>23</sup> DWP internal data, 10th February 2023, provided in answer to a Parliamentary Question. [Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#) Please be aware of cautionary notes on accuracy set out in the answer.

coaches to look through in coaching meetings. Later in the scheme, once Kickstart roles were added to the Find A Job website, independent searching became easier.

Importantly, the Kickstart job search process allowed flexibility for a) young people who knew what they were searching for and wanted to independently find suitable vacancies and b) young people who needed support to understand what vacancies might work for them and benefitted from being directed to particular opportunities.

### **How searching for Kickstart jobs was different**

In contrast to experiences of searching for jobs in the open labour market, young people found searching for Kickstart jobs more positive. It felt different because the adverts were more accessible and the employers both did not require experience and were more willing to provide training. Overall, the opportunities seemed more varied and more achievable.

“Things on Indeed had much [more] overwhelming expectations I thought that I’m just not going to bother applying... With the Kickstart ones, I had a lot more opportunity to apply for things... as I was thinking ‘I could do that’”

(Young person, 24, Event Management)

For some young people, Kickstart jobs provided a way to secure an entry-level role in a hard-to-access sector that they wished to work in and often was related to their qualifications.

### **Applying for Kickstart jobs**

From qualitative findings, young people were typically submitting multiple Kickstart applications and searching for other employment and training opportunities at the same time. Many detailed receiving rejections or turning down other Kickstart roles before securing one. Although some described challenges when making applications, such as convoluted application stages, or a lack of feedback after applications were rejected, the quantitative research suggests that most young people overall found the process easy.

#### **Number of Kickstart jobs applied for**

Almost three-in-ten Starters (29%) only applied for one Kickstart job (which they then started), two-thirds (67%) applied for multiple roles. Most commonly, Starters applied for between two and five roles (41%).

#### **Other offers received**

Of the two-thirds of Starters (67%) who applied for multiple Kickstart roles, two-fifths (42%) received multiple offers, giving them the option to pick the job that suited them best.

#### **Making multiple applications**

Over half of Starters (58%) who had made multiple applications for Kickstart jobs were unsuccessful in some. Around half of those who had unsuccessful applications did not receive any feedback (49%), and only 6% received feedback on all their unsuccessful applications.

In qualitative interviews, several young people described receiving multiple rejections with little or no feedback, or no response at all. One young person described receiving vague details with a rejection, such as not having the correct skills or experience. However, they felt more detailed and specific feedback would have helped them to improve their applications for future. Another described their frustration at making many applications and receiving few responses, eventually they got a job through a job fair:

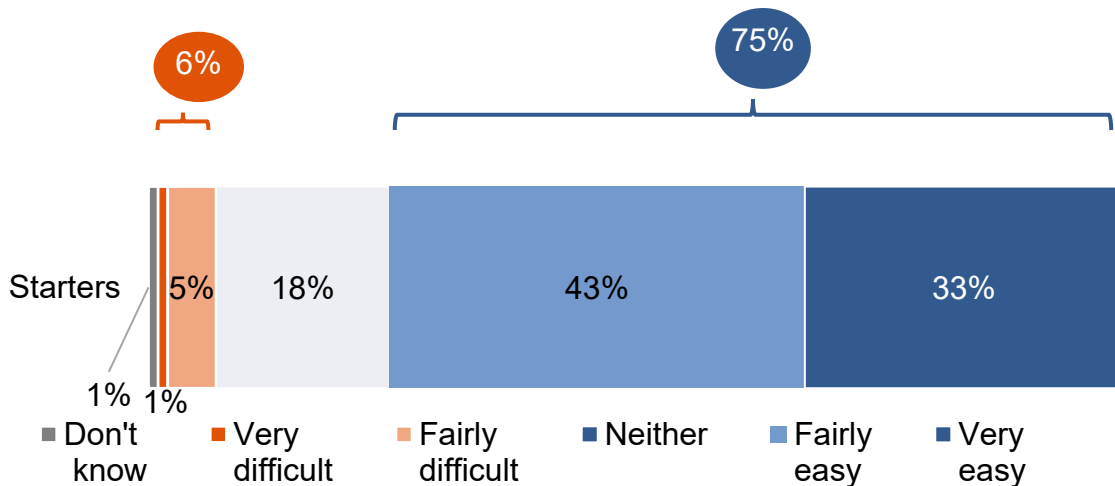
“That was an unfortunate thing and the one thing I did not like [the lack of responses to applications]. It seemed a lot of the companies were putting these Kickstart Schemes out, but I literally got one or two replies [in response to eight applications] ... at least get a reply saying you are not suitable rather than no reply whatsoever — I wasn't sure I was doing it right... I am not sure if my CV was that great or maybe the way I was writing the emails but I knew that once I got through the door and speak to people it is way easier to show and tell what you are good at.”

(Young person, 21, Training Company Administrator)

### Views on the application process

Overall, young people found applying for Kickstart jobs straightforward. The application and interview processes were felt to be easier than for non-Kickstart applications.

Three-quarters of Starters (75%) rated the application process for Kickstart jobs as easy, with a third (33%) saying they found it very easy, as shown in Figure 3.3.



**Figure 3.3 Ease of application process for Kickstart jobs**

B11. Overall, how easy or difficult did you find the application process for Kickstart jobs? Base: All Starters (8,063).

In the survey, most of those who said they found the process difficult were unsure how it could be improved (63%), and any improvements identified were suggested by small numbers. The most common improvements suggested by those who found the process difficult were more help or employability support (7%), better communication

(5%), improve their ability to see all roles and opportunities available (5%), or more feedback on applications (5%).

## Supporting young people with additional needs and barriers during recruitment

In the qualitative research, it was clear that many of the young people applying for Kickstart roles had additional needs and barriers. Additional needs included physical health conditions; mental health conditions; learning difficulties (for example, dyslexia); and neurodivergences (for example, autism and ADHD). Additional barriers to finding and securing employment included costs of attending interviews, transport, caring responsibilities, and English language skills.

The qualitative research reported in this section provided examples and further insight into the types of support young people needed because of their physical and mental health conditions but not the extent to which such needs existed and were supported nationally. The scale of health problems among young people taking part in Kickstart is shown in the quantitative analysis earlier in this chapter (see Health, p.38).

### **Support from work coaches**

The Kickstart programme enabled work coaches to recognise and support young people with additional needs and barriers. Work coaches also appreciated the extended coaching appointments during the Kickstart programme. This gave work coaches more time to get to know the applicants, understand their needs and barriers, discuss job options, and support applications. Although the nature and extent of support may have varied nationally, in the qualitative research, the ways in which work coaches supported young people included:

- exercises in coaching meetings to boost confidence
- enrolling into intensive schemes such as the Youth Employment Programme, before searching and applying for Kickstart jobs
- referring the young person to a disability employment advisor
- matching young people with more inclusive employers
- helping search for and sharing vacancies for suitable roles to meet the individual's needs or health condition
- reviewing CVs and applications
- conducting mock interviews with work coach or other young people
- organising workplace visits or trial shifts
- providing travel costs and supporting applications for discounted travel
- offering smart interview clothes

Poor mental health and high levels of anxiety were widespread among young people applying for Kickstart roles. In addition to the practical support from work coaches, young people valued the emotional support offered.

“I came into it feeling really, really, anxious, which is quite normal for me, but he [the work coach] was so adamant to really motivate me and remind me that I was capable of a lot of things’ (Young person, 24, Events management).

### **Support from employers**

Young people also reported additional support from employers during recruitment. This included:

- employers being flexible around interview timings
- conducting pre-interviews or informal interviews
- conducting video interviews
- offering flexibility in working hours
- providing work from home opportunities

Jobcentre staff felt that the working hours, the ethos of the scheme, and additional support around the Kickstart programme helped young people who were further from the labour market to overcome barriers.

“We’ve seen some really good news stories from customers with health conditions, for example with autism. We’ve seen them get jobs through Kickstart because of all the wrap around support and the 25 hours rather than being expected to work full-time.”

(Jobcentre staff)

### **Challenges supporting young people**

Despite these successes, there were still young people who needed further support during recruitment. Work coaches and employers reported that, in later waves of Kickstart, young people were more likely to be further from the labour market and require additional support from work coaches and employers.

“In the last month I’ve started with my ‘harder to help’ customers. They do a one-to-one session with a disability employment advisor, then move to a training course. We’ve got one started on a Kickstart [job], but we’ve had to [go on] a journey with that person. With [their] anxiety, [their] depression, we had to go slow and it’s taken us longer... We couldn’t just do the quick two to three day turnaround expected in Kickstart. DWP wanted it to happen quickly, “bang, bang, bang”. And yet, they’re realizing now with the ‘harder to help’ customers, we do need to take things a bit slower.”

(Work coach)

There were also several examples of young people not reporting health conditions, needs, and barriers to their work coach or employer. As a result, they did not receive the necessary support to help them. The reasons for this non-disclosure were not clear. One young person suggested the disclosure could negatively affect their

employment chances; others suggested they did not need additional support. Furthermore, some young people may not have understood the help on offer or felt they could not trust the work coach with this confidential information.

## Difficulties in applying for Kickstart jobs

Although most young people found applying for Kickstart jobs to be straightforward, young people in the qualitative research described challenges that arose for them during the Kickstart recruitment experience. These included difficulties writing applications, anxiety around interviews, confusion over what the role entailed, disconnect between the advert and the role, and frustration over limited feedback from unsuccessful interviews.

Young people said that some available job roles that appealed based on the job title were narrow in scope on further inspection. One example given was a job to open letters (advertised as administrative assistant). This highlights the importance of work coaches going through the details of each potential role, which could avoid disappointment or wasted time in pursuit of a role that, once fully understood, did not appeal.

There was also a call for greater clarity in job descriptions — some young people were left unsure of what the work would entail. Some of these young people described issues, such as needing to ask a lot of questions or feeling out of depth, when they started such roles, as they had not understood what the role required. Similarly, some young people felt their Kickstart employer had been disingenuous in the job descriptions, as they did not align with the realities of the job. Both issues could have been addressed through more careful vetting of employers, vacancies, and job descriptions.

Other young people felt, overall, that there was a lack of appealing vacancies. A few young people from rural areas mentioned that interesting jobs were not accessible to them due to travel requirements, others felt the sectors and nature of Kickstart vacancies did not align with their interests. Some described feeling under pressure from their work coach to apply for roles they did not want to do; one young person reported their work coach suggested unsuitable roles and when they did not want to apply, was told not to be picky.

Some young people and work coaches described the support many applicants needed through the process. Work coaches mentioned that some young people found writing applications difficult. To address this, one jobcentre had staff in the computer room to support when needed; they felt this made a huge difference for young people.

Some young people reported having to submit numerous applications before being successful (for example, one described applying for 30 to 40 vacancies in the cultural and charity sectors).

Young people felt consistent feedback was missing from the application process. Following application, some would have appreciated confirmation if their application

was not being pursued by an employer. In instances where they had been rejected following interview, young people wanted constructive feedback. There is potential to make this a consistent element to the application process — a requirement for employers to provide detailed feedback when a young person got as far as an interview.



## 4. Experience of Kickstart jobs

This chapter starts with young people's experiences of the programme, including the nature of their Kickstart job and satisfaction levels. It also looks at the experiences of those who left their job early. The second half of the chapter looks at employer experience and satisfaction with the programme as well as the gateway perspective. It also covers experiences of the training and employability support and the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

### Summary

Most young people were satisfied with their Kickstart job. 70% of Leavers at seven months reported that they were satisfied.

Most young people reported that they worked for the 25 weekly hours funded by the scheme (66% of Leavers at seven months), though small proportions worked more or fewer hours. Three-quarters of young people were paid the National Minimum Wage (NMW) for their age in their Kickstart job (76% of Leavers at seven months).

Most Kickstart jobs were with private sector organisations (70%) and over half were with relatively small organisations (34% of Leavers at seven months had their Kickstart job with an organisation with two to nine employees, 23% ten to 49 employees; for a small minority (4%), the only other member of staff was their employer).

Around a fifth of young people conducted their Kickstart job entirely from home (19% of Leavers at seven months). Nearly all young people (94% of Starters and Leavers) reported having received some on-the-job training during their Kickstart role.

Although there were cases described in qualitative interviews with young people where Kickstart jobs were clearly additional, but there was range in the extent of additionality and examples of this in practice.

During the qualitative research, many young people working in Kickstart jobs described additional needs and barriers, these included physical health conditions, mental health conditions, learning difficulties, neurological challenges, caring responsibilities, transport barriers, and language barriers. There were many positive examples where employers had made efforts to accommodate these either through day-to-day flexibility or formal reasonable adjustments.

Three-quarters of employers (73%) were satisfied with their involvement with Kickstart, despite many being new to this sort of scheme (63% had neither advertised

vacancies through Jobcentre Plus / Universal Jobmatch or taken part in any schemes run by JCP or DWP to provide employment).

Two-thirds of gateways (65%) were satisfied with their involvement with Kickstart.

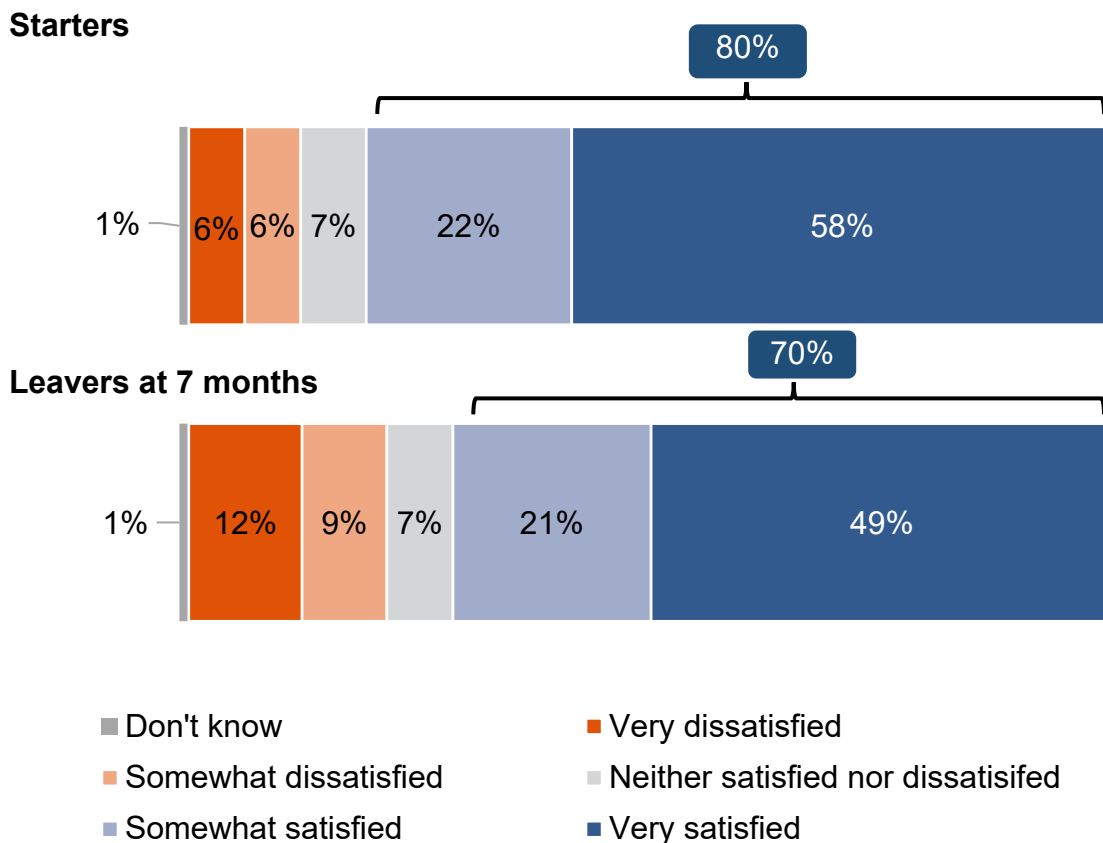
## Young people’s experiences

During the scheme, a total of 163,000 Kickstart jobs were started by 152,000 young people.<sup>24</sup> A young person could start more than one Kickstart job, though not concurrently.

### Young people’s satisfaction with Kickstart

Overall, and as shown in Figure 4.1, most Starters (80%) were satisfied with their Kickstart job, with a majority (58%) opting to say they were ‘very’ satisfied.

**Figure 4.1 Satisfaction with Kickstart job**



C4. How satisfied are/were you with your Kickstart job (so far)? Base: All Starters (8,063), All Leavers at seven months (11,665).

<sup>24</sup> DWP internal data, 10th February 2023, provided in answer to a Parliamentary Question. [Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#) Please be aware of cautionary notes on accuracy set out in the answer.

Although most Starters were satisfied with their Kickstart experience at the time of the survey, one-in-ten Starters (12%) reported that they were dissatisfied with their experience to date.

Satisfaction levels for Leavers at seven months were slightly lower than for Starters but were still relatively high — seven-in-ten (70%) were satisfied overall with their Kickstart job, and a half (49%) said they were ‘very’ satisfied. At the other end of the scale, around two-in-ten (22%) were dissatisfied.

Leavers at seven months with a health condition that substantially impacted their daily life were more dissatisfied than others (32% were dissatisfied with their Kickstart job compared to 18% of those without a long-term health condition). In addition, Leavers at seven months who were from ‘mixed or multiple ethnic groups’ or who were ‘Black, African, Caribbean or Black British’ were more dissatisfied than others (24% and 27% compared to 21% of those who were ‘White (including White minorities)’). Similar findings were also found for Starters.

For Leavers at seven months, there was also a higher level of dissatisfaction among those who had at least 12 months’ prior experience of work (25% compared to 18% of those with no prior experience) and those with Level 4 or above qualifications (24% compared to 19% of those with no or low qualifications). These differences were less evident for Starters, suggesting that over time the Kickstart job started to feel less relevant or appropriate to these higher qualified or experienced individuals.

Other groups showing higher levels of dissatisfaction were:

- those who left their Kickstart job before completing the full six months (45% compared with 10% of Leavers at who completed their Kickstart job)
- those who were NEET at the 7-month point (28% compared with 17% of those in work or due to start)
- those who had a Kickstart job with a private business (24% compared with 11% who were with a public sector organisation and 13% who were with a charity)
- those in London (27% compared to 22% on average).

Young people with employed by GOEs were as likely to be satisfied with their Kickstart job as those with direct employers.

### **Reasons for satisfaction with Kickstart job**

‘Working with friendly staff or having a good team’ was the most common reason spontaneously offered as to why young people were satisfied with their Kickstart job (35% of Leavers at seven months who were satisfied). In practice, this was due to colleagues who were supportive, helpful, and caring; managers who were available to the young person; and employers who were flexible around needs.

"I'm never struggling as I've always got help around me. My colleagues are always happy to help and they don't make me feel stupid for asking questions.

Being surrounded by people who make you laugh is really refreshing and enjoyable."

(Young person, 22, Human Resources)

'Enjoyment of the work' was also a frequently mentioned reason for satisfaction (% of Leavers at seven months who were satisfied). This included day-to-day tasks that interested the young people, finding the role fulfilling, being given appropriate responsibilities, and enjoying the general work atmosphere and culture.

"I genuinely really enjoy my job. I'm learning new skills seeing new people and being involved with cool projects. In my work I assist the graphic designers in client and internal graphics. It's quite a varied role, sometimes I update the website, make letter headers, and get to try my hand at logo design for commercial clients."

(Young person, 25, Graphic Design)

Around three-in-ten (29%) Leavers at seven months who were satisfied spontaneously reported that this was because they had 'gained experience or confidence'. The 'opportunity for good skills development and training' was also a key reason given for satisfaction (25% of Leavers at seven months), as was 'good support being available' (17% of Leavers at seven months). In the qualitative research, young people mentioned that they had enjoyed learning new skills, especially those which were transferable or would help to secure future work in their preferred field.

"I have enjoyed working in this sector. My Kickstart role has given me a great start to continue growing in fundraising. Before my role I had very limited experience and few transferable skills. I guess before this job I was a bit lost, especially after all the rejections. This role has given me the foundations to begin a career in fundraising."

(Young person, 24, Fundraising Assistant)

Leavers at seven months who had shorter claims prior to Kickstart were more likely to spontaneously report that they were satisfied because they had 'gained good experience or boosted their confidence' (32% who had short-term claims versus 24% who had long-term claims). They were also more likely to offer that they were satisfied as it had been a 'good skills development opportunity / training' (27% versus 21%).

Older participants were also more likely to suggest they were satisfied due to the job being a 'good opportunity for skills development'. This was true for both Starters and Leavers at seven months. To illustrate, 24% of Starters aged 22-to-24 mentioned the 'opportunity for skills development' compared to just 18% of those aged 18-to-21.

By ethnicity, young people from an 'Asian or Asian British' ethnic background were more likely than those from a 'White (including those from White minorities)' ethnic

background to spontaneously report being satisfied because their Kickstart job provided 'good experience / boosted confidence' and provided 'good opportunity for skills development'. Thirty-eight percent of 'Asian or Asian British' Leavers at seven months said that it provided 'good experience / boosted confidence' compared to 28% of 'White (including those from White minorities)' Leavers at seven months.

Young people with a health condition that substantially impacted their daily life who were satisfied with their Kickstart job were more likely to credit this with having 'good support available' —24% of Leavers at seven months, compared to just 15% with no long-term health conditions.

'Good support available' was also more likely to be mentioned as a driver of satisfaction for females than males (20% of female Leavers at seven months versus 15% of male Leavers at seven months).

### **Reasons for dissatisfaction with Kickstart job**

Where Kickstart participants were less satisfied with their job role, reasons they spontaneously offered for this centred on being 'unhappy with how they were treated', 'poor management', 'limited development opportunities', and 'pay issues'. In qualitative research, some young people described the monotony of their day-to-day work, having an unclear job role, feeling unnecessary in their role, feeling unsupported, and having limited opportunity to develop new skills. It was evident that in some instances employers had not fully thought through the Kickstart role and how to maximise the experience for the young person.

Overall, 'unhappiness with how they were treated' was the most common reason young people were dissatisfied with their Kickstart jobs (36% of Leavers at seven months who were dissatisfied). In qualitative interviews, young people described this as encompassing several aspects including their role being unfulfilling; having lots of responsibility; doing overtime or more than they felt they were being paid for; a sense that the role did not match the job description; and thinking they were dealt with unfairly when ill.<sup>25</sup>

"I have been told my work — no matter how monotonous it may be at times — does matter. However, I have trouble visualizing the difference my work makes because I have been so uninvolved with the other aspects of my company... I like the work I am doing, but I feel stressed due to having so much of it."

(Young person, 24, Research Assistant)

"Management were trying to say it was my fault that I caught COVID. They said I did it on purpose to get off work. I missed 12 hours of work and they took the money from my wage. I don't know if they are allowed to do that."

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<sup>25</sup> Young people may not have been aware that Statutory Sick Pay is not available unless there has been four days' absence, which may have been reflected in their contract. [Statutory Sick Pay \(SSP\) : Eligibility - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/statutory-sick-pay-ssp)

(Young person, 21, Retail)

The quality of ‘support from the employer’ was also a common reason given for being dissatisfied with their Kickstart jobs. Other reasons offered included ‘poor management’ (23% of those Leavers at seven months who were dissatisfied); ‘poor or limited training’ (20% of Leavers at seven months who were dissatisfied); and ‘lack of help/support’ (17% of Leavers at seven months who were dissatisfied). In terms of a ‘lack of help/support’, this was more likely to be spontaneously reported as an issue by young people with a condition that impacted daily life substantially (30% of Leavers at seven months dissatisfied with their job compared to 15% with no long-term health issues).

In qualitative interviews, when discussing support from their employer, some young people said they felt their manager was not available or accessible. Often, the young person was working from home and managers were perceived to be busy. Some young people felt that their level of responsibility outweighed the training and support provided to guide them in their role.

“I feel like I do so much work, even more than I’m supposed to and it’s just taken for granted...I’ve had to just figure it out myself. The manager has not really taught me anything. If I’m unsure about something then I’ve been told to just message or call my manager but they never answer. Today I wrote something for the company’s social media, it took me a while suss it out and then after it was posted, my manager decided to change something and they deleted half of it. I had to redo everything all over again. I wasn’t given any support, just had to redo it. I would like them to actually take the time out to help me with things instead of dumping the work on me and just leaving me to try do it all myself and then ignore me when I message for help.”

(Young person, 22, Mortgage Assistant)

“Most of the time I was given a task, did it and got a little bit of feedback but everyone’s really busy with their own workload. I’d like to feel less on my own ... I sometimes feel like a bit of an outsider ... I know there’s a job sheet with all the jobs that need doing, and I don’t have access to it, so I’m at the mercy of being given something to do ... I want to do things every day where I’m useful.”

(Young person, 25, Graphic Design)

The quality of the Kickstart role was also a reason for dissatisfaction, whether the role was viewed as a ‘poor/basic experience’ (15% of Leavers at seven months who were dissatisfied) or the ‘job title or description was misleading’ (16% of Leavers at seven months who were dissatisfied). In the qualitative interviews, some young people felt that roles were not set up for the training and support required by Kickstart. In a few worst-case examples, some felt their role was illegitimate or they were treated unfairly.

“There is a promise [of support] but in reality what is given to you is very little especially with training. There was a red flag. They said ‘we need you to [fill out this training schedule] otherwise we will get into trouble. We had to pick out training from our general work ... so like a team meeting was communication skills ‘training’. That is a cop out. They get paid for training of staff they are giving for free...”

(Young person, 24, Paralegal)

### **Whether Kickstart jobs aligned with skills young people had or wished to develop**

The majority of young people agreed their Kickstart job matched their existing work skills (68% of Starters; 60% of Leavers at seven months) and/or allowed development of skills they wanted (77% of Starters; 69% of Leavers at seven months).

Young people were even more positive that the scheme had provided the opportunity to develop good working relationships with others. Four-fifths of Starters (83%) and Leavers at seven months (78%) agreed their relationship with colleagues was good.

## **Job specification**

### **Occupation type**

Kickstart jobs were spread across a range of occupation types. The most common type of role was an administrative occupation (18% of Leavers at seven months), as shown in Table 4.2. Business and public service associate professional roles accounted for the jobs held by 16% of Leavers at seven months, followed by sales occupations, which accounted for the jobs held by 11% of Leavers at seven months. These types of occupation are classed as Skill Level 2 or 3<sup>26</sup>. Elementary administration and service occupations are classed as lower-skill level roles, accounting for around a tenth of Kickstart jobs (11% of Leavers at seven months).

**Table 4.1 Kickstart jobs by occupation type (most common)<sup>27</sup>**

	<b>Skill Level</b>	<b>All Leavers at seven months (n=11,665)</b>
<b>Administrative occupations</b>	<b>2</b>	18%
<b>Business and public service associate professionals</b>	<b>3</b>	16%
<b>Sales occupations</b>	<b>2</b>	11%

<sup>26</sup> Each SOC classification has an associated skill level, 1 is lower-skill roles and 4 the highest. Skill levels are based on the time thought necessary to become fully competent in the job.

<sup>27</sup> Respondents were asked open questions to ascertain their job title, duties, and responsibilities. These responses have been coded to place each job in a Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 2020 group as developed by the Office for National Statistics. [SOC 2020 - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

<b>Elementary administration and service occupations</b>	<b>1</b>	11%
<b>Caring personal service occupations</b>	<b>2</b>	7%
<b>Culture, media, and sports occupations</b>	<b>3</b>	6%

C2. What is/was your Kickstart job title? C3. What do/did you mainly do in your Kickstart job?  
Occupation types accounting for 5% of jobs or fewer not shown.

By occupation type, Leavers who were satisfied with their Kickstart job were slightly more likely to work in administrative occupations (20% compared to 15% who were dissatisfied) and sales occupations (12% compared to 8%). Leavers who were dissatisfied were more likely to work in business and public service associate roles (19% compared to 16% amongst satisfied Leavers), and elementary administration and service occupations (13% compared to 10% amongst satisfied Leavers).

### Hours worked

The Kickstart Scheme funded jobs for 25 hours per week, and most young people worked at least this much. Two-thirds of Leavers (66%) at seven months worked 25 hours on average per week in their Kickstart job.

Some young people worked for more than the funded hours (24% of Leavers at seven months). From the qualitative research, it was evident that there were practical reasons behind this and generally the young person was appropriately compensated. For example:

- it was written into their contract and paid for by employer
- the young person was offered paid overtime on top of contracted hours
- if overtime was required on job, the young person was given time off *in lieu*

In several cases, however, young people described being expected to work unpaid overtime to get their tasks done (generally in organisations where they felt unpaid overtime was prevalent). In one case, a young person described having done a lot of unpaid overtime in a law firm in the hope of securing a full-time, permanent contract at the end of the Kickstart job.

Although only a minority, some young people worked for fewer than the funded hours (9% of Leavers at seven months). Leavers at seven months with a health condition that impacted daily life substantially were more likely not to work the full funded hours (16% compared to 8% of those with no long-term health issues). One JCP staff member described how many of the young people they worked with health conditions, particularly mental health conditions, were only looking to work 16 hours. In response, their marketing team worked with employers to try and raise awareness of the demand for Kickstart jobs with fewer hours. Kickstart scheme guidance was adapted to allow young people to be employed for less than 25 hours per week in a Kickstart role as a reasonable adjustment.



### **Whether paid the National Minimum Wage (NMW)**

Three-quarters of young people were paid the National Minimum Wage (NMW) for their age<sup>28</sup> in their Kickstart job (76% of Leavers at seven months).<sup>29</sup> However, a very small proportion reported they were paid lower than the NMW for their age (3% of Leavers at seven months). One-in-six Leavers (16%) were paid above the NMW.

Generally, from the qualitative interviews, it was evident that the young people were pleased to have any work that was paid. This was particularly the case for people who were younger, living at home, were further from the labour market, or claiming Universal Credit for longer. However, many young people reported that the one thing they would change about the Kickstart job would be increasing pay.

Some young people reported that the pay was not enough for them to live independently to cover rent and living expenses. Kickstart salaries suited young people who were living in a family home with lower living costs.

For some, the experience offered through Kickstart was seen to be worth the low wage, but at other times, the experience did not live up to their expectations or was not worth the low remuneration.

“If you don’t have to pay rent, Kickstart is fantastic. If you are looking at a job and it says it is likely to end in a fulltime job then absolutely fantastic but if they can’t guarantee it then be wary.”

(Young person, 24, Communications and Digital Marketing)

“I was definitely seeing it as lower paid than all the jobs I’d been applying for, however it was something I thought I would probably get, and it was still a good salary amount. So I could get paid well and also get the experience that I needed”.

(Young person, 22, Digital Marketing Assistant)

In the qualitative interviews, there seemed to be no clear correlation between job satisfaction and satisfaction with pay. Several young people who were unsatisfied with pay felt satisfied about their Kickstart job experience, appreciating the experience and exposure, but also felt underpaid.

However, there appears to be a correlation between learning and development opportunities and pay satisfaction. Those who felt they had a better learning and

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<sup>28</sup> At the time of the survey, the NMW by age were:

- For those aged under 18: £4.81 per hour (equivalent to £168 per week or £729 per month or £8,754 a year if working a 35 hour week)
- For those aged 18 to 20: £6.83 per hour (equivalent to £232 per week or £1,007 per month or £12,092 a year if working a 35 hour week)
- For those aged 21 to 22: £9.18 per hour (equivalent to £287 per week or £1,247 per month or £14,975 a year if working a 35 hour week)
- For those aged 23 and over: £9.50 per hour (equivalent to £295 per week or £1,280 per month or £15,364 a year if working a 35 hour week).

<sup>29</sup> As a condition of releasing grant payments, DWP confirmed via wage slips or administrative data that young people were paid the full NMW for 25 hours. There is no direct evidence from the research to explain why some young people reported this was not the case.

development experiences seemed more satisfied with their pay. However, those who received less training and development opportunities, had less support, were working from home, and/or had lots of responsibility were more likely to report feeling underpaid. Some mentioned that their colleagues were being paid more for doing the same tasks or felt the employer has used Kickstart to get a lot of work from the young person while giving little back.

### **Profile of Kickstart jobs by type of employer**

Seven-in-ten Leavers at seven months (70%) had their Kickstart job with a private organisation or business in their Kickstart job, 13% for charity or not-for-profit organisation, and 6% for a public sector organisation.

Over half worked in an organisation with between two and 49 other employees (34% two to nine employees, 23% ten-to-49 employees). A small proportion (8%) worked in a mid-size organisation with 50-to-249 other workers, and 10% in large organisations with 250 workers or more. For a small minority (4%), it was just them and their boss.

### **Travel to Kickstart job**

A fifth of young people did not have to travel to their Kickstart job, presumably as they were working from home (19% of Leavers at seven months). For the majority of those who did travel the journey time was 30 minutes or less (55% of Leavers at seven months), although 6% of young people had to travel for an hour or more. The few in qualitative interviews that had longer journeys (up to 1.5 hours) felt this was manageable for the Kickstart period but did not feel sustainable if they were offered a permanent contract.

There was little difference in likelihood to work from home between those who were satisfied and dissatisfied with their job, or between those who left their Kickstart job early or completed it, indicating working from home was generally not a factor in satisfaction.

### **Perceived additionality of Kickstart jobs**

In order that the scheme avoid having a negative impact on the recruitment market more generally, and to provide value for money in public spending, Kickstart funding had to be for 'additional' positions in an organisation. Employers providing jobs through the scheme had to agree that the position(s) would:

1. Be funded by the Kickstart Scheme grant and not exist without this funding
2. Be paid from the grant money for the 25 hours per week on National Minimum Wage (employers can pay a higher wage and pay for more hours)
3. Not replace existing or planned positions
4. Not cause existing employees or contractors to lose or reduce their employment

A 'position' describes a specific vacancy that can be filled by an individual. In a company, one FTE person fills one FTE 'position'. Determining the extent to which a

position was additional or, in some cases, whether it was additional at all is challenging. Exploring additionality requires consideration of the specifics of the job role; the surrounding workforce and their roles; the employer's circumstance; and whether there was a change to usual circumstance due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. DWP staff who participated in the research generally acknowledged that it was difficult to operationalise help for employers and through gateways in identifying/creating wholly additional job opportunities. How 'additionality' was described by some employers implied that they interpreted the guidance as saying that completely new roles and tasks needed to be created for young people, rather than new positions that added value. To add further complexity, whether a position was additional could change over time (for example, if the context shifted post-approval).

Through qualitative interviews with young people on the Kickstart Scheme, and by exploring experiences of their roles and interactions with colleagues, different extents to which positions could be considered 'additional' emerged. This was further supported in interviews with employers and gateways. The characteristics pointing to positions with greater additionality and those with lesser additionality are explored below.

### **Examples and evidence pointing to Kickstart jobs with greater additionality**

- **New position and role (tasks performed) which added value:** In these cases, the job role had been newly created, and performed tasks the organisation had not delivered previously but added value (for example, contributed to business growth). For these positions, young people felt they were doing tasks that otherwise no one would be performing, and they were still involved in working with permanent staff some of the time
- **New position, bringing focus to tasks / a work area the organisation was not able to dedicate enough time to previously:** For these positions, the tasks may have existed previously, but were usually spread across other team members struggling for time. This meant the Kickstart employee was adding value, by enabling existing staff to perform their job roles better and allowing some businesses to develop/improve work strands

"Before I was there it was an on the side job for anyone that had the login details for the Facebook page ... there was no consistency between posts and different platforms, which is something I decided to bring early on into my role — making sure there is a branding guideline for social media so making sure posts on Facebook have the same tone as Instagram."

(Young person, 24, Communications and Digital Marketing)

"Kickstart has given us more bandwidth to do things, either developing systems and processes ... we have been able to beef up our Gift Aid collection process which is now much more robust. We have more capacity and time to do those sorts of things, that we didn't have before."

(Employer, Charity)

- **Position and role previously fulfilled by volunteers:** Some young people and employers mentioned a position and role existed previously but was done by unpaid volunteers. The introduction of Kickstart added economic value by providing wages and by freeing up volunteering hours for additional duties.
- **Employer was struggling to recruit for the position through usual channels:** Some employers described positions that they had been advertising for a while and had been unable to fill. Reasons for this difficulty included low demand for the roles and/or the absence of the necessary skills. For the latter, Kickstart put employers in a better financial position to hire and train someone up (as opposed to needing an employee to have the skills upfront). It was part of the requirements that Kickstart jobs should *not* replace existing vacancies. However, it should still be noted that in these circumstances this did have economic value because without Kickstart there would not have been anyone else doing these roles.
- **Employer was otherwise unable to fund the position fulfilling a valuable role:** Some employers talked about needing the role but being financially unable to fulfil it prior to Kickstart. Likewise, a very small number of cases, employers spoke about previously needing to make the staff filling these roles redundant (usually in the wake of COVID-19). As a result of being unable to fund these positions, some employers had been struggling to deliver their service or run the business effectively. Kickstart funding allowed employers to fill these roles, and to (re-)build business strength.

#### **Examples and evidence pointing to Kickstart jobs with less additionality**

- **Position existed previously, but employee fulfilling it had recently left:** Although rare in qualitative interviews, there were some instances of employers feeling Kickstart ‘came at the right time’ to simply replace a staff member that had just left with a Kickstart-funded position. Without Kickstart, the employer would have simply hired and funded the position as usual. One example of this was for a receptionist position, which the employer was just about to recruit for before Kickstart was introduced.
- **Position new but not needed / adding value:** In these cases, the young people felt they were performing tasks that were unnecessary and/or adding little no value. They felt their job descriptions were unclear and there was little guidance or support offered. For example, one young person worked in a creche and said the employer had no need for more staff. This young person was helping staff members whenever they appeared to need it; they almost felt as though their employer was just doing them a favour by hiring them through Kickstart, as they were adding little in return. It is important to note that this group is hard to identify with certainty from the perspective of a young person. As one Kickstart employee flagged:

“I have been told my work — no matter how monotonous it may be at times — does matter.”

(Young person, 24, Research Assistant)

- **Kickstart employee taking shifts away from other workers:** One employer mentioned that they hired Kickstart employees into roles which were otherwise fulfilled by workers on zero-hours contracts. This employer described how Kickstart employees were giving consistency to a role, but without them, the shifts would have been filled by workers they had on the roster (hence, Kickstart young people were reducing the availability of work for others)

### **Experience of additional positions**

As a possible by-product of positions being created for the purpose of being overtly 'additional', several Kickstart participants described themselves as 'working alone' on discrete tasks that did not require input from others. This could be the case even though they were officially placed within a team. By their nature, positions where the tasks themselves were additional could be delivered quite independently from other roles within the organisation. While some enjoyed the independence, others felt isolated and unsupported as a result. This interpretation and implementation of the additionality requirement left some young people feeling as though they were not needed or valued.

"I feel that the Kickstarter job has been randomly carved out for me because of the nature of Kickstarter not being a job that replaces another job, so I find myself feeling like I don't know what I'm doing or projects/tasks not being fully thought out for me by my boss, sometimes this can make me feel anxious and nervous especially when I then make a mistake because I don't know what I'm doing."

(Young person, age unknown, Events Supervisor)

## **Experience of those that left their Kickstart job before completing the full six months**

### **Leavers at seven months who had not completed full six-month job**

Over two-thirds (67%) of young people completed the full six months of their Kickstart job.

Almost two-thirds (67%) of Leavers at seven months who were dissatisfied with their Kickstart job left before the six-month job ended compared to only 19% of those who were satisfied with the job.

Around half (47%) of those with a health condition that substantially impacted daily life left early compared to 28% of those with no reported health condition.

Those also less likely to complete the full six months included:

- female Leavers (35% compared to 29% of male Leavers at seven months)
- those from an ethnic minority (excluding 'White minorities') (33%, rising to 41% of those from a 'Black, African, Caribbean or Black British' ethnic background compared to 31% of Leavers who were 'White (including White minorities)')
- Leavers with lower or no qualifications (36% compared to 29% of those with at least Level 3 qualifications (for example, two A-Levels)

Among the 32% of Leavers at seven months who had not completed the six-month job ‘receiving another job offer’ or the ‘employer terminating the role’ were similarly likely to be a reason for leaving early (for 22% and 21% respectively).

**Case study: “Nothing met my expectations about the Kickstart job”**

Maya was working in a Business Administration role at an Apprenticeship company. Prior to Kickstart, she was doing voluntary work while claiming Universal Credit for a few months. Her work coach helped her find this Kickstart role as it aligned with her degree in Business Studies, and it fitted her long-term plan. Through the role, she was hoping to develop existing skills and gain new knowledge and experience.

Maya did not get an introduction to the organisation and did not understand what the other staff did.

She managed her own tasks, usually spending her day-to-day on the phone calling apprentices to see how their apprenticeship was going, or employers to see if they were interested in hiring. Maya quite liked this task as it involved speaking with different people and arranging interviews. However, she felt the office environment was dull and she was frustrated when she was specifically told not to walk around the office and interact with her colleagues.

There was little direction or support from her manager, who worked across multiple sites and was not there when they needed help. She felt senior staff were not approachable and did not listen to her. *“It was my first job; they could have put more support into it”*.

After four months, Maya and the other Kickstart employee decided to leave. She had not yet secured another job at the point of interview, but she felt confident this role would help her secure a similar role but in a more supportive team.

*“I would recommend the Kickstart Scheme, however I would tell them to go for something they would see themselves doing.”*

(Young person, 24, Business Administration)

‘Personal’ (10%) and ‘health’ (8%) reasons were less commonly mentioned. A small minority (3% of those who left early) reported they had ‘problems getting paid’.

‘Receiving another job offer’ was more likely to be the reason for leaving early among Leavers at seven months who:

- had a Level 4 or above qualification (35% compared to 15% with lower or no qualifications)
- had more than 12 months prior experience (29% compared to 13% of those with none)
- were aged 22-to-24 (25% compared to 19% of those aged 18-to-21), or
- who had short-term UC claims prior to Kickstart (26% versus 17% with long-term claims)

Male Leavers at seven months were also more likely to have left early as their 'employer had terminated the job' (26% compared to 16% of females).

Leavers at seven months with a health condition that impacted daily life substantially were more likely to have left their Kickstart job early due to their health (32% compared to 3% of Leavers at seven months with no reported health condition).

'Personal' reasons were more likely to be the reason for leaving early for those with lower or no qualifications (16% compared to 3% of those with a Level 4 or above qualification), no prior work experience (13% compared to 7% of those with at least 12 months experience) and 18-to-21 year olds (13% compared to 6% of those aged 22-to-24). These groups may have been facing complex personal or social situations.

For 13% of Leavers at seven months who left early, the Kickstart job had not matched their expectations.

The job not meeting expectations was most commonly spontaneously attributed as being due to an 'unprofessional work environment' (37% of those who had left early because the job did not match expectations), followed by a 'lack of training or support' (given by 27%), a 'misleading job description' (mentioned by 25%), or 'not enjoying the work or finding it did not suit them' (offered by 19%).

## Additional support and reasonable adjustments in Kickstart jobs

Many young people working in Kickstart jobs had additional needs and barriers, these included physical health conditions, mental health conditions, learning difficulties, neurological challenges, caring responsibilities, transport barriers, and language barriers.

Through the Kickstart job, additional support and reasonable adjustments could be provided by employers, gateways, or work coaches. In the qualitative interviews, many employers stated they had provided additional support or flexibility as well as more formal reasonable adjustments.

Support offered varied for different needs:

- Mental health conditions were common. Support was offered through signposting to support programmes, enrolling in the organisation's employee assistance programme, and referring to counselling outside the organisation
- anxiety was a widespread issue. Some employers recognised that young people had additional needs. Employers offered support to these young people, for example, through close mentoring, regular wellbeing calls, and a gentle approach in professional development review meetings
- people with caring responsibilities were supported through adjusting working hours, offering flexible working hours, and the possibility of working from home

- some young people needed additional help with literacy and numeracy skills. Employers provided this, for example in one case, by offering extra support to navigate training websites
- employers described being more lenient in terms of punctuality, absence, and managing performance issues delicately for individuals with mental health conditions or caring responsibilities

### **Case study: good practice example**

Fran worked in a recruitment agency.

On a day-to-day basis her responsibilities included matching CVs in a database to job specifications to find the right candidate and writing job adverts.

She felt valued because of the responsibilities she was given.

She also felt supported. During her Kickstart job, she was diagnosed with epilepsy, and the manager was flexible, allowing Fran to take as much time off as she needed.

The manager also worked hard to provide reasonable adjustments by ensuring the office was epilepsy-safe. Furthermore, the assistant manager held a first aid training course, so the staff knew what to do should she ever have a seizure in the office.

She developed useful and transferable customer service skills from her job. Towards the end of her Kickstart job, the employer sourced a suitable role within a different branch of the company. She is still working at this organisation and sees herself continuing her career there.

If she could change one thing, Fran would have liked there to be more support for young people's mental health and wellbeing; she felt this was particularly important post-pandemic.

Examples of more formal reasonable adjustments included:

- for one young person who was autistic, the employer adjusted their working position "to make sure that [they] were comfortable with the environment around [them]", which relaxed them greatly and reduced the risk of triggers adding difficulty to their day
- one employer provided genderless bathroom facilities available in the workplace for a transgender young person who was due to start
- one workplace, in a rural area, paid to hire a bus specifically for the young people working in their Kickstart jobs. They then matched the work rotas to the bus times

Across the interviews, some issues were raised by employers in terms of the support provided. For example, some employers reported they did not feel equipped to



support the young person’s mental health or anxiety needs because they had not had mental health training. Others described finding it difficult to be flexible or lenient.

There were a few examples where the Kickstart job ended early due to difficulties around additional needs, such as being off long-term due to illness or a lack of support or flexibility provided around childcare.

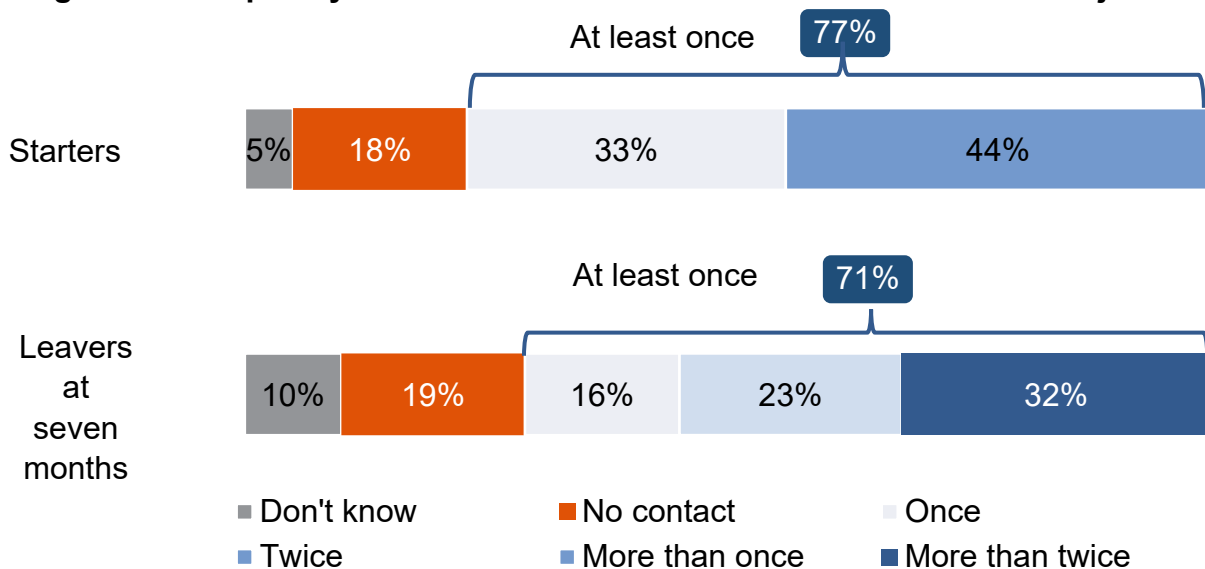
## Support from Jobcentre Plus

### Contact once started Kickstart job

Around three-quarters of young people had contact from their work coach or other JCP staff while on their Kickstart job (71% of Leavers at seven months).

Leavers with a health condition that substantially impacted their day-to-day activities were more likely to report having had contact with their work coach more than twice (38% compared to 32% of those without a health condition), as were those with no prior work experience (35% compared to 32% of those with any prior work experience).

**Figure 4.2 Frequency of contact from JCP staff since start of Kickstart job**



C9. Since the start of your Kickstart job, how frequently have you / did you have contact with your work coach or other staff from Jobcentre Plus? Base: All Starters (8,063), All Leavers at seven months (11,665)

In qualitative interviews, the majority of young people were happy with the support they received from their work coach. Young people appreciated check-ins during their Kickstart jobs and described feeling supported. These check-ins typically happened every month or two by phone call, a message on the Universal Credit account journal, or in one case, the work coach visiting the workplace. Check-ins functioned to make sure that young people were settling in, there were no issues or concerns with the role, and towards the end of the six-month job, to remind them to apply for roles after Kickstart. There were a few cases where the young person had additional needs, such as physical and mental health conditions, and their work coaches checked in more frequently.

As shown in Figure 4.2, almost a fifth (19% of Leavers at seven months) reported they had not been in touch with their work coach or JCP staff since starting their job.<sup>30</sup> Not having any contact with their work coach or JCP staff was more common among young people who were dissatisfied with their Kickstart job (Leavers at seven months who were dissatisfied 24% compared to 18% of those satisfied).

From the qualitative interviews, it was evident that some young people who had not had any contact with their work coach or with JCP staff felt forgotten about and alone once they were in employment; they had not known they could contact the work coach.

In many of these instances, the young person had been promised continued contact, but this had not been maintained by the work coach.

Although, as mentioned above, the overall majority of young people interviewed were happy with the support they received from their work coach or JCP staff, there were still pointers for areas where they would have liked more support. These included:

- more regular contact from the work coach once the Kickstart job had started, preferably every 3-4 weeks
- longer check-ins with the work coach to allow more open and honest conversations
- more coaching-style conversations from the work coach during check-ins, asking what they have learned and offering more support around applying for roles after the Kickstart job ended
- for the work coaches to check the employer was keeping to the Kickstart role laid out in the vacancy advert
- for the work coaches to check whether and how the employer was using the training budget, and to advise young people on how they could request training

Young people who had issues with their role and/or employer reported that they would have liked the work coaches to be more available and the Jobcentre to have worked harder to vet organisations offering Kickstart jobs. Several serious issues were raised such as unpaid overtime, employees not being able to take legal breaks, discrimination, and wage debt to an employee. It was felt these could have been picked up with more regular communication with work coaches.

From the work coaches' perspective, many mentioned that they would get in touch if issues were raised / questions asked through the young person's journal. Work

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<sup>30</sup> DWP extended the written direct communications material for young people in the Kickstart Scheme to try to improve the information available to young people about their employment rights and the support available. The following information was shared with young people:  
[https://jobhelp.campaign.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/KS\\_Young-People-Guide-3-2.pdf](https://jobhelp.campaign.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/KS_Young-People-Guide-3-2.pdf)

coaches felt the most common situations where they intervened between a young person and their employer was over issues of payment.

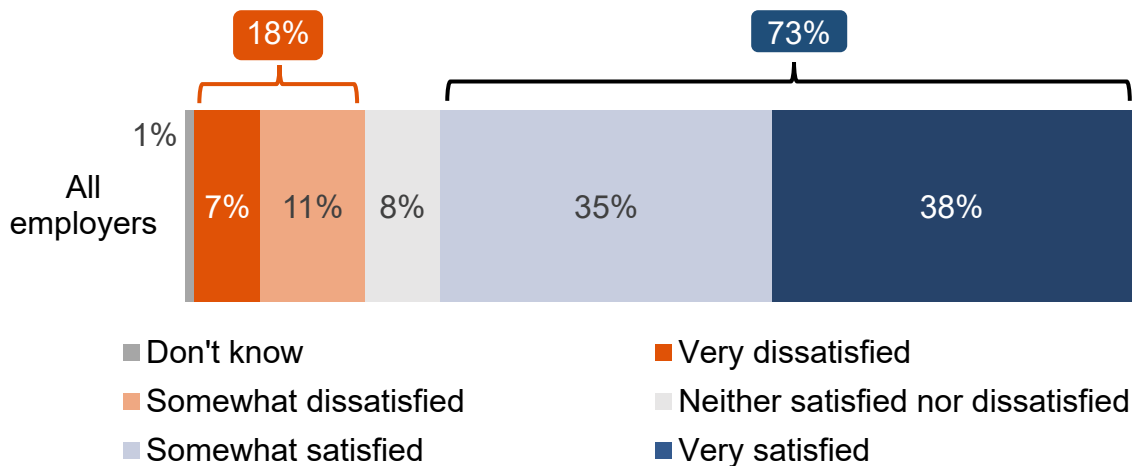
## Employer experience of Kickstart

A direct employer refers to an employer that applied to Kickstart directly online via the DWP. A gateway organisation employer (GOE) refers to an employer that applied to Kickstart through a ‘gateway’, an organisation acting as an intermediary to help employers manage their Kickstart Scheme grant.

### Employer satisfaction

Overall, employers felt positive about their Kickstart experience. As shown in Figure 4.3, 73% of employers were satisfied with their involvement.

**Figure 4.3 Employers’ satisfaction with participation in Kickstart**



D1. Overall, how satisfied do you feel about your organisation’s experience of participating in Kickstart? Base: All employers (1,008)

Employer satisfaction was higher among:

- public or third sector organisations (83% compared with 70% of those in the private sector)
- direct employers (77% compared with 71% of GOEs)<sup>31</sup>
- large organisations (83% of those with 250+ paid employees were satisfied, compared with 72% of those with 1-to-9 staff, 74% of those with 10-to-49, and 64% of those with 50-to-249)

Satisfaction also tended to increase with the number of filled Kickstart vacancies. Nearly all (95%) of those who filled more than 25 Kickstart vacancies were satisfied compared with 64% of those who filled only 1 vacancy.

<sup>31</sup> See Gateway experience of Kickstart, p.81 for discussion of reasons for dissatisfaction among GOEs.

## Reasons for satisfaction or dissatisfaction

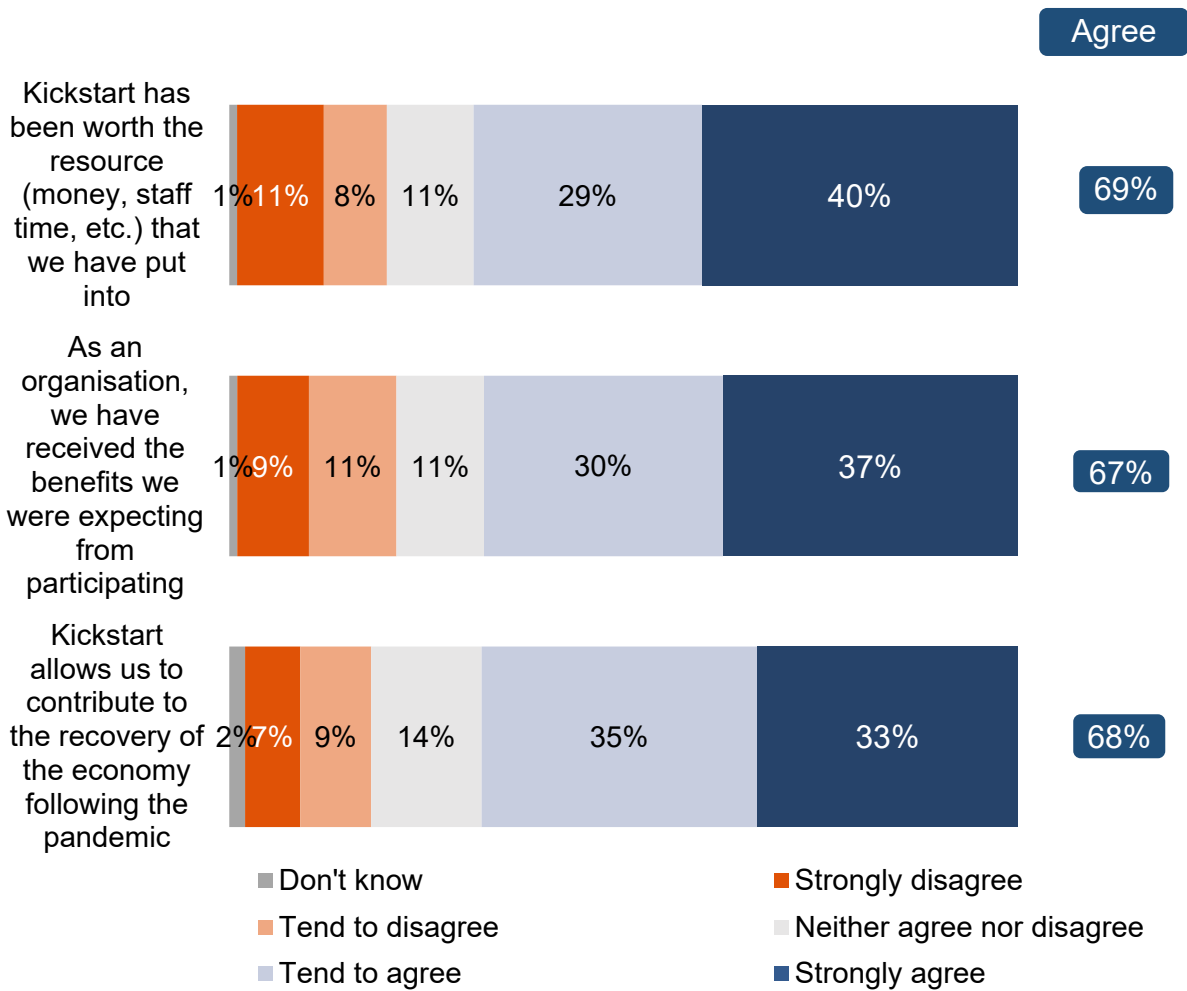
In addition to reconfirming general satisfaction with the scheme, employers spontaneously shared a variety of specific reasons for their satisfaction. Some employers felt their young person had been a 'good addition to their team' (17%), felt positive because they had 'offered employment opportunities after the programme' (16%), or because their involvement had 'provided a young person with employment experience or confidence' (16%).

The most frequently offered reason for dissatisfaction reported by employers was 'poor calibre candidates' (46% of dissatisfied employers). The 'process being inefficient or complicated' was reported by almost a third of those dissatisfied (32%) and a 'lack of candidates' by just over one-in-five (22%).

Almost seven-in-ten employers (69%) agreed that Kickstart had been worth the resource (such as money or staff time) that they had put into it, as shown in Figure 4.4. Two-thirds (67%) also agreed they had received the benefits they were expecting from participating in Kickstart.

A similar proportion of employers believed both that Kickstart had allowed them to contribute to the recovery of the economy following the pandemic (68%).

**Figure 4.4 Employer agreement with statements about value of Kickstart**



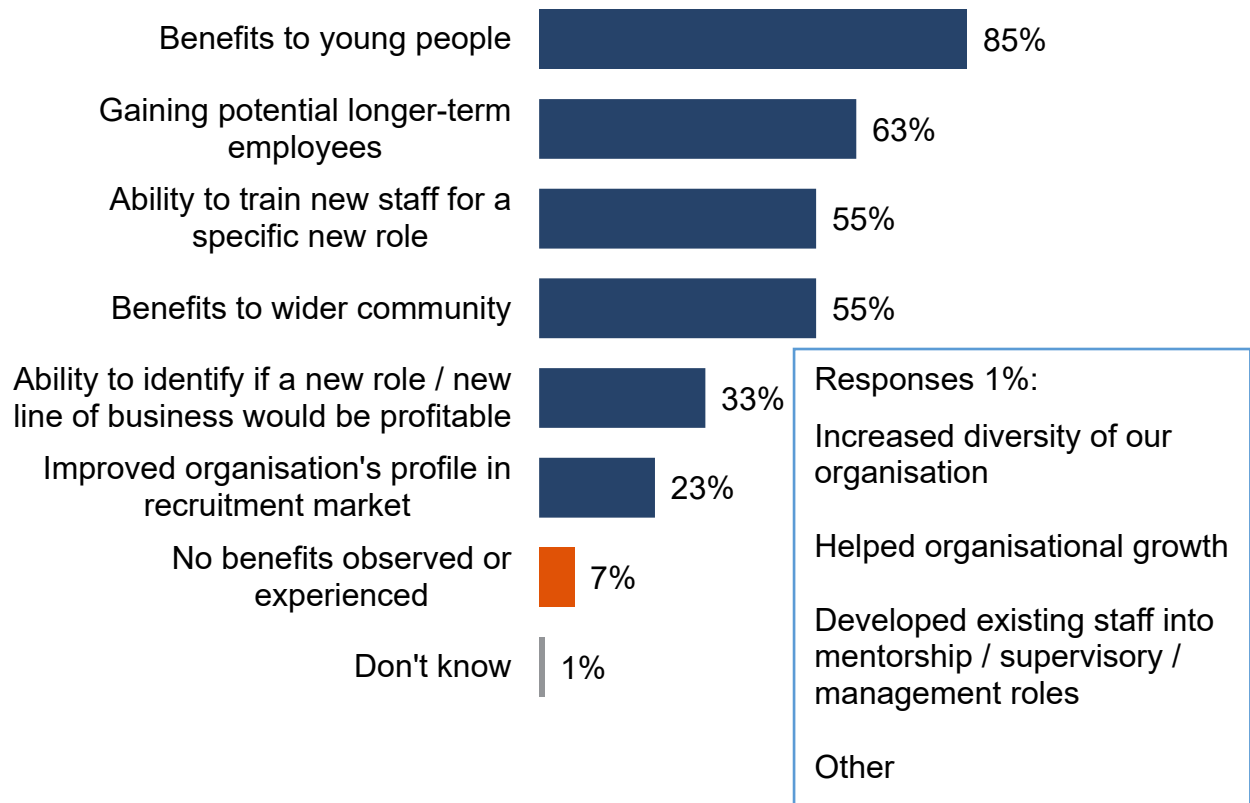
D3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: All Employers (1,008)

### Experienced benefits for employers

The majority of employers felt that Kickstart had delivered benefits to young people, to themselves and to the wider community (Figure 4.5).

Only 7% of employers did not perceive any of these benefits, though this rose to 14% among those who filled only one Kickstart vacancy (14%).

**Figure 4.5 Employers’ observed or experienced benefits as a result of participating in Kickstart**



D4. Which of the following benefits have you observed or experienced as a result of participating in Kickstart? Base: All employers (1,008)

Over four-fifths of employers (85%) felt that they had observed or experienced benefits to young people as a result of participating in Kickstart. Other benefits observed or experienced by more than half of employers included gaining potential longer-term employees (63%), the ability to train new staff for a specific new role (55%) and benefits to the wider community (55%), as shown in Figure 4.5.

Improvement in the organisation’s profile in the recruitment market was a benefit mentioned more often by employers who filled more Kickstart vacancies (51% of those who filled 26 or more compared to only 14% of those who filled 1 vacancy).

In qualitative interviews, the main benefit employers discussed was having additional staff at no financial cost to the business.

A few employers described how the scheme more broadly added value by creating an opportunity to expand their workforce and/or workstreams where they would not otherwise have been able to.

“They [young people] have been a massive benefit to the business because they have allowed the business to focus on winning contracts and growth”

(Employer, recruitment agency)

**Case study: “The Kickstart employees have been extremely valuable”**

*“[They] helped us so much in a really busy period because our peak period is November, December. So, the fact that they were there to enable that, and that we’d had them a couple of months before to get them to the level we needed, meant that we could fill all the roles that were expected at that stage.”* Kickstart employees brought value by taking responsibility for the large volumes of enquiries the business has received through its campaign of advertising, calling prospective warehouse/industrial site employees and determining whether they are suitable to be signed up.

*“Turnover for the last few months has been as much as the whole of the first year because of the increased staff through Kickstart. Without the Kickstart, the business would have struggled with resources, and it would have been hard to fill the positions that we needed to fill, so I think it’s been really valuable.”*

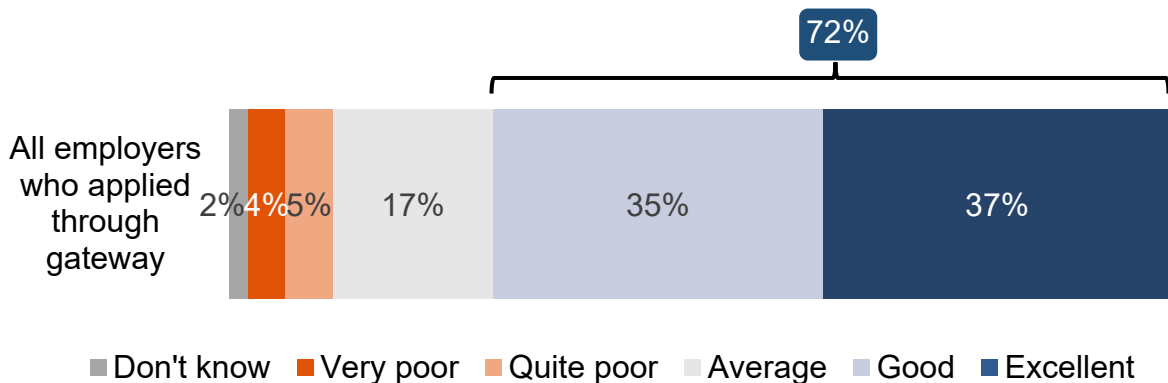
(Employer, small business, Recruitment)

The social value of participating was mentioned by some employers who valued their role in helping young people in their community, building their confidence, skills, and social relationships, and helping them get ready to enter the labour market in a salaried role.

**Employer experience of gateways**

Thirty-seven per cent of employers rated their gateway as excellent and a further 35% as good, meaning 72% gave a positive rating overall. Just under one-in-ten (9%) Employers rated their gateway as “quite poor” or “very poor”, as shown in Figure 4.6.

**Figure 4.6 Employer rating of gateway organisation**



D7. How would you rate your gateway organisation? Base: All employers who applied through gateway (462)

Almost three-in-five employers (59%) who rated their gateway organisation as poor felt that they could have improved their communication, while two-in-five (40%) felt they should have provided more training. Ten per cent of employers who rated their

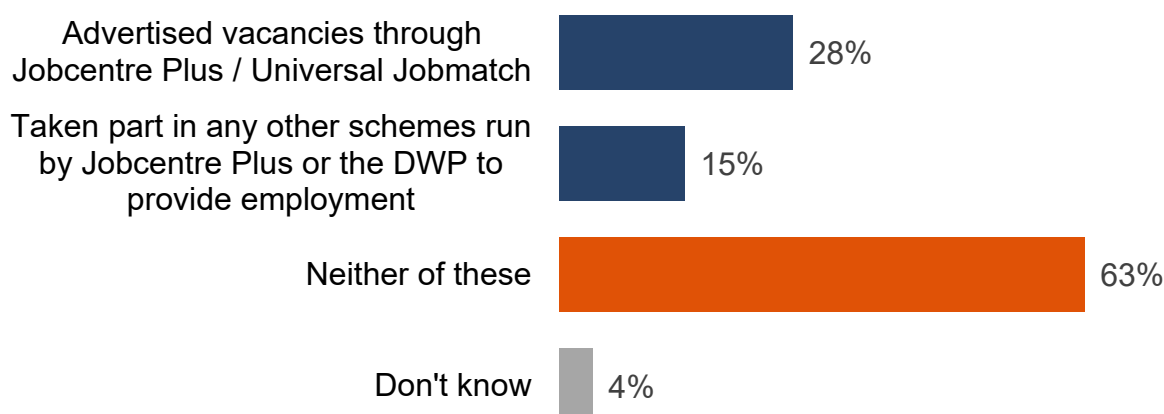
gateway poor thought they could have improved on delivering on promises made, and a similar proportion (9%) felt that their gateway should have taken less money or ensured that all the training funds were allocated to the young person.

When explaining why they found their gateway organisation to be good or excellent, half (50%) reported their gateway had effective and timely communication with DWP and them as the employer. Two-in-five (40%) found their gateway to be helpful, informative, or supportive. A quarter (24%) reported prompt administration or that their gateway was organised.

## Employers' future intentions

Prior to their involvement in Kickstart, almost two-thirds of employers had neither advertised vacancies through Jobcentre Plus / Universal Jobmatch or taken part in any other schemes run by Jobcentre Plus or the DWP to provide employment, as shown in Figure 4.7. This demonstrates the success of Kickstart in encouraging new employers to consider recruiting unemployed people.

**Figure 4.7 Employer activities with DWP pre-Kickstart**



D10. Before your involvement with Kickstart, had your organisation ever...? Base: All Employers (1,008)

Employers were more likely to have had no prior involvement with Jobcentre Plus / DWP if they were:

- small (77% of those with 1-to-9 paid employees compared to 25% of those with 250+ employees)
- in the private sector (69% versus 47% of public or third sector)

The impact of positive experiences with Kickstart is evident in the fact that many were willing to consider participating in similar initiatives in the future. Three-quarters (74%) of employers would be willing to help with another DWP employability scheme in the future and a similar proportion (72%) would be willing to provide work experience to young unemployed people through Jobcentre Plus / DWP. Similar numbers would be willing to recruit young people through JCP into permanent roles in their organisation (71%), provide work experience to unemployed or under-



employed groups (69%) and to recruit other unemployed groups through JCP (68%) Only 5% said they would not be willing to help in any of the areas outlined.

In qualitative interviews, the majority of employers who reported a positive experience would happily repeat the scheme or get involved with a similar future scheme. In contrast, the minority whose overall experiences were negative would not sign up again.

## **Employers with young people who left before completing the full six months**

At the time of survey, 42% of employers reported that at least one of their Kickstart employees had left their role early, without completing the full six months of the job. A third of all employers (33%) said that at least one of the Kickstart employees had taken on had left early of their own choice by the point of the survey.

### **Reasons for dismissal**

Among all employers, at the point when they were surveyed, 18% had dismissed at least one Kickstart employee. Employers were asked about the factors that contributed to their decision to dismiss their Kickstart employee(s). The most commonly reported factor was poor attendance (70% of employers who had dismissed a young person). Poor performance was the second most common factor in the decision to dismiss a young person (58%).

The next most commonly reported reason for employee dismissal was poor performance, with 58% of employers who had dismissed a young person reporting this as a contributing factor.

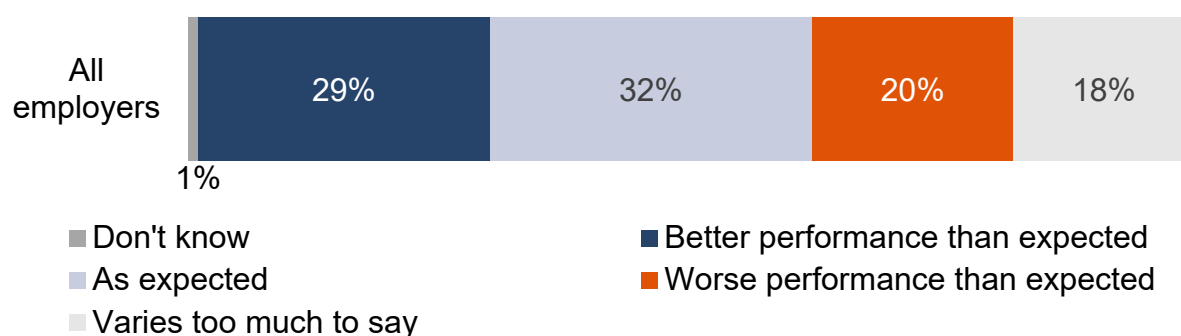
A third (33%) of employers who had dismissed at least one Kickstart employee did so due to misconduct, and 3% due to safety concerns.

## **Outcomes with Kickstart employees**

Almost three-in-ten employers (29%) had Kickstart employees who, on average, performed better than their expectations (Figure 4.8). This was more frequently reported among organisations who:

- were larger (38% of those with 250+ paid employees compared to 28% of those with 1-9 employees)
- took on more young people (45% of those who filled 26 or more Kickstart vacancies)

**Figure 4.8 Performance of Kickstart employees compared to employers' expectations**



C10. On average, how did your initial expectations of Kickstart employees at the time of hiring compare to their overall performance while in their roles? Base: All employers (1,008)

Just under a third of employers (32%) had Kickstart employees who performed as expected. A fifth (20%) had Kickstart employees who performed worse than expected. This was notably higher for those that were dissatisfied with the scheme (59%), indicating that young people's performance linked to overall satisfaction within the scheme.

Just under a fifth (18%) of employers noted that the average performance of young people varied too much to say how it compared to their initial expectations.

#### **Job offers and acceptance after Kickstart**

Overall, 75% of employers with young people who had completed Kickstart jobs had offered at least one of them a permanent job.

Employers who were more likely to have made a job offer to at least one young person were:

- those in the business and administrative and health and education sectors (both 81%)
- larger organisations (96% of those with 250+ paid employees compared with 64% of those with 1-to-9 employees)

A quarter (24%) had not made job offers to any of the young people completing their job. This was more common among employers:

- in the private sector (27% versus 20% public or third sector)
- who were dissatisfied with Kickstart overall (47%)
- in the South of England (29%)
- in professional, science, and tech sectors (34%)

## Post Kickstart jobs offered by employers

At the point when they were surveyed, employers had offered jobs to approximately one-in-six young people who had started a Kickstart job with them (17%).<sup>32</sup>

At the time of the survey almost half (49%) of employers still had young people in Kickstart jobs. It is therefore likely that the proportion of young people who were offered Kickstart jobs at the end of the scheme increased from the point when employers were surveyed, as greater numbers of young people became “eligible” to be offered jobs following the completion of the six-month Kickstart role (as indicated by the findings from the surveys with young people).

Nearly all (95%) of the jobs employers offered to young people post Kickstart were accepted.<sup>33</sup>

For the most part, when employers had made job offers to young people, they expected to meet the costs of their wages themselves. Among employers who had a post-Kickstart job offer taken up, only 9% expected to receive any other external funding to subsidise the wages of this young person beyond the first six months of the Kickstart job. This proportion was much lower among private sector employers (5% versus 21% in the public or third sector).

A minority of gateways provided some financial support for employers taking on young people after the end of Kickstart. 15% of gateways had provided or facilitated additional funding to their employers.

In the qualitative interviews, employers with young people who had moved into a permanent position within the company had mostly asked young people to continue their Kickstart role or continue it with additional responsibilities. An example of where an employer felt this worked particularly well is detailed in the case study below.

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<sup>32</sup> 3% of employers were unable or unwilling to report how many young people they had employed with Kickstart jobs, and 3% of employers who offered permanent jobs after Kickstart were unsure or unwilling to report the number offered.

<sup>33</sup> 2% of those who offered at least one job were unsure or unwilling to report the number accepted.

**Case study: “This is what the scheme is meant to do”**

The young person, age 19, was employed by a logistics company. He had very little work experience and no formal qualifications, so was initially employed in the warehouse division, doing manual labour.

As part of his training and employability support, he was given some management training, which he excelled at. He learned supervisory skills and progressed, during his job, to a more managerial role within the warehouse. After his job ended, he was offered a different role, helping other young people who were starting out on the Kickstart Scheme, in a more managerial and supervisory capacity. When the scheme ends, the employer plans to transition him into a more general management role and ready him for a leadership position.

The employer viewed this young person as an excellent example of how Kickstart should work; they had taken a young person with no formal qualifications or experience and given them the chance to excel.

(Young person, 19, Logistics)

Other employers reported in qualitative interviews that they would have liked to offer young people a job but could not afford the salary. In such cases, they gave a good reference and so knew when the young person had secured a job. In most cases, employers reported that the young person was able to secure a job doing similar work to their Kickstart job, showing that the experience had helped them gain other employment.

## Gateway experience of Kickstart

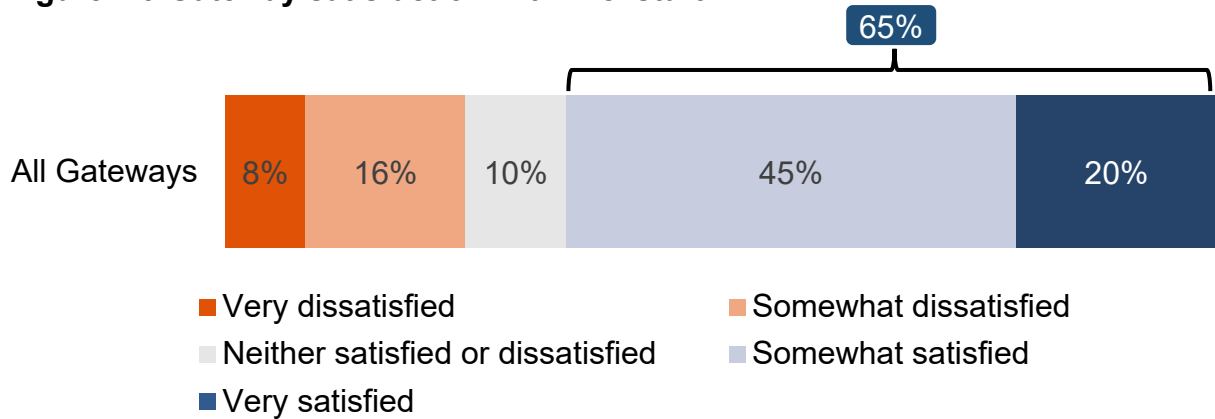
### Benefits of being a gateway

One fifth (20%) of gateways were very satisfied with Kickstart, as shown in Figure 4.9. A further 45% were somewhat satisfied, meaning an overall satisfaction rate of 65%.

Just over a third of gateways who were satisfied (37%) spontaneously reported that the main factor was the provision of opportunities to young people. This was even higher among charity or not-for-profit organisations (46% versus 30% central or local government and 33% private sector). For 18%, satisfaction was reported to be driven by seeing successful candidates achieve full-time positions with their employer.

Satisfaction was considerably lower among those who filled fewer Kickstart jobs than expected (43%), and among those who filled fewer than 30 Kickstart vacancies (51%).

**Figure 4.9 Gateway satisfaction with Kickstart**

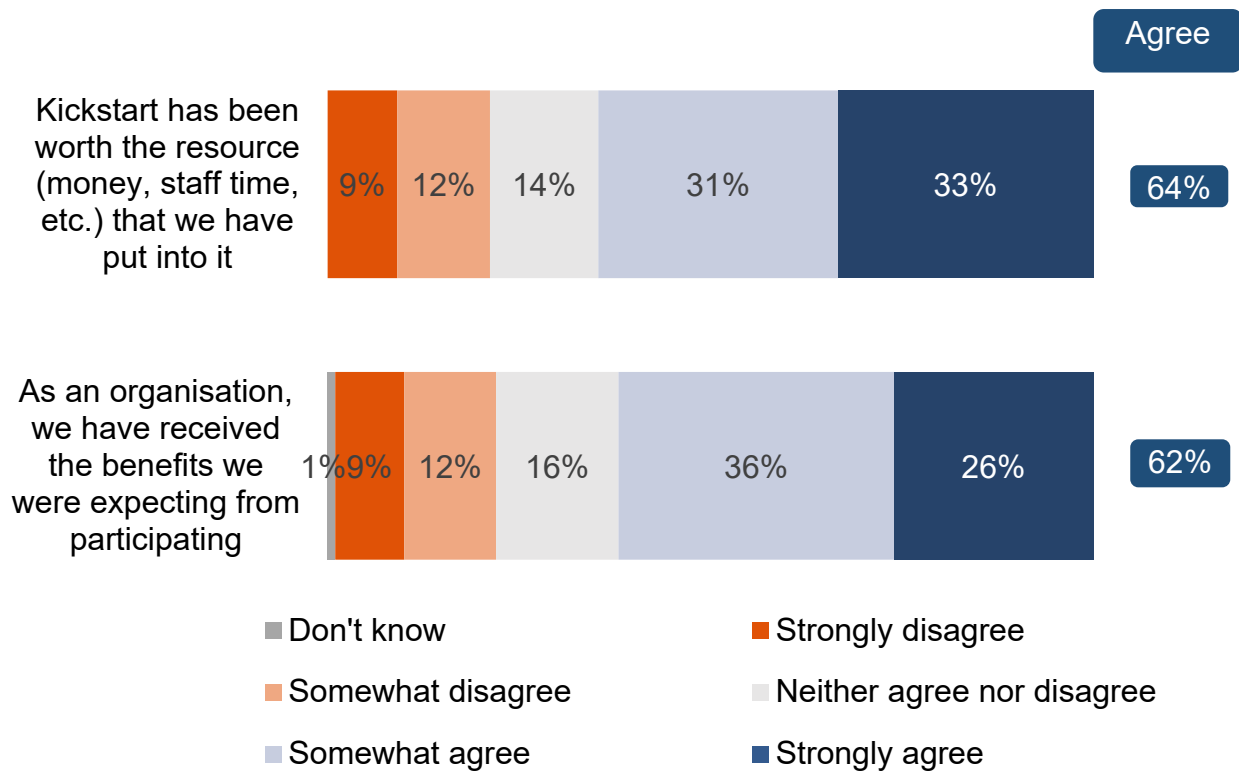


D1. Overall, how satisfied is your organisation with Kickstart? Base: All gateways (401)

Among those who were dissatisfied, this was most often spontaneously reported as being due to problems with the programme administration or communication. Just over a fifth (22%) offered that their dissatisfaction was due to communication issues with the DWP/Jobcentre, a similar number (21%) noted poor organisation/management of the scheme by DWP, while 18% noted delays in the process.

Just under two-thirds of gateways (62%) agreed that their involvement had led to the benefits they were expecting, as shown in Figure 4.10. A similar proportion felt that their involvement had been worth the resources that they had put into it (64%).

**Figure 4.10 Gateway agreement with value statements**



D4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your experience of Kickstart as a gateway? Base: All gateways (401)

## Gateways’ future intentions

None of the issues that gateways experienced appeared to have been sufficient to make them reluctant to participate in future employment programmes. Over 80% of gateways indicated they would be willing to support the employment of disadvantaged groups by working with employers and with DWP again in various ways to support unemployed people into work. Only 3% of gateways would not be willing to work with employers nor DWP in any of the ways discussed.

## Training and employability support

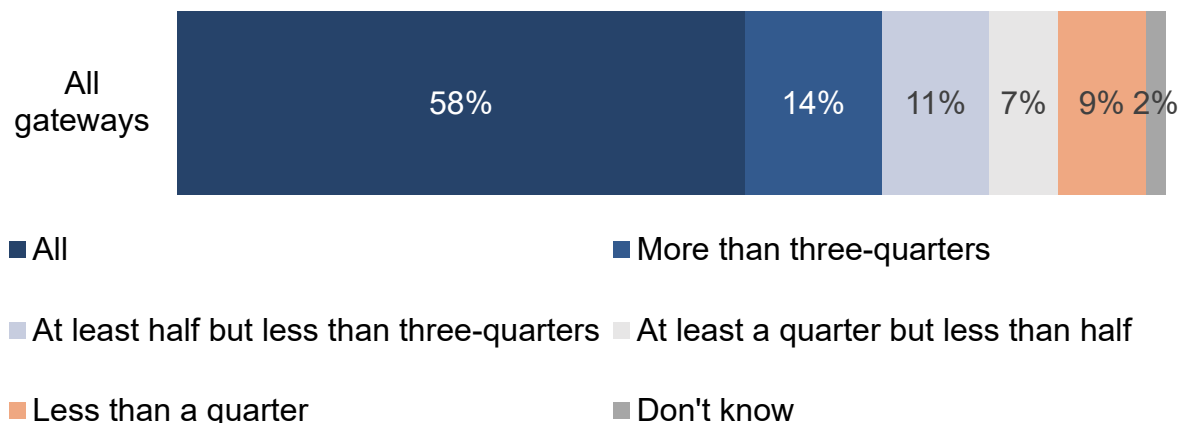
### Provision of employability support and training

A key component of the Kickstart Scheme was that young people received employability support and training while working in their Kickstart jobs. Employability support could include on-the-job training, work search support, skills development, mentoring, careers advice, and other related support to help young people find sustained employment after they have completed the Kickstart scheme. The scheme allowed for employability support to be provided by either employers or gateways through the provision of £1,500 for each young person.

#### Gateway provision

Nearly all (92%) of gateways reported that they provided some type of training or employability support to young people in Kickstart jobs. Over three-fifths (58%) of gateways that offered employability support provided it to all their young people on Kickstart (Figure 4.11). The remainder provided employability support to some but not all (presumably depending on employer willingness or ability to deliver this themselves).

**Figure 4.11 Provision of employability support from gateways**



C3. What proportion of the young people in Kickstart jobs do you provide employability support to?  
Base: All gateways that offer training (368)

Most gateways provided employability support for developing soft workplace skills (87%) and applying for jobs in the future (86%) with a smaller proportion providing role or industry specific training (28%).

There was variation in the number of training hours provided by gateways to young people. Around half of gateways (48%) provided up to 26 hours equating to up to approximately one hour per week per young person throughout the period of their Kickstart job. A third of gateways (33%) said they provided a greater number of hours than this, while 17% were unable to provide an estimate.

### **Gateway approaches to delivering training**

In qualitative interviews, gateways described both delivering employability training themselves and outsourcing it to partner organisations. Their courses focused on transferable skills such as leadership, time management, health and safety, workplace norms, communication, CV-writing, interview training, and problem-solving. If required, the courses additionally covered basic literacy, numeracy, and first aid. Almost all gateways mentioned offering some version of the above to young people.

“The basic package is two workbooks for the young person to work through. One is around expectations in the workplace and health & safety. The other is focused on CV writing, interview skills and applications. The second package... [focuses on] customer service, communication techniques and team working. These modules are also available online for young people who don't feel comfortable in a group discussion.”

(Gateway, Internship placements facilitator)

Some gateways additionally offered more role-specific support and training, based on the role the young person was doing. This typically involved conversations with employers about which training would be most useful, then sourcing relevant courses online for the young person to complete.

“It can be anything really, it depends on the job. We do the basic training such as CV writing and interview skills, but more specific job role training is ongoing. For example social media, construction, dealing with nervous animals.”

(Gateway, Farming)

Other individual gateways offered a variety of other support and training options. One gateway offered an ‘employability support wraparound’. This involved the equivalent of two one-to-one sessions or group sessions that focused on employability topics and general support for being in a working environment. It also included signposting to suitable training options.

Another gateway offered a weekly programme of webinars for young people to dial into, as well as access to an employee support worker and one-to-one sessions throughout their six-month job. Similarly, another offered weekly training remotely on

a different area of the business every Monday, with the added benefit of helping the young person get used to potential remote working in the future.

### **Challenges of delivering training for gateways**

Nine-in-ten (90%) gateways found the delivery of employability support challenging. Only 7% reported no challenges with providing employability support. Between two- and three-in-five gateways reported experiencing each of the following issues:

- 59% found it challenging to get young people to engage with the training, a problem more likely to be reported by gateways who supported 250+ employers (82%)
- 55% had issues with attendance
- 42% felt there were challenges in the differing training needs of young people
- 40% found it difficult organising the training around the pandemic, for example, social distancing restrictions.

### **Employer training provision**

Almost all employers offered Kickstart employees training to do their specific job role (96%) and soft skills to navigate a workplace (90%). It was slightly less common to offer support with applying for jobs in the future (61%).

Generally, the likelihood to offer most types of employability support or training was higher among employers in the public or third sector. Nearly all (97%) employers in the public or third sector offered support for developing soft workplace skills (for example, communication) and 74% offered support on applying for jobs in the future (for example, CV writing and interview skills).

Direct employers were more likely to offer support with applying for future jobs themselves than GOEs were (79% versus 53%). Some of this shortfall was made up by GOEs leaving provision of such support to their gateways (43% of GOEs said their gateways offered it). In total, this resulted in 72% of GOEs offering young people employability support directly via a gateway or from both the gateway and the employer but this remains below the 79% of direct employers who offered employability support themselves.

As with gateways, there was a wide range in the amount of training that employers provided to young people. Three-in-ten (28%) provided up to 26 hours (one hour per week), but some employers provided significantly more, with 8% offering over 209 hours over the course of the Kickstart job, equivalent to 8 hours per week. A relatively high proportion were unsure how much training was provided.

### **Types of training provided by employers**

In qualitative interviews, employers who had applied directly to Kickstart rather than using a gateway reported offering the same sort of general soft skills training and support that gateways offered.

In addition, both employers and young people reported that employer training included more role-specific training than what was typically offered by gateways. This



included on-the-job training and (where relevant) general office skills such as telephone manner, team communications, dealing with customers, and managing tasks, alongside whatever software training was needed (most commonly, Microsoft Office software).

The young person's development was usually monitored and feedback was given on their performance. Additional support or training was also provided where required. Where necessary, employers would seek out external courses for the young person to attend.

“One young person completed Level 2 in Food Hygiene, Manual Handling and a social media course. We give them on-the-the job training and weekly reviews.”

(Employer, wholesaler)

In qualitative interviews, some employers also described provided employability training and discussed future planning to help candidates think about life beyond their Kickstart job. This would often be part of a 'blended learning approach' that combined CV writing, interview practice, and team building with some more specific role training, such as administrative systems and customer service.

One employer commented that they would give the candidate a few weeks to settle into the position and then begin to support them in thinking about their future:

“When they start [their Kickstart jobs], I ask them what they want to do [in the future] and 90% of the time they don't know, which is absolutely fine ... As time goes on I can identify what their strengths are ... and we start planning and sourcing future training.”

(Employer, small business, community group)

## **Use of the Kickstart grant**

### **Gateway distribution of grant**

As shown in Figure 4.12 just over half of gateways (52%) let employers decide how much of the £1,500 available to meet each young person's training needs they received (including the option to receive all of it). Gateways in the central or local government (58%) or the third sector (56%) were more likely to do this than gateways in the private sector (47%).

**Figure 4.12 How gateways distributed Kickstart grant**

- Yes - we give them the option of how much they receive
- Yes - we always keep a certain amount to spend on their behalf
- No - we don't give them an option of how much they receive
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

C1A. Do you give your employers the option of how much of the £1,500 funding (for supporting and training Kickstart employees) they receive? Base: All gateways (401)

Eighteen per cent of gateways kept a certain amount to spend on their employers' behalf, but they gave the employer the option to receive any amount of the remainder, while 27% did not give employers an option of how much to receive.

### **Gateway perception of adequacy of grant**

Seventy-two per cent of gateways agreed that the funding was sufficient to provide skills needed by the Kickstart employees to do their Kickstart job. This increased with the size of gateway (67% of those with 1-9 paid employees, 70% of those with 10-49, 77% of those with 50-249, and 75% of those with 250+).

Sixty-eight per cent of gateways agreed that the funding was sufficient to provide Kickstart employees with longer-term skills they can take onto future job roles.

Seventy-seven per cent agreed the funding was sufficient to provide Kickstart employees with job search skills that they would need to successfully apply for other roles. This increased with the number of employees supported (to 86% of those who supported more than 250 employees),

### **Employer receipt of grant**

Among employers who applied through a gateway, only a relatively small proportion (6%) stated that they did not receive any of the funding for training Kickstart employees. 45% of employers who applied through a gateway received all of the funding for Kickstart employees themselves. Two-fifths of employers who worked with a gateway (40%) received part of the £1,500. This was more common among employers in the private sector (43%) versus the public or third sector (31%).

Employers who received at least part of the funding for training, and those who applied directly, were asked whether they felt that the funding was sufficient to provide the skills the Kickstart employees needed to do their Kickstart job. Levels of agreement were similar to those among gateways. Three-quarters (75%) of employers agreed that the funding was sufficient to provide skills needed for the Kickstart job. A slightly lower proportion (69%) agreed that the funding received was sufficient to provide Kickstart employees with longer-term skills they could take on to

future job roles. Two thirds (66%) agreed that the funding they received was sufficient to provide Kickstart employees with job search skills that they would need to successfully apply for other roles

Agreement of whether funding was sufficient was lower among those who only received part of the funding from their gateway (69% that the amount was sufficient to provide employees with the skills needed to do their Kickstart job; 63% for longer-term skills to take to future jobs; 63% for job search skills).

## Young people’s experiences

Nearly all young people (94% of Leavers at 7 months) reported having received some on-the-job training during their Kickstart role (Figure 4.13). Among young people who were dissatisfied with their Kickstart job, this was significantly lower (72% of dissatisfied Starters and 80% of dissatisfied Leavers).

**Figure 4.13 Types of training received by Leavers at 7 months**



C8. Did you receive any of the following types of employment training or support from your employer and/or a third party training provider during your Kickstart job? Base: All Leavers (Wave D onwards) (7,301)

This on-the-job training most commonly took the form of “Someone describing/showing me the tasks required as part of my job” (81% of Leavers). This proportion was lower among Leavers who worked from home (72%).

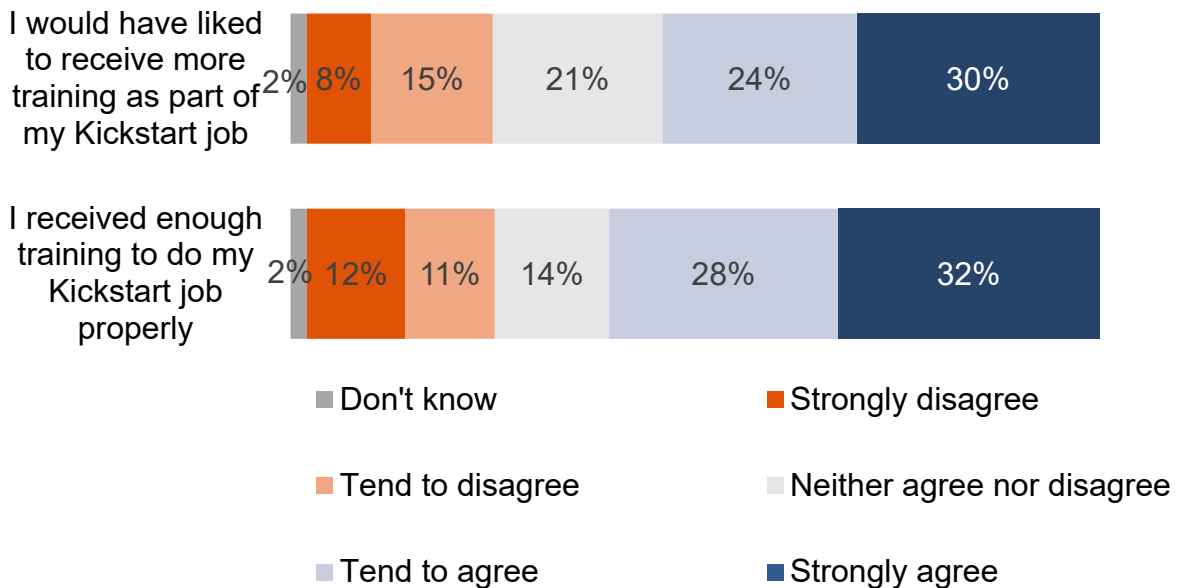
Other forms of training experienced by more than half of young people included “Receiving feedback on my work from colleagues or managers to help me understand how to improve” (66%), “Being told about the main aims of the business/organisation” (63%), and “Receiving basic health and safety training” (53%).

On-the-job training was deemed useful by 94% of Starters and 88% of Leavers.

Soft-skills training was deemed useful by the vast majority of young people who received it (94% Leavers). This was also the case for support on applying for future jobs (90%).

Over half (53%) of Leavers at ten months agreed they would have liked more training in their Kickstart role (Figure 4.14). This rose to 78% among those overall dissatisfied with Kickstart.

**Figure 4.14 Agreement with training statements among Leavers at ten months**



B9a\_\_1 / 2. Thinking back about the training you received as part of your Kickstart job, to what extent do you agree / disagree that... Base: All Leavers at ten months (3,396)

Some groups of young people were more likely to feel that they would have liked more training. Agreement was higher among those from an ethnic minority background (57%) and those with a long-term health condition or illness (58%).

Two-thirds (61%) agreed they received enough training to do their job properly. Agreement was higher among:

- males (63% versus 59% females)
- those without a long-term health condition (65% versus 54% with)

Findings from qualitative interviews and online diary completion with young people show that the vast majority of young people received job-specific training about how to carry out the duties of their Kickstart role, including additional training where necessary. This matches employers' reports of the job-specific training they offered to young people. Additionally, most young people felt that their line managers and colleagues were supportive and helpful.

Those who did receive training and support were positive about their experiences, although the details of what they most appreciated varied between individuals. Some liked the generalist training, while others appreciated more specialist training that they felt could help them further their careers in the area.

Some young people spoke positively about general training that provided them with transferable skills. This included training on commonly used software or communication tools that they expected they would use in future positions. Others spoke positively about industry- or role-specific skills that would be beneficial for pursuing a career in that particular sector. For example, one young person completed college courses towards an NVQ Level 2 in Care. Another learned specialist skills for the gaming industry and felt a career in the field was now more achievable.

Some young people who were interviewed in-depth reported receiving very little or no job-specific training. There were instances of this being the in roles that they believed were pre-existing rather than among those in roles they understood were created for Kickstart, and for those that worked from home.

In qualitative interviews, there was, however, a marked discrepancy between the amount of employability support that young people reported receiving and the amount that employers and gateways reported to have offered. Of the young people who took part in qualitative research, some said that they had not received the kind of employability support that employers and gateways generally reported having provided.<sup>34</sup> This discrepancy could be partly explained by the training being offered by not necessarily taken up. One employer described the process of trying to motivate young people to undertake the online employability course as 'quite painful'. However, most young people stated that would have liked to have been given more training as part of their job, particularly on their soft skills and job searching skills. Whether 'training', as described by employers, was perceived as such by young people could also be a factor in this discrepancy. Many employers described the training as being 'on-the-job' and weaved into their Kickstart employees' day-to-day job; young people may not identify this as training. There were some instances of young people being offered training opportunities outside of working hours, which was not usually unappealing and could be a reasons for some offers of training not being taken up.

While a minority of young people did receive support for planning next steps and securing another job in the future, some felt it could have happened earlier in their

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<sup>34</sup> Interviews were not linked, so the employers and gateways who participated in the research were not specifically those of the young people interviewed, but their profile was broadly representative of all employers and gateways.

Kickstart cycle to get the most use from it. Many young people reported during interviews (at 3-4 months into their Kickstart job) that they had not received the training and support that they were expecting or had been promised. Others described how they did not receive regular feedback on their performance, which left them unsure about their performance and unclear about areas for personal development.

“I would however like to get some feedback on how well I am doing so I know how I could still improve as I do not really get any probation feedback each month.”

(Young person, 24, Digital Marketing)

Several young people identified their need to develop soft skills and would have liked training to support this. One young person described how they had wanted formal communication skills training and had identified this an area of weakness, but without the training provided they felt uncomfortable presenting in meetings or talking to senior staff. Another young person felt that they would benefit from more support to build confidence interacting with their colleagues.

“It’s hard to get something out of my mouth sometimes, I’m so worried about making myself look foolish or saying something that doesn’t seem to make sense.”

(Young person, 25, Design)

## 5. Kickstart Scheme Outcomes

This chapter explores the early outcomes experienced by young people who participated in the Kickstart Scheme. It presents the employment, education, and training (EET) status of young people at seven and ten months after starting the scheme; the influence of Kickstart on career motivation and future plans; perceived levels of work-related and job search skills; and any wider impacts of participation on confidence and wellbeing.

### Summary

Kickstart participants had often reported positive early employment, education, and training outcomes: two-thirds of Leavers at seven months (65%) reported they were EET, including more than half in work (52%).<sup>35</sup> For Leavers at ten months, three-quarters (75%) reported they were EET, including 63% in work. Three-in-ten (31%) of Leavers at seven months said they were still in employment with their Kickstart employer.

Around two-thirds of Leavers at seven and ten months who reported they were in work (63% and 66% respectively) said that the skills and experiences gained through Kickstart had been important helping them find work.

Most Leavers at ten months who were in work were satisfied with their current job overall (79%); the hours worked (72%); and the pay (61%).

Three-in-ten Leavers at seven months (31%) and just under a quarter of Leavers at ten months (24%) reported they were not in education, employment, or training (NEET). Among Leavers at seven months, NEET status was more common for those aged 18-to-21 (32%); those with lower or no qualifications (37%); and those that had no prior work experience (37%). However, Leavers who were 18-to-21 or with lower or no qualifications who were in work at ten months were more likely to be satisfied with their job (83% and 91%, respectively) and pay (66% and 75%, respectively). They were also more likely to be motivated to stay in their job in the longer term.

Leavers at seven and ten months with a long-term health condition were also more likely to report being NEET (35% and 32%), even more so for those with a long-term health condition with a substantial impact on day-to-day activities (51% and 46%).

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<sup>35</sup> Throughout this report, figures referring to EET young people or young people in work includes those that were due to start in the next month

However, unlike the groups mentioned above, those in work at ten months were less likely to be satisfied in their role overall (75%).

A small proportion of Leavers at seven and ten months (5% and 6% respectively) reported they were in education or training. Seven per cent of Leavers at seven months and 5% of Leavers at ten months were completing an apprenticeship.

Over one-third of Leavers at both seven (37%) and ten months (38%) were claiming Universal Credit (UC) and expecting or receiving payments.

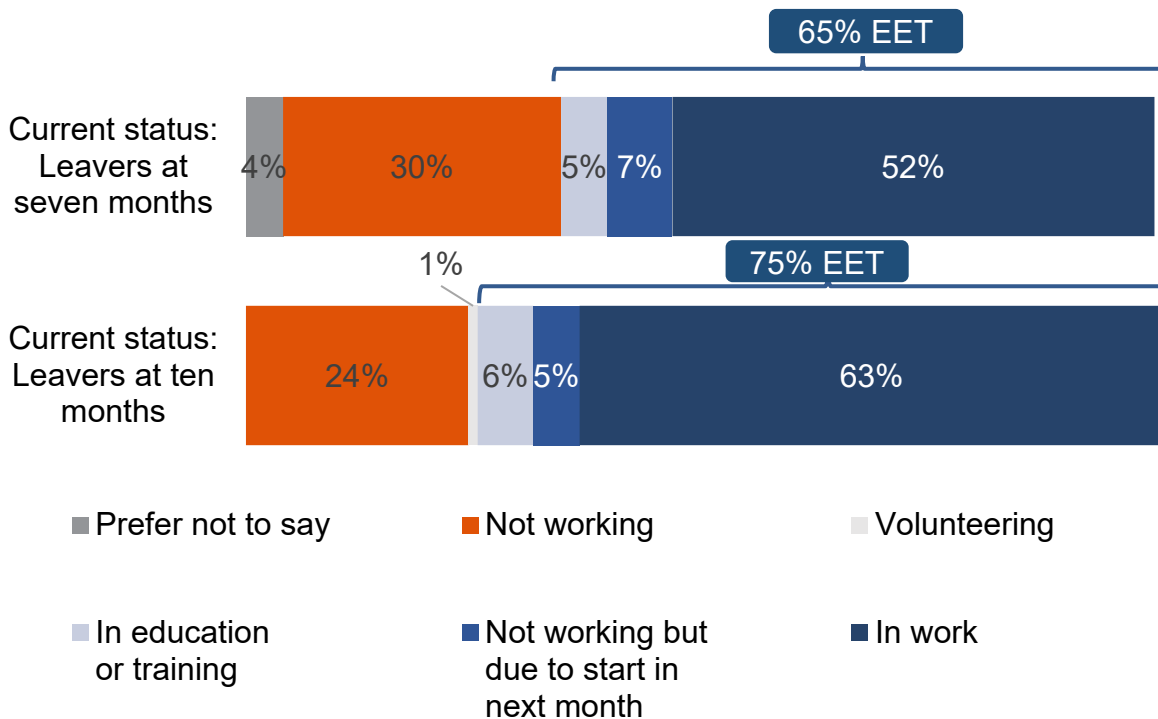
Young people commonly cited wider wellbeing outcomes from Kickstart, including feeling more positive about their future, and benefits from the routine and discipline that Kickstart brought to their lives.

## Next steps for young people

### Status following Kickstart

Following Kickstart, most young people reported they were in employment, education, or training, or were due to start work shortly ('EET'). As shown in Figure 5.1, just under two-thirds of Leavers at seven months (65%) were EET and more than half were in work (52%). Among Leavers at ten months, more than three-quarters were EET (75%) and 63% were in work.

**Figure 5.1 Status for Leavers seven and ten months after starting Kickstart**



D1. / A1. Which of the following best describes what you are doing at the moment? Base: Leavers at seven months (11,664); Leavers at ten months (3,396)



Three-in-ten Leavers at seven months (31%) and just under a quarter of Leavers at ten months (24%) were not in education, employment, or training ('NEET'). Leavers at seven and ten months were more likely to be NEET if they:

- were younger, aged 18-to-21 (32% at seven months; 27% at ten months)
- had lower or no qualifications (both 37%)
- had no work experience prior to Kickstart (37% at seven months; 29% at 10 months)
- had a long-term health condition (35% and 32%), and more so for those with a long-term health condition with a substantial impact on day-to-day activities (51% and 46%).
- had long-term UC claims (defined as over 18 months) prior to Kickstart (35% and 28%)

## **Continuing with Kickstart employers**

Three-in-ten Leavers at seven months (31%) reported they were in paid employment with their Kickstart employer. Although Leavers at ten months were more likely to be EET overall (75% versus 65%), the proportion that were still with their Kickstart employer was slightly lower at 27%. This indicates that most Leavers remained with their Kickstart employer for notably longer than their initial placement, while some had only remained for a short time beyond the Kickstart job and had then moved on to alternative employment or had become NEET.

Four-fifths of Leavers at seven months who were still working for their Kickstart employer (81%) reported they were in a job role with the same duties and responsibilities as their Kickstart job, while 18% were in a different role with the same employer.

Among those Leavers at seven months still working for their Kickstart employer, some were more likely to have stayed in the same role, with the same duties and responsibilities, rather than move to a different role with the same employer. This included:

- those with lower or no qualifications (86% versus 74% of those with a Level 4 qualification or above)
- those who had no work experience prior to Kickstart (88% versus 77% of those with at least 12 months of prior work experience)
- those with long-term (more than 18 months) prior UC claims (86% versus 80% of those with short or 79% of those with medium-term claims).

## Changes in outcomes for young people as Kickstart continued

### Changes in outcomes for Leavers at ten months by profile

The section above shows average outcomes for Leavers throughout the duration of Kickstart. However, some outcomes became more prevalent amongst Leavers as the scheme continued.

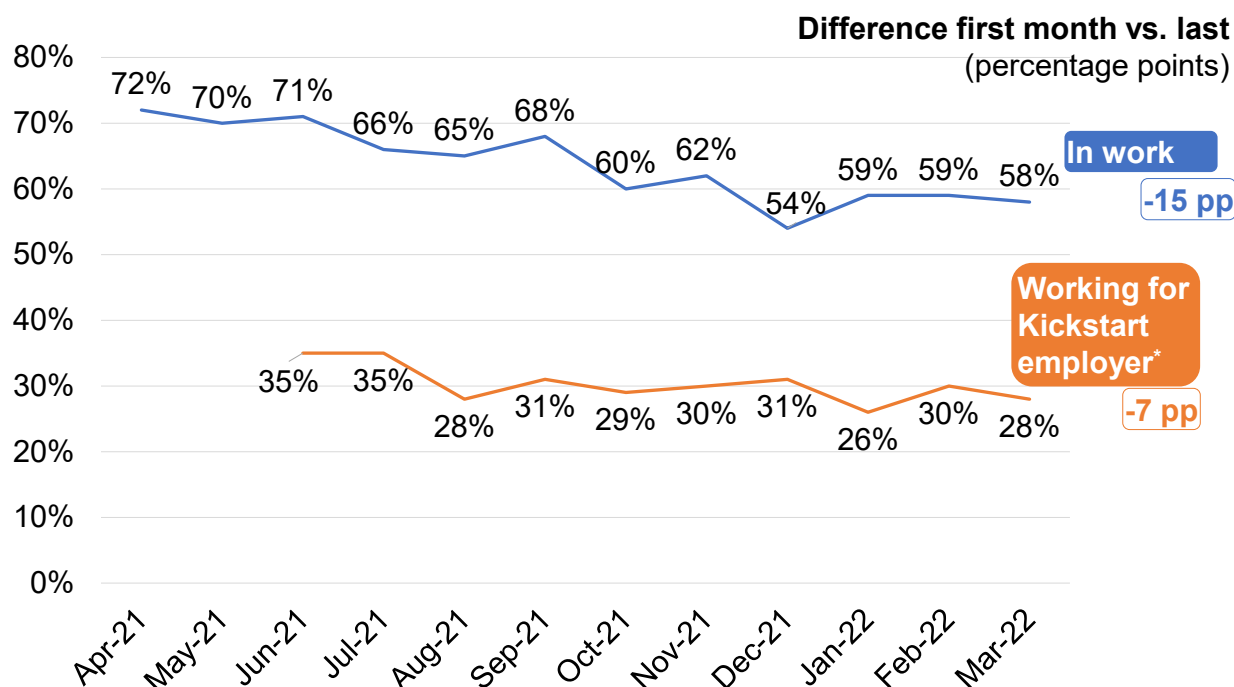
The proportion of Leavers at ten months who reported they were in work fell by 14 percentage points (from 72% of those who started their Kickstart job in September 2021 to 58% who started in March 2022), as shown in Figure 5.2. Over the same period there was a smaller drop of ten percentage points in the proportion of Leavers at ten months who met the wider description of being 'EET or due to start work' (from 82% to 72%), partly as there was three percentage point *growth* in the proportion in education or training (from 7% to 10%).

The proportion of Leavers who reported they were still with their Kickstart employer ten months after their Kickstart job ended dropped by seven percentage points between those who started their Kickstart jobs in June and July 2021 and those who started in February and March 2022 (from 35% to 29%).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> This data not collected from those who started Kickstart jobs in September and October 2021.

**Figure 5.2 Employment outcomes for Leavers at ten months as Kickstart continued (by month started Kickstart job)**



\*This data not collected from those who started Kickstart jobs in September and October 2021. A0. Is the information we hold about what you are doing from the last survey still correct? / A1. Which of the following best describes what you are doing at the moment? Base: Leavers at ten months who started Kickstart jobs in April 2021 (366), in May 2021 (362), in June 2021 (468), in July 2021 (526), in August 2021 (334), in September 2021 (458), in October 2021 (93), in November 2021 (183), in December 2021 (99), in January 2022 (172), in February 2022 (115), in March 2022 (220).

The proportion of Leavers at ten months who reported they were NEET generally increased month-by-month as Kickstart continued, overall, by eight percentage points (from 18% of those who had started in April 2021 to 26% who had started in March 2022).

These figures may reflect that the profile of Starters, in some ways, shifted towards young people who are typically thought ‘harder to help’ as Kickstart continued, as reported in Chapter 3.<sup>37</sup>

### Longitudinal changes in outcomes between Leavers at seven and ten months

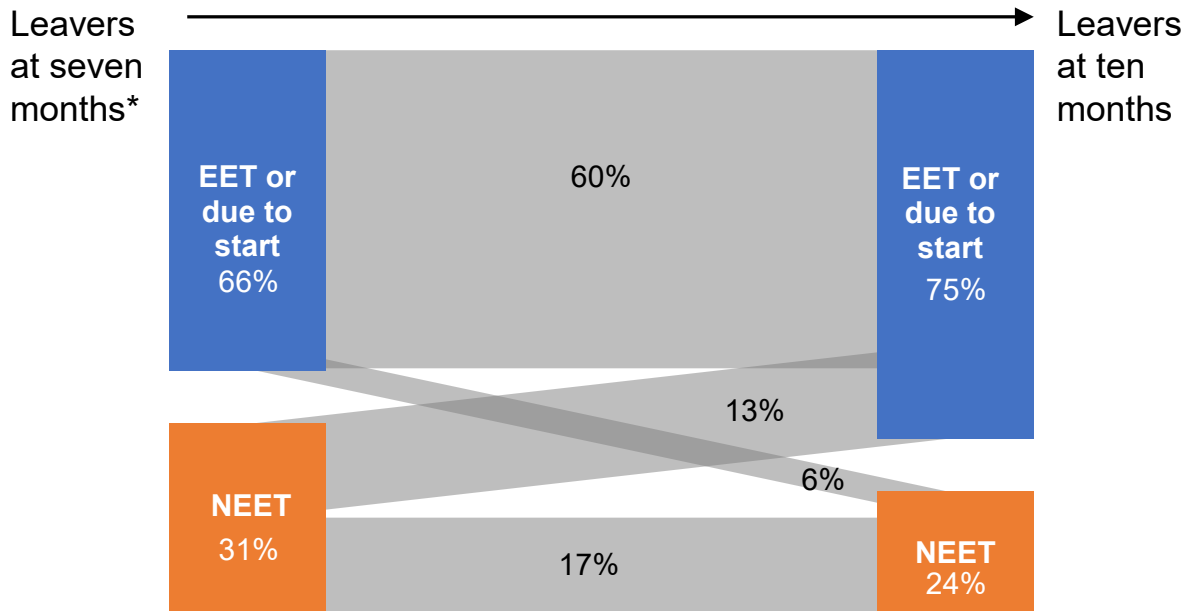
Three-fifths of Leavers who were interviewed both seven and ten months after starting their Kickstart job (60%) reported they were EET or due to start work at both interview points. Less than a fifth (17%) reported they were NEET at both interview points.

Over a tenth of Leavers (13%) shifted positively from being NEET seven months after their Kickstart job started to being EET or due to start work ten months afterwards. A

<sup>37</sup> DWP’s internal evaluation will measure net impact of the scheme looking at the difference between the participants and a statistically similar counterfactual group of young people.

smaller proportion (6%) shifted negatively from being EET or due to start work at seven months but NEET at ten months.

**Figure 5.3 Longitudinal changes in outcomes between Leavers at seven and ten months**



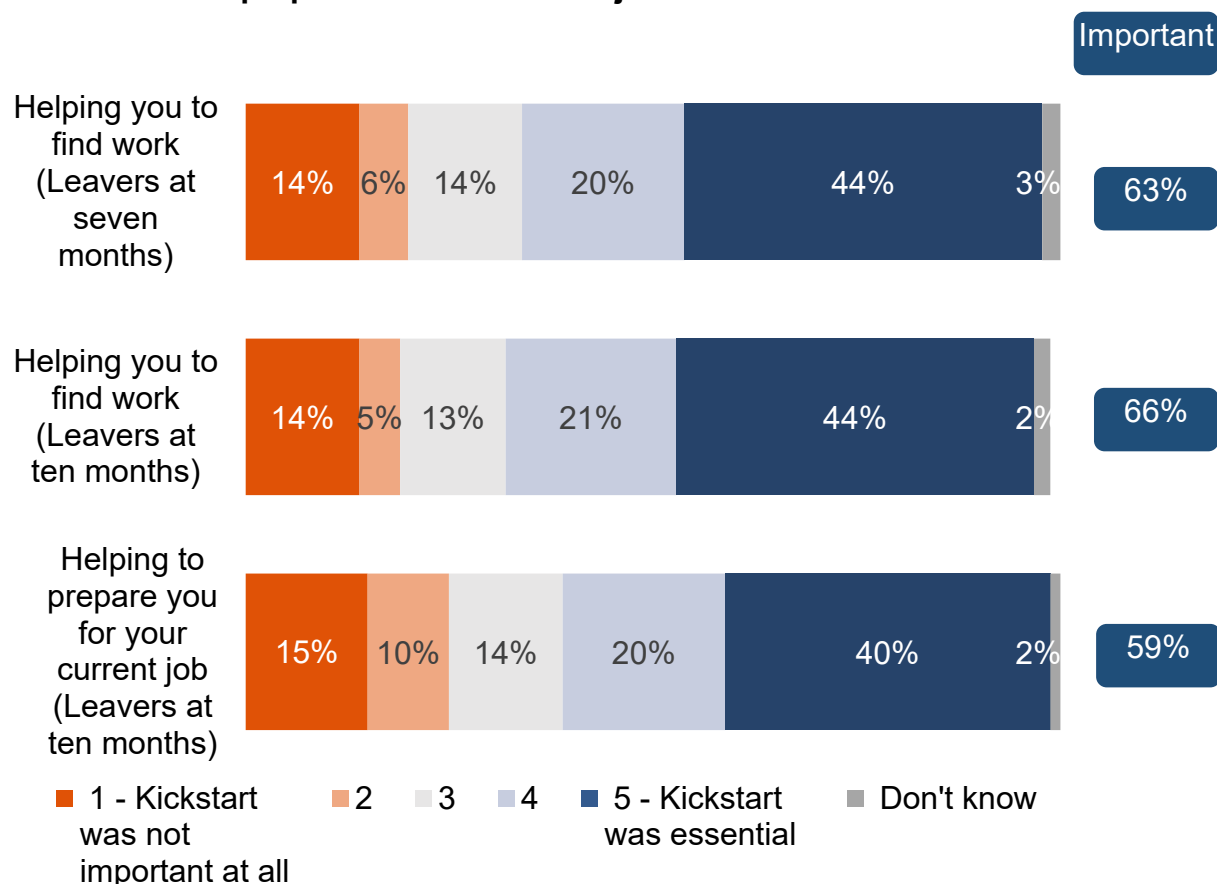
\*This longitudinal data includes only Leavers interviewed at seven who were also interviewed at ten months, so it differs slightly from outcomes amongst all Leavers at seven months reported above (where 65% were EET or due to start). D1. Which of the following best describes what you are doing at the moment? / A0. Is the information we hold about what you are doing from the last survey still correct? / A1. Which of the following best describes what you are doing at the moment? Base: Leavers who were surveyed at both seven and ten months (3,395). Does not show Leavers who answered 'volunteering' (<1% Leavers at seven months, 1% Leavers at ten months) or 'prefer not to say', (4% Leavers at seven months, less than 1% Leavers at ten months).

## Leavers with an employment outcome

### Importance of Kickstart in helping young people find work

Almost two-thirds of Leavers at seven and two-thirds of Leavers at ten months (63% and 66% respectively) who were in work said that the skills and experience they gained through Kickstart were important in helping them find work, as shown in Figure 5.2. One-fifth of Leavers at seven months and ten months (20%; 19%) said that they had not been important. Three-fifths of Leavers at ten months who were in work (59%) stated Kickstart was important in helping them prepare for their current job.

**Figure 5.4 The importance of skills gained through Kickstart in helping Leavers to find work or prepare for their current job**



D5. How important would you say experience and skills you gained through your Kickstart job were in helping you to find work? / A8. How important would you say the experience and skills you gained through your Kickstart job were in the following areas? Base: Leavers at seven months currently in work

### Current job role, working patterns and wages

Leavers at seven and ten months who were in employment were working in a variety of job roles, as shown in Table 5.1 below. The most common type of job among Leavers at seven and ten months was administrative occupations (15% for both).

**Table 5.1 Job descriptions of Leavers at seven and ten months that were in work**

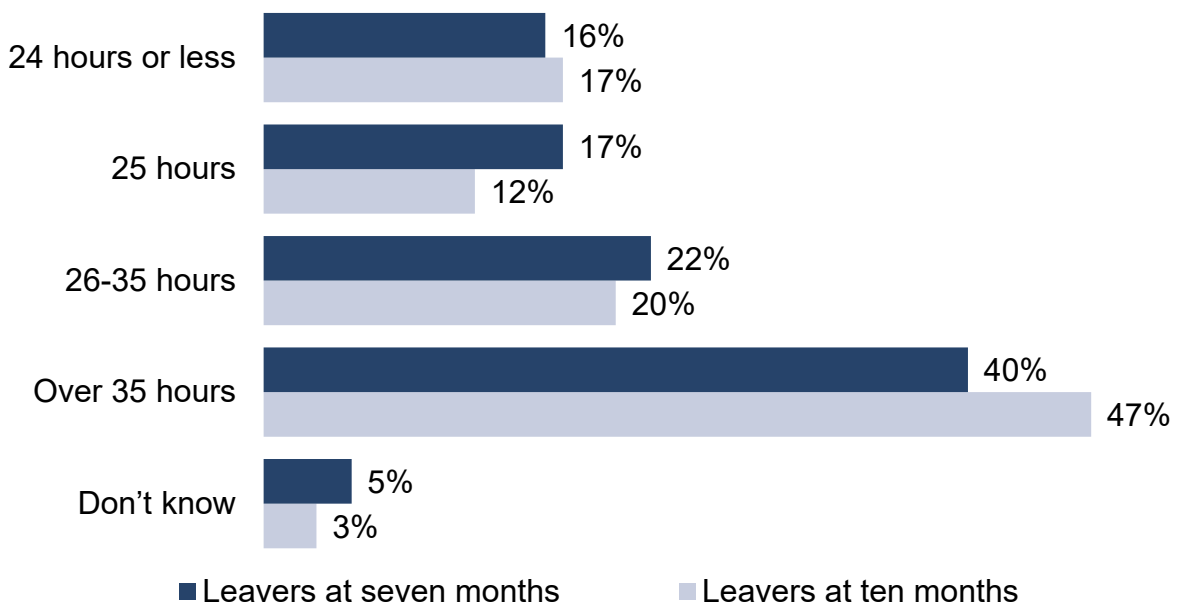
	Leavers in work at seven months (n=6,332)	Leavers in work at ten months (n=2,272)
<b>Administrative occupations</b>	15%	15%
<b>Business and public service associate professionals</b>	14%	13%

<b>Elementary administration and service occupations</b>	12%	12%
<b>Sales occupations</b>	11%	10%
<b>Caring personal service occupations</b>	6%	8%
<b>Culture, media, and sports occupations</b>	5%	4%
<b>Science, research, engineering, and technology professionals</b>	3%	4%
<b>Science, engineering, and technology associate professionals</b>	3%	4%
<b>Process, plant, and machine operatives</b>	3%	2%
<b>Customer service occupations</b>	2%	4%

D3b/c. What is your job title / What do you mainly do in your job? / A5. What do you mainly do in your job? Base: Leavers at seven months currently in work (6,332); Leavers at ten months currently in work (2,272)

Around two-fifths of Leavers at seven months (40%) and closer to half of Leavers at ten months (47%) were working over 35 hours per week, as shown in Figure 5.3 below.

**Figure 5.5 Working hours of Leavers at seven and ten months that were in work**



D3d. How many hours do you work per week? A6. How many hours do you work per week? Base: Leavers at seven months currently in work (6,332); Leavers at ten months currently in work (2,272)

Leavers at seven months were less likely to be working over 35 hours a week if they:

- had a long-term health condition with a substantial impact on day-to-day activities (23%)
- had a long-term health condition with little or no impact on day-to-day activities (35%)
- were aged 18-to-21 (37%)
- had lower or no qualifications (33%)
- had long-term UC claims prior to Kickstart (33%)
- had no prior work experience were also less likely to be working over 35 hours a week (35%).

Leavers at ten months were less likely to be working over 35 hours a week if they:

- had a long-term health condition with little or no impact on day-to-day activities (43%)
- were aged 18-to-21 (42%)
- had lower or no qualifications (41%)
- had long-term UC claims prior to Kickstart (45%)

Nine-tenths of Leavers in work at seven months (91%) and Leavers at ten months (93%) were earning *at least* the National Minimum Wage (NMW) for their age. This included those earning more than the NMW: 52% of Leavers at seven months; 64% of Leavers at ten months. Only 3% of each cohort reported earning less than the NMW for their age.

Among Leavers at seven months and ten months, the following groups were more likely to be earning over the NMW:

- those with a Level 4 qualification or higher (64% and 72%)
- those with more than 12 months experience prior to Kickstart (57% and 71%)

Among Leavers at both seven and ten months those with short-term UC claims prior to Kickstart were more likely than those with long-term claims to be earning more than the NMW (58% versus 43%; 68% versus 58%).

### **Satisfaction with job role at ten months**

Most Leavers at ten months who were in work were satisfied with their current job overall (79% rating their satisfaction as a four or five on a five-point scale, where one was 'very dissatisfied' and five 'very satisfied'), with their pay (61%), and hours worked (72%). Of those who were dissatisfied with their hours, over three-fifths (64%) wanted to work more hours whilst one-in-three (33%) wanted to work fewer.

Leavers at ten months in work were largely positive about the opportunities that their job role afforded them. More than three-quarters agreed they were able to develop knowledge and expertise (88%), learn job-specific skills (86%), learn new soft skills (87%), and that the job offered good opportunities to develop their careers (75%).

Three-quarters of Leavers at ten months who were in work (74%) felt motivated to stay in their job at the time they took part in the survey, 10% said they were not.

Educational level correlated with motivation to stay, those who had a Level 4 qualification or above (68%) were least motivated, and those with lower or no qualifications were most motivated (86%).

## **Leavers with education and training outcomes**

A small proportion of Leavers at both seven and ten months (5% and 6% respectively) had gone into education or training after their Kickstart job. Among Leavers who were in education or training, it was most common to be studying at Level 4 (degree level) or above (54% at seven months; 62% at ten months). Around one-sixth (16% and 12%) were studying at A-Level or equivalent level. At seven months less than one-tenth were studying at GCSE or equivalent level (9%), increasing to 12% at ten months.

Leavers at seven months from 'Ethnic minority (excluding White minority)' backgrounds were more than twice as likely as 'White (including White minority)' Leavers to be in education or training after Kickstart (9% versus 4%). Those who left their Kickstart job early were more likely than those who completed it to have followed this path (9% versus 4%).

Leavers at seven months who had two A-Levels or equivalent were twice as likely to be in education or training than those who already held at least a Level 4 qualification (9% versus 4%).

Seven per cent of Leavers at seven months and 5% of Leavers at ten months were completing an apprenticeship.

## **Leavers not in employment, education or training**

Nine-tenths of Leavers at seven months (89%) who were not in employment, education, or training (NEET) were looking for paid work; a slightly lower proportion were doing so at ten months (80%) reflecting that a higher proportion were in work at that point.

Almost nine-tenths of Leavers at seven months who were NEET (86%) felt they had the skills needed for work, and to find or apply for jobs (85%). Almost a quarter (24%) said they had health concerns that made it difficult to find a job they could do.

Leavers at ten months were additionally asked whether they were confident that they could find a job within the next couple of months, over six-in-ten were (63%).



## Universal Credit<sup>38</sup>

Well over one-third of Leavers at seven months (37%) were claiming Universal Credit (UC) and expecting or receiving payments. A further 25% were claiming UC but were not expecting payments (due to income or earnings). Just under one-third were not claiming UC (31%).

Similarly, over one-third of Leavers at ten months (38%) were claiming UC and expecting or receiving payments. However, Leavers at ten months were less likely than those at seven months to be claiming UC but not expecting payments (15% and more likely not to be claiming at all (45%).

The likelihood of claiming UC and expecting or receiving payments was higher among Leavers at seven and ten months who:

- had long-term UC claims prior to Kickstart (46% and 47%)
- had a long-term health condition that has a substantial day-to-day impact (61% at seven months; 60% at ten months)
- had lower or no qualifications (46% and 54%)
- had no work experience prior to Kickstart (42% and 42%)

## Relevance and influence of Kickstart for future plans

Four-fifths of Leavers at seven months (79%) thought they would be working in 12 months as did a slightly higher proportion of Leavers at ten months (84%).

### Areas of work

Participation in Kickstart appears to have given young people the opportunity to develop a clearer vision of their future. Just under two-thirds of Starters (63%) would like to develop their careers in the same area of work as their Kickstart job, more than one-third (36%) strongly agreed. Among Leavers at seven and ten months, just over half agreed (54% and 55%) and three-in-ten (29% and 30%) strongly agreed.

Leavers at ten months were asked specifically whether their participation in Kickstart had influenced their desire to remain in the sector, three-in-ten (29%) said it had had a large influence but 13% said that it had had none at all.

Those with a Level 4 qualification or above (27%), and those who were NEET were less likely to say Kickstart had a large influence (27%).

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<sup>38</sup> Young People's UC claims were held open during their Kickstart job, in order to be able to provide the young person with work coach support during their 6 month Kickstart employment. This made it more challenging to ask young people about their benefit status at 7 months, as their claims may not have been formally closed despite receiving no monetary benefits due to earnings or income. Other young people who either left for another job earlier or had proactively closed their claim would have no open claim.

# Skills gained through Kickstart

## Employability skills

### Confidence in job-searching skills

Table 5.2 below shows the level of confidence young people had about various aspects of job searching at the different points in their Kickstart journey when surveys were conducted. It should be noted that it is not possible to attribute these changes to the Kickstart Scheme. This is because the majority of changes took place between the seven and ten month surveys, and because of the many other factors in young peoples' lives that contribute to feelings of confidence.

As the table shows, the largest increase in confidence between Starters and Leavers at ten months was in the proportion confident in 'completing a good job application and CV' (which increased by nine percentage points), followed by 'making a good list of all the skills that they had which can be used to find a job'; 'making the best impression and getting their points across in a job interview'; and 'contacting and persuading potential employers to consider them for a job' (each of which increased by seven percentage points).

**Table 5.2 Confidence in job-searching skills and activities among young people**

	<i>% confident</i>		
	<i>Starters (n=8,063)</i>	<i>Leavers at seven months (n=7,301)</i>	<i>Leavers at ten months (n=3,396)</i>
<b>Searching for jobs online (using computers, smart phones, internet, etc.)</b>	84%	84%	*87%
<b>Applying for jobs online (using computers, smart phones, internet, etc.)</b>	83%	84%	*89%
<b>Completing a good job application and CV</b>	74%	76%	*83%
<b>Making a good list of all the skills that you have and can be used to find a job</b>	71%	73%	*78%
<b>Getting help in order to become familiar with a new job</b>	68%	69%	*74%
<b>Making the best impression and getting your points across in a job interview</b>	64%	66%	*71%
<b>Talking to friends and other contacts to discover promising</b>	63%	66%	*68%

<b>job openings that are suitable for you</b>			
<b>Talking to friends and other contacts to find out about potential employers who need your skills</b>	62%	66%	*67%
<b>Contacting and persuading potential employers to consider you for a job</b>	55%	57%	*62%

D1/D8/B8. How confident do you feel about doing the following job search skills and activities successfully? Base: Starters (8,063); Leavers at seven months — Wave D onwards (7,301); Leavers at ten months (3,396). \*Higher than Starters at the 95% confidence level

Amongst some sub-groups there were notably higher (or lower) increases in confidence across several aspects of the job-searching skills and activities than seen on average across all young people when comparing confidence amongst Starters and Leavers at ten months with the same characteristics. The job-searching aspects which saw most differentiation, and the sub-groups which had the highest levels of differentiation are presented in Figure 5.6.

Positively, young people with no work experience were more likely than average (by at least four percentage points) to show higher increases in confidence for four of the job-searching skills and activities, especially ‘completing a good job application and CV’ (65% of Starters versus 80% of Leavers at ten months, an increase of 15 percentage points compared to an increase of nine percentage points amongst all young people – bearing in mind that those with no work experience had a lower starting point) and ‘talking to friends and contacts to find out about potential employers who need your skills’ (54% of Starters versus 65% of Leavers at ten months, an increase of 11 percentage points compared to an increase of five percentage points amongst all young people). Young people with ‘mixed or multiple’ ethnic backgrounds were also more likely than average to show higher increases in confidence (of at least four percentage points) for three of the job-searching skills and activities, including two of those presented in Figure 5.6.

Negatively, young people with health issues that impact daily life substantially were less likely than average (by at least four percentage points) to show increases in confidence for six of the job-searching skills and activities, indeed they showed decreases (of over four percentage points) for three. This was especially notable for confidence in ‘completing a good job application and CV’ (66% of Starters versus 55% of Leavers at ten months, a decrease of 11 percentage points compared to an increase of nine percentage points amongst all young people) and ‘applying for jobs online’ (74% of Starters versus 68% of Leavers at ten months, a decrease of six percentage points compared to an increase of six percentage points amongst all young people). Similarly young people who held qualifications at Level 4 or above were less likely than average to show increases in confidence with six of the job-searching skills and activities, including two of those presented in Figure 5.6.

Young people with ‘Asian or Asian British’ or ‘Black, African, Caribbean or Black British’ ‘ethnic backgrounds were also less likely than average to show increases in confidence (of at least four percentage points, although they did have a relatively high starting point) for four and five of the job-searching skills and activities respectively, including some of those presented in Figure 5.6. Less well qualified young people were also less likely to show increases in confidence, for three and two of the skills and activities for those with Level 1 or no qualifications and those with Level 2 qualifications respectively.

**Table 5.3 Changes in confidence with job searching skills and activities between Starters and Leavers at ten months, sub-groups most different from overall changes**

	Starters	Leavers at 10 months	Percentage point difference
<b>Completing a good job application and CV</b>			
ALL	74%	83%	+9 pp
No work experience	65%	80%	+15 pp
Level 2 quals	76%	79%	+3 pp
Substantial health issue	66%	55%	-11 pp
<b>Talking to contacts re: suitable promising job openings</b>			
ALL	63%	68%	+5 pp
Mixed ethnic background	64%	74%	+10 pp
No work experience	54%	66%	+12 pp
Degree-level+ qualifications	67%	66%	-1 pp
Asian ethnic background	68%	60%	-8 pp
<b>Contacting &amp; persuading potential employers to consider you</b>			
ALL	55%	62%	+7 pp
Mixed ethnic background	57%	64%	+7 pp
Substantial health issue	42%	41%	-1 pp
Asian ethnic background	60%	58%	-2 pp
<b>Talking to contacts re: potential employers needing your skills</b>			
ALL	62%	67%	+5 pp
No work experience	54%	65%	+11 pp
Black ethnic background	70%	69%	-1 pp
Degree-level+ qualifications	67%	65%	-2 pp

D1/B8. How confident do you feel about doing the following job search skills and activities successfully? Base: Starters (8,063); Leavers at ten months (3,396).

### **Soft skills**

Similarly, young people provided ratings of their soft skills at the different survey points, as shown in Table 5.7 below. On the whole, only relatively small increases in young people's ratings of their soft skills were seen over time (largely because initial ratings were very high). Kickstart may have had a small positive impact on self-confidence though, as this was higher among Leavers at ten months (71% versus 68% of Starters).

**Table 5.4 Agreement with having soft skills relevant to work**

	% agree		
	Starters (n=8,063)	Leavers at seven months (n=11,665)	Leavers at ten months (n=3,396)
I am reliable (e.g. meeting deadlines, taking responsibility, attendance)	92%	93%	*94%
I am good at working with others (e.g. teamwork, getting on with people, respecting others)	91%	92%	*93%
I have good communication skills (e.g. polite, can clearly explain myself)	88%	90%	*90%
I am good at setting and achieving goals (e.g. motivated, organised, a hard worker)	86%	88%	85%
I am good at managing my feelings at work (e.g. dealing with issues, coping in stressful situations, managing problems)	79%	81%	80%
I am confident in myself (e.g. self-belief, self-respect, dealing with nerves)	68%	71%	*71%
I feel in control of my career development and direction	N/A	N/A	65%

D2/D9/B9. To what extent do you agree / disagree that you have the following skills? Base: Starters (8,063); Leavers at seven months (11,665); Leavers at ten months (3,396). \*Higher than Starters at the 95% confidence level

In qualitative interviews, young people frequently described how their timekeeping, organisational, and accuracy skills had improved through taking part in Kickstart.

“The main soft skill I developed is sticking to my schedule because before that I was very bad at it and working under pressure without panicking.”

(Young person, 21, Printing Assistant)

Young people who were generally more satisfied with their Kickstart experience tended to particularly feel their communication and teamwork had improved, especially when working with senior colleagues or customers. They linked this skills development to greater confidence, emotional intelligence, assertiveness, independence, and resilience.

“I have been able to sharpen up my social skills a bit as I’m normally quite reserved and anxious, especially around talking digitally, but I’ve been doing a lot better recently, especially when talking to other Kickstart colleagues. I’ve also gotten better at taking initiative and doing things without much guidance.”

(Young person, 24, Accounts Assistant)

### Employer perspectives on soft skill improvements

Many Kickstart employers noticed large improvements in various soft skills among the young people they employed as part of the scheme, as shown below in Table 5.8.

The soft skill which employers were most likely to notice a large improvement in was self-confidence (72%), closely followed by working with others (70%).<sup>39</sup> At least half of employers saw large improvements in reliability (54%), setting and achieving goals (54%), managing feelings (52%), and personal presentation (50%).

**Table 5.5 Whether employers have seen improvements in young peoples' soft skills during their Kickstart employment**

	<i>Employers (n=1,008)</i>	
	<i>% noticed large improvement</i>	<i>% noticed no improvement</i>
<b>Confidence (e.g. self-esteem, self-belief, self-respect, self-awareness, dealing with nerves)</b>	72%	8%
<b>Working with others (e.g. teamwork, getting on with people, respecting others)</b>	70%	9%
<b>Communication skills (e.g. politeness, appropriate language, clearly explaining yourself)</b>	65%	9%
<b>Reliability (e.g. time-keeping, meeting deadlines, taking responsibility, attendance)</b>	54%	20%
<b>Setting and achieving goals (e.g. motivation, planning and organising, problem-solving, hard work)</b>	54%	16%
<b>Managing feelings (e.g. dealing with issues, coping, managing problems)</b>	52%	15%
<b>Personal presentation (e.g. dress appropriately for work)</b>	50%	14%

D5. To what extent have you noticed an improvement in the following skills among your Kickstart young people over the course of their time with you? Base: All employers (1,008)

In qualitative interviews, employers felt most young people had improved their skills on the Kickstart Scheme. Many reported that young people had not just learned role-specific skills but also more general job-related skills and had an improved work

<sup>39</sup> Employers were asked to rate the extent to which they noticed an improvement on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was "no improvement" and 5 was "to a large extent". Scores of 4 or 5 are reported as "noticed improvement".

ethic. These improved skills included teamwork, relationship building, listening, taking directions, paying attention to detail, organisation, discipline, motivation, concentration, punctuality, and reliability. In many instances, employers highlighted that some of these skills were initially lacking.

“After some initial issues around motivation and discipline, the young people have learnt new skills on the job and are proficient in completing tasks given to them.”

(Gateway Employer, North East Yorkshire and Humber, Environment)

As a result, employers agreed that many young people had grown in confidence, assertiveness, and independence through their Kickstart job.

‘When he first started he wouldn’t say boo to a goose, he was so shy. Now he chats to you, I see him every morning he always speaks to me. He works so hard, he’s done so well.’

(Direct Employer, Black Country, Education)

### **Employer and gateway perspectives on Kickstart job length**

Employers were fairly positive about the duration of Kickstart jobs being six months. Two-thirds (65%) agreed that the jobs were long enough to allow young people to learn the technical skills required for the role, though one-in-five (22%) disagreed.

Around seven-in-ten employers agreed that six months in a Kickstart job was long enough to allow young people to develop longer-term skills they could use in other jobs (69%), and for employers themselves to see benefits from the work conducted by Kickstart employees (71%).

Gateways showed similar levels of positivity as employers around the six-month duration of Kickstart jobs. Around three-quarters agreed that six months was long enough to allow young people to learn the required technical skills (72%) and that the length of the job allowed young people to develop longer-term skills that could be used elsewhere (74%).

In the qualitative interviews, some employers were negative about the length of the scheme. Typically, these were employers that had high expectations of the prior skills and experience young people they employed in Kickstart jobs should hold, and were offering more demanding Kickstart roles. They felt the scheme was too short. They reported six months was insufficient for their organisation to benefit from the investment they made in training.

### **Vocational skills**

Although less common than soft skills, in the qualitative interviews young people described a range of job and sector-specific skills they had developed through taking part in the Kickstart Scheme. Some examples included: working with computer packages e.g., Excel, Adobe; electrical or mechanical skills; food and drink preparation; and teaching skills.



The extent to which these young people felt the skills developed were useful usually depended on their intended next steps. Skills relating to computer packages were likely to be considered valuable, due to the transferability to a range of jobs. Kickstart participants tended to identify improved confidence for future job applications as a key outcome of developing these skills. They felt they could apply to relevant roles with greater confidence that they would be considered, and that they could deliver the role.

## 6. Reflections and recommendations

This final chapter reflects on all elements of Kickstart to draw conclusions about whether the scheme is delivering against its intended aims and what key learnings can be taken for the delivery of future programmes.

### Is the Kickstart Scheme delivering its intended outcomes?

In terms of delivery of Kickstart jobs, the scheme has met its objectives of providing most young people employed through the scheme with at least 25 hours of work per week, paid at National Minimum Wage (NMW) or above, with at least some employability support or training opportunities.

The majority of young people on Kickstart, including many young people with significant barriers to employment, reported that they went on to employment, education, or training (EET) after their Kickstart job. As part of the wider evaluation of the scheme, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is carrying out ‘an in-house impact analysis using statistical matching techniques to compare Kickstart participants’ outcomes (such as employment after the Kickstart job has completed) with similar people who did not participate’.<sup>40</sup> This will provide evidence on the likelihood of outcomes being achieved in the absence of the scheme. This process evaluation, however, has provided first-hand insight from the perspective of participants on their experiences of the impacts of the scheme.

Evidence suggests that the Kickstart Scheme delivered against its intended outcomes: it provided some innovative opportunities for both young people and employers that would not have been available otherwise. The scheme helped keep young people engaged in productive activity, mitigating against the negative impacts of prolonged unemployment in the challenging context of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

There is also evidence that the Kickstart Scheme added value in the diversity and quality of job roles available to young people, particularly those with lower skills, lower-level qualifications, and less experience. The scheme opened access to a wider range of opportunities and access to work experience in more specialised

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<sup>40</sup> [Employment support: The Kickstart Scheme - National Audit Office \(NAO\) report](#)

areas of employment, which previously had been difficult for some young people to access (for example, web design, media).

Accepting the funding required gateways and employers to agree that all vacancies put forward were additional, establishing additionality of Kickstart positions can be challenging in the absence of all contextual details. Those with greater indications of additionality included positions developed to help businesses grow or improve certain work areas or processes. Young people in these roles tended to have a positive experience of the scheme, and employers who created these positions valued the impact and felt the growth would not have been possible otherwise. In some cases, jobs demonstrating less or no additionality stemmed from employers misinterpreting 'additional'. In qualitative interviews, some employers believed they had to create roles delivering completely new tasks for the business (rather than create an additional position). In some cases, this resulted in young people doing work that could be perceived as superfluous, with no value added to the business. Often, young people in these roles recognised the unnecessary nature of them and tended to have a negative experience. Other positions with less or no additionality included those where Kickstart employees were taking shift work away from other employees.

There were positive examples of additionality, however, including young people fulfilling value adding new positions within companies, bringing focus to tasks / a work area the organisation was not able to dedicate enough time to previously or fulfilling roles employers were struggling to fill or work previously done by volunteers. In all of these instances, the Kickstart roles were adding economic value to some extent.

In some cases, the challenge of creating 'additional' positions which did not replicate existing job roles meant some employers had not fully considered the activities that the young people would undertake, including how they would be supervised and supported in these roles. This led to some dissatisfaction among young people, who felt their role lacked clarity and skill development opportunities.

In qualitative interviews, many employers mentioned that prior to the scheme they had not been able to hire new staff during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, let alone invest in staff that were new to working and would require considerable training and support. There is evidence that the scheme has worked well to increase the number of jobs available to young people claiming UC — regardless of their characteristics and typical likelihood of employment. It is likely, therefore, that the scheme has helped to minimise the potential scarring effects of long periods of inactivity at a young age.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Being unemployed when young leads to a higher likelihood of long-term 'scarring' in later life, for example in terms of subsequent lower pay, higher unemployment, lower levels of well-being, and poorer mental health (see, for example, work by David N. F. Bell, David G. Blanchflower, Young people and the Great Recession, *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, Volume 27, Issue 2, Summer 2011, Pages 241–267, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxrep/grr011> and Mattias Strandh, Anthony Winefield, Karina Nilsson, Anne Hammarström, Unemployment and mental health scarring during the life course, *European Journal of Public Health*, Volume 24, Issue 3, June 2014, Pages 440–445, <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cku005>)

Many JCP staff felt it was important to highlight that the scheme often helped those with a degree or above and/or those with relatively good employability find work, while those who faced more challenges entering the labour market (for example, because of lower qualification levels, no experience, or additional support needs) took longer or struggled to find a suitable Kickstart job. This is reflected in survey data as well. This demonstrates that young people at the higher end of the skills spectrum found it easier to secure a Kickstart job, notwithstanding the support provided by JCP. While they are not traditionally those targeted by DWP programmes they were a notable section of the scheme's target audience due to the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.<sup>42</sup>

Three-fifths of Starters (62%) had not previously had support from JCP before starting their Kickstart role, and qualitative findings indicated that some young people applied for Universal Credit specifically to access the Kickstart Scheme. While the former may be more related to the young age of participants, the latter suggests the scheme was less likely to reach eligible young people facing greater labour market disadvantage.

Many young people further from the labour market and/or with additional support needs, including those with a long-term health condition, did secure Kickstart jobs and a positive EET outcome after the scheme. However, this was less common than for young people without these barriers to work. Kickstart participants with a long-term health condition were less likely than those without a long-term health condition to be satisfied with the scheme, achieve an EET outcome and where they were in work post-Kickstart, be satisfied with their job role.

Although many JCPs described reaching out to known employers and organisations, there was evidence that the pool of employers accessible to young people on Kickstart went beyond those who usually engage with JCPs. The majority of employers had not advertised vacancies through JCP / Universal Jobmatch or taken part in any other schemes run by JCP/DWP to provide employment prior to Kickstart. Furthermore, most employers had a positive experience, agreeing that it had been worth the investment. Kickstart has engendered a greater willingness from employers to help and support people through work experience — JCP now have a strong base to develop this potential.

An added success of engagement with employers was the encouragement and take-up of more 'flexible' approaches to recruiting and supporting young people into work. Gateways commented that the scheme was most successful when employers were able to look past their usual CV criteria when considering a young person for a

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<sup>42</sup> Young people who were more highly skilled or qualified were thought to be at risk of long-term unemployment at the time Kickstart launched. Research has shown that graduation during difficult economic times can have lasting effects on graduates' career success, and early figures on the graduate labour market in spring 2020 suggested a decrease in the availability of jobs for new graduates. See Altonji et al. 2016. 'Cashier or consultant? Entry Labor Market Conditions, Field of Study, and Career Success.' *Journal of Labor Economics* 34(S1): S361-S401 and Greaves. 2020. Graduating into a pandemic: the impact on finalists. <https://luminare.prospects.ac.uk/graduating-into-a-pandemic-the-impact-on-university-finalists>

Kickstart role (for example, relaxing the typical minimum educational grades or previous work experience). It was also important for employers to adapt from more ‘traditional’ recruitment processes, to give opportunities to a wider range of young people (for example, holding employer ‘speed dating’ events).

A key part of this, for Jobcentre or gateway staff, was working with employers to ensure they understood the ethos of the scheme. Many employers felt able to take a chance they would not have (on both the recruitment approach and, more generally, in recruiting a Kickstart employee) if the role was not funded (as it was low risk). Where more encouragement was needed, gateways and JCP usually reiterated to employers that a key aim of the scheme was to help young person at risk of long-term unemployment; it was not just to specifically meet employer labour needs. The most common reason for dissatisfaction among employers was ‘calibre of candidates’ — again this may reflect a need for a more careful matching system for some jobcentres, and the lack of breadth in the quality and quantity of vacancies and available young people.

The use of gateways created some early challenges, largely due to lack of clarity in the split of roles and responsibilities between JCP staff, gateways and employers at the outset. In many cases, JCP staff felt gateways convoluted the application process and there was confusion over which organisation had ownership over different elements of the process at different points. However, following these teething issues, views about the use of gateways were overall positive — employers that used them found all elements of application and set-up easier.

There was some evidence to suggest that ideally there would have been more time given to supporting young people while they were in their job. Most young people had some contact with their work coach or jobcentre staff during their Kickstart job (including that young people with health conditions that impacted their daily life substantially and those with no prior work experience were likely to receive more frequent support than others). Some found this very helpful, but others did not find the contact very supportive. The latter group and other young people who were not in contact with their work coach would have welcomed the opportunity to discuss challenges they were facing in their job. For these young people, JCP could perhaps have acted as a broker with the employer to talk about things like training needs.

## Key learnings and recommendations for future programmes

As with many employment programmes and policies, particularly those that are reactive to a sudden contextual change (such as the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic), the rollout of Kickstart happened quickly. This created many teething issues, many of which were resolved. A key learning, however, was the importance of minimising lags between stages. There were various points in the Kickstart process where lags were created (and still existed to some extent until the end of the scheme), which could be avoided:

- In many of the case study districts, a local imbalance between supply and demand for vacancies was an issue. Although typically imbalanced in the direction of there being too many vacancies, a small number of districts experienced an influx of interest from young people, where jobs were yet not available. This situation might have been avoided through: **local timelines for engaging young people and employers being more aligned; additional vetting of vacancies by organisations who understood local labour supply** in order to ensure the nature and volume approved was in line with demand from young people
- Many employers and young people experienced a lag during the referral phase. This resulted in employers finding workers through other means, or young people dropping out of the scheme, due to increased anxiety / loss of interest. Some ways in which JCP staff were successful in minimising this lag included:
  - **use of job fairs / “speed dating” for employers and potential Kickstart participants to meet:** The face-to-face meetings were helpful in advertising vacancies. Additionally, because the young person is meeting the employer directly, it removes the need to go through the work coach. This improved efficiency and reduced drop-out after referral stage.
  - **attaching CVs to their referrals for young people, in effect acting as an application:** This addressed the issue of young people being referred but not following up with an application.
  - **effective methods to promote the scheme to potential applicants included:** calculating earnings using the Better Off Calculator; reassuring young people they would continue to receive support from the work coach; reassuring young people their Universal Credit claim would stay open.

The need for more careful vetting of job roles is also supported by evidence around job role additionality. This proved a difficult concept to define, and interpretation appeared inconsistent sometimes leading to negative experiences for young people. Ideally, the vetting process would have given **more consideration to the extent to which the young person would experience a sense of purpose, and have a clear training and development plan**. Reviewing the employability support was a key part of the Kickstart vacancy approval process, with vacancies lacking a clear description being rejected; however, quality of this support in practice varied. This issue also highlights the need for **clear and consistent guidance for employers and those involved in vetting in schemes** like this (for Kickstart, this was gateways and DWP) in terms of vacancy requirements.

**Young people with long-term health conditions** form approximately a quarter of the NEET population.<sup>43</sup> As highlighted throughout, young people with health

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<sup>43</sup> [Office for National Statistics \(2023\), 'NEET age 16 to 24'](#). UK, Office for National Statistics: March 2023'

conditions were more likely to face multiple difficulties throughout the Kickstart process. These young people — accounting for nearly one-third of Kickstart participants - had a much greater propensity to have problems in terms of recruitment, retention, training and programme experience and outcomes.<sup>44</sup> This highlights a greater need for help and support in any future programme design.

**Young people who were ‘Black, African, Caribbean or Black British’** appear to have been more likely to have a negative experience with their Kickstart job. They were more likely to be dissatisfied with their Kickstart job, although the reasons given for dissatisfaction were similar between ethnic groups. This group of young people were also less likely to have completed the full six-months than those who were ‘White (including White minorities)’. This group were more likely to report that they left early as the job did not meet their expectations. Black, African, Caribbean or Black British Leavers at seven months who were in work were less likely to attribute importance to their Kickstart job in finding it and were more likely to be looking for work.

**Young people with long-term Universal Credit (UC) claims** prior to Kickstart had mixed outcomes. They were more likely to be NEET and to be claiming UC at both seven and ten months after the scheme. However, for those who were in work after the scheme, there were positives; they were more likely to want to stay in their role for over three years and be satisfied with their pay. This is despite them being more likely to be working shorter hours and receiving lower pay — location and hours were generally important factors for long-term claimants, and it may be that meeting these criteria, and having overcome their more substantial barriers to employment (including health concerns, low qualifications and lack of access to transport) was more valuable.

**Short-term claimants** benefited from the scheme as a stepping-stone. They were more likely to report they had ‘gained good experience or boosted their confidence’ and it had been a ‘good skills development opportunity/training’. If they were no longer in their Kickstart job, or had left early, it was more likely to be as they had received another offer, or as they were not interested in the area of work. Those in work after the scheme were more likely to be earning over the National Minimum Wage (NMW) but were more likely to be seeking another role.

**Younger participants, those with no/lower qualifications and those with no prior work experience** (characteristics that tended to be related to each other) were also less likely to be in full-time employment at the end of the Kickstart job. When they were in work, however, they were more likely to be satisfied with their new job role and see longevity in it than their counterparts, indicating the scheme has the potential to have a real impact for these groups.

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<sup>44</sup> It also worth noting that the [State of the nation 2021: children and young people’s wellbeing - GOV.UK report](#) found that young people with a disability were statistically more likely to give lower ratings of their overall life satisfaction.

Taken together, these findings highlight the importance of **additional support mechanisms for youth employability schemes like Kickstart to improve outcomes for these groups**. This could include:

- **ensuring employers involved in future programmes or schemes are clear on the purpose and ethos**. This reduces the likelihood of employers having unrealistic expectations/requirements from applicants and, in turn, jobs being created, which are not suitable for candidates with lower qualifications and/or no experience. Where JCP staff and gateways spent time educating employers on the ethos, employers tended to be responsive and adapt job roles accordingly.
- JCP providing **more tailored and individual support** for young people in these groups to help with job choice, navigating vacancy and application procedures, and greater in-work support.
- helping more young people with more barriers **to access intensive support, such as that provided by Youth Employability Coaches (YEC)**, these additional resources can benefit eligible young people prior to starting in Kickstart jobs.
- employers who are willing to recruit young people with additional support needs may also require **more ‘hand-holding’ from JCP and/or gateway type organisations**, although additional financial incentives do not seem to be required.
- **‘pre-programmes’** to prepare who have not worked before those with basic workplace skills/etiquette.
- **extended jobs** for those that require more support/development to prepare them for future work.
- **greater flexibility** (and awareness of this possibility) in working hours for those with health conditions who would benefit from fewer working hours. Where this is an option, it needs to be clearly communicated to young people with health conditions and employers creating the vacancies.

Despite some prior concerns about how capable the young people would be to perform the jobs and their capacity as an employer to support them, employers felt that Kickstart was an attractive (and low risk) proposition for them because roles were fully funded with grants for training and support. However, there were accounts from young people that felt little support from their employer, added value, or sense of additionality in their role. It is critical, therefore, **that employers and job roles are carefully vetted** to ensure they deliver the intended benefit to the young person and not just the employer. This should include clear plans for roles, responsibilities, training, and development, which are then monitored throughout. **Continued monitoring** would also benefit employers who are struggling with misconduct among employees.

The benefits of a gateway approach were evident (for example, expanding the breadth of sectors and types of employers engaging with a DWP scheme), albeit



somewhat clouded by the initial teething issues related to the pace of the Scheme's development. To avoid this, any future similar programmes should clearly **communicate the purpose and added value of gateways upfront in guidance.**

# 7. Annexes

## Annex A: Glossary

**COVID-19** — Coronavirus pandemic

**DWP** — Department for Work and Pensions

**EET** — Education, Employment or Training

**GOE(s)** — Gateway organisation employer(s)

**JCP** — Jobcentre Plus

**JETS** — Job Entry Targeted Support

**KDAMs** — Kickstart District Account Managers

**NEET** — Not in Education, Employment, or Training

**NMW** — National Minimum Wage

**ONS** — Office for National Statistics

**UC** — Universal Credit

## Annex B: Kickstart website links

Employer guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/kickstart-scheme-for-employers>

Employer resources: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/kickstart-scheme-employer-resources>

Kickstart Scheme Grant Funding Agreement: terms and conditions for gateways:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/kickstart-scheme-terms-and-conditions/kickstart-scheme-grant-funding-agreement-terms-and-conditions-for-gateways-effective-from-21-june-2021>

Kickstart gateway guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/kickstart-scheme-for-gateways>

Kickstart Scheme Grant Funding Agreement: terms and conditions for employers:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/kickstart-scheme-terms-and-conditions/kickstart-scheme-grant-funding-agreement-terms-and-conditions-for-employers-effective-from-21-june-2021>

Terms and conditions: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/kickstart-scheme-terms-and-conditions>

Young person's Kickstart Guide: [https://jobhelp.campaign.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/KS\\_Young-People-Guide-3-2.pdf](https://jobhelp.campaign.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/KS_Young-People-Guide-3-2.pdf)

# Annex C: Technical Detail

## Methodology

### Quantitative Methodology

#### Surveys

Three audiences took part in the surveys: young people who participated in Kickstart, gateways, and employers.

##### Young people surveys

Interviews with young people who participated in Kickstart took place approximately:

- 1-to-3 months after they started a Kickstart job ('Starters')
- seven months after they started a Kickstart job ('Leavers at seven months')
- ten months after they started a Kickstart job, so three months after completing 'Leavers' at seven months' survey ('Leavers at ten months')

IFF Research conducted fieldwork in monthly 'waves' by sending out an online survey link to Starters and Leavers at seven and then ten months. Leavers at ten months who did not complete online were then invited to take part via telephone. The surveys took around 10-15 minutes to complete.

##### Sampling

The surveys of Starters and Leavers at seven months were issued to a random sample of young people who had started a Kickstart job during the relevant month (detailed in the table below) and who had valid contact details and were eligible to take part in research.

The Kickstart scheme was launched in September 2020, with the first young people starting Kickstart jobs in November 2020. Due to the timing of the award of the research contract (September 2021), it should be noted that young people who started Kickstart jobs between November 2020 and August 2021 were out of scope for the Starter survey, and similarly those who started Kickstart jobs between November 2020 and March 2021 were out of scope for the Leavers at seven months survey.

The survey of Leavers at ten months employed a longitudinal sampling approach: only those who had completed the Leavers at seven months survey and who had agreed to re-contact were invited to participate.

##### Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted online for Starters and Leavers at seven months. For Leavers at ten months, a mixed-mode approach of sequential online and telephone data collection was used.

For all three surveys, invitations and up to two reminders were issued by email. A third reminder was sent by text message to non-responders with a valid mobile phone number. In the absence of this, the third reminder was sent by email.

The fieldwork window for each wave was approximately three weeks. For Leavers at ten months, the two-week telephone fieldwork window for each wave commenced one week after the initial online invitation.

Table 7.1 (overleaf) presents the populations and timings of each wave, for each survey, for the data reported in this report. Table 7.2 (overleaf) presents the response rates for each.

All cohorts included those who started Kickstart jobs but left early.

**Table 7.1 Young people survey timings and sample size (survey completes) achieved**

Wave	Fieldwork date	Starters		Leavers at seven months		Leavers at ten months		
		Month started KS job	Sample size	Month started KS job	Sample size	Fieldwork date	Month started KS job	Sample size
A	Nov 21	Sep 21	n = 1,144	Apr 21	n = 1,316	Feb 22	Apr 21	n = 366
B	Dec 21	Oct 21	n = 996	May 21	n = 1,439	Mar 22	May 21	n = 362
C	Jan 22	Nov 21	n = 1,382	Jun 21	n = 1,609	Apr 22	Jun 21	n = 468
D	Feb 22	Dec 21	n = 873	Jul 21	n = 1,798	May 22	Jul 21	n = 526
E	Mar 22	Jan 22	n = 810	Aug 21	n = 1,090	Jun 22	Aug 21	n = 334
F	Apr 22	Feb 22	n = 1,281	Sep 21	n = 1,625	Jul 22	Sep 21	n = 458
G	May 22	Mar 22	n = 1,577	Oct 21	n = 310	Aug 22	Oct 21	n = 93
H	Jun 22	--	--	Nov 21	n = 528	Sept 22	Nov 21	n = 183
I	Jul 22	--	--	Dec 21	n = 356	Oct 22	Dec 21	n = 99
J	Aug 22	--	--	Jan 22	n = 544	Nov 22	Jan 22	n = 172
K	Sept 22	--	--	Feb 22	n = 428	Dec 22	Feb 22	n = 115
L	Oct 22	--	--	Mar 22	n = 622	Jan 23	Mar 22	n = 220
<b>Total</b>			<b>n = 8,063</b>		<b>n = 11,665</b>			<b>n = 3,396</b>

Table 7.2 Young people survey completes and response rates

Wave	Starters			Leavers at seven months			Leavers at ten months		
	Starting sample	Interviews achieved	Response rate	Starting sample	Interviews achieved	Response rate	Starting sample	Interviews achieved	Response rate
A	7,698	1,144	14.9%	9,310	1,316	14.1%	905	366	40.4%
B	6,798	996	14.7%	9,923	1,439	14.5%	1,005	362	36.0%
C	8,397	1,382	16.5%	10,898	1,609	14.8%	1,137	468	41.2%
D	4,490	873	19.4%	9,270	1,798	19.4%	1,285	526	40.9%
E	5,598	810	14.5%	9,500	1,090	11.5%	775	334	43.1%
F	5,597	1,281	22.9%	8,679	1,625	18.7%	1,164	458	39.3%
G	6,656	1,577	23.7%	1,494	310	20.7%	221	93	42.1%
H	--	--	--	1,983	528	26.3%	400	183	45.8%
I	--	--	--	1,715	356	20.8%	210	99	47.1%
J	--	--	--	2,190	544	24.8%	424	172	40.6%
K	--	--	--	1,970	428	22.2%	305	115	37.7%
L	--	--	--	2,556	622	24.3%	485	220	45.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45,234</b>	<b>8,063</b>	<b>17.8%</b>	<b>69,488</b>	<b>11,665</b>	<b>16.8%</b>	<b>6,271</b>	<b>3,396</b>	<b>40.8%</b>



## Data processing

Following data collection, verbatim responses were coded to allow quantitative analysis by theme. Responses to ‘other specify’ questions were backcoded where possible, or new codes were created. For fully open-ended questions new code frames were created. Data were then tabulated to a specification created by the research team.

To reduce any bias in the survey estimates, the data for each survey was weighted to match the population profile provided by DWP.

Weighting was completed using Random Iterative Method (RIM) approach, which allows for multiple characteristics to be adjusted simultaneously, whilst distorting the overall dataset as little as possible. The technique works by using an iterative process to achieve the ‘best fit’ for the weighted variables. The process starts by applying the weighting factors for the first variable. Once this has been calculated, the weighting is then applied for the second variable (and then the third, and so on). As this second step will likely mean the profile will no longer match the first variable targets, the process then involves iteratively weighting getting increasingly closer to the targets for each variable with each iteration. This is repeated until the profile is as close as possible to the targets.

For the Starters and Leavers at seven months, survey targets were set based on population frequencies supplied by DWP for the following sample characteristics: age, gender, ‘Kickstart status’ (i.e., whether the young person had stayed in their job for the full six months), job sector. To account for the fact that the populations participating in each wave of Kickstart were not equal, the final step was to ‘gross up’ the weights so that they the total would equal the population for that wave, meaning that each wave represented the correct proportion of the total population. It was necessary to ‘gross up’ in this way, because this allowed for the proportions to align as each wave was added to the total data.

For the Leavers at ten months survey, a RIM weight was applied to correct for both non-response bias and the longitudinal sampling approach, before being ‘grossed-up’ to Leavers population. The RIM weighting stage involved setting the same targets as had been used for the Leavers at seven months, and in addition, targets by the unweighted responses from a selection of key questions from Leavers at seven months survey:

- C4 Satisfaction with Kickstart (from Leavers at seven-month response)
- D1 Current working status (from Leavers at seven-month response)
- E2 Ethnicity (from Leavers at seven-month response)
- Age (from sample)
- Gender (from sample)
- ‘Kickstart status’ (from sample)
- Job sector

This ensured the Leavers at ten months data were a ‘best fit’ representation of both the overall population and the profile of the Leavers at seven months (to correct for non-response bias at both stages).

Finally, the weights were ‘grossed-up’ in the same way the Starters and Leavers at seven months has been.

## Employer and gateway surveys

### Sampling

IFF Research conducted the employer survey among employers at least six months after they first employed young people via Kickstart. Only employers who had at least one young person start a Kickstart job with them were in scope. The survey of employers was conducted in two waves: the first included only direct employers and the second included direct employers and gateway organisation employers (GOEs). The gateway survey was an attempted census; all gateways on record were invited to complete it.

### Fieldwork

A sequential online and telephone approach was used for all surveys.

Table 7.3 presents the interviews achieved and corresponding response rates.

**Table 7.3 Employer and gateway survey completes and response rates**

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Fieldwork date</b>	<b>Starting sample</b>	<b>Interviews achieved</b>	<b>Response rate</b>
Direct employers	Feb 22 & Jul 22	1,626	520	31%
GOEs	Jul 22	1,500	462	33%
Gateways	Feb 22	1,144	401	35%

### Data processing

Following data collection, verbatim responses were coded to allow quantitative analysis by theme. Responses to ‘other specify’ questions were backcoded where possible, or new codes were created. For fully open-ended questions new code frames were created. Data were then tabulated to a specification created by the research team.

To reduce any bias in the survey estimates, the data for each survey was weighted to match the population profile.

A RIM weight was used to bring the data for employers into line with their population profiles, correcting for any non-response bias. For direct employers (with one Kickstart starter), the variables used as weighting targets were number of employees, number of approved Kickstart vacancies, and region. For GOEs, the weighting targets were set by month of first employing a Kickstart employee and total number of Kickstart jobs filled. The weights for each employer group were then scaled against each other to reflect the full employer population.

Data for gateways has been weighted to the population profile for gateways (following removal of duplicate records) by start month and total number of Kickstart jobs offered by gateways.

## Qualitative Methodology

### Case studies

IFF Research, with support from Sue Maguire from the Institute of Policy Research at the University of Bath, carried out a total of 12 case studies. These were in a mix of Kickstart districts across England, Wales, and Scotland including rural, urban, and mixed rural/urban locations. The case studies involved interviews and focus groups with a range of Kickstart employers, gateways, and Jobcentre Plus (JCP) staff involved in delivery of the scheme. It also included qualitative research with young people. This was comprised of a five-day online diary and follow-up interview about their experiences of the scheme approximately three-to-four months into their Kickstart job. As it was intended to capture ‘a week in the life’ of someone in their Kickstart job, young people who had left their Kickstart job early were not included in online diaries. A small minority of young people left their Kickstart role early between their online diary and follow-up diary. This means qualitative insights from young people who left Kickstart early are limited.

All qualitative fieldwork took place between December 2021 and June 2022.

Table 7.4 provides a summary of all audiences that took part in the case studies.

**Table 7.4 Case study number of interviewees**

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Total no. of respondents</b>
<b>District overview</b>	Depth interviews	22
	Paired/group interviews	
<b>KDAMs</b>	Depth interviews	35
	Paired/group interviews	
<b>Work coaches</b>	Group interviews	54
<b>Gateways</b>	Depth interviews	25
<b>Employers</b>	Depth interviews	35
<b>Young people</b>	Online diaries	86
<b>Young people</b>	Follow-up interviews	64
<b>Young people</b>	Peer-to-peer interviews	19

An analysis framework was created for each audience, and thematic analysis was undertaken to identify the key insights that emerged from the data.

## Grouping and cross-break definitions

Table 7.5 details the definitions of variables and questions from the surveys of young people that were used to create the subgroups included in the body of the report.

**Table 7.5 Analysis cross-breaks**

<b>Grouping</b>	<b>Subgroup</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Logic</b>
Gender	Male	Gender recorded as male on sample, or identified as male in survey if blank on sample	E7=1 OR gender (sample)=1
	Female	Gender recorded as female on sample, or identified as female in survey if blank on sample	E7=2 OR gender (sample)=2
Age	18 – 21	Age recorded as 18 - 21 on sample, or response provided in survey if blank on sample	E8 = 18 – 21 OR age (sample) = 18 - 21
	22 - 24	Age recorded as 22 - 24 on sample, or response provided in survey if blank on sample	E8 = 22 – 24 OR age (sample) = 22 - 24
Ethnicity	White (including White minorities)	Survey response ‘White English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish/ British’ or ‘White Irish’ or ‘White Gypsy or Irish Traveller’ or ‘Any other White background’	E2=1-4
	Ethnic Minority	Survey response ‘White and Black Caribbean’ or ‘White and Black African’ or ‘White and Asian’ or ‘Any other mixed / multiple ethnic background’ or ‘Indian’ or ‘Pakistani’ or ‘Bangladeshi’ or ‘Any other Asian background’ or ‘African’ or ‘Caribbean’ or ‘Any other Black / African / Caribbean background’ or ‘Chinese’ or ‘Arab’ or ‘Any other ethnic background’	E2=5-18

Kickstart Scheme – Process Evaluation

<b>Grouping</b>	<b>Subgroup</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Logic</b>
	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	Survey response 'White and Black Caribbean' or 'White and Black African' or 'White and Asian' or 'Any other mixed / multiple ethnic background'	E2=5-8
	Asian or Asian British	Survey response 'Indian' or 'Pakistani' or 'Bangladeshi' or 'Chinese' or 'Any other Asian background'	E2=9-12 OR 16
	Black, African, Caribbean or Black British	Survey response 'African' or 'Caribbean' or 'Any other Black / African / Caribbean background'	E2=13-15
Long-term health condition or illness expected to last for at least 12 months	No long-term health condition	Survey response 'no' to 'do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?'	E4=2
	Has a health condition	Survey response 'yes' to 'do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?'	E4=1
	Has a health condition that impacted daily life substantially	Survey response 'yes' to 'do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?' and 'yes, a lot' to 'does your condition or illness / Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry-out day-to-day activities?'	E4=1 AND E5=3
Highest qualification level	Lower or no qualifications	Survey response 'Less than 5 GCSEs grades A*-C/9-4 or equivalent, NVQ Level 1' or 'Something else' or 'No qualifications'	E3=4/5/6

Kickstart Scheme – Process Evaluation

<b>Grouping</b>	<b>Subgroup</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Logic</b>
	Level 2	Survey response '1 A-Level or equivalent, 5 or more GCSEs of grade A*-C/9-4 or equivalent, NVQ Level 2 or equivalent'	E3 =3
	Level 3	Survey response '2 or more A-Levels, NVQ Level 3 or equivalent'	E3=2
	Level 4 or above	Survey response 'Degree level or above'	E3=1
Work experience	No prior work experience	Survey response 'none of the above' to 'before starting your Kickstart job, had you ever done any...?'	A1=3
	Any work experience	Survey response 'paid work' or 'unpaid work' to 'before starting your Kickstart job, had you ever done any...?'	A1=1-2
	At least 12 months of paid work experience	Survey response 'more than 12 months paid work experience' to 'approximately how much paid or unpaid work experience did you have prior to your Kickstart placement?'	A1a_1 = 4
Current activity	In work	Survey response at Wave A or B: 'self-employed' or 'working for an employer in a paid role' plus those back-coded from 'other specify'  Survey response at Wave C onwards: 'self-employed' or 'working for your Kickstart employer in a paid role (including an apprenticeship or a zero-hour contract)' or 'working for a different employer in a paid role (including an apprenticeship or a	D1=1 or 2 or 3 or 4 or 9 or 10 or 11 or 12

Grouping	Subgroup	Definition	Logic
		zero-hour contact) plus those back-coded from 'other specify'	
	In work or due to start	<p>Survey response at Wave A or B: 'self-employed' or 'working for an employer in a paid role' or 'not working but due to start work within the next month' plus those back-coded from 'other specify'</p> <p>Survey response at Wave C onwards: 'self-employed' or 'working for your Kickstart employer in a paid role (including an apprenticeship or a zero-hour contract)' or 'working for a different employer in a paid role (including an apprenticeship or a zero-hour contact)' or 'not working but due to start work within the next month' plus those back-coded from 'other specify'</p>	D1=1 or 2 or 3 or 4 or 6 or 9 or 10 or 11 or 12
	EET or due to start	<p>Survey response at Wave A or B: 'self-employed' or 'working for an employer in a paid role' or 'not working but due to start work within the next month' or 'in education or training' plus those back-coded from 'other specify'</p> <p>Survey response at Wave C onwards: 'self-employed' or 'working for your Kickstart employer in a paid role (including an apprenticeship or a zero-hour contract)' or 'working for a different employer in a paid role (including an apprenticeship or a zero hour contact)' role' or 'not working but due to start work within the next month' or 'in education or training' plus those back-coded from 'other specify'</p>	D1=1 or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 or 9 or 10 or 11 or 12



Kickstart Scheme – Process Evaluation

<b>Grouping</b>	<b>Subgroup</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Logic</b>
	NEET	Survey response: 'prefer not to say' and all remaining in 'other specify' after back-coding	D1=7 or 13
Length of Universal Credit Claim	Short-term (0 to 6 months)	Length of UC claim recorded on sample as 0 – 6 months	LOC (sample) = 0 - 6
	Medium-term (7 to 18 months)	Length of UC claim recorded on sample as 7 – 18 months	LOC (sample) = 7 – 18
	Long-term (over 18 months)	Length of UC claim recorded on sample as more than 18 months	LOC (sample) = >18
Region	North of England	Postcode on sample belongs to North East (England), North West (England) or Yorkshire and the Humber	Postcode to Government Office Region (GOR) lookup
	Midlands	Postcode on sample belongs to East Midlands (England), West Midlands (England) or East of England	Postcode to GOR lookup
	South of England	Postcode on sample belongs to South West (England), South East (England) or London	Postcode to GOR lookup
	Scotland	Postcode on sample belongs to Scotland	Postcode to GOR lookup
	Wales	Postcode on sample belongs to Wales	Postcode to GOR lookup