



Evaluation of the Day One Support for Young People Trailblazer

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Introduction

The Day One Support for Young People (DOSfYP) Trailblazer was an ESF-funded mandatory programme designed to help young people aged 18-24 with less than six months' work history get the skills and experience they need to help them move into employment.

The Trailblazer

Eligible new Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants were referred to a placement provider at their first New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) appointment. The provider then arranged a community work placement with a 'host' organisation. The expectation was that claimants would be referred following their NJI (day one), meet the provider the next day (or earlier) (day two) and start their placement the following day (day three). Work placements were expected to last 13 weeks, with claimants attending the placement for 30 hours per week and conducting 10 hours of provider-led job search.

The Trailblazer was launched on 26 November 2012 in the North and South London Jobcentre districts with one provider in each area contracted to provide the support. Trailblazer referrals were made over an eight-month period.

The evaluation

This summary presents the findings from research with Trailblazer participants, drawing on evidence from a survey of claimants and qualitative depth interviews with claimants, Jobcentre Plus staff, providers and hosts. The findings consider the outcomes and experiences of claimants who were eligible but did not start the programme, as well as those who participated (for some, or all of the 13 weeks).

The evaluation of DOSfYP also includes an impact assessment, measuring whether the Trailblazer has achieved its aim of helping more young claimants off benefits and into work and this is published separately.

Findings

Starters and non-starters

The survey found that just over half of claimants eligible for DOSfYP started a placement (53 per cent) and 47 per cent did not start a placement. Of those who did not start, just under half (46 per cent) appear to have signed off JSA and a further third (33 per cent) received a sanction.

Those who started a placement tended to be slightly younger (under 21 years old rather than in the 21-24 year old age group), be slightly less qualified (ten per cent of starters had a degree or above compared to 19 per cent of those who did not start) and more likely to have no work experience prior to their JSA claim (48 per cent had no work experience, compared to 36 per cent of those who did not start because they discontinued their claim and 45 per cent of those who were referred but did not start).

Over half of claimants who started a placement did not complete the full 13 weeks (56 per cent). Numbers leaving their placement were highest during the first four weeks of the placement, with nearly two-thirds (61 per cent) leaving within four weeks. Sixty per cent of those who did not complete a placement moved into work.

The referral process

There was a good understanding of the requirements of the scheme by claimants and both Jobcentre Plus advisers and provider advisers appeared to be explaining these clearly and effectively. Seventy-nine per cent of claimants said they understood the scheme to be mandatory.

Jobcentre Plus staff did not always feel that they had time to explain the detail of the scheme or the potential benefits to claimants, particularly with those who might need some convincing. This is borne out by claimants who said that they were not always clear about the specifics of what they would be doing and how this would benefit their job search.

Nevertheless, around half of claimants felt positive about the scheme (49 per cent compared to 38 per cent who felt negative) at the time of referral, and 66 per cent felt that the trailblazer was an opportunity to get used to the routine of going to work. Just over a half felt it would help them to get a job (55 per cent), and 38 per cent felt that it would not help them to get a job.

As to be expected, starters were generally more positive than non-starters. Starters were also more likely to feel that the placement was suitable (51 per cent) compared to those who did not start a placement (26 per cent), based on the information they received from Jobcentre Plus and providers at the time of the referral. The main reason that placements were not felt to be suitable was because they did not match the type of job claimants were interested in (60 per cent).

The speed of the referral process was seen as an issue by providers. Providers mentioned that the timescales made sourcing good quality placements more difficult, as some hosts wanted to sift candidates, and limited the extent that they could offer placements to meet any specific claimant needs.

Experience of placements

Despite some reservations with placements, claimants who participated in the Trailblazer were positive about their experience. This was particularly the case for claimants who completed a full 13-week placement – 85 per cent of these claimants said they felt positive overall.

Three-quarters of claimants said: they felt they got the support they needed from staff while on their placement (78 per cent); they were satisfied with the amount of responsibility they were given (76 per cent) and they enjoyed the routine of going to work (75 per cent). However, 43 per cent of claimants who started a placement felt that it was not suitable for them.

Compared to other elements of the scheme claimants were asked about, they were least satisfied with the amount of time for job search. Overall, 55 per cent were satisfied and 40 per cent were dissatisfied.

There was a feeling amongst some claimants and staff that spending 30 hours per week on the placement meant that claimants did not always have time to carry out sufficient job search,

particularly when claimants were required to travel long distances to the host and the provider.

The range of work placements and the type of work carried out on placement sometimes lacked diversity (58 per cent were in charity shops) and this was seen as an issue by some Jobcentre Plus staff, providers and claimants. There was a feeling that placements were most worthwhile when they were at least partly tailored to the claimants' needs and aspirations.

Overall, hosts were positive about their experience of the trailblazer and were largely impressed by the enthusiasm shown by claimants. However, there was a perception amongst hosts that unengaged claimants were unlikely to benefit from placements, and placements which matched claimants' interests were more beneficial to themselves, and the claimant. Where higher numbers of claimants than expected left their placement soon after it had started, this was difficult to manage for some hosts.

Employment and other outcomes from the Trailblazer

Employment outcomes: Around half of all those who did not start a DOSfYP placement moved into paid work following their decision not to participate (44 per cent).

Of those who started a placement, six in ten of those who did not complete their placement moved into work (60 per cent) and a quarter of those who completed (26 per cent) subsequently moved into work.

Around six months after their initial claim, around three-quarters of those who had moved into work were still in work (76 per cent of non-starters and 72 per cent of starters).

Work outcomes tended to be more positive for older claimants (aged 21-24) and those with at least some prior work experience. Both among non-starters and starters, these claimants were more likely to have found work initially and to be in employment still at the time of the survey.

Benefit and other outcomes: Around six months after their initial claim, just over a quarter (27 per cent) of all non-starters said they were on JSA and just over four in ten starters (41 per cent) were on JSA. A small proportion said they had moved onto other benefits (Employment and Support Allowance or Income Support), including three per cent of non-starters and six per cent of starters.

There was a group of young people (those who had either not started or not completed a placement) who said that they were no longer claiming benefit but had not moved into work. The majority of this group were 'looking for work' (over six in ten) and the evidence suggests that this group was not disengaged from entering the labour market (very few said that they were unemployed and not looking for work).

Intermediate outcomes: Most who completed a 13-week placement felt there had been a wide range of benefits to participating: 89 per cent felt their motivation to find work had increased, 80 per cent felt their chances of finding paid work had improved and 82 per cent felt they had new skills to help find work. Consistent with findings elsewhere, these wider benefits seem to be felt most strongly by younger claimants (under 21) and those with slightly lower educational attainment.

Of those who completed a placement, 89 per cent felt more motivated to find work, 85 per cent agreed that they looked more attractive to potential employers on job applications and 80 per cent reported increased personal confidence. Seven in ten claimants (70 per cent) felt they had gained in all three of these ways. Further, nearly all claimants (94 per cent) agreed that they felt more able 'to cope with the routine of going to work' following completion of the placement.

While most claimants who completed a placement were positive about the impact of attending a placement, there was concern amongst a small group (17 per cent) that participation in DOSfYP had not increased their chance of finding paid work.

Job search: Job search among claimants who completed a placement appears to have been invigorated by the experience. Over six in ten said that they were sending out more job applications at the time of the survey than they had before their placement (62 per cent) and they had applied for jobs they had never considered applying for previously (64 per cent).

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You can download the full report free from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/research#research-publications>

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