



Evaluation of GOALS UK's Step Up, and Timewise Foundation's Earnings Progression and Flexible Career Pathways in Retail

Evaluation of GOALS UK's Step Up, and Timewise Foundation's Earnings Progression and Flexible Career Pathways in Retail

DWP ad hoc Research Report No. 58

A report by the Department for Work and Pensions summarising three items of research.

© Crown copyright 2017.

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/> or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This document/publication is also available on our website at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/research#research-publications>

If you would like to know more about DWP research, please email:
Socialresearch@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

First published December 2017

ISBN 978 1 78425 985 3

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

Summary

This document is a summary of research findings from three small proofs of concept (PoCs) commissioned by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in 2014-2016. The three PoCs were led and evaluated by organisations external to DWP. This summary report collates findings from these three small PoCs, drawing together the common themes in the best way of presenting the evidence for in-work progression together. The findings presented in this report help develop our understanding of how we can support employers and people in low pay to progress and increase their earnings potential, of how we can improve progression pathways in the retail and hospitality industries, and help us to move forward to shape our approach to supporting progression and work coach capability. These PoCs are part of our Test and Learn Strategy which ensures that we are able to explore a range on interventions and measures and build and thoroughly test the approaches that seem to be effective. Both client-facing and employer-facing elements were investigated across the three PoCs.

Contents

- Acknowledgements 6
- The Authors 7
- List of abbreviations 8
- 1 Executive Summary 9
- 2 Background and aims 11
- 3 Methodology 12
 - 3.1.1 Timewise Foundation’s Universal Credit earnings progression PoC... 12
 - 3.1.2 GOALS UK: Step Up 13
 - 3.1.3 UK Futures Programme: Flexible Career Pathways for Retail, Timewise in partnership with a national retailer 14
- 4 Conclusions and Key Findings for Universal Credit 16
 - 4.1 Outcomes achieved 16
 - 4.1.1 Timewise Foundation’s Universal Credit earnings progression PoC... 16
 - 4.1.2 GOALS UK: Step Up 16
 - 4.1.3 UK Futures Programme: Flexible Career Pathways for Retail, Timewise in partnership with a national retailer 17
 - 4.2 Participant engagement 17
 - 4.2.1 Timewise Foundation’s Universal Credit earnings progression PoC... 17
 - 4.2.2 GOALS UK: Step Up 17
 - 4.3 Customer barriers and support needs 18
 - 4.3.1 Timewise Foundation’s Universal Credit earnings progression PoC... 18
 - 4.3.2 GOALS UK: Step Up 19
 - 4.3.3 UK Futures Programme: Flexible Career Pathways for Retail, Timewise in partnership with a national retailer 19
 - 4.4 Effective elements of the in-work support model 20
 - 4.4.1 Timewise Foundation’s Universal Credit earnings progression PoC... 20
 - 4.4.2 GOALS UK: Step Up 21
 - 4.5 Employer engagement 21
 - 4.5.1 Timewise Foundation’s Universal Credit earnings progression PoC... 21
 - 4.5.2 UK Futures Programme: Flexible Career Pathways for Retail, Timewise in partnership with a national retailer 23
 - 4.6 Employer barriers to providing progression opportunities 23

Evaluation of GOALS UK’s Step Up, and Timewise Foundation’s Earnings Progression and Flexible Career Pathways in Retail

- 4.6.1 Timewise Foundation’s Universal Credit earnings progression PoC... 23
- 4.7 Contributions towards the Department for Work and Pension in-work progression randomised control trial..... 24
 - 4.7.1 Timewise Foundation’s Universal Credit earnings progression PoC... 24

Acknowledgements

The three proofs of concepts (PoCs) summarised in this report were commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions and were led and evaluated externally. We would like to thank those at both GOALS UK and Timewise Foundation for their hard work throughout the evaluations, including all those who led and delivered the PoCs. Furthermore, we would also like to thank those who evaluated the PoCs at Learning and Work Institute, IFF Research and Tooley Street. Thanks also go to all the participants on the PoCs; to the DWP and Jobcentre Plus staff involved; and to all the employers and retailers involved, including those at the large national retailer involved with the UK Futures Programme: Flexible Career Pathways for Retail.

The Authors

This report was prepared by Benjamin Ashton, Brenda Gonzalez, Emma Hill and Aynur Rigby from the Department for Work and Pensions.

List of abbreviations

CV	Curriculum Vitae
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
JCP	Jobcentre Plus
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
POC	Proof of Concept
SME	Small or medium-sized organisation
UC	Universal Credit

1 Executive Summary

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) commissioned three proofs of concept (PoCs) focusing on in-work progression in 2014-2016. These PoCs were led and evaluated by organisations that are external to the DWP and none of the participants were on Universal Credit (UC) at the start of the PoCs. The three PoCs were:

- Timewise Foundation's Universal Credit (UC) earnings progression PoC, which aimed to support and increase 102 low-income parents' incomes beyond proposed UC income thresholds while maintaining flexible working. The model provided one-to-one tailored support for parents and employer facing support.
- The GOALS UK: Step Up model, which aimed to motivate and support 80 low-income, part-time workers towards progression in work and greater financial independence. The model was based on a motivational coaching programme.
- The UK Futures Programme, run by Timewise in partnership with a national retailer. It aimed to tackle progression barriers and increase part-time, entry level, female workers' earnings. The model investigated and implemented job redesign to include part-time and flexible working access for first step promotion to managerial roles.

Positive progression outcomes were achieved by all three PoCs. In GOALS UK: Step Up five out of the 16 participants evaluated achieved successful employment outcomes, with most participants reporting soft skill improvements. Both group and one-to-one sessions appeared to make the model more effective. Participants praised the peer support and the one-to-one sessions and thought more sessions would be beneficial, as did the staff.

In the Timewise Foundation's earnings progression PoC, 28 of the 102 participants achieved a progression outcome – either through a new job, working more hours or negotiating a pay rise (or a combination of these). Of these, 21 achieved an earnings progression and seven achieved a progression but did not increase their incomes. There were 30 job outcomes achieved overall, with two participants securing more than one job during the period. From 47 interviewed, who did not achieve a job outcome, 29 were in the same job, with six undertaking unpaid training or study and 4 had found a new job.

Support averaged two-and-a-half hours throughout the trial, with face-to-face support the most effective. Findings and lessons learnt from this PoC were used to help shape aspects of the DWP in-work progression randomised control trial, including learning products designed by Timewise which were used as part of communications and product development to support working coaches.

Participants rated the advice on training, interview and pay negotiation and the emotional support provided as the most useful support elements. Timewise found client job change support and job brokerage for those most in need to be most

Evaluation of GOALS UK's Step Up, and Timewise Foundation's Earnings Progression and Flexible Career Pathways in Retail

effective for achieving progression, rather than aiming to progress participants in their current role as many employers were small or medium-sized (SME). The model was more effective when both pre-progression and employer-facing teams worked closely together.

Employers found the employer-facing team's candidate guidance (with a focus on business need), listening to feedback, regular contact, and candidate interview preparation useful. Employers said that in-work support, training grants, extended career guidance with job brokering and location-based initiatives were needed to sustain progression.

Positive outcomes occurred for UK Futures, including a greater knowledge of how to negotiate and design flexible management working patterns. The retailer has agreed to continue to promote flexible opportunities, saying they have a positive impact on the business.

Progression barriers were identified by all PoCs. All three identified caring responsibilities, while two highlighted both the fear of housing benefit loss and confidence issues. Other factors included motivation, part-time or irregular shifts, finances, soft skills, negative perceptions of benefits, and a lack of relevant skills, experience and qualifications. English language issues were highlighted in the Timewise UC PoC, suggesting early intervention to address this quickly.

The SME employers interviewed reported several barriers that they have or currently face when providing progression opportunities. Employers reported that being small in size or being from a generally low paid sector meant attracting good candidates and staff retention were key issues. Furthermore, most felt that staff retention difficulties were industry specific or a consequence of not being able to compete on salary terms. Employers interviewed, struggled to compete on salary terms with the multinationals and large companies, or with their competitors.

Also, many employers do not have internal progression structures. This suggests that there is an opportunity to aid the design of job roles in SMEs to provide progression opportunities for flexible and part time workers.

Aspects of the Timewise UC PoC model could help inform DWP work coach capability to help tackle progression barriers. These aspects include designing support so it includes appointment time and communication channel flexibility; having knowledge of income increase implications; one-to-one support with action planning and interview practice; job brokerage; career pathways mapping; and guidance on accessing higher paid sectors. Other lessons included allowing work coach access to learning resources on career sectors and allowing claimants access to flexible literacy and numeracy support.

Though the outcomes of the three PoCs were largely positive, the findings and lessons learnt must be treated with caution. This is due to small sample sizes, the self-selection of participants, and the absence of control groups.

2 Background and aims

This document outlines the findings of three different in-work progression proofs of concept (PoCs) commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in 2014-2016. These three PoCs were led and evaluated externally from the DWP by different organisations:

- Timewise Foundation's Universal Credit (UC) earnings progression PoC, evaluated by Learning and Work Institute.
- GOALS UK: Step Up, evaluated by IFF Research.
- UK Futures Programme: Flexible Career Pathways for Retail, led by Timewise in partnership with a national retailer, evaluated by Tooley Street.

There were several findings and common themes that help to build the evidence base for the DWP, particularly to support employers during the introduction and roll-out of Universal Credit (UC), including:

- understanding how employers could support low paid people to progress and increase earning potential;
- improving progression pathways in the retail and hospitality industries, and
- further developing the evidence base and learning for in-work progression and work coach capability.

Timewise Foundation's Universal Credit earnings progression PoC was delivered between January 2014 and March 2015. It aimed to support 102 low income working parents to progress their earnings to above the proposed UC earnings conditionality threshold (the equivalent of working 35 hours per week at the national minimum wage), while ensuring the parents could maintain the flexible working practices needed to combine their care and work responsibilities.

GOALS UK delivered the 'Step Up' programme to support 80 individuals on low-income, part-time employment and in-work benefits (predating UC) from July 2014 to October 2015. The aim of the PoC was to motivate and support individuals towards progression in work and greater financial independence.

As a continuation of the UK Futures Programme on Progression Pathways into Hospitality and Retail, Timewise partnered with a large national retailer to help tackle progression barriers for women working in entry-level part-time roles, and increase their career opportunities and earnings. The aim of the PoC was to examine if greater access to flexible working in managerial roles could unblock the retail talent pipeline, and enable low wage employees to increase their earnings.

Given the scale and focus of the three PoCs, the forthcoming findings and lessons learnt should be treated with caution, particularly due to the small sample sizes, the self-selection of participants and the absence of control groups in the three PoCs.

3 Methodology

3.1.1 Timewise Foundation's Universal Credit earnings progression PoC

The Timewise earnings progression proof of concept (PoC) methodology was based on Timewise's support model, comprising of one-to-one holistic advice and guidance support from a pre-progression advisor, employer facing support from employer engagement advisors providing direct job brokerage, structured support to negotiate flexible progression opportunities, and a job alert service.

The selection criteria was based on individuals living in one of several South London council authorities (Bexley, Bromley, Croydon, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Southwark and Sutton) and earning between £76 and £220.85 per week (above the 2013 Jobseeker's Allowance rate, and below the equivalent of working full time at the 2013 national minimum wage). The participants were not claiming Universal Credit (UC). Participation was voluntarily. The majority of participants were female lone parents (99 out of 102), and predominantly from a Black Ethnic group (73 out of 99) as the districts used tend to have a high representation of ethnic minorities.

The independent evaluation, conducted by Learning and Work Institute from December 2014 to November 2015, involved 25 qualitative in-depth interviews with participants (12), Timewise (6) and DWP staff (7), 15 employer interviews, analysis of Timewise's management information, and a telephone survey six months after the PoC with 67 of the 102 participants. In addition, Learning and Work Institute and Timewise led four learning events with staff from both DWP and Jobcentre Plus (JCP).

The evaluation found that the client-facing support model was largely conducted face-to-face (72%) with Timewise advisers and each participant received on average 49 minutes of support. The main purpose of this one-to-one support was to overcome barriers to progression based on the participant's support needs. During the evaluation phase, the 67 participants who took part in the telephone survey reported the following frequency of the support elements:

- CV preparations (52).
- Career advice (47).
- Job alerts (39).
- Advice on better paying employers and sectors (31).
- Advice on how to write job applications (26) and assistance writing these (21).
- Emotional support (26).
- Better off in work calculations and advice to reduce fear of benefit changes (8).
- Advice on how to negotiate better pay (6).

Evaluation of GOALS UK's Step Up, and Timewise Foundation's Earnings Progression and Flexible Career Pathways in Retail

- Childcare options (5).
- Interview with employers arranged for participants (7).

Other elements of the one-to-one support were:

- Developing personalised action plans to ensure sustainable progression opportunities.
- Supporting clients to access voluntary work experience placements or work trials to gain experience.
- Part-time apprenticeships.
- Intensive support for clients with low level skills and aptitudes.
- Identifying the participants' core aptitudes and transferable skills.
- Access to clothing for interviews ("Dress for Success").

Regarding the length of the support engagement, nine of the participants surveyed by telephone stated that it was less than a month; eight stated that it was one to two months, 28 between three and six months, seven between six months and a year and four participants stated that it was for over a year. The remaining participants did not know or preferred not to state the length of their support engagement.

3.1.2 GOALS UK: Step Up

GOALS UK: Step Up is based on a motivational coaching programme that aims to tackle its participants' negative thoughts and feelings, raise their self-esteem and aspirations toward employment progression, and transform hard-to-reach individuals into motivated candidates. This is done by teaching them tools and strategies that can be used for solving problems and coping with difficult situations and emotions. According to GOALS UK, the approach is similar to the Individual Placement and Support service which aims to improve the self-esteem and motivation of its participants.

Participant selection criteria involved targeting individuals, who, at the point of recruitment, were working between 16 to 35 hours a week, paid at the minimum wage, had been in work for at least 12 months, and had not been actively looking for new or better paid work at any time during the previous six months.

A sample of in-work claimants, not on UC, was provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for recruitment. The sample was contacted by a telemarketer that offered the participants to join the taster sessions to introduce them to the Step Up course. Approximately 100 individuals attended the initial tasters, which lasted an average of 1.5 hours and consisted of 4 participants each. GOALS UK coaches suggested that 20 individuals per taster session would have been optimal and more cost effective. 80 individuals signed up for the Step Up programme.

Participants were based in London: 61 in North West London (Cricklewood, Hampstead, Hendon, Kentish Town, Kilburn, Mill Hill, St. John's Wood, The Hyde, Willesden and Golders Green), 16 in West London (Acton, Maida Hill, Shepherd's

Bush), and one in Feltham. The majority of participants were female (66 out of 80 individuals) and single carers (53). There was a high proportion of non-British born residents. Participation was voluntary.

The PoC relied on 15 Step Up modules conducted in groups of up to 10 participants and supported by a GOALS UK guidebook. The modules were based on the themes of self-esteem, responsibility, positive self-talk, vision, planning your future, negotiating skills, perseverance, and realities of the work place. After the modules had been introduced there were follow-up coaching one-to-one sessions, averaging three sessions per individual.

The evaluation phase conducted by IFF Research involved four focus groups with 28 participants (out of the total 80) and one in-depth interview with two GOALS UK coaches. The participants were split into two groups, those who had recently completed the programme and those who completed it six months before the evaluation. Two focus groups were conducted with each group.

3.1.3 UK Futures Programme: Flexible Career Pathways for Retail, Timewise in partnership with a national retailer

The PoC led by Timewise in collaboration with a retailer involved job-redesigning to include the availability of management roles for the first step of promotion, from entry-level (Colleague) to first management rung (Assistant Manager), available on a part time and flexible basis. The PoC consisted of three phases: a diagnostic and base-lining exercise, followed by the intervention and evaluation phases. None of the employee participants were on Universal Credit at the start of the PoC. The diagnostic phase consisted of:

- Fact finding sessions with the senior management team.
- A short bespoke staff survey (311 staff in the former North and West regions).
- Analysis of human resources files.
- Focus groups with different levels of management (11), directed at female staff from entry-level colleagues (3), assistant managers (3), store managers (3) and participants of the internal development programme that trains entry-level to assistant managers (3).
- One-on-one interviews with female area managers (3).

As part of the diagnostic phase, two cohorts of workers in entry-level roles were analysed: one group that prioritised part-time working and were more likely to be female and carers (controlled hours group), and one who were more focused on increasing their earnings and working hours (more hours group). The perception amongst the staff surveyed was that it was not possible to be promoted and maintain a part-time status. The diagnostic phase concluded that the organisation became less female as job roles became more senior. Whereas 71% of the entry-level positions were held by women, this fell to 62% for assistant managers, 54% for deputy managers and 39% for store managers. The ratio of men moving off the shop

Evaluation of GOALS UK's Step Up, and Timewise Foundation's Earnings Progression and Flexible Career Pathways in Retail

floor into assistant manager roles was double that of women and the lack of flexibility in management roles was a major contributing factor. These findings were presented to the retailer's board. The board made a commitment to redesign the first management rung roles, and set up a steering group to run the process.

The intervention phase, supported by Timewise, involved several changes which were implemented through a series of advisory and training sessions for human resources and regional managers. The changes introduced as part of this phase involved:

- Clarification of which types of flexible working (job share - 3 days weekly and part time - 4 days weekly) could support larger stores and updates on internal policy documentation and guidance for different management levels.
- The decision to inform store managers and colleagues that these contracts can be available on promotion as well as by flexible working request.
- Development of a training module to update store managers on flexible working legislation, new types of flexible working for management roles and how to integrate a flexible cohort of managers to store resourcing.
- Clarification of the availability of discussions regarding flexible working patterns on vacancy ads internally and externally.
- Advice directed at store managers via briefings to include part-time and flexible workers in their candidate nominations for future training programmes.

The evaluation phase, conducted by Tooley Street Research, involved obtaining the exact details of the implemented changes through qualitative evaluation using focus groups in three locations suggested by the retailer: South West (Bristol), South East (Folkestone) and North of England (Preston). The evaluation consisted of both female and male Assistant Managers, Store Managers and Colleagues.

The evaluation also included a repeat of the staff survey (598 staff members) but on a nationwide level, analysis of an updated human resource file, a seminar with other retailers and leadership activities.

4 Conclusions and Key Findings for Universal Credit

4.1 Outcomes achieved

4.1.1 Timewise Foundation's Universal Credit earnings progression PoC

The Timewise earnings progression proof of concept (PoC) achieved a positive income progression outcome for 21 out of the 102 participants. These were achieved through various combinations of finding a new job (14 participants), working more hours (18), and achieving an increased hourly wage (15). Twelve participants increased both their wage and hours. On average, participants with an income progression outcome achieved an actual salary increase of £5,770 (an average change of £4,023 as full time equivalent - FTE). This represented a proportionate increase in salaries of 75% on average (29% as an FTE). Only three of the 21 remained below the Universal Credit (UC) threshold. A further seven participants did not progress their incomes but changed their career paths, doing so for convenience, to take on further education, or for better progression prospects. All seven took new jobs working the same or fewer hours per week.

At six months post support, out of the 17 participants interviewed who had achieved a progression outcome, 11 had maintained the outcome. Participants who had not achieved a job outcome were in the same job (29 of 47 interviewed) with small proportions undertaking unpaid training or study (6 of 47) or finding a new job (4 of 47).

4.1.2 GOALS UK: Step Up

IFF Research evaluated 16 of the 80 participants. Of these, five participants had achieved successful employment outcomes: two had increased their working hours, two had been promoted in their jobs, and one was starting a second job.

Most participants evaluated reported improvements in their softer skills, such as increased confidence, self-esteem, resilience and positive thinking. Other employment-related actions undertaken by participants were: improving their CV (6 individuals), applying for a full time job (3), changing jobs (3), starting their own business though unsuccessfully (2), asking for more working hours at their current job without success (1), asking for an older job back as of convenience for their working hours and location (1), starting the process of becoming self-employed (2), and starting a training or educational course (5).

There were no clear differences between the focus group containing recent finishers of Step Up and the focus group of those who finished it six months prior. Many participants were in the same employment situation directly following the course and six months post-PoC.

4.1.3 UK Futures Programme: Flexible Career Pathways for Retail, Timewise in partnership with a national retailer

The PoC led to changes in company procedures and the redesign of management roles to allow flexible working hours and to support people who work part time to progress. Awareness of these changes has cascaded to store manager level, and the retailer will continue to promote the opportunities available. Although the initiative is in its early stages, the retailer is confident that in time the impact on the business will be significant.

4.2 Participant engagement

4.2.1 Timewise Foundation's Universal Credit earnings progression PoC

Timewise found that the most effective method to engage its participants was direct marketing via a personalised letter to residents receiving Housing Benefit, screened for eligibility in the South London district, which explained the support offer and the potential outcomes to be achieved from participation. As the majority of participants were working parents, usually with time restraints, they preferred to be engaged outside of working hours. The targeted letter allowed participants to consider it at a time convenient to them and follow-up in their preferred mode of communication. The letter included a short introduction, a clearly outlined support offer and the participant's adviser's contact information. Less effective approaches were traditional community outreach methods (school breakfast clubs, children's centres, supermarkets, libraries, food banks) and engagement directly through employers.

In addition, flexibility in the times, locations and communication channels (online, telephone, face-to-face, in/out-of-hours) available for appointments were valued by the working participants as of their care responsibilities.

4.2.2 GOALS UK: Step Up

GOALS UK coaches described recruitment as challenging. They originally planned to partner with two London-based housing associations to benefit from their pre-existing relationship, but neither was effective in recruiting individuals for the taster sessions. The coaches described recruitment as time consuming and believed the programme could have had more impact had individuals been issued with mandatory taster session appointments.

Recruitment staff used the introduction of UC as a conversation starter during the taster sessions. Participants shared that they had joined the Step Up programme due to their interest in learning more about the transition to UC and appreciated the course was free. The taster session aimed to build trust and make participants feel valued and welcomed. GOALS UK staff believed that having a venue separate to Jobcentre Plus (JCP) helped with this aim.

Although participation was described as voluntary and having no effect on the individual's benefit situation, the connection with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as funder of the PoC left some participants unsure. This concern over any potential impact on their financial situation was, for some participants, the driver to attend the taster session.

4.3 Customer barriers and support needs

4.3.1 Timewise Foundation's Universal Credit earnings progression PoC

Timewise staff found that most participants required a high level of in-depth support to progress and that this needed to be delivered through one-to-one sessions. Timewise staff suggested that group workshops could have been a useful way to deliver the level of support needed and that peer support would enhance the participants' outcomes. However, it was logistically difficult to organise group support workshops for participants working different shifts.

Timewise found that participants had a variety of barriers to progressing. These barriers included confidence, motivation, relevant skills, experience and qualifications. During telephone survey conducted six months after the PoC, 13 respondents explained how they perceived their lack of qualifications, work experience and working in a low paying sector as barriers. Other respondents' answers varied from soft skills to low English skills and insecure jobs.

Some participants were found to have additional support needs. These were related to literacy and numeracy difficulties, particularly related to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) needs. The depth interviews revealed many participants to have limited English skills, even if they did not identify it as one of their barriers. The findings suggest that participants could be screened for English language and literacy needs at an early point and then supported to address these needs. In addition, although most participants had high qualifications and levels (over NVQ Level 3), having low qualifications was a barrier for a fifth of the participants, who had formal qualifications below NVQ Level 1 or no qualifications at all.

Timewise staff found that one of the greatest barriers they needed to overcome with participants was their fear of losing their Housing benefit. Thus, there was a need to ensure that they could give accurate information about income and benefit ratios, such as through tools to guide individuals through changes to working hours above 16 hours per week, which could affect their access to tax credits.

Evaluation of GOALS UK's Step Up, and Timewise Foundation's Earnings Progression and Flexible Career Pathways in Retail

Participants reported that having young children was a progression barrier. Timewise staff reported that targeting progression support at the transition of the participant's children between primary and secondary school was highly effective. On the telephone survey conducted six months after the PoC, 13 (out of 67 respondents) participants mentioned how they perceive their caring responsibilities to be their main barrier to progression, whether balancing the cost of childcare or having enough time to balance work and caring roles.

Due to the participants' wide variety of needs, it may be worth considering whether caseloads should be segmented accordingly in order to appropriately account for the levels of needs in low income cohorts due to be affected by UC income threshold conditionality limits. The DWP could consider how early needs assessment, based on the factors mentioned above, could be used to help to target support based on the readiness of claimants to engage, and to help line up additional support needs where those are required.

4.3.2 GOALS UK: Step Up

GOALS UK PoC revealed similar barriers to progression. Caring responsibilities were perceived to be the greatest barrier to full time working, which was often described by participants as the ideal working scenario, though they questioned how feasible this was. In addition, due to the cost of childcare, some participants did not think taking more working hours would be financially justified. Some participants also provided care for a sick parent or a disabled child, also perceived as barriers to working more hours.

Other barriers described by participants were mental health disorders (depression), health (back, arthritis, and breathing problems), finances, housing, low confidence and problems with soft skills. Housing was mentioned as a barrier due to a fear of losing Housing benefit, as working more hours could potentially reduce their benefit and would make it financially difficult to meet their rent. Health problems in particular were highlighted by participants working in jobs that were more physically demanding (i.e. with long periods of standing) in sectors such as health care, retail and cleaning services. Working part-time and irregular working patterns were also described by participants as barriers to progression as they perceived their working hours to be restrictive for promotion. Participants also described seeing themselves and being seen by others as less worthy because they are on benefits.

4.3.3 UK Futures Programme: Flexible Career Pathways for Retail, Timewise in partnership with a national retailer

Participants in the UK Futures PoC described caring responsibilities as a progression barrier. The participants thought that increasing their work responsibility (by acquiring a higher job grade) would entail less flexibility on their time and would disrupt their work-life balance.

4.4 Effective elements of the in-work support model

4.4.1 Timewise Foundation's Universal Credit earnings progression PoC

The Timewise in-work support model included tailored support for each individual's needs as it was associated with better progression outcomes and participant engagement. Several of the facets considered for this model could help inform DWP working coach capability, including:

- designing the support model around the working parent to allow them to balance their care and work responsibilities
- individual action planning based on one-to-one support and interview practice and job brokerage (sending the participant's CVs and speaking to the employers)
- mapping of career pathways and guidance on how to access better paid sectors based on their skills
- offering flexibility on the support mode that could be fit around working hours and through different communication channels (online, telephone, out-of-office)
- accurate advice on the implications of any change in earnings and circumstances for their benefit and housing payment

In addition, the support from the adviser role focused on how to access quality part-time jobs in different sectors, the benefits system, local support offers and services and job searching for progression opportunities.

Participants who achieved an income progression received an average of two-and-a-half hour's support throughout the trial. Those that progressed beyond the UC income threshold received an average of over 3 hours support and were more likely to receive face-to-face support rather than remote support (email and phone sessions). The post-PoC survey indicated that most participants (42) preferred face-to-face support, followed by online (10) and telephone (10).

The 67 participants surveyed during the evaluation rated the advice on how to negotiate training with employers, arrange interviews, pay increases and emotional support as the most useful support elements and asked for additional time for support. The support was often described as being family-friendly compared to other support service providers, especially JCP. Participants also described how the support increased their motivation, confidence, and other soft skills.

Other lessons provided by the PoC were related to work coach capability. These included providing work coaches with access to learning resources on career sectors based on an internal knowledge base and using links between Jobcentre Plus partnerships; allowing claimants to access the appropriate and flexible ESOL literacy and numeracy support services to fit around their working schedule; engaging work coaches to provide clear and accurate information regarding the income increases

that claimants will achieve for taking on more and better work; and offering services out-of-hours and through mixed channels.

4.4.2 GOALS UK: Step Up

GOALS UK participants reacted positively to both the peer support group sessions and one-to-one sessions with advisers, and suggested this combination made the programme more effective. Participants described the group sessions as “group therapy”, which offered them life skills, more awareness of the realities of work, and increased their focus on responsibility, positive thinking, goal setting and resilience. The peer element in the sessions was important to the participants. They described it as helpful to share the sessions with others with similar barriers and that this helped them address their feelings of isolation and loneliness and helped them build trust in preparation for the individual sessions. The participants suggested that the group sessions could be improved by tailoring them more towards individuals sharing similar experiences in smaller groups. GOALS UK coaches described the group sessions as more cost effective than the individual sessions.

A document (called a “contract” to show mutual agreement) was signed by the participants as a starting point for the one-to-one sessions, which included a vision of what they wanted to achieve. These individual sessions were regarded as more practical, as the participants could receive tailored help and support from the GOALS UK coaches, including CV and application writing, vacancies and course searches, and business card design. Some participants suggested having more flexibility between group and one-to-one sessions in order to choose what feels most relevant to each individual. One of the activities described by participants as being most helpful was the “career ladder”, which involved setting goals and planning the steps to achieve them, and encouraged a sense of responsibility about their own future. In some cases, GOALS UK coaches were in communication with participants between sessions to find out how they were doing or to provide additional support.

Coaches and participants agreed that the programme would benefit from a greater number of overall coaching, group and follow-up sessions and several participants wanted a continuation of the programme.

4.5 Employer engagement

4.5.1 Timewise Foundation's Universal Credit earnings progression PoC

The lessons learnt from the employer experience in this PoC are based on small or medium-sized organisations (SMEs) based in London. Timewise found that individual client job changing support and individual employer brokerage for clients with greater needs was most effective for achieving progression, usually with local SMEs, as opposed to negotiating progression within their current role. In fewer cases, clients were supported to negotiate pay rises with current employers. Timewise found it not

Evaluation of GOALS UK's Step Up, and Timewise Foundation's Earnings Progression and Flexible Career Pathways in Retail

possible to work at a large scale to negotiate groups of flexible roles with employers with a caseload of 102 clients.

The PoC explored a wider scope for testing a more explicitly employer facing model, that seeks to engage local employers in low-paying sectors to offer more flexible employment and improved progression pathways. A key part of this approach was to make a personal intervention with the employer and have sufficient knowledge of the participant's skills and attributes to market them and open up the potential for future negotiations about flexible terms, and to receive the employer's feedback on the participant's interview. The latter would likely require a wider range of partners and the engagement of specialist recruitment agencies, and highlights the role of the National Employer Partnership teams to work with larger employers to open up vacancies for part-time or flexible roles. Employers would consider flexibility for candidates with the requisite skills and aptitudes.

Timewise found that support advisers needed a different skill set to when working with unemployed individuals, such as a greater working knowledge of the employer-facing work led by the employer engagement team. Staff felt that the support role would operate better if the pre-progression elements and client driven employer engagement functions were brought together, so that if a participant was repeatedly unsuccessful at securing roles, the support adviser would be better placed at marketing the participant at employers themselves as they would have a better idea of the participant's skills and attributes. The support model was more effective when the Employer Engagement team worked closely with the support advisers to ensure joined-up support from initial support and careers advice to signposting or brokerage to an appropriate job.

Employers valued the expertise of Timewise staff and trusted them to forward the right kind of candidates, particularly valuing the direct marketing of candidates to save them time and money. Employers were receptive to the proactive approach taken by Timewise, including:

- Guiding the employer through the benefits of a candidate and gaining feedback where an employer felt that they were not suitable. Timewise sent the employer an email alongside each participant's job application to advise as to why they would be a good candidate and what they could offer to the organisation. An employer explained this was useful because it drew attention to the application, as otherwise the candidate could have been dismissed due to limited working experience.
- Regular but not overburdening contact with the employers and supporting the candidates. Timewise contacted employers with live job adverts to suggest Timewise's recruitment service and specific candidates and discussed the benefits of making the role flexible. Employers reported they valued these inquiries and the staff's quick reply, and acknowledged that interviewed candidates seemed prepared. If the employer did not offer the candidate a job, Timewise contacted them to receive feedback. The employers seemed impressed with this contact and explained how it was rare for a recruitment agency to be so supportive of the individuals and show a willingness to ensure that business needs were prioritised.

Evaluation of GOALS UK's Step Up, and Timewise Foundation's Earnings Progression and Flexible Career Pathways in Retail

- Employers were receptive to conversations supporting flexibility and progression that would fit business needs. Interventions needed to be pitched according to business needs and priorities (as opposed to social or philanthropic needs).
- Employers valued organisations approaching them that had good experience supporting candidates to move into and progress in-work.
- Ensuring the candidates were prepared for the job interviews was very useful for on-going relationships between the employers and Timewise.

4.5.2 UK Futures Programme: Flexible Career Pathways for Retail, Timewise in partnership with a national retailer

Several of the findings illustrate how to negotiate more flexible working arrangements for the claimants and how to help inform the redesign of specific job roles for the employers. The retailer agreed the intervention was the beginning of a process of internal cultural change, as it had been informative regarding the types of employee flexible working arrangements the business can accommodate, following its resourcing model. This helps the DWP build its understanding of the issues surrounding flexible employment from the employer perspective and prompts wider learning for the retail sector.

4.6 Employer barriers to providing progression opportunities

4.6.1 Timewise Foundation's Universal Credit earnings progression PoC

The 15 SME employers interviewed reported several barriers they face when providing progression opportunities. Employers reported that being small in size or being from a generally low paid sector meant that attracting good candidates and staff retention were key issues. As they struggled to compete with large and multinational companies, in order to attract and retain staff, employers were offering part time positions (16 hours per week), promoting both informal and formal flexible working and offering the London Living Wage. This shows an opportunity to work with SMEs in order to redesign job roles to provide progression opportunities for flexible and part time workers. Few SME employers interviewed had formal internal progression structures, though some offered progression or training opportunities for staff on a case-by-case basis.

Some employers explained that any approach from external agencies to place job candidates needed to focus on the business benefits or the suitability of the candidate. Furthermore, interviewed employers highlighted several factors that they thought worked when supporting low-income working parents to achieve sustainable progression, including in-work support to help candidates sustain their new roles, increased access to training grants for skills development, extended careers

guidance with job brokering, and place-based (such as London) initiatives (such as subsidies) to provide more opportunities.

4.7 Contributions towards the Department for Work and Pension in-work progression randomised control trial

4.7.1 Timewise Foundation's Universal Credit earnings progression PoC

Findings and lessons learnt from the Timewise Foundation's Universal Credit earnings progression PoC helped to shape the DWP in-work progression randomised control trial. The learning products developed by Timewise for its staff contributed towards the development of products and communications which were used to support working coach discussion in the trial.