Department for Work & Pensions

Support for the very long term unemployed trailblazer

Preliminary analysis of benefit impacts

December 2012

Support for the very long term unemployed trailblazer – preliminary analysis of benefit impacts

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Work Programme (WP) was introduced in June 2011 as an integrated package of back to work support for long term unemployed people. However support will be put in place to help those Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants reaching the end of their two years on the Work Programme who have not secured sustainable employment and require further support.

To inform a national programme of post-Work Programme support in 2013 the support for the very long term unemployed trailblazer (SVLTU) was introduced in order to:

    a) Explore what kinds of support would be effective for this group, and

    b) Test whether the knowledge that six months of intensive/full-time support would begin on a definite date would increase the likelihood of leaving benefit before that point was reached (a deterrent effect).

To do this the trailblazer has the following key features:

- A randomised controlled trial to give a high degree of confidence that any observed differences in outcomes are attributable to the support options,

- A 13 week pre treatment period to test deterrence, informing and maintaining awareness of forthcoming support throughout the period, and

- A 26 week period of treatment consisting of either intensive Jobcentre Plus support, contracted provider-led full time work experience or job search support, or a control option of standard Jobcentre Plus support.

This publication contains statistics describing a preliminary estimate of the impact of the SVLTU trailblazer on the likelihood of participants being in receipt of an out of work benefit[1] or training allowance[2].

This quantitative analysis complements the findings in Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) research report "Evaluation of the Support for Very Long Term Unemployed (SVLTU) Trailblazer" published on 6 December 2012[3].

This is an early view of impact to accompany the research report and we intend to publish a more comprehensive assessment in 2013 that includes all randomly assigned participants over a longer tracking period. Due to the limited amount of administrative data currently available this preliminary analysis is limited to a tracking period of 41 weeks following random allocation. Only around 75% of randomly assigned participants have completed the tracking period within currently available data.

The figures presented are based on DWP working age benefit data to the end of June 2012 and the analysis focuses on a cohort of participants during the first 41 weeks following random

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[1] Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Income Support (IS), Incapacity Benefit (IB) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
[2] A training allowance (TA) is a maintenance allowance paid instead of Jobseeker's Allowance, out of public funds to people taking part in a course of training or instruction provided by the Department or under arrangements made with a partner.
[3] http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrs-index.asp

assignment to a trailblazer support option. Only participants that have completed 41 weeks before the end of June 2012 and were in receipt of an out of work benefit at the date of random assignment are included within the cohort. This includes those who were randomly assigned to but did not start a support option[4]

2. BACKGROUND

In the absence of any Work Programme completers until 2013, a proxy group of long term unemployed JSA claimants were identified on which to test the support options. Claimants completing Flexible New Deal (FND) provision represent a reasonably close match to JSA WP participants aged over 25 in terms of eligibility criteria for the provision[5] and the broadly 'black box' nature of the support. A major difference is programme duration, WP lasting 24 months in comparison to 12 months contracted provision within FND[6].

The trailblazer aims to test the relative effectiveness of the following support options in boosting employment and benefit outcomes for the very long term unemployed.

- **Standard Jobcentre Plus support** – this is the control group within the trailblazer and consists of flexible and personalised adviser based support.

- **Community Action Programme (CAP)** - delivered by contracted providers and comprising of 26 weeks of full time work experience or provider-led job search support.

- **Ongoing Case Management (OCM)** – an intensive offer of flexible and personalised adviser based support, delivered by Jobcentre Plus (JCP) through increased interventions over 26 weeks.

To examine whether any participants would be deterred from joining support options, once randomly assigned participants selected to CAP/OCM were informed they would be mandated to a support option at the end of the 13 week period if they were still in receipt of JSA, those selected to the control were told they would receive standard Jobcentre Plus support.

Throughout the 13 week period all participants would receive standard Jobcentre Plus support equivalent to the control group, with the addition of monthly reminder letters for CAP/OCM participants to maintain awareness of their forthcoming support option.

Four districts within the Jobcentre Plus Central England group were chosen to deliver the pilots – Derbyshire, East Anglia, Leicestershire & Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire & Rutland.

The trailblazer design identified Jobseeker's Allowance claimants returning to Jobcentre Plus support following FND provision and randomly assigned them to one of the three support options.

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[4] Those who leave benefit in the pre treatment period or that reached the point of treatment after February 2012. Annex B describes in more detail.
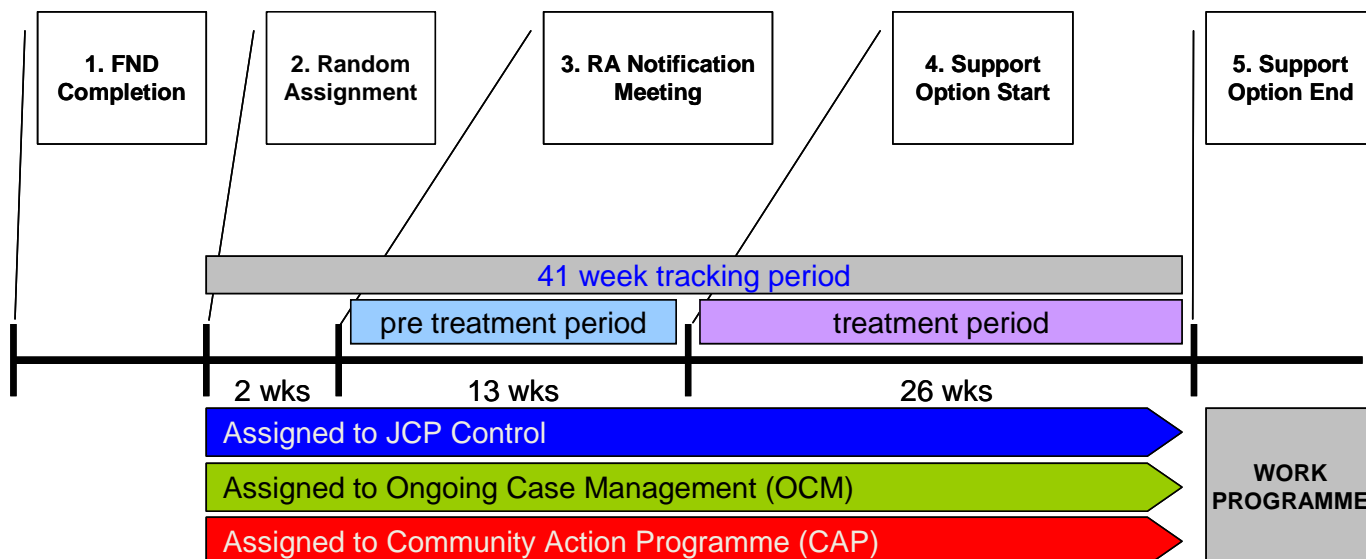[5] Work Programme payment group 2 (JSA claimants over 25) eligibility requires 12 months of Jobcentre Plus support whilst claiming JSA
[6] FND providers were contracted for a maximum of 52 weeks support (or 78 with an agreed extension) excluding any time spent off benefit or in employment, or until a sustained job outcome was paid for a participant.

The pilot aimed to select 12,000 participants to the treatment stage as this would provide a large enough sample group to give robust evaluation results. To account for any benefit off flow over the 13 week period post random assignment, 16,000 participants were selected overall.

Figure 2.1 and the stage description below set out a participant's journey through the trailblazer.

Figure 2.1: Trailblazer participant journey

- **Stage 1: FND completion** – claimants that reached the end of their participation on FND and remained on JSA attended a review meeting with a Jobcentre Plus adviser. At this meeting they were identified as eligible for the trailblazer and were given an initial pilot marker.

- **Stage 2: Random assignment** – the adviser support team used a random assignment tool that allocated to one of the three groups based on the national insurance number of the participant. This took place at the same time the notification discussion was booked with the claimant. FND contracts ended during the trailblazer selection period (September 2011). Participants who returned to JCP after this point would have had a combined FND completion and random assignment notification meeting. More detail on the effect of FND termination in the trailblazer can be found in **Annex A**.

- **Stage 3: Notification meeting** – the participant attended a meeting with a JCP adviser around two weeks following random assignment and was informed of the support option to which they had been allocated and their journey through the remaining trailblazer process. Following this participants allocated to all support options were given standard Jobcentre Plus support for around 13 weeks.

- **Stage 4: Support option start** – at the end of the pre treatment period those in receipt of JSA began their 26 week support option (OCM) or were referred to the CAP provider, unless they reached this stage after February 2012 as no further support option starts were made in the trailblazer. In these circumstances participants had their eligibility for Work Programme tested and were referred if found eligible. This process is described in more detail in **Annex B**.

- **Stage 5: Support option end** – participants starting a support option and still in receipt of JSA 26 weeks later had their eligibility for Work Programme tested and were referred to the programme if found eligible.

3. METHODOLOGY

Data and cohort definition

The analysis was carried out using data derived from DWP administrative databases. These provide details of spells on DWP benefits, characteristics of DWP customers (drawn from Jobcentre Plus' Labour Market System (LMS) which relies on inputs from advisers), sanctions, advisor interventions, pilot marker identification and spells on employment programmes, including referrals to CAP.

We believe that the recording of the majority of out-of-work benefit and Training Allowance spells to be accurate. However, we should note that there is some inaccuracy in some of the imputed end dates of spells and that some very short spells are omitted. We believe that JSA end dates are accurate in so far as much that if someone fails to sign on to JSA then the end date is given as the date of the previous signing. ESA end dates are randomised between the two fortnightly scans between which the person disappears off benefit. If the Department is informed quickly, this should be unbiased; however, if on average individuals take a while to tell the Department, this may be biased forwards. In the case of people moving from ESA to another DWP benefit the end date is set to be the day before the next benefit starts.

We also believe that the sanctions database provides an accurate measure of the date a sanction decision is made by a Jobcentre Plus decision maker. However there are significant proportions of missing start and end dates for the period the sanction is in force for a claimant, making it difficult to estimate the duration of any particular sanction. This analysis only considers the dates at which sanction decisions are made.

Characteristics data from the Jobcentre Plus LMS contains a number of missing values as advisers do not routinely fill in all of the fields during client interviews or the claimant does not disclose the information. This is particularly the case for variables identifying ethnicity, disability and low qualification.

There are no statistically significant differences in the proportions of missing or unknown values between support option groups. The proportion of missing data within the 'low qualified' and 'lone parent' markers is high (82% and 10% respectively). All other demographic variables report less than 1% missing or unknown values.

Table 3.1 shows the overall number of participants randomly assigned and entering the support option phase, as well as those referred to CAP contracted provision by Jobcentre Plus who did not engage with the provider.

Table 3.1: Total random assignments and support option starts

Journey stage	JCP Control	CAP	OCM	Total
Random assignment	4,925	5,136	4,981	**15,042**
Random assignment %	32.7%	34.1%	33.1%	100%

Support option start[7]	4,135	3,439	3,682	**11,256**
CAP referral (no start)	n/a	425	n/a	**425**

The cohort for this analysis is drawn from the overall participant group and is shown in Table 3.2 . It is defined as trailblazer participants that have moved 41 weeks past random assignment before the end of June 2012, and were in receipt of an out of work benefit at the date of random assignment.

Table 3.2: Cohort random assignments and support option starts

Journey stage	JCP Control	CAP	OCM	Total
Random assignment	3,697	3,868	3,765	**11,330**
Random assignment %	32.6%	34.1%	33.2%	100%
Support option start	3,166	2,622	2,824	**8,612**
CAP referral (no start)	n/a	323	n/a	**323**

Those not in receipt of an out of work benefit at random assignment are excluded from the cohort. This group is made up of participants that could not be matched in administrative data to a benefit record (14 participants) and those that have a benefit record but were not in receipt of benefit on the day of random assignment (322 participants). This is possible in process terms as assignment takes place at the meeting booking stage when the participant is not in attendance at the Jobcentre Plus office.

Table 3.3 shows how the excluded participants are spread across support option groups.

Table 3.3: Participants excluded from the cohort as not in receipt on benefit or no benefit record found

	JCP Control	CAP	OCM	Total
Cohort	3,697	3,868	3,765	**11,330**
Participants excluded from cohort as not on benefit at RA / no benefit record	122	121	93	**336**
Cohort plus excluded	**3,819**	**3,989**	**3,858**	11,666
Proportion of cohort plus excluded that are included in this analysis	96.8%	97.0%	97.6%	**97.1%**

The variables used in this analysis to compare the characteristics of participants and are presented in Table 3.4. If random assignment is successful we would expect the values to be similar across the three support option groups.

Table 3.4: Variables used to compare characteristics

Variable	Type	Values
Support option group	Categorical	The result of the random assignment process including the adjustments described in **Annex C**. Values are: JCP Control; CAP; OCM.
Gender	Categorical	Male; Female.
Age	Numerical - continuous	18-65 years old.

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[7] Recorded starts on CAP and OCM, and for comparative purposes only, a pseudo treatment start defined as those assigned to the control group that are in receipt of JSA or training allowance 15 weeks after random assignment.

Disability[8]	Categorical	Not disabled; Disabled; Unknown.
Ethnicity	Categorical	White; Black; Asian; Mixed; Chinese; Other; Unknown
Lone Parent	Categorical	Lone Parent; Couple; No (not a Parent); Not Known; Missing
Low Qualified	Categorical	No; Yes; Unknown.
Benefit history	Categorical	104 binary variables – representing each of the 104 weeks prior to random assignment Values are: in receipt of benefit; not in receipt of benefit.
Benefit spell history	Numerical	Number of open claims in 104 weeks prior to random assignment. Benefits include JSA/ESA/IS/IB
Sanction and disallowance history	Numerical	Number of sanctions/disentitlements in 104 weeks prior to random assignment

The outcome variables used in this analysis observed over the 41 week tracking period are described in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Variables monitored following random assignment

Variable	Type	Values
Benefit outcomes (weeks)	Categorical	41 binary variables – representing each of the weeks following random assignment. Values are: in receipt of benefit; not in receipt of benefit.
Benefit outcomes (days)	Categorical	287 binary variables – representing each of the days in 41 weeks following random assignment. Values are: in receipt of benefit; not in receipt of benefit.
Benefit spell outcomes	Numerical	Number of benefit claims in 41 weeks following random assignment.
Sanction and disallowance outcomes	Numerical	Number of sanctions/disentitlements in 41 weeks following random assignment.

Support option characteristics

Table 3.6 compares the characteristics of the JCP control group to the CAP or OCM groups and Table 3.7 compares the entire cohort with a group made up of the JSA caseload within the four trailblazer districts. Significant differences between groups are highlighted.

Comparing support option groups within the trailblazer, there are no significant differences in any demographic characteristics but significant differences at the 95% level were found in some benefit receipt characteristics[9]. However, overall this table provides reassurance that the random assignment process was successful.

Table 3.6: Characteristics of support option groups

Support option group	JCP Control	CAP	OCM
Observations	3,697	3,868	3,765
	Personal / Demographic		

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[8] Since disability is set by a Jobcentre Plus adviser based on claimant self -disclosure, this variable is not a systematic identification of disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).
[9] These differences are not significant at the 99% level

	Characteristics		
Age (mean years)	38	38	38
Male (%)	75%	75%	77%
Disabled (%)	34%	34%	33%
Ethnic Minority (%)	16%	16%	16%
Low Qualified (%)	14%	13%	12%
Lone Parent (%)	6%	6%	5%
	Benefit Receipt		
Benefit history (mean weeks claiming any benefit in past two years)	99	98	98
JSA history (mean weeks claiming in past two years)	97	96	96*
non JSA benefit history (mean weeks claiming in past two years)	2	2	2
Benefit spell history (mean spells in past two years)	2.11	2.15	2.17*
JSA spell history (mean spells in past two years)	1.98	2.00	2.02
non JSA spell history (mean spells in past two years)	0.13	0.15*	0.15*
	Benefit Sanctions		
Sanction History (mean number of adverse decisions in past two years)	0.64	0.63	0.64

– past two years measured from date of random assignment.

*Significant difference at 95% confidence level between JCP control and CAP/OCM

Table 3.7 shows the trailblazer cohort is significantly different from average JSA claimants in the same districts on all measured characteristics. This is consistent with our expectation that the trailblazer was targeted at a distinct group of JSA claimants.

A trailblazer participant is significantly more likely to be older, male, disabled and low qualified than the average JSA claimant, less likely to be a lone parent or ethnic minority, and will have spent more time on benefit over the last two years with fewer benefit spells.

Table 3.7: Characteristics of trailblazer group compared to JSA caseload

	Trailblazer Cohort	live JSA Caseload
Observations	11,330	151,497
	Personal / Demographic Characteristics	
Age (mean years)	38	34*
Male (%)	76%	65%*
Disabled (%)	34%	23%*
Ethnic Minority (%)	16%	17%*
Low Qualified (%)	13%	9%*
Lone Parent (%)	5%	10%*
	Benefit Receipt	

Benefit history (mean weeks claiming any benefit in past two years)	98	54*
JSA history (mean weeks claiming in past two years)	97	44*
non JSA benefit history (mean weeks claiming in past two years)	2	10*
Benefit spell history (mean spells in past two years)	2.1	5.5*
JSA spell history (mean spells in past two years)	2.0	4.6*
non JSA spell history (mean spells in past two years)	0.1	0.9*
	Benefit Sanctions	
Sanction History (mean number of adverse decisions in past two years)	0.64	0.42*

JSA Caseload – snapshot at 30 June 2012. Past two years measured from 30 June 2012.

Trailblazer groups – past two years measured from date of random assignment.

*Significant difference at 95% confidence level

Measuring outcomes and impacts

We have shown that the pre-treatment characteristics are well balanced, giving reassurance that the randomisation has eliminated any selection bias, so enabling us to infer impacts confidently. This means that we believe the difference in outcomes across the different support options captures the average causal effect of the support option treatment.

We have measured the variables in Table 3.5 for each participant for the 41 weeks following random assignment to a support option.

The original intention was to measure the outcomes of the trailblazer from the point of notification meeting, as this is the earliest point at which we would expect any potential differences in the groups to occur, unfortunately we are unable to accurately identify this point within administrative data, as explained detail in **Annex D**. The chosen alternative was to use the date of random assignment, which is recorded robustly within administrative data.

For benefit outcomes, each period we measure whether the individual was in receipt of out of work benefits (JSA, IS, IB, ESA) or training allowance. A definitive outcome is assigned where a daily/weekly point in time (e.g. 7, 14, 21 … days following random assignment) is identified as being between a benefit spell start and spell end. The outcome period covers an independently calculated period of time for each individual, spanning from the participant's random assignment date to the end of the maximum period of the data available for the cohort (41 weeks later).

Daily benefit variables were used to calculate the total days on benefit across support options with more precision, which was required for the outcomes in Table 4.2, however this level of precision was unnecessary for the weekly snapshot charts (Figure 4.1 to Figure 4.8).

To calculate the net impacts for a given week, we take the mean outcome value of the CAP/OCM treatment group (i.e. the proportion of the group who are receiving benefit) and subtract the mean value of the control group. Thus the net impact measure is the absolute percentage point difference between the CAP/OCM and control group for the corresponding outcome.

Benefit spell outcomes count any out of work benefit claim open between the participant's random assignment date and the end of the maximum period of the data available for the cohort (41 weeks later).

Sanction and disallowance outcomes measure the number of adverse decisions made by Jobcentre plus decision makers resulting from a sanction referral initiated by Jobcentre Plus or contracted providers. As such the variable measures only negative outcomes for a participant and excludes favourable decisions.

4. RESULTS

This section presents a summary of outcomes in all variables monitored over the tracking period in Table 4.1, the benefit outcomes of the trailblazer across all out of work benefits (Figure 4.1 to Figure 4.4) then JSA only (Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6) and displacement to other benefits (Figure 4.7 to Figure 4.8). It then goes on to describe the impact on days in receipt of benefit (Table 4.2) and discusses the deterrent phase of the trailblazer, before finally setting out sanction outcomes in Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.10.

Summary of outcomes

Table 4.1 shows the difference in our outcome variables over the 41 week tracking period and indication of significant differences at the 95% confidence level between control and CAP/OCM groups.

The table shows on average those assigned to CAP/OCM spent significantly fewer days claiming JSA/TA, significantly more days claiming ESA/IB/IS, and had a greater number of benefit spells and adverse sanction decisions in comparison to the control group.

Table 4.1: Monitored outcome variables over 41 weeks

	JCP Control	CAP	OCM
Observations	3,697	3,868	3,765
	Benefit and Sanction Impact		
Benefit outcomes (mean days in receipt of any benefit over 41 weeks)	252	242*	240*
JSA Benefit outcomes (mean days in receipt of JSA over 41 weeks)	242	228*	227*
Non JSA Benefit outcomes (mean days in receipt of ESA/IB/IS over 41 weeks)	10	15*	13*
In receipt of any benefit 41 weeks after random assignment	81%	76%*	74%*
Benefit spell outcomes (mean benefit spells on any benefit in 41 weeks)	1.27	1.36*	1.39*
JSA spell outcomes (mean JSA spells in 41 weeks)	1.20	1.23*	1.27*
non JSA spell outcomes (mean ESA/IB/IS spells in 41 weeks)	0.08	0.13*	0.13*
Sanction outcomes (all adverse decisions) (mean adverse decisions in 41 weeks)	0.22	0.31*	0.29*
Sanction outcomes (first adverse decision only) (mean adverse decisions in 41 weeks)	0.15	0.19*	0.21*

Benefit outcomes

Figure 4.1 shows the proportion of the cohort in receipt of an out of work benefit[10] for the 104 weeks preceding and 41 weeks following random assignment. The lines are closely aligned over the previous 104 weeks indicating the groups consist of participants with a similar benefit history. This is exactly what we would expect to see with a successful random assignment process, and this combined with the characteristic comparison in Table 3.6 gives us confidence that the differences in outcomes are attributable to the effect of support options.

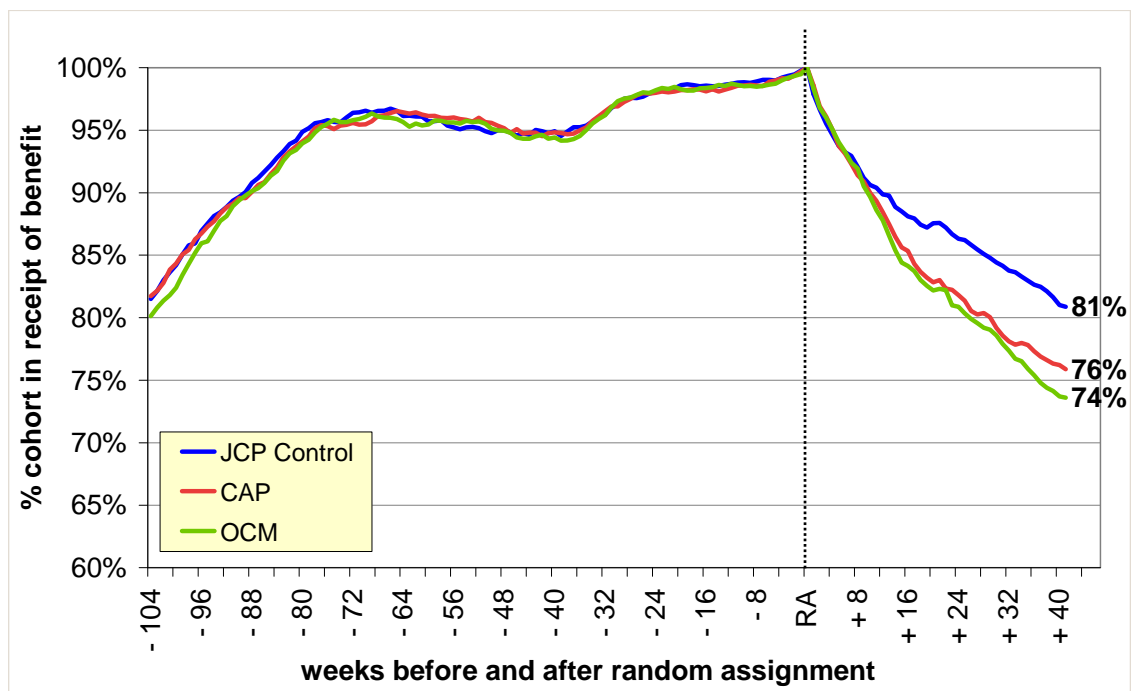**Figure 4.1: Likelihood of claiming any out of work benefit before and after random assignment**

Figure 4.2 presents the benefit impact of CAP and OCM with red and green t-bars representing a 95% confidence range. There is no significant difference between groups pre random assignment which supports the view that randomisation was successful. A 5 (CAP) and 7 (OCM) percentage point difference from control is observed at the 41 week point which means after 41 weeks, those assigned to CAP/OCM groups were between 6% and 9% less likely to be receiving benefits than the control group.

Figure 4.2: Benefit impact of CAP and OCM before and after random assignment

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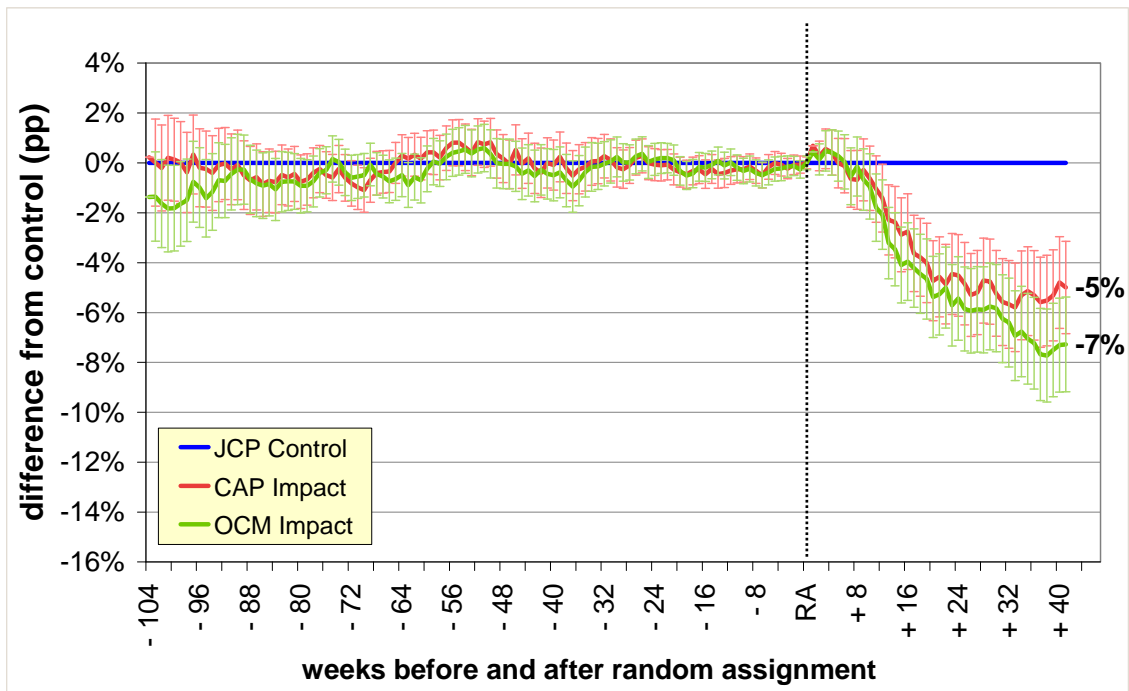
[10] JSA, ESA, IB, IS or a training allowance

Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4 present the same data in the post random assignment phase only. A statistically significant impact at the 95% level is observed from 13 weeks following random assignment.

Figure 4.3: Likelihood of claiming any out of work benefit after random assignment
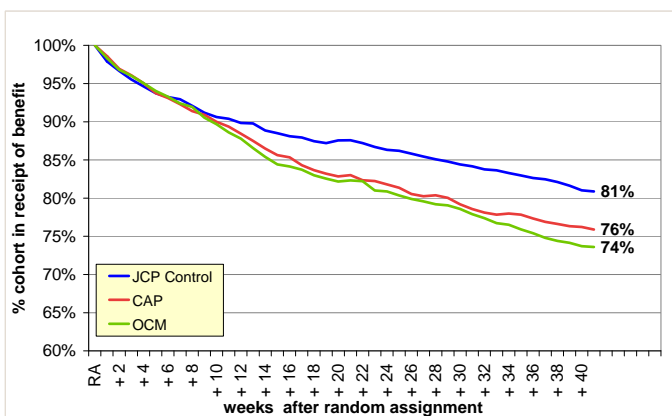

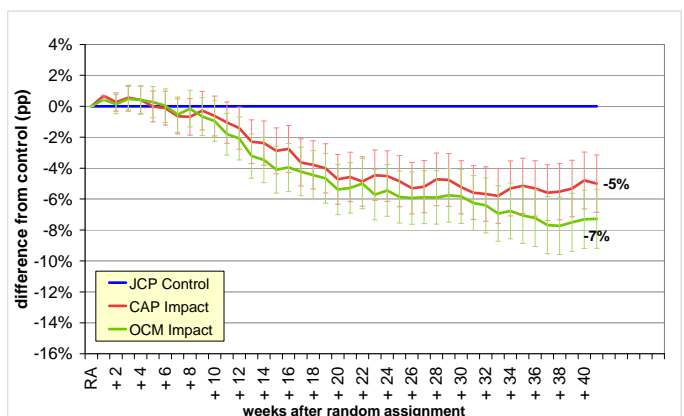**Figure 4.4: Benefit impact of CAP and OCM after random assignment**

Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6 show the outcomes and impact from random assignment on the likelihood of remaining on JSA or training allowances after random assignment. Those assigned to CAP or OCM are less likely to be in receipt of JSA/TA 41 weeks following random assignment, an 8 (CAP) or 10 (OCM) percentage point difference is observed.

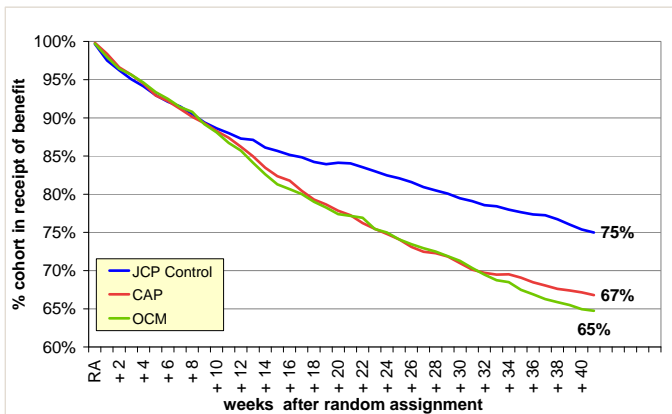**Figure 4.5: Likelihood of claiming JSA/TA after random assignment**

Figure 4.6: JSA/TA impact of CAP and OCM after random assignment
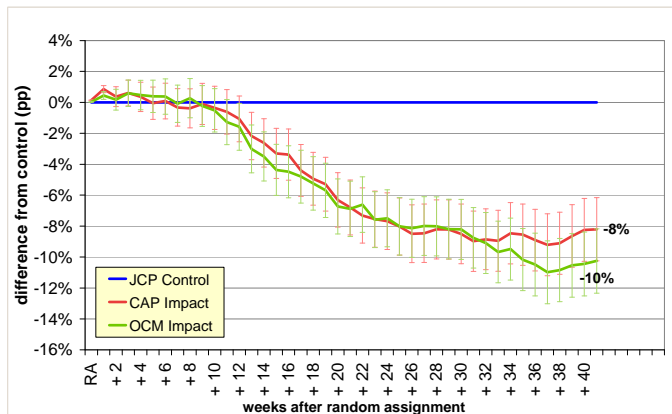

Figure 4.7 and Figure 4.8 show the probability of claiming non-JSA benefits (ESA, IB or IS) for 41 weeks following random assignment and impact with a 95% confidence interval. There is 3 percentage point difference between control and treatment at this stage indicating assignment to CAP/OCM led to some displacement to non-JSA benefits, however the magnitude is less than that observed in JSA/TA.

The vast majority displacement was to ESA, and to move through the medical assessment phase of an ESA claim can take around three months. During this period claimants are paid a JSA equivalent rate of benefit until the medical assessment outcome is known. With the limited tracking period in this analysis we have not explored the extent to which displacement is to the ESA assessment phase only, or what proportion of displacement results in a long term claim to ESA.

Figure 4.7: Likelihood of claiming ESA/IB/IS after random assignment
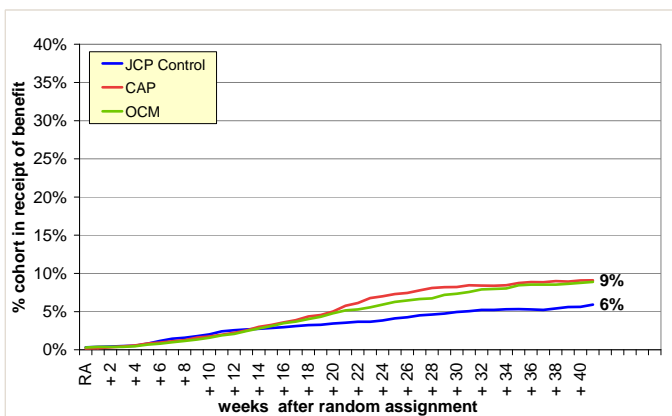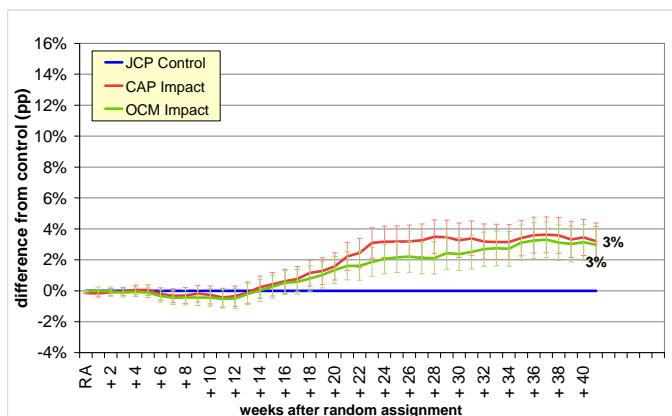

Figure 4.8: ESA/IB/IS impact of CAP and OCM after random assignment

Deterrent

When looking at whether the prospect of six months of full time or intensive support would affect the likelihood of receiving benefits before the point of treatment, we need to consider JSA and other benefits separately to measure the effect.

Figure 4.6 shows there is significant impact of CAP and OCM in the likelihood of claiming JSA/TA from 13 weeks following random assignment, and for those participants in the cohort that started CAP or OCM we know the average start date was 20 and 17 weeks following assignment, which suggests that the impacts in the 13 to 20 week range are in part deterrent.

The displacement to non-JSA benefits shown in Figure 4.8 occurs over the same range of weeks and supports the suggestion of partial deterrent impact in these weeks. However because of uncertainties identifying the date of notification meeting, delays and other complexities in the trailblazer journey described in **Annex D**, we cannot be more definitive.

Days in receipt of benefit

Table 4.2 shows the total number of days claiming any out of work benefit following random assignment for the cohort, calculated using the benefit outcome (days) variable. Over 41 weeks those assigned to CAP/OCM groups have on average spent 9 (CAP) or 12 (OCM) days fewer in receipt of out of work benefits than the control group. Broken down by benefit type this is 14 (CAP) or 16 (OCM) fewer JSA days and 5 (CAP) and 4 (OCM) more days on non-JSA benefits.

Table 4.2: Days in receipt of out of work benefits over 41 weeks

	JCP Control	CAP				OCM			
Participants	3,697	3,868				3,765			
Days in receipt of any benefit	**Total days**	**Total days**	difference from control			**Total days**	difference from control		
			All	**JSA /TA**	**ESA / IB / IS**		**All**	**JSA /TA**	**ESA / IB / IS**
over first 15 weeks	97	97	-1	-0.5	-0.1	96	-1	-0.6	-0.2
over first 25 weeks	158	155	-4*	-4.7*	1.1*	154	-4*	-5.0*	0.6
over first 35 weeks	217	210	-7*	-10.6*	3.4*	209	-9*	-11.0*	2.4*
over first 41 weeks	**252**	**242**	**-9***	**-14.3***	**4.9***	**240**	**-12***	**-15.5***	**3.7***

*Significant difference at 95% confidence level between control and CAP/OCM

Sanction outcomes

Figure 4.9 shows the cumulative total number of adverse sanction decisions as a proportion of the cohort, with each decision counted at the date it was made. At the end of the tracking period a significantly higher proportion of adverse decisions were observed in the CAP and OCM groups reflecting the greater intensity of these support options in comparison to the control group.

Figure 4.10 strips out repeat adverse decisions for a participant, keeping only the first recorded sanction in order to show the proportion of unique individuals that have received a sanction in the tracking period. By the end of the tracking period a significantly higher proportion of individuals in CAP and OCM groups had received a sanction in comparison to the control.

Figure 4.9: Adverse sanction decisions as a proportion of cohort after random assignment, including repeat decisions
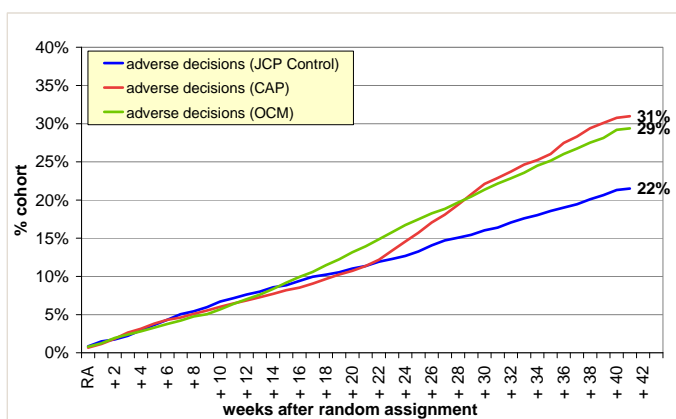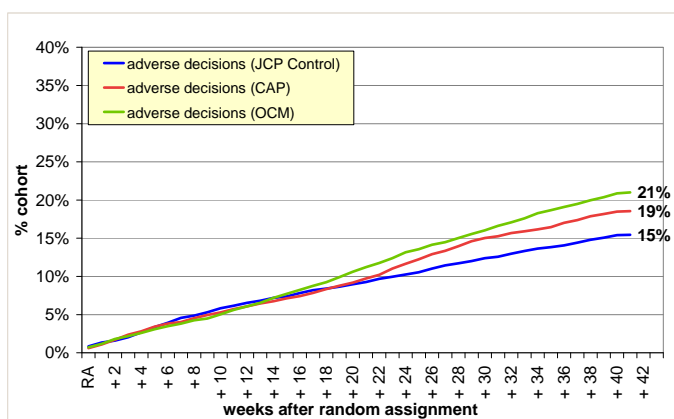
Figure 4.10: Proportion of cohort receiving an adverse sanction decision after random assignment, first decision only

5. CONCLUSIONS

The support option volumes and analysis of characteristic differences across our measured variables indicate that the random assignment process was successful at apportioning participants to each group. This gives a high degree of confidence that the observed differences in the outcome variables are attributable to the support group options and not to underlying differences in the composition of the groups themselves.

Assignment to CAP and OCM groups significantly reduces the likelihood of a participant being in receipt of an out of work benefit 41 weeks after random assignment. A 5 (CAP) and 7 (OCM) percentage point difference is observed at the 41 week point, and those assigned were 6% (CAP) and 9% (OCM) less likely to be receiving benefits than the control group.

Those assigned to CAP and OCM also spent significantly fewer days overall in receipt of an out of work benefit (9 and 12 days respectively), but fewer days observed on JSA/TA (14 and 16 days) were partially offset by a small displacement to ESA/IB/IS (5 and 4 days).

There is no evidence to suggest there is any benefit impact occurring in the majority of the pre treatment period. However impact in the 13 to 20 week range may be in part due to deterrent, but limitations in the analysis prevent a more definitive conclusion.

The more intensive, mandatory nature of CAP and OCM has led to a significantly higher proportion of participants assigned to these groups receiving a sanction or disallowance over the tracking period.

6. NEXT STEPS

We intend to publish a more comprehensive assessment in 2013 that includes all trailblazer participants and tracks outcome variables over a longer period. It will also include outcomes relating to employment and explore in more detail the displacement to ESA and other benefits.

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7. ANNEX

Annex A: FND contract termination

Although the aim of the trailblazer was to use participants that had completed a full term on the FND programme as a proxy group for those completing Work Programme, it was not possible to exclusively use this group as the FND contract was terminated at a point during the trailblazer participant selection period (the beginning of September 2011).

At termination, all remaining FND participants claiming JSA were brought into Jobcentre Plus support over a three month period, some of whom with as little as three months duration on the programme. A process was put in place to select those with the longest durations on FND for the trailblazer, so as to match as closely as possible the intended target group. Around 6,000 (or 40% of) participants were drawn from this group.

This constraint added some complexity to the design in that participants brought into the trailblazer after FND termination had a combined FND completion and random assignment notification meeting, as well as a different pattern of pilot marker usage.

Annex B: Trailblazer volumes

It was important that no more than 12,000 participants were selected into support option groups as participation in the trailblazer would delay a claimant's journey on to the Work Programme. This was not desirable in particular for those selected to the control group, who could receive less intensive support for the duration of the pilot.

A process was put in place to ensure no more than 12,000 participants started on a support option, ending treatment starts for CAP and OCM when the control total was achieved. Consequently there are a number of participants randomly assigned to support options and included in the cohort that did not start a support option, even though they were in receipt of JSA at the end of the deterrent period.

This process had to be modified part way through the delivery phase as it became clear that the significant drop off in starts over the Christmas period meant that it was unlikely the control total would be met by the end of January 2012 (the planned date by which 12,000 support option starts would have been achieved).

Because of commercial constraints within the CAP contract and the need to evaluate the trailblazer in a reasonable timeframe to inform a national programme, a decision was taken to end support option starts at the end of February 2012 with slightly less than the 12,000 intended participants.

Annex C: The random assignment process

A pilot marker was set up within Jobcentre Plus' labour market system (LMS) to identify trailblazer participants throughout their journey. The marker had four values, three to capture the outcome of random assignment (CAP, OCM, or JCP control) and a value ('PWPS Selected') that signified that a participant was part of the trailblazer but had yet to be randomly assigned (stage 1 in figure 2.1).

The standard pattern of pilot marker usage would have a participant's marker status initiated to 'PWPS Selected' at stage 1 of the journey. At stage 2 the adviser support team would use the

random assignment tool and update the marker value to the outcome of random assignment. Participants selected to the trailblazer after FND termination would have their marker set immediately to the random assignment outcome value.

The random assignment tool was a spreadsheet product available within Jobcentres in trailblazer districts. Adviser support teams enter a participant's national insurance number into the randomisation tool which returns the support option group the participant is to be allocated to. Because it relies on manual keying of information there is the potential for error.

The 'PWPS Selected' marker value was also used to identify participants brought into the pilot in error (as pilot markers cannot be removed once set but values can be changed) and those randomly assigned but who don't start treatment. Because of this and general errors and corrections around 60% of participants have more than one marker change recoded within pilot marker data.

Excluding 'PWPS Selected' values, we find that 3% of participants (around 400 of the cohort, 500 of all participants) have more than one support option marker value change within the data. Identifying the support option a participant was randomly assigned to in 97% of cases is straightforward by selecting the only support option value within the data. For the 3% of participants with multiple support option values, the earliest support option value that matched the random assignment formula[11] was chosen. This method was one of three approaches considered[12] and chosen as it took into account marker setting errors that were subsequently corrected.

The support option identified within the pilot marker data was, in a small number of cases (47 in the cohort), contradicted by other data collected (e.g. where a participant selected to the control group has a subsequent referral to CAP recorded). In these cases the support option group variable records the treatment identified, in the example the variable records CAP as opposed to control.

Overall only 2.5% of participants (278 of the cohort) were assigned to a support option that differed from the random assignment formula. This could be explained by operational error in the random assignment process or trailblazer generally, or potentially deliberate assignment to support options by Jobcentre Plus staff.

The support option group variable records participants by the group they were selected to in random assignment process, adjusted for subsequent contradictory data as described above.

Annex D: Identifying the deterrent period

In setting up the trailblazer, some IT changes to Jobcentre Plus systems to support the trailblazer evaluation were not available. In particular it was not possible to raise specific MI identifiers for the random assignment notification meeting and initial OCM intervention. Without these identifiers it is difficult to pinpoint within administrative data the date at which participants were notified of the group they were allocated to, or the date that those assigned to OCM started treatment.

Ideally we would measure the impact of the trailblazer from the point of notification, as this is the earliest point at which we would expect any potential differences in the groups to occur. As we are unable to accurately identify this point within administrative data, the alternatives are to

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[11] The random assignment formula is based on the national insurance number of the claimant and is the formula contained in the random assignment tool used by Jobcentre Plus operational staff to allocate participants in the trailblazer.
[12] Approaches taking the earliest and latest support option value were also considered.

try to estimate the notification date or to use the date of random assignment, which is recorded robustly within administrative data.

On balance the chosen option was to present the outcomes in this paper measured from the date of random assignment, and to assume that there is a two week gap between random assignment and the notification meeting based on advice from JCP operations on the average time between booking and attending a meeting.

As an alternative to a specific identifier for an OCM treatment start meeting, a clerical process was put in place where advisers send email notification of a participant start on the strand. Although reasonably robust the process relies on manual keying of data so we would expect there to be a higher error rate than data recorded in administrative databases.

Similarly there is no treatment start date for the Jobcentre Plus control group. Once a participant was notified of assignment to the group, a workflow was set for 39 weeks denoting a participant's maximum end point on the trailblazer. No other trailblazer specific interventions occur for this group. Although the possibility of introducing an intervention at the end of deterrent point was discussed, feedback from operational staff and others was that that this would deviate too much from the standard service and could compromise the control.

In this analysis participants assigned to the control group that are in receipt of JSA or training allowance 15 weeks after random assignment are assigned a pseudo treatment start date in order to illustrate the rate of benefit off flow over the pre treatment period (Table 3.1 and 3.2).

At the end of the pre treatment period, participants in receipt of JSA and selected to the CAP group attend an intervention with a JCP adviser where they are referred to the contracted provider. The date of this referral and the date of the subsequent engagement with the provider are recorded within administrative data.