



Evaluation of the Personalisation Pathfinder Trial: Supporting people with health conditions and disabilities into employment

This summary presents findings from quantitative and qualitative research into the Personalisation Pathfinder Trial, which was introduced in April 2015 in three Jobcentre Plus Districts: South West Wales, Surrey and Sussex, and Greater Wessex. The Personalisation Pathfinder offered tailored support to the unemployed with a health condition or disability through an approach focused on personalisation, flexibility, peer support and integration with local support.

The key components of the Trial were:

- Dedicated Specialist Health and Disability Coaches (SHDCs) who offered more time and tailored employment support to claimants.
- Specialist Health and Disability Partnership Managers who worked to build partnerships and procure specialist provision in the local area.
- Journey to Employment (J2E) - peer support job clubs delivered by voluntary organisations through a Community Employment Specialist (CES), a member of J2E staff with a lived experience of disability.
- Personalisation Fund – additional funding to procure tailored provision that could not be covered by existing funding routes.
- The Personalisation Pathfinder was available to three distinct groups of claimants:
 - Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants, pre-Work Capability Assessment (WCA), and Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) claimants with a known health condition or disability.

- JSA claimants on the Pathfinder were further split into two groups:
 - JSA Caseload: These claimants received support from a SHDC.
 - JSA Support: These claimants received continuing support from their existing Work Coach with additional advice from the SHDC.
- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Work Programme (WP) Completers.

Methodology

These findings derive from two Waves of a quantitative survey with claimants on the Personalisation Pathfinder. In the first Wave, 3,326 participants were interviewed around four months after joining the Pathfinder, 1,901 claimants were then re-interviewed for the second Wave, around 12 months after joining the Pathfinder. Respondents to the survey were broadly representative of Pathfinder participants in terms of claimant group, gender and age.

Findings from qualitative interviews with claimants, DWP staff and stakeholders are also reported alongside observations of J2E job clubs.

Detailed findings

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants with a known health condition or disability accounted for the greatest proportion of participants on the Pathfinder (50 per cent), followed by ESA pre-Work Capability Assessment (WCA) claimants (38 per cent).

Only around one in eight (12 per cent) participants were ESA WP Completers.

Nearly all respondents described themselves as having multiple health conditions or disabilities (96 per cent). Some respondents had multiple physical health conditions or multiple mental health conditions; three quarters (75 per cent) said they had both a physical and a mental health condition. Early on in the Trial, nearly three quarters of individuals on the Personalisation Pathfinder reported low levels of general wellbeing, as indicated by the WHO-5 wellbeing scoring system. A similar proportion also reported high levels of social isolation. The majority of participants had been in employment at some point before joining the Pathfinder (76 per cent). Six in ten had left their previous employment due to health-related reasons and more than seven in ten regarded their health as a key barrier to returning to work.

Set-up and recruitment

Recruitment for the Pathfinder was time-consuming due to the volume of targets, difficulty reaching individuals, high levels of refusals and high levels of claimants agreeing to attend a meeting but subsequently not attending. Introductory group information sessions about the Pathfinder were found to be less effective than one-to-one meetings for recruitment purposes, but far more labour intensive. In many offices, group sessions were therefore abandoned altogether for recruitment, in favour of one-to-one meetings.

Staff indicated that use of the Personalisation Fund was much lower than originally anticipated. The fund was intended for provision that could not be secured through existing funds but SHDCs reported that there was confusion around the types of support they could access the fund for. In most cases, it was found that provision could be secured through existing funding routes such as the Flexible Support Fund and Low Value Provision.

Among claimants, the need for support and a desire to return to work were key drivers in claimant uptake of the programme.

Experience of the Pathfinder

One-fifth (19 per cent) of claimants incorrectly thought that the Personalisation Pathfinder was mandatory; this proportion rose to 36 per cent for ESA WP Completers.

Staff and claimants identified the additional time dedicated to participants as the most important and impactful element of the Personalisation Pathfinder. This facilitated stronger relationships between Work Coaches and claimants and a more holistic experience for individuals, which went beyond work-focused goals and scheduled meetings with their regular Work Coach. As a result, staff and claimants felt the support offered was more personalised and tailored than that offered prior to the Trial.

Activities available through the Pathfinder were not felt by staff to differ greatly from those offered through the conventional support process. However, stronger relationships and more time spent on exploring barriers and building trust allowed appropriate activities and support to be more successfully identified for each individual.

Journey 2 Employment

Journey to Employment (J2E) peer support jobclubs were delivered by voluntary organisations using a CES, a member of J2E staff with a lived experience of disability.

Although the J2E job clubs were only able to accommodate a small number of participants, these were generally regarded very positively by both staff and claimants. Eight in ten claimants who said they took part in group sessions rated these as helpful in moving closer to employment, and nine out of ten claimants who met with a CES felt this was helpful.

There is evidence that J2E was particularly beneficial to younger claimants, who were more positive about the sessions and reported feeling more confident as a result of taking part.

Discussions and observations showed that these job clubs were able to offer support which was felt to be very different from that offered through a one-to-one interview with a SHDC in the Jobcentre. Taking part in group exercises that did not have an explicit work-related focus helped individuals to build skills in an unthreatening way. The peer support element was also very valuable

both in terms of providing social interaction and helping claimants to feel that the barriers that they were facing were surmountable.

The most commonly reported challenge to delivering J2E job clubs was low levels of referrals being made by Jobcentre staff, particularly in the first months of the Pathfinder Trial.

Partnership working

Local organisations and stakeholders were overall positive about the working relationship with Specialist Partnership Managers and the Specialist Partnership Managers appear to have made considerable efforts to engage SHDCs. Specialist Partnership Managers reported that limitations in the time allocated to their job role and the geographical spread of their area prevented them from engaging as much as could have been hoped with local provision and employers.

Employment outcomes

Three in ten claimants were in work twelve months after joining the Personalisation Pathfinder. From this research it is difficult to establish how many of these outcomes would have been achieved without involvement with the Pathfinder, but qualitative evidence from both staff and claimants points to the Pathfinder having played a large role for at least some claimants.

ESA pre-WCA claimants were most likely to have found work while on the Trial. ESA WP Completers were the least likely to have found work, but the ones who did were more likely than the other claimant groups to credit the support they received from the Pathfinder in moving them into work. Positive employment outcomes appear to be influenced by:

- severity of health condition (those whose health did not limit day-to-day activities and were better able to manage their condition were more likely to move into employment)
- having previous work experience
- improvements in general wellbeing whilst on the pathfinder.

At the Wave 2 survey, 41 per cent of respondents agreed the Pathfinder had moved them closer or into work. Those who had taken part in group

sessions or met with a CES were particularly likely to say the Pathfinder had moved them closer to work.

Of those who did not feel the Pathfinder had moved them closer to work, the most frequent reason given was they had a need for medical help the Pathfinder could not provide.

Nearly half of respondents reported an improvement in confidence and motivation to find work, and this was particularly prevalent among JSA claimants who met with a SHDC.

Health outcomes

Improvements in wellbeing and social isolation were more modest. Between the Wave 1 and Wave 2 survey points, the proportion of participants stating that they were able to manage their health condition well increased slightly (from 62 to 68 per cent). However it is not possible to establish what level of change may have occurred without involvement with the Pathfinder.

The survey also explored general wellbeing using the WHO-5 scale, and results show that half of participants reported an improvement in their WHO-5 score (52 per cent) while 37 per cent reported a deterioration.

Approximately three in ten claimants also reported improvements in levels of social isolation, but the proportion of claimants who reported a deterioration in levels of social isolation was only slightly smaller.

Additional analysis of outcomes using multivariate analysis techniques (logistic regression) was undertaken to understand what factors were able to 'predict' claimant outcomes (like finding a job or improving confidence). Results show that a range of factors predicted positive outcomes in terms of employment status, perceived confidence to find work and attitudes towards returning to work. The factors that predicted positive outcomes were a mix of demographic and behavioural factors, as well as factors related to the delivery of the Pathfinder, such as specific types of support the claimant may have received.

Overall, the multivariate analysis suggests that for outcomes such as confidence to find work and attitudes to work, the support offered by the Pathfinder contributed to positive outcomes, over and above factors related to demographics or behaviour.

Conclusions

Additional Work Coach time dedicated to participants facilitated stronger relationships between Work Coaches and claimants, and created a more holistic experience for claimants.

As a result the support offered was overall felt to be more personalised and tailored than that offered previously, by both staff and claimants.

In particular, the J2E job club was viewed very positively. Both claimants and J2E staff perceived it to increase levels of confidence and work readiness among participants.

The Pathfinder improved claimants' work readiness, as indicated by increases in the number of applications made and interviews attended, as well as improvements in attitudes towards work.

© Crown copyright 2018.

You may reuse 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

The full report of these research findings is published by the Department for Work and Pensions (ISBN 978 1 5286 0424 6. Research Report 957. June 2018).

You can download the full report free from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/research-reports>

Other report summaries in the research series are also available from the website above.

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

Socialresearch@dwp.gsi.gov.uk