

Research report

Evaluation of Mandatory Work Activity

Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 823

Evaluation of Mandatory Work Activity

A report of research carried out by ICF GHK and TNS-BMRB on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

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Central Analysis Division, Department for Work and Pensions, Upper Ground Floor, Steel City House, West Street, Sheffield, S1 2GQ

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Views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the DWP or any other government department.

Abbreviations

ATM	Adviser Team Manager
CPA	Contract Package Area
CSOM	Customer Service Operations Manager
DMA	Decision Making and Appeals
DNS	Did not start
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
FTA	Fail to attend
IB	Incapacity Benefit
IS	Income Support
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
LMS	Labour Market System
MI	Management information
MWA	Mandatory Work Activity
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
PETL	Performance Team Leader
PRaP	Provider Referral and Payments system
TPPM	Third Party Provision Manager

Summary

This report presents findings from research on Mandatory Work Activity (MWA), undertaken by ICF GHK Consulting Ltd and TNS-BMRB on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The research comprised both qualitative and quantitative elements, and was undertaken between March and August 2012. The qualitative research was led by ICF GHK Consulting Ltd and supplemented by a quantitative survey of c.800 MWA participants carried out by TNS-BMRB.

MWA was introduced in May 2011. The objective behind the design and introduction of MWA is to move claimants closer to the labour market through:

- providing extra support to a small number of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants who would benefit from a short period of activity that helps them re-engage with the system, refocus their job search and gain valuable work-related disciplines, such as attending on time and regularly, carrying out specific tasks and working under supervision; and
- demonstrating to claimants that the receipt of benefits for those able to work is conditional on their willingness to search for and take-up employment.

MWA is targeted at a relatively small group of claimants and referral to MWA is at Jobcentre Plus Adviser discretion usually coupled with a 'case conference' approach where they discuss referrals with the Advisory Team Manager. In all instances, a referral to MWA is at adviser discretion. MWA is a work placement of 30 hours a week lasting for four weeks. The placements are sourced by contracted providers and set in voluntary sector organisations or institutions that deliver a community benefit.

Claimants referred to MWA who do not comply are referred for a benefits sanction, with the severity of sanctions increasing with repeated non-compliance.

Initially, 19,000 MWA places per year were available to advisers to utilise. During February and March 2012, 3,750 extra places were made available in five Jobcentre Plus Districts, known as the 'trailblazer districts'. A change was made to the MWA guidance in these districts to ask advisers to specifically consider claimants with a history of two or more sanctions among those claimants they considered for a referral to MWA although adviser discretion was not removed. Advisers were instructed to refer such claimants only if they met the general referral criteria for MWA. The aim of the trailblazer was to monitor the impact of MWA for this sub-group of referrals.

MWA is available in all areas of Britain. The expansion of MWA, announced on 12 June 2012 provides an additional 9,000 places per year. This means in 2012/13 there will be approximately 28,000 places available. Some Jobcentre Plus districts are using their Flexible Support Fund to buy further places. From May 2011 to August 2012 there were 90,470 referrals and 33,170 starts to MWA. From 22 October 2012 claimants that are referred to MWA but fail to attend or complete will be subject to the new sanctions regime which could mean a sanction of up to three years (156 weeks) for a third failure.

The MWA impact assessment analysis published by DWP in June 2012 and the ratio of referrals to starts seen in the official statistics both suggest there is a 'deterrent effect' associated with MWA, where some claimants choose to end their JSA claim following a referral and before starting on the programme. Advisers are guided to consider a subsequent referral should the claimant make a further claim and remain within the eligibility criteria.

Aims of the study

The aim of the evaluation study was to undertake a series of research tasks to explore the following:

- How is MWA being implemented and what is advisers' feedback on the use, delivery and effect of the policy?
- How have claimants responded to being referred to, and participating in, MWA?
- What is the impact of MWA on the soft outcomes of claimants (such as work related activity or re-newed commitment to job search)?
- What is the provider feedback on the delivery and impact of MWA?
- How have advisers responded to the increased number of places and revised referral guidance in the trailblazer districts?

Methodology

In order to achieve the aims and objectives of the study, the research included:

- Document and Management Information (MI) Desk Review: to provide the context for the research.
- Fieldwork with District Offices: Face-to-face and telephone interviews with District Managers, MWA district leads and MWA contract managers in each of the five districts.
- Fieldwork with Jobcentre Plus local offices: Interviews with staff in 15 Jobcentres (three per selected district); focus groups in each Jobcentre Office with Jobcentre managers, Customer Service Operations Manager (CSOMs), Performance Team Leaders (PETLs) and Adviser Team Managers (ATMs); and face-to-face interviews with two Personal Advisers in each Jobcentre.
- Fieldwork with providers: A combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews with ten providers (five prime providers and five sub-contractors in each selected district).
- Fieldwork with hosts: Telephone interviews with ten hosts (two per district), and 11 short case studies of hosts and their MWA placements.
- Fieldwork with claimants: Telephone interviews with 798 claimants who were referred onto MWA and had started their placement, in addition to the 11 short case studies of hosts and their placements mentioned above.

As the study fieldwork took place between March and August 2012, some of the delivery issues identified have subsequently been rectified.

The following summarises the findings from all strands of the research.

Understanding of Mandatory Work Activity

Claimant perspective

Claimants' understanding of MWA was varied. Most understood that MWA was a placement where they could gain some work experience, boost their CV and get into a routine. Most said that they understood the compulsory nature of the programme:

- in total, 95 per cent of surveyed claimants said the adviser had made it clear when they were referred that attending the placement was compulsory;
- the same proportion (95 per cent) recognised that the placement would last four weeks in total;
- 96 per cent also said the adviser made it clear that they had to attend the full four weeks; and
- around three-quarters (77 per cent) correctly identified that their benefits would be stopped for a set period of time if they did not meet the conditions of MWA without good cause.

Many claimants thought they were being referred to MWA because they had been claiming benefits for some time. Most commented that the risk of sanctions played an important role in why they participated in MWA. However, within the qualitative research with non-starters none of the claimants had considered signing off JSA to avoid MWA. This finding from the qualitative research is based on a small number of claimants and as such would not be representative of the population. As discussed above both the official statistics and impact assessment has found evidence of 'deterrent effect' in terms of claimants signing post referral and before start.

Jobcentre Plus perspective

Overall, there was a good level of understanding about the purpose and intent of MWA from District and Jobcentre Plus staff at all levels of the organisation, although there were occasional instances of inappropriate referrals. MWA was described by staff as a way of:

- re-introducing claimants to the work ethic/discipline;
- reinforcing the 'rights and responsibilities' messages to claimants and testing conditionality;
- providing some/recent work experience for the long-term unemployed and particularly for young people; and
- providing an additional offer for claimants – which could complement other Jobcentre Plus products and services.

The way advisers introduced MWA to claimants was consistent with this: they reported emphasising the potential benefits and positive aspects of MWA to claimants (e.g. the prospect of gaining work experience, an opportunity to refresh and update their CV and obtain a recent work reference) and reported clearly explaining the mandatory aspects of the programme and consequences of non-attendance. In addition, some advisers informed claimants in advance that if their jobsearch activities did not improve, then they would be referred to MWA; this encouraged some claimants to sign-off.

Jobcentre Plus staff identified two main categories of claimant they typically referred to MWA:

- 1 those for whom there was some element of 'doubt' about their commitment to finding work;
- 2 unmotivated or de-motivated claimants – those doing the minimum to stay eligible for JSA, the long-term unemployed and those lacking recent work experience.

Advisers also identified two other categories of claimant who were referred to MWA in smaller numbers. These were individuals who were motivated to find work but needed some work experience and could not get it elsewhere, and claimants who were suspected of working and claiming. It is unclear whether the latter group had also been referred to fraud teams in all cases.

Provider perspective

All providers and subcontractors understood the aims and overall policy intent of MWA, with the overall aim being to provide experience of work and the associated disciplines (such as time-keeping and working under supervision) to JSA claimants to help them move closer to the labour market.

Around half of the providers interviewed made specific reference to the ‘punitive’ aspects of MWA, which sat alongside the employability component of the programme as a means of enforcing conditionality. A small number of providers reported that they had at times received potentially mixed messages from Jobcentre Plus on the balance between the employment support element and the imposition of the mandatory and potential loss of benefit elements of MWA.

Host perspective

Each of the hosts interviewed also had a clear understanding of the overall aim of MWA – to help unemployed individuals to find work through the provision placements that provide individuals with experience of work. Many of the hosts had provided similar work placement opportunities for unemployed individuals in the past. This was one of the reasons why they agreed to be part of MWA in addition to the benefits of having additional staff to complement their regular volunteers.

The referral process

Claimant perspective

Qualitative and quantitative research with claimants showed that most recognised positive reasons for being referred to MWA – with work experience, the opportunity to improve their CV and to gain work reference often being highlighted. Nevertheless, around a third of surveyed claimants (31 per cent) felt that one of the reasons for being referred was to put them off claiming JSA. Nearly all were clear that they had no choice about attending once referred.

Claimants did not always feel the explanation of MWA offered by advisers was clear at the point of referral. Nearly a third of those surveyed (30 per cent) felt it was not very or not clear at all. Claimants tended to want more practical information on the nature of their placement and/or the work they would be involved with. This represents a challenge to advisers and the design of MWA, given that details of specific placements are not available at the time of referral. Providers are contracted to confirm placement arrangements at, or after, their initial engagement with the claimant and therefore, cannot provide advance details to advisers.

The majority of surveyed claimants (61 per cent) said that, based on everything they had been told by their adviser, they felt positive about being sent on an MWA placement. Younger men (aged 18-24) were particularly positive in this regard. Positivity was strongly linked to how clearly the adviser had explained MWA and whether or not the adviser had highlighted links between MWA and potential benefits to their job search.

Jobcentre Plus perspective

Advisers commented that referral to MWA was a relatively simple process. Once a referral decision had been made, it was logged via the Labour Market System (LMS) system¹ and the claimant was told to expect a telephone call or letter from the provider. Some advisers said providers had provided claimants with written information or a leaflet explaining the details of MWA. There were mixed

¹ Details of referrals recorded on LMS were transferred to the Provider Referrals and Payments System (PRaP), to allow progress to be monitored by Jobcentre staff.

views among advisers about this process. Some felt it worked well, whereas others commented that following referral they effectively had no further knowledge about the claimant and their progress. However, DWP advises that providers are not contracted to deliver progress reports to Jobcentre while the claimant is on placement.

In three districts, the ten day referral-to-placement target² was not being met, resulting in a backlog of referrals and in some cases negatively influencing the advisers' view of MWA. A key factor was the flow of referrals – some providers were unable to manage the ramping-up of referrals and spikes in referral numbers. Sourcing sufficient numbers of placements was cited as the critical issue.

In two districts there was very positive feedback about their provider and sub-contractors. In the three remaining districts regular meetings between the district staff and providers were taking place, with performance improvement plans being developed and implemented.

Provider perspective

Providers tended to see the claimant referral process as straightforward. However, the number of referrals made and the spikes in referral rates caused difficulties for the majority of providers, and caused significant backlogs in three of the districts included in the research.

A number mentioned a higher than anticipated referral-to-start ratio which had financial implications, and reported that in their view the cost of processing fail-to-attend (FTA) cases for Decision Making and Appeals (DMA)³ referrals was not sufficiently met in the current 'payment per start' contract.

Host perspective

Most hosts were satisfied with the claimants referred to them. Some hosts worked closely with the provider/subcontractor to assess the appropriateness of claimants, with some conducting 'pre-interviews' with placement candidates – although this process could contribute to the backlog in districts where it occurred. However, in other cases there were no discussions between hosts and providers/sub-contractors – often because a working relationship had already been established and the provider/sub-contractor knew which claimants to refer to which placements for the benefit of both parties.

The placement

Claimant perspective

Although most claimants worked for charity shops, others worked for organisations involved in recycling or conservation, country parks, health and youth centres, and larger charity outlets that traded in furniture, white goods and electrical items and which incorporated some warehousing, minor repair work, pick-ups and deliveries.

Even among those claimants who were placed in charity shops, roles were not limited to retail activities. Common activities were shop-based, such as interacting with claimants, stock duties and serving on the till, but in the larger outlets claimants were also involved in warehouse operations, office work, administration, merchandising and promotion.

² The referral to placement target of ten working days has since been changed to 15 working days.

³ The Labour Market DMA process is the mechanism by which doubts over compliance can be raised and decisions reached on whether a benefit sanction should be imposed.

The experiences of those who had started or completed their placement were largely positive. Three-quarters (74 per cent) of surveyed claimants said they felt positive overall and it was common for claimants' views to become more positive during their time on placement. The fact that more claimants felt positive about the placement after it had ended than before starting indicates that the experience of attending can sometimes prompt claimants to change their minds. Many had enjoyed the experience and a quarter of those who completed their placement choose to volunteer at the organisation where they had been placed after MWA had finished. This was most common among younger respondents and for a minority of claimants who previously had lacked routine or confidence to leave the house.

Generally, claimants were satisfied with the workload, level of responsibility and variety of tasks they were given during their placement. Around half (45 per cent) of surveyed claimants said they had the chance to acquire new skills during their placement – most often customer service skills, using cash registers or handling money, working as part of a team, or other social skills. Furthermore, the supervision offered by the host was generally regarded as being of good quality by claimants.

As measured by the claimants' survey, one in five of those who had started MWA did not complete the full four week placement, with drop outs concentrated in the first week of attendance. It was most common for claimants to have withdrawn from the programme due to illness or injury, although it is unclear whether this was linked to the placement or not. Others had left as the result of an offer of paid work and ceased claiming JSA.

Jobcentre Plus perspective

There were mixed views from Jobcentre Plus staff on the suitability of available placements. Some staff thought the types of placement were an irrelevant consideration when the focus was on promoting a work ethic and providing an experience of being in the workplace (rather than specific work experience). Other staff thought placements that were a better fit with the claimants' work aspirations or local employment opportunities would have greatest impact.

Provider perspective

In all but one district, subcontractors were responsible for sourcing placement opportunities. Placements were usually drawn from existing links with hosts developed under previous programmes.

There were problems in identifying sufficient placements to meet demand in some of the case study districts. Providers reported on a range of factors affecting the supply of placements and leading to delays, including:

- competing demand for places between different programmes (such as those for the probation service);
- the withdrawal of placements from some charities – creating a reduction in places;
- instances where claimants referred to MWA continued as volunteers after completing their placement – reducing the demand for more MWA placements; and
- limited supply of suitable placements in less urban areas.

As outlined above, placements tended to be in charity shops and other not-for profit/charity settings. Provider and host interviews suggested that in-placement monitoring practices were variable, as was the frequency of contact between providers, hosts and claimants who were on placement. There were some instances where providers maintained contact at the start of the placement and then regularly throughout the four weeks; elsewhere this was less prevalent.

Some providers and hosts reported a degree of leniency and, where possible, tried to offer claimants another choice of placement if they were unable to attend their first option (e.g. for health or transport/access issues). Some also attempted to re-engage claimants who had withdrawn from their placements.

The host perspective

As most hosts had worked with long-term unemployed individuals previously, they reported being very knowledgeable about this claimant group. All but two of the host organisations were very positive about MWA and were continuing to provide placements. There was widespread recognition among hosts that there could be issues around motivation, attendance, timeliness and behaviour appropriate for the workplace from the claimants referred to MWA. While these concerns were justified in some cases, both the qualitative and quantitative research found that, once they had a chance to settle into their role, most claimants engaged with the experience of attending their placement; had positive views on the routine of going to work, learning on the job, and working under supervision; and enjoyed the overall experience.

Depending on the nature of the host and their size, some form of training was provided as part of the placement. Typically hosts said they offered an induction, health and safety training and, in one case, the opportunity to work towards an NVQ (for claimants who choose to volunteer past the four week placement).

While there were some cases of FTAs and early leavers, the majority of claimants were reported as completing their placements. Hosts suggested ways of encouraging completion, such as the use of induction sessions, 'buddy systems' and clear staff rotas.

Impacts from mandation and sanctions, and off-flow

Early impact analysis

In June 2012, DWP published some early analysis on the impact of MWA on benefit receipt. This analysis found that within the first three months of referral to MWA had reduced the likelihood of receiving benefit compared to a control group of customers who had not be referred to the programme. However, this impact diminished between three and five month point after referral. The report concluded that the benefit impact over the first 21 weeks equates to referred individuals being off benefit for an average of about four days more than if they had not been referred⁴.

Claimant perspective

Qualitative research was carried out with a small number of claimants who were referred but were yet to start MWA. The research did not capture any individuals who had signed-off rather than taking up the MWA placement, and only two claimants interviewed said they had considered signing off and decided not to. A number of reasons were offered by claimants for this:

- Signing off was unaffordable. This suggests that the prospect of losing benefits does play a role in encouraging claimants to take up their MWA placement.
- They thought it was not unreasonable for people 'to work for their benefits'.
- They appreciated the opportunity of a work experience placement, the chance to re-engage with the world of work and to re-fresh their CV/skills.

⁴ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc_analysis/index.php?page=adhoc_analysis_2012_q2

This qualitative finding is in contradiction to the view of advisers who had witnessed an impact of off-flows between referral and start. In addition, quantitative evidence of a small but significant off-flow impact is reported within the MWA impact assessment published in June 2012⁵.

The quantitative survey of claimants only included those who had actually started an MWA placement so does not provide a perspective on off-flow prior to start. A quarter (24 per cent) had off-flowed between the start of their placement and the time of the survey. Around half of those who had off-flowed (12 per cent of all claimants) were in paid work at the time of the survey and had stopped claiming benefits. A small number of claimants had stopped claiming JSA but were now claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support (IS) or Incapacity Benefit (IB).

On balance attending MWA may have had a positive impact on claimants' motivation to end their JSA claim. Two-thirds of interviewed claimants said their motivation to end their JSA claim had increased either a lot or a little as a result of their experience, and only around half as many (34 per cent) said there had been no effect on their motivation. While this is the case, there is little evidence from the survey of a link between motivation to come off JSA and actual off-flow, this may be related to external factors such as availability of vacancies.

Despite the importance of the sanctions process to MWA, both the qualitative and quantitative research suggested that the application of sanctions for non-completion of MWA was inconsistent. Only one in five claimants who did not complete their placement reported that they were aware of being sanctioned. Among those who did not report being sanctioned were claimants whose main reason for not completing was a dislike of some aspect of their placement.

Jobcentre Plus perspective

Staff tended to be complimentary about the potential value of MWA in terms of hard outcomes; it was viewed as a useful addition to their portfolio of options. It was felt that MWA could be effective in encouraging individuals to sign-off the register if they were not fully engaged with their search for work.

However, there was a fairly consistent view across all qualitative case studies that the DMA process was not effective. The sanctioning of claimants who did not attend or did not complete their MWA placement was not being followed through consistently by providers. There was a perception that providers were disinclined to make DMA referrals, partly attributed to the 'payment per start' structure of the provider contract. As a consequence, some staff felt that the message about the potential loss of benefit, intrinsic to the mandatory element of the programme, was diminished. We are aware that since the research fieldwork DWP have centralised the DMA processing system to address some of these issues and provided more support to providers in meeting their DMA responsibilities.

Provider perspective

All providers understood that claimants who failed to attend or did not complete their placement should be sanctioned, although most showed some degree of discretion or flexibility. There was some variance in providers' knowledge and understanding of the DMA process, with some getting involved in the detail locally and others referred to centralised specialist teams within their organisation. In the latter case, the centralised teams were reported to be familiar with the process, the rules and the evidence requirements – drawing on the local provider delivery staff for additional information as required.

⁵ http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc_analysis/2012/early_impacts_mwa.pdf

Impacts from participation

Claimant perspective

Around one in seven claimants were working at the time of the quantitative survey and around half of these felt that MWA had helped them find work. In addition, around two-thirds (64 per cent) of claimants who were not working at the time of the survey agreed that they felt more motivated to find work (with nearly half agreeing strongly that they felt more motivated). Younger claimants (aged under 25) were more likely to feel more motivated than those aged 25 and over, as were those who had been claiming benefits for a shorter period of time.

There is evidence that MWA may have reinvigorated some claimants' job searches. Most claimants who had made applications since starting MWA had mentioned their experience through MWA on either a job application or CV. Nearly half (42 per cent) said they were sending out more applications than before attending MWA, with a similar proportion (48 per cent) saying they had applied for jobs they would not have previously considered.

Furthermore, 75 per cent of claimants who had completed their placement felt that participation in MWA made them look more attractive to potential employers and 62 per cent felt that their chances of finding paid work had increased.

There were more mixed views on the potential impact of MWA among claimants interviewed as part of the qualitative research. Some saw the benefits of participating in such a programme, but others commented that it would not make a difference – they were pro-actively looking for work at the time and felt MWA could detract from time to jobsearch. Claimants who had been in employment and were older felt MWA was more suited to young people who had not worked before; they did not see how they could benefit from more work experience.

The survey suggests that MWA had a number of peripheral benefits outside of claimant jobsearch activities, employability and off-flow. These include a range of positive 'soft' impacts on those who completed the placement:

- around three-quarters (72 per cent) felt that their personal confidence had increased since attending;
- three-quarters (76 per cent) felt their ability to work as part of a team had improved;
- nine in ten (89 per cent) felt they could recognise the benefits of a working routine since attending; and
- more than half (56 per cent) felt more positive about work than before attending.

The survey findings suggest that MWA may have the greatest impact among those who are most anxious about working and those who feel they do not have sufficient work experience to find a job.

Jobcentre Plus perspective

Advisers reported improvements in jobsearch activity and commitment to finding work in a number of cases. District and Jobcentre Staff were clear that job entry from MWA was not necessarily expected – instead it was seen as a useful intermediary step towards employment, especially for young people or others with little or no recent work experience. However, the delay between referral and start and the lower than expected level of sanctions did detract from overall impact.

Provider perspective

Although providers felt they had limited knowledge of the impacts resulting from MWA, the main impacts were considered to be:

- developing a mind-set for work;
- improving claimants' confidence and belief in their ability to find work; and
- providing references and work experience for CVs – which show employers (and the Jobcentre) their potential and that they are prepared to work.

Providers relied on anecdotal evidence to provide examples of individuals progressing to work (limited) or on to volunteering (more common).

Host perspective

The benefits of MWA to the host organisation were a regular supply of staff. In fact, some hosts have become reliant on MWA placements and hoped that the programme would continue.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the aims of MWA appear to be well understood by staff, providers and hosts who recognise the potential for this scheme to positively impact on placement participants. The vast majority of claimants are clear about the compulsory elements and report a range of positive attitude and behavioural changes as a result of participation.

However, the research also indicates a number of implementation problems. These issues do not indicate a need to reconsider the original design of the policy, but they do require significant attention to ensure the smooth delivery of the policy and to maximise the intended impacts on participants. At the time of publication the authors are aware that DWP have undertaken a range of continuous improvement activity to address many of the delivery issues described within this report.

Recommendations

A series of recommendations were developed on the basis of the study findings and areas for improvement suggested by Jobcentre Plus staff, providers, hosts and claimants interviewed. These are detailed in the final section of the report and cover proposals for enhancing claimants' understanding of MWA at the point of referral; optimising the referral process; providing alternative types and periods of placement; reconsidering aspects of the sanctions process; and maximising positive impacts from MWA participation.

1 Introduction

This is the report of the qualitative and quantitative research on Mandatory Work Activity (MWA), undertaken by ICF GHK Consulting Ltd and TNS-BMRB on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

1.1 Overview of Mandatory Work Activity

MWA was introduced in May 2011. The objective behind the design and introduction of MWA is to move claimants closer to work through:

- gaining a better understanding of the labour market discipline via a mandatory work placement; and
- reminding claimants that receipt of benefits for those able to work is conditional on their willingness to search for and take-up employment.

MWA is targeted at a small group of claimants and referral to MWA is at Jobcentre Plus adviser discretion. MWA is a work placement of 30 hours a week lasting for four weeks. The placements are sourced by contracted providers in organisations/institutions that deliver a community benefit, e.g. charity shops and conservation projects.

Claimants referred to MWA who do not comply are referred for a benefits sanction, with the severity of sanctions increasing with repeated non-compliance.

Initially, 19,000 MWA places per year were available to advisers to utilise. During February and March 2012, 3,750 extra places were made available in five Jobcentre Plus Districts, known as the 'trailblazer districts'. A change was made to the MWA guidance in these districts to ask advisers to specifically consider claimants with a history of two or more sanctions among those claimants they considered for a referral to MWA although adviser discretion was not removed. Advisers were instructed to refer such claimants only if they met the general referral criteria for MWA. The aim of the trailblazer was to monitor the impact of MWA for this sub-group of referrals.

The five trailblazer areas are as follows:

- Birmingham and Solihull;
- Black Country;
- East London;
- North and Mid-Wales;
- South East Wales.

The expansion of MWA, announced on 12 June 2012 provides an additional 9,000 places per year. This means in 2012/13 there will be approximately 28,000 places available. Some Jobcentre Plus districts are using their Flexible Support Fund to buy further places. From May to February 2012 there were 49,640 referrals and 16,790 starts to MWA. From 22 October 2012 claimants that are referred to MWA but fail to attend or complete will be subject to the sanctions regime which could mean a sanction up to three years.

1.2 Aim of the study

The aim of the evaluation study was to undertake a series of research tasks to explore:

- how MWA is being implemented – in particular, how the policy intent was translated into decision-making for the selection of claimants for referral;
- management and adviser feedback on MWA's use, delivery and effect;
- adviser feedback on the expansion of places, the revised guidance and its implementation – in particular within the trailblazer districts;
- claimant response to referral and their participation in MWA;
- the soft outcomes from MWA and their impact on claimants' jobsearch behaviour; and
- provider feedback on delivery and the impact of MWA.

The critical success factors assessed by the qualitative research, quantitative survey and the in-house statistical analysis are whether MWA is:

- re-enforcing the responsibilities associates with claiming JSA;
- providing jobseekers with employment while at the same time enabling them to make a contribution to the local community; and
- producing an increase in job search activity and greater engagement with other back to work support for jobseekers who participate.

1.3 Study methodology

This section briefly describes the methodology undertaken (more details are provided in Appendix A). The study consisted of three strands of work:

- A qualitative study in five case study areas incorporating interviews with Jobcentre Plus management and staff, providers, hosts and claimants referred to and participating in MWA. This work was undertaken between March and July 2012.
- A telephone survey of 798 MWA participants undertaken between 16 July and 20 August 2012.
- Analysis of DWP/Jobcentre Plus management information for referrals to MWA made between May 2011 and February 2012.

The qualitative evaluative research was undertaken in five districts as shown in Table 1.1. The telephone survey was carried out at a national level with a random sample of claimants who were referred between February and April 2012. The survey element of the evaluation included a representative sample of under 25 year participants to understand the impact of the policy on this particular age group.

As the study fieldwork took place between March and August 2012, some of the delivery issues identified have subsequently been rectified.

Table 1.1 Case study areas selected for the evaluation

Trailblazers	Non-trailblazers
Birmingham and Solihull	West of England and Gloucestershire
East London	Durham and Tees Valley
South East Wales	

1.4 The qualitative research

Prior to the qualitative fieldwork GHK undertook a document and MI Review to provide a context for the research.

Interviews and focus groups were undertaken in five Jobcentre Plus districts – including three trailblazer districts. A range of staff, providers, MWA hosts and claimants were interviewed, and short ‘MWA host case studies’ undertaken with host managers and current MWA placements. The list of individuals interviewed is summarised in the table below.

Table 1.2 Overview of individuals interviewed

Group	Planned interviews per district	Achieved
District staff – District Managers, MWA leads, CPA performance managers and MWA TPPMs	4 individuals per district	Total – 88 managers and staff at district and Jobcentre level
Jobcentre Plus staff:		
Focus groups with Jobcentre managers, CSOMs, PETLs and ATMs	3 focus groups, 4 to 6 staff per district	Including 31 Personal Advisers
Personal Advisers	6 per district	
Providers	2	10
MWA hosts	2	10
MWA ‘mini case studies’ – placement hosts and two claimants	2 case studies per District – 2 hosts and four claimants	11 case studies completed
Claimant telephone interviews:		
Referred to MWA and started	3 per district	21
Referred to MWA and not started	5 per district	25

1.4.1 Fieldwork with District Offices

A combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews took place with District Managers, MWA district leads and MWA contract managers in each of the five districts. The interviews covered the following topics:

- Each individual’s understanding of the aims and policy intent of MWA.
- Detail of the delivery process.
- Progress and performance to date in terms of referral, take-up and completion.
- Views of outcomes and impact.
- In the Trailblazer Districts – experience of identifying and securing additional placements and other issues associated with increased MWA participant numbers, and experience of working with 18 to 24 year olds.
- In the non-Trailblazer Districts – their experience of placement availability and associated issues, and of working with 18 to 24 year olds to date.

1.4.2 Fieldwork with Jobcentre Plus Local Offices

Staff in three Jobcentres in each district were interviewed – a total of 15 Jobcentres overall. Focus groups and one to one interviews were undertaken with: Jobcentre managers, Customer Service Operations Managers (CSOMs), Performance Team Leaders (PETLs), Adviser Team Managers (ATMs) and Advisers.

Areas covered included: understanding of the policy intent of MWA, experience of delivery and challenges, performance and outcomes and areas for improvement.

1.4.3 Providers

In each district, providers were interviewed on a face-to-face basis, or by telephone. Ten in total were interviewed – five prime providers and five sub-contractors. The interviews explored their understanding and experience of MWA, their role (and success and challenges experienced) in identifying suitable referrals and securing placement opportunities. Performance against expectation was reviewed, alongside their perceptions of impact in terms of changing claimants' attitudes to work and associated behavioural change. The impact of the increase in referrals was also examined.

1.4.4 MWA Hosts

Two approaches were used to explore placement hosts' perceptions and experiences of MWA:

- telephone interviews with two hosts in each district (ten in total); and
- short case studies with an additional two hosts in each district (11 in total) – including interviews with hosts and participating claimants if available.

Topics covered with host organisations included their understanding of MWA, the type of placements offered and views on individuals referred, their experiences of the placements themselves, and whether they will continue to offer placement opportunities in the future.

The case studies allowed participating claimants to discuss their placement, their understanding of its purpose, and their experience of referral and the placement itself, and the benefits they have or expect to gain from it.

1.4.5 Claimant interviews

In addition to the case studies, claimants referred to MWA were interviewed over the telephone. Two groups of claimants were targeted:

- Claimants referred to MWA who had started their placements – three in each district (15 in total).
- Claimants referred to MWA but who had not started their placements – five in each district (25 in total).

Telephone interviews were undertaken with 46 claimants, 21 of whom had started their placements and 28 who had been referred but were awaiting placement. Those who were referred to MWA and had started their placements were asked about: their understanding of the purpose of MWA and the reasons for their referral, their experience of their placement, the perceived benefits resulting from it and any subsequent change in their job finding behaviour. Claimants who had not started their placements were asked about their reasons for not starting (awaiting a placement or other reason), their current employment status and the barriers to work they experience.

1.5 The telephone survey of participants

TNS-BMRB carried out telephone interviews with 798 claimants who had been referred to MWA between February and April 2011. Claimants were selected randomly from a database of all referrals made during this period. The sample included a purposive over-selection of claimants aged under 25 (who can be classified as falling under the Youth Contract). The over-selection of under 25s was to ensure a minimum of 400 interviews with this group to allow reliable data analysis among this important group of claimants. Otherwise the sample was selected to provide a representative cross-section of claimants referred to MWA.

Telephone interviews were carried out by TNS-BMRB interviewers between 16 July and 20 August 2012. From an initial selection of 2,349 a total of 798 interviews were completed representing an 'interview' rate of 34 per cent. Once ineligible cases (where the respondent claimed they had not been on MWA or had no dealings with Jobcentre Plus) and deadwood (largely invalid and inactive telephone numbers) are taken into account, the effective response rate was 53 per cent.

1.6 Structure of the report

The following report is developed on a thematic basis, using the evaluation information to address how MWA was understood in practice, the key process elements of delivery – the referral and the placement, and then the impacts associated with MWA from referral to the programme and from participation. Each chapter incorporates information from each of the main groups of respondents: Jobcentre Plus, the providers and the hosts and the claimants as appropriate. The report concludes with a discussion of the main findings and presents a set of recommendations that emerge both from the analysis and from those who manage, deliver and participated in MWA.

2 Understanding of Mandatory Work Activity

2.1 Introduction

Before discussing the implementation and impact of Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) this chapter explores how the policy intent behind MWA was understood in practice by the managers and providers, and by the claimant themselves. Findings from the quantitative survey focus on claimants' understanding of the rules and practical elements of MWA (for example, the length of the placement and application of sanctions for non-attendance).

2.2 District and Jobcentre Plus staff perspectives

Overall, there was a good understanding of the purpose and intent of MWA from district and Jobcentre Plus staff at all levels of the organisation. The views expressed were consistent across grades and locations. In summary advisers' understanding of the purpose of MWA was expressed as:

- re-introducing claimants to the work ethic/discipline;
- reinforcing the 'rights and responsibilities' message to claimants; and, testing conditionality;
- providing some/recent work experience for the long-term unemployed and especially for young people – particularly for individuals who may not take up work experience voluntarily; and
- providing an additional offer for claimants to help them move closer to work.

MWA was recognised as providing a lever for Jobcentre Plus to encourage people to re-engage with their jobsearch and provide a positive opportunity to develop their work skills.

'The aim of MWA is to try and get claimants back into the work ethic ... getting work experience, getting up on time, how to conduct themselves in the work environment, how to dress, all those sort of things ... and trying to give people the soft skills they need.'

(Adviser, non-Trailblazer District)

It was recognised that MWA was intended to focused on claimants for whom there is some concern and who need an additional 'push' with their jobsearch activities. One staff member suggested that while the main aim of the policy was to provide work placements an implicit purpose of MWA is to sanction individuals who do not comply with conditionality and to encourage them to sign-off.

'MWA is primarily about taking claimants off benefits'

(MWA Lead/TPPM, Trailblazer District).

2.3 Providers' perspectives

Each of the providers and subcontractors interviewed described having a clear understanding of the aims and overall policy intent of MWA, with the overall aim being to provide mandatory work placements to long-term Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants to help them get closer to the labour market. Many referred to encouraging a work ethic, helping top-up or refresh basic employability skills, providing current work experience and references for CVs, and getting claimants into a routine of attending work at set times for a four week period.

Around half the providers made specific reference to the ‘*punitive*’ aspects of MWA, which sat alongside the employability component as a means of enforcing conditionality, for example, where claimants were believed to be working as well as claiming – as one provider described ‘*to intervene in their lifestyles in an attempt to get them to sign off benefit*’ and by testing their availability for work. One prime provider considered that Jobcentre Plus intended MWA primarily to be a way of reducing claimant numbers by stimulating off-flows, evidenced in their view by the high levels of claimants referred and the severity of the sanctions regime. However, elsewhere the view was more balanced – all the providers were aware of the sanctions element but did not describe it as a central aim of the programme. There were no apparent differences in perception of the overall intent of MWA between providers in mainstream or trailblazer districts.

A couple of providers reported that they had received mixed messages on the balance between the employment support and more punitive aspects of MWA – both at the outset and over time – and only one provider explicitly referred to the ‘community benefit’ aspect of the programme as one of the key aims.

2.4 Hosts’ understanding of Mandatory Work Activity

The placement hosts had a clear understanding of the overall aim of MWA, namely to help unemployed individuals to find work through the provision of work placements. They all also seemed to understand that claimants who failed to attend, or whose behaviour was not appropriate for the workplace, could be referred back to the provider and would be subject to sanction.

Many referred to the aim of the placements as being to ‘*get people into the habit of working*’ (host, non-Trailblazer District), while several also described the MWA claimant group as including those who were suspected of being in work and claiming benefits. One provider summed up the understanding of many when they stated that MWA ‘*... is to help people get back into the work situation, and getting used to coming into work at certain hours and getting used to the rules and regulations, and encouraging them to go and look for a job*’.

2.5 Claimants’ understanding of Mandatory Work Activity

Claimants taking part in the qualitative research reflected different understandings of what MWA constituted. For example, many understood it to be compulsory and understood that if they did not participate, they would lose their benefits:

‘I was told it was mandatory and if I did not do the placement I would lose my benefits.’

(Starter, Mainstream District)

‘They told me I had to do voluntary work which will go on my CV and will benefit me. If I didn’t do it, it will affect my jobseekers.’

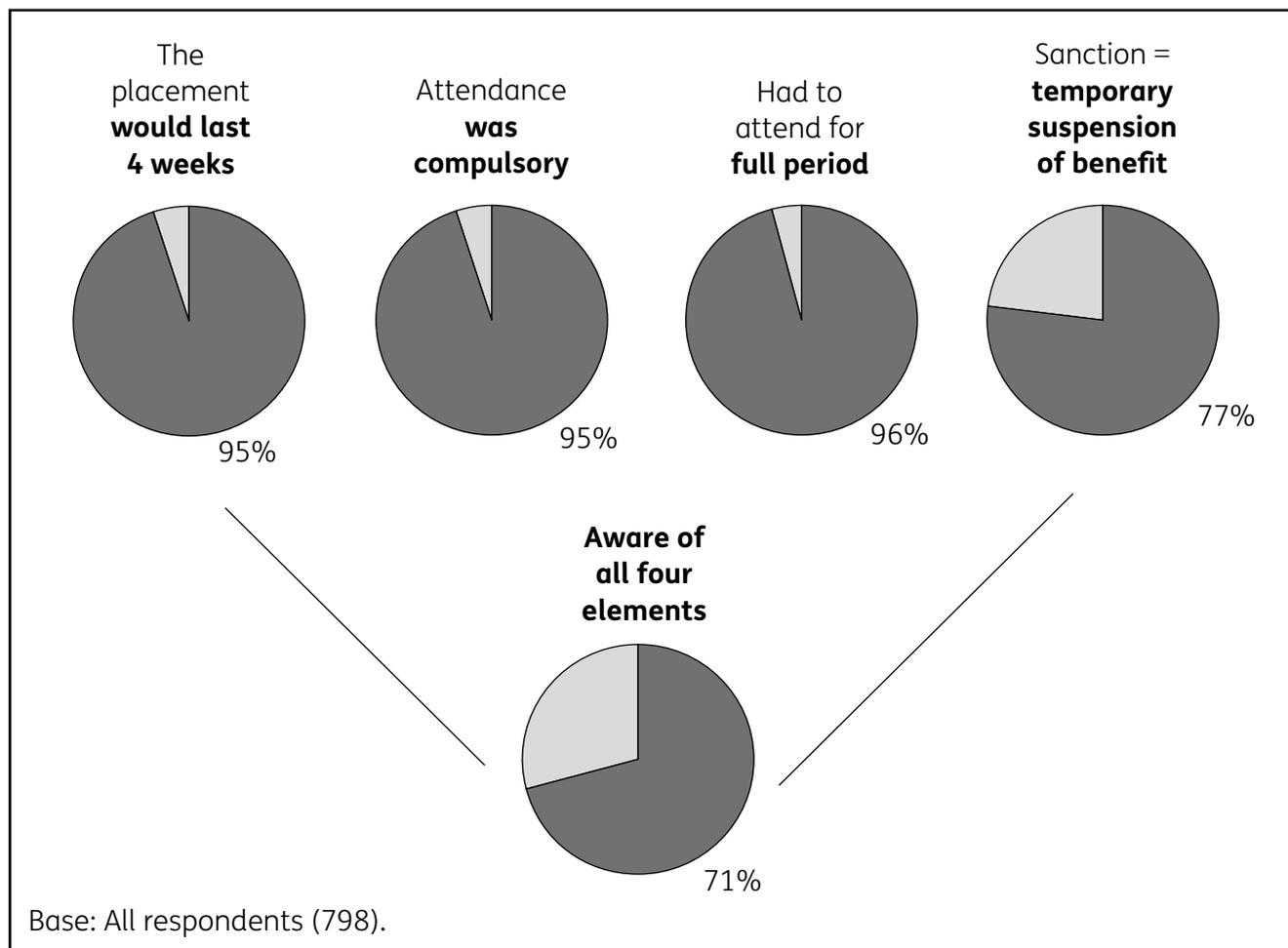
(Not-started, Trailblazer District)

The findings from the quantitative survey suggest that the mandatory/compulsory aspects of MWA were widely understood by claimants and clearly explained by Jobcentre Plus advisers. In total, 95 per cent of respondents said the adviser had made it clear when they were referred that attending the placement was compulsory with the same proportion (95 per cent) recognising that the placement would last four weeks in total. A similarly high proportion (96 per cent) also said the adviser made it clear that they had to attend the full four weeks. This almost universal recognition of these conditions of MWA was seen in all key sub groups. Combined, more than nine in ten claimants (91 per cent) said the adviser made all three of these aspects clear.

Further, around three-quarters (77 per cent) of all respondents correctly identified that their benefits could be stopped or reduced for a set period of time if they did not meet the conditions of MWA.

As shown in Figure 2.1, if all four measures are combined nearly three-quarters (71 per cent) of all claimants were aware of all four aspects of the rules governing MWA.

Figure 2.1 Understanding/awareness of the rules governing MWA



Most of those who were unable to define sanctions precisely recognised that if they didn't keep to the rules of MWA there would be some kind of financial penalty. Common responses included that:

- their benefits would be stopped (but no further details known) – five per cent of all respondents;
- their benefits would be affected in some other way (but no further details known) – four per cent;
- they would be unable to claim benefits from Jobcentre Plus ever again – four per cent;
- ‘sanctions’ would be applied but the details of these was unknown – three per cent;
- their benefits would be reduced (rather than stopped) for a set period of time – one per cent;
- they would be re-referred to another MWA placement – one per cent.

The survey findings suggest that most, if not all, claimants are aware that attending MWA is compulsory once referred and that failure to meet the conditions will result in some kind of financial penalty through the loss of benefit payments.

Other claimants in the qualitative research saw MWA as an opportunity to enhance their CV, gain some up to date work experience, obtain checkable work references and aid their progress towards employment:

'I was told it was a work programme to get back into work, sort out my CV and stuff like that.'

(Not-started, Trailblazer District)

For some, it was an opportunity to get back into a routine and to increase confidence and motivation.

'It's a scheme to get people like myself into a routine, waking up in the morning, going into a work environment and taking part in work activities. Getting that confidence to engage in one-to-one activities and take charge. It was basically trying to get my work ethics back.'

(Starter, Trailblazer District)

'It's to get me back into work and to make me feel motivated. They told me it is the best thing for me at the moment, so I was more than happy to do it.'

(MWA participant, Trailblazer District)

Some claimants felt MWA was unlikely to make much of a difference in finding work as they are already actively seeking employment. Two went on to say MWA took them away from looking for paid employment:

'MWA will make it harder for someone to look for a job. It'll make you more miserable – working for nothing and no time to look for a job.'

(Not-started, Trailblazer District)

'MWA is like a full-time job. During that period you don't have the time to find a job – you can't fill out the job diary, by the time I have finished it would be difficult to search for jobs/do the research.'

(Not-started, Trailblazer District)

Claimants who were a bit older and had previous work experience said MWA was more suited to young people and those with no experience of work. As one claimant explained:

'For someone who has been working for nearly 30 years and supported my family, I'm not sure it's going to motivate me. I would have preferred a paid job, and if you're going to be placed somewhere, it needs to lead to employment. But for those who have never worked before it would be helpful.'

(Not-started, Non-Trailblazer District)

There were also claimants who did not understand what MWA meant:

'I had a letter to say I was going on the MWA, but I did not understand the purpose of MWA.'

(Not-started, Non-Trailblazer District)

In addition, this small number of claimants did not understand the compulsory nature of the MWA:

'I thought it was optional because the adviser said "we might put you forward for it". So I told the adviser that I would rather not do it as I want to find a job in a bar or as a care worker. The adviser told me that was not possible because it's mandatory and I had to do it. I was confused. I don't understand. How does that work?'

(Not-started, Non-Trailblazer District)

'I went to [name of provider] who told me that the placement was not a mandatory thing, so I left. But then I went to the Jobcentre who told me that the placement was mandatory and I had to go.'

(Not-started, Non-Trailblazer District)

While understanding the work placement intent of MWA, not understanding or comprehending the mandatory element could have significant consequences for claimants.

3 The referral process

3.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the referral process from the Jobcentre Plus, provider, host and claimant perspectives, based on the findings of the qualitative and quantitative elements of the study.

3.2 Jobcentre Plus experience of claimant selection and referral process

This section reviews the experiences of Jobcentre Plus staff in selecting potential claimants to participate in Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) and referring them on to their local providers. The section draws on the qualitative research across the five case study districts.

3.2.1 Claimant selection

The qualitative research found that, in general, the guidance for MWA and specific guidance within the trailblazer districts was considered by Jobcentre Plus staff to be fit for purpose and not overly prescriptive. This meant that advisers could exercise their discretion, in effect their professional judgement, to select who should be referred to MWA and who was most likely to benefit.

Interviews with Jobcentre staff suggested that there were effectively two categories of claimant referred to MWA:

- those for whom there was some element of ‘doubt’ about their commitment to job search activity – and who are identified as being reluctant to fully engage in jobsearch and other activities to help their return to work in their meetings with advisers; and
- claimants where there was a need to re-engage the individual in jobsearch activity and other options. This group tended to be unmotivated or de-motivated, including those who had been away from the workplace for some time, without recent work experience or who had rejected other Jobcentre Plus services. In one district this group also included young people without work experience.

Two further categories of claimant were also identified, both of which were out of scope from the official guidance for MWA and were referred to the programme in lesser numbers:

- motivated claimants who lacked work experience – who were looking for work, complying with the JSA regime but who were unable to compete in the labour market; and
- claimants suspected of working while signing.

We should emphasise that for the majority of advisers their view was that motivated people should not be referred to MWA⁶.

Consequently, referrals to MWA were based on a combination of factors, including:

- signing history and duration of current signing-period – with a push to refer claimants at 13 weeks and those approaching 52 weeks to MWA;

⁶ Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has strengthened the guidance on referral to ensure advisers are clear on the edibility criteria.

- limited activity or deterioration in level of jobsearch activity;
- a poor history of engagement with Jobcentre Plus services and opportunities;
- doubt as to whether individuals' were available to work (possibly working and signing);
- previous record of Fail to Attend for signing-on/adviser interviews;
- assessment of whether the claimant could benefit from the experience; and
- in the trailblazer districts, two or more sanctions in the past year.

Discretion and the use of adviser knowledge of the individual was a key element of the referral process for MWA as a whole. Within trailblazer districts advisers considered that having received two sanctions in the previous year was too crude a measure to target claimants and were aware of the need for claimants to meet the other general eligibility criteria for referral. However, they also felt that claimants with a history of sanctions were likely to be have been among those referred prior to the change in guidance for the trailblazer districts. All referrals are based are adviser discretion.

When MWA was first introduced, case conferences were held between the Adviser Team Managers (ATMs) and advisers in a number of the case study offices. These helped ensure some consistency in decision-making around referrals, and the management of the flow of referrals to providers where available placements were limited. Over time the use of case conferences was dropped in some offices, as they were no longer felt necessary. However, issues did arise around the flow of referrals to providers and the emergence of a back-log of claimants. Control over referrals and the adherence to profile emerged as a critical success factor in the smooth delivery of MWA.

3.3 Introducing Mandatory Work Activity to claimants

The majority of advisers interviewed reported emphasising the potential benefits of MWA when introducing the programme to claimants – with work experience, the opportunity to refresh their CV and to gain a recent work reference being highlighted. Advisers were clear about the consequences of non-compliance, including the wider implications of losing secondary benefits. Some advisers, but not all, said they explicitly mentioned to claimants that their referral was linked to a history of non-compliance, were not taking their jobsearch seriously or had declined other Jobcentre Plus opportunities for assistance.

Telling claimants that MWA existed, and that they stood the probability of being referred if their jobsearch activities and level of engagement did not show signs of improvement, was also reported as effective by the advisers. Introducing the potential of a referral to MWA was reported as having a noticeable effect for some claimants – and in some cases was enough to encourage some people to sign-off, especially it was thought for those who may have been working and signing.

3.4 Advisers' perceptions of the referral process

For the advisers the referral process was simple. Once a referral decision had been made, it was logged on the LMS IT system within the Jobcentre and the individual was told to anticipate a letter or a call from the provider. In some cases the individuals were provided with written information or a leaflet explaining the details of MWA. This process meant that the advisers, from this point, were effectively divorced from the process and handed-off their responsibility to the provider. For some advisers this was a positive move; but not for all.

Some advisers had used a 'warm handover' for previous employment programmes and felt that a similar approach would be useful for MWA. This involved the adviser telephoning the provider at the point of referral to pass on the customer details and arrange an appointment for them, allowing the appointment details to be passed directly to the customer at the point referral. With the current system the advisers did not have this knowledge and control over the initial stages of the process.

Advisers said they commonly had no knowledge of where or when the claimant was supposed to meet with the provider, nor did they have any information on the outcomes of the process, i.e. whether the claimant attended the placement, or were referred for a sanction if they did not. We understand from DWP that advisers are able to check the Labour Market System (LMS) system to ascertain whether the provider had recorded a start or did not start (DNS) the placement because of failure to attend (FTA). However, advisers reported a lack of information recorded by providers or a lags in information being entered into the system. Aside from this system check there was no formal mechanism for advisers to know how well the placement had gone as providers were not contracted to provide feedback while the claimant was on placement.

The exception to this lack of provider-adviser communication was found in one district where a local provider was well known to the advisers and where informal liaison took place. This was possible because of already established contacts and knowledge.

Many staff felt that the customer was effectively 'lost' to them as soon as they had completed the referral. This was partly as a result of the standard design of contracted DWP provision where advisers completely handover responsibility for the claimant once referred to provision, which allows the adviser to concentrate resource on those claimants who remain under Jobcentre support. This is, however, dependent on the referral and placement process working well. Where this process did not work well, this lack of direct contact with the provider was viewed as a critical issue and a contributing factor to the slow resolution of some of the delivery issues that emerged.

3.5 Provider perceptions of the referral process

The providers participating in the qualitative research described the claimant referral process as straightforward, although the number of referrals made and spikes in their profiling caused difficulties for the majority of those interviewed.

Providers in all five case study districts reported that although the appropriateness of referrals could be variable, the quality of referrals was not a major issue and that overall the individuals referred to them were no more or less challenging than expected. Referrals received during the trailblazer period were not seen as any more challenging than their mainstream equivalents. Examples of the providers' experiences of the appropriateness of referrals to MWA are provided below.

Appropriateness of referrals – provider experience

Most of the providers felt that referrals made for placements were appropriate, and where this was not the case less appropriate referrals were usually well within expected tolerances.

In one case, the subcontractors reported that the appropriateness of referrals could be variable – most commonly where information on customer background had not been made available and could not be considered in advance of their placement. Several cases where individuals with histories of offending, substance abuse or mental health issues were reportedly only identified in the latter stages of the referral process. One subcontractor reported that many hosts were now interviewing or screening referrals prior to offering places – although this could cause delays in the ten day referral to start target.

Providers felt that a small number of claimants were particularly inappropriate for sending on placement, for example, individuals unable to read or write and who needed extra support which could not be catered for under MWA.

In another district the provider considered that their low referral to placement rate suggested that the claimant selection approach could be improved – *‘In our experience the majority of the MWA claimants have commitment issues, or there is a sales issue, somewhere along the line’*. They wondered whether the claimants referred to them had received a clear explanation of the programme from the Jobcentre.

Two additional issues did emerge with some consistency:

- First, providers complained that they were not always kept informed of changes in claimant status (signing off benefits, progression to another programme) by the Jobcentres and that considerable effort could be expended following-up claimants only to find they had signed-off.
- Second, the providers suggested that the way in which MWA was introduced underpinned whether referrals (and placements) were successful. As claimants’ attitudes towards their placements were key, ensuring MWA was ‘sold on the positives’ rather than positioned as a threat was felt most likely to result in positive outcomes.

3.6 Claimants’ experiences of the referral process

This section looks at the referral process from the point of view of the claimant. Most of the findings are drawn from the quantitative survey of claimants augmented with additional findings from the qualitative research.

3.6.1 Introducing MWA

The quantitative survey found that referrals to MWA were most commonly raised in discussions between Jobcentre Plus Advisers and claimants one to two weeks prior to referral. In some cases (18 per cent), this discussion took place one or two days prior to referral, although for 16 per cent it took place ‘a few months’ or more before.

In terms of the clarity of the introduction and explanation of the programme, and as discussed in Section 3.5, most surveyed claimants had a clear understanding of the mandatory aspect of MWA (95 per cent), the duration of the placement (again 95 per cent) and that their benefits could be affected if they did not participate (77 per cent). However, the survey findings also showed that not all respondents thought their adviser had provided a clear explanation of all aspects of MWA at the time of referral.

As shown in Table 4.1, while 65 per cent of respondents felt the explanation offered was clear, relatively few (25 per cent) felt the explanation was very clear and nearly a third (30 per cent) felt it was not very or not clear at all. Variations by sub-group were minimal, although claimants aged under 25 tended to be more positive about the clarity of the explanation offered – 70 per cent saying they thought the adviser’s explanation was clear compared with 62 per cent of those aged 25 and over.

Table 3.1 Perceived clarity of the adviser’s explanation

	Total %	<25 %	25+ %
Clearly (net)	65	70	62
Not clearly (net)	30	28	31
Very clearly	25	25	25
Clearly	40	45	37
Not very clearly	17	16	17
Not clearly at all	13	12	14
No explanation given at all	4	1	6
Don’t know	1	1	1
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	798	392	406

Those who did not feel they had been given a clear explanation (or were offered no explanation at all) were asked what the adviser could have done to make it clearer. Claimants tended to say they wanted more practical information about their placement and/or what the work on the placement would involve. The most common responses among those who were asked were:

- More information about what the placement would involve – 34 per cent.
- Information about what I would be doing – 34 per cent.
- Information about where I would be going/where the placement was – 11 per cent.
- Having a more knowledgeable adviser – eight per cent.
- Given a choice of placements/places to go – seven per cent.
- Told me earlier/sooner – six per cent.
- Not providing misleading information – five per cent.

This represents a challenge for advisers, as frequently details of specific placements are not available at the time of referral. Indeed, at the time of the research there was evidence of delays of several weeks, see Section 3.14 for further discussion. While claimants may want (and benefit from) more detailed information about their placements, advisers need to be cautious so as not to provide potentially misleading information at the time of the initial discussion.

As discussed, in Section 3.11, clarity of explanation is closely associated with positive perceptions of MWA prior to attending a placement; those who felt they were not offered a clear explanation tended to be more negative towards MWA. It is, therefore, important to consider how MWA is framed to claimants before they attend so they begin their placement in a positive frame of mind.

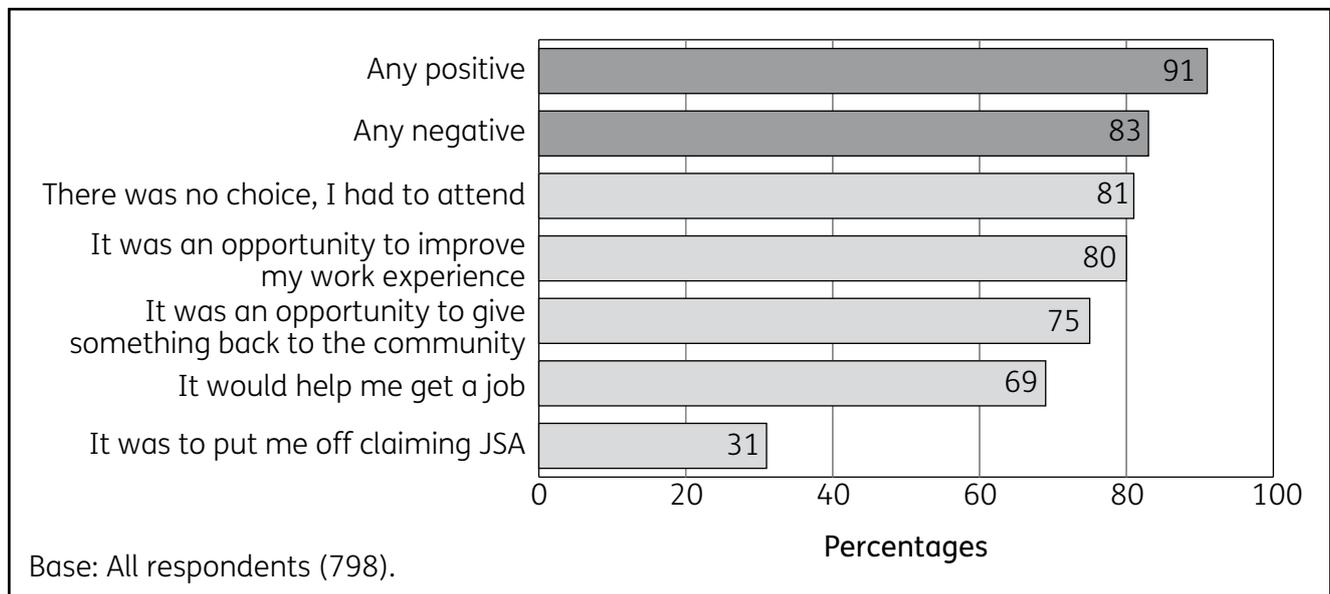
3.7 Claimants' perceptions of the reason for referral

The qualitative interviews with claimants suggest there was some ambiguity in the messages claimants received as to why they were being referred onto MWA. Not all advisers made it explicit that the referral was a consequence of the action (or lack of action) on the part of the claimant. This might mean that a potential opportunity to reinforce the message that Jobcentre Plus takes 'rights and responsibilities' seriously was being lost in some cases. In effect, there is some tension between balancing the two messages – the mandatory element of having to take up the work placement with the message that MWA is a positive opportunity that can help an individual's prospects within the labour market. As one adviser remarked – *'it's quite hard to get the words right'*.

Findings from the quantitative survey are largely consistent with this view. All respondents were asked about their understanding of the reason for their referral. Around a third of respondents (30 per cent) felt that they were referred to put them off claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). However, the majority of respondents also picked up on the more positive aspects of MWA, with three-quarters or more feeling that *'it was an opportunity to improve [their] work experience'* (79 per cent), *'it was an opportunity to give something back to the community'* (75 per cent) or *'it would help [them] get a job'*. A similar proportion (78 per cent) of respondents also noted that they *'... had no choice, I had to attend'*.

As summarised in Figure 3.1, 91 per cent of all respondents selected one or more positive reasons for being referred (most commonly to improve work experience).

Figure 3.1 Perceptions of reasons for being referred to MWA



Those who felt that they were being referred to put them off claiming JSA tended to be older (29 per cent of those aged 25 or older felt this was the case compared with 26 per cent of under 25s) and to have been claiming JSA for a longer period of time. Nevertheless, this was a view held only by a minority in all key sub-groups. Of course whether the survey findings reflect a difference in the way advisers positioned MWA to certain types of claimant, or simply a difference in claimants' perceptions, is unclear.

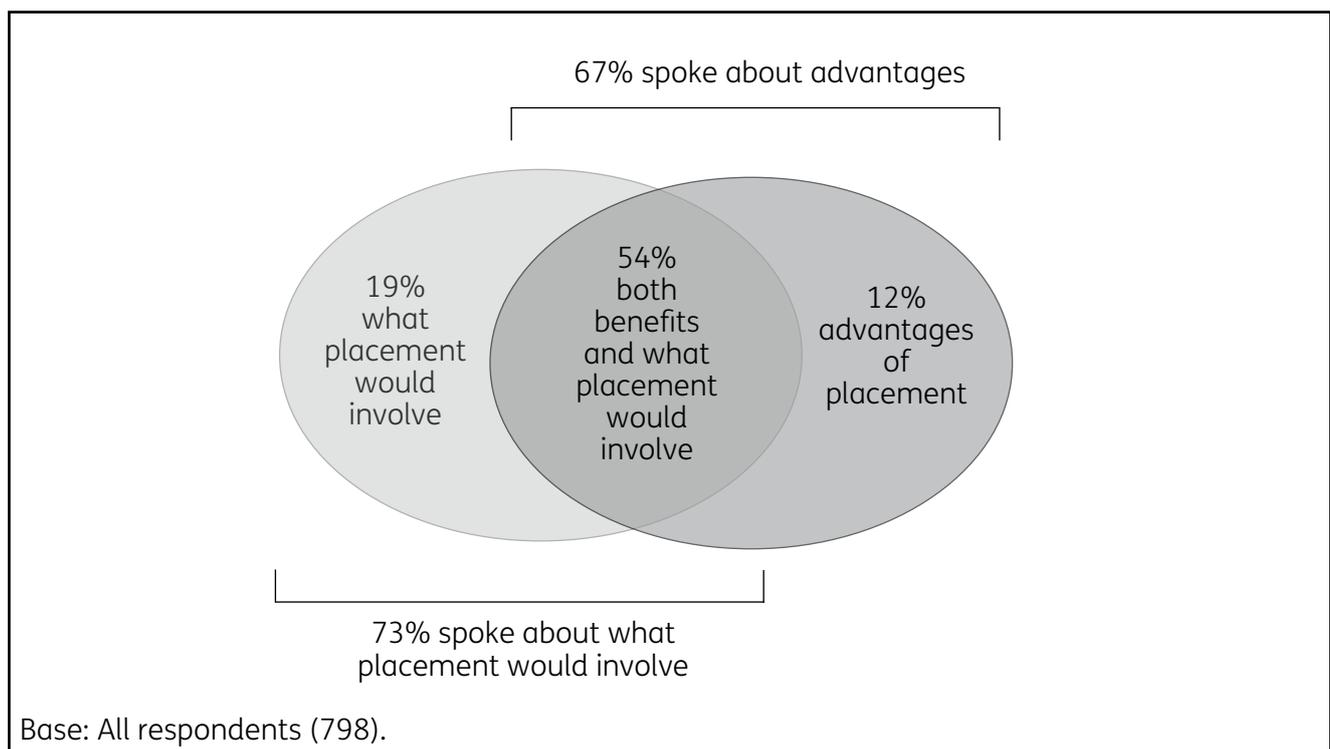
Claimants interviewed as part of the qualitative research were largely compliant at the referral stage, and while some raised objections about being referred, the emphasis placed by advisers on the potential benefits was effective in diffusing any issues that arose.

3.8 Pre-referral discussions

While this chapter looks primarily at the referral process, the survey also included questions regarding discussions between claimants and advisers about MWA prior to the referral meeting. The survey findings suggest that most claimants did discuss MWA with their adviser prior to the referral meeting. Three-quarters of those interviewed (73 per cent) said their adviser spoke to them before referral ‘about what the placement would involve’ and 23 per cent of these respondents said that this pre-referral discussion was not the first time they had heard about MWA.

Discussions before referral were common among all types of claimant, but most common with those aged under 25 (76 per cent compared with 70 per cent of those aged 25 or more). Whether a discussion had taken place before referral was also linked to the number of sanctions, if any, the claimant had experienced. Interestingly, those with no sanctions as well as those with three or more sanctions were the most likely to have discussed MWA with an adviser prior to referral (74 per cent and 77 per cent respectively).

Figure 3.2 Prevalence of discussions prior to referral and the content of these discussions



Two-thirds (67 per cent) of surveyed claimants said that their adviser discussed the possible advantages of attending a placement, leaving a third where the adviser did not. Consistent with other findings in this section, advisers were more likely to have discussed the possible advantages with claimants aged under 25 than with those aged 25 and older (75 per cent compared with 62 per cent).

As shown in Figure 3.2, if combined, around half of all claimants (54 per cent) said that the adviser spoke them about **both** what the placement would involve and the possible advantages of attending. This leaves half where the adviser did either one or none of these things, suggesting that some advisers could have done more to prime claimants before they were referred to MWA. In fact 15 per cent of respondents (around one in six) said that their adviser did not speak to them about what the placement would involve **and** did not discuss the possible advantages of attending.

Generally, in cases where the claimant recalled discussions with their adviser about the possible benefits of MWA and where they felt the adviser had made links between the placement and possible job attainment, the claimant’s views of MWA were more positive and they were more likely to feel motivated to find paid work and/or come of JSA.

3.9 Advantages of Mandatory Work Activity discussed with claimants

Where claimants recalled a discussion of the possible advantages of attending prior to referral, these recalled messages tended to relate directly to their jobsearch and work experience:

- Increased work experience – 29 per cent of all claimants recalled their adviser discussing this with them.
- Increased chances of getting paid work – 27 per cent per cent of claimants recalled their adviser discussing this with them.
- Chance to improve CV – 24 per cent per cent of claimants recalled their adviser discussing this with them.

As shown in Table 3.2, advisers were less likely to mention advantages that related to claimants’ ‘softer’ skills. For example, only around one in ten respondents said their adviser had discussed the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills (12 per cent) or to improve their confidence (ten per cent).

Table 3.2 Advantages of attending MWA discussed with advisers

	Total %	<25 %	25+ %	Never worked %	Worked %
Discussed any benefits with claimant	67	75	62	71	66
Increased work experience	29	39	23	39	28
Increased chances of paid work	27	30	25	21	28
Chance to improve CV	24	28	21	28	24
Chance to get work reference	12	16	9	14	12
Chance to develop interpersonal skills/ team-working ability	12	16	9	16	11
Chance to improve confidence	10	13	8	14	10
Chance to try something new/broaden horizons	7	9	6	7	7
To get back into the routine of work	4	3	4	2	4
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	798	392	406	109	682

The advantages advisers focused on varied by a number of factors including the claimant’s age and work experience. As shown above, those aged under 25 were more likely to have discussed the potential for MWA to provide additional experience of work (39 per cent compared with 23 per cent of those aged 25 and over) or about their chances of finding paid work (30 per cent compared with 25 per cent). Similarly, advisers were more likely to have discussed increased work experience with those who had not previously worked.

The findings suggest that some advisers tailored the way they presented MWA to claimants so that placements were seen as relevant to claimants’ needs.

3.10 Claimants feelings towards the placement prior to starting Mandatory Work Activity

The majority of claimants were positive about being referred based on the information received from their Jobcentre Plus adviser. In fact, almost three times as many claimants felt positive as felt negative overall (61 per cent compared with 23 per cent). Table 3.3 summarises claimants' feelings before attending their placements.

Table 3.3 Feelings towards being referred prior to attending placement

	Total %	Men < 25 %	Men 25+ %	Women < 25 %	Women 25+ %
Positive (net)	61	68	56	64	62
Negative (net)	23	20	27	23	19
Very positive	19	20	19	20	19
Positive	42	48	37	43	43
Neither positive nor negative	14	12	15	12	15
Negative	14	12	16	13	11
Very negative	10	8	12	10	8
Don't know	2	1	2	1	4
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	798	283	278	109	128

Differences in feelings between sub-groups were generally small. Younger claimants, specifically those aged under 25, tended to be slightly more positive about being referred than those aged 25 and over. This was mainly driven by differences in opinion among male claimants, with younger men tending to be significantly more positive than older men.

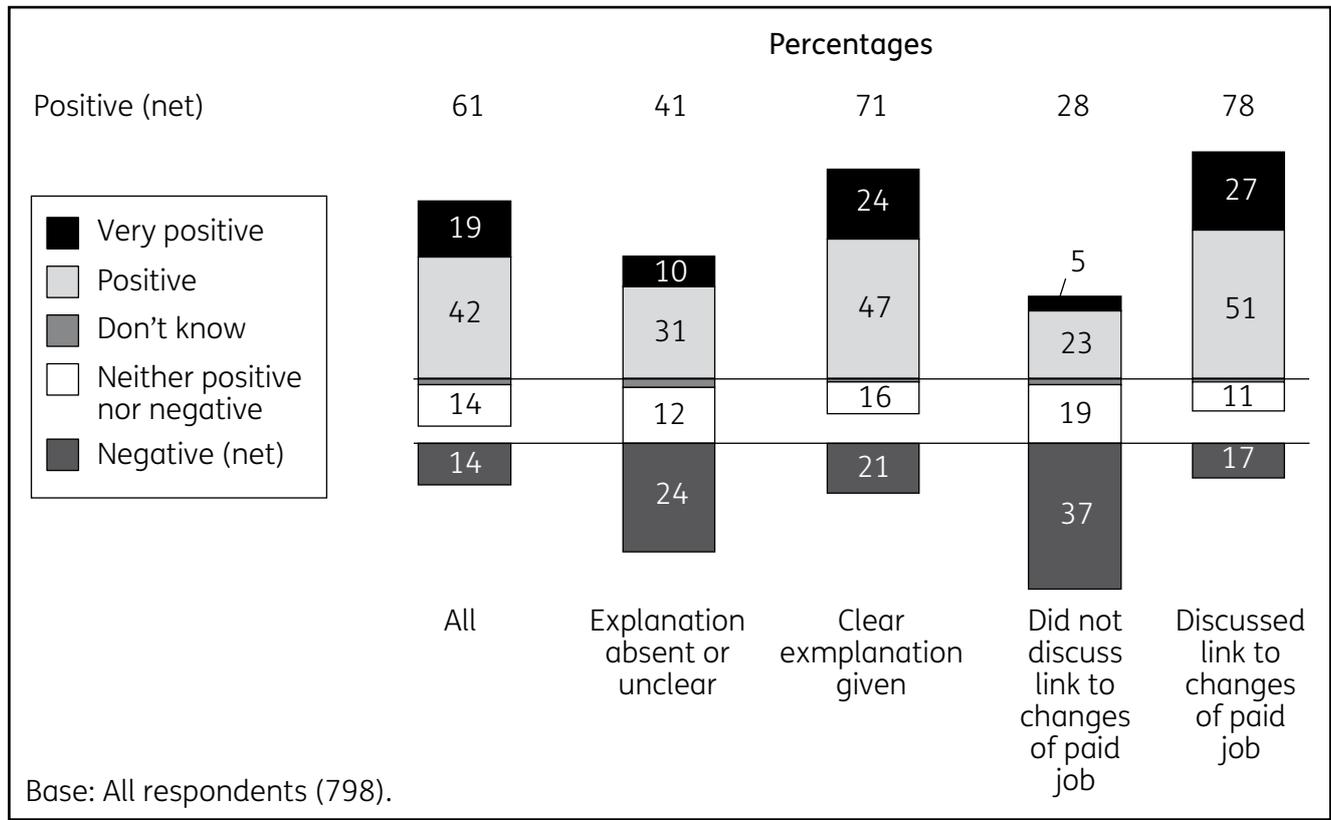
Claimants' feelings towards being referred were linked with two key factors:

- The clarity of the explanation that the adviser provided to the claimant.
- Whether or not the adviser discussed with the claimant how MWA might help their chances of getting a paid job.

As shown in Figure 3.3, those who felt their adviser had provided a clear explanation of what MWA would involve tended to be more positive about attending than those who felt that the explanation was unclear, or that the adviser had offered no explanation at all. Similarly, those who felt the adviser had made a link between attending MWA and the chance of getting a paid work were more positive about attending.

These findings highlight the importance of discussions between advisers and claimants before the start of an MWA placement. In cases where the adviser takes the time to provide a clear explanation of the MWA and makes clear links between the placement and the claimant's jobsearch, claimants are more likely to start the placement in a positive frame of mind. This is important as how positive the claimant feels prior to attending has a strong effect on some of MWA's softer impacts (this is discussed in detail in Section 6.7).

Figure 3.3 Perceptions of MWA prior to attending



3.11 The offer – time between referral and start of placement

3.11.1 Offer letters and other contact with the placement host – claimant perspective

Following referral to MWA all claimants should have some face-to-face or telephone contact with the MWA provider to discuss their start on the programme. After this contact they should receive confirmation by letter of the details of their placement, including the start date, time and where they should go. The survey shows that 90 per cent of respondents received this type of letter, with one in ten saying they either did not receive one (nine per cent) or that they didn't know (one per cent). Why some claimants had not received a letter is unclear from the survey data; it may be that some had simply forgotten as they were being interviewed weeks or months after they were first referred to MWA.

In addition, around a third of (38 per cent) claimants had direct contact with someone from the organisation where they would be working before starting their placement, typically in person rather than by telephone. This comprised 32 per cent who had been contacted in person and nine per cent by telephone. Those who had some form of initial contact with their placement host tended to be more positive about the experience of attending MWA overall – 37 per cent who had been contacted said they felt very positive about the experience overall compared with 21 per cent who had no contact.

Regardless of the pre-start contact they had received, all claimants were asked whether they felt they had received a clear explanation of the type of work they would be required to do.

Two-thirds (65 per cent) of claimants said that the provider had given a clear explanation leaving a third (32 per cent) who did not feel it was clear. As discussed in Section 3.11, the clarity of the explanation provided had an important impact on how positive claimants felt prior starting their placement. So ensuring reducing the proportion (a third) who felt they had not been given a clear explanation should be regarded as a priority.

As we might expect, perceived clarity was linked strongly with the type of contact the claimant had with the host before starting. In particular, those who had met with the host in person were more likely to feel they had been given a clear explanation of what the work would involve. Some 80 per cent of claimants who had met in person felt the explanation they had been given was clear compared with just over a half (59 per cent) of those who been informed only by letter/phone or had no contact with the host at all.

3.12 Perceived suitability of placements offered

On the basis of the information provided to them in advance of starting their placement, claimants were divided as to whether they felt the placement they were being offered was suitable for them. Around two-thirds of (68 per cent) of all claimants felt the placement on offer was suitable, leaving around a third (31 per cent) who felt the placement was not suitable.

Variations in perceived suitability of placement by sub-group were small apart from by gender, with more male than female claimants saying that they felt the placement was not suitable (35 per cent compared with 21 per cent). This is shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Perceived suitability of placement, by gender

	Total %	Male %	Female %
Whether seen as suitable...			
Yes	68	64	78
No	31	35	21
Don't know	1	1	1
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	798	561	237

Those who did not feel the placement was suitable were asked why this was. Most commonly, these respondents said this was because the placement was not suited to their skills or experiences or because it was not related to the type of work they were looking for or were interested in. The most common responses were:

- The placement was not in a job I was looking for/something I was interested in doing – 34 per cent (of claimants who felt the placement was not suitable).
- The placement was not suited to my skills/work experience – 31 per cent.
- Had already done this type of work before/it didn't offer any new experience – 14 per cent.
- The work was boring – nine per cent.

Men were much more likely than women to say the placement was unsuitable because it did not suit their skills or work experience (33 per cent compared to 20 per cent of women).

A small proportion of claimants felt the placement on offer was unsuitable for personal or practical reasons, with seven per cent saying it was unsuitable for health reasons, five per cent saying that it involved lifting or manual work that they were unable to perform and five per cent saying the placement location was too far away. Unsurprisingly, claimants who gave one of these three responses were less likely than average to complete the full four week placement (44 per cent did not complete compared with 20 per cent overall).

3.13 Time between referral and placement start

Claimants are referred to MWA with the expectation that they would start their placement in ten working days⁷. Twelve days after the referral the advisers are instructed to check the LMS system to see if the claimant had started or if there was a DNS marker. However, in some cases advisers reported significant delays between the referral meeting and providers contacting claimants to arrange placement starts.

Some of the claimants in the qualitative research felt there was a lack of clarity about where to go and when; and in a few of instances letters of instruction were received after the scheduled meeting time with a provider or start date for a placement.

While the quantitative survey focused on claimants who had started their placements under MWA, a group of 25 claimants referred to MWA but yet to start were interviewed as part of the qualitative research. The claimants interviewed had most commonly been awaiting placement for between three and six weeks.

Those awaiting placement had different views about the delay between referral and placement start – some were not concerned, some had forgotten about the referral until reminded in the interview, although others expressed frustration at the lack of communication from the provider (and the Jobcentre):

'I did not receive a lot of information about the MWA, except to expect a telephone call from someone at a charity shop – this never happened and this was three weeks ago.'

(Claimant referred but not started)

Two claimants had been waiting to be contacted for over six weeks. One was meant to meet a provider representative but, according to the customer, the representative did not turn up and no further contact had been made. Another claimant was referred in late 2011 and due to start their placement at Christmas, but was turned away as the host organisation was overstaffed.

In the case of the quantitative survey, claimants who had started their placements were questioned on the time they had waited between being referred by their Jobcentre Plus Adviser and being contacted by the provider to arrange their placement. While 73 per cent of respondents were contacted within two weeks of being initially referred (the equivalent of ten working days), one in five (19 per cent) said they had waited more than two weeks between being referred by Jobcentre Plus and being contacted by their provider (including four per cent who reported waiting for more than six weeks).

The survey claimants who had not been contacted within a two week period were asked what reason, if any, they had been given for the delay. Just half reported being offered an explanation, with the most common being a lack placements including:

⁷ This target has been since been changed to 15 working days.

- a lack of available local placements (ten per cent);
- a lack of available placements generally (seven per cent); and
- a lack of suitable placements (six per cent).

This is consistent with findings from the qualitative research which suggested that backlogs of referrals were occurring in some districts due to a lack of available placements. In addition, a small number of claimants interviewed in the qualitative research also reported not starting their placement for health reasons – including being unable to lift heavy weights and suffering from depression.

3.14 Issues with referral and starts

For DWP/Jobcentre Plus delays between referral and placement start mean that individuals' can change their circumstances or move in the intervening period while other claimants are left in limbo awaiting a placement, and that sanctions may not be applied appropriately. Remedial action, tracking of claimants and working with providers to resolve the issues, incurred administrative costs. Further, loss of impact was reported – the power of the MWA message was diminished and its potential dual benefit was reduced. We understand that DWP are currently exploring ways of providing more up to date benefit status information to providers to avoid unnecessary Decision Making and Appeals (DMA) activity.

In three districts Jobcentre staff identified two significant delivery issues, namely a delay between the referral and the start of a placement and the application of sanctions. However, these issues appear to have been caused by process management and capacity issues rather than an intrinsic fault in the design of MWA.

It is clear from the qualitative interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff and providers, and the review of management information (MI), that the critical issue was the availability of placements relative to the numbers being referred. As the MI for one District showed, there was a gradual ramping up of the number of referrals over time but the number of individuals on placements stayed fairly static during the period, i.e. as referrals increased the number of placements did not increase proportionately so creating a significant backlog.

'The issue is that there are not enough placements going around ... it is taking six weeks to get someone into a charity shop. So claimants don't know what to do with that time, whether to write-off that time ... it's getting to the point where people may stop referring.'

(District TPPM, Trailblazer District)

In one district an immediate spike in referrals followed the introduction of the Trailblazer, and made them unable to meet the ten working day placement target. But rapid action on the part of the provider meant the situation was recovered quickly and the referral to placement target was again being met as planned. The provider reported mobilising their wider bank of placements to address the issue, and actively monitoring the placement target to allow rapid action if delay of more than one or two days occur. This contrasts sharply with the experience of other districts, where the delays could be up to six weeks.

A number of factors were identified by staff and providers that were affecting the supply of placements and the subsequent development of a backlog:

- The high profile withdrawal of placements from a number of larger charities meant a sharp reduction in placements.

- Competing demand for placements between different programmes – a number of hosts mentioned that they offered placements to other organisations.
- The price of success, i.e. when claimants choose to continue as a volunteer part-time with their host, is a potential need for additional MWA placements.
- Although not mentioned by Jobcentre Plus staff or providers directly, there may be a correlation between the type of area served and the number of potential placements available. Less urban and more affluent areas may have fewer charity shops, for example, to draw on for placements.

In addition, there were aspects of the mechanics of MWA delivery that contributed to the development of the backlog:

- The flow of referrals: an initial slow start in the volume of referrals was rapidly increased, partly prompted by provider feedback and a natural ramp up as the policy bedded in. Providers felt they were unable to manage the rate of increase in the number of referrals.
- Providers reported that administrative burden was also a contributing factor. Feedback suggested that the administrative tasks associated with placing individuals were challenging to achieve within ten working days.
- Providers, paid on the basis of a start, according to one Jobcentre manager prompted perverse behaviour, e.g. offering claimants more than one chance to attend an initial MWA interview in order to maximise the potential of an individual starting (and thus avoiding FTA paperwork), but which introduced delays into the process as a consequence.

In the three districts with problems district Performance Managers had worked closely with the providers and Jobcentre staff to address these problems. A Performance Improvement Plan had been developed in one district, which tasked providers with looking at better ways of managing referrals, breaking down the delivery process into manageable components, and setting clear responsibilities and time scales.

Jobcentre Plus management and staff in one area raised the issue of being unable to work directly with the provider to help improve the performance of the programme. This was due to complaints about the provider's service having to be delivered via the contract and performance management teams, with the division between the management of the referral process and the management of the providers being felt by some Jobcentre staff to be ineffective in resolving issues.

From the provider perspective, the main issues related to the numbers of claimants referred for placement, which exceeded expectations in many areas, and the flows of referrals across the programme period. The main issue raised was that, in some cases, referrals outstripped the established monthly referral profiles, which lead to resourcing challenges for the providers and backlogs in the process. However, this issue was recognised and was being addressed at the time of the study.

3.15 Referral to start ratio

A common theme across the provider interviews was the MWA funding model, where payments were linked to starts but with the contractors being responsible for the associated costs of non-starters. In theory the risk associated with cases of fail to attend and non-starts could be assessed at the outset on the basis of providers' experience of work with this target group, and commonly a 'three referrals to one start' estimate was used. However, variations in referral flow, and subsequent backlogs, caused higher than 3:1 referral to start ratios according to some providers.

Providers are paid on the basis of a placement start, which should incentivise the rapid processing of referrals. Providers also have to initiate the sanctions process for individuals who fail to attend or don't complete their placement. The price of the total process was built around an estimated 3:1 referral to start ratio. For providers, the cost of a higher referral to start ratio lies in having to raise a greater number of DMAs as the number of FTAs increase due to delays between referral and the start.

Referral to start rates – provider experiences

- In one district, the provider reported that just over a third of referrals made convert to starts, and that they had been attempting to improve this position by contacting claimants failing to attend the first day of placement and attempting to get them to re-engage. However, they had recently reverted to the provider guidance given the level of resources required to re-engage FTAs, and they now refer FTAs to DMA earlier and more frequently.
- In a second district, the overall referral to start rate was again estimated to be just over one in three – with around two-thirds of claimants failing to start their placements. However, this provider had no backlog and was meeting the ten working day placement target.
- In a third district, the prime provider reported that almost two-thirds of referrals to them had resulted in placement starts. Notably this case study district reported having strong relationships at both district and Jobcentre levels, which had resulted in referral numbers closely matching profiles and avoiding any backlog.

3.16 Acknowledging good delivery

While there were difficulties in the referral and delivery process in some areas; in two districts there was very positive feedback about the providers – a prime contractor in one district and a prime contractor and their sub-contractor in another. One district could not praise the prime and sub-contractors enough – the advisers were kept informed on whether a referral had started/completed and were given feedback on the claimants' participation and any issues with a claimant were dealt with promptly. This same provider was praised by the hosts and the claimants interviewed on placement with the hosts.

The conclusion that could be drawn from these findings is that there is nothing inherently flawed about the design of MWA. There may be scope for improvement in processes and in managing the flow of referrals but the evidence of well delivered and appreciated provider services in two districts suggest that these are manageable and there is no basis for changing the overall delivery structure or design of MWA.

Having looked at the referral process and claimants' feelings prior to attending MWA, Chapter 4 looks in detail at placements, including claimants' perceptions of MWA having attended part of or the entire four week placement.

4 The placement

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on claimants' experiences of placements under Mandatory Work Activity (MWA), including exploring their attitudes during and following their placement. Sections 4.2 to 4.5 of the chapter review the processes involved in sourcing placement opportunities, the placement hosts' experiences of the process between referral and placement, and views on the variety and appropriateness of the placements available. Section 4.6 presents an overview of the diverse settings, conditions, activities and other arrangements that claimants experience as part of their placement, and Section 4.7 describes claimants' views of various aspects of the placement in order to build up a picture of their engagement. The final two sections present information on completion, non-completion and extension of placements.

4.2 Sourcing placement opportunities and hosts' experiences

In all but one district covered by the qualitative research responsibility for sourcing placement opportunities lay with the subcontractors.⁸ In most cases the subcontractors built on existing links with potential placement hosts in the not-for-profit sector developed under previous programmes, for example, the Community Task Force and New Deal programmes. However, in a couple of cases the provider had not used not-for-profit hosts before.

The requirement for placements to be in the not for profit sector was widely understood but considered to limit opportunities. However, this requirement was clear from the outset, and for the most part was not felt to influence the quality of opportunities available. As one provider reported – *'a charity shop placement can offer a range of skills – and larger operations can also include IT, warehousing and lots of other work opportunities'*.

To differing extents, most of the providers and subcontractors interviewed in the qualitative research reported experiencing difficulties identifying sufficient numbers of placements. In some cases these difficulties were not considered significant, and were more a question of sequencing the end of placements with the start of new ones where rolling programme approaches had been developed.

4.3 Providing placement opportunities

Most of the hosts interviewed in the qualitative research were charity shops, with the remainder including a wood recycling charity, warehouse/outlets servicing and supplying recycled household goods, a country park and a community café/drop-in centre. All were charitable or 'not for profit' organisations.

The interviews with providers and Jobcentre Plus staff at district and Jobcentre levels also confirmed that the majority of placements were in charity shops, and that such placements were not equally attractive to all the claimants. Providers commonly referred to the lack of opportunities for young males, with outdoor or construction related opportunities being considered the most suitable. While several had established links with community regeneration and environmental improvement programmes, these were less prevalent than previously under activities such as Community Task Force programmes.

⁸ The single exception involved a sole provider model.

District and Jobcentre Plus staff held a range of views on the value and suitability of the placements:

- At one end of the spectrum were those who felt that a wider range of placements should be available, and while working in a charity shop could be useful for those interested in retail opportunities a closer match between an individual's interests and their placement would potentially have greater impact.
- At the other end of the spectrum were advisers who thought that the type of placement was irrelevant, as the purpose of MWA was to re-engage people with work and the work ethos, with the placement being a means for claimants to develop or demonstrate their commitment to working and to develop, enhance or rediscover softer skills such as self-confidence and social and communication abilities. As such the placement was a means to demonstrate the ability to attend every day, on time and to contribute productively. These staff drew a distinction between a skills development or a training opportunity and an MWA work placement. In their view there were other Jobcentre Plus opportunities for developing specific skills or work experience, which in some cases had been rejected by some of the claimants referred to MWA. The purpose of MWA was to reinforce the message that individuals need to engage in jobsearch and with Jobcentre Plus, and to fulfil their responsibilities. It was more important to them that individuals were referred and placed quickly to reinforce these messages. Their concern was that giving individuals a choice of placements would cause delays to the start of the placement while the 'ideal' match was found.

Overall, there was a greater call from those interviewed in favour of providing a wider variety of placements beyond charity shops and with a closer fit to opportunities in the labour market and claimants' aspirations.

The hosts interviewed reported having provided between one and over 100 placements at the time of interview, with the majority having hosted over 50 placements under the programme to date. Just one described hosting their first placement at the time of interview. In many cases placements were taken on an ad hoc basis, but in others more of a 'rolling programme' of placements had developed – in some cases featuring multiple places at any one time (with one host describing taking up to ten individual placements concurrently).

Many, but not all, of the hosts interviewed described providing similar work placement opportunities for unemployed individuals in the past, for example, under programmes such as the former New Deal and Future Jobs Fund, and for organisations including Business in the Community and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Many also currently offered work placements either through Jobcentre Plus work experience provision and/or under the Work Programme. Others also reported providing placements on a regular basis for other organisations, for example, for the probation service and mental health support groups.

For many hosts their involvement in MWA came about as a result of previous placement activity, in several cases through existing relationships with MWA providers/subcontractors. In other cases meetings at conferences/local briefing events, direct contacts from providers or sub-contractors, and discussions with and recommendations from other colleagues had led to them getting involved in the programme. For a few, MWA was their first experience of hosting placements for unemployed clients.

The majority of the hosts described getting involved in MWA to provide staff for their organisations, which in many cases relied on unpaid staff to operate. Indeed several described coming to rely on MWA to provide a steady supply of staff. The supply of staff was also balanced in many cases by the desire to help individual claimants and support their return to work. Here placements were seen as offering benefits for both the claimant and the host, with claimants benefiting by gaining new experiences and skills.

For the majority of the hosts interviewed, their experience of MWA had been positive, and so most expressed the intention to continue taking placements. However, in a few cases the hosts' experiences had been less positive, with two hosts reporting issues no longer offering placement opportunities to MWA claimants as a result.

4.4 Hosts' experiences of the process between referral and placement

Some hosts described working closely with the provider/sub-contractor to assess the appropriateness of claimants for a specific placement prior to a referral being made, as in the example below:

Referral process

One case study host worked with their provider to agree the characteristics of the claimants to be referred to them, which were used to inform the initial sift of potential participants undertaken by the provider. The host considered that the provider has a sufficiently good understanding of their requirements, and was happy for this 'first stage' selection to be completed by them.

This initial sift is followed by group interviews and an initial induction process with the host, which allowed standards and expectations to be set in terms of timeliness and behaviour during the placement. Following the confirmation of a placement opportunity, the provider meets the claimant on their first day at the shop, which is when the necessary paper work is completed.

A second host described a similar experience, where they met their provider to discuss the type of placements they could offer and the characteristics of potential candidates. This informed initial interviews between the provider and potential participants, before visiting the placement site for an interview with the local manager. Claimants are also invited to describe what they would like to get from the experience, and the process ensures that both the host and claimant understand what is required and expected of the placement, and allows either side to withdraw as appropriate.

Elsewhere some hosts described dissatisfaction with either the referral process or elements of it – which had coloured their perceptions of the programme and in one case led to the host ceasing to offer placements. In this case the host referred to difficulties with their provider, including inappropriate individuals being referred to them and changes in provider staff which meant that an effective working relationship was never established. The host has continued, however, to offer eight week work experience placements for Jobcentre Plus.

4.5 Hosts' experiences of the appropriateness of claimants

While their experiences of the referral process varied, the majority of the hosts interviewed reported being satisfied with most of the claimants referred to them in terms of their suitability for placement.

While the majority of hosts reported being satisfied overall with the appropriateness of claimants referred, each reported either being referred or accepting for placement individuals who were, or proved to be, unsuitable for the placement offered. While the hosts were pragmatic about this, and in most cases understood that MWA was about providing experience of the work environment rather than experience of the specific work areas of interest to the claimant, some were disappointed in the quality of referrals received.

One case study host (Charity shop) described how their initial experiences of MWA were negative in terms of one of claimant failing to attend the interview and a second arriving intoxicated. However, receiving two ‘excellent’ claimants after this initial experience changed the host’s view of MWA. Both were young males, who were extremely enthusiastic and prepared to help out wherever they could. Following this experience the host has continued to offer placements, and had subsequently taken eight additional placements.

A small minority of hosts did, however, report ‘gaps in their knowledge’ of claimants’ backgrounds prior to interview which had potentially more serious implications – for example, not knowing until interview that the claimant had a criminal record or substance misuse issues.

The hosts interviewed sometimes felt that some of the individuals who came to work with them started with a negative attitude. Those who had offered placements as part of previous programmes indicated that the attitudes of the MWA participants referred to them were no different to those many had worked with previously. Others reported expecting to experience teething problems given that those referred had been away from the workplace for some time

One provider summed up the views of many:

‘The first few days you can get a bit of attitude from some; what you would probably expect; because I think if they came in with a really good attitude they probably wouldn’t have been long term unemployed. For some it’s a confidence issue; you can just see the body language; you know, don’t look at me, I’m not here. Others come in with a bit of a swagger. The managers are pretty used to dealing with that sort of personality.’

(Charity shop, Trailblazer District)

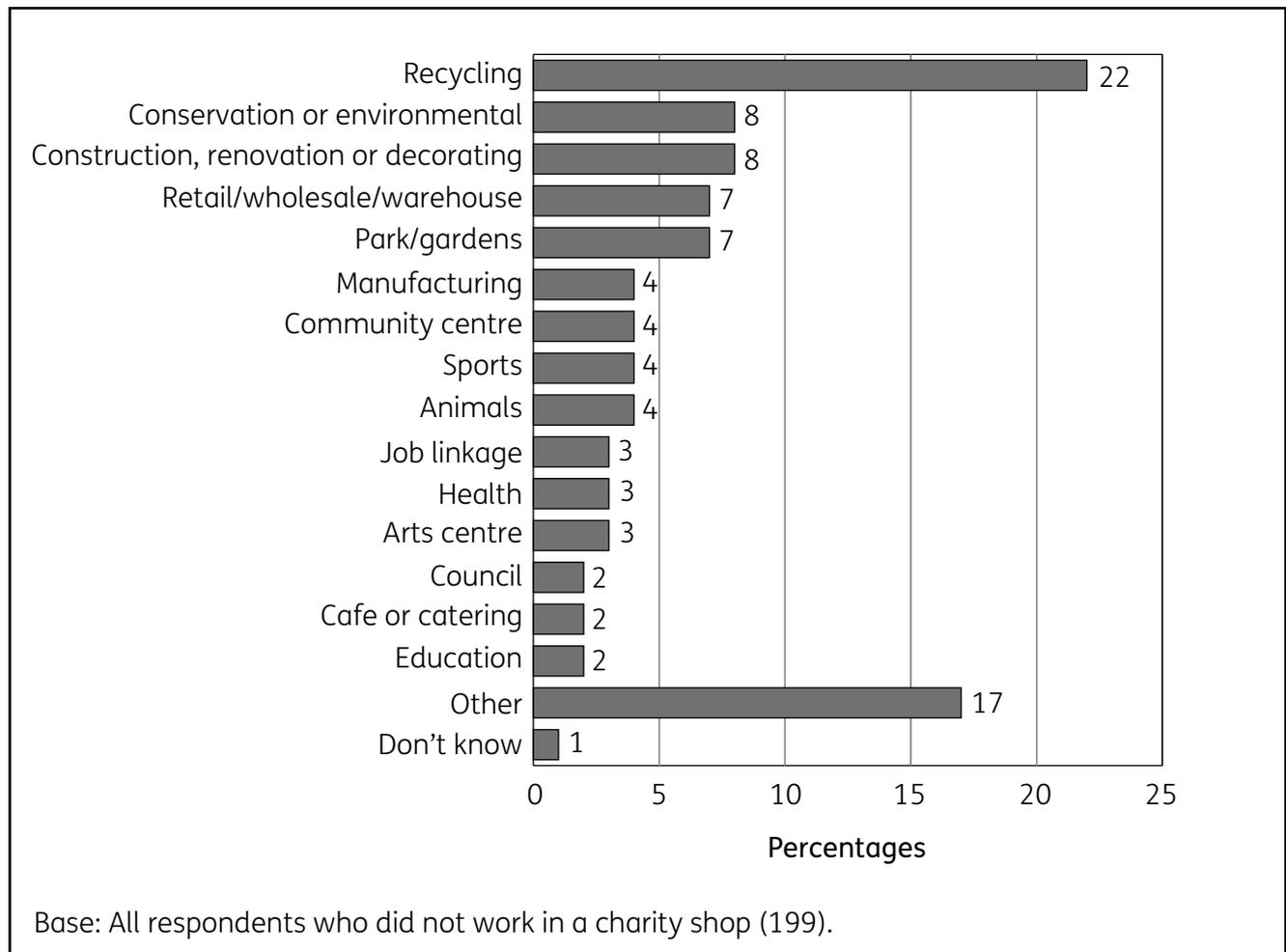
4.6 Claimants’ experiences of placements

As discussed in Section 4.3, while placement opportunities are not as varied or tailored as some providers and claimants would like, nor are they limited to charity shops. The survey data, supplemented with relevant information elicited from the hosts who took part in the qualitative research, provides information on the settings where claimants worked, the roles they carried out, and the arrangements in place concerning working hours, learning on the job, and supervision.

4.6.1 Types of placements

The qualitative research indicated that the majority of MWA placements offered to claimants were in charity shops but not exclusively so. Other examples included country parks, recycling centres and larger charity shops that traded in furniture, white good and electrical items and which incorporated some warehousing, minor repair work, pick-ups and deliveries.

The claimant survey supported this. Three-quarters of the claimants who were interviewed (75 per cent) reported working for a charity shop, while the majority of the remainder worked for recycling organisations (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Type of organisation worked for

Most (90 per cent) of claimants who worked for a charity shop were based in the shop during their placement (equating to 69 per cent of all claimants). Smaller proportions of claimants spent at least part of their placement based in a warehouse (23 per cent), outdoor site (16 per cent) or office (six per cent), though other locations such as community centres and cafes were also mentioned by small numbers of claimants. As shown in Table 4.1, the location assigned to claimants varied according to their age and gender: younger claimants and men were more likely to spend their placement working outdoors, while men were almost three times more likely than women to be carrying out their placement in a warehouse.

Table 4.1 Location of placement, by age and gender

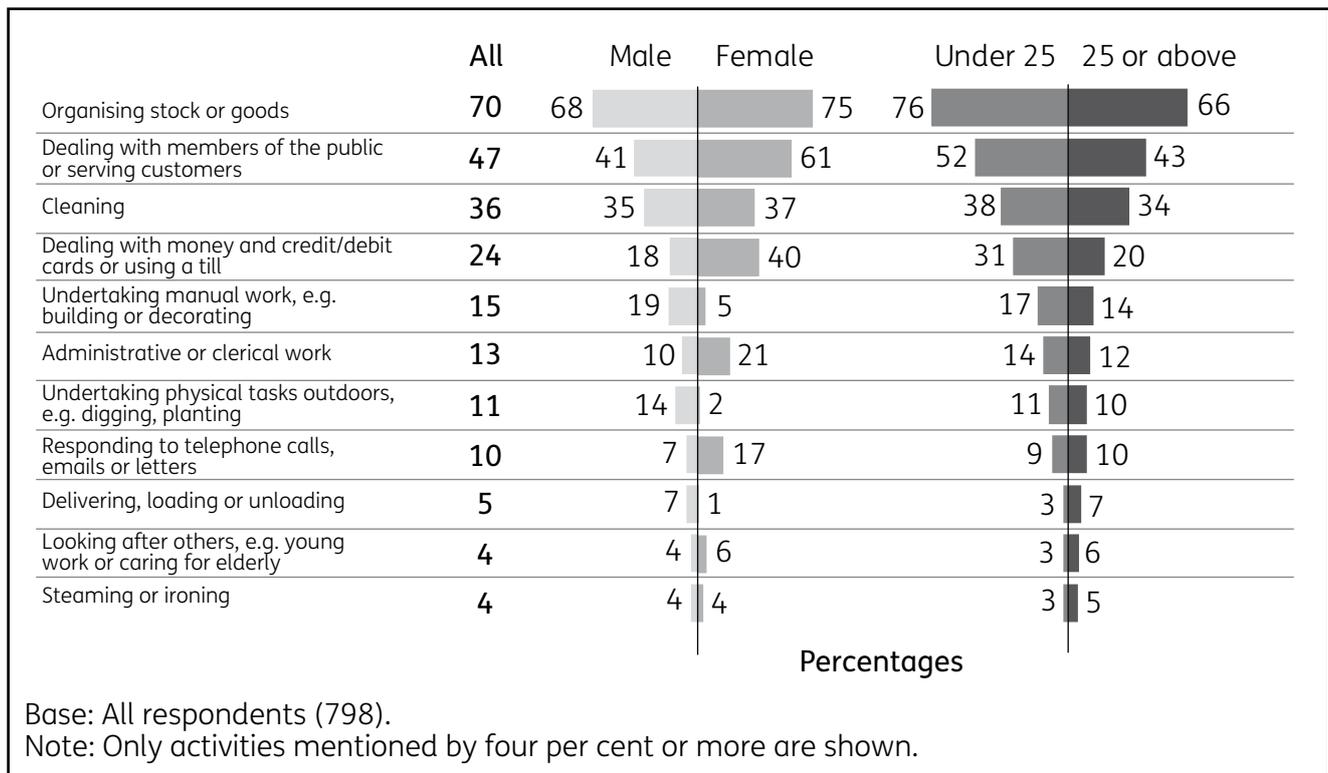
	Total %	Male %	Female %	18-24 %	25-34 %	35-44 %	45-54 %	55+ %
Shop	69	64	82	69	64	68	75	74
Warehouse	23	28	10	24	24	25	24	5
Outdoors	16	21	3	13	19	20	12	21
Office	6	5	7	5	6	7	4	12
Other	6	6	7	5	9	4	6	6
<i>Base</i>	798	560	238	381	136	111	132	35

4.6.2 Claimants' roles

Despite the fact that the majority of placements were in charity shops, the roles carried out by claimants were not limited to serving customers. The qualitative research found that charity shop placements included a wide range of tasks, including interacting with customers; delivering, collecting and displaying goods; shop security; stock management and serving on the till; as well as activities away from the shop floor. In the larger outlets this also included warehouse operations, office work and administration (from taking telephone calls to organising deliveries) and merchandising or promotion. Other claimants who took part in the qualitative interviews reported being involved in catering and serving food (including learning about food hygiene regulations and practices); wood recycling (which included park management, using tools and machinery and refurbishment work) and warehousing tasks (including shifting stock and managing collections and deliveries).

The most common activity reported by claimants who took part in the survey was stock organisation (70 per cent), although customer-facing roles were also common (47 per cent). Both roles were disproportionately more likely among women and claimants under the age of 25, and there was further variation by gender and age for most of the other activities undertaken by claimants while on their placement (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Types of activities, by gender and age

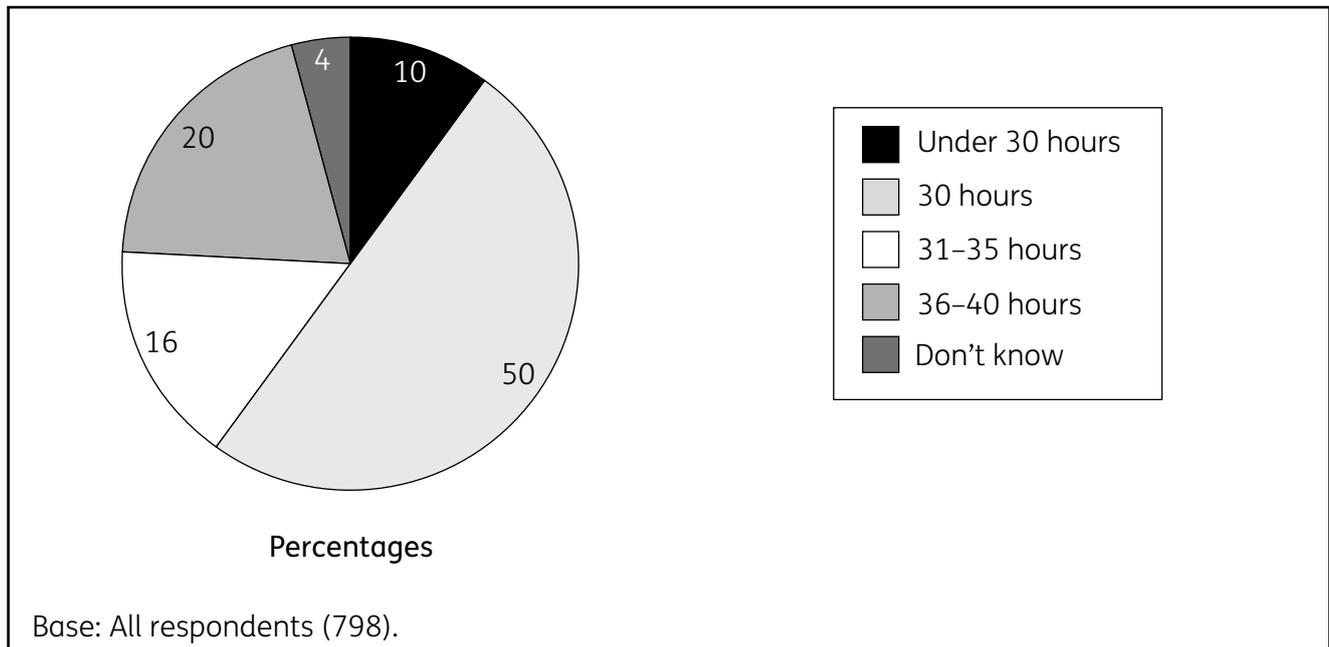


4.6.3 Working hours and nature of work

One of the conditions of the MWA programme is that claimants must work for 30 hours per week during their placement. Half of all claimants who participated in the survey (50 per cent) reported that this was the case during their placement, with a further 36 per cent working more than 30 hours. It is unclear from the survey data whether those who worked more than 30 hours per week did so on a voluntary basis. The working hours of ten per cent of claimants (and 27 per cent of female claimants aged 25 or above) fell below the standard 30-hour threshold (Figure 4.3).

Working less than the standard 30 hours may be permitted if claimants have agreed with their Jobcentre adviser within their Jobseekers Agreement that the jobs they are looking for while receiving benefit are for fewer than 30 hours a week because of caring commitments or other restrictions. This is also permitted under exceptional circumstances, such as if the claimant has or acquires part-time work during their placement, is already involved in part-time training or study before the start of the placement, or has a domestic emergency.⁹ Of those claimants in the survey who worked less than 30 hours per week, 46 per cent were limited by childcare commitments, eight per cent were restricted by health issues, two per cent had another job and five per cent were studying. In addition, some reported not having sufficient work in the host organisation to fill the available time (nine per cent). It is worth noting that several hosts involved in the qualitative research reported being flexible around start and finish times, as well as allowing claimants to attend doctor’s appointments or pick up dependants in cases of emergency without informing the provider.

⁹ DWP 2012 ‘Mandatory Work Activity Provider Guidance’. Available online at: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/pg-part-p.pdf>, accessed on 5/10/12

Figure 4.3 Working hours per week

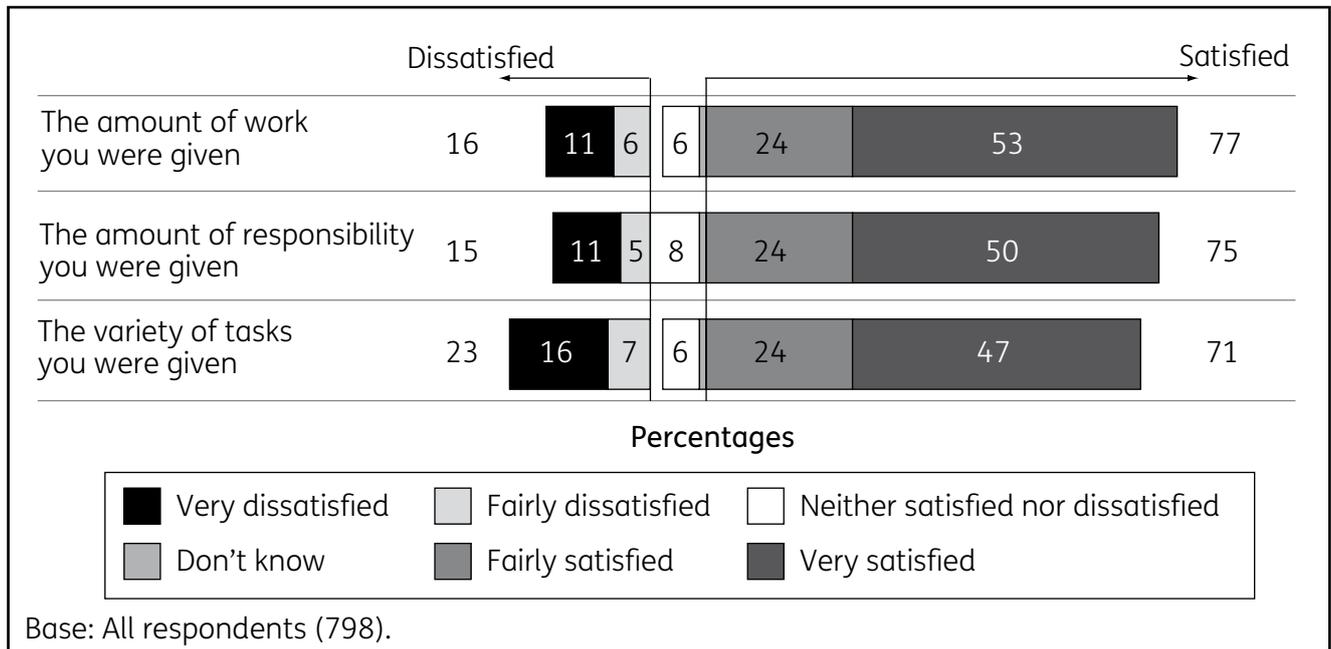
Only three per cent of claimants who worked below the required threshold spontaneously mentioned that they made up for their absence by staying on their placement for longer than four weeks, though it is possible that the frequency of this arrangement is under-reported as respondents were not asked directly whether they had done this.

Most claimants (83 per cent) carried out all their work between Monday and Friday. However, one in eight (13 per cent) worked on a Saturday or Sunday as well as on weekdays. This was more common for claimants working in customer-facing roles (15 per cent) and those involved in building or decorating (18 per cent).

Claimants who took part in the survey were asked their views on various aspects of the work they undertook. Around three-quarters were satisfied with their workload (77 per cent) and level of responsibility (75 per cent), while slightly fewer (71 per cent) expressed satisfaction with the variety of tasks they were given during their placement (Figure 4.4).

There were almost no differences of opinion regarding workloads, levels of responsibility and variety of tasks between claimants with different placement experiences: opinions did not vary substantially depending on the location of the placement, and whether or not work extended over the weekend or above 35 hours per week. It is worth noting, however, that views of female claimants diverged depending on their age. Women under the age of 25 had the greatest likelihood of all claimants to give a negative rating of their workload (29 per cent, compared with 16 per cent across all claimants), whereas women aged 25 or over were the most likely to say they were strongly satisfied in this regard (70 per cent, compared with 53 per cent overall). In fact, women in the older age bracket tended to be not only very satisfied with their workload but also with the other aspects of their work: 63 per cent felt very satisfied with the responsibility they were given (compared with 50 per cent overall) and 58 per cent were very satisfied with the variety of activities they undertook (compared with 47 per cent overall). As discussed in Section 4.16, this group was also the most likely to enjoy their placement, suggesting that these factors potentially contribute to an enjoyable experience.

Figure 4.4 Satisfaction with workload, responsibility and variety of tasks



4.6.4 Induction and training

Depending on the nature of the host and their size, some form of training was provided as part of the placement. The most common form of training reported by those who took part in the qualitative research was a general introduction to the organisation and colleagues. Several hosts described a more protracted approach which included a gradual easing of individuals into their roles, and efforts to ensure the placements were ‘part of the team’. The induction process was also considered important in allowing clear expectations to be set at the start regarding timeliness, appearance and behaviour.

The survey offered an indication of the prevalence of induction or introductory sessions. Over four in five interviewed claimants (83 per cent) said they received an induction when they arrived at their placement. There was no apparent association between the type of placement (e.g. whether it was in a charity shop or not) and the provision of an induction session. Most likely, the decision to induct claimants was contingent on the availability of staff or scale of the organisation.

Some hosts reported that they offered additional training during the placement, ranging from health and safety briefings to providing a working knowledge of food hygiene. One host provided NVQ-accredited training opportunities for their long-term volunteers, which were available to MWA placements if they choose to continue as a volunteer after their placements had completed. However, for the most part the training offered was ‘experiential’, with claimants gaining new experiences on a ‘learn by doing’ basis.

As discussed elsewhere, the primary policy intent behind MWA was not to develop new skills among claimants but to provide experience of the discipline of work routine. Nevertheless, almost half of survey respondents (45 per cent) said they had the chance to learn new skills during their placement, with one in seven (15 per cent) specifying that they had the opportunity to pick up ‘lots’ of new skills (rising to 19 per cent among claimants who had never previously worked). There was a clear association between the nature of the work claimants were tasked with and the extent to which they felt they were exposed to new skills. Claimants involved in serving customers, performing administrative work, dealing with money or till work, or responding to correspondence and

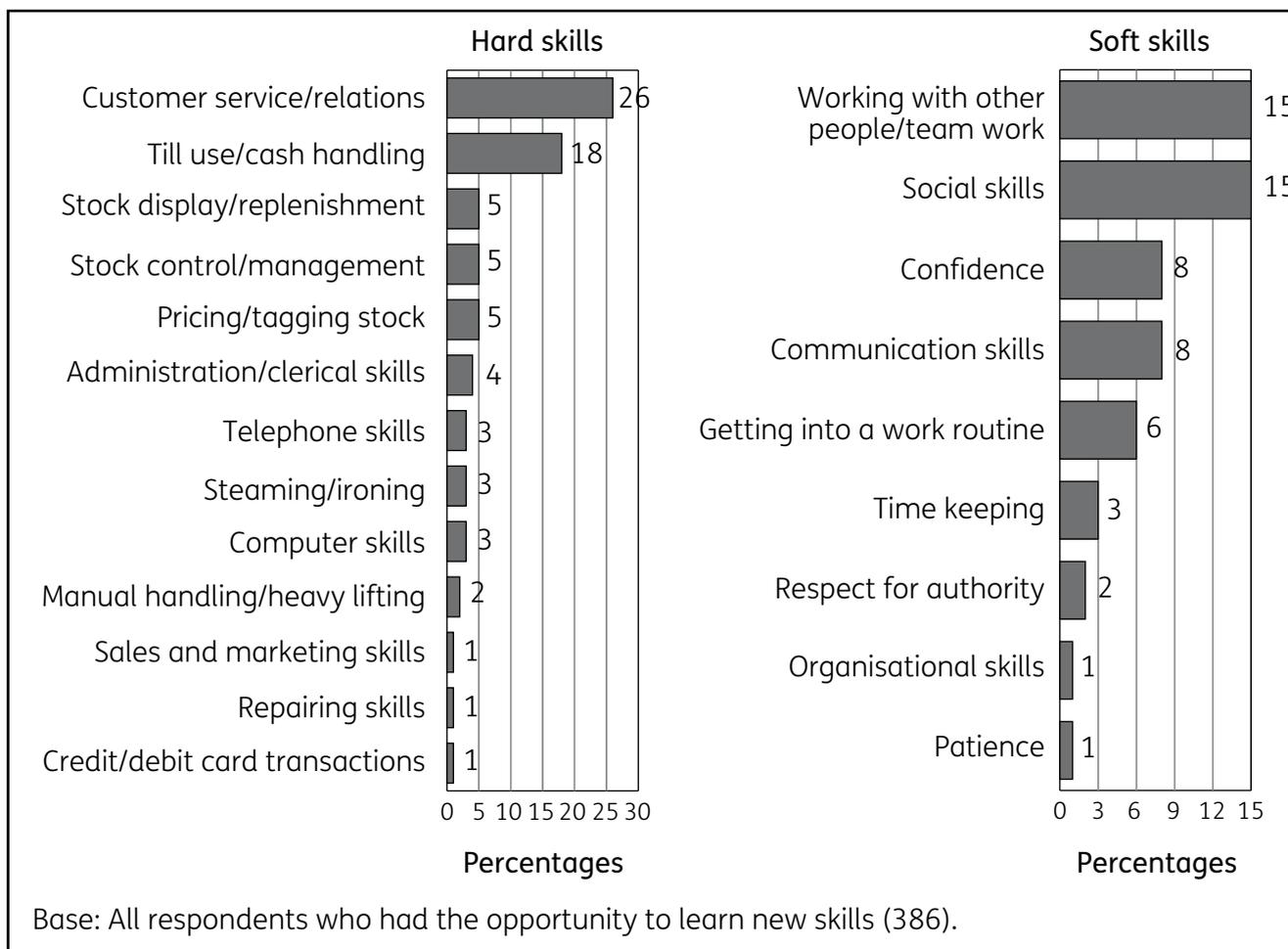
telephone calls were more likely to feel that they had the chance to learn ‘lots’ of new skills (18 per cent, 22 per cent, 25 per cent, and 27 per cent respectively, compared with 15 per cent overall), whereas fewer of those who spent their placement based in a warehouse felt this way (ten per cent).

Placements evidently did not offer as many fresh learning opportunities for older claimants as they did for younger claimants. While over half of 18 to 24-year-olds (54 per cent) said that the placement gave them the opportunity to learn new skills, only 40 per cent of claimants aged 25 or over said the same. Claimants aged between 18 and 19 were the most likely to say their placement gave them the chance to learn something new (60 per cent). Among claimants aged 25 or above there was a disparity between men and women, with men being more likely than their female counterparts to say they had no opportunity at all to acquire new skills (66 per cent versus 46 per cent).

Around two-thirds of claimants (68 per cent) agreed that staff were willing to teach them new skills. However, only a quarter (24 per cent) went as far as to discuss the types of tasks and skills they wanted to try with a staff member.

That said, there was sometimes a disconnect between willingness to teach and opportunities to learn: around a quarter of claimants (27 per cent) believed they were in an environment where staff were willing to teach yet there was no opportunity to gain skills that were new to them. This was particularly common among claimants aged 25 or over (30 per cent, compared with 21 per cent of 18-24s) and once again suggests that older claimants are less likely to feel that the types of activities undertaken during MWA placements offer them useful new learning opportunities.

The survey asked claimants who believed the placement had offered them new skills which of these they considered most useful. Answers included a range of hard skills (54 per cent, primarily customer relations or till work), as well as soft skills (42 per cent, such as team-working and interacting with other people). The frequency with which each of these skills was mentioned is shown in Figure 4.5. In addition, 11 per cent cited gaining an insight into an industry – whether retail in general (seven per cent), charity shops (two per cent) or warehouse operations (one per cent) – as the most useful thing they had learnt. Three per cent felt that nothing they had learnt had been useful.

Figure 4.5 New skills considered most useful

4.6.5 Supervision and feedback

Hosts employed their own systems for planning claimants' workloads, supervising activities, providing feedback, and dealing with any issues that arose during the claimants' placements. The qualitative interviews collected various examples of the approaches used. One host described having a rota for who should be in work and when – which as well as a staff planning tool was used to show claimants the implications of non-attendance and the extra work this would mean for their colleagues. Two hosts described how they follow a 'buddy' or mentor approach with new placements to help them integrate into their placement and offer support on a one-to-one basis. In one case, individuals in the latter stages of their MWA placements acted as buddies to newer recruits, whereas in the other existing volunteers (or in some cases staff) took this role. Several of the hosts described how minor issues, such as poor timekeeping or minor behaviour issues, were dealt with by the host without involving the provider. Several described following a 'three strikes and you're out' approach, and how 'a quiet word' was usually sufficient. However, in more serious incidents, such as theft, or repeated poor timekeeping or behaviour, the provider would be informed.

The survey captured claimants' perspectives on the amount and quality of the supervision they received during their placement. Four in five claimants (79 per cent) described the amount of supervision they received while on their placement as 'about right'. One in eight (13 per cent) felt that the degree of supervision was inadequate, though this was more common in situations where staff were perceived to be unwilling to teach new skills (34 per cent) and placements where there were no opportunities to learn anything new (20 per cent). Less common was the belief that the placement involved 'too much' supervision (four per cent of claimants).

The supervision offered by the host was generally regarded as being of good quality: 39 per cent of claimants rated it as 'very good' and 37 per cent as 'good', with a further 14 per cent describing the quality as 'fair'. Less than one in ten (nine per cent) gave a negative rating, with claimants who have never been in work somewhat more inclined to give a lower rating.

Views about the quality of supervision did not vary substantially by the nature of the placement, but did vary depending on the activities claimants were involved in. Specifically, those who dealt with members of the public, administration, money and tills, and telephone calls and correspondence were more likely than other claimants to say the supervision they received was 'very good' (45 per cent, 49 per cent, 51 per cent and 54 per cent, respectively, compared with 39 per cent overall), whereas those who undertook outdoor physical tasks such as digging and planting were more likely than average to say the quality varied (two per cent, compared with less than half a per cent overall). Poor supervision did not appear to be associated with any particular type of placement.

The most common reason why supervision was considered poor, mentioned by three per cent of all claimants, was that it was completely lacking. Other reasons given by the minority who felt that supervision was poor included being left to do things themselves, that activities were not demonstrated or explained, that the workload was not evenly distributed, or that supervisors were unpleasant. Only one person mentioned the absence of health and safety training.

Many of the hosts interviewed in the qualitative research believed that offering support and praise throughout the placement – and treating MWA claimants like employees – contributed towards placement completion. Praising achievements and tasks well done were considered particularly important given the work (and wider) histories of many of the claimants referred. Nevertheless, the survey showed that less than half of the claimants who completed the full period of their placement (44 per cent) received feedback from staff about their overall performance once their placement ended. However, the survey did not specifically ask about feedback received during the placement. Claimants involved in administrative tasks had the greatest likelihood of being offered a performance review at the end of their placement (62 per cent), whereas claimants who had never worked in the past – and were arguably most in need of feedback – were less likely than other claimants to say they had received this (31 per cent). Unsurprisingly, an end of placement review was also uncommon in settings where staff were deemed unwilling to teach new skills, where the claimant felt there was insufficient supervision or where the quality of supervision was considered poor or fair.

4.6.6 Follow-up discussions between claimant and adviser

After leaving or completing the placement, almost one in three claimants (32 per cent) recalled discussing their experiences with their adviser at the Jobcentre.¹⁰ These discussions most frequently took place within a week of departure from the host organisation (65 per cent of those who had a discussion), though one in ten (ten per cent) had a discussion on the day they left, and a similar proportion (11 per cent) did not have a discussion until more than two weeks after the placement had ended.

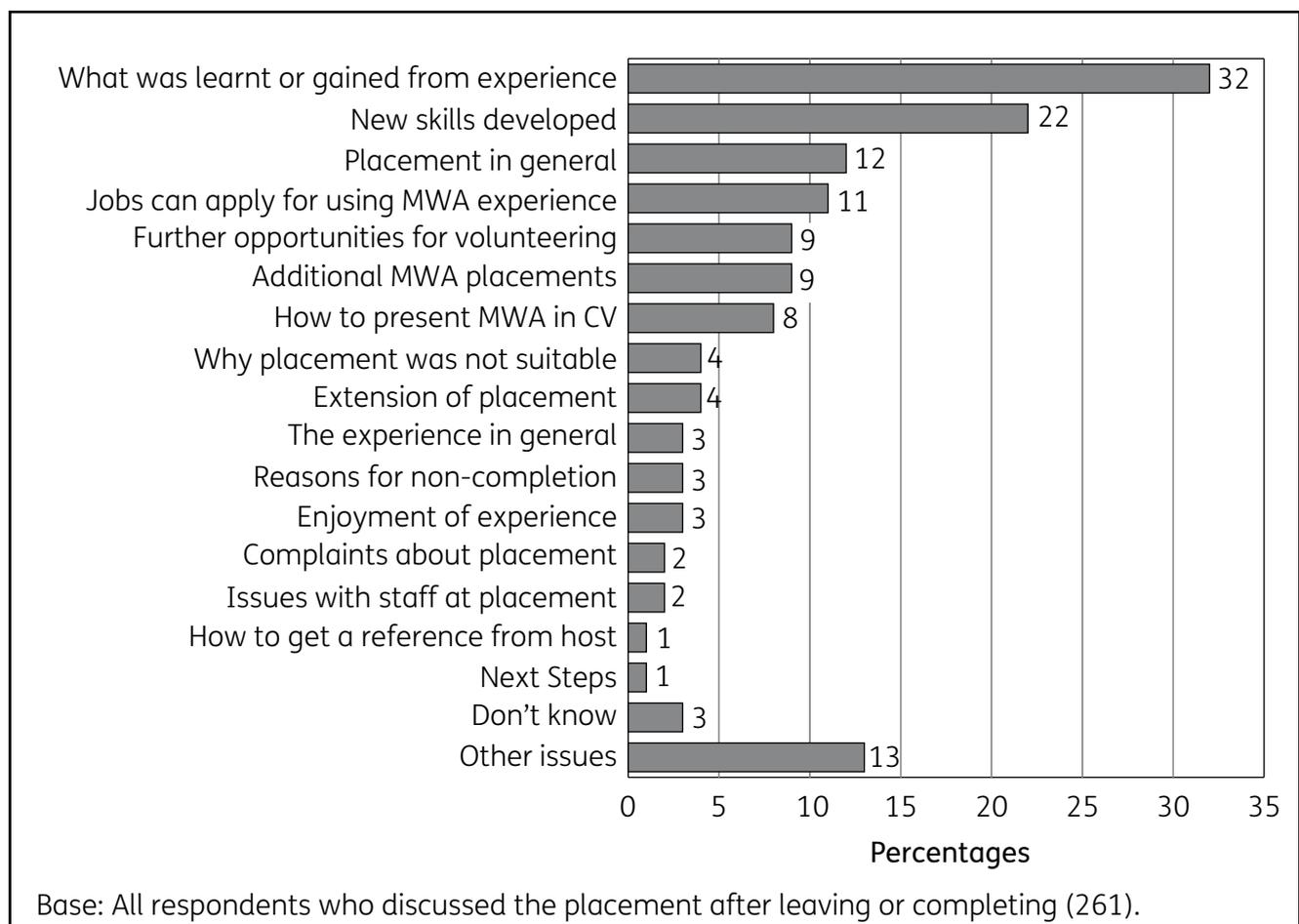
The strongest determinant of whether or not this discussion took place was whether the claimant had kept in touch with an adviser during the placement itself. Almost half of those who maintained contact while on their placement (outside of regular jobsearch reviews) subsequently discussed their experience at the end of the placement (46 per cent, compared with 29 per cent of those who did not maintain contact). However, contact during the placement was relatively rare, reported by only 14 per cent of claimants, and mostly took place in person at the Jobcentre (seven per cent) or by telephone (five per cent). It is not known whether this type of contact was initiated by the claimant

¹⁰ Providers are contracted to supply Jobcentre Plus exit reports for participants completing their placements.

or the adviser. The likelihood of maintaining contact was unrelated to the type of placement the claimant was involved in, but claimants who had never worked were the most likely to keep in touch with an adviser (24 per cent) whereas claimants aged between 45 and 54 were the least likely (eight per cent).

The topics covered during the follow-up discussion are shown in Figure 4.6. Generally, discussions focused on the benefits of the experience (32 per cent) and new skills the claimant had developed (22 per cent, rising to 29 per cent among claimants aged 18-24). Some claimants used the session as an opportunity to discuss how to take advantage of these benefits by identifying new job opportunities, improving their CV or getting a reference from their host. Discussion of most topics was, of course, less common for claimants who had not completed their placement.

Figure 4.6 Topics discussed with adviser after leaving/completing placement



4.7 Claimant engagement

There was widespread recognition among hosts with previous experience of offering placements to the long-term unemployed that there could be issues around motivation, attendance, timeliness and behaviour appropriate for the workplace from the claimant group referred to MWA. While these fears were justified in some cases, both the qualitative and quantitative research found that, once they had a chance to settle into their role, most claimants engaged with the experience of attending their placement; had positive views on the routine of going to work, learning on the job, and working under supervision; and enjoyed the overall experience. The survey data also revealed disparities between the engagement levels of different subgroups, with men aged 25 or above the least positive about their experience of MWA.

4.7.1 Views on length and organisation of placement

MWA placements are designed to last for four weeks, and the vast majority of the claimants interviewed for the survey (95 per cent) acknowledged that it was made clear to them before they began that they would be required to attend the placement for the full four weeks (see Section 3.5). However, less than two-thirds of claimants (63 per cent) said that this amount of time felt ‘about right’. This view did not seem to be affected by the claimant’s working hours and whether or not they worked over the weekend.

Claimants with negative views on placement length were evenly divided between those who felt that four weeks was too long (18 per cent of all claimants) and those who felt this was too short (16 per cent of all claimants). Differences in opinion between demographic subgroups were minimal, although claimants who were dissatisfied with their workload during the placement or who were negatively disposed towards it from the outset were particularly likely to say this. The opposite view – that the placement was too short – was disproportionately more likely to be held by men aged 25 and above (21 per cent of all men aged 25 plus).

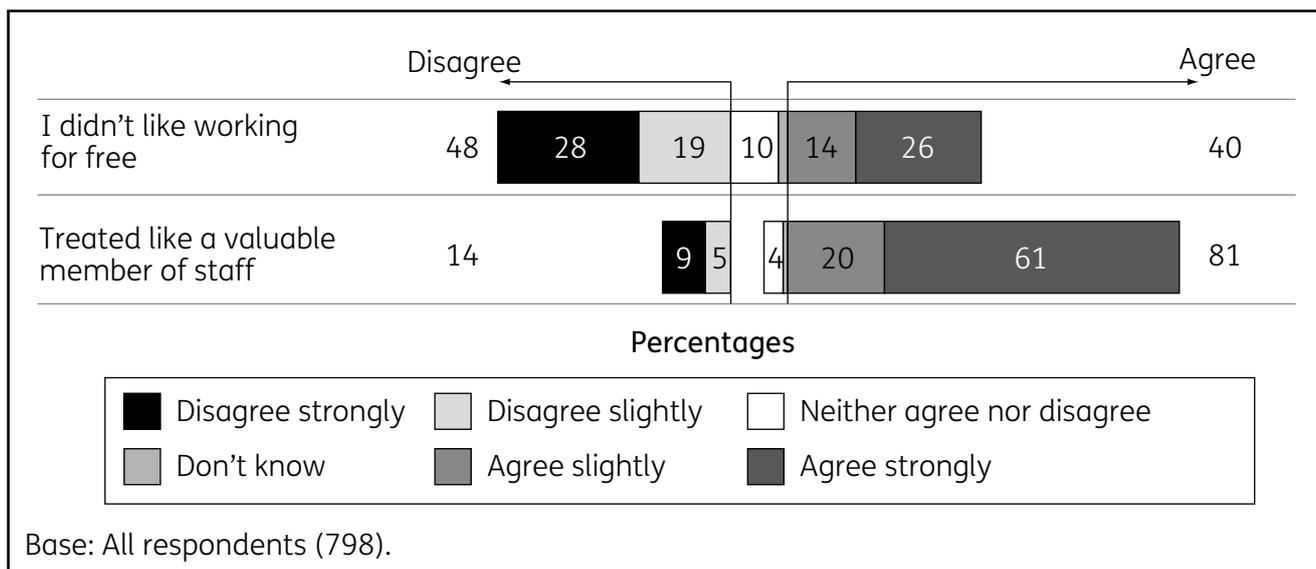
Three-quarters of claimants (75 per cent) agreed that their placement had been well organised, with almost half (47 per cent) agreeing strongly that this was the case. In this regard the views of men and women aged 25 and above differed starkly, with men less likely to rate the organisation of the placement positively (69 per cent, compared with 84 per cent of women in the same age bracket).

The claimant’s experiences during the placement clearly contributed to whether or not they regarded it as well-organised. Claimants who felt that supervision was of good quality, or who felt the degree of supervision was ‘about right’, together with those who worked between 31 and 35 hours per week, were more likely than average to give a positive rating (84 per cent, 82 per cent, and 82 per cent, respectively, compared with 75 per cent overall). In addition, experiences between referral and starting the placement may have played a role. Claimants who had the chance to discuss their placement with someone from the host organisation before starting, or who were given a clear explanation by the provider of the type of work they would be required to do, were more likely to rate the organisation of their placement positively (84 per cent each).

4.7.2 Views on being paid and being valued at work

MWA are unpaid work placements, and providers and hosts are not permitted to give incentive payments or rewards. Claimants participating in the survey were asked whether they agreed with the statement ‘*I didn’t like working for free*’. Two-fifths (40 per cent) agreed with this statement. Claimants with five or more sanctions were more likely to agree with the statement (53 per cent saying they didn’t like working for free). While the survey indicates some claimants felt a degree of resentment about working without pay, this may have been mitigated to some extent by being made to feel like a valuable member of staff while on their placement. Over four-fifths (81 per cent) agreed that they felt valued during their placement despite not being remunerated for their work (Figure 4.7).

Men and women held differing views on not being paid and being valued as a member of staff. Men were more likely than women to say that they did not like working for free (42 per cent of men, compared with 34 per cent of women). A factor which potentially contributed to men’s propensity to say this was that they were less likely than women to feel they had been treated as valuable members of staff during their placements (78 per cent of men, compared with 88 per cent of women). Male claimants aged 25 or above were particularly likely to believe that they were not valued, with 13 per cent disagreeing strongly that ‘*I was treated like a valuable member of staff*’ (compared with an average of nine per cent strong disagreement across all claimants).

Figure 4.7 Agreement with statements on being paid and being valued at work

In addition, those who worked during weekends were less likely to feel valued (23 per cent disagreed they were treated as a valued member of staff, compared with an average of 14 per cent).

4.7.3 Enjoyment of work routine and the overall experience

One of the main aims of MWA is to promote the discipline and habit of working life among claimants. This includes the need to attend work regularly and turning up on time. In the main, claimants who attended a placement seemed to appreciate the value of a working routine, with nine in ten of those who took part in the survey (90 per cent) agreeing with the statement '*I enjoyed the routine of going to work*'. Since almost all claimants who were satisfied with the variety of tasks they were given enjoyed the routine of going to work (96 per cent), it would appear that offering a degree of variety during the placement helps to shape claimant's appreciation of a working routine.

The routine of going to work was especially welcomed by claimants aged 35 or above (78 per cent strong agreement, compared with 65 per cent of 18-24 year-olds and 67 per cent of 25-34 year-olds).

However, a number of groups of claimants were more likely than average to struggle with the routine of attending a placement. In particular, claimants who had never worked were somewhat less likely to find the routine enjoyable (84 per cent agreed with the statement compared with 90 per cent overall). In addition, male claimants and those who had been out of work for less than a year were more likely than average to strongly disagree that the working routine was enjoyable (nine per cent and seven per cent strongly disagreed, compared with four per cent overall).

Most claimants who did not enjoy the working routine did not enjoy their placement overall. This suggests that enjoying the working routine was a crucial element of enjoying MWA. An appreciation of routine was not, however, a guarantee that the placement would be enjoyable: 11 per cent of claimants who enjoyed the routine of attending a placement actually disliked the overall experience of attending MWA.

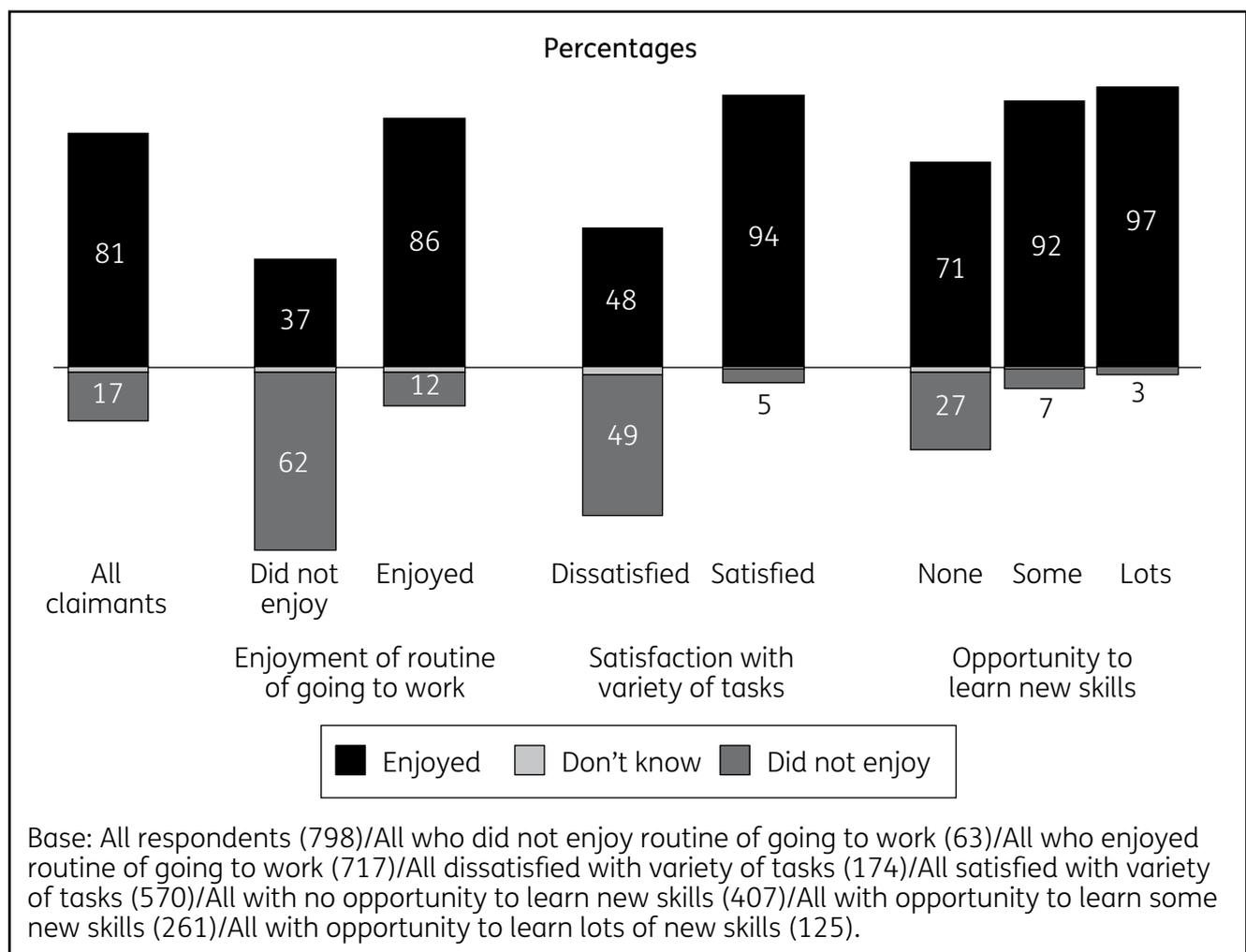
The majority of claimants who took part in the qualitative research said that they had enjoyed their MWA placements, describing how they enjoyed the work environment and the people that they worked with. Of those who took part in the survey, four in five (81 per cent) enjoyed their placement. Women aged 25 or above were more likely (92 per cent) than either their male counterparts (81 per cent) or under-25s of either sex (76 per cent) to find the experience enjoyable. The likelihood of

enjoying a placement was higher than average among claimants who dealt with members of the public (88 per cent), who were tasked with till work or handling money (93 per cent), or who were involved in answering phone calls, letters or emails (94 per cent).

As indicated above, enjoyment was partly linked to an appreciation of a working routine, but it was also associated with the extent to which variety and new skills were on offer during the placement. As illustrated in Figure 4.8, enjoyment was higher than average among claimants who liked the routine of going to work (86 per cent); higher still among those who were satisfied with the degree of variety on offer (94 per cent); and almost universal among claimants who had the opportunity to pick up ‘lots’ of new skills (97 per cent).

Enjoyment was also influenced by a number of other factors. More than half of claimants who were dissatisfied with the workload or responsibility they were given, or who felt under-valued during their placement, did not enjoy the experience (54 per cent, 57 per cent and 54 per cent, respectively, compared with 17 per cent overall). It is worth reiterating, however, that claimants who did not enjoy a working routine were the most likely of all to say they did not enjoy the placement (62 per cent).

Figure 4.8 Factors associated with enjoyment of placement



4.7.4 Rating of placement

As discussed in Section 3.11, three in five claimants (61 per cent) felt positive about the prospect of their placement at the time of referral. By the end of the placement, the proportion who felt positive about the placement had risen to 74 per cent.

Claimants who had never received a sanction were more positive about the experience of being on a placement than those with a history of four or more sanctions (79 per cent versus 61 per cent). Moreover women, regardless of age, were more likely to view the experience positively than men (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Positivity towards placement after completion, termination or withdrawal

	Total %	Men < 25 %	Men 25+ %	Women < 25 %	Women 25+ %
Positive (net)	74	74	68	81	83
Negative (net)	19	21	22	17	11
Very positive	27	28	22	36	32
Positive	47	46	46	46	51
Neither positive nor negative	6	5	8	3	6
Negative	10	12	10	9	8
Very negative	9	9	11	7	3
Don't know	1	-	2	-	-
<i>Base</i>	798	283	278	109	128

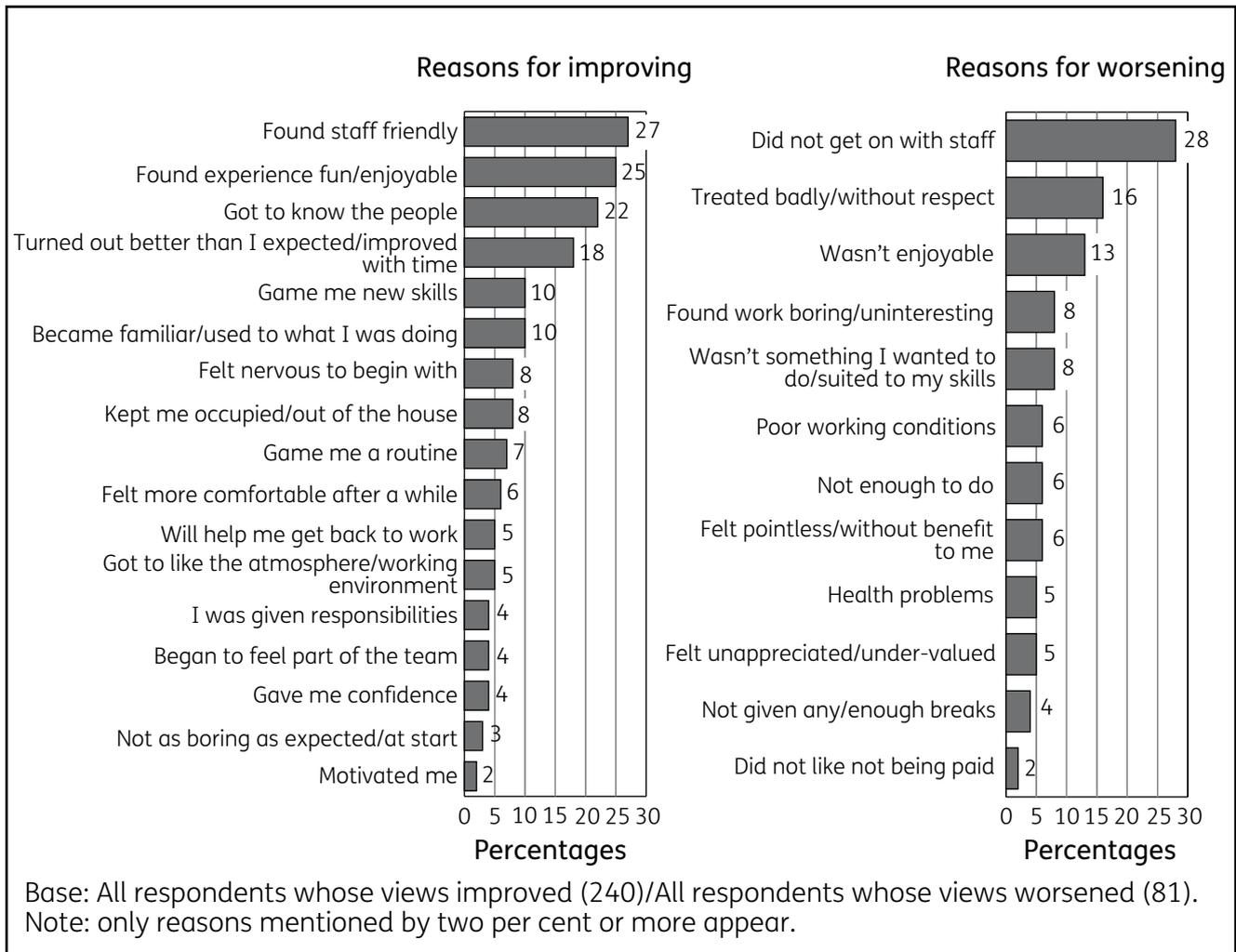
The fact that more claimants felt positive about the placement after it had ended than before starting indicates that the experience of attending can sometimes prompt claimants to change their minds. This was also observed in the qualitative research, where the hosts interviewed commonly reported that while many claimants lacked enthusiasm at the start, most became more positive across the duration of their placement. Indeed, as described below, this often reflected an increase in confidence rather than necessarily a change in their attitude to work, with many '*coming out of their shells*' as they settled in and got to know their colleagues. However, in some cases claimants' views were more intractable – with those who were considered not wanting to work, or to work for nothing, at the outset being less likely to change their views over time.

According to the survey, one in ten claimants (11 per cent) began with negative feelings and maintained this view until the placement was over, while another 54 per cent reported that they set off feeling positive about the placement and continued to feel positive afterwards. The views of most of the remaining claimants were transformed during the course of the placement. One in five claimants (19 per cent) went from feeling negative or neutral to feeling positive. This was particularly common among claimants aged 25 or over (21 per cent), and especially women in that age range (25 per cent). A further eight per cent went from feeling positive or neutral to feeling negative.

When asked directly whether their feelings about the placement had changed, two in five claimants who took part in the survey (40 per cent) said they had revised their views during the four week period. Over a quarter (28 per cent, rising to 35 per cent among 18 and 19 year-olds) reported that their views of the placement had improved, citing a variety of reasons which included getting over

initial confidence barriers (Figure 4.9). Conversely, one in ten (11 per cent) reported that their views had worsened, most commonly because of a poor relationship with staff. Claimants who had never been in work were twice as likely as the average claimant to say that their views had deteriorated during the course of the placement (21 per cent).

Figure 4.9 Reasons why views about placement changed



4.8 Attendance and completion

Not all claimants referred on to MWA completed the full period of their placement, with some FTA on the first day and others withdrawing or having their placement terminated before completing the full four weeks. The qualitative research collected information from hosts on cases of FTA, but the survey only included claimants who had started their placement and therefore, did not cover claimants FTA on the first day. Both the survey and qualitative interviews indicate that most attrition from the MWA placements occurs in the first few days of the placement, and that rates of non-completion gradually diminish thereafter. The survey also collected data on the reasons for non-completion and placement extensions.

4.8.1 Fail to attend

Levels of FTA for the first day of placement reported by the hosts interviewed in the qualitative research varied between zero and 70 per cent (one case), although the majority reported 100 per cent attendance or very low levels of FTA. One charity shop reported that around one in five individuals dropped out during their placements, in all cases due to FTA (*‘they just don’t turn up one day’*) rather than due to any issues of behaviour or discipline.

The hosts had little knowledge of why individuals failed to attend, and it appeared that if an individual did not attend the first day of their placement few of the hosts interviewed attempted to re-start the same placement again.

From the providers’ perspective, even though there were cases where failing to attend for the first day of their placement and subsequent ‘in-placement drop-out’ levels were high, MWA claimants overall were seen as being no more problematic than others attending similar provision previously.

4.8.2 Non completion

While the survey provides no evidence on the prevalence of FTAs on the first day of the placement, it gives a clear indication of completion rates. Four in five claimants who took part in the survey (80 per cent) completed the full period of their placement, around one in six (16 per cent) withdrew early and a further four per cent terminated their placement.

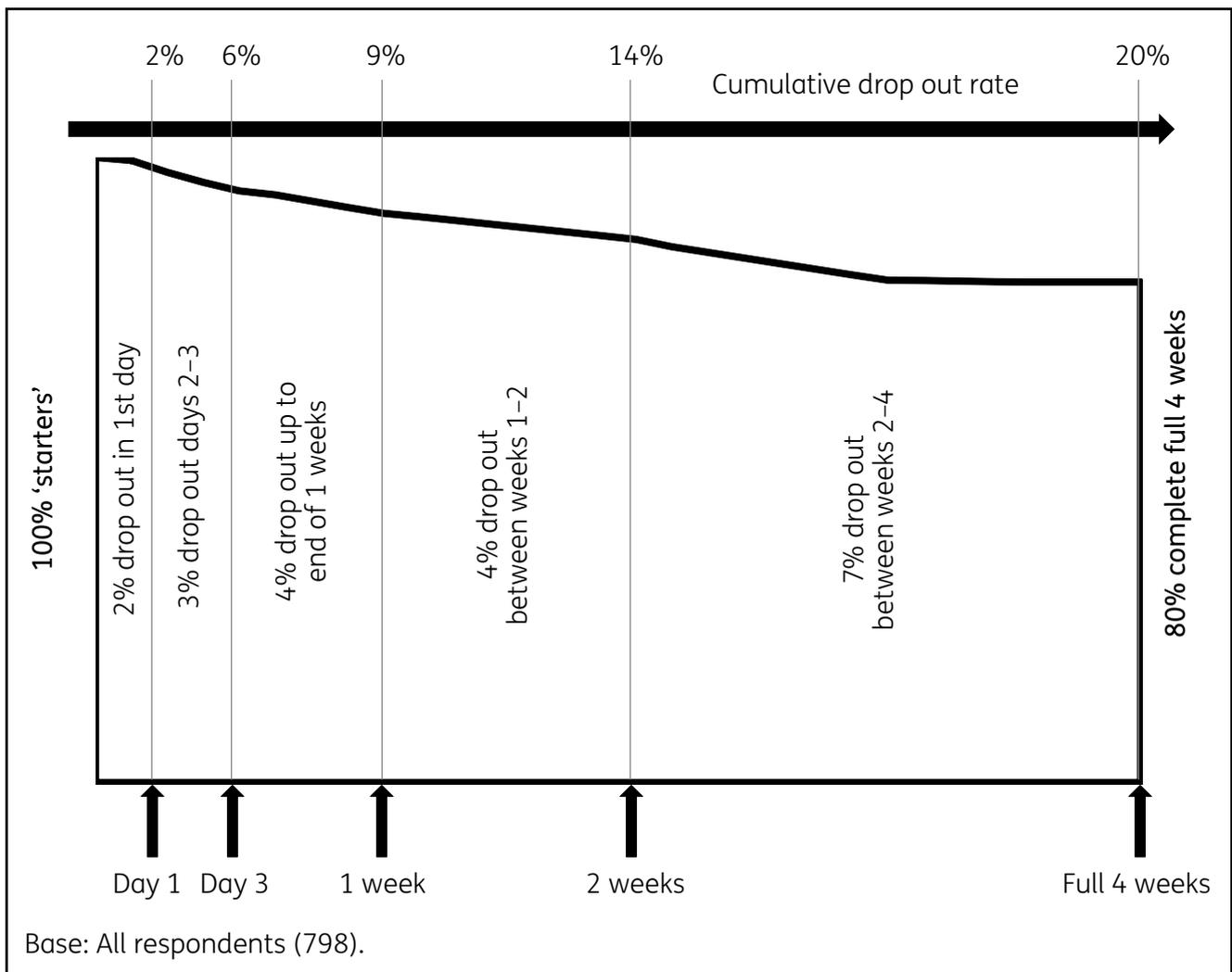
Non-completion tended to happen in the early days of the placement (Figure 4.10). Almost half (47 per cent) of the claimants who stopped attending their placement had left by the end of the first week. A further one in five non-completers (21 per cent) had dropped out by the end of the second week.

While the non-completion rate across all claimants was 20 per cent, some groups were more likely than others to fail to complete their placement. Specifically, non-completion was rare among women aged 25 or above (nine per cent) but relatively high among 18 and 19 year-olds (31 per cent), those who felt negative about the prospect of the placement before beginning (31 per cent) and claimants who believed the placement would not be suitable for them before they began (30 per cent). Dropping out was even more common among claimants who felt the placement was poorly organised (37 per cent) or who struggled with the routine of going to work (43 per cent). The claimants most likely to drop out of their placement were those who felt under-valued (47 per cent) or whose feelings about the placement deteriorated while they were attending (48 per cent).

The qualitative research offered additional perspectives on completion rates. The majority of hosts reported that, once referred and a placement offer had been made there were high levels of completion among their MWA placements. Indeed, several reported that once claimants had attended for the first day or couple of days, they tended to stick with and complete their placements. Several hosts described being impressed by the level of attendance which exceeded their expectations for this client group.

Most commonly hosts reported either ‘a few’ or ‘one or two’ placements had not completed, with the issues for this ranging from behaviour issues and poor timekeeping. Others simply stopped attending, and in all cases the hosts informed their provider. However, a handful of hosts reported higher drop-out rates.

Claimants who took part in the survey were asked to give the reasons why they stopped attending. One in five non-completers (19 per cent) did so because they had found work or received a job offer. Although this reason was given by only a small number of claimants, making base sizes too small for statistical analysis, the data indicates that this may be more common among claimants who had been out of work for less than a year.

Figure 4.10 Timings when claimants withdrew/terminated their placements

While the non-completion rate across all claimants was 20 per cent, some groups were more likely to drop out. The most common explanation for dropping out after starting the placement was illness or injury (mentioned by 36 per cent of those who failed to complete) although it is unclear whether this was linked to the placement. Other reasons related to family circumstances (seven per cent) or not enjoying the placement, specifically the work (seven per cent), the people (five per cent) or the hours (three per cent). Five per cent mentioned that there was not enough work at the placement, four per cent that they left to take up training or a course, and nine per cent that they were asked to leave.

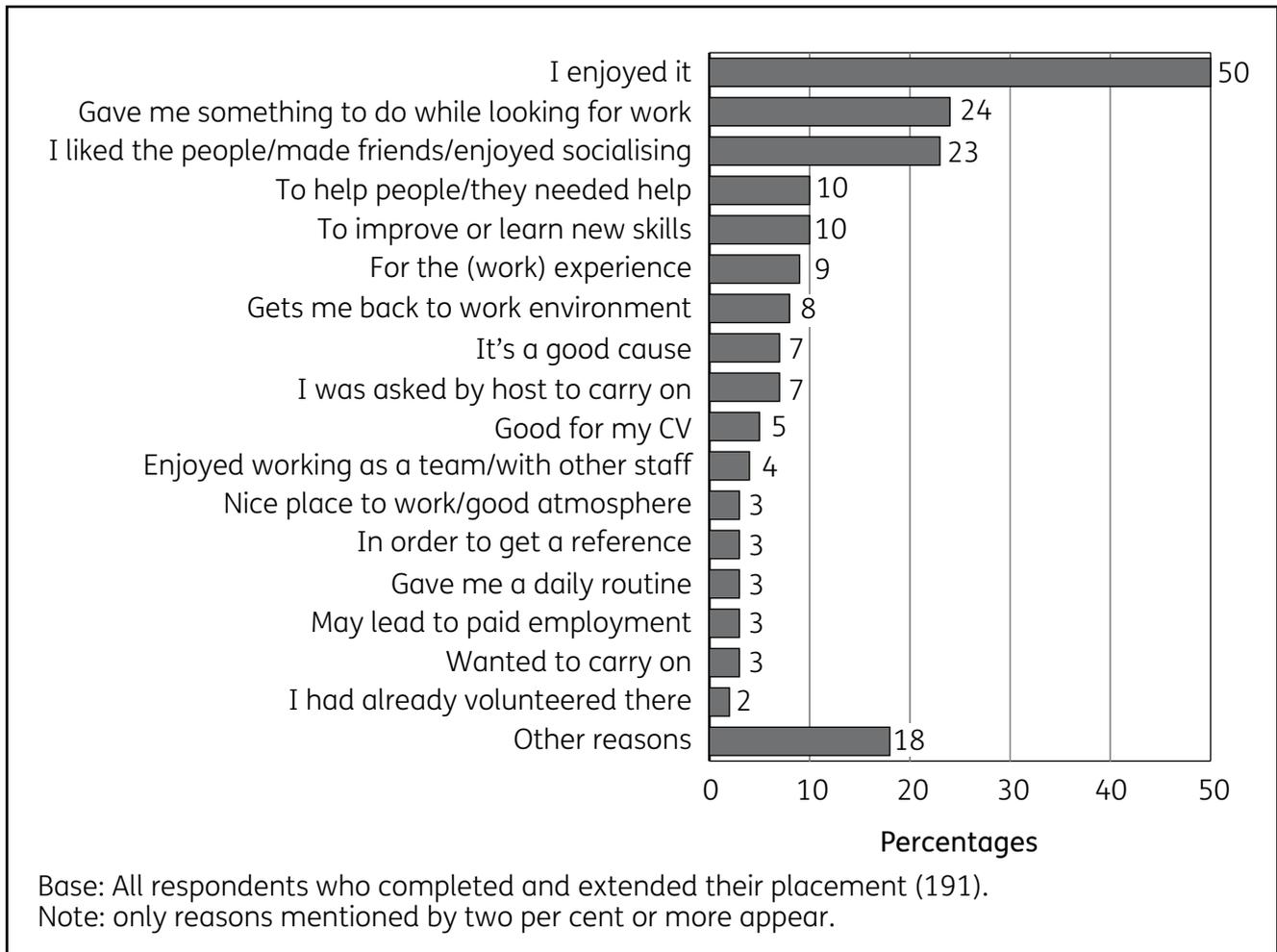
The link between reasons for non-completion and application of sanctions is discussed in Section 5.7.

4.9 Post placement volunteering and attending multiple placements

Almost a quarter of claimants (24 per cent, the equivalent of 30 per cent of all who completed the full four weeks) choose to continue as a volunteer with the host after the end of their initial placement. Among claimants who completed their placement, more women (35 per cent) than men (28 per cent) had extended their placement in this way. Claimants who completed but felt the placement was too short were more likely than average to opt for an extension (40 per cent), while those who completed but had never been in work were less likely than average to do so (23 per cent).

One per cent of all who extended did so in order to make up for absences during the four-week period. Other reasons mentioned by those who extended their placement are shown in Figure 4.11.

Figure 4.11 Reasons for post placement volunteering



Among the remaining claimants who completed their placement there was an even split between those who considered extending but never did (34 per cent of all completers) and those who never considered extending (35 per cent of all completers). No subgroups stood out as being particularly likely to dismiss the notion of extending without considering it.

5 Impacts from mandation and sanctions

5.1 Introduction

The mandatory aspect of Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) and the application of sanctions are central to the design of the programme. Claimants who fail to attend or withdraw from a placement before completing the full four weeks without a good reason for doing so risk losing a part or all of their Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) payments for a set period time. This chapter explores the impact that mandation, and specifically the threat of sanctions, has on claimants including off-flow – that is the propensity to stop claiming JSA as a result of being referred to and/or attending MWA.

Findings are taken from both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the evaluation as well as early impact analysis carried out by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

5.2 Impact of Mandatory Work Activity on off-flow

Prior to the current evaluation an early impact analysis was carried out in June 2012 by DW. Their report considering the short-term benefit outcomes of claimants referred to MWA during May 2011 and July 2011.

This analysis found that within the first three months a referral to MWA reduced the likelihood of receiving benefit compared a control group of claimants who were not referred to MWA. However, this impact diminished between three and five month point after referral. The report concluded that the benefit impact over the first 21 weeks equates to individual referred to MWA being off benefit for an average of about four days more than if they had not been referred to programme¹¹.

In addition, the analysis focused on a rather narrow definition of outcome, namely receipt of benefit. The current research assesses a wider range of measures including claimants' own perceptions of the impact on likelihood of finding paid work, likelihood of meeting the conditions of their JSA claim as well as 'softer' impacts, for example, on their personal confidence and ability to work as part of a team.

The rest of this chapter assesses impact as measured by the survey of claimants and the qualitative research. It should be noted that since the survey of claimants did not include a control group it is difficult to attribute off-flow and progression into paid work directly to MWA. However, it is possible to draw tentative conclusions as all claimants in the survey were asked directly whether they felt the MWA placement had had an effect on both their motivation to come off JSA and to follow the conditions of their JSA claim.

Work outcomes, including whether claimants had worked since the end of their placement and whether they were working at the time of the survey, are covered separately in Chapter 6.

¹¹ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc_analysis/index.php?page=adhoc_analysis_2012_q2

5.3 Perceptions of effect on off-flow among advisers

Jobcentre Plus management and staff interviewed in the qualitative research were consistently positive about the potential value of MWA. It was viewed as a useful addition to the portfolio of options they had to work with. The difficulties with delivery identified in some of the case study districts should not detract from the potential of the programme – *‘there’s not a lot, not to like’* (Personal Adviser).

One of the main impacts from MWA quoted by Jobcentre Plus staff and providers was the impact on off-flows; the proportion of claimants who signed-off following the introduction of MWA to them or their referral to a placement. A number of possible explanations were given as to why people signed-off:

- They had found a job – MWA may have been the spur to take a job that they might previously have been reluctant to pursue. For others, where there was a significant delay between the referral and the start-date, it is very plausible that claimants found a job in the interim.
- They had another source of income – for example, from a partner or from relatives (young people living at home with their parents were specifically mentioned), or they could have been working and signing.
- A tactical move – signing off before the start of their placement rather than attending MWA without realising that they would be re-referred when re-signing. Only a few of these cases were mentioned by staff, and had led to the claimant being re-referred to MWA.

The interpretation of sign-off data needs to be explored closely. The most recent statistical review of MWA showed that the majority of those who had signed-off had subsequently signed-on again. Given the explanations above, it is possible to see how the impact of MWA on people signing-off may not have been sustainable. For example, in today’s labour market, those who had signed-off because they had found work could quite plausibly have found themselves signing-on again after being laid-off or having only found temporary work in the first case. Similarly, for those working and signing or able to pick-up casual work, their ability to sustain this income over time will have been affected by the overall economic climate. If people do sign-off and then re-sign some months later, this is still a positive outcome if they were in work in the interim.

5.4 Claimants views on sign-off prior to Mandatory Work Activity start

The qualitative research with claimants who were yet to start their placements did not capture any candidates who had signed-off rather than take-up an MWA placement. A number of reasons were offered:

- People could not afford to sign-off, rather, concern about losing benefits did play a role in people’s commitment to taking up their MWA placement.
- They thought it was not unreasonable for people ‘to work for their benefits’.
- They appreciated the opportunity of a work experience placement, the chance to re-engage with the world of work and to re-fresh their CV/skills.

As part of qualitative research, claimants who had started were also interviewed at their placement and asked if they would have considered signing-off rather than going on an MWA placement. None of the respondents said that they would have signed-off. It was made clear that they could not

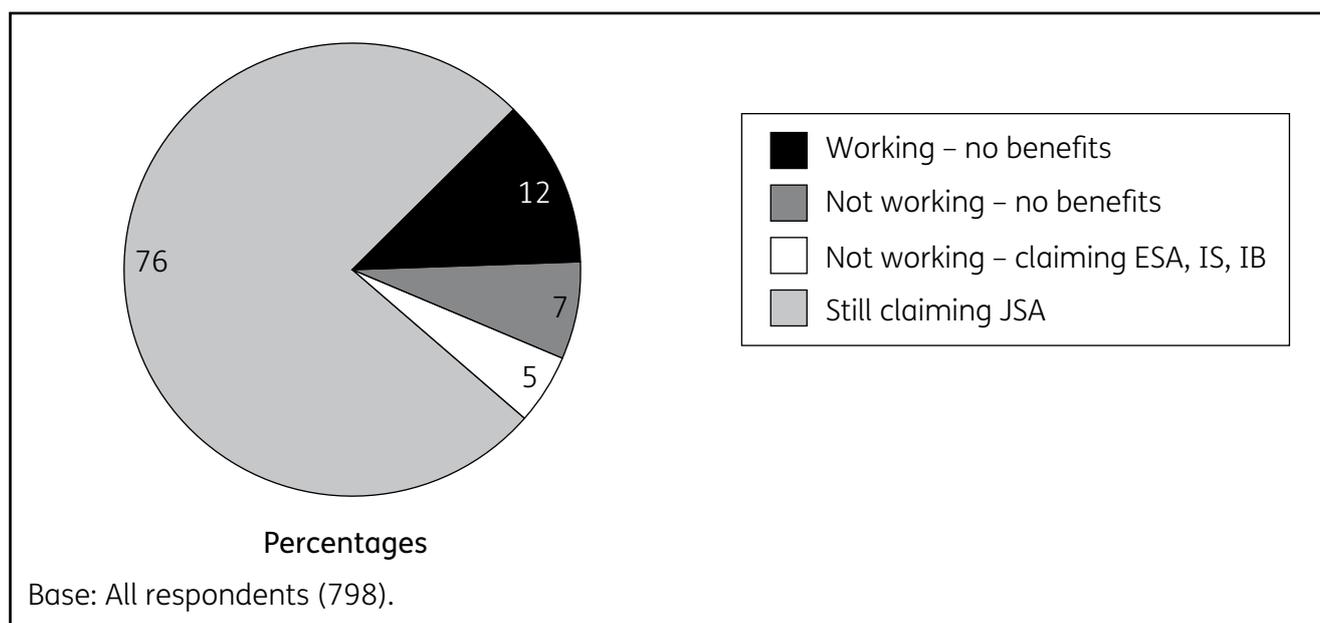
afford to sign-off – they had no other source of income. From the qualitative telephone interviews, only two respondents suggested that they had thought about whether they should sign-off but had decided not to – again because of their on-going need to claim benefits.

5.5 Evidence of off-flow among starters

As the survey of claimants only included those who had actually started an MWA placement, it cannot provide a perspective on off-flow prior to start. However, it is possible to look at the claimants claiming behaviour at the time of the survey to assess how many had off-flowed since completing or leaving an MWA placement.

As shown in Figure 5.1 the majority of claimants were still on JSA at the time of the survey with around a quarter (24 per cent) having off-flowed, although not all of these had stopped claiming benefits altogether. Most positively the 12 per cent of all claimants were in paid work at the time of the survey had stopped claiming any type of benefit (other than Carers’ Allowance). A further five per cent of all claimants were claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support (IS) or Incapacity Benefit (IB) and were not working, with the remaining seven per cent not working not claiming any of these benefits.

Figure 5.1 Summary of off-flow as measured by claimants survey



Of those who were not working at the time of the survey but were claiming a benefit other than JSA, most were claiming ESA. In fact four per cent of all surveyed claimants were claiming this at the time they were interviewed. This suggests there is a small but significant flow between JSA and ESA among claimants who are referred to MWA – although it is unclear whether this is a consequence of attending MWA. It is possible that being referred to a MWA placement that is unsuitable due to disability, illness or injury may prompt some claimants to apply for ESA but the survey does not provide conclusive evidence on this.

Positive outcomes were more prevalent among claimants who had been claiming benefits for a shorter period of time suggesting that MWA is most effective among those who are less entrenched in the benefits system.

Claimants can be divided into four equal size groups (or quartiles) depending on the number of days they had been claiming benefits in the five years leading up to the survey. As shown in Table 5.1 those who had been claiming for the longest period of time (fourth quartile) were the least likely to have off-flowed (86 per cent were still claiming JSA), the least likely to be working (three per cent). In contrast, they were more likely than other groups to have off-flowed but started to have claimed ESA, IS or IB (eight per cent).

Positive outcomes were more prevalent in the first and second quartiles (those who had claimed benefits for less than 818 days in the last five years). Among these two groups 29 per cent had off-flowed and around one in five were actually in paid work at the time of the survey.

Table 5.1 Off-flow and destinations among claimants

	Number of days on benefits in last five years (quartiles ¹)				
	Total %	(1) %	(2) %	(3) %	(4) %
Still claiming JSA	76	71	71	78	86
Working (off-flowed and not claiming)	12	19	18	9	3
Not working (off-flowed and not claiming)	7	8	8	8	4
Not working (off-flowed JSA but claiming ESA, IS or IB)	5	3	4	5	8
'Complete' off-flow (not claiming JSA, ESA, IS or IB)	19	26	26	17	7
<i>Base</i>	798	200	200	198	200

¹ Quartile (1) included those who had claimed benefits for up to 355 days in the last five years, quartile (2) 356 to 817 days, quartile (3) 818 to 1,351 days and quartile (4) more than 1,351 days.

There are also differences in off-flow rates by age and gender, with claimants aged under 25 being more likely to have off-flowed than those age 25 and over (28 per cent were not claiming JSA at the time of the survey compared with 21 per cent). Similarly, men were slightly more likely to have off-flowed than women (25 per cent compared with 21 per cent) with younger men (aged under 25) being among the most likely to have left JSA (29 per cent had off-flowed). However, differences in age and gender are mainly attributable to the proportion of claimants who had found paid work, with younger claimants and men the most likely to be working at the time of the survey. Impact on jobsearch and employment are dealt with in detail in Chapter 6.

The following section looks at claimants' perceptions of whether MWA had an impact on the motivation to off-flow.

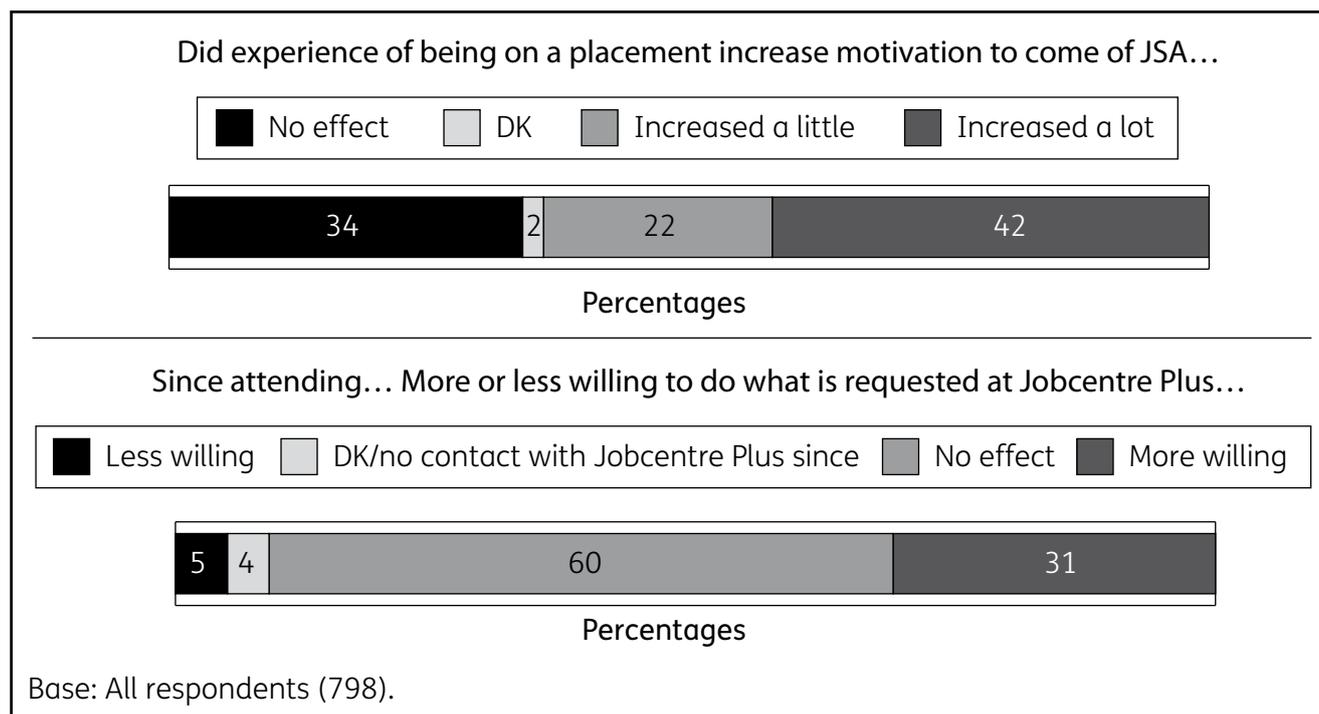
5.6 Claimants views on sign off after starting Mandatory Work Activity

Claimants in the quantitative survey were asked:

- Did the experience of being on a placement increase your motivation to come off Jobseeker's Allowance?; and
- Since attending a placement have you felt [...] more or less willing to do what is requested of you at Jobcentre Plus?

The survey findings for both questions are summarised in Figure 5.2 and suggest that MWA had a net positive impact on both measures. On balance the experience of starting MWA appears to have more of an effect on claimants' motivation to come off JSA than it has their willingness to do what is requested by Jobcentre Plus (the latter being a measure of the willingness to comply with the conditions of their JSA claim).

Figure 5.2 Effect of MWA on motivation to off-flow/follow Jobcentre Plus conditions



Two-thirds (64 per cent) of all claimants who had started a placement said that their motivation to come off JSA had increased either a lot or a little as a result of their experience, with half (34 per cent) saying there had been no effect. Most encouragingly, nearly half of all claimants said they felt their motivation to come off JSA had increased a little.

Notably increases in motivation to come off JSA were evident in all groups of claimants regardless of whether or not they were still claiming JSA at the time of the survey. For example, 62 per cent of those who were no longer claiming JSA at the time of the survey said that MWA had increased their motivation to off-flow, but the proportion was actually the same (64 per cent) among those who were still claiming.

Furthermore, although a large proportion felt there had been a positive impact on their motivation to come off JSA there was little evidence that level of motivation (in itself) increased off-flow. This is not unexpected as whether a claimant stops claiming will be a product of many factors including economic and social factors (such as the availability of jobs) over which the claimant has little or no control. As shown in Table 5.2, those who said MWA had increased their motivation to off-flow were only marginally more likely to have come off JSA (23 per cent compared with 20 per cent of those who said that MWA had no effect on their motivation). Further this difference is mainly associated with the proportion who were specifically working (13 per cent compared with nine per cent). Differences in motivation to find work are dealt with in the next chapter of the report.

Table 5.2 Off-flow and motivation to leave JSA

	Total %	Motivation increased to come off JSA %	No effect %
Still claiming JSA	76	77	80
Working (off-flowed and not claiming)	12	13	9
Not working (off-flowed and not claiming)	7	5	6
Not working (off-flowed JSA but claiming ESA, IS or IB)	5	4	5
'Complete' off-flow (not claiming JSA, ESA, IS or IB)	19	19	15
<i>Base</i>	<i>798</i>	<i>506</i>	<i>175</i>

Both motivation to come off JSA and willingness to do what is required from Jobcentre Plus varied by age with younger claimants, and specifically those aged under 25, being more positive than older claimants. Analysis of the survey data suggests this not purely an artefact of benefit history (i.e. that older claimants tend to be more entrenched in the benefit system having claimed JSA for longer).

As shown in Table 5.3 three-quarters (74 per cent) of those aged under 25 said that their motivation to come off JSA had increased a lot compared with only around a third (36 per cent) of claimants aged 25 and older. In fact 50 per cent of those aged under 25 said that their motivation had increased a lot. Conversely, only a quarter of those aged under 25 said that their experience had no effect on their motivation to come off.

Differences in willingness to do what Jobcentre Plus requires were less pronounced but again the proportion of under 25s who said they were more willing as a result of MWA was higher than those aged 25 and over (36 per cent and 27 per cent respectively).

These age differences are interesting and should be seen in the context of the wider survey results. For example, as described in Chapter 4, a discussion of how advisers positioned MWA to claimants suggests that advisers are more likely to make links between MWA and the chances of finding paid work explicit to younger claimants.

Table 5.3 Motivation to leave JSA and comply with Jobcentre Plus conditions

	Total %	Under 25s %	25+ %
Whether experience of placement(s) increased motivation to come off JSA			
Yes – increased a lot	41	50	36
Yes – increased a little	22	24	21
No effect	34	26	39
Don't know	3	1	4
How felt about doing what is required at Jobcentre Plus, since placement(s)			
More willing to do what is requested of you at the Jobcentre	31	36	27
No difference	60	53	65
Less willing to do what is requested of you at the Jobcentre	5	6	4
Don't know/no contact with Jobcentre Plus since placement	4	5	3
<i>Base</i>	798	392	406

5.7 Sanctions

5.7.1 Sanctions as a motivating factor to start MWA

As described at the start of this chapter, the mandatory element of MWA and the potential loss of benefit are fundamental to the design of the programme. The sanctions process is, therefore, a critical element of successful delivery.

Sanctions had an important role to play in why claimants interviewed as part of the qualitative research had participated. Nearly all said that the threat of sanctions had a significant influence on their decision to participate in MWA, and none wanted to give up their benefits to avoid going on the placement. As one claimant explained:

'It does play a big role 'cos like now I pretty much have to go. You've got pretty much no choice – it has played a big role. I still would have gone just for personal help but because I am doing the mandatory work I'm still going back there to get a reference. Them saying it was mandatory did play a big part in it.'

(Starter, Non-Trailblazer District)

Two claimants described how the threat of sanctions had made them think differently about claiming JSA, although both did start their placements:

'The threat of sanctions did have an impact on whether I participated in the scheme and it did make me think I should come off benefits.'

(Starter, Non-Trailblazer District)

'It did make me think about signing off.'

(Starter, Trailblazer District)

In addition, there were a couple of cases where claimants who had been sanctioned before did not want to experience losing their benefits again, for example:

'I was sanctioned before. If you don't go on your money will be stopped.'

(Starter, Trailblazer District)

5.7.2 Application of sanctions as a result of non-completion

Sanctions may be applied either for failing to turn up to the work placement or for gross misconduct while on placement. As shown in Table 5.4, while the majority (80 per cent) of claimants interviewed as part of the survey did complete the full four weeks, one in five failed to do so (20 per cent). It was more common for claimants to have withdrawn early from MWA (taking themselves out of the process) rather than for their placement to have been terminated by the placement provider or host.

Claimants who did not complete the full four weeks were asked why this was the case. The results from this question are discussed in detail in the previous chapter but are also presented in Table 6.4 for reference, divided into three categories to assist with the analysis on the application of sanctions – i.e. those not completing for:

- 'positive' reasons – ostensibly because they were offered paid work or started some form of training;
- 'negative' reasons – stopping because they did not like some aspect of the placement; or due to
- 'extenuating' circumstances – failure to complete because of illness, injury or some other personal factor.

Table 5.4 provides a breakdown of the reasons given for non-completion both for all respondents (all 798 claimants who took part in the survey) and for all who did not complete.

We cannot be certain that claimants were truthful about the reasons for non-completion but, on face value, those who offered extenuating circumstances or positive reasons for non-completion probably should not have been sanctioned. As discussed previously, sanctions are generally only applied where a valid reason for non-completion is not provided.

Nevertheless, this leaves a quarter (24 per cent) of all non-completers who claimed not to have completed the four week placement for more negative reasons – most commonly because they were asked to leave (nine per cent), they did not like the work (seven per cent) or because they did not like the people/staff (five per cent). In many of these cases a sanction may have been appropriate.

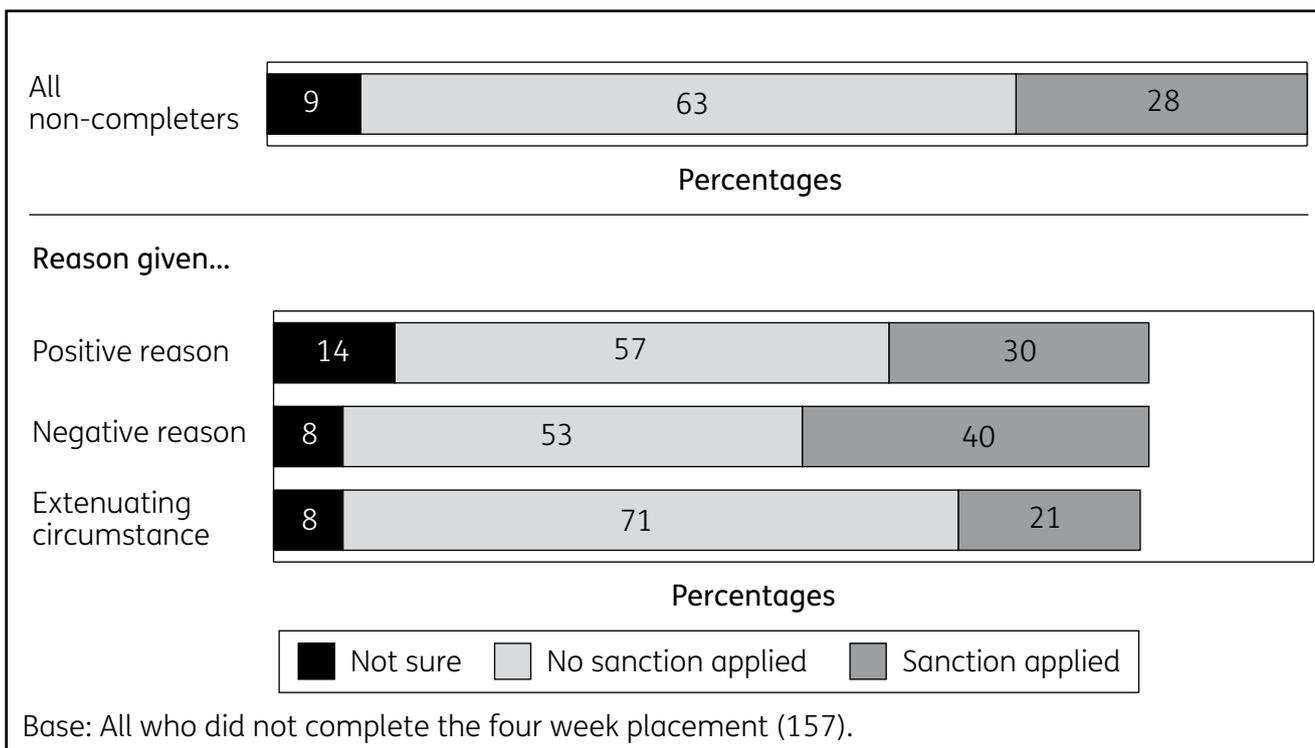
Table 5.4 Non-completion rates and reasons for withdrawal/termination

	Total %	All who did not complete %
Completed four weeks	80	–
Did not complete (net)	20	–
Withdrew	16	–
Terminated	4	–
Reasons for non-completion		
Positive (net)	5	24
Paid work	4	19
Training	1	4
Negative (net)	5	24
Was asked to leave	2	9
Did not like work	1	7
Did not like people/staff	1	5
Did not like hours	1	3
Benefits stopped/reduced	*	2
Did not like travelling/journey	*	1
Wasn't beneficial to me/my jobsearch	*	1
Extenuating circumstances (net)	9	46
Illness or injury	7	36
Family circumstances	1	7
Lack of work/too many people on placement	1	5
<i>Base</i>	798	157

5.8 Prevalence of sanctions for non-completion

Consistent with views expressed in the qualitative research (summarised later in this chapter) the application of sanctions for non-completion appeared to be inconsistent among the survey respondents. Just over one in four who did not complete their placement reported being sanctioned as a result – which meant that just below three-quarters of those who did not complete were not aware or did not report being sanctioned. This could be because they were not referred for a sanction (i.e. a Decision Making and Appeals (DMA) referral was not raised by the provider) or because it was decided a sanction should not be applied even though a referral had been made.

On first inspection this suggests that sanctions are rarely applied, but it is important to note that the survey only included claimants who had actually started a placement and does not, therefore, record sanctions that were applied for failing to start a placement. Also, the survey findings rely on self-reported experience of sanctions. Equally, not all non-completers would have been eligible for sanctioning. As discussed in the previous section, large proportions of non-completers said they didn't finish their placement either because of extenuating circumstances or for a positive reason (such as being offered paid work). Many of these may not have been eligible for sanctioning, and of course those who moved into paid work would off-flow from JSA at that point.

Figure 5.3 Self-reported experience of sanctions by reason for non-completion

However, the application of sanctions as reported by the claimant was fairly uncommon among all non-completers regardless of the reason given for not completing. As shown in Figure 5.3, even among those who withdrew because of negative reasons (primarily because they were asked to leave or because they didn't like some aspect of the placement) only four in ten (39 per cent) had reported being sanctioned. While we cannot say definitively it seems likely that sanctions should have been applied in a greater number of cases.

5.9 Inconsistency in the application of sanctions

Overall, the survey suggests that some claimants who fail to comply with MWA are doing so without consequence. Given that the application of sanctions is critical to many of the goals of MWA it is important that this is addressed.

The qualitative research supports this picture of the inconsistent application of sanctions. Despite the importance of the sanctions process to MWA, there was a commonly held view across all those interviewed that the DMA process was not effective. Jobcentre Plus staff mentioned that they knew of individuals who were referred to MWA, did not attend or finished early, and for whom no DMA had been raised. There was a perception among advisers that the providers were 'disinclined' to make DMA referrals. Jobcentre Plus staff consistently mentioned that there was a difference in their perception of the volume of fail to attend/no starts/early leavers they encountered and the number of DMAs that had been raised.

'It has almost become a bluff now; that if we send someone and they say they don't want to go, they will sign off; if they say they are not going, we do not know if anything will happen as a result' i.e. that a sanction process will be started.'

(Adviser, Trailblazer)

‘... word gets around that the sanction is not being put into practice.’

(District Office Manager, Trailblazer)

Four possible reasons were offered by district and Jobcentre staff for the difference between perceived levels of non-compliance and DMAs raised:

- Providers were paid for starts only – there is no incentive to classify an individual as a fail to attend (FTA) and to start the DMA process.
- The volume of FTAs was higher than anticipated. While an estimate of the cost to providers of the DMA process was built into the contract, the number of cases to be processed was much higher than anticipated.
- Providers were unable to assess whether someone who had failed to and since signed off benefit. If they raise a doubt and that person had signed-off then this was a waste of time and costly.
- Some providers complained that the DMA process is complex and resource intensive because the requirement for accurate and full documentation can be challenging. Suggestions were made that provider staff probably needed additional training on the process. In addition, issues were raised about inconsistency in evidence requirements between different DMA offices, which apparently has since been addressed.¹²

One of the providers who had said that the levels of FTA were much higher than anticipated was working with their local Jobcentre Plus district office to address the question of whether a referral to DMA was needed or not. The provider sent through lists of MWA referrals who had not attended their initial induction interview; the district office then checked whether these individuals had indeed signed-off or whether they should be categorised as an FTA and have DMA paperwork completed. This process had only recently started at the time of the interview and so whether it was effective or not is unknown. It does, however, illustrate that the burden of raising a sanction for FTAs was a real issue for the provider, and that local collaboration has the potential to provide a solution.

Under MWA ‘signing-off’ for a short period and then signing-on again as a rapid re-claim, as a tactic to avoid having to take-up an MWA placement, was likely to be unsuccessful. A record of referral to MWA was held on an individual’s record and if they then signed-on again, guidance states that they should be immediately re-referred to MWA unless the original reason for referral has changed (e.g. the customer is more engaged with job search). This was indeed the case in the few examples offered by advisers of individuals signing off and then back on again. However, in one district, a loop-hole or flaw in this system was identified. Apparently, if someone was referred to MWA and failed to attend, and was referred for a DMA but signed-off before a decision was handed down, they could then sign back on again and could not be re-referred to MWA while the initial decision was still outstanding.¹³

Another issue raised by Jobcentre Plus was whether sanctions had been applied appropriately. In several cases staff referred to examples where, in their view, claimants appeared to have been referred for DMA for failing to attend when either they were not aware of their placement start or where miscommunication between the host and provider led to sanctions being applied for where a reasonable explanation had been provided for their failure to attend. Feedback from claimants

¹² Since the study DMA has been centralised for all MWA referrals. The centralised team supply updates on the outcomes of referrals to providers. In addition, providers are able to check with local Jobcentre Plus offices on updated benefit status to avoid unnecessary DMA referral work.

¹³ NB: This loop has subsequently been addressed.

interviewed in the qualitative research also generated examples where sanctions had been, in their view, inappropriately applied – for example, when claimants were unable to attend their placement due to unexpected medical appointments or childcare needs. The DMA process also flagged up some of the issues within DWP/Jobcentre Plus about communication silos between different lines of business commands; specifically in relation to advisers trying to find out who/if someone had been referred for a decision and that individual's status.

One district manager suggested that the discretionary decision about whether to refer for a sanction should be taken away from providers. In his view the process needs to be simplified and streamlined – possibly by giving Jobcentre Plus advisers the responsibility to refer for sanctions (if they have access to real time FTA data). *'If the customer has been clearly informed and does not attend, a sanction should be imposed and the decision-making process streamlined to ensure this is done swiftly'* (District Manager, Trailblazer District). The general tenor of views on the sanctions process would certainly support action to simplify, streamline and speed-up the process.

From the providers' perspective, each understood that fail to attend at placement start, and FTA/behaviour issues during placement, should result in sanctions. However, most providers showed some degree of discretion/flexibility, such as following up on non-attends at start or issues/instances of non-attendance during placements.

In several cases providers admitted that the referral to placement backlogs experienced had resulted in similar backlogs in DMA referrals. At least one provider implied that it was only at the time of interview that all of their FTAs were being referred to DMA.

Providers' knowledge and understanding of the DMA process varied – with some getting involved in the detail but others referring to central centres who took the process forward. These specialist internal teams reportedly *'know what they are doing'* and 'front-line' staff are called on only if further information on a specific case is needed.

Different providers followed slightly different approaches to DMA referrals, for example:

- In one district where a 'single provider' model was being followed an in-house approach was adopted. Here referrals for DMA are communicated to a centralised national call centre to 'raise a doubt' over an individual and start the DMA process. The call centre then follows-up with the claimant, and if necessary completes a DMA referral. If information on the case is incomplete local staff are then contacted to provide the missing data. This in-house expertise and centralisation of the process was assumed to be efficient and effective as no significant issues had been reported.
- More commonly and where prime and subcontractor models are followed, each provider has responsibility for DMA referrals at different 'stages' of the MWA process – for example, in one district the prime provider was responsible for cases where claimants failed to attend the first day of their placement, with any failure to attend once the placement has started being the responsibility of their subcontractor.

Where directly involved in the process, several providers expressed frustrations as DWP DMA teams would often send referrals back if forms had not been completed correctly – some suggesting that many claims were rejected because of insufficient evidence. In one district an offer was made by DWP to second staff into their subcontractors to lead on DMA processing. Some providers felt that there was a degree of inconsistency in the process – and it was common for provider staff not to know the outcomes of DMA referrals submitted. We are aware that some workshops between providers and Jobcentre Plus DMA teams have been arranged by DWP to address some of these issues.

5.10 Impact of sanctions on claimants' finances and likelihood of future compliance

The survey of claimants included a number of questions specifically for those who had been sanctioned as a result of non-completion of MWA, including the impact of the sanction on their financial situation. As only 42 claimants had experienced a sanction for this reason, the findings presented below are for reference only and should be treated as indicative.

Overall, the findings suggest that many claimants who were sanctioned may have experienced difficulties as a result, with 27 of the 42 claimants stating that they had problems buying everyday essentials as a result of being sanctioned. Further, 36 of the 42 claimed to have taken out a loan as a result with 33 of the 42 claiming to have gone overdrawn.

Whether enforcing sanctions encourages future compliance with the conditions of a JSA claim is unclear. More than half of the 42 claimants who were sanctioned for non-completion of MWA said that the sanction had made no difference to their likelihood of following the rules in future (19 claimants) or that they were less likely to follow the rules in future (five claimants).

6 Impacts from participation

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter looked specifically at the impacts of mandation and sanctions. This final chapter of research findings focuses on impacts that participation had on claimants. The majority of the analysis presented is taken from the quantitative survey of claimants. Where appropriate this is combined with analysis from the qualitative elements including advisers' and placement providers' views of the impact of Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) on claimants.

The first half of the chapter looks at employment outcomes and impacts on claimants' job searches, the second at the impact on claimants' perceptions of their employability as well as other 'softer' impacts – including the impact that attending MWA had on claimants' attitudes towards work generally, their self-confidence and other inter-personal skills.

Throughout, it is important to note that the claimant survey was not designed to measure the direct impact of MWA on employment. Unlike the early impact analysis, the survey did not include a matched control sample so it is not possible to attribute specific outcomes to participation in MWA. However, later analysis of the survey looks at claimants' own perceptions of the impact that MWA had both on their jobsearch and their chances of finding employment.

Analysis of off-flow (i.e. claimants ceasing to claim Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)) is presented separately in the preceding chapter.

6.2 Employment outcomes

Around one in seven claimants (14 per cent) were working at the time of survey (roughly 20 weeks after start) while one in six (16 per cent) had worked at some point since they completed their MWA placement. Unless otherwise stated, the analysis in this section focuses on what claimants were doing at the time of the survey, so in this instance the 14 per cent who were still employed when they were interviewed (some months after being referred to MWA). Positively, most (78 per cent) of those who were in paid work were working full-time¹⁴ rather than part-time (22 per cent).

Table 6.1 summarises claimants' working status at the time of the survey. As well as one in seven who were in paid work nearly one in ten (eight per cent) were in some form of unpaid work (other than MWA), with a further two per cent who had been re-referred and were attending another MWA placement.

¹⁴ Full-time is defined as working 16 or more hours per week.

Table 6.1 Employment since leaving MWA and at the time of the survey

	Number of days on benefits in last five years (quartiles ¹)				
	Total %	(1) %	(2) %	(3) %	(4) %
Whether any paid work since completing MWA					
Yes	16	21	24	14	6
No	83	79	76	86	93
Don't know	*	*	*	*	1
Whether currently in work (paid or unpaid)					
Any work (paid or unpaid)	22	30	30	17	11
Paid work	14	20	19	11	4
Unpaid work	8	10	11	6	7
On another MWA placement	2	3	1	1	2
Not working at all	76	67	69	82	88
<i>Base</i>	798	200	200	198	200

¹ Quartile (1) included those who had claimed benefits for up to 355 days in the last five years, quartile (2) 356 to 817 days, quartile (3) 818 to 1,351 days and quartile (4) more than 1,351 days.

As shown above, employment outcomes varied according to how long claimants had been claiming benefits. Those who had been claiming benefits the longest (fourth quartile) were the least likely to be in paid work at the time of the survey (just four per cent), with a large majority (88 per cent) not working at all. In contrast those who had been claiming benefits for the shortest period (first quartile) were the most likely to be in paid work (20 per cent) with two-thirds (67 per cent) not working at all. Similarly, the length of time claimants had been unemployed was strongly associated with the likelihood of being in paid work at the time of the survey. Those who had been unemployed for 12 months or less were more likely to be in paid work (23 per cent) compared with those who had been unemployed for between one and two years (ten per cent) and those who had been unemployed for more than two years (seven per cent).

However, this should not be regarded as firm evidence that MWA had a bigger impact on employment for those who had been on benefits and unemployed for a shorter period. It is probable that those who had been claiming benefits and unemployed for a relatively short period of time were more likely to have found work even if they had not attended MWA.

Given the link between length of time on benefit and claimant age, it is unsurprising that under 25s were also more likely to be in paid work compared with those age 25 and over (18 per cent and 11 per cent respectively).

6.3 Employed claimants' perceptions of the impact of Mandatory Work Activity

As discussed above, analysis of employment outcomes at the time of the claimants' survey does not offer conclusive evidence of MWA's impact on employability. However, all claimants who were in either paid or unpaid work were asked directly whether or not their MWA placement had helped them find work. Opinion was evenly divided in this group, with roughly half saying that they felt

MWA had helped (46 per cent) and half saying that they thought it had not (49 per cent). If the analysis is limited to those who were in paid work at the time of the survey, the equivalent figures are 34 per cent who felt that MWA had helped them find this and 65 per cent who felt it had not.

This suggests that MWA may have had an effect for a small but important minority of claimants – with the equivalent of six per cent of all surveyed claimants in paid work and feeling that MWA had helped them to find their current position.

As only 175 survey respondents had found work since leaving MWA it is not possible to carry out meaningful sub-group analysis to determine which types of claimant were most likely to feel there was an impact.

6.4 Impact of Mandatory Work Activity on claimants' jobsearch – claimant survey

The measure of impact discussed above was limited to claimants who had found work since leaving MWA. Conversely, all claimants who were yet to find work were asked if they felt more motivated to look for it. The findings in this section are of key importance since one of the stated goals of MWA is to refocus claimants' job search activity.

Overall the findings from the survey are very positive, with two-thirds (64 per cent) of claimants who were still not working agreeing that they felt more motivated to find work, and just 25 per cent disagreeing that this was the case. In fact over two in five of the claimants who took part in the survey agreed strongly that they felt more motivated in this regard (Figure 6.1).

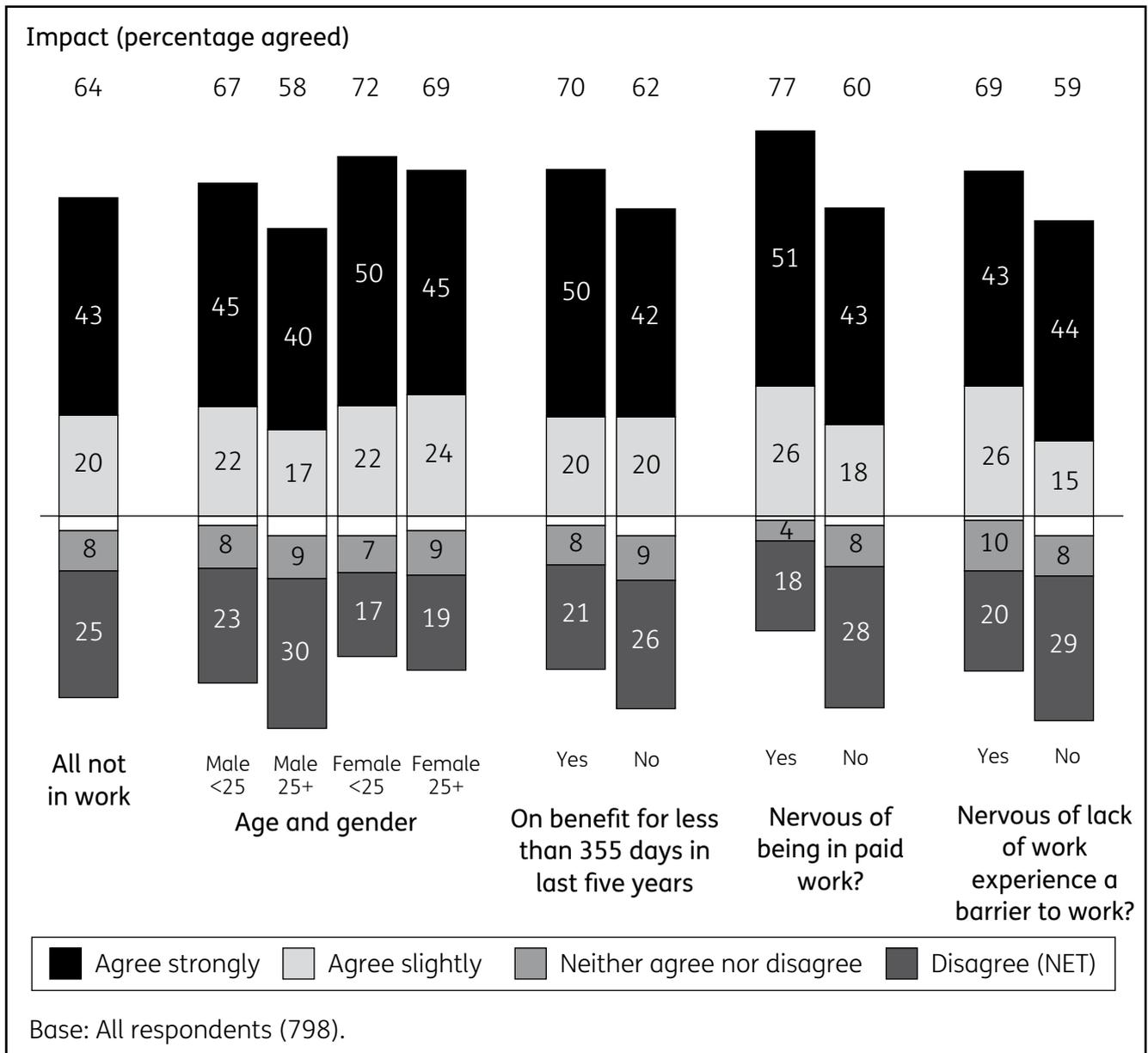
As shown in Figure 6.1 the impact of MWA on claimants' motivation to look for work varied by age and gender, and also by the length of time they had been claiming benefits. Younger claimants (aged under 25) tended to be more positive than those aged 25 and above, with this age difference being most pronounced among men – with older men tending to be the least positive of the four groups shown below. Equally the impact of MWA on claimants' job searches was greatest among those who had been claiming benefits for a short period of time. To illustrate this, those who had been claiming benefits for less than 355 days in the last five years (the lower two benefit quartiles) were more likely to feel more motivated than those who had been claiming for 355 days or above.

It is also interesting to look at variations in motivation depending on what claimants said were barriers for them personally when it came to finding work. Both of the following groups (as shown in Figure 6.1) of claimants tended to feel more motivated as a result of attending than on average:

- ... those who agreed the thought of being in paid work made them nervous;
- ... those who felt their lack of work experience was a barrier to them finding work.

This suggests that MWA may have the greatest impact among those who are most anxious about working and those who feel they do not have sufficient work experience to find a job – some of the key targets for MWA given the policy's aims and objectives.

Figure 6.1 Claimants' perceptions of the impact of MWA on their motivation to find work



In addition to the differences discussed above, and as might be expected, those who said they enjoyed the experience of attending MWA were more likely to feel more motivated to look for work. This suggests that having a positive experience on MWA may lead to more positive outcomes for the claimant. In fact, 71 per cent of those who enjoyed their placement felt more motivated compared with 25 per cent of those who did not enjoy it (almost three times the number).

As well as asking about motivation to find work, the survey also included a number of specific questions about job applications claimants had made since starting MWA and how, if at all, they had used their experience to support their applications.

As maintaining an active jobsearch is a condition of claiming JSA it is unsurprising that nearly all claimants who took part in the survey said they had submitted job applications since starting their placement (Table 6.2). Around eight in ten (83 per cent) had made an application and levels were high among all sub-groups and regardless of whether the claimant had found work.

Table 6.2 Whether submitted any job applications since starting MWA

	Total %	Male		Female	
		<25 %	25+ %	<25 %	25+ %
Yes	83	86	82	89	75
No	17	14	18	11	25
<i>Base</i>	798	283	278	109	128

Furthermore, as shown in Table 6.3, it was common among claimants who had made applications since starting MWA for them to have mentioned their experience through the programme on either their application or CV. Three-quarters of those who had made an application had done this. There is also some evidence that claimants feel they have widened their jobsearch since starting MWA (perhaps as a result of attending although this is not clear from the survey results). Nearly half (42 per cent) of those who had submitted an application since starting said that they were sending out more applications than before attending – a sizeable minority. And, a similar proportion (48 per cent) felt that they had applied for jobs they would not have previously considered. Why some claimants had widened their jobsearch activity is unclear. Even if MWA was a direct influence we cannot say definitively whether this was because claimants felt more positive generally, because they were worried about being re-referred to MWA, or because of the prospect of being sanctioned for not actively looking for work.

Table 6.3 Jobsearch activities among claimants who had submitted an application since MWA

	Total %	Male		Female	
		<25 %	25+ %	<25 %	25+ %
Mentioned experience of MWA on job application	72	78	63	78	79
Applied for jobs would not have considered before attending MWA	48	56	42	47	48
Sending out more job applications per week than before attending MWA	42	52	31	51	44
<i>Base</i>	663	242	230	95	96

Consistent with findings elsewhere in this chapter, the perceived impacts on jobsearch were not equal among all groups of claimants. In particular, those aged 25 and over tended to be less positive about the impact of MWA on their jobsearch. The age difference was particularly visible among older men – for example, only 31 per cent of men aged 25 and over who had sent out applications said they were sending more per week than before attending MWA (compared with 52 per cent of men aged under 25 and 42 per cent on average). Differences by age and gender are illustrated in Table 6.3.

6.5 Impact of MWA on claimants' jobsearch – qualitative research

The views of claimants interviewed as part of the qualitative research reflected many of the same issues discussed above. For some, MWA had given them the opportunity to think about the different kinds of job roles they could do:

'I never thought I could work in a charity shop now I have done it I feel like I can try anything and achieve it as well.'

(MWA participant)

Furthermore, two younger participants whose placements were on-going considered that their experience had changed their attitude towards finding work.

However, not all claimants were positive, with a few feeling that MWA was unlikely to have much of an impact on their attitudes and behaviour towards finding work. In a couple of cases the participants considered that attending their placement had prevented them from looking for work (because they were working full-time hours which left them little time to look for a job, an issue also identified in the quantitative survey of claimants).

A small number of claimants felt that the MWA would not equip them with the skills to look for a job:

'MWA is just pointless. I don't know anyone who's been on it and actually got a job. It should be more matched up to what you want to do, because you have got a chance of getting a job out of it. The placement should be optional. You don't have a choice. You have to do the days and hours they say.'

(MWA participant)

'Personally, I don't think we should go to charity shops, because you can't learn anything from working with charity shops. All they do is get the bags in and we just put the clothes out. That's not teaching somebody to get a job, to go out and get a job in a normal workplace because they're not telling you what to do. A few people I know who have gone to charity shops have all said exactly the same thing.'

(MWA participant, non-completer)

Others considered that MWA did not make a difference to their attitude towards work as they had already been pro-actively searching for employment. For example, one claimant said he would like to work as a driver but the vacancies he had seen require experience. Although he has a full clean driving license, the claimant realises that he needs to build up his confidence on the road. He feels that the Jobcentre could have helped him more by asking him what he actually wants to do and getting him experience in that field rather than what he described as standard factory, warehouse or retail work.

6.6 Impact on perceived employability

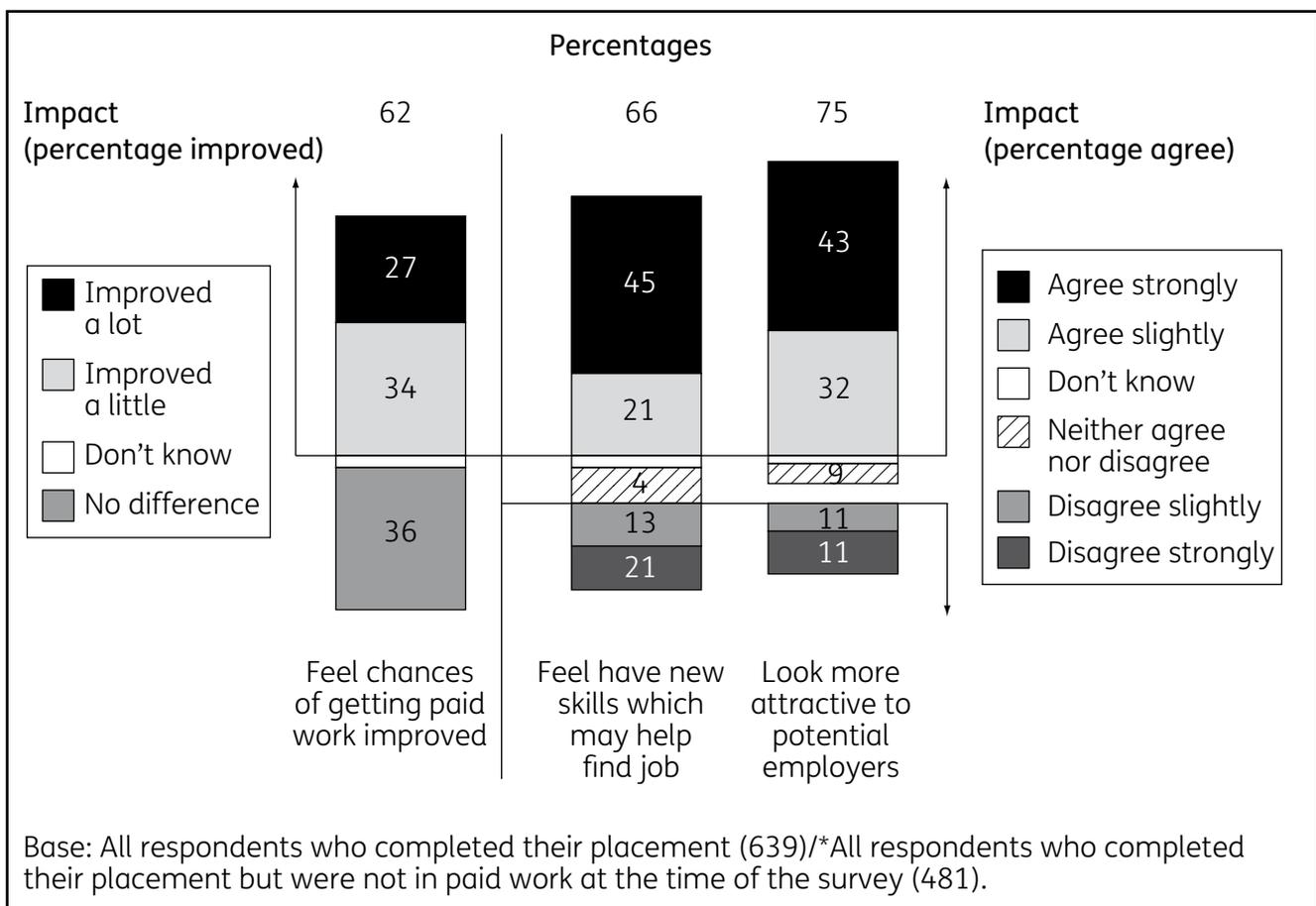
A range of measures were included in the claimants' survey to assess whether respondents felt that attending MWA had improved their:

- prospects of finding employment;
- skills to make them more employable; and
- perceived attractiveness to potential employers.

While these questions were asked of all claimants, MWA can be expected to have had the greatest impact in these areas among those who completed their four-week placement. For claimants who left a placement for 'negative' reasons (such as not enjoying MWA) it is unlikely that their experience will have increased the chances of employment. Equally, as discussed in Section 4.8.2, some claimants did not complete their placement because they actually found work before it finished. For these reasons, the findings below exclude any claimants who withdrew before the end of their allotted time for any reason, or whose placement was terminated by the host or provider.

Around two-thirds of claimants who were not in work at the time of the survey felt they had developed new skills that would help them find work or that their chances of getting paid work had improved as result of MWA (62 per cent agreed with each statement). The more widespread perception regarding employability was that participation in MWA made claimants look more attractive to potential employers (75 per cent of claimants who had completed their placement agreed that this was the case).

Figure 6.2 Impact of MWA on perceived employability



Older and younger claimants felt these impacts to different extents, with claimants under the age of 25 being more likely to be positive in all respects. For instance, three-quarters of 18-24 year-olds felt both that their chances of finding paid work had improved (76 per cent) and that they had developed new skills that could help them find work (77 per cent). This compared with just over half of claimants aged 25 or above (53 per cent).

Similarly 18-24 year olds were more inclined to believe their experience had increased their attractiveness to employers (82 per cent, compared with 70 per cent of those aged 25 and above), although it is worth noting that men aged 25 or above were the most sceptical of all in this regard (26 per cent disagreed that they were more attractive to employers, compared with 15 per cent of women aged 25 or above).

Claimants who had been on JSA for less than a year in the last five years were more likely to report a positive impact on their employment prospects (73 per cent compared with an average of 62 per cent). Furthermore the impacts of MWA appear greatest among those who had been on benefits for the shortest period of time in the last five years. Three-quarters (75 per cent) of those in the lowest benefit history quartile believed that MWA had equipped them with new skills that could help them find a job, 71 per cent that their prospects of getting a job were now better, and 81 per cent that they were more attractive to employers.

While these findings partly reflect the younger ages of claimants who have spent less time on JSA, it is also possible that duration of claiming benefits may limit claimants' capacity to benefit from attending MWA. Notably, motivation to search for jobs and positive perceptions of employability were less common among those in the second and third benefit history quartiles, and rarer still for those in the highest quartile (who had been claiming benefits the longest). This suggests that claimants who have become entrenched in the benefits system remain relatively unaffected by their MWA experience and are less likely to feel reinvigorated and refocused on their jobsearch by spending four weeks on MWA.

Claimants who felt nervous of being in paid work were among the most likely to receive a boost in motivation (71 per cent, compared with 62 per cent overall) and feel their chances of gaining employment had improved (80 per cent, compared with 66 per cent overall) after attending a placement. There was also a relationship between the types of barriers which claimants felt hindered them from finding work, and whether or not placements afforded claimants any gains in motivation or perceived employability.

Claimants who said that their lack of work experience was a barrier to entering paid work were more likely than those who did not name this as a barrier to report that their placement had boosted their motivation (71 per cent compared to 61 per cent) and that it had given them skills which would assist them in their jobsearch (63 per cent compared to 55 per cent). Despite these gains, this group was no more likely than average to feel that they had become more attractive to employers or that their chances of finding a job had improved.

By contrast, claimants with various other – mainly practical – barriers were less likely to gain motivation to look for work or to feel more positive about their job prospects by participating in MWA. Specifically, claimants who felt that their health, caring commitments or transport difficulties constrained their job prospects, or who said that a lack of vacancies was a barrier to finding work, were less likely to feel that MWA had any effect (Table 6.4). Although base sizes are too small for reliable analysis, there are also indications in the data that claimants with housing difficulties were less likely than other claimants to feel that their job prospects had improved. The answers given by claimants who said that being in work would leave them worse off than being on benefit did not differ substantially from the average, suggesting that this factor was less influential.

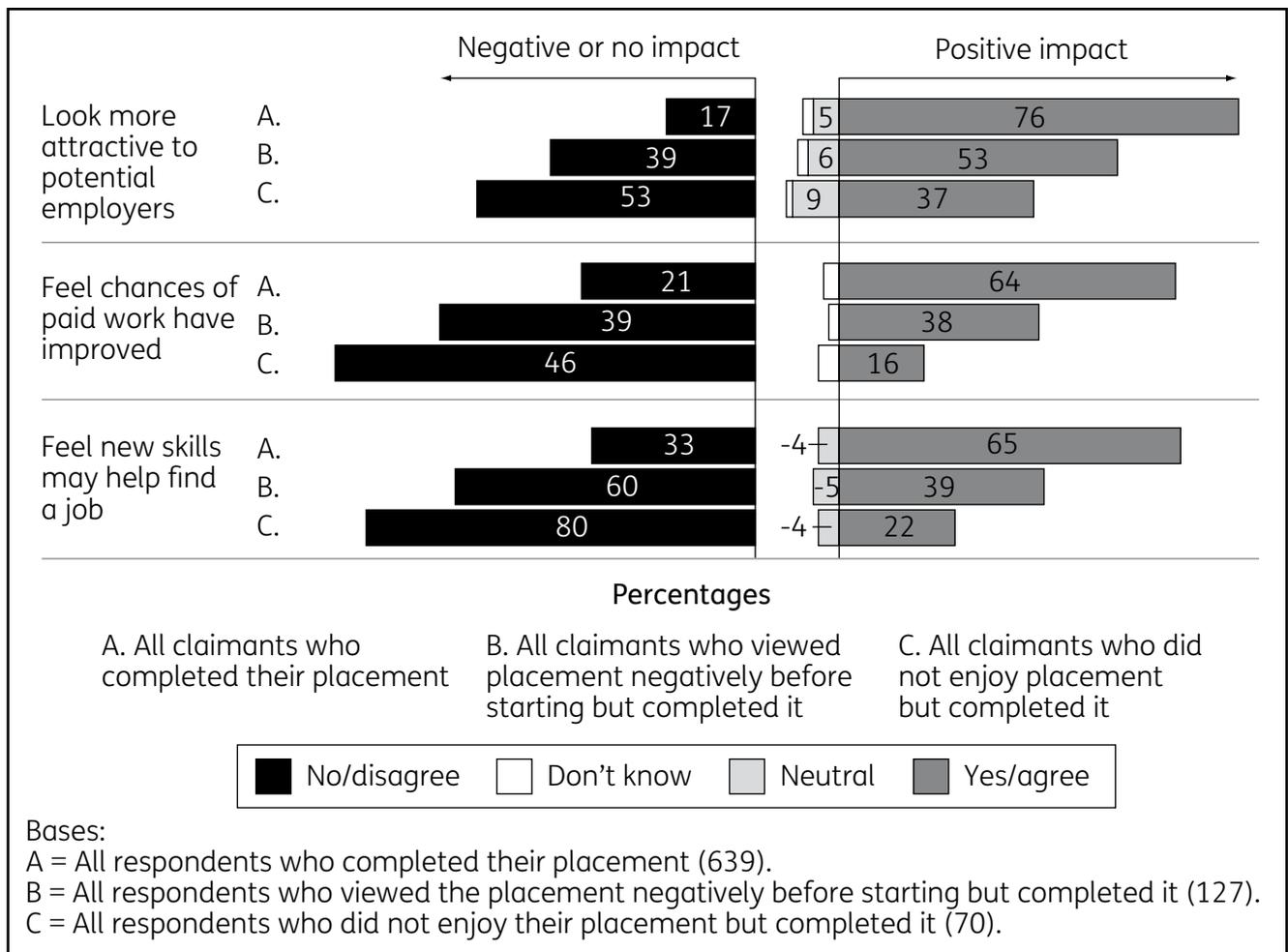
Table 6.4 Impact on perceived employability by barriers to work

	Total %	Transport/ travel difficulties		Lack of vacancies		Family/caring commitments		Limiting health condition or disability	
		No %	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %	Yes %
Feel chances of getting paid work improved	62	61	51	69	52	59	42	61	36
Feel have new skills which may help find work	66	63	52	64	56	59	51	61	44
Look more attractive to potential employers	75	75	68	76	71	75	55	76	54
<i>Base</i>	481	298	168	151	315	422	44	397	69

Base: All respondents who completed their placement but were not in paid work at the time of the survey.

Apart from the factors above, there were two additional factors with the potential to undermine any boost in perceived employability: the degree of positivity felt by claimants before they began their placement; and the extent to which they enjoyed their placement. Compared to the average, claimants who did not feel positive about the prospect of their placement, or who did not enjoy the experience, were less likely to feel their employability and chances of finding work had improved (Figure 6.3). Presenting placements in such a way as to create a positive and favourable impression on claimants, and maintaining certain standards during the placement which make it enjoyable, could serve to amplify these outcomes.

Figure 6.3 Impact of MWA on employability among claimants who viewed placement negatively before start and claimants who did not enjoy their placement



6.7 Other impacts

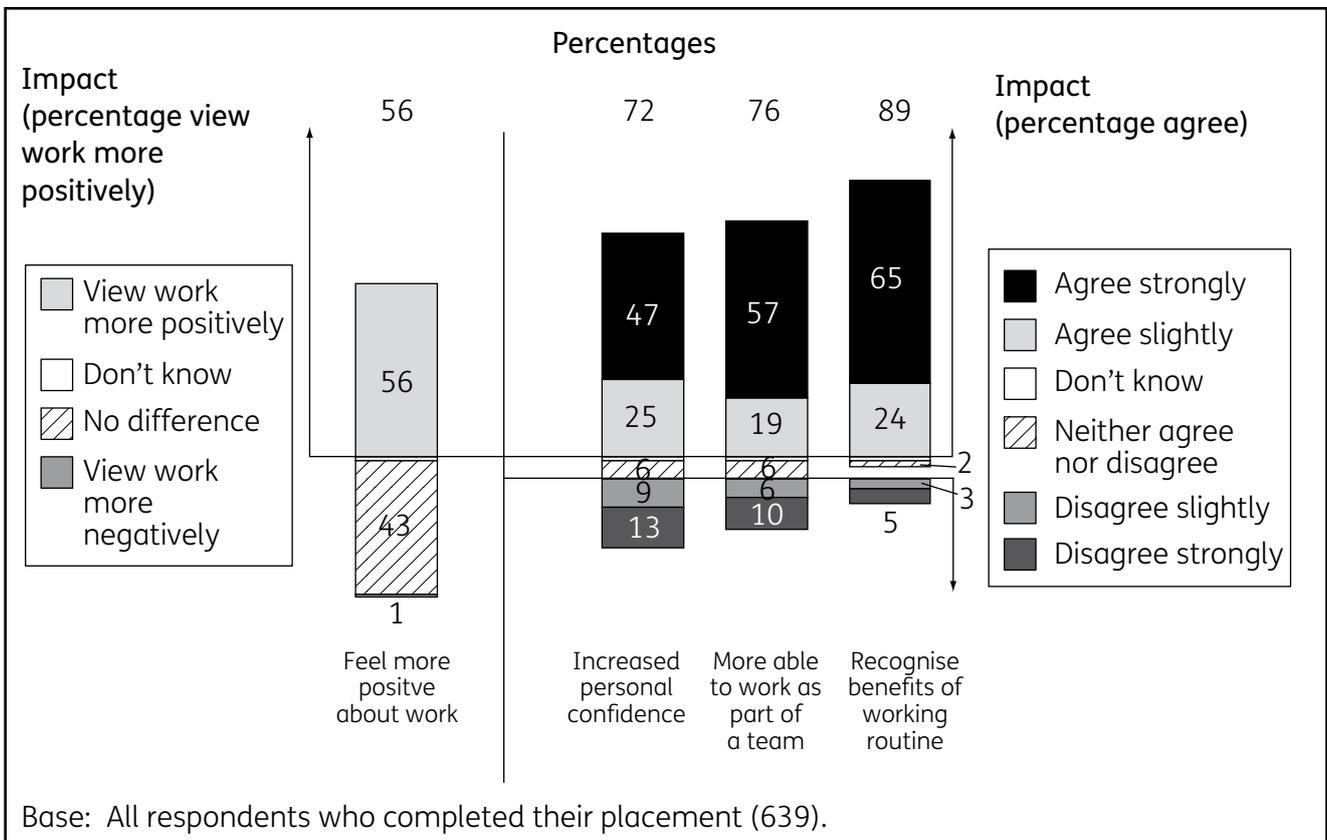
As well as looking at the impact of MWA on claimants' job search activity and perceived employability, the survey also measured whether there had been any changes in the mindset of claimants who had attended a MWA placement. Agreement scale questions were used to assess whether claimants felt their confidence and team-working skills had increased and whether, subsequent to the placement, they recognised the benefit of the routine of working life. A separate question asked whether they viewed work more positively or negatively since their placement had ended.

As in the previous section, respondents who did not complete their placement have been excluded from the analysis presented below.

As shown in Figure 6.4, the findings suggest that attending MWA had a range of positive 'soft' impacts on a large number of claimants. Nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) of claimants who completed MWA felt that their personal confidence had increased since attending their placement. Three-quarters (76 per cent) believed their ability to work as part of a team had improved, and nine in ten (89 per cent) felt they could recognise the benefits of a working routine since attending.

More than half (56 per cent) also felt more positive about work than before attending their placement, although only slightly fewer of said there was no difference (42 per cent).

Figure 6.4 Impact of MWA on views of work, personal confidence, team-working skills, and recognition of benefits of working routine



Compared to other claimants, men aged 25 or above were less likely to experience an increase in personal confidence (63 per cent), an improvement in their team-working skills (66 per cent), or a shift towards a more positive perception of work (43 per cent). By contrast, men aged between 18 and 24 were more likely than other claimants to say they viewed work more positively than before their placement (68 per cent compared with 56 per cent overall). There was an almost universal recognition of the benefits of a working routine among claimants of both sexes who were aged 18-24 (94 per cent).

Another group of claimants who were particularly likely to benefit from a boost to their confidence and ability to work with others were those who had never previously worked (81 per cent and 91 per cent, respectively) and, to a lesser extent, those who said they felt nervous about being in paid work (78 per cent and 85 per cent). These findings are particularly encouraging as these two groups stand to gain from the work experience elements of programmes such as MWA.

6.7.1 Work barriers and impacts of MWA

As observed in relation to impacts on perceived employability (section 6.6), claimants with particular barriers to finding work – namely those who felt health conditions, transport difficulties, or a lack of vacancies were key obstacles to finding a job – were less likely to report most of these ‘softer’ impacts (see Table 6.5).

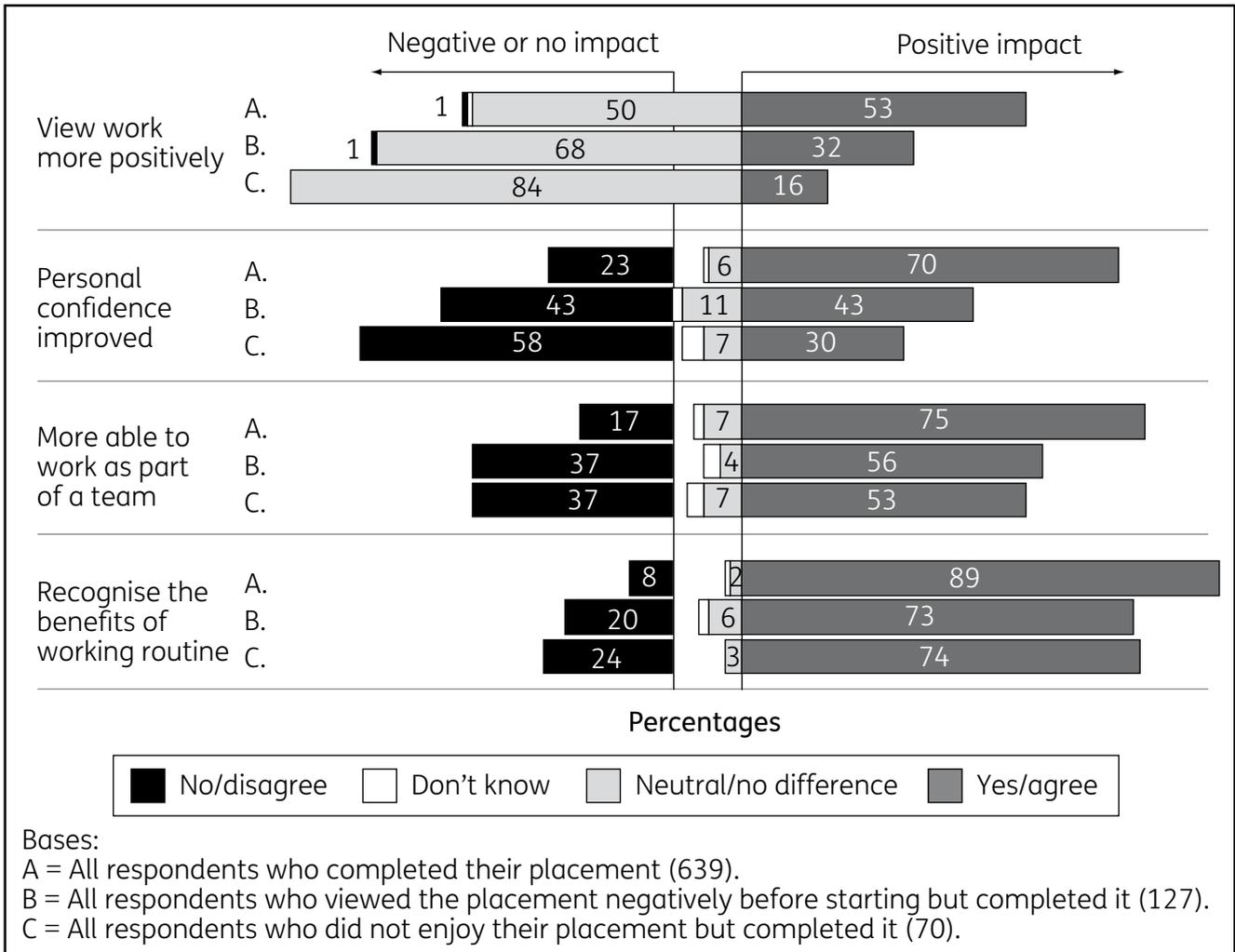
By contrast, claimants who felt that their lack of experience acted as a barrier to finding paid work were more likely than average to feel that the placement had made them more able to work as part of a team (79 per cent, compared with 69 per cent across all claimants), but were otherwise no more likely than other claimants to be affected by the experience of attending MWA.

Table 6.5 Views of work, personal confidence, team-working skills, and recognition of benefits of working routine by barriers to work

	Total %	Transport/travel difficulties		Lack of vacancies		Limiting health condition or disability	
		No %	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %	Yes %
View work more positively	51	53	47	62	45	52	44
Personal confidence improved	69	71	65	75	66	72	51
More able to work as part of a team	74	75	72	82	70	75	63
Recognise benefits of working routine	89	90	88	91	88	91	79
<i>Base</i>	481	298	168	151	315	397	69

As with perceived employability, a positive attitude prior to the start of the placement and an enjoyable experience while attending were key to fostering these positive soft outcomes (Figure 6.5). Fewer claimants who started off feeling negative about the prospect of attending a placement, or who did not enjoy the placement itself, felt that their confidence had risen or their ability to work with others had improved. Similarly, fewer of these claimants developed an appreciation of a working routine as a result of attending. Perhaps more crucially, claimants who had a negative outlook about MWA at the outset or who did not enjoy their placement tended to maintain the same views regarding work as they had before starting: the MWA experience only altered the opinions of a relatively small proportion of these claimants.

Figure 6.5 Impact of MWA on views of work, personal confidence, team-working skills, and recognition of benefits of working routine among claimants who viewed placement negatively before start and claimants who did not enjoy their placement



6.8 Jobcentre Plus views on impact

There were mixed views among the Jobcentre Plus advisers who were interviewed as part of qualitative research on the extent to which the MWA placement made a material difference to the motivation and re-engagement of claimants. A few advisers mentioned there are some claimants who simply see MWA as *'just another hoop'* to ensure they can get their benefit; they go through the motions and there are no real impacts. One adviser estimated that about 30 per cent of people have a positive change in attitude. Another adviser, said that of their 14 starts – four had gone onto the Work Programme; four showed no change; four went on to do voluntary work; one signed-off due to a change of circumstances and one returned to education.

The majority view, however, was that MWA was seen as helpful in progressing some people towards work and conveying the message that Jobcentre Plus was serious about claimants being available for work and actively engaging in jobsearch.

The range of impacts with claimants observed included:

- arriving on time for their interviews;
- undertaking increased jobsearch activity/bringing their jobsearch up to date;
- improved attitude towards applying for jobs;
- willingness to broaden their jobsearch preferences;
- claimants were more motivated and with a positive attitude;
- individuals had enjoyed their placement – the routine, the purpose to their day and the company of working with others;
- completing the placement was an achievement for claimants, and as a consequence they were more confident their ability to work;
- claimants felt they had something to offer an employer;
- claimants were more willing to consider other opportunities that would help them progress towards work; and
- a few cases saw claimants working towards qualifications, one in claimant service and another in catering.

District and Jobcentre Plus office staff were all quite clear that job entry from an MWA placement was not expected. Rather, the case was often made that MWA was an intermediary step towards employment. Reference was made to the particular benefit of MWA for young people or others with no work experience. One Jobcentre Plus manager remarked how many of the young people on MWA may never have worked before, never spent time in a work environment, and never understood what was to be expected of them in work. For this manager, MWA was an opportunity for these young people to learn, and to experience work and the social benefits of working – the camaraderie, a sense of purpose and enhanced self-respect. It was felt that MWA was the first step in the journey for some of these young people, and that once they had finished their placement it was the role of Jobcentre Plus to build on that positive experience and move the young people into more structured, occupation specific training or work placements.

The benefits for people who had been out of work for some time (including women bringing up children or those who had been on a disability benefit) were also mentioned. These individuals were generally not in a very competitive position in the labour market; they did not have recent work experience and often lacked confidence and self-belief. An example given by one adviser was how Jobcentre Plus work experience placements were limited and access to these too was competitive, but one of their clients had been able to secure a place after MWA. The belief was that MWA, as an intermediary step, made the difference in enabling that claimant to gain a place.

The challenge for advisers was capitalising on the benefits from MWA and sustaining positive attitude towards jobsearch that resulted. Their initial task was to find out from the claimant what the placement had been, how they had performed, whether it had made a difference to their view of work and what they would like to engage in next. Advisers generally had no feedback from the provider or placement host and had to rely on the claimant's view of their performance.¹⁵ Feedback from the provider on the completion of the placement by the claimant (and ideally throughout the whole process) would, it was felt, enable advisers to act quickly and build on positive outcomes from MWA.

¹⁵ Providers are contracted to provide an exit report to Jobcentre Plus for MWA participants.

6.9 Providers' and hosts' views on impact

Providers' knowledge of impacts resulting from claimants' placements was limited, mainly due to limited contact with the claimant following completion of their placement, although across the providers and subcontractors interviewed the main impacts were considered to be:

- getting claimants 'into a work mind-set';
- improving their confidence and belief in their ability to find work; and
- providing references and experience for CVs – which show potential employers (and the Jobcentre) that they are prepared to work.

While the providers were not informed of destination outcomes for participants post-placement and relied on anecdotal information, some provided examples of individuals progressing to work (limited) or to volunteering (more common). For many, MWA was again not seen as a programme to get individuals into work directly – although this was a positive outcome if achieved – but rather to move more challenging claimants towards employment, and encourage them (through increased confidence, etc.) to take the next steps to achieve this.

Hosts' views on the impacts of the work placements were explored in terms of benefits for individuals participating and for the host organisations themselves.

Benefits for participating claimants varied, from no identifiable change in attitudes and behaviours in terms of looking for work to examples where the placement experience was considered to have led to either securing a full-time job or volunteering (which was seen as a measure of claimants' renewed preparedness to engage with work). Where positive benefits were reported, these were most commonly expressed as:

- Increased confidence – the most commonly reported impact for claimants by the hosts interviewed, with many describing how individuals had 'come out of their shell' during the placement and more readily interacted with managers, colleagues and where relevant claimants in their shops.
- Acquiring new skills – was also a commonly reported benefit, and while the nature of these new skills depended on the nature of placement they were largely experiential (although in one case the host provided National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level training as a progression route for people completing placements and choosing to volunteer with them post placement). New skills acquired included customer service skills, using the tills, stock control and materials handling/warehousing skills. For many hosts the provision of work experience had provided participants with a range of employability skills, ranging from timekeeping to working as part of a team.
- Changed attitudes and increased willingness to engage with work – while most commonly evidenced through choosing to volunteer once placements had completed (reported by around half the hosts interviewed), many hosts also reported how claimants with more negative attitudes to their placement at the outset (and so presumed to have similar attitudes to work in general) had changed their behaviour by the placement end.

While few of the hosts were aware of the subsequent destinations of previous placement claimants, several were able to provide examples of where they had found work which was considered to be at least in part to be due to their placement experience. In two cases hosts reported taking former placement claimants on in full time positions – one as their acting warehouse manager (Charity Shop placement host), with a second taking on two former placements as permanent staff elsewhere in their organisation (Warehouse placement host). In other cases identifying progression

to work often relied on the testimony of former participants contacting the host or meeting them in the street, for example, one host reported how a former participant had found work in a large retailer, where their experience on the till had been helpful. In a second case a host described how four of their former placements had secured full time work, all in the retail trade, and which the participants themselves considered was due to the retail skills gained during their placements (Charity shop placement host)

While a range of positive benefits were reported, it was clear that not all the participants had displayed sufficient change in behaviour, attitude or ability to be recognised by their hosts. In some cases no identifiable change in attitude to work resulted from the placement (which included the already motivated as well as those less motivated and who remained so), although for some the fact they had turned up for four weeks was felt to represent success. Elsewhere smaller changes, such as improved appearance and personal hygiene, were also seen as positive moves forward. In these cases many hosts questioned whether a four week placement was sufficient to lead to change among those with more deep set attitudes and behaviour patterns.

The most commonly reported benefits for the hosts related to being provided with a supply of staff for four week periods. In all but two cases the business benefits resulting for the host were considered worth the effort expended in supporting the placements, even when fail to attend and drop-outs were considered.

Indeed, several of the hosts reported that they had become reliant on MWA as a source of staff, and hoped that the programme would continue.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

This final chapter draws together the main conclusions of the study and provides a number of recommendations based on the research findings as well suggestions for improvements from Jobcentre Plus staff, providers, hosts and claimants on how Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) could be improved.

Generally district offices, Jobcentre Plus, providers, hosts and claimants all offered positive feedback on MWA. However, this came with caveats and calls for improvement to the programme. Interestingly, each of these stakeholder groups tended to identify common features of MWA that would benefit from further development.

7.1 Summary of stakeholders' views

The majority of the stakeholders interviewed in the qualitative research were positive about the **potential** value of MWA.

Jobcentre Plus staff viewed MWA as a useful addition to the portfolio of options they had to work with, particularly for claimants who were less likely to engage with other Jobcentre Plus services, and as an effective means for reducing the number of individuals claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) (the 'claimant count'). The providers interviewed considered that the underpinning concept and policy intent of MWA was sound, and that it formed a useful addition to the services available for long-term JSA claimants to help them move towards employment and helping enforce conditionality.

Positive impacts from MWA were observed for many claimants, by the claimants themselves and by those working with them in both the qualitative and quantitative research. These included helping claimants progress towards or into employment, increasing jobsearch activity and other 'soft impacts' such as increased confidence and more positive perceptions of being in work.

However, significant implementation difficulties were encountered in three of the five case study districts, which in the view of the Jobcentre Plus staff detracted from delivery. These issues included backlogs in referrals, variable Decision Making and Appeals (DMA) activity and variable communications between Jobcentres, providers and claimants during the placement period. The providers and their subcontractors reported not appreciating the level of administration involved or the implications of the programme payment structure, and finding delivery more challenging than they had expected at the outset. Some hosts also raised issues relating to communication with their providers on referrals, access to clients' background details and follow-up. So while the majority of stakeholders interviewed were positive about the potential of MWA for delivering positive impacts, they considered that improvements to the delivery model were required if this potential was to be realised.

7.2 Understanding of Mandatory Work Activity

There was some variation among claimants' understanding of the purpose of MWA – the majority understood it was a chance to gain experience of a real working environment, whereas others were less clear on the purpose of the scheme. Survey findings suggest that most claimants did feel they were being referred for at least some positive reasons, including MWA as an opportunity to improve their work experience.

The compulsory nature of MWA was clearly understood by claimants – with nearly all being aware of the mandatory aspects of the programme. The threat of potential sanctions played a significant role in whether claimants decided to participate in MWA or not. Claimants in general were clear that they could not survive without their benefits. Some claimants realised they had been referred to MWA because they had been claiming benefits and out of work for some time, and a few were aware that their referral was linked to a history of sanctions.

There was a good level of understanding about the purpose and intent of MWA from District and Jobcentre Plus staff at all levels of the organisation. MWA was described, among other things, as a way of re-introducing claimants to the work ethic/discipline, as well as a means of enforcing conditionality.

Providers and hosts also tended to be clear of the overall aims and policy intent of MWA, although a small number of providers did feel they had received potentially mixed messages on the balance between the opportunity for employment support and the mandatory aspect of the programme.

In a small number of cases, hosts considered that Jobcentre Plus staff could do more to introduce MWA to claimants, explain the programme to them and provide greater follow-through on return to the Jobcentre.

7.2.1 Recommendations

In introducing MWA to claimants, Jobcentre Plus advisers should:

- continue to ensure that the mandatory element of MWA is fully explained to claimants, and that the implications of non-compliance are understood by all. Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) advise that adviser guidance has been strengthened on this issue;
- also emphasise the positive aspects of participation in MWA to all, and that MWA provides an opportunity for claimants to become familiar with the day-to-day work routine and, where relevant, to gain up to date work experience.

7.3 The referral process

There were mixed views among the Jobcentre Plus staff interviewed about the effectiveness of the referral process. Some felt it worked well, whereas others commented that after the referral they effectively had no further knowledge about the claimant and their progress. This was seen as a problem in districts where there were localised delivery issues and/or when claimants reported difficulties back to the Jobcentre.

In three of the districts involved in the qualitative research the ten working day referral to placement target was not being met, resulting in the development of a backlog of referrals. A key factor here was the flow of referrals – some providers were unable to manage the volume of referrals and spikes in the numbers of referrals received from the Jobcentres against expected profile. Sourcing sufficient numbers of suitable placements was cited as a critical issue.

In most of the districts regular meetings between the district staff and providers were taking place, with performance improvement plans being developed and implemented where needed. A specific frustration at the local level was the time taken to resolve issues, with local offices having to rely on the district contracting teams to resolve issues rather than working with providers directly.

Most hosts were satisfied with the claimants referred to them. Some worked closely with the provider/subcontractor to assess the appropriateness of claimants, with some conducting 'pre-interviews' with placement candidates – although this process could contribute to the backlog in districts where it occurred.

The survey of claimants found that promoting MWA to claimants on its potential positive benefits at the point of referral may not be persuasive in all cases. However, the survey findings suggested that where the positive aspects of MWA are emphasised to claimants they tend to enter the process with a more positive view of MWA, and may get more out of their placement.

Most claimants felt they were given enough information about MWA at the time of referral, although some wanted more from Jobcentre Plus or the provider (e.g. about what their placement would involve). Around a third of surveyed claimants said that their adviser did not explain what the placement would involve clearly at the point of referral (or did not provide an explanation at all), and many of those felt they should have been given more detail about what the placement would involve or what they would be doing there.

7.3.1 Recommendations

- Encouraging advisers to conduct a 'warm handover' with providers where the providers delivery supports this. This would entail the adviser speaking to their provider at the start of the referral process to introduce the claimant, establish the details of the claimants' appointment with the provider and to ensure the claimant is clear about next stage in the process (in some cases this was already happening and was felt to be beneficial).
- Providers to supply claimants at each stage of the process with clear instructions, written information and a single point of contact should issues arise.
- Considering extending the ten working day placement target if it proves unachievable. A longer period would also allow more time for providers (and hosts) to carry out pre-screening interviews.¹⁶
- Closer liaison between Jobcentre Plus and providers to profile the number of claimants referred on a monthly basis to avoid future referral backlogs. This would include:
 - ensuring that Jobcentre Plus and providers work jointly to agree robust referral profile figures, based on evidence of claimant and placement availability at the district and local office levels;
 - monitoring profiles on a collaborative basis to ensure they are not exceeded beyond 'reasonable levels' at both district and individual office levels;
 - ensuring early and rapid intervention to improve performance if flow management issues arise, with district and local offices working collaboratively with providers to resolve any problems; and
 - considering offering placements in a more co-ordinated manner and allowing start dates to be staggered so that hosts do not have to deal with short notice requests or turn away claimants because they do not have the capacity to take them.

We understand that DWP have completed much activity in this area in terms of ensuring providers are given more accurate profile numbers within reasonable lead times for planning their workload. The referral to start target has been extended to 15 days.

¹⁶ NB: The placement target has recently been extended to 15 days.

7.4 The placement

Claimants' experiences of MWA were largely positive, and it was common for those with initially negative views to become more positive during their time on placement. There was also evidence of some claimants choosing to volunteer at the organisation where they had been placed after MWA had finished. Conversely, around one in five claimants who started a placement did not complete it (typically either because of ill-health or injury, or because they were offered paid work).

Some providers and hosts reported offering claimants a 'second chance' if they were unable to attend their first placement offer (e.g. for health or transport/access issues), and where possible tried to offer claimants another choice of placement. Some also attempted to re-engage claimants who had withdrawn from their placements.

Placements tended to be mainly in charity shops, with the remainder being in not-for profit/charity settings. Claimants who took part in the survey were asked directly what they thought could have been done to make their placement more worthwhile. Answers varied widely but common responses did relate to a wider variety of placements being available and for placements to be more relevant to their jobsearch and work preferences.

There were mixed views from Jobcentre Plus staff on the suitability of available placements. Some staff thought the types of placement were not a relevant consideration when the focus was on promoting a work ethic and providing an experience of being in the workplace (rather than a specific occupational experience). Other staff thought placements that were a better fit with the claimants' work aspirations or local employment opportunities would have greatest impact.

In all but one district in the qualitative research, subcontractors were responsible for sourcing potential placement opportunities. Placements were commonly drawn from existing links with potential hosts that had been developed under previous programmes. Some providers had problems in terms of identifying sufficient placements to meet demand.

Provider and host interviews suggested that monitoring practices and the frequency of contact by providers with hosts and claimants on placement was variable. There were some instances where providers maintained contact (at the start of the placement and then regularly throughout the four weeks), elsewhere this was less prevalent.

Most hosts had worked with long-term unemployed claimants in the past and tended to be very knowledgeable about working with this claimant group. Furthermore, all but two of the host organisations were very positive about MWA and were continuing to provide placements. Some hosts reported that, for them, a four week placement was insufficient because as soon as an individual was inducted and trained to be able to do the job, it was time for their placement to end. Others reported that they provided less training to MWA participants compared to longer placement claimants for this reason.

Hosts were generally positive about MWA – with the principle benefit to the host organisation being a regular supply of unpaid staff. In fact, some hosts have become reliant on MWA placements and hoped that the programme would continue. While some of the hosts were keen to emphasise they had strong and mutually beneficial relationships with their providers, others described issues in their relationships with their providers/sub-contractors. While the basis of these varied, two of the hosts reported that their relationship with their provider had either deteriorated over time or had never been properly established.

7.4.1 Recommendations

Overall claimants and hosts (in particular) were positive about MWA having been directly involved in the programme. There were, however, a number of suggestions for improving placements including:

- Consider extending the placement period beyond the current four weeks – which was considered by the majority of hosts to be insufficient to achieve and sustain the type of attitudinal and behavioural change required to progress MWA claimants towards work. Although not all those consulted felt the four week placement was too short, an eight week opportunity was commonly considered to be the optimum duration.
- While recognising that the policy intent of MWA was focused on getting claimants used to the discipline of being in the workplace rather than offering placements that reflected their experience and employment aspirations, consider offering claimants a degree of choice in their placement opportunity, which may help improve retention rates, lead to more productive placements and result in more effective outcomes.
- Consider relaxing the community benefit rules to allow access to a wider range of placements. While this might lead to increased competition with other Jobcentre Plus programmes it may lead to a greater variety of placements that claimants may be more interested in.
- Engaging the public sector, especially Local Authorities, to offer placements.

7.4.2 Examples of good practice

The hosts cited a number of factors that helped to ensure claimants remained engaged once they had started their placement (these could be adopted as examples of good practice):

- the induction process – easing individuals into their roles and making efforts to ensure the placements were part of the team;
- ‘buddy’ systems – to help with integration and offering one to one support;
- offering flexibility around placement start times and allowing time away from the placement – to sign-on, for job interviews, and to reflect child-care/carer responsibilities;
- dealing with issues internally – such as poor time keeping/minor behavioural issues rather than involving the provider;
- using a rota to schedule attendance at the placement, to illustrate to claimants the implications of non-attendance and the extra work this would mean for colleagues; and
- treating MWA claimants like employees and, importantly for this claimant group, offering support and praise.

Other suggestions relate to the relationship between hosts and provider/sub-contractors, including:

- improving communications links between hosts and providers/sub-contractors – ensuring that there is a single point of contact for queries and questions, and for reporting non-attendance or behaviour issues; and
- introducing the requirement for providers to actively monitor placement progress across the programme – while some of the hosts described close links with providers which continued throughout the placement period, this was not always the case.

Jobcentre Plus Advisers also made a number of suggestions for improving communication between themselves and providers/hosts:

- Improving the communication and information flow between the Jobcentre, the providers and hosts generally. Including better communication regarding changes in claimants' circumstances – to avoid wasted effort particularly if those who fail to attend have signed off.
- Specifically, advisers would like better information on whether the customer has started; if they were attending and how they were performing on their placement; if there had been a referral to DMA; the end date for the placement; and better summary reports on completion for all claimants. This would mean that if a claimant comes back to the Jobcentre at any time with a problem, the adviser would have an up to date source of information. Similarly, advisers would be able to review the placement with the claimant from an informed position and build quickly on next steps.
- Ensuring advisers have a dedicated contact name/number for their provider, who is available and able to resolve queries.
- Offering advisers the opportunity to see what providers and hosts were actually doing; to see how the delivery process worked and the type and range of placements.

7.5 Impacts from mandation and sanctions, and off-flow

The qualitative research with claimants who had been referred but not started did not include any individuals who had signed-off rather than take-up the MWA placement. However, feedback from advisers and data analysis published by DWP impact provides evidence of a small but significant impact of referral on benefit receipt¹⁷. In terms of off-flowing post start, a quarter (24 per cent) of the MWA participants surveyed had stopped signing by the time they were interviewed, around half of those (12 per cent of all claimants) were in paid work at the time of the survey and had stopped claiming benefits. A small number of claimants had stopped claiming JSA but were now claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support (IS) or Incapacity Benefit (IB).

Attending MWA may have had a positive impact on claimants' motivation to come off JSA – two-thirds of surveyed claimants said their motivation to come off JSA had increased either a lot or a little as a result of their experience. However, there is little evidence of a link between motivation to come off JSA and actual off-flow, this may be related to external factors such as availability of vacancies.

Despite the importance of the sanctions process to MWA, the research showed the application of sanctions for non-completion was inconsistent. Only one in five claimants responding to the survey who did not complete their placement recalled being sanctioned as a result, including some whose main reason for not completing was a dislike of some aspect of their placement.

Jobcentre Plus staff tended to be complimentary about the **potential** value of MWA. However, there was a fairly consistent view at the time of the research that the DMA process was not effective as it could be. The perception was that the sanctioning of claimants who did not attend or did not complete their MWA placement was not being followed through consistently by providers.

There was a perception that providers were disinclined to make DMA referrals, partly attributed to the 'payment per start' structure of the provider contract. As a consequence, the message about the potential loss of benefit, intrinsic to the mandatory element of the programme, was diminished for some claimants. Providers also reported that receiving up to date information on the benefit status of claimants referred but awaiting placement would be useful, to avoid unnecessary DMA referrals.

¹⁷ http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc_analysis/2012/early_impacts_mwa.pdf

All providers understood that if claimants failed to attend or did not complete their placement then they would be sanctioned, although most showed some degree of discretion or flexibility. There was some variance in providers' knowledge and understanding of the DMA process, with some getting involved in the detail locally while others referred to centralised specialist teams within their organisation. In the latter case, the centralised teams were reported as being familiar with the process, the rules and the evidence requirements – drawing on the local delivery staff for additional information as required.

7.5.1 Recommendations

As discussed above sanctions were not being applied consistently. Jobcentre Plus staff, providers and hosts made a number of suggestions for how to improve the DMA and sanctioning process including:

- Ensuring MWA compliance rules are fully understood by providers, sub-contractors and hosts – including providing more guidance and clarifying the rules for illness and other enforced absences from placements.
- Reducing the scope for unnecessary work on preparing DMA referrals by providing data to providers on which individuals have signed-off JSA.
- Providing better guidance for providers on the sanctions process, including when it should be applied and the evidence requirements.
- Exploring the scope for simplifying, streamlining and speeding up the sanctions process, including:
 - ensuring clarity and consistency in DMA evidence requirements and decision making; and
 - considering the scope for different models of delivery (e.g. specialist teams for processing MWA sanctions).
- Reviewing the assumptions in the funding model in the context of MI data on the actual ratio of fail to attend (FTAs)/non-starts and of early leavers to starts, to provide a more evenly balanced risk between Jobcentre Plus and providers.

We understand that DWP have already addressed some of the issues associated with sanctions by creating a centralised processing team dealing solely with MWA sanction referrals. Since the study DMA has been centralised for all MWA referrals. The centralised team supply updates on the outcomes of referrals to providers. In addition, providers are able to check with local Jobcentre Plus offices on updated benefit status to avoid unnecessary DMA referral work. In addition, DWP have ran a series of workshops with providers to improve their understanding of the DMA process.

7.6 Impacts from participation

Around one in seven claimants were working at the time of the quantitative survey and around half of these felt that MWA had helped them find work. In addition, two-thirds of claimants who were not working at the time of the survey agreed that they felt **more** motivated to find work. More specifically there is evidence that MWA may have reinvigorated some claimants' job searches. Most claimants who had made applications since starting MWA had mentioned their experience through MWA on either a job application or CV. Furthermore, many claimants who had completed their placement felt their chances of finding paid work had increased, and that they were now more attractive to potential employers.

These views were by no means universal. Some claimants interviewed in the qualitative research felt that MWA would not make a difference to their chances of finding work as they were already pro-actively looking for work and felt that MWA could detract from available time to jobsearch. In addition, older claimants and those who had been employed previously tended to feel MWA was more suited to young people who had not worked before.

The survey suggests that MWA had a number of peripheral benefits outside of claimant jobsearch activities, employability and off-flow. These include a range of positive 'soft' impacts:

- around three-quarters (72 per cent) of claimants who completed MWA felt that their personal confidence had increased since attending;
- three-quarters (76 per cent) felt their ability to work as part of a team had improved;
- nine in ten (89 per cent) felt they could recognise the benefits of a working routine since attending; and
- more than half (56 per cent) felt more positive about work than before attending.

Positive impacts are greatest among claimants who felt positive about being referred to MWA and who enjoyed the experience of attending. In addition, the survey findings suggest that MWA may have the greatest impact among those who are most anxious about working and those who feel they do not have sufficient work experience to find a job – some of the key targets for MWA given the policy's aims and objectives.

Advisers reported improvements in jobsearch activity and commitment to finding work in a number of cases. District and Jobcentre Staff were clear that job entry from MWA was not necessarily expected – instead, it was seen as a useful intermediary step towards employment, especially for young people or others with little or no recent work experience. However, the delay between referral and start and the lower than expected level of sanctions did detract from overall impact.

Providers' knowledge of impacts resulting from claimants' placements was limited although the main impacts were considered to be:

- developing a mind-set for work;
- improving claimants' confidence and belief in their ability to find work; and
- providing references and work experience for CVs.

7.6.1 Recommendations

The research shows that the MWA placement can be a positive experience for the majority of claimants in developing their soft skills and providing up-to-date work experience. A number of suggestions to maximise these impacts are provided below:

- Ensuring that claimants are given some detail about what their placement is likely to involve as early in the referral process as possible, for example, the provider could give Jobcentre Plus staff lists of current placement opportunities in their areas – as analysis of the survey data shows that the benefits of MWA are maximised claimants are aware of what to expect.
- Trying to ensure that claimants feel positive about being referred on to MWA, i.e. through introductions to the programme which accentuate the positive and highlight potential benefits while retaining clarity regarding sanctions, may also lead to more positive impacts.
- Improving communication – as feedback from the claimants suggests a need generally for improved communication between the different actors at each stage of the MWA delivery process.

- Ensuring that steps are taken to sustain and build on the benefits gained by claimants who start and complete MWA on their return to the Jobcentre once their MWA placement finishes.
- Drawing Jobcentre Plus and providers into developing the follow-through post placement, especially for those groups (including young people) for whom MWA was identified as a useful intermediate step towards more intensive Jobcentre Plus support or training options.

We are aware that DWP have addressed some of the issues described by ensuring more effective communications between providers, advisers and participants. Advisers are guided to review the progress made on placement when the claimant complete their time on MWA and take into consideration the exit reports supplied by providers.

Appendix A

Qualitative methodology

This section describes the methodology that was used and targets achieved for the qualitative element of the evaluation.

Prior to the qualitative research a document and management information (MI) Review took place which provided the context in which Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) was being delivered in as well as illustrating MWA performance to date, in terms of throughput and outcomes recorded.

A programme of qualitative fieldwork in five Jobcentre Plus districts – three trailblazer districts and two non-trailblazer districts was then undertaken. A range of staff, providers, MWA hosts and claimants were interviewed, and short ‘MWA host case studies’ undertaken. The list of individuals interviewed is summarised in Table A.1.

Individuals were contacted by the study team by telephone, appointments arranged and a confirmatory email sent setting out the main topics to be discussed.

Table A.1 Overview of individuals that were interviewed

Group	Planned interviews per district	Achieved
District staff – district managers, MWA district leads, CPA performance managers and MWA TPPMs Jobcentre Plus staff:	4 individuals per district	Total – 88 managers and staff at district and Jobcentre level
Focus groups with Jobcentre managers, CSOMs, PETLs, ATMs	3 focus groups, 4 to 6 staff per district	Of whom 31 were personal advisers
Personal advisers	6 per district	
Providers	2	10
MWA Hosts	2	10
MWA ‘mini case studies’ – placement hosts and 2 claimants	2 case studies per district – 2 hosts and 4 claimants	11 case studies completed
Telephone Interviews with claimants:		
Referred to MWA and started	3 per district	21
Referred to MWA and not started	5 per district	25

A.1 Fieldwork with District Offices

A mixture of face to face and telephone interviews took place with District Managers, MWA district leads and MWA contract managers in each of the five districts. The interviews covered the following areas:

- each individual’s understanding of the aims and policy intent of MWA;
- detail of the delivery process followed across the district – including how claimants and placement are identified, views on placement quality, and any areas for improvement identified;
- progress and performance to date in terms of referral, take-up and completion;

- views of outcomes and impact at the district level – from effects on claimants to any identified changes in provider behaviour resulting;
- in the trailblazer districts – experience of identifying and securing additional placements and other issues associated with increased MWA participant numbers, and experience of working with 18-24 year olds; and
- in the non-trailblazer districts – experience of placement availability and associated issues, and of working with 18 to 24 year olds to date.

A.2 Fieldwork with Jobcentre Plus Local Offices

Staff in three Jobcentres in each district were interviewed – a total of 15 Jobcentres overall. Two sets of consultations were undertaken for the most part (although in some Jobcentres the two exercises were combined):

- Focus groups in each Jobcentre office – with Jobcentre managers, Customer Service Operations Managers, Performance Team Leaders and Adviser Team Managers. Areas covered included: understanding of the policy intent of MWA, experience of delivery and challenges, performance and outcomes and areas for improvement.
- Face-to-face interviews with two personal advisers in each Jobcentres took place which explored their understanding of the policy, experiences of implementation (successes and challenges) and perceptions of benefits to date.

For this stage of the fieldwork, members of the study team spent one day at each Jobcentre, with the management focus group and interviews with personal advisors taking place on the same day. Any key individuals who were unable to attend were followed-up by telephone.

The topics explored mirrored those at the district level, including any issues around the expansion in placement numbers and specific issues arising in the trailblazer districts.

A.3 Providers

In each district, providers were interviewed face to face or by telephone. Ten in total were interviewed – five prime providers and five sub-contractors. The interviews explored their understanding and experience of MWA, their role (and success and challenges experienced) in identifying suitable referrals and securing placement opportunities. Performance against expectation was also reviewed, alongside their perceptions of impact in terms of changing claimants' attitudes to work and associated behavioural change. The impact of the increase in referrals was also examined.

A.4 Mandatory Work Activity hosts

The evaluation featured consultations with host organisations providing placement opportunities under MWA.

In total 21 different placement hosts took part in the evaluation, with a sample of hosts being developed from details provided by either the providers in each district or their sub-contractors. Table A.2 shows the distribution of the hosts consulted, and that in keeping with experiences across all five districts, the majority of placements were in charity shops.

Table A.2 Coverage – host interviews and case studies

Host interviews	Host case studies
South East Wales – a recycling centre and office work with a charity	South East Wales – charity shop and a restaurant
Birmingham – two charity shops	Birmingham – two charity shops
London – one charity shop	London – a furniture charity shop, a furniture and white goods recycling centre, and a country park
South West – a warehouse, charity shop, wood recycling	South West – a charity shop, a furniture charity shop
Durham and Tees Valley – two charity shops	Durham and Tees Valley – two charity shops

Two approaches were used to explore placement hosts’ perceptions and experiences of MWA:

- telephone interviews with two hosts in each district (ten in total); and
- short case studies with an additional two hosts in each district (11 in total). The host and participating claimants were interviewed when available. The target was two claimants per visit although this was not always achievable.

Topics covered with host organisations included their understanding of MWA and expectations of engagement with it, the type of placements offered and views on individuals referred, their experiences of the placements themselves, and whether they would continue to offer placement opportunities (and increased placement numbers) in future.

The case studies allowed participating claimants to discuss their placement, their understanding of its purpose, and their experience of referral and the placement itself, and the benefits they had gained or expected to gain from it.

Not all of the hosts could recall the exact number of placements provided so far, their estimates suggested that they ranged from one to over 100. A rough estimate, however, suggests the 21 hosts participating in the qualitative research had provided over 500 MWA placements at the time of interview. This section provides the findings from the host interviews and case studies.

A.5 Claimant interviews

In addition to the case studies, claimants referred to MWA were interviewed by telephone. Two groups of claimants were targeted:

- claimants referred to MWA who had started their placements – three in each district (15 in total); and
- claimants referred to MWA but who had not started their placements – five in each district (25 in total).

Claimants in both groups were sent a letter (see Appendix B) informing them of the study and notifying them that a researcher may contact them. If the claimant did not wish to participate in the study, they were asked to return a signed slip in a pre-paid self-addressed envelope. In addition, the researcher’s telephone number and email address were provided in the letter should the claimant have any queries about the study.

Telephone interviews were undertaken with 46 claimants, 21 of whom had started their placements and 28 who had been referred but were awaiting placement. Table A.3 illustrates the breakdown of starts and non-starts.

Table A.3 Breakdown of starts and referrals awaiting placement

	Started	Not started
Trailblazer	10	15
Non-trailblazer	11	10

In total 201 telephone calls were made to achieve 46 interviews (116 calls made to individuals in the non-trailblazer districts and 95 in the trailblazer district).

Of the interviewees who had started a placement, six (out of the 21 interviewed) had completed their placement (three in each district) and five were still attending at the time of interview. Ten interviewees had stopped attending their placement. The circumstances for the early leavers were as follows:

- Three had been sanctioned and one was waiting on a decision about a sanction. Two were sanctioned early on in their placements. One claimant had received a sanction because he said he went for a job interview (and presumably did not tell the provider/host). Another claimant claimed they were asked by the provider not to come in because the placement was overstaffed. However, this information had not been communicated to the jobcentre or the placement. One claimant had suffered a bereavement (he had notified the placement host but not the provider and as a result had been sanctioned) and one claimant said they were at risk of a sanction claiming the placement manager 'fired' her on her first day after claiming she was five minutes late back from her lunch break.
- One claimant acquired an injury while on the placement.
- One claimant had been asked to re-start her MWA by the placement manager due to health reasons. The claimant was waiting to speak to her contact at the provider but they were on annual leave.
- One claimant was not on the provider's books and did not receive their Jobseeker's Allowance payment.
- One claimant claimed they had been asked not to come in one day but had not been given a reason.
- One claimant left their placement because they did not enjoy it.
- One claimant had signed-off as they had found a paid work trial.

Of the 25 who had not started their placement:

- Sixteen were awaiting information about their placement (including ten from trailblazer districts).
- Two had turned down a placement they had been offered.
- Three had signed-off; one to re-enter education and two because they had found work, although one had subsequently lost their job and been re-referred for a second placement.
- Three had health problems.
- One had been sanctioned for fail to attend.

Claimants who were referred to MWA and had started their placements were asked about: their understanding of the purpose of MWA and the reasons for their referral, their experience of their placement, the perceived benefits resulting from it and any subsequent changes in their jobsearch behaviour.

Claimants who were referred to MWA but had not started their placements were asked about their reasons for not starting (awaiting a placement or some other reason), their current employment status and the barriers to work they experience.

The findings from the telephone research should be treated as a qualitative exercise only. Calls were not made to a random sample of claimants and interviewing stopped once interview quotas had been achieved.

Appendix B

Interview schedules

B.1 Jobcentre Managers, CSOM, ATM and PETL – trailblazers

Introduction and understanding

- When was MWA introduced in this office?
- What is your understanding of the policy intent of MWA? Is it different under the trailblazer?
- Did you welcome the introduction of MWA?
- What are the benefits (actual or potential) of MWA to this office and to its claimants?
- What are your views on the trailblazer expansion of MWA places for claimants with two or more sanctions?
- How was MWA and the trailblazer introduced to advisers?
 - What questions did they raise?
 - Is the new trailblazer guidance fit for purpose?
 - How well do you think the guidance is being followed?
 - What is their view on the value of MWA?

Identification of potential candidates

- How do you and your advisers identify appropriate claimants to refer to MWA?
- How else have you been supporting advisers in the identification of claimants with two previous sanctions, e.g. developing local guidance; sharing experience within the office?

Selection for referral

- How many or what proportion of eligible claimants with two or more sanctions do you expect to see referred onto MWA?
- What type of claimants are advisers referring to MWA? What characteristics or criteria are staff using?
- How do your advisers exercise their discretion in identifying the appropriate claimants to refer to MWA?
- Have your advisers referred any motivated claimants to MWA?
- Has the new guidance increased the likelihood of claimants with two sanctions being referred to MWA? Are there any other factors that would influence the decision to refer claimants with two sanctions to MWA?
- Do you think claimants with two or more sanctions are appropriate for referral to MWA?

- Are there some claimants with two or more sanctions that you have chosen not to send to MWA? If so, why did you choose not to send these claimants? (Need to be careful on the wording of this question as we do not want to imply that advisers should be sending all the second sanction claimants to MWA. It is still down to adviser discretion who goes to MWA and no obligation to send everyone – but in practice there will be some ‘gentle’ pressure to send this group so it is interesting to know why they decided not send some claimants).
- Do the characteristics of this sub-group of claimants differ from others you send to MWA (other than sanction history)? If so, how?

Introducing MWA to claimants

(Note: the managers may have limited views on the following as they are not claimant facing)

- How is MWA described to claimants? How is the purpose of MWA described and the activity of MWA?
- Is MWA introduced to clients as a possible outcome if they do not sign-on/demonstrate adequate jobsearch activity? (i.e. do they get a warning that if they do not improve then they will be referred to MWA?)
- How have claimants responded to being referred to MWA? What questions do they ask about MWA?
- Has the reaction to referral from claimants with two or more sanctions been different from others you have referred to MWA?

The delivery of MWA

- What is your view on the referral process of MWA? How quickly are claimants starting on their MWA placement after referral?
- Can you provide some examples of where claimants are being sent under MWA?
- What are your views on the quality of MWA placements?
- What feedback have you received from claimants attending MWA? Has this feedback differed for those claimants with two or more sanctions?

The impact of MWA

- How has MWA helped with meeting performance goals, e.g. off-flows?
- Are you aware of any evidence of a change in claimant engagement or attitudes from those who have participated (or just being referred to) MWA?
- Do you believe that MWA participation is moving claimants closer to the labour market?
- How could MWA be improved?
- Do you think that MWA fills an important gap in claimant support?
- Do you think that MWA is achieving its policy aim?
- Anything else you want to share regarding MWA?

B.2 Jobcentre Personal Advisers – trailblazers

Introduction and understanding

- When was MWA introduced into this office?
- What is your understanding of the policy intent of MWA? Is it different under the trailblazer?
- How was MWA and the trailblazer introduced to advisers?
 - What questions did you raise?
 - Is the new trailblazer guidance fit for purpose – easy to understand, clear, easy to apply in reality?
 - Are there any barriers to the implementation of the guidance?
- Did you welcome the introduction of MWA?

Identification of potential candidates

- How do you identify appropriate claimants to refer to MWA?
- How do you identify the trailblazer claimants?
- How else have you been supported in the identification of claimants and especially those with two previous sanctions, e.g. lists; local guidance; sharing experience and practice within the office?

Selection for referral

- What type of claimants do you refer to MWA? What characteristics or considerations do you use?
- How do you exercise your discretion in identifying the appropriate claimants to refer to MWA?
- Have you referred any motivated claimants to MWA?
- Has the new guidance increased the likelihood of claimants with two sanctions being referred to MWA? Are there any other factors that would influence your decision to refer claimants with two sanctions to MWA?
- Do you think claimants with two or more sanctions are appropriate for referral to MWA?
- Are there some claimants with two or more sanctions that you have chosen not to send to MWA? If so, why did you choose not to send these claimants? (Need to be careful on the wording of this question as we do not want to imply that Advisers should be sending all the second sanction claimants to MWA. It is still down to adviser discretion who goes to MWA and no obligation to send everyone – but in practice there may be some ‘gentle’ pressure to send this group so it is interesting to know why they decided not to send some claimants).
- Do the characteristics of claimants with two or more sanctions differ from others you send to MWA (other than sanction history)? If so, how?
- Once potential claimants have been identified; have there been any issues in calling claimants for their MWA referral interview

Introducing MWA to claimants

- How is MWA described to claimants? How is the purpose of MWA and what it involves described?
- Is MWA introduced to clients as a possible outcome if they do not sign-on/demonstrate adequate jobsearch activity (i.e. do they get a warning that if they do not improve then they will be referred to MWA?)
- How have claimants responded to being referred to MWA? What questions do they ask about MWA?
- Have any claimants signed-off benefit to avoid MWA? What do you think in particular put them off MWA?
- Has the reaction to referral from claimants with two or more sanctions been different from others you have referred to MWA?

The delivery of MWA

- What is your view on the referral process of MWA? How quickly are claimants starting on their MWA placement after referral?
- Can you provide some examples of where claimants are being sent under MWA?
- What are your views on the quality of MWA placements?
- What feedback have you received about claimants attending MWA? Has this feedback differed for those claimants with two or more sanctions?

The impact of MWA

- How has MWA helped with performance goals? Are you aware of any evidence of a change in claimant engagement or attitudes from those who have participated (or have just been referred to) MWA?
- Are there specific benefits from the trailblazer extension of MWA?
- Are there any problems with the MWA trailblazer?
- Do you believe that MWA participation is moving claimants closer to the labour market?
- How could MWA be improved?
- Do you think that MWA fills an important gap in claimant support?
- Do you think MWA is achieving its policy aim?
- Anything else you want to share regarding MWA?

B.3 Jobcentre Managers, CSOM, ATM and PETL – non-trailblazers

Introduction and understanding

- When was MWA introduced in this office?
- What is your understanding of the policy intent of MWA?
- Did you welcome the introduction of MWA?
- What are the benefits (actual or potential) of MWA to this office and to its claimants?

- How was MWA introduced to advisers?
 - What questions did they raise?
 - Is the guidance fit for purpose?
 - How well do you think the guidance is being followed?
 - What is advisers view on the value of MWA?

Identification of potential candidates

- How do you and your advisers identify appropriate claimants to refer to MWA?
- How have you been supporting advisers in the identification of claimants to refer onto MWA, e.g. providing additional lists; developing local guidance; sharing experience within the office?

Selection for referral

- What type of claimants are advisers referring to MWA? What characteristics or criteria are staff using?
- How do your advisers exercise their discretion in identifying the appropriate claimants to refer to MWA?
- Have advisers referred motivated claimants to MWA?
- Do you think claimants with two or more sanctions are appropriate for referral to MWA?
- Once potential claimants have been identified; have there been any issues in calling in claimants for their referrals interview?

Introducing MWA to claimants

- How is MWA described to claimants? How is the purpose of MWA described and the activity of MWA?
- Is MWA introduced to clients as a possible outcome if they do not sign-on/demonstrate adequate jobsearch activity? (i.e. do they get a warning that if they do not improve then they will be referred to MWA?)
- How have claimants responded to being referred to MWA? What questions do they ask about MWA?
- Have any claimants signed off to avoid MWA? If so, what in particular about MWA do you think put them off?

The delivery of MWA

- What is your view on the referral process of MWA? How quickly are claimants starting on their MWA placement after referral?
- Can you provide some examples of where claimants are being sent under MWA?
- What are your views on the quality of MWA placements?
- What feedback have you received about claimants attending MWA?

The impact of MWA

- How has MWA helped with meeting your performance goals?
- Are you aware of any evidence of a change in claimant engagement or attitudes from those who have participated (or just being referred to) MWA?
- Do you believe that MWA participation is moving claimants closer to the labour market?
- How could MWA be improved?
- Do you think that MWA fills an important gap in claimant support?
- Do you think MWA is meeting its policy aims?
- Anything else you want to share regarding MWA?

B.4 Jobcentre Personal Advisers – non-trailblazers

Introduction and understanding

- When was MWA introduced into this office?
- What is your understanding of the policy intent of MWA?
- Did you welcome the introduction of MWA?
- How was MWA introduced to advisers?
- What questions did you raise?
- Is the guidance fit for purpose – easy to understand, clear, easy to apply in reality?
- Are there any barriers to the implementation of the guidance?

Identification of potential candidates

- How do you identify appropriate claimants to refer to MWA?
- How have you been supported in the identification of suitable claimants, e.g. lists of claimants; local guidance; sharing experience and practice within the office?

Selection for referral

- What type of claimants do you choose to refer to MWA? What characteristics or considerations do you use?
- How do you exercise your discretion in identifying the appropriate claimants to refer to MWA?
- Do you think claimants with two or more sanctions would be appropriate for referral to MWA?
- Do you refer claimants with two or more sanctions to MWA?
- Once potential claimants have been identified, have there been any issues in calling claimants in for their MWA referral appointment?

Introducing MWA to claimants

- How is MWA described to claimants? How is the purpose of MWA and what it involves described?
- Is MWA introduced to clients as a possible outcome if they do not sign-on/demonstrate adequate jobsearch activity (i.e. do they get a warning that if they do not improve then they will be referred to MWA?)
- How have claimants responded to being referred to MWA? What questions do they ask about MWA?
- Have any claimants signed-off to avoid MWA? If so what in particular about MWA has put them off?

The delivery of MWA

- What is your view on the referral process of MWA? How quickly are claimants starting on their MWA placement after referral?
- Can you provide some examples of where claimants are being sent under MWA?
- What are your views on the quality of MWA placements?
- What feedback have you received from claimants attending MWA?

The impact of MWA

- How has MWA helped with meeting your performance goals, e.g. off-flows?
- Are you aware of any evidence of a change in claimant engagement or attitudes from those who have participated in (or have just been referred to) MWA?
- Do you believe that MWA participation is moving claimants closer to the labour market?
- How could MWA be improved?
- Do you think that MWA fills an important gap in claimant support?
- Do you think that MWA is achieving its policy aim?
- Anything else you want to share regarding MWA?

B.5 Claimants referred to and who participated in Mandatory Work Activity

(Note: Half of both claimant groups (participants and referred only) will be have two or more sanctions/disallowances before referral. So we can pick up any particular issues for this sub-group of claimants).

Introduction of MWA and referral

- We understand from DWP/Jobcentre Plus records that you started on a mandatory work placement on XXXXX date – is that correct?
- Are you still on the placement? If no, did you complete your placement (or did they leave early – is ask the early leaver questions below)?
- When did the Jobcentre tell you that you were being sent on this placement?
- How was MWA described to you?

- Did you understand why you were referred onto MWA?
- What did you think was the purpose of MWA?
- When the Jobcentre first told you were being sent onto the placement, did it have any impact on your attitudes or behaviour? (e.g. thinking about or choosing to sign-off to avoid MWA)
- Did the threat of sanctions influence your participation in the (MWA) placement?

MWA placement

- Where have you been on placement? What is/was your role there?
- How would you describe your experience of attending MWA/being on your placement?
- What did you think of the placement (the quality of the opportunity and the supervision received; any issues, e.g. non-attendance for any reason)?
- What have you learned from being on MWA placement (renewed confidence; new skills)?

Early Leaver from the MWA Placement

- Are you still on the placement? If no, did you complete your placement (or did they leave early – is ask the early leaver questions below)?
- What was your reason for leaving the placement early? Probe in detail. Find out what in particular the claimant did not like about the placement.
- If they have left the placement – are you still claiming JSA?
- If yes, would you rather forfeit (give up) your JSA than return to the placement? If so, why?

Impact

- Do/did you believe that participation in MWA will help you get a job?
- Has your experience on MWA made any impact on your view or behaviour about getting a job? If, so how (optimism; looking at different types of job; increased jobsearch activity; wider jobsearch area)?
- How do you think MWA could be improved?
- What is your current employment/benefit status?
- If employed, do you think MWA had any effect on you getting a job?
- If unemployed, what else could Jobcentre Plus to help you get a job?
- Is there anything else you want to share regarding MWA?

B.6 Claimants referred to Mandatory Work Activity who didn't start

(Note: Need to confirm with claimant that they had a referral to MWA but have not (yet) started the placement).

We understand from DWP/Jobcentre Plus records that you were referred to a mandatory work placement on X but you have not started this placement. Is this correct? If they have no recollection of being referred to MWA (mandatory work placement) then terminate interview as can't provide any feedback.

If they have started their placement then use the starter's interview schedule instead

Why didn't you start your placement?

- Waiting for a suitable placement (explore what this means).
- Waiting for the provider to get in contact about setting up a placement.
- Got a job before the placement started.
- Did not want to attend a placement.
- Any other reason?

If the claimant is waiting for a placement or a provider to contact them, ask if they intend to start the placement once it has been arranged? Probe in detail if they have any concerns about starting the placement.

If the claimant has not started because they didn't want to attend the placement or they do not intend to start the placement – probe the following in detail.

- What was it about MWA that put you-off/made you sign-off?
- Explore without prompting but could include: the specific placement; travel; personal issues (e.g. self-confidence); health; care responsibilities; was working and signing.

Are you currently claiming JSA? If left JSA, probe in detail why left. Was referral to MWA a factor, even if in part, in leaving JSA?

If still claiming JSA would you be willing to forfeit (give up) your JSA to avoid going on the placement?

Introduction of MWA and referral

- When did the Jobcentre tell you that you were being sent on this placement?
- How was MWA described to you?
- Did you understand why you were referred onto MWA?
- What did you think was the purpose of MWA?
- When the Jobcentre first told you were being sent onto the placement, did it have any impact on your attitudes or behaviour?
- Did it make you more motivated to find job, take a job or leave JSA?
- Did the threat of sanctions influence your participation in the (MWA) placement?

View on potential impact

- What is your current employment status?
- If unemployed, what are your current barriers to getting a job?
- Do you think a MWA work placement could help you get a job? Probe in detail
- If unemployed, what else would help you find work?
- For both employed and unemployed, is there anything else you want to share regarding MWA?

B.7 Mandatory Work Activity providers – non-trailblazers

Purpose

- What do you understand as the purpose (policy intent) of MWA?

Referrals

- How many claimants and placements are you contracted to provide and over what time period?
- What is your feedback on the quantity of referrals from Jobcentre Plus?
- What is your view on the quality of referrals from Jobcentre Plus?
- Have you had any difficulty in placing claimants referred to you?

Placements

- How did you source placements (existing links or new organisations)?
- What was your brief on the sort of placements to be sourced?
- Are/were there any issues in sourcing placements?
- What is your feedback on sourcing (and retaining) the required quantity of placements?
- What is your view on the quality of placements?
- What type of placement is best suited to MWA claimants?

Delivery

- Are you able to meet the ten day target for referral to start? If not, why not?
- What proportion of claimants is failing to start MWA? How are you dealing with these claimants?
- How are you monitoring claimants while they are on their placement?
- What is the fail to attend rate for claimants after starting their placement?
- What is your procedure if claimants fail to attend MWA?
- What have been claimants' reasons behind failure to attend after starting MWA?
- What is your feedback on the sanctions process for MWA? How many claimants have you referred back to Jobcentre Plus for sanction?
- How has the funding model impacted on your delivery of MWA, e.g. maintaining attendance on MWA, incentive to refer to sanctions?

Impact

- How have claimants responded to participating in MWA?
- Do you have any evidence of claimants' attitudes to work changing as a result of participating in MWA?
- Would you renew your contract for MWA?
- What have been the overall challenges to delivery of MWA?
- Is there any way MWA could be improved?
- Anything else you want to share regarding MWA?

B.8 Mandatory Work Activity providers – trailblazers

Purpose

- What do you understand as the purpose (policy intent) of MWA? Are you aware of the specific trailblazer sub-group of claimants, i.e. those who have had two or more sanctions already? (Note: within the trailblazer districts there is a separate PRaP referral code for trailblazer claimants because they attract a higher start fee. So providers should be aware of the claimant group and the volumes coming through).

Referrals

- How many claimants and placements are you contracted to provide and over what time period? What proportion and number of these will have had 2 or more sanctions already – the trailblazer client group?
- What is your feedback on the quantity of referrals from Jobcentre Plus? Specifically, are you receiving the expected volumes of trailblazer claimants (claimants with two previous sanctions)? What is your view on the quality of referrals from Jobcentre Plus?
- Have you had any difficulty in placing claimants referred to you? Have you had any particular issues in placing (dealing with) the trailblazer sub-group of claimants?
- Do you think the trailblazer group of claimants are suitable claimants for MWA? If not, why not?

Placements

- How did you source placements (existing links or new organisations)?
- What was your brief on the sort of placements to be sourced?
- Were there/are there any issues in sourcing placements?
- What is your feedback on sourcing (and retaining) the required quantity of placements?
- What is your view on the quality of placements?
- What type of placement is best suited to MWA claimants? Is this any different for the trailblazer group of claimants?

Delivery

- Are you able to meet the ten day target for referral to start? If not, why not?
- What proportion of claimants is failing to start MWA? What proportion of the trailblazer sub-group of claimants is failing to start MWA?
- How are you dealing with these claimants?
- How are you monitoring claimants while they are on their placement?
- What is the fail to attend rate for claimants once they have started their placement? What is this rate for the trailblazer sub-group of claimants?
- What is your procedure if claimants fail to attend MWA (after starting)?
- What have been claimants' reasons behind failure to attend after starting MWA generally and for the trailblazer sub-group?

- What is your feedback on the sanctions process for MWA? How many claimants have you referred back to Jobcentre Plus for sanction?
- How has the funding model impacted on your delivery of MWA, e.g. maintaining attendance on MWA, incentive to refer to sanctions?

Impact

- How have claimants and the trailblazer group responded to participating in MWA?
- Do you have any evidence of claimants', in particular trailblazer claimants', attitudes to work changing as a result of participating in MWA?
- Would you renew your contract for MWA?
- What have been the overall challenges to delivery of MWA?
- Is there any way MWA could be improved?
- Anything else you want to share regarding MWA?

B.9 Mandatory Work Activity host organisations – non-trailblazer

Purpose

- What do you understand as the purpose (policy intent) of MWA?
- Why did you agree to provide placements for MWA?
- What other schemes do you provide placements for?
- How long have you been providing placement for MWA? How many placements do you offer/contracted to provide?
- Have there been any issues on in the number of claimants that have been referred to you and on how quickly they were expected to start.

Delivery

- How many claimants have you had on placement? What do you (your staff) know about the claimant in advance?
- What placements do you offer? What are the MWA claimants expected to do (nature of work, tasks and activities, working hours) while on their placement?
- What is your feedback on the types of claimant sent on placement via MWA?
- How many/what proportion of claimants fail to turn-up and start their placement?
- How many/what proportion of claimants start their placement but then drop-out – don't complete the placement?
- What is your process when claimants fail to start or to fail to attend their placement?
- How have claimants responded to participating in MWA?
- Have there been any issues with the placements, e.g. regarding claimants behaviour and conduct?
- How do you maintain attendance at the placements? Is this successful? What works best?

Impact

- Do you have any evidence of claimants' attitudes to work changing as a result of participating in MWA?
- Would you offer placements for MWA claimants in the future?
- Is there any way MWA could be improved?
- Is there anything else you want to share regarding MWA?

B.10 Mandatory Work Activity host organisations – trailblazer

Purpose

- What do you understand as the purpose (policy intent) of MWA?
- Why did you agree to provide placements for MWA?
- What other schemes do you provide placements for?
- How long have you been providing placement for MWA? How many placements do you offer/contracted to provide?
- Have there been any issues on in the number of claimants that have been referred to you and on how quickly they were expected to start.

Delivery

- How many claimants have you had on placement?
- What do you (your staff) know about the claimant in advance? Are you aware of an increase in claimants with a previous sanctions history? (Note: we do not know if the host organisations will know whether the claimants is a trailblazer candidate or not)
- What placements do you offer? What are the MWA claimants expected to do (nature of work, tasks and activities, working hours) while on their placement?
- What is your feedback on the types of claimant sent on placement via MWA?
- How many/what proportion of claimants fail to turn-up and start their placement?
- How many/what proportion of claimants start their placement but then drop-out – don't complete the placement?
- What is your process when claimants fail to start or to fail to attend their placement?
- How have claimants responded to participating in MWA? Have you experienced any particular issues in working with claimants who have a history of being sanctioned (e.g. higher FTA rates)? (Note: host organisation may not be able to answer this question if they do not know who is a trailblazer claimant).
- Have there been any issues with the placements e.g. regarding claimants' behaviour and conduct?
- How do you maintain attendance at the placements? Is this successful? What works best?

Impact

- Do you have any evidence of claimants' attitudes to work changing as a result of participating in MWA?
- Would you offer placements for MWA claimants in the future? Do you think claimants with a history of benefit sanctions are suitable candidates for MWA placements? If not, why not?
- Is there any way MWA could be improved?
- Is there anything else you want to share regarding MWA?

B.11 Mandatory Work Activity Third Party Provision Manager and Performance Managers

(Note: The TTPM and PM roles are very similar aside from the geographical area they cover. However, the PM retains the role of liaising with the provider if there are any performance issues. For example, if the provider is not meeting the ten target, the PM should pursue this with the provider. The PM might also pursue other performance/contractual issues, e.g. lack of suitable placements available)

Purpose

- What do you understand the policy intent (purpose) of MWA to be?
- What is your responsibility for the MWA contract?
- What contact do you have with the providers regarding MWA? Do you have any contact with sub-contractors and placement hosts?

Delivery

- Have there been any issues or problems with the referral process? If so, what?
- Have providers met the ten day target between referral and start? If not, what has been done to address this (explore specifically with the PM)?
- Have there been any issues in sourcing enough placements?
- What are your views on the quality of placements?
- Are you aware of any issues for/at the placement hosts (e.g. maintaining attendance, supervising participants, etc.)?
- Are you aware of how claimants have been responding to attending MWA?

Sanctions

- Are you aware of the frequency and reasons for sanction referrals from the MWA providers?
- Are there any issues with the sanctions process?
- Funding.
- What is your view on the funding model for MWA (explore additional PRaP for trailblazers where relevant)?

Performance

- What is your overall impression of how the MWA contract has been running to date?
- What are the performance issues (if any)?
- Is there any way that the MWA contract arrangements could be improved?
- Any other feedback you would like to share regarding MWA?

B.12 District Manager and Mandatory Work Activity district leads

Purpose

- What do you understand the policy intent (purpose) of MWA to be?
- [District leads] What is your responsibility with regard to MWA?

Referrals

- How has the referral process being working?
- What are your views on the expansion in the number of MWA places and associated change to guidance regarding claimants with two or more previous sanctions?
- Do you think claimants with two or more previous sanctions are suitable claimants for a MWA referral?
- How are advisers responding to the increase in places and change in guidance?

Delivery

- Are there any issues with the quantity or quality of MWA placements?
- Do you have any feedback on the claimant response referral and/or attending the placements?
- How has the sanctions process being working for MWA? Could this be improved in anyway?

Performance

- What, in your opinion is the value of having MWA within the menu of options for advisers?
- Could the MWA contracts or delivery process be improved in anyway?
- How effective do you think MWA is in meeting its objectives?
- Any other feedback you would like to share regarding MWA?

Appendix C

Claimant advance letter

DWP Department for
Work and Pensions



[Insert claimants name here
Type first line of address here
Type second line/town
Type town/postcode
Postcode]

Date: 24th February 2012

Dear [Name]

Evaluation of Mandatory Work Activity

I am writing to you to ask for your help in a research study that has been commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The aim of this research is to find out about people's experience of Mandatory Work Activity. Your name has been selected from people referred for a Mandatory Work Activity placement and we are contacting you for research purposes only. We would like to speak to you, to hear more about your experience.

The research is being conducted on DWP's behalf by **GHK**, an independent research organisation. A researcher from **GHK** may be in touch with you to ask if you are willing to participate in a **telephone interview**. If you choose to take part in an interview it will last no longer than 15 minutes.

Any information you provide will be held in the strictest of confidence and will be handled securely throughout the study. The research findings will not identify you and no personal information will be shared with any third parties. **Participation in this research is voluntary and will not affect any benefits or tax credits you are claiming, now or in the future.**

If you **do not** want to take part please let GHK know by **Monday 5th March**. You can contact the **contractor** via email on mwasurvey@ghkint.com or you can tear off the strip below and use the enclosed stamped addressed envelope. If you have any questions about the research please contact Daljeet Johal or Eleanor Breen on 020 7492 1658.

Your contribution will provide us with valuable information that will help us to review our services and the support we provide our customers. We hope that you decide to take part.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely



Janet Allaker, DWP



Eleanor Breen, GHK

.....

I do not wish to be contacted for the research

Customer Ref No.: XXX

Signature:

Name (in capital letters):

Please return to GHK in the stamped addressed envelope provided.

Appendix D

Quantitative methodology

This short annex provides further technical details about the how the quantitative survey was designed and implemented.

The quantitative survey was 29 minutes long on average although the length of the survey varied considerably depending on claimants' answers. The final questionnaire used in the survey can be found at the end of this document.

D.1 The telephone survey

The survey was conducted with a selection of claimants who had been referred to and started an MWA placement. TNS-BMRB carried out telephone interviews with 798 claimants in total.

TNS-BMRB wrote to all selected claimants around two weeks before the start of the telephone survey to notify them that they had been selected and to ask for their co-operation in the research. The letter contained a freephone number and email address so that claimants could ask questions or opt out of the research.

Telephone interviews were carried out by TNS-BMRB interviewers between 16 July and 20 August 2012. Where claimants were unable to take part initially interviewers made appointments to speak to them at a more convenient time. Interviews consisted largely of 'closed' questions asking respondents to select their response from a list of precoded answers.

D.2 Sample development/inviting respondents to take part

The sample for the survey was selected from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) records of claimants who had started an Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) placement between February and April 2011. Claimants were selected randomly from a database of all claimant starts made during this period after stratifying by age, benefit history and region.

The sample included a purposive over-selection of claimants aged under 25. The over-selection of under 25s was to ensure a minimum of 400 interviews to allow reliable data analysis among this important group of claimants. Otherwise the sample was selected to provide a representative cross-section of claimants who had been referred to and started MWA.

D.3 Questionnaire design

The telephone questionnaire was designed with input from DWP, TNS-BMRB and GHK. The questionnaire development was informed by two key elements: the aims and objectives set out in the project brief and proposal; and the findings from a pilot exercise involving interviews with claimants who had started an MWA placement.

The pilot exercise consisted of 30 telephone interviews and was carried out to test the wording of the questionnaire and introduction to the survey. Researchers from both TNS-BMRB and DWP monitored interviews throughout the pilot and a number of changes were made to improve the flow of the questionnaire and to reduce the overall length of the survey.

Claimants who had attended more than one MWA placement (around 0.5 per cent of starters had attended more than one placement) were interviewed mainly about the first placement they attended. This ensured a similar interview experience for all respondents, particular in relation to the experience of being referred on to MWA for the first time.

D.4 Fieldwork outcomes

Table D.1 provides a breakdown of the response to the telephone survey. The final response rate was 52 per cent based on 798 complete interviews from a total of 1,522 pieces of ‘in scope’ sample (excluding invalid numbers, ineligible respondents and one respondent who had died).

Table D.1 Breakdown of sample and achieved interviews with claimants

	n	%
Total sample	2,349	–
Invalid telephone numbers	741	32
Ineligible (respondent claimed not been on MWA/had dealings with Jobcentre Plus)	85	4
Respondent dead	1	0
<i>Total out of scope</i>	827	35
<i>Total in scope</i>	1,522	–
Refusals	79	5
Terminated interviews	37	2
Respondent unavailable during fieldwork	9	1
Unresolved appointment/callbacks	563	37
Claimant answered survey about wrong (non-MWA placement)	10	1
Complete interviews	798	52
Final response rate		52

D.5 Analysis and weighting

Survey data were weighted using DWP statistics to correct for the purposive over-selection of under 25s and for any non-response biases.

Quantitative analysis is drawn from claimants’ responses to the telephone survey augmented with management information provided by DWP. The two were linked using an anonymous unique identifier. Throughout the report two pieces of management information are used extensively:

- benefit history (the number of days the claimant had been claiming benefits in the five years leading up to the survey);
- previous sanctions (the number of sanctions that had been applied to the claimant either relating to MWA or any other non-compliance).

For simplicity, analysis by benefit history is presented in quartiles; claimants being divided into four approximately equal sub-groups according to the number of days they have claimed benefits. Quartile (1) included those who had claimed benefits for up to 355 days in the last five years, quartile (2) 356 to 817 days, quartile (3) 818 to 1,351 days and quartile (4) more than 1,351 days.

Appendix E

Claimant survey questionnaire

INTRODUCTION

Ask to speak to (CONTACT NAME) and confirm name when speaking to this person.

INTERVIEWER: My name is ... and I'm calling on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions. TNS-BMRB are conducting some research into people's experiences or work placements organised through the Jobcentre Plus.

I understand that you recently attended a Mandatory Work Activity placement. You should have received a letter about this. We would like to ask you about your experience of this recent placement. The information you give will be used to improve the services offered by Jobcentre Plus.

IF NECESSARY:

Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary and will not affect your benefits or dealings with the Department for Work and Pensions. You can withdraw from the research at any time.

Any information you provide will be held in the strictest of confidence and will be handled securely throughout the study in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998). The information you provide will be used only for research purposes and the research findings will not identify you.

Would you be willing to take part? It should take about 25-30 minutes to complete.

INTERVIEWER: IF NO, BRIEFLY OUTLINE THE PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF THE SURVEY

SCREENING

ASK ALL

CONFIRMREF

I believe you were recently referred onto the Mandatory Work Activity scheme by Jobcentre Plus. Can you please confirm whether you were sent on a mandatory work placement in [textfill: month from sample]?

ADD IF NECESSARY: This is a 4-week work placement where you would be required to work for up to 30 hours per week. You would not have received payment, except for the cost of travel and childcare expenses.

SINGLE CODED.

1. Yes
2. No
- Don't know

IF CONFIRMREF = No OR Don't know, THANK AND CLOSE

ASK ALL

CONFIRMSTART

And since that referral have you attended this work placement at all?

SINGLE CODED

1. Yes
2. No
3. [DO NOT READ OUT] I haven't received details of placement yet
4. [DO NOT READ OUT] I haven't had a start date yet

IF CONFIRMSTART = No OR 'I haven't received details of placement yet' OR 'I haven't had a start date yet', THANK AND CLOSE

IF CONFIRMSTART = Yes

FIRSTMWA

Is this the first mandatory work placement arranged by Jobcentre Plus that you've ever attended?

SINGLE CODED

1. Yes
2. No
- Don't know

IF FIRSTMWA = No

NUMBERMWA

How many mandatory work placements have you ever attended?

Numeric (2-10)

Don't know

CUSTOMER BACKGROUND

ASK ALL

JOBOUTCOME

Can I just check, have you had any PAID work since you completed the mandatory work placement that started in (text fill: start month)?

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

WORK

And, are you currently in paid or unpaid work?

PROMPT TO PRECODES. CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

1. Paid work
 2. Unpaid work but not MWA (e.g. work experience, volunteering)
 3. On MWA placement
 4. [SINGLE CODED] Not working
- Don't know
-

IF WORK = 1 (is currently in paid work)

WORKTIME

And are you working.....?

READ OUT

1. 16 hours or more per week
 2. Or less than 16 hours per week
- Refused
-

ASK ALL

BENEFITS

Can I check: are you claiming any of these benefits at present? Please only include benefits where you are the named recipient.

READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1. Jobseeker's Allowance
 2. Income Support
 3. Incapacity Benefit
 4. Employment and Support Allowance
 5. Carers' Allowance
- None of these
-

IF WORK = 3 or 4 (is currently on MWA or not working)

WORKBARRIERS1

Do any of the following make it difficult for you to get back to work?

READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

1. Family or caring commitments
 2. Health issues or disabilities that limit the kind of work you can do
 3. Lack of vacancies or too much competition for jobs
 4. Not having the right skills for the jobs available
 5. You don't want to leave benefit and get a job
 6. Knowing you would be worse off financially in work
 7. DO NOT READ OUT: None of these
- Don't know
-

IF WORK = 3 or 4 (is currently on MWA or not working)

WORKBARRIERS2

And do any of the following make it difficult for you to get a job?

READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1. Lack of work experience
 2. Drug or alcohol problems
 3. Criminal record
 4. Housing problems
 5. Transport/travel difficulties
 6. Something else (specify)
 7. DO NOT READ: None of these
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

OUTOFWORK

[IF WORK NOT 1 (not currently in paid WORK)]How long have you been out of paid work?

[IF WORK = 1 (is currently in PAID work)]: How long were you out of paid work before you started your current job?

PROMPT TO PRECODES

1. Less than 1 month
 2. 1 – up to 3 months
 3. 3 – up to 6 months
 4. 6- up to 12 months
 5. 1 year – up to 2 years
 6. 2 years – up to 3 years
 7. 3 years – up to 5 years
 8. 5 years or more
 9. Never worked
- Refused
-

IF WORK NOT 1 (is not currently in paid work)

ECONACTIVITY

Which of these is your main activity at present? Are you...

READ OUT ALL AND CODE THE ONE THAT APPLIES TO MAIN ACTIVITY

- A. focused primarily on looking for work
 - B. in training or education (including at school/college)
 - C. caring for children or other people
 - D. coping with a long term condition or disability
 - E. getting better from a temporary illness
 - F. unemployed and not looking for work
-

ATTITUDES TO EMPLOYMENT AND JOBSEARCH

The next few questions are about how people feel about work and looking for work.

ASK ALL

WORKATTITUDES

Please can you tell me how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

SINGLE CODE

- A. Having almost any type of paid work is better than not working
- B. **[IF WORK = 1]** I am a happier person now I'm in paid work
[IF WORK NOT 1] I would be a happier person if I was in paid work
- C. Being in paid work allows you to contribute properly to society
- D. **[IF WORK NOT 1]** The thought of being in paid work makes me nervous
- E. People are put under too much pressure to find work
- F. Once you have a job, it's very important to keep it , even if you don't really like it

READ OUT:

- 1. Agree
 - 2. Disagree
 - 3. Neither agree nor disagree
 - 4. Not applicable
- Don't know
-

IF WORKATTITUDES = AGREE or DISAGREE

Is that strongly or slightly?

- 1. Slightly
 - 2. Strongly
-

SUPPORT BEFORE REFERRAL TO MWA

ASK ALL

Now please think about all the support you've received from Jobcentre Plus in trying to find employment. Can you tell me ...

ASK ALL

JCPSUPPORT1

Before you were told you had been chosen for a Mandatory Work Placement, did the Jobcentre Plus do any of the following for you ...

READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY

- A. Sent you on a training course to help with job skills?
- B. Arranged a skills assessment?
- C. Arranged voluntary work?
- D. Arranged careers advice?

DO NOT READ OUT: None of these

ASK ALL

JCP SUPPORT2

And did they give you any help with the following ...

IF NECESSARY: that is help BEFORE you were told you had been chosen for a Mandatory Work Placement

- E. Childcare or other caring responsibilities
- F. Health problems or disabilities
- G. Alcohol problems
- H. Housing problems
- I. Setting up your own business

DO NOT READ OUT: None of these

THE REFERRAL AND GENERAL VIEWS ON MWA

ASK ALL

The next few questions are about the time when you were first told by your Jobcentre Plus Adviser that you had been chosen to go on a Mandatory Work Activity placement.

IF FIRSTMWA = No

Please think about the very *first* occasion when your Adviser spoke to you about a placement. That is before your first Mandatory Work Activity placement.

ASK ALL

QCLAR1

Before you were referred did your adviser speak to you about what a placement would involve?

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

IF QCLAR1 = Yes

QCLAR2

And was this the first time you'd heard about the Mandatory Work Activity programme?

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

IF QCLAR1 = No OR DK, OR QCLAR2 = No OR DK

QWHER1

Where did you first hear or see something about the Mandatory Work Activity programme?

DO NOT READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1. Adviser had mentioned it before
 2. Word of mouth – friends or family
 3. Article in newspaper or magazine
 4. TV or radio
 5. Other (specify)
- Don't know
-

IF QWHER = Adviser had mentioned it before

QWHER2

You said that your Adviser had mentioned Mandatory Work Activity to you previously. How long before the actual referral did your Adviser *first* mention this? Was it ...

PROMPT TO PRECODES. SINGLE CODE ONLY

1. A few days before you were referred
 2. 1-2 weeks before
 3. A few weeks before
 4. A few months before
 5. Or much earlier than that?
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL.

QBEN1

When you were told you had been chosen for a Mandatory Work Placement, did the Adviser talk about the possible advantages of attending?

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

IF QBEN = Yes (discussed possible benefits of attending a placement)

QBEN2

What possible advantages did they discuss with you?

DO NOT READ OUT. PROMPT TO PRECODES. CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1. Increase your chances of getting paid work
 2. Increase your work experience
 3. Chance to improve your CV
 4. Chance to improve your confidence
 5. Chance to develop interpersonal skills/ability to work as part of a team
 6. Chance to try something new/broaden horizons
 7. Chance to get a work reference
 8. Other (specify)
- Don't know
-

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IF QBEN1 not yes (did not discuss possible benefits of attending a placement)

QBEN3

How did the Adviser explain the purpose of the placement? Did they say that attending the placement was to...

IF NECESSARY REPEAT: Did the Adviser say that attending the placement was to...

READ OUT.

- A. increase your chances of getting a job
- B. improve your work experience and CV
- C. help you get into the routine of going to work
- D. give you fresh motivation to look for work

CODE FOR EACH

- 1. Yes – this was mentioned
 - 2. No – not mentioned
 - Don't know
-

IF QBEN1 not yes (did not discuss possible benefits of attending a placement)

QBEN4

Did the Adviser mention anything else when explaining the purpose of the placement?

OPEN ENDED. PROBE FULLY.

CODE 'NULL' IF NOTHING ELSE MENTIONED.

ASK ALL

QLEN1

And did they make it clear that the placement would last 4 weeks?

- 1. Yes
 - 2. No
 - Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QSANC1

Did the Adviser make it clear that...

READ OUT

- A. attending the placement was compulsory
- B. you had to attend for the full 4 week placement period

CODE FOR EACH

- 1. Yes
 - 2. No
 - Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QSANC2

What were you told would happen if you did not keep to these rules?

DO NOT READ OUT. PROMPT TO PRECODES. CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

1. Your benefit would be STOPPED for a set period of time
 2. Your benefit would be STOPPED permanently
 3. Your benefit would be REDUCED for a set period of time
 4. Your benefit would be REDUCED permanently
 5. You would be referred onto another Mandatory Work Activity placement
 6. Other (specify)
 7. Told nothing
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QCLEAR1

Overall, how clearly did the adviser explain what your placement would involve?

Would you say ...

1. Very clearly
 2. Clearly
 3. Not very clearly
 4. Not clearly at all
 5. [DO NOT READ OUT: No explanation given]
- Don't know
-

IF QCLEAR1 = 3 or 4 or 5 or DK (not explained clearly or at all)

QIMP2

What could they have done to make it clearer?

PROBE: What else should the adviser have told you about the placement? How could they have explained things more clearly?

OPEN ENDED. PROBE FULLY

Don't know

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ASK ALL

QHAPP2a

I'm now going to read out some statements about how you may have felt when Jobcentre Plus referred you on the placement. For each please tell me if you felt this or not.

When the Adviser referred me on a Mandatory Work Activity placement I felt...

IF NECESSARY REPEAT: When the Jobcentre Plus sent you on the mandatory work placement did you feel...

READ OUT

- A. It was an opportunity to give something back to the community
- B. There was no choice, I had to attend
- C. It was to put me off claiming Jobseeker's Allowance
- D. It was an opportunity to improve my work experience
- E. It would help me get a job

CODE FOR EACH

- 1. Yes
 - 2. No
 - 3. [DO NOT READ OUT:] Partly
 - Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QHAPP1a

And, based on everything you were told by the Adviser, did you feel positive or negative about being sent on placement?

PROMPT – is that 'very' positive ...

- 1. Very positive
 - 2. Positive
 - 3. Neither positive nor negative
 - 4. Negative
 - 5. Very negative
 - Don't know
-

THE OFFER/MATCHING PROCESS

IF FIRSTMWA = no

Please continue to think about the very *first* occasion you were referred onto a Mandatory Work Activity placement. That is before your *first* placement.

ASK ALL

QGAP

How long did you wait between the Jobcentre Plus Adviser referring you and the placement organisers contacting you?

1. 1 week or less
 2. More than 1 week, up to 2 weeks
 3. More than 2 weeks, up to 6 weeks
 4. More than 6 weeks
- Don't know
-

IF QGap=3 OR 4 (waited more than 2 weeks)

QTIME3

What were the reasons you were given for how long this was taking?

DO NOT READ OUT. PROMPT TO PRE-CODES IF NECESSARY.

1. No reasons given
 2. Availability – of local placements
 3. Availability – of suitable types of placement
 4. Other (specify)
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QCHOICE

At this stage, were you offered a specific placement or a choice of placements?

1. One specific placement
 2. Choice of placements
- Don't know
-

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ASK ALL

QTYPE

Did the placement organiser provide a clear explanation of the type of work [textfill: this placement/ each of these placements] would require you to do?

1. Yes
 2. No
 3. [DO NOT READ OUT: for some of the placements, but not all]
Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QINFO1

Were you sent a letter detailing the placement start time and where to go?

1. Yes
 2. No
 - Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QSUITABLE1

Did you feel, based on the information provided, that the placement you were offered was suitable for you?

1. Yes
 2. No
 - Don't know
-

IF QSUITABLE1 NOT Yes (did not feel placement was suitable)

QSUITABLE2

Why did you feel the placement was not suitable?

OPEN-ENDED. PROBE FULLY.

Don't know

ASK ALL

QDISCUSS1

Before starting your first placement, did you have the chance to discuss the placement with someone from the organisation where you would be working?

PROMPT: Was that in person or by phone?

1. Yes – in person
 2. Yes – by phone
 3. No
 - Don't know
-

THE PLACEMENT

IF FIRSTMWA = no

Still thinking about the very *first* occasion you were referred onto a Mandatory Work Activity placement.

ASK ALL

QDAYS

On what days of the week [textfill: are you working/did you work] during your placement?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

INTERVIEWER: If respondent left part way through the placement – ask them to say which days they were supposed to work.

1. Monday
 2. Tuesday
 3. Wednesday
 4. Thursday
 5. Friday
 6. Saturday
 7. Sunday
 8. [DO NOT READ OUT: It varies/It varied]
Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QHOURS1

How many hours per week [textfill: are you spending/did you spend] on your placement?

INTERVIEWER: If respondent left part way through the placement – ask them to say how many hours per week they were supposed to work.

Numeric (1-40)

Don't know

IF QHOURS1<30

QHOURS2

People who are referred to the Mandatory Work Activity programme are normally expected to attend their work placement for 30 hours per week. What were the circumstances for you attending fewer hours?

OPEN ENDED. PROBE FULLY

Refused

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ASK ALL

QORG2

Were you working at a charity shop?

1. Yes
 2. No
-

IF QORG2 = NO (not working for a charity shop)

QORG3

Where were you working?

PROMPT TO PRECODES. SINGLE CODE ONLY

1. Conservation or environmental organisation (e.g looking after nature reserves or woodlands)
 2. Organisation involved in construction, renovation or decorating
 3. Recycling charity or organisation
 4. Café or catering organisation
 5. Other (specify)
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QINDUCTION

Did you receive an introductory or induction session from someone at the organisation on the first day of your placement?

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

I would now like to ask you a bit more about what [textfill: you are doing on the work placement/ you were doing while you were on the work placement].

ASK ALL

QDO1

Where did you work during your placement?

READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

1. in a shop
 2. in a warehouse
 3. outdoors
 4. in an office
 5. Other (specify)
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QDO2

And what [textfill: does/did] your role involve ...

PROMPT IF NECESSARY: 'What did you mainly do there?'

PROMPT TO PRECODES. CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1. Organising stock or goods
 2. Dealing with members of the public or serving customers
 3. Dealing with money and credit/debit cards or using a till
 4. Administrative or clerical work such as filing, photocopying, and dealing with paperwork
 5. Responding to telephone calls, emails or letters
 6. Undertaking physical tasks outdoors such as digging and planting
 7. Undertaking other manual work such as building or decorating
 8. Looking after others e.g. youth work or caring for elderly
 9. Cleaning
 10. Anything else (specify)
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QPROGRESS1

[textfill: So far have you been given/during your placement were you given] the opportunity to learn any new skills?

READ OUT

1. Yes – lots
 2. Yes – some
 3. No
- Don't know
-

IF QPROGRESS1=1 or 2 (has had opportunity to learn new skills)

QPROGRESS2

What would you say were the most useful things you have learnt from your placement?

OPEN-ENDED. PROBE FULLY.

Don't know

ASK ALL

QPROGRESS3

[textfill: Have you had/Did you have] the chance to discuss any new skills or tasks you wanted to try with a supervisor or another staff member?

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QSUPERVISE1

How would you describe the amount of supervision you [textfill: are receiving/received] on your placement. Did you feel it was ...

READ OUT

1. Too little
 2. About right
 3. Too much
 4. [DO NOT READ OUT: It varies/varied]
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QSUPERVISE2

And how would you describe the quality of the supervision you [textfill: are receiving/received] on your placement. Would you describe it as ...

READ OUT

1. Very good
 2. Good
 3. Fair
 4. Poor
 5. Very Poor
 6. [DO NOT READ OUT: It varies/varied]
- Don't know
-

IF QSUPERVISE2 = 4 or 5 (felt quality of supervision was poor or very poor)

QSUPERVISE3

Why do you say that?

OPEN-ENDED. PROBE FULLY.

Don't know

ASK ALL

QCADVISER1

And during the time [textfill: you have been working/you worked] at the organisation [textfill: have you had/did you have] any contact at all with your adviser at Jobcentre Plus other than by signing on?

IF YES: PROMPT 'Was that by phone? etc...'

1. Yes – by phone
 2. Yes – visited me at placement
 3. Yes – met in Jobcentre
 4. Yes – by letter
 5. No
- Don't know
-

END OF PLACEMENT AND FOLLOW-UP

QEND

[IF FIRSTMWA = No: Thinking back to the first placement you were referred to...] Did you complete the full 4 weeks of your placement?

PROMPT TO PRECODES

1. Completed placement
 2. Withdrew early
 3. Terminated early
 - Don't know
-

IF QEND=2 or 3 or DK (withdrew or terminated early or not sure)

QENDWHEN

How long did you attend the placement?

PROMPT TO PRECODES

1. Less than a day
 2. 1 day
 3. 2-3 days
 4. 4-7 days
 5. 8-14 days
 6. more than 2 weeks
 7. [DO NOT READ OUT: Almost the entire 4 weeks]
 - Don't know
-

IF QEND=2 or 3 (withdrew or terminated early)

QENDWHY

What were the reasons for not completing the full period of your placement?

DO NOT READ OUT. PROMPT TO PRECODES

1. Received offer of paid job
 2. Decided to go on training instead
 3. Did not like – the work
 4. Did not like – the people
 5. Did not like – the hours
 6. Did not like – travelling to get there
 7. Other (specify)
 - Don't know
-

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IF QEND=2 or 3 (withdrew or terminated early)

QENDSANCTION

Was your benefit reduced or stopped as a result of not completing the full 4-week period?

DO NOT READ OUT

1. Yes- reduced
 2. Yes -stopped
 3. Something else happened (specify)
 4. No
- Don't know
-

IF QENDSANCTION = 1 or 2 (benefit reduced or stopped)

QENDHARDSHIP1

Did you have problems buying everyday essentials as a result of your benefit being reduced or stopped?

IF NECESSARY: By this I mean, did it affect the purchase of things you would normally buy in everyday life such as food.

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

IF QENDSANCTION = 1 or 2 (benefit reduced or stopped)

QENDHARDSHIP2

And, did you have to do any of the following?

IF NECESSARY: Did you have to do any of the following when your benefit was stopped or reduced?

READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1. Take out a loan
 2. Become overdrawn at the bank
 3. Borrow money from a friend/relative
 4. Sell personal goods/belongings
 5. Other (specify)
- Don't know
-

IF QENDSANCTION = 1 or 2 (benefit reduced or stopped)

QENDRULES

Did having your benefit stopped or reduced make you more likely to follow the conditions of claiming Jobseeker's Allowance?

READ OUT. SINGLE CODED

1. More likely to follow rules
 2. No effect
 3. [DO NOT READ OUT] Less likely to follow rules
- Don't know
-

IF QEND=1 (completed full period of work placement)

QFEEDBACK

When you completed your work placement, did you receive any feedback from a supervisor or members of staff about your performance?

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QFOLLOWUP1A

Since [textfill: leaving/completing] your work placement, have you discussed the placement with an adviser at Jobcentre Plus.

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

IF QFOLLOWUP1A = Yes (has discussed placement with adviser since leaving/completing)

QFOLLOWUP1B

What did you discuss?

DO NOT READ OUT. PROMPT TO PRECODE. CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1. The skills you had developed as a result of attending the placement
 2. What else you had learnt/gained during your time there
 3. How to present your work placement in your CV
 4. Any new jobs you could apply for on the basis of this experience
 5. Further opportunities for volunteering
 6. Additional Mandatory Work Activity placements
 7. Other (specify)
- None of these
Don't know
-

IF QFOLLOWUP1 = Yes (has discussed placement with adviser since leaving/completing)

QFOLLOWUP2

When did this discussion take place?

READ OUT

1. On the day the placement ended
 2. Within 1 week of the placement ending
 3. Within 2 weeks of the placement ending
 4. Or was is longer than this?
- Don't know
-

PERCEPTIONS OF PLACEMENT

ASK ALL

QVIEWS

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about [textfill: your placement/the first work placement you attended] and the organisation for which you [textfill: are working/worked]?

- A. I was treated like a valuable member of staff
- B. Staff were willing to teach me new skills
- C. I didn't like working for free
- D. The placement was well organised
- E. I enjoyed the routine of going to work

READ OUT:

- 1. Agree
 - 2. Disagree
 - 3. Neither agree nor disagree
 - 4. Not applicable
- Don't know
-

IF QVIEWS = AGREE or DISAGREE

Is that strongly or slightly?

- 1. Slightly
 - 2. Strongly
-

ASK ALL

QSATISFACTION

And how satisfied [textfill: are you/were you] with ...

- A. The amount of work you [are/were] given
- B. The variety of tasks you [are/were] given
- C. The amount of responsibility you [are/were] given

READ OUT:

- 1. Satisfied
 - 2. Dissatisfied
 - 3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Don't know
-

IF QSATISFACTION = Satisfied or Dissatisfied

Is that strongly or slightly?

- 1. Slightly
 - 2. Strongly
-

ASK ALL

QLENGTH

How would you describe the length of the placement? Would you say that four weeks [textfill: feels/felt]...

READ OUT

1. Too long
 2. About right
 3. Too short
- Don't know
-

IF QLENGTH = Too long or Too short

Is that far too much or slightly?

1. Far too much
 2. Slightly
-

IF QEND=1 (completed full period of work placement)

QEXTEND

Have you extended your [textfill: your placement/the first work placement you attended] beyond the initial 4 weeks on a voluntarily basis?

DO NOT READ OUT. PROMPT IF NO: 'Did you consider it?'

1. No, but I considered it
 2. No, I never considered it
 3. Yes
- Don't know
-

IF QEXTEND=3 (chose to extend work placement beyond 4 weeks)

QEXTEND2

Why was that?

OPEN-ENDED. PROBE FULLY.

Don't know

ASK ALL

QHAPP1

And overall, would you say you [textfill: are enjoying/enjoyed] the placement?

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QHAPP2

Did your feelings about the placement change during the time you were there?

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

IF QHAPP2 = Yes

QHAPP3

Did your feelings about the placement ...

READ OUT

1. improve during the placement
 2. or get worse?
- Don't know
-

IF QHAPP3 = 1 or 2 (feelings about placement improved or worsened)

QHAPP4

Why do you say that?

PROBE FULLY

OPEN ENDED.

ASK ALL

QHAPP5

Based on everything you experienced, [textfill: do/did] you feel positive or negative about your placement?

PROMPT – is that 'very' positive/negative ...

1. Very positive
 2. Positive
 3. Neither positive nor negative
 4. Negative
 5. Very negative
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QSUGIMP

What, if anything, could have been done better to make your placement more worthwhile?

OPEN-ENDED

CODE NULL IF NOTHING COULD BE DONE BETTER

Don't know

ADDITIONAL PLACEMENTS

IF FIRSTMWA = No (has attended more than one placement)

You mentioned earlier that you have attended [textfill: one/two/three/four] Mandatory Work placements in total. I would like to ask you a few questions about the [textfill: one/two/three/four] other placements we have not discussed.

IF FIRSTMWA = No (has attended more than one placement)

QADDP1

Did you complete the full 4 weeks for [textfill: this placement/each of these placements]?

READ OUT

1. Yes – completed all placements
 2. Yes – completed some but not all placements
 3. No – did not complete any of these placements
- Don't know
Refused
-

IF QADDP1 = 2 or 3 (Did not complete all placements)

QADDP2

Why didn't you complete [textfill: this/these] placements?

PROMPT – What was/were the main reason(s) you didn't complete the full 4 weeks?

OPEN-ENDED

Don't know

Refused

IF FIRSTMWA = No (has attended more than one placement)

QADDP3

After your first placement, what reasons did your Jobcentre Plus adviser give for referring you to another placement?

PROMPT – What was/were the main reason(s)? Why did they say you needed to go on another placement?

OPEN-ENDED

Don't know

Refused

IMPACTS

IF FIRSTMWA = No (has attended more than one placement)

Now please think about all the placements you have attended, regardless of whether you completed them all. I would like to ask you some questions now you've had a chance to reflect on these.

ASK ALL

QAPP1

Since starting your placement(s), have you submitted any job applications for paid work?

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

IF QAPP1 = Yes (has submitted applications since placement)

QAPP2

Did you mention your experience of the placement(s) on any of these applications, either on the application itself or on your CV?

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

IF QAPP1 = Yes (has submitted applications since placement)

QAPP3

On average, are you sending out more job applications per week now than you had been before attending your placement(s)?

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

IF QAPP1 = Yes (has submitted applications since placement)

QAPP4

Since starting your placement(s), have you applied for jobs which you never considered applying to previously?

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

IF WORK = 1 or 2 (is currently in paid or unpaid work)

QIMPJOB1

You mentioned earlier that you have a [paid/unpaid] job. Do you feel the work placement(s) we have been talking about helped you to get this?

1. Yes
 2. No
 - Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QIMPJOB2

Would you say that the experience you have gained during your placement(s) has improved your chances of getting **[IF WORK not 1** (not currently in paid work): a paid job/**IF WORK = 1** (currently in paid work): paid jobs in the future]?

PROMPT: Is that ...

1. Improved a lot
 2. Improved at little
 3. Not improved at all
 - Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QIMP1

Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. As a result of the placement(s) ...

IF NECESSARY REPEAT: Do you agree or disagree that, as a result of your placement(s) ...

READ OUT.

- A. My personal confidence has increased
- B. I have developed new skills that could help me to find a paid job
- C. I feel more able to work as part of a team
- D. I will look more attractive to potential employers on job applications
- E. I can see the benefits of the routine of working life
- F. [if WORK = 4 (not working)] I am more motivated to find work

READ OUT:

1. Agree
 2. Disagree
 3. Neither agree nor disagree
 4. Not applicable
 - Don't know
-

IF AGREE or DISAGREE

Is that strongly or slightly?

1. Slightly
 2. Strongly
-

ASK ALL

QOTHPOSITIVE

Have you gained anything else positive from the placement?

OPEN-ENDED

Don't know

ASK ALL

QIMP2

Did the experience of being on [textfill: a placement/these placements] increase your motivation to come off Jobseeker's Allowance?

DO NOT READ OUT. PROMPT TO PRECODES.

1. Yes – increased a lot
 2. Yes – increased a little
 3. No effect
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QIMP3

Since attending [textfill: a placement/these placements] have you felt...

READ OUT

1. More willing to do what is requested of you at the Jobcentre
 2. Less willing do what is requested of you at the jobcentre
 3. Or has it made no difference?
 4. [DO NOT READ OUT: no contact with JCP since placement]
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

QIMP4

Would you say you now view work...

READ OUT

1. More positively
 2. More negatively
 3. Or has the placement(s) made no difference?
- Don't know
-

F QIM4 = 1 or 2 (views work more positively or negatively)

QIMP5

Why do you say that?

OPEN-ENDED. RECORD VERBATIM

Don't know

DEMOGRAPHICS

ASK ALL

This is the final section and I'd just like to ask you a few details about yourself for classification purposes.

ASK ALL

GENDER

ASK OR RECORD GENDER

1. Male
 2. Female
-

ASK ALL

AGE1

Can I just check, what was your age last birthday?

Numeric Range

Don't Know

Refused

If Age= DK or Refused, ASK AGE

AGE2

In which of these age bands do you fall?

READ OUT

1. 16-17
 2. 18-24
 3. 25-34
 4. 35-44
 5. 45-54
 6. 55-60
 7. 61-65
 8. 66-74
 9. 75-84
 10. 85+
- Refused
-

[IF WORK=1] Thinking about your current job...
[OTHERS] Thinking about your most recent job...

WORK8

What does/did the firm/organisation you worked) for mainly make or do (at the place where you worked)?

DESCRIBE FULLY – PROBE MANUFACTURING OR PROCESSING OR DISTRIBUTING ETC. AND MAIN GOODS PRODUCED, MATERIALS USED, WHOLESALE OR RETAIL ETC.

WORK9

What is/was your (main) job?

OPEN_ENDED

WORK10

What [textfill: did/do] you mainly do in your job?

CHECK SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS/TRAINING NEEDED TO DO THE JOB

OPEN-ENDED

ASK ALL

HIGHQUAL

What is the highest level qualification you have completed?

PROMPT TO PRECODE.

1. Degree or above
 2. 2 or more A-levels, NVQ level 3 or equivalent
 3. 1 A-level or equivalent, 5 or more GCSEs grades A*-C or equivalent, or NVQ level 2
 4. GCSE less than 5 grades A*C or equivalent or NVQ level 1
 5. Other (specify)
 6. No qualifications
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

DISABLE1

Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
-

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IF DISABLE1 = YES (has health problem or disability)

ILLNESSTYPE

Do any of these conditions or illnesses affect you in any of the following areas?

READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

1. Vision – for example, blindness or partial sight
 2. Hearing – for example, deafness or partial hearing
 3. Mobility – for example, walking short distances or climbing stairs
 4. Dexterity – for example, lifting and carrying objects, using a keyboard
 5. Learning or understanding or concentrating
 6. Memory
 7. Mental health
 8. Stamina or breathing or fatigue
 9. Socially or behaviourally – for example, associated with autism, attention deficit disorder or Asperger's syndrome
 10. Anything else (specify)
- Refused
-

IF DISABLE1 = YES (has health problem or disability)

DISABLE2

Does your condition or illness (do any of your conditions or illnesses) reduce your ability to carry-out day-to-day activities?

1. Yes, a little
 2. Yes, a lot
 3. Not at all
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

ETHNIC

To which of these groups do you consider you belong?

READ OUT

1. White
 2. Mixed
 3. Asian
 4. Black
 5. Other (specify)
- Don't Know
Refused
-

IF ETHNIC = WHITE, ASK ETHWHITE

ETHWHITE

PROMPT TO PRECODES

1. White – English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
 2. White – Irish
 3. White – Gypsy or Irish Traveller
 4. White – Any other white background (please specify)
- Don't Know
Refused
-

IF ETHNIC = MIXED, ASK ETHMIX

ETHMIX

PROMPT TO PRECODES

1. Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
 2. Mixed – White and Black African
 3. Mixed – White and Asian
 4. Mixed – Any other mixed background (please specify)
- Don't Know
Refused
-

IF ETHNIC = ASIAN, ASK ETHASIAN

ETHASIAN

PROMPT TO PRECODES

1. Asian or Asian British – Indian
 2. Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
 3. Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
 4. Asian or Asian British – Chinese
 5. Asian or Asian British – Any other Asian background (please specify)
- Don't Know
Refused
-

IF ETHNIC = BLACK, ASK ETHBLACK

ETHBLACK

PROMPT TO PRECODES

1. Black or Black British – Caribbean
 2. Black or Black British – African
 3. Arab
 4. Black or Black British – Any other Black background (please specify)
- Don't Know
Refused
-

IF ETHNIC = OTHER, ASK ETHOTHER

ETHOTHER

PROMPT TO PRECODES

1. Other ethnic groups – Chinese
 2. Other ethnic groups – Arab
 3. Other ethnic groups – other (please specify)
- Don't Know
Refused
-

ASK ALL

LANG

Now thinking about language. Is English your first language?

1. Yes
 2. No
- Don't know
Refused
-

IF LANG = NO, ASK NotEnglish

NotEnglish

What is your first language?

PROMPT TO PRECODES

1. Arabic
 2. Bengali
 3. Chinese
 4. Gujarati
 5. Polish
 6. Punjabi
 7. Tamil
 8. Urdu
 9. Cantonese
 10. French
 11. Somali
 12. Sylheti
 13. Welsh
 14. Other (specify)
- Don't Know
-

ASK ALL

MaritalStat

Are you.....?

READ OUT

1. Single, that is never married and never registered a same-sex civil partnership
2. Married and living with husband/wife
3. In a registered same-sex civil partnership and living with your partner
4. Separated, but still legally married
5. Divorced
6. Widowed
7. [Do not read out] separated, but still legally in a same-sex civil partnership
8. [Do not read out] formerly a same-sex civil partner, the civil partnership now legally dissolved
9. [Do not read out] a surviving civil partner; his/her partner having since died

Don't Know

Refused

IF MaritalStat <> 2 or 3 or DK or REF (not married or civil partnership or unspecified)

Livingarrange

May I just check, are you living with someone in your household as a couple?

1. Yes
 2. No
 3. [Do not read out] Same-sex couple (but not in a formal registered civil partnership)
-

ASK ALL

CHILD

Do you have any children of your own currently living with you in your household? Please only include children who live with you AND who you are responsible for.

1. Yes
 2. No
- Refused
-

IF CHILD=Yes

CHIAGE

And how old is your youngest child who is currently living with you?

Range 0-99

Refused

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ASK ALL

BEN

Which of the following benefits, if any, do you receive, [if MaritalStat=2/3 or if LivingArr=1/3: either on your own or with your partner]?

READ OUT. MULTICODE

1. Income Support
 2. Jobseeker's Allowance
 3. Incapacity Benefit
 4. Employment and Support Allowance
 5. State Pension
 6. Pension Credit
 7. Carer's Allowance
 8. Attendance Allowance
 9. Disability Living Allowance
 10. Housing Benefit
 11. Tax credits
 12. Child Benefit
 13. Council Tax Benefit
 14. Other (specify)
- None of these
Refused
Don't know
-

ASK ALL

TENURE

Which of these best describes the accommodation you are living in at the moment?

READ OUT AND CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES

1. Rented
 2. Owned outright
 3. Being bought on a mortgage/bank loan
 4. Shared ownership where pay part rent and part mortgage
 5. Living with friends/relatives
 6. Other (specify)
- Don't Know
Refused
-

IF TENURE = 1 (in rented accommodation)

TENURE2

Is that ...

READ OUT

1. Rented privately
 2. Rented from a council or local authority
 3. Rented from a Housing Association
 4. Other (specify)
- Don't know
-

ASK ALL

EXOFFEND

May I just check, do you have any unspent criminal convictions?

IF NECESSARY: A conviction becomes spent after a certain period of time has passed and the length of time will depend on the sentence. If you have been sentenced to more than 30 months in prison for a single offence, this will never become spent.

1. Yes
 2. No
 - Don't know
 - Refused
-

ASK ALL

LINK

We can learn more about customers of Jobcentre Plus by linking administrative records held by the Department for Work and Pensions to your answers from these questions. This information and everything you have told us today will be treated in strict confidence and used for research and statistical purposes only.

Would you be willing for us to add administrative data held by the Department for Work and Pensions to the answers you have given us today?

IF NECESSARY: This will be for analysis purposes only and will NOT affect your dealings, either now or in the future, with any Government department.

1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Not sure, need further information
-

IF LINK = 3, ASK LINK2

LINK2

The Department for Work and Pensions holds information about benefits, tax credits and employment. We would like to add this information to your answers from the questions we have just asked you, to...

* Create a more accurate picture of people's work history, benefits and needs

* Help researchers and policymakers to be better informed in their work to improve the services Jobcentre Plus provides.

We will only do this if you give your permission to link the information that DWP already hold about you to the answers you have given in the survey today

* The information will only be used for research and statistics.

* The information will be kept confidential.

* Names and addresses are never included in the results and no individual can be identified from the research

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* Your personal details will not be passed to anyone else outside the research team and the Department for Work and Pensions.

* The information will not be used to work out whether anyone is claiming benefits or tax credits they should not be.

* Any current or future claims for benefits or tax credits will not be affected.

Would you be willing for us to link administrative data held by the Department for Work and Pensions to the answers you have given?

1. Yes
2. No

Thank and close

Appendix F

Claimant survey advance letter

DWP Department for
Work and Pensions



<Title Name Surname >
< Address 1 >
<Address 2 >
<Address 3 >
<Address 4 >

TNS-BMRB
6 More London Place
London SE1 2QY
United Kingdom

Freephone: 0800 015 0655
Website: www.tns-bmrb.co.uk

Dear <Title Name Surname >

Reference: 106647/<Resp. Serial>

Research into customers' views of work experience placements

We are writing to you to ask for your help in a research study that has been commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions. The aim of this research is to find out about people's experiences of attending a Mandatory Work Activity placement. You have been selected to take part as someone who has recently been referred to a work placement by Jobcentre Plus. We would like to include you in the survey to find out more about your own experiences and views about your placement. We are contacting you for research purposes only.

The research is being conducted on DWP's behalf by TNS BMRB, an independent research organisation. You will be contacted by TNS BMRB during July or August to take part in a telephone survey which will take no longer than 30 minutes to complete.

Any information you provide will be held in the strictest of confidence and will be handled securely throughout the study. The research findings will not identify you and no personal information will be shared with any third parties. Participation in this research is voluntary and will not affect any benefits or tax credits you are claiming, now or in the future.

If you *do not* want to take part please let TNS-BMRB know by the 15th of July by ringing the freephone number 0800 015 0655. If you have any questions about the research please let us know by calling 0800 015 0655. Alternatively you can write to: Eleni Romanou, TNS BMRB, 6 More London Place, London SE1 2QY, or email xxx@xxx.

Your contribution will provide us with valuable information that will help us to review the support that Jobcentre Plus provides. We hope that you decide to take part.

Yours sincerely

Janet Allaker
Jobseekers Evaluation Team

Department for Work and Pensions

Eleni Romanou
Researcher Manager

TNS BMRB

This report presents findings from research on Mandatory Work Activity (MWA), undertaken by ICF GHK Consulting Ltd and TNS-BMRB on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The research comprised both qualitative and quantitative elements, and was undertaken between March and August 2012. The qualitative research was led by ICF GHK Consulting Ltd and supplemented by a quantitative survey of c.800 MWA participants carried out by TNS-BMRB. This report provides evidence on service delivery of the policy from the perspective of all key stakeholders and the impact on customers referred to the scheme.

If you would like to know more about DWP research, please email:
Socialresearch@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

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Work and Pensions

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