



Department
for Work &
Pensions



Intensive Activity Programme trial evaluation: Claimant research

July 2016

Research Report No 925

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Summary

The Intensive Activity Programme (IAP) was a package of intensive support and structured activities that claimants were required to complete within 21 days of making a new Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claim, in addition to a full-time job search. Delivery of the IAP was led by Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches and was structured around a fixed curriculum of workshops, work at home activities and follow-up meetings with Work Coaches. The IAP was designed to facilitate effective full-time job seeking from the earliest stage of the claim, and therefore accelerate movement off unemployment benefit and into work.

For six months from spring 2015 the IAP was implemented by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as a randomised controlled trial across seven Jobcentre Plus offices to fully assess its impact, as well as claimant and staff experiences of the programme. The evaluation strategy comprised of quantitative and qualitative strands. The findings presented in this report are from longitudinal in-depth interviews with JSA claimants and observations of IAP delivery across three participating Jobcentre Plus offices.

For a summary of the evidence across all available strands of research to date, please refer to the [IAP trial evaluation: evidence synthesis report](#).

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List of abbreviations

CC	Claimant Commitment
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
FTA	Failure to Attend
IAP	Intensive Activity Programme
IWSI	Initial Work Search Interview
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
LDD	Learning Disability or Difficulty
RCT	Randomised Controlled Trial
STAR	Situation, Task, Action, Result
UC	Universal Credit
UJ	Universal Jobmatch

Executive summary

The Intensive Activity Programme (IAP) was a package of intensive support and structured activities that claimants were required to complete within 21 days of making a new claim. It was designed to facilitate effective full-time job seeking from the earliest stage of the claim thus accelerating the movement into work and off unemployment benefit.

Claimants participating in the programme were required to complete a fixed curriculum of activities over this three-week period, while also conducting a comprehensive job search. To support and monitor their progress, claimants also had face-to-face meetings with their Work Coaches, and took part in group workshops which focused on elements of the curriculum.

From spring 2015 the IAP was implemented by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as a randomised controlled trial across seven Jobcentre Plus offices to fully assess its impact. The evaluation strategy involved various quantitative and qualitative strands of research. The findings presented in this report derive from a qualitative strand designed to assess the claimant experience of the IAP. This comprised longitudinal in-depth interviews with claimants and structured, observational research in three Jobcentre Plus offices.

For a summary of the evidence across all available strands of research to date, please refer to the [IAP Trial Evaluation: Evidence Synthesis Report](#).

The IAP theory of change

At the outset of this research, a theoretical model informed by policy assumptions about the ways in which the IAP would help claimants progress was developed, known as a theory of change (Chapter 3). This acted as the benchmark against which the claimant experience was evaluated, to see whether the assumptions underpinning the theory of change held true in practice and whether the intervention was working in the way it was originally intended.

Key features of the theory of change included assumptions that:

- The IAP would support individuals to become effective, active and persistent job seekers from the earliest stage of their claim. As such, it would accelerate entry into employment and the end of their claims.
- The IAP would assist claimants to find sustainable work, not just any job, and equip them with the skills to master transitions between employers. Claimants would recall the IAP activities and would be effective in applying them in future situations.
- The planned provision would be tailored towards individuals' skills and capabilities and would encourage attention to quality of job seeking activities.
- Through engaging with IAP, individuals' confidence and ownership of their job search would increase and they would display more positive attitudes to the process – because they understood it better.
- While the curriculum would not be needed in full by all claimants, all would be able to benefit from some learning that it delivered.
- Work Coaches would be at the heart of IAP, emanating the Jobcentre Plus cultural transformation and leading coaching and quality-checking activities that encouraged continuous improvement in job search activities.

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- During an Initial Work Search Interview Work Coaches would encourage claimants to want to engage with the IAP for the benefits they would gain. As such Work Coaches would make a sell and claimants would not need to be mandated to attend.
- Being part of IAP workshops would have several positive effects: workshops would deliver hints and tips on job seeking, being part of a group would reduce any sense of isolation in unemployment while also developing positive social norms.
- The workshop environment would foster collaboration and sharing of ideas and experiences, while networking space would allow claimants to continue discussions with peers after workshops.
- While few obstacles to the achievement of eventual outcomes were perceived, local labour market, logistical issues and the adequacy of staff training were identified.

This research used claimants' reported journey through the IAP as a guiding narrative when presenting how closely their experience matched the assumptions embedded in the theory of change.

The intensive experience

Once assigned to the trial, claimants quickly began the intensive experience and typically progressed through the curriculum and workshops during the first two weeks of their claim. This matched the policy intention that claimants would progress through the IAP at the earliest possible stage. Most claimants were content with the speed of the process (Section 5.3.3) and welcomed this early support to bring them up to date with current job seeking techniques. Some also welcomed the idea of being able to learn from others.

As expected by the theory of change, the rooms in which workshops were held were purposively designed for the delivery of the IAP with the intention of creating a positive learning environment. This included visual aids for topics discussed during workshops, facts and statistics about the labour market, buzz words that claimants could use to describe themselves in applications and standards of conduct for participants.

IAP workshop facilitators were generally viewed positively by claimants and were effective in helping them contribute towards the group discussion and in ensuring their input was valued (Section 6.2). Claimants reported that the workshop experience was thereby inclusive and comfortable, and showed some that they were not isolated in their experiences of unemployment. In line with the theory of change, staff were seen to be most capable when they tailored the workshops to claimants' situations and circumstances and guided claimants to adapt the hints and tips to their own contexts.

There was substantial evidence of information being shared between claimants with some providing advice and support to others based on their prior experiences (Section 6.2). These were positive signs that the theory of change matched to claimants' experiences.

However, being part of a mixed group was not appreciated by all. Some claimants wished to be grouped with people from similar sectors or with similar levels of experience (Section 6.2.3). There was also evidence that claimants believed that self-disclosure was easier where they believed they shared characteristics with other group members.

The area where claimants' experience departed markedly from the theory of change was in relation to the feedback and support they received on job seeking activities they completed as part of IAP (Section 6.5). This input would help validate claimants' skills as well as show them possible areas of improvement. The research found that this did not take place consistently, which made affected claimants question the value of the activities they had undertaken and to criticise what they perceived as a box-ticking exercise on behalf of Jobcentre Plus.

Distance travelled

Claimants discussed how practical benefits had derived from IAP participation including improvements to the structure and content of CVs, cover letters and applications (Section 6.6). They also noted that they had picked up helpful hints and tips and local labour market intelligence from Work Coaches and other claimants. This matched the assumption within the theory of change, such that IAP activities would bring about behavioural change by increasing individuals' skill level or capability for their job search.

Outcomes in other forms were also observed: claimants drew a link between IAP activities, new information and an expanded job search. This encompassed new regions, new positions and new opportunities for work. Furthermore, some individuals were as or more positive about their search for work, in part on the back of new skills and strategies gained.

However, perceived obstacles such as lack of local opportunity or success in the labour market and ageism among employers could demotivate individuals, and make them question their own skills and capability. This again indicated that the continuation of IAP approaches until the claim ended was not embedded within Jobcentre Plus, and would be particularly important for individuals who did not move swiftly into employment. Ongoing support and motivational techniques appeared the most important need amongst these claimants, as had been envisaged by the theory of change.

Behavioural changes

While not closely specified by the theory of change, some behavioural effects of IAP did emerge. For those claimants who understood a need to further develop their job search skills, the opportunities afforded by IAP – providing they saw the curriculum and/or the contribution of others in the workshops as relevant, and they were capable and had access to the necessary support infrastructure – were effective in the short-term in respect of increasing the motivation to look for work and deploy the techniques learned (Section 7.5). Specifically, such claimants indicated the IAP was valuable and as a result of it they had increased their chances of finding employment.

Claimants who were shortlisted to job interviews and could see that their job search skills were effective in terms of getting them through to the latter stages of the application process appeared to be more motivated to continue with these behaviours, given that they believed they would eventually lead to them finding employment. In these cases, employers provided the external validation necessary to sustain these outcomes.

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However, intermediate benefits started to wane if individuals did not see any results, did not receive feedback or external validation of their improved job search skills. Where this did not come in the form of a job or, for example, increased likelihood to be shortlisted, long-term support and feedback was felt to be lacking. These claimants who initially benefited from the programme faced the risk of regressing.

Lessons learned

- Voluntary engagement in the IAP was not, as assumed by the theory of change, a highly crucial lever in terms of what participants were able to gain from the programme (Section 5.4). Many expected that Jobcentre Plus would supply a provision such as IAP to support them and expected to have to do agreed tasks in return for their JSA. However, wanting to take part remained valuable to positive engagement within the intervention.
- Seeking to achieve greater consistency in ‘the sell’ of the IAP could improve engagement. While some degree of personalisation was valuable within the sell, and certainly different Work Coach styles should be supported, it was also crucially important that claimants understood the benefits of participation since this increased their commitment to the IAP and their motivation to attend workshops. Increasing the emphasis on making a sell, as well as providing more guidance on the factors that this should promote, would be of significant benefit.
- There was space for greater personalisation in the referral process and this would accommodate the needs of claimants with health problems and disabilities, learning disabilities and difficulties, caring responsibilities and anxiety-type disorders. Allowing such claimants a little more control on the point at which they entered the programme would ease their access, thereby attaining greater engagement.
- Tailored advice during workshops and in meetings increased claimants’ views of Work Coach professionalism and competence, but also increased the relevance and therefore the retention of IAP messages. Flexibility on the activities required increased the relevance to individuals’ situations and circumstances, and this also increased relevance and traction of IAP messages.
- Validation and continued encouragement was important, but was a weak link in delivery. Whether IAP Work Coaches continued to provide the ongoing support or not, there needed to be attention to quality as well as to providing feedback and seeking to motivate claimants, which not only helped claimants to improve their job seeking activities, but also to sustain effectiveness and persistence in this. It increased views of reciprocity in the relationship which again increased commitment amongst claimants.
- Moreover, validation from Work Coaches was particularly important where claimants did not receive feedback from other sources such as employers, or see their outcomes improving. The evidence suggested that for those who remain unemployed for some time, this could be particularly effective in retaining the traction of IAP messages and keeping the momentum established during the early part of their claim going.

Policy implications

The IAP shows some very positive signs although a full evaluative assessment cannot be made until more empirical information is available. Despite this, the IAP intensive experience appears to be able to offer everyone something from the experience and this can include increased confidence and motivation as well as improved understanding of how to present CVs, covering letters and so forth.

Despite these positive outcomes, the IAP could be strengthened to ensure that maximal results were achieved with most claimants.

- Many claimants did not feel well informed about the IAP and while this did not deter their engagement, they could have been better prepared. On this basis, a greater focus on self-assessment of job seeking skills may have helped them understand their own situation prior to workshops as well as what the workshops would cover. The Getting Started Handbook was meant to be issued for this purpose, however the research suggested that this tool was not frequently issued or used. If more consistent access to this or other preparatory self-assessment were provided and used to help inform the delivery of IAP, this could have increased the degree of personalisation, which in turn could have enhanced the perceived value of IAP and thus participants' motivation to engage with it. This would also create greater certainty of behavioural changes taking root and being sustained.
- Second, the ongoing experience of those claimants who did not readily enter work requires attention. Ongoing coaching support to this group, to help sustain motivational and confidence gains, as well as to keep quality of job search activities high, would be valuable along with consideration of any other obstacles to employment they face.

1 Introduction

The Intensive Activity Programme (IAP) was a new provision that aimed to increase the effectiveness of claimants' job search skills from the earliest point in their claim. It had been piloted in other settings before being implemented as a randomised controlled trial. This chapter outlines the genesis and design of the IAP programme including its coverage and how staff were prepared to deliver it.

1.1 The Intensive Activity Programme

The Intensive Activity Programme (IAP) was a package of intensive support and structured activities that claimants were required to complete within 21 days of making a new claim. It was designed to facilitate effective full-time job seeking from the earliest stage of the claim thus accelerating the movement into work and off unemployment benefit.

It was introduced as a trial with proof of concept testing prior to a test implementation in the form of a randomised controlled trial; the point when the research reported here was commissioned. This section gives a brief account of its development.

The IAP was first trialled and assessed as a **proof of concept** in North London Jobcentre Plus offices in August 2013 with new Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants eligible for support. The IAP package comprised some 70 hours of support and activities. Informal feedback gathered by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) researchers revealed both claimant and staff enthusiasm for this new model, which was perceived to break traditions of information giving, replacing them with a more facilitative, coaching style.

From spring 2015, DWP implemented the IAP as part of a large-scale **randomised controlled trial**¹ to more thoroughly assess its impact. It was implemented in seven Jobcentre Plus offices across two Jobcentre Plus districts for a period of six months.

A key aim of this trial was to understand more about how IAP worked (and did not work) for claimants with different personal and labour market characteristics. It was thus trialled among new claimants of JSA, as Universal Credit was still being introduced on a staged basis, i.e. it had started small, in a few areas, first for new, single claimants, and only recently been introduced for couples and families in some areas. As such, the full range of claimant types would not be available to the trial if new claimants of Universal Credit were the target.

¹ A randomised controlled trial (RCT) is a type of scientific experiment, where the target population is randomly allocated to either the treatment under study or the control group (also known as business as usual). As long as it is implemented correctly, random allocation is a robust method which allows differences measured between groups to be confidently attributed to the effects of the intervention alone.

Some claimants were excluded from participating in the trial, however. Those who were deemed out of scope were:

- Post Work Programme Support (PWPS) claimants; except those who broke the link with a previous PWPS claim who were subject to Day 1 conditionality.
- Day 1 referrals to the Work Programme, for example, prison leavers; as well as individuals who had not completed their full allocation on the Work Programme².
- Those requiring support for English language including speakers of other languages (ESOL).

1.1.1 IAP support and activities

As noted, the IAP required claimants to complete a fixed curriculum that comprised a series of activities designed to establish effective, full-time job seeking from the earliest stage of the claim. Through this, the IAP intended to increase the speed of claimants' movement towards and into work and off welfare benefits. The curriculum activities took place, typically, over the first two weeks of the claim during which claimants were also required to conduct comprehensive job search. To support and monitor their progress, claimants also had face-to-face meetings with their Work Coaches, and took part in group workshops which focused on elements of the curriculum.

The types of activities that the IAP curriculum required of claimants included job seeking skills self-assessments, application processes; and job search skills. This was intended to ensure that job seekers were able to implement a high quality job search with appropriate intensity each week and over time.

- Specifically, **Workshop 1** covered: CVs and covering letters, application forms, interview skills, internet job searches, and references.
- **Workshop 2** focused on the work-search area and its implications, speculative applications, recruitment agencies, and the work search diary which IAP claimants were required to complete.

The **relationship** between the Work Coach and the claimant was also a central element of instilling effective and persistent job search behaviours. To do this, IAP aimed for this relationship to be one that actively coached and addressed weaknesses as well as minimised any emphasis on conditionality. In order to perform this role, IAP Work Coaches were involved in training to gain knowledge and competence in the use of behavioural and other coaching techniques, and in using facilitative approaches in meetings and the workshop settings.

Following each workshop, claimants would receive a follow-up telephone call to check how they were getting on with the work at home expected of them and this formed part of the three week intensive experience.

² Claimants who volunteered for or were referred to the Work Programme spent up to two years in this provision. If their JSA claim ended, their entitlement was put on hold. Where claimants restarted their claim their entitlement to Work Programme support recommenced at that point.

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Following this, the meetings with IAP Work Coaches were intended to continue for the duration of the claim and thus, IAP would be a continuous process from the earliest part of the claim until it was ended by entry to employment or off flow from benefits. The schematic for IAP is shown in Figure 1.1.

In respect of **conditionality** it was intended that Work Coaches would encourage claimants to participate in the IAP through stressing the benefits of the programme. However, Work Coaches could, if necessary, mandate claimants to specific elements of IAP through a Jobseeker's Direction. They would do this only if it became clear that a claimant was not engaging voluntarily, which would be demonstrated by a claimant failing to attend a group session, a meeting with their Work Coach or undertaking activities associated with the curriculum.

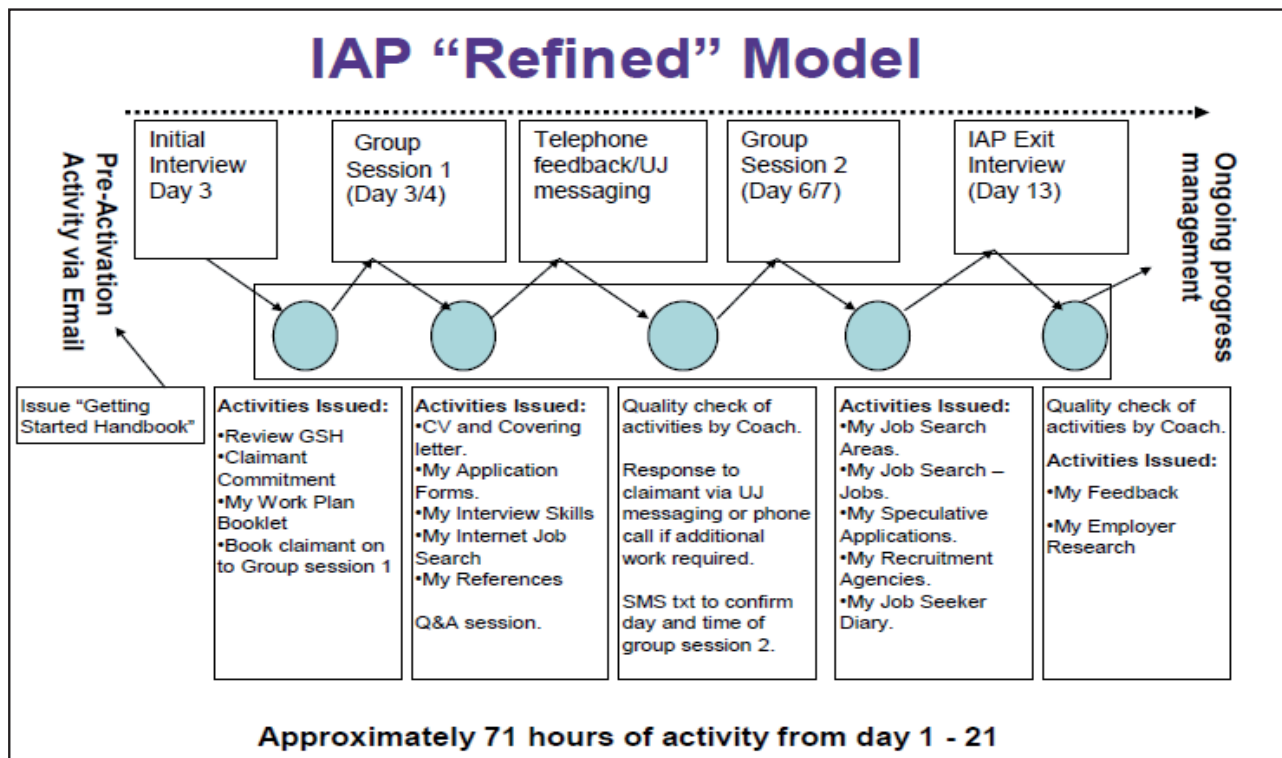
1.1.2 Difference from business as usual

To understand more fully the unique experience of IAP, it is worth setting out the standard Jobcentre Plus offer for new JSA claimants, which was offered to the control group as part of the randomised controlled trial testing of IAP. This standard offer also applied to those in the IAP participant group, who were to experience the IAP curriculum, workshops and coaching in addition to it.

All new claimants joined what was known as the Day 1 Offer. Under this, and during the first three weeks of their JSA claim, claimants experienced: an initial Jobseeker Interview (New Claim), fortnightly work search reviews and flexible interventions led by a Work Coach. The length and frequency of these interventions was at the discretion of Work Coaches, who determined the level of support that each claimant needed. Work Coaches also had access to local provision and support to which they could refer claimants. This could include, for example, a CV appointment with a National Careers Service (NCS) Advisor. In addition, Work Coaches could access a flexible support fund (FSF) in order to remove any potential barriers to work that claimants faced. Permitted use of this fund included covering the costs of interview or work clothes, or costs of travelling to interviews.

It was also fairly common for Jobcentre Plus offices to arrange Group Information Sessions (GIS) for new claimants. These sessions were used as a device to inform groups of claimants about the support available through Jobcentre Plus, as well as their responsibility to seek work and engage with this support offer as a condition of their receiving benefit. The key aim of these sessions was to supply the crucial information that claimants needed, in an accessible and consistent manner, at an early point in their claim.

Figure 1.1 The IAP schematic



Source: Invitation to Tender, DWP

1.1.3 Upskilling staff to deliver IAP

As part of the randomised controlled trial, a bespoke training package was developed for Work Coaches, which focused on them using behavioural science and other coaching techniques within interactions with IAP claimants. The expectation was that Work Coaches would be skilled in using these alongside more standard interviewing techniques. The techniques included in the training materials were:

- **Anchoring** – setting high but realistic expectations for desired behaviours and actions often results in greater effort to achieve those behaviours or actions.
- **Social norming** – people are strongly influenced to conform to what they believe the normal or acceptable behaviour to be. Setting out what most successful job seekers do creates a standard for claimants to achieve or work towards.
- **Nudging** – positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions which aim to achieve voluntary compliance with suggested actions for example, by asking claimants to identify what they can do, then getting them to agree to commit to completing this action.
- **Applying the quality ruler** – this technique encourages people to reflect upon and score – on a scale of one to ten – the quality of what they have achieved and to consider how they could improve on this self-assessed quality score.
- **Coaching** – this entails Work Coaches entering into a positive engagement with claimants, seeking to acknowledge their activities to find work as well as identifying further activities which improve claimants' ability to get work. Similarly, Work Coaches encourage claimants to reflect on how they can be more productive, and thus enable claimants to focus their effort more effectively.

1.2 Report structure

The methodology used in this research is detailed in **Chapter 2**. This includes coverage of how behavioural insights featured within the data collection and analysis strategies.

In **Chapter 3**, the theory of change is elaborated and the final model that was agreed is presented. This chapter is based on the qualitative interviews with policy makers and designers and a consensus building workshop.

Some differences in the implementation of IAP between the Jobcentre Plus offices selected for this research are set out in **Chapter 4**. This is based on information arising from observations. These differences were identified as part of the visits (i.e. not known about before the observations took place) and, as such, it was not possible to systematically explore them and their effects.

Chapter 5 explores the starting points of claimants in general (i.e. IAP participant and control groups) and the specific experience of referral to the IAP for those randomly allocated to the trial. This is based on analysis of observational data as well as that emerging from initial qualitative interviews with claimants.

The intensive support package is explored in **Chapter 6**, with the analysis based on observational evidence as well as the initial (wave 1) and follow-up (wave 2) interviews with claimants in the IAP participant group.

In **Chapter 7**, the outcomes and destinations of claimants are considered. In this chapter, the outcomes and destinations of the IAP participant and control groups are compared and contrasted, and a segmentation of these claimant groups is presented.

The conclusions in respect of the theory of change and behavioural insights analysis are presented in **Chapter 8**. This chapter also considers policy implications and lessons learned.

2 Methodology

The claimant research towards the evaluation of the Intensive Activity Programme (IAP) complements work undertaken by the Department to assess the impact of the programme, as well as staff views of its delivery. In this chapter, the approach taken to the qualitative research with claimants is described following an overview of the wider evaluation strategy.

2.1 Overall evaluation strategy

The Intensive Activity Programme (IAP) was implemented as a randomised controlled trial (RCT) from spring 2015. To understand its impact and particularly whether it accelerated entry to employment or off-flow from benefits, the evaluation strategy involved gathering quantitative and qualitative evidence. This comprised six strands with two elements led by independent researchers at the Institute for Employment Studies (IES):

- Monitoring the experimental data and the trial implementation (Department for Work and Pensions (DWP))
- Impact assessment and cost benefit analysis³ (DWP)
- Clerical data tool for segmentation analysis (DWP)
- In-house qualitative research with Jobcentre Plus staff (DWP)
- Theory of change development (IES)
- Qualitative research with claimants (IES).

The findings in this report derive from the theory of change and claimant qualitative research elements. These will assist the Department to assess and interpret the impact of the programme.

For a summary of the evidence across all available strands of research to date, please refer to the [IAP Trial Evaluation: Evidence Synthesis Report](#).

The methods and approaches used to undertake each of the externally commissioned elements are discussed below.

³ At the time of reporting, it was not clear if DWP analysts would be able to proceed with this latter element.

2.2 Theory of change development

Interventions are informed by assumptions about the ways in which they will work to deliver the 'change' that they seek to achieve with those targeted by them. However, in practice some of these assumptions may not hold true and/or the intervention may work in a different way than was originally intended. Theory of change provides the means to assess these strategic and practical implications for interventions. This approach typically commences by eliciting information and developing a model for how an intervention is meant to work, and then tests whether it does work in the planned ways. It thus identifies gaps between the planned and actual implementation and effect(s), and explores the extent, nature, causes and resulting impacts on outcomes.

In an addition to these standard requirements for a theory-based perceived impact assessment, the Department also wished to understand the behavioural effects that IAP would engender among claimants, and where behavioural change(s) occurred, what drove this. As a result, the theory of change element was undertaken through this lens through attempting to understand from policy makers the expected starting and end points of claimants in terms of the behaviours and attitudes that they would exhibit rather than simply focusing on the outcomes they would achieve and the intermediate steps that would lead to these.

A first stage of work in developing the IAP theory of change involved reviewing trial documentation and other salient material to ensure full familiarity with policy intentions.

The second stage comprised seven elicitation interviews with IAP policy makers and designers. These, combined with the findings from a trial documentation review, generated the main assumptions that informed the design of the IAP to include in the theory of change model. Interviews covered policy makers' expectations for delivery and outcomes including their concepts of how claimants' behaviour and attitudes would change as a result of IAP participation.

From these two elements a draft theory of change was devised and this was discussed and tested at a consensus-building workshop with further policymakers with whom the key assumptions were explored and clarified along with the interdependencies and causal linkages between different aspects as well as factors that could threaten their achievement. As noted, the aim of the workshop was to ensure consensus emerged on the model and the assumptions; as such, there was no intention to capture the degree of agreement with any particular part of the model. The IAP theory of change is reported in Chapter 4. This acted as a benchmark for the qualitative research with claimants discussed in the next section.

2.3 Qualitative research with claimants

In order to understand the claimants' experiences of the IAP, qualitative methods were marshalled which comprised longitudinal in-depth interviews with claimants and structured, observational research in three Jobcentre Plus offices operating the IAP. These offices were selected to represent different labour market conditions. To allow links to be made between these two sources of evidence, the sample for the interviews was generated from the three offices involved in the observations.

2.3.1 Aims of the claimant research

The claimant qualitative research was tasked to provide detailed evidence on the nature of support being offered within the IAP programme; claimants' perceptions of effectiveness of the programme; and its role in moving claimants closer to the labour market and into work. In addition, the Department specified this element should explore whether and how the programme was influencing key drivers of behaviour, such as self-efficacy, attitudes and norms, and as a result moving claimants closer to and into work.

Key research questions defined by the Department included:

- What was the claimant experience of IAP? What support did claimants receive?
- Did the support influence behaviour and attitudes? Did it influence proximity to the labour market?
- What aspects of the programme were most effective, and for whom?

2.3.2 Claimant interviews

A longitudinal approach was used to interview claimants, with the fieldwork for wave 1 beginning in June 2015. The wave 2 interviews took place some six to eight weeks later, and began in August 2015. The **sampling strategy** for the Wave 1 interviews sought to engage claimants early in their claim and IAP experience with differing personal characteristics (gender, age, ethnicity, health) and labour market circumstances (prior education and work history). The sample was drawn from data held by the Department.

In practice, it was not possible for the Department to draw and process the sample at a speed which would mean claimants would be at the outset of their IAP experience. There were also differential claimant volumes between the selected offices. For these reasons, in addition to recruiting claimants through the sample data, researchers also sought to recruit claimants from the observation element of the research (see section 2.3.3).

In the **interview sample**, the Research team aimed to capture the views of claimants displaying a range of personal characteristics, which broadly reflected the characteristics of those claimants entering random allocation process for the IAP trial. The intention was to include, from each of the three participating offices, ten active IAP claimants, five claimants drawn from the control group and five claimants who failed to attend the IAP or who left the programme early. In practice, the volume of eligible claimants varied between offices, which led to a higher number of interviews attached to one office than the others. In addition, failure to attend (FTA) rates were low and there was no systematic means to sample those who left the trial early. Beyond this, the expected spread and number of interviews was achieved (see Table 2.1).

In Wave 1, an opt-out letter and information sheet were developed for use with claimants, and were sent in advance of recruitment. In order to encourage participation, this noted that they would receive £20 in shopping vouchers as thanks for taking part in Wave 1 interviews. All claimants involved at Wave 1 were asked for their consent to be followed up at Wave 2 and the large majority consented to this. All claimants in the Wave 1 sample were contacted for a second interview some six-to-eight weeks after their first research interview had taken place. They were offered £15 in shopping vouchers in thanks for their participation. Attrition in the sample was somewhat higher than expected at around 30 per cent (see Table 2.1), and particularly affected those claimants who had moved into work.

Intensive Activity Programme trial evaluation: Claimant research

The original intention was for the Wave 1 interviews to be conducted in person, with the follow-up Wave 2 interviews taking place by telephone. In practice, and due to the need to recruit claimants from the observations as well as from the sample supplied by the Department, for some claimants both interviews took place by telephone. While potentially this could have had an impact on the rapport established between claimant and researcher, and thereby for the quality of the longitudinal research, in practice few, if any, mode effects – where the mode of interviewing (in this case a telephone call) affects the responses given by participants – were detected.

Table 2.1 The achieved interview sample

Category	Sub-category	Number
Allocation	IAP participants	42
	Control group	15
	FTA	4
Gender	Male	35
	Female	26
Age	18–24 years	20
	25–44 years	19
	45+ years	22
Ethnicity	White	25
	Black and Minority Ethnic	2
	Not specified	34
Disability	Disabled	22
	Not disabled	28
	Not specified	11
Education	Entry	6
	Level 1	5
	Level 2	9
	Level 3	15
	Level 4	15
Benefit/employment status at first interview	Not specified	11
	JSA	40
	ESA	2
	Employed	4
	Other	3
Jobcentre Plus Office	Not specified	12
	Office 1	31
	Office 2	18
	Office 3	12

Source: IES, 2015

Interview analysis

The qualitative interviews were recorded (with permission) using encrypted dictaphones and transcripts were produced on this basis. **Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis** was used to analyse the interviews; specifically Atlas.ti software was used for this purpose. Transcripts were coded to allow systematic retrieval of information falling under different headings. This enabled detailed analysis and interpretation.

2.3.3 Structured observations

Observations were used to gain detailed insight into the operation of the IAP and served a number of purposes. Observing **initial interviews** enabled the evaluation to understand how the IAP was introduced by Work Coaches and how its aims and potential benefits were described whereas observing **ongoing interviews** allowed understanding of Work Coaches' role in helping participants get the most from the IAP experience. However, in practice, the selected Jobcentre Plus offices prioritised involving researchers in the observation of the initial rather than ongoing interviews.

In addition, two IAP **group workshops** were observed in each selected Jobcentre Plus office to understand how the group process interacted and supported the individualised elements of the programme. This enabled the research to capture information on the curriculum as well as how claimants engaged with the sessions and how Work Coaches gained and maintained attention and built claimants' motivation and job search skills.

Following each observation, brief discussions were held with participants to validate researchers' understanding of the interactions.

The spread of achieved observations is shown in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2 The achieved observation sample

Meeting type	Number
Initial interview*	15
Ongoing interview	10
Group workshop 1	5
Group workshop 2	5

* This covered meetings with claimants drawn from the IAP and control groups

Source: IES, 2015

Observation analysis

Observation data was captured in the form of notes taken by researchers and analysed using the frameworks available in Appendices 9.8 to 9.11. As part of this, the data contained within the notes were extracted and summarised against key themes to enable rapid interpretation and analysis.

2.3.4 Research tool development

Research tools were developed for use in the observations and qualitative interviews. These were designed to pursue the assumptions contained within the theory of change, exploring, for example, if and how the IAP accelerated the development of high quality job seeking skills and if, and how Work Coaches helped to sustain their skill gains. These research tools are available in the Appendices.

While research tools were framed in relation to the theory of change they also drew on behavioural insights frameworks, notably EAST and MINDSPACE, each of which was suitable respectively to the claimant interviews and the observations.

As such, some key facets that the **claimant topic guide** covered were:

- **Ease** – how easy was it for claimants to attend – did they experience any issues with childcare, travel arrangements, understanding where to go/attend and when?
- **Attractiveness** – what did they think of IAP? What made it attractive? What put them off?
- **Social** – what do they understand that other new job seekers do? Experience of mutual support/peer-to-peer learning on the programme. Did claimants think they were making a commitment when attending? To whom?
- **Timely** – how motivated/receptive were claimants to the support at that time? What were the immediate costs/benefits to them of attending?

Since contact was longitudinal the topic guides incorporated mechanisms to measure change in knowledge/awareness; self-efficacy; attitudes; motivation levels, intentions and planned/actual behaviour. The degree to which changes were sustained throughout the claim was also pursued including how the relationship with Work Coaches affected this although the relatively brief timeframe between initial and follow-up interviews (around six to eight weeks) meant that more sustained behavioural changes could not be fully assessed.

The observations gathered information on MINDSPACE, as this behavioural science framework was well-placed to observe automatic reactions. For example:

- **Messenger** – Has the Work Coach established rapport with the claimant? If so, how does this affect the claimant's reaction towards IAP?
- **Incentives** – Are the benefits of IAP clear to the claimant? Are these emphasised by their Work Coach and positioned against potential trade-offs (i.e. time, effort)?
- **Norms** – Are behaviours or attitudes of other claimants towards IAP discussed? Are these used to argue for attendance/express reservations?
- **Defaults** – Does the claimant take ownership of engaging in IAP, or are they passive?
- **Salience** – What factors are most salient in a claimant's decision to engage (what predominates – employability/conditionality)?
- **Priming** – Is promotional material (i.e. 'success' stories) presented to claimants?
- **Affect** – Do claimants relate their feelings about unemployment?

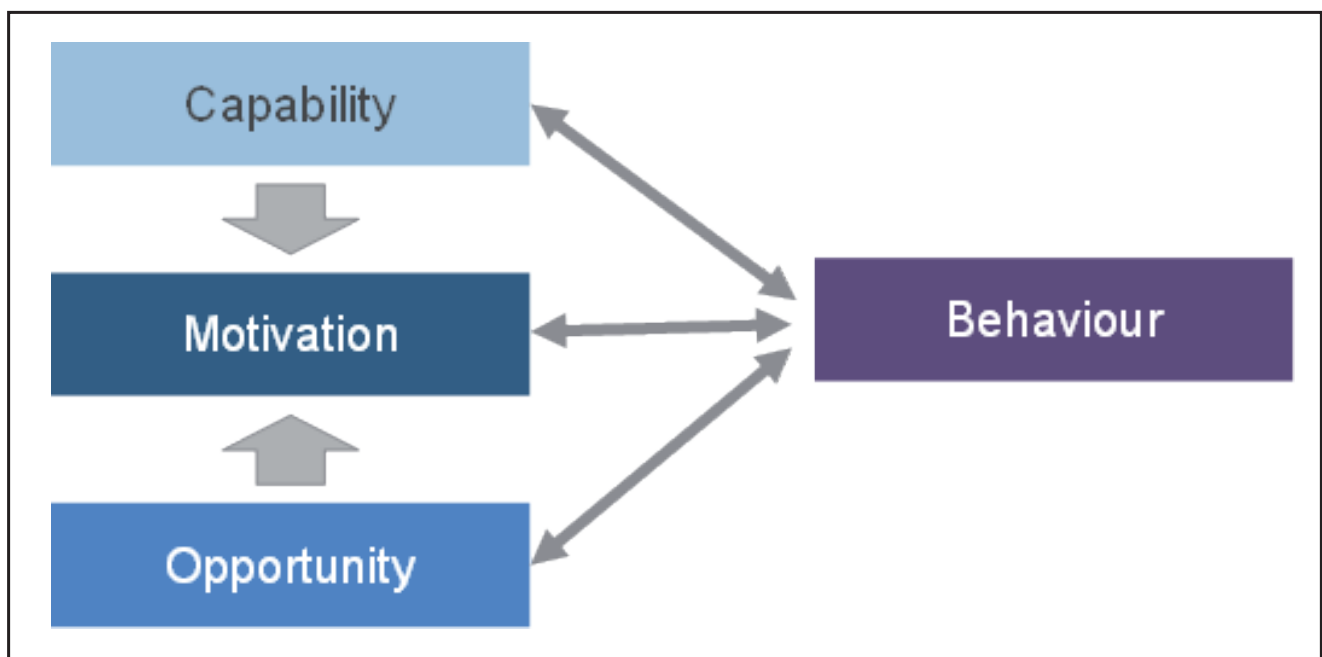
- **Commitment** – Has the claimant engaged with the idea of IAP? Are they enthusiastic/hesitant?
- **Ego** – Does the claimant raise concerns about the potential for negative feedback about themselves/their job seeking skills via IAP engagement?

2.3.5 The COM-B system for analysing behavioural change

In order to draw together the evidence resulting from the application of EAST and MINDSPACE, the framework known as COM-B was used in synthesis analysis, particularly in order to make sense of the factors that affected IAP claimants' behaviours and attitudes towards job seeking.

This integrative framework for designing behaviour change interventions is the result of a review and synthesis of 19 other behavioural insights models developed and applied in the social intervention literature (Michie *et al.* 2011). The model illustrates that behaviour is an interacting system in which capability, opportunity, and motivation interrelate to generate behaviour that in turn influences these components (see Figure 2.1). The single-headed and double-headed arrows in Figure 2.1 represent potential influence between components in the system. For example, opportunity can influence motivation as can capability; similarly, enacting a behaviour can alter capability, motivation, and opportunity.

Figure 2.1 The COM-B system: a framework for understanding behaviour



Source: Michie *et al.* 2011

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The authors define the aspects of the framework as follows:

- **Capability** is the individual's psychological and physical capacity to engage in the activity concerned. It includes having the necessary knowledge and skills.
- **Opportunity** is defined as all the factors that lie outside the individual that make the behaviour possible or prompt it. Opportunity can be either social or physical.
- **Motivation** encapsulates brain processes that energise and direct behaviour, not just goals and conscious decision-making. It includes habitual processes, emotional responses as well as analytical decision-making. Motivation may be therefore automatic or reflective (Michie *et al.* 2011).

2.3.6 Applying COM-B to the IAP intervention

In applying the COM-B framework to IAP, the following components were identified as triggering behavioural outcomes among claimants in relation to their search for employment.

Each claimant's **capability** could affect their job seeking behaviour and what they were able to glean from IAP in the following ways:

- **Job seeking skills and experience.** This related to the extent to which claimants were familiar with applying various job seeking techniques and approaches, and were knowledgeable about what constituted best practice. This could be enhanced through IAP, by the advice, guidance and feedback claimants received from their Work Coaches as well as other claimants, and by practicing certain skills through IAP-related activities.
- **Health conditions and Learning disability/difficulty (LDD) considerations.** These could affect the ability of claimants to engage in their job search, and also what they were able to gain from IAP in terms of learning and practicing new skills.

Several physical and social opportunities may affect claimants' ability to engage in IAP and in effective job seeking.

- **Jobcentre Plus infrastructure and environment.** What claimants were able to gain and learn from engaging in IAP was dependent on a number of factors relating to its delivery, which were outside the control of the individual. These included:
 - The approach and information provided by Work Coaches.
 - The capability of facilitators to foster a positive learning environment in the workshops and lead the group discussions, keeping them on-topic.
 - The group mix within the workshops, and the willingness of other claimants to engage and contribute towards the group discussion and interact with other claimants.
 - The physical workshop and Jobcentre Plus environment, which provided individuals with information and resources necessary to engage in IAP-related activities and conduct an effective job search (i.e. IT facilities).
 - Claimants could also receive support in developing their job seeking skills from external organisations (e.g. local job clubs).

- **Wider supporting infrastructure.** How easy it was for claimants to attend and engage in various work-related activities. This included access to IT facilities, a stable internet connection, access to transport, childcare etc.
- **Conscious expectations of family/peers and the benefits system.** Claimants may believe that they have an imposed responsibility to find work and therefore to further hone their job search skills.
- **Conscious expectations of employers/local labour market.** Claimants' perceptions of whether employers would be willing to hire an individual with their skills, experience and personal characteristics. This could affect whether claimants believe it is worthwhile engaging in job seeking activity.

Claimants' motivation to become an effective job seeker throughout their IAP experience had the following dimensions:

- **Goal-setting and expectations.** Whether and how claimants believed the IAP and Jobcentre Plus support would contribute towards their ability to search for and find work. This was about expectations at the outset. Claimant perceptions of their own job search **capability** and the **opportunities** available to them through IAP affected these expectations and therefore their motivations to engage in the suggested work-related activity.
- **Perceived value of Jobcentre Plus support and IAP.** Upon reflection, to what extent did claimants feel the support they received contributed towards their job search. The degree to which claimants believed they had improved their **capability** in this area and had adequate **opportunities** to either learn new job search skills or refresh existing ones, affected motivations to continue to engage with these opportunities and to persist in their job search going forward.

Using this model to frame claimants' experience of IAP, it was possible to better understand the intermediate behavioural outcomes that resulted from the participation. The effectiveness of the intervention in moulding claimants into successful job seekers was highly individual and dependent on their varying levels of capability, their distance from the labour market, and their personal circumstances although policymakers expected this, and it formed an assumption within the theory of change.

2.4 Limitations

While the methodology was designed to provide robust evidence on the implementation and effectiveness of the IAP, it is salient to note that the approach was qualitative and as such, it was not designed to quantify how many claimants held particular views. Instead, the intention was to capture the diversity of claimant views and experiences in order to generate the fullest picture of the operation of the programme.

It is also important to acknowledge the potential effect of the attrition in the sample between the two waves of interviews. This was highest amongst claimants who had moved into employment and means that less can be known from this study about the role played by IAP in achieving employment outcomes than would otherwise have been the case.

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Similarly, while the sampling methodology included the control group, the number of interviews with this group was relatively small compared to the number of interviews with the IAP participant group. As such, while some contrasts can be drawn, the small number of control group interviews as well as the limitations imposed by qualitative research, mean that findings must be considered indicative, particularly where the analysis is further segmented by claimant demographic and personal characteristics. The impact assessment will be able to more thoroughly address differences between the outcomes of claimants taking part in the IAP compared to the control group.

A final point is to re-emphasise that while the initial interviews with claimants took place during or immediately following their experience of the IAP workshops, follow-up interviews happened just six to eight weeks after this. While this time was sufficient to allow some intermediate and interim behavioural outcomes to emerge, it was unlikely that the research would capture sustained behavioural outcomes.

3 The IAP theory of change

To provide a systematic framing to the qualitative research with claimants, the research commenced with the elicitation and development of a theory of change model. This involved in-depth interviews with policy makers and designers along with a consensus building workshop. This chapter provides a summary of this first element of research.

3.1 Key findings

- The Intensive Activity Programme (IAP) was designed to accelerate claimants' entry into work and off welfare benefits. It would achieve this by making claimants more effective, active and persistent in their job search and work-related activities.
- An emphasis was planned on the provision of support that took account of individuals' skills and capabilities, and encouraged increasing levels of attention to quality in job search activities.
- Claimants would wish to engage with this new form of support because of the benefits they would derive in terms of their job search, although not all claimants would require the support to be able to progress into work.
- Staff in Jobcentre Plus would be crucial to the success of the IAP as they would engender the changing culture of Jobcentre Plus, which aims to throw a sharper focus on coaching and encouraging job seeking activities of the highest quality. Staff would also be able to apply the behavioural science and other coaching techniques envisaged by the IAP.
- Some challenges to delivery were expected: firstly, from the conditions of local labour markets (different labour market conditions would lead to tailoring of the IAP content; if a large, local employer closed this would increase flows to IAP potentially overwhelming the available resource); second, the effects of regional social norms (some policy makers believed that what in essence would appear to be regional stereotypes of claimant behaviour would affect IAP delivery); and thirdly, resulting from the effectiveness of the staff training (the IAP would not have traction if staff did not believe in it and deliver it as set-out).

3.2 About theory of change

Theory of change is part of a suite of evaluation methodologies that focus on surfacing the concepts (or theories) for how a policy or intervention should work from their designers' perspectives. This then acts as a benchmark to empirical research which tests whether and how well these 'theories' hold true within the practice of the intervention (for further details on theory of change and the method used in this research, see Chapter 2).

This chapter presents findings from the activities to develop a theory of change for the IAP and includes the final model that was drawn up (see Figure 3.1).

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Themes from the chapter are then picked up in the ensuing descriptive analysis of the findings from the claimant research (see Chapters 4 to 7). This involves exploring and highlighting whether assumptions and theories captured by the theory of change worked as expected or otherwise, including whether these worked in part, but did not complete the envisaged logic change, and whether any factors or events occurred that were not anticipated that affected later outcomes. These analyses lead towards a final summation of the validity of the theory of change model in Chapter 8.

3.3 The rationale for IAP

This section considers the reasons why IAP was introduced and specifically the long-term outcomes its designers planned that it would achieve, as well as the stepping stones (intermediate outcomes) that would underpin these.

3.3.1 Long-term outcomes

A starting point in the theory of change interviews and workshop was the reason why IAP was required and the nature of the difference it could make to claimants' outcomes. While long- and shorter-term outcomes were considered, the timeframe of the claimant research meant that long-term outcomes would not be captured by the current study.

According to its designers, a key outcome seen amongst IAP participants would be **better equipped, effective, active and persistent job seekers**. The IAP would 'increase the skill level or capability of individuals to take effective steps to gain employment'.

It would also support sustained employment outcomes through this increased capability. In this sense, the emphasis on off-flow was viewed as less important than delivering the skills and capabilities because it was these that would lead to sustained employment. The policy makers' accounts indicated that **sustained employment** did not necessarily mean remaining for a particular length of time in one particular job; rather, this was viewed as the ability to transition between jobs without recourse to welfare benefits. Implicit within this was a view that claimants would retain, recall and reapply the skills and capabilities gained through IAP in the future and do so independently, i.e. without the assistance of Jobcentre Plus. It was also believed that the continued application of IAP techniques and retention of the positive attitudes resulting from engagement would lead individuals to want to seek to advance or progress once in work.

In terms of understanding whether the IAP led to such sustained outcomes, it must be noted that the current research could not provide information on this, since claimants were interviewed at an early stage of IAP and followed up a maximum of two months later. However, the impact assessment that the Department itself was leading would be able to provide some assessment of whether any churn between work and unemployment (benefit claiming) had reduced amongst the IAP participant group compared to the control group.

Returning to the assumptions within the design of the programme and its implementation as a randomised controlled trial, policy makers indicated that there was an aim to understand how best to help claimants in differing situations and contexts to become optimally effective job seekers at the earliest possible point; which would potentially have the effect of saving the Department money through helping claimants to move off benefits, to do so more

quickly⁴ as well as equipping them with the skills and attributes required to remain off benefits. There was recognition that not all claimants would need the IAP to the same degree to achieve these desired outcomes thus there was interest in discovering which elements were most helpful to which types of claimants.

3.3.2 Intermediate outcomes

In order to achieve these longer term outcomes, intermediate behavioural outcomes were seen as highly important. Policy makers and designers believed that as a result of IAP, claimants would not be passive; rather, they would take ownership of their search for work and display positive attitudes to finding employment.

Behavioural changes that were thought would emerge included **increased persistence** in the job search: a continuous focus on identifying opportunities, making applications, communicating with employers, planning and prioritising work-related activities. While policymakers were often not explicit about the challenge that IAP would address, it could be inferred that on joining, claimants might be passive rather than active in their job search.

Beyond this, amongst policymakers, there was recognition that 'distance travelled' would vary between claimants because they would have differing starting points.

'Each individual would be likely to change in different ways. There are significant differences in existing capability, perception and the circumstances and experience of individuals. People tend to develop from where they are rather than in a uniform way.'

(Policy maker)

Underlying this was an assumption that, despite their different starting points, **all claimants should be able to derive some benefit from IAP activities** whether this was from the coaching, workshops and/or work-related activities.

3.3.3 Predictions of differences in impacts

While policy makers and designers indicated that all claimants would be able to benefit from IAP, they also recognised that there could be claimants who did not require IAP support to become optimally effective job seekers as well as claimants where the likelihood of success was greater or lesser. While some policy makers pointed to evidence that early intervention with all claimants led to more rapid off-flow, others noted that many people would enter employment without this additional support being necessary.

Beyond this, there were theories about **who the IAP might be most successful with**. These included claimants who were closer to the labour market and/or possessed higher skill levels. It was suggested that this group was more open to practising their job search skills (as part of the IAP workshop and work at home activities). Any influence of other social demographic and benefit factors was considered less significant.

⁴ On this point, policy makers and designers referred to an evidence base showing that early intervention speeds off-flow.

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A second theory was that **new claimants would be more open to IAP** than returning claimants because they had fewer expectations for the initial claims process. A final point was made that the IAP could be **challenging for people with long-standing health conditions and disabilities** and/or those who had not worked for a significant period. This was because some of the activities would be difficult for these claimants, such as approaching a formal employer on a speculative basis.

3.4 Drivers of change

3.4.1 Work Coaches and other Jobcentre Plus staff

While the IAP focused on claimants' skills and capabilities, throughout the discussions with its designers, there was an emphasis on the skills and capabilities that Work Coaches would need to deliver the intervention effectively. These were stated to align with a cultural transformation taking place within Jobcentre Plus which itself was linked to the introduction of the Universal Credit. Work Coaches who were able to apply the new principles – encouraging claimants to take responsibility while demonstrating understanding of their situation – were seen at the heart of this. Perhaps as a consequence of the changed expectations of staff, policy makers anticipated that Work Coaches would volunteer to be involved in the IAP rather than be asked by senior managers. Those staff who would be involved in IAP delivery would receive **training in order to apply the behavioural science and other coaching approaches** that the programme envisaged (see section 1.1.2).

The importance of several staff roles for the theory of change to take hold was identified by several policy makers. **IAP workshop facilitators** would emphasise interactivity in the workshops and would elicit contributions from participants, value their ideas and expertise, as well as adapt and personalise the workshop to those in attendance.

'It is so reliant upon them fostering and creating this inclusive and encouraging learning environment and facilitating. If they have not bought into that...and the value of the claimants and the information they have to add, then the model falls down.'

(Policy maker)

Similarly, the **IAP Work Coaches** would adopt the behavioural science and coaching techniques that form part of IAP staff skills training and be able to apply these with all claimants they encountered. This would be demonstrated through open questioning approaches, use of the quality ruler which encouraged claimants to critique their work-related activities and agree the means through which to improve on these. Work Coaches would engage with the quality of work-related activities completed by individuals, not simply acknowledge that certain tasks had been completed.

IAP Work Coaches would offer claimants advice, feedback and encouragement which would foster increased motivated and positivity about their job search and assist them to sustain this.

The policy makers and designers also identified the role of Jobcentre Plus **Office Managers** who would ensure the necessary staff resource for the IAP workshops and review meetings. They would also encourage and support IAP Work Coaches and facilitators to improve their skills and to share best practice.

Policy makers assessed that staff would be less focused on off-flow and would instead place an emphasis on claimants finding the best job for their circumstances as this was more likely to lead to sustainable employment. Policy makers and designers also believed that staff would recognise the expertise that claimants had in respect to their occupations and sectors. To claimants, staff would appear more professional and claimants would believe that their meetings with Work Coaches were interactive and centred on the quality of work-related activity rather than a process to check up on job applications or used to pass on information.

3.4.2 Role of the different elements of the IAP

The IAP experience comprised multiple elements, each of which were viewed as playing an important role in the achievement of outcomes. In combination, these elements would help promote the sustained behavioural outcomes that policy makers envisaged emerging from IAP through the continuous, incremental build-up of positive attitudes and job search routines, which would emerge from elements acting to reinforce each other to this end.

The sell and encouraging voluntary engagement

Firstly, the IAP would create an intensive intervention from the outset of the claim and policy makers indicated that claimants' **voluntary engagement** would be important to their later outcomes because it would be more likely that they would actively engage with the various elements of the programme, rather than take a passive stance because of a feeling that they 'had to be there'. As such, the initial meeting with a Work Coach was an essential starting point that would begin to create motivation to engage with this early and intensive supportive experience.

Policy makers and designers expected that Work Coaches would make '**a sell**' during this meeting and persuade claimants, if necessary, of the value of participation. This in turn meant that IAP Work Coaches would need to be able to articulate the benefits as relevant to claimants in differing contexts and circumstances.

While legislative frameworks at the time meant it was not possible to mandate claimants to the IAP package as a whole – only to specific elements such as the first workshop or meetings, policy makers also believed that a heavy emphasis on conditionality would be unhelpful to the style and ethos of IAP workshops.

The initial meeting for IAP therefore would involve additional time to allow IAP Work Coaches to encourage participation and to begin to personalise support. On this, an underlying assumption was that earlier intelligence on claimants' needs and circumstances would enable Work Coaches to tailor support which supported better and potentially more rapid outcomes.

'It enables that diagnostic to be so much richer so the coach knows the sort of support that the claimant needs rather than finding that out in three months' time.'

(Policy maker)

Intensive Activity Programme trial evaluation: Claimant research

The Getting Started Handbook

During the initial meeting the Getting Started Handbook for the IAP would be discussed. This document, which would be issued ahead of the Initial Work Search Interview (IWSI) meeting, would set out the plan of action and begin to prompt claimants to think about quality, and not simply quantity of work-related activity. The Getting Started Handbook emphasised the need to be active in the job search from Day 1 of the claim. As such, policy makers and designers described how the Handbook would help claimants with their personal organisation as well as to better understand their responsibilities, for example, in respect of job seeking for 35 hours each week or what the 90 minute travel to work area might entail.

The workshops

The **workshops** were understood by policy makers to be the space in which the Getting Started Handbook would be explored in greater detail. During these, IAP facilitators would explore claimants' understanding of their responsibilities and use claimants' views and experiences to create an interactive, personalised and engaging experience.

An important element of the workshops would be the creation of **social norms** about what being an active and effective job seeker entailed. The positive commitment of claimants to the IAP process would encourage the active engagement of other claimants.

Workshops would embed a shared learning culture, with claimants picking up useful hints and ideas from each other. The workshops would bring claimants up to date with current recruitment practices including familiarisation with key job search skills.

The workshops would not emulate the group information sessions (GIS) that were sometimes offered to claimants. The GIS were seen by policy makers to be focused upon information giving and did not particularly encourage interaction and the sharing of experiences. The IAP workshops in contrast would actively encourage both of these as well as **bonds to form between claimants** and a sense of camaraderie to emerge.

An '**all age**' group would be important to encourage the sharing of ideas between different generations; older claimants with a greater depth of labour market experience would share these with younger claimants, who in return would be able to share experiences of new job searching techniques such as using social media.

The buzz and group cohesion

An implicit assumption was that all workshop groups would positively engage with the process and would be able to maintain this momentum. The workshops would create '**a buzz**' which would be infectious and spread throughout the claimants who attended; this again linked to the creation of positive social norms. The buzz would underpin motivation to be part of the IAP as well as to optimise job searches and would involve peer support, a willingness to practice some work-related activities and to share experiences.

'Claimants will be buzzing and really positive because they feed off each other in the workshops.'

(Policy maker)

Also aligned to social norming, were thoughts of **group cohesion**. While implicit in the assumption was that some claimants would not return for the second workshop (because they would find work or off-flow), the majority would and as such, there were expectations that the camaraderie would continue into Workshop 2. Also implicit within this assumption, was the expectation that not all claimants would require the intervention in full to (re-)enter the labour market.

Work at home

In addition to discussing and debating what makes an effective and active job seeker in workshops, claimants would be required to undertake a specified set of activities in their allotted job search time, which would be known as **work at home**. These tasks and activities were work-related and involved for example, approaching a previous employer for a reference, making a speculative application or signing up to local employment agencies.

Policymakers believed that undertaking the work at home would be important in '**moving claimants to be effective from the earliest point**'. Through completing the activities, claimants would gain job search skills which they could apply and continuously improve upon throughout their career.

Ongoing meetings, coaching and attention to quality and quantity

IAP Work Coaches would continue to encourage the retention and application of IAP approaches beyond the workshops and work at home. **Ongoing meetings** with Work Coaches would encourage claimants to think about and self-assess their strengths and weaknesses and to address these. Through this process, the Work Coaches would provide the continuity to reinforce the positive messages and achievements from the IAP elements, which would assist in maintaining claimants' motivation.

The ability of Work Coaches to effectively apply the behavioural science and other coaching techniques they received training in would be important to this. Work Coaches would hold claimants to account not simply for completing work-related activities but for ensuring these were completed to the highest possible quality. The approach that Work Coaches would embed meant that they would validate claimants' self-assessment of quality and progress by providing feedback as well as encouraging claimants to think about how to further improve their activities. If necessary, Work Coaches would also enforce conditionality with participating claimants.

Policy makers and designers believed that this ongoing coaching would continue until the claimant moved into work or ceased their claim for other reasons. The behavioural science and other coaching techniques would encourage claimants to continuously improve and sustain momentum. This would mean that a focus on quality and intensity was retained throughout the duration of the claim and was at the heart of achieving sustained, behavioural changes.

A further point was that the policy makers did not make particular reference to the role of the follow-up calls made by IAP Work Coaches to the participants during the three week element of the experience within the theory of change development. While these were noted in the IAP implementation model (Figure 1.1 earlier), their role was not elaborated further by those involved in designing the intervention.

3.4.3 The environment

In order to deliver the IAP package, Jobcentre Plus offices would need to have **the right space** available – and this underpinned the selection of the offices in which the trial was implemented. Each office would need a workshop room large enough to readily accommodate the participant group and IAP Work Coaches and encourage an open and supportive feel to emerge which the Work Coaches would facilitate.

The workshop space would foster this as it would be relatively informal, bright and encouraging and contain creative materials on the walls, and positive motivational messages. These materials might have been co-created with participants in earlier workshop groups.

One further environment assumption was present and this concerned the availability of networking space, necessary because the group cohesion and enthusiasm created by the workshops would mean that participants would wish to continue their discussions beyond the time allocated to attending the workshops themselves.

3.5 External factors and potential obstacles

As noted above, there were expectations that local labour market factors could mean that different emphases might emerge on different aspects of the curriculum. For example, the majority of policy makers and designers believed that significant differences would be seen between **rural and urban** locations. This would affect activities and workshop coverage: for example, in some areas the number of employment agencies might be limited or local geography and transport infrastructure would mean there would be different interpretations of a 90 minute travel to work distance.

There was also recognition that factors in the local labour market could put pressure on what was a relatively resource-intensive programme. For example, should a large local employer enter a phase of redundancy, this could create a level of demand for the IAP that was difficult for smaller Jobcentre Plus offices to meet.

Some policy makers believed that **regional cultural norms** (in effect regional stereotypes of individuals' behaviours) might mean that the IAP could have greater or lesser effect. Where the regional stereotype was for individuals to be somewhat reserved or uncommunicative for example, it was believed by some that this would create particular obstacles in terms of achieving the desired interactivity in workshops.

A final point surrounded the **training delivered to staff** to prepare them to deliver the IAP. Between the proof of concept phase and the implementation of the randomised controlled trial for IAP, the staff training package had been reduced to two days. There were concerns that this time could be insufficient for staff to acquire the skills and the ethos of the IAP which would risk the difference between IAP and business as usual being minimal, which in turn would undermine the benefits of implementation of the IAP as a randomised controlled trial.

'If we don't get the training element of it right and if we don't invest that in the staff and if we don't really get across to them the behavioural sciences behind this, that all we'll end up with will be that we are just delivering a product.'

(Policy maker)

As such, some policy makers and designers were, at the time of the interviews, considering whether staff would benefit from ongoing continuing professional development to ensure they delivered the IAP effectively.

3.6 The theory of change model

On the basis of these findings, the theory of change model for the IAP was drawn up and agreed with IAP stakeholders within the Department (see Figure 3.1). While a procedural logic model for the programme would have been possible, this would have failed to recognise the dynamic, interactive and reinforcing elements of the programme.

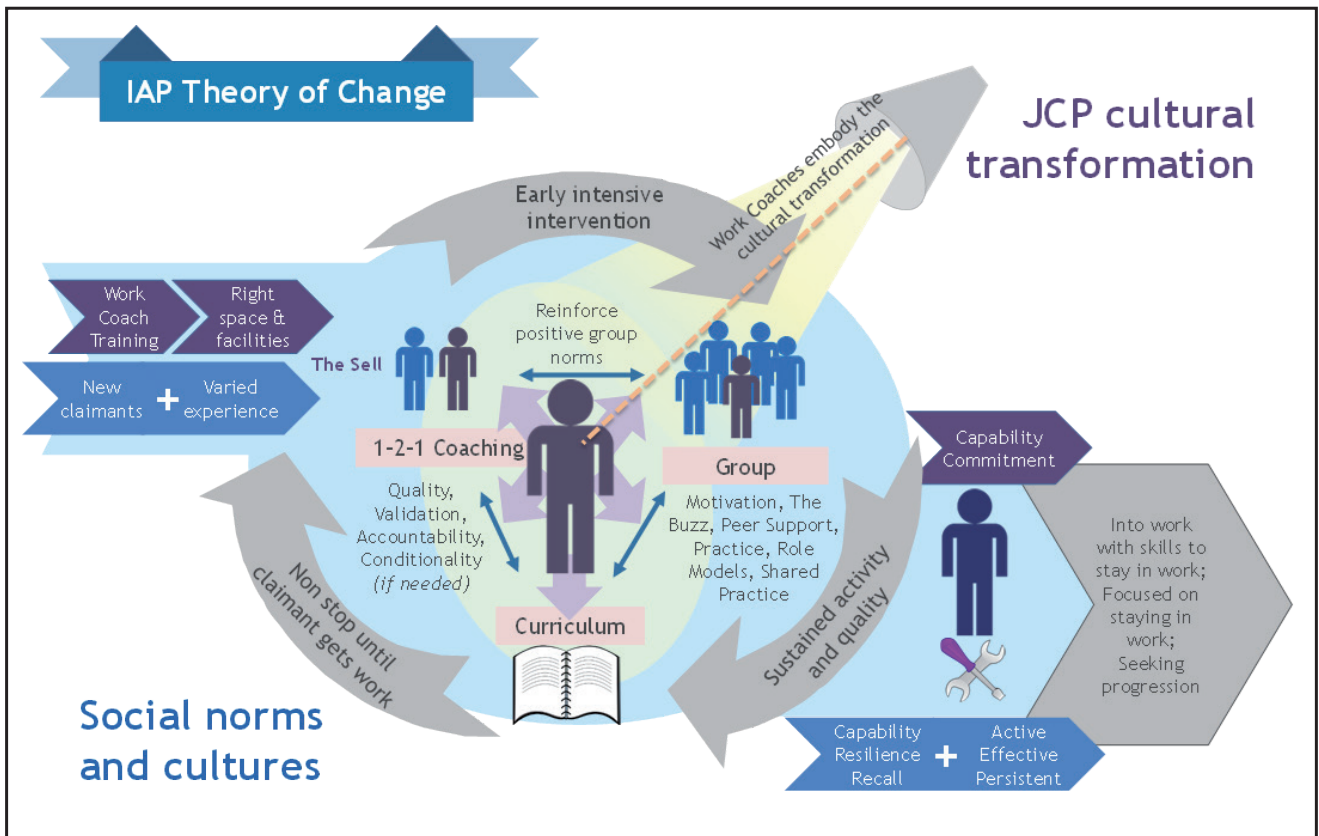
The model and the concepts that it contained, provided a benchmark to the observational research and interviews with claimants that form the basis of the remainder of this report.

3.7 Testing the theory of change

Throughout the report, the empirical findings are presented in the light of the theory of change, highlighting: how and where assumptions held true; where findings ran counter to the expected operation of the IAP; whether any particular effects, intended or otherwise, emerged from either assumptions being met or not met; as well as indicating where the theory of change did not capture key events or factors that were associated with the outcomes of the IAP.

The concluding chapter discusses and summarises the theory of change in terms of its traction within IAP implementation.

Figure 3.1 IAP Theory of Change



Source: IES 2015

4 Differences in the implementation of the IAP

This short chapter compares and contrasts the implementation of the Intensive Activity Programme (IAP) in the three offices selected for the research. There were differences in how Jobcentre Plus offices approached this, and these had implications in respect of the assumptions noted within the theory of change.

4.1 Key findings

- The claimant research was conducted in three Jobcentre Plus offices operating the trial, each of which had differing labour market conditions and opportunities.
- The differences had implications for the travel distances to which claimants could be expected to commit, and in respect of how the IAP content was tailored to claimants' experiences of the local labour market.
- There were also differences in the structures of the Jobcentre Plus offices which led to differences in the implementation of IAP, some of which conflicted with policy aims and implementation standards (see following key points).
- These included, in one Jobcentre Plus office, new claims being segregated by age which led to the IAP becoming age segmented, counter to the original policy intention. In other examples, the key difference surrounded the assignment of IAP Work Coaches to only the three-week intensive experience which meant that claimants were handed on to generalist Work Coaches after this point⁵.
- Other differences included when claimants were referred to the second workshop. Most often, the referral was made as quickly as possible but in one Jobcentre Plus office, would only be made where claimants had completed the tasks from Workshop 1 to the satisfaction of their Work Coach.

4.2 Implementation differences

The IAP trial was rolled out as a universal (i.e. all age) Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) intervention in seven Jobcentre Plus offices spread across two districts in England. Three of the participating offices were visited as part of the research (for fuller details on the methodology see Chapter 2). Each of these offices operated in labour market with particular characteristics. In addition, different structures operated by Jobcentre Plus offices involved in the research. Both of these factors could affect IAP delivery.

The differences and their implications for the IAP and its theory of change are discussed in detail throughout the ensuing chapter. The chapter is based mainly on data arising from the observations of meetings and workshops within Jobcentre Plus offices, although claimants' accounts were also examined for relevant material.

⁵ However, in some offices, many if not all Work Coaches had received the IAP staff training.

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It must be noted that this information on implementation was not available to the Research team ahead of the visits, i.e. these differences emerged during analysis. As such it was not possible to systematically test the extent to which they were the norm in particular offices or simply represented a snapshot of practice of a particular Work Coach, or on a particular day. For this reason, it was not possible to examine the effects of the differences on the claimant experience in any systematic way.

4.2.1 Local labour markets

The three selected offices were located in settings that had differing labour market conditions from busy, large towns with a good range of employers and jobs locally as well as good transport links, to a smaller, more rural location with more limited vacancies and fewer transport options.

These differences had consequences for travel in terms of the availability of public transport as well as the time involved in travelling; these in turn had implications for the interpretation of the 90 minute travel distance to which claimants were expected to commit.

The IAP theory of change anticipated that labour market conditions would be accounted for within the delivery of the IAP package, and specifically that activities and workshops would focus on how to achieve the aims of the Getting Started Handbook in the local environment. The types of tailoring which led to implementation differences that centred on labour market characteristics⁶ included: discussing industrial developments locally, local job search websites, the distance and directions it would be possible to travel within 90 minutes (which varied between the three offices for reasons of infrastructure and geography), modes of transport, as well as the realistic number of agencies that it was possible to sign up with (for example, in one area it was stated that only three agencies existed).

4.2.2 Jobcentre Plus Delivery Structures

The key observed differences between the Jobcentre Plus offices in terms of delivery structures concerned whether offices segmented claimant support, whether Work Coaches involved in IAP delivery also supported claimants on an ongoing basis and when claimants were allocated to attend Workshop 2.

In two of the Jobcentre Plus offices there was **no differentiation in the claimant process by age** although in one, claimants were split by age across two floors in the office with younger claimants (those aged under 25) separated by a floor from those aged over 25 years. In some instances the IAP was implemented by these age groups, i.e. not mixing the age groups together, seemingly where there were sufficient numbers of new claimants of either age group to fill workshop places. Where flows were lower, it appeared that workshops would be mixed. There were particular implications of this related to the theory of change, since there had been assumptions amongst policy makers that claimants would learn from each other's experiences and that this learning might be amongst the most powerful between younger and older claimants. It must also be noted that policy guidance intended that IAP would be delivered to mixed age groups.

⁶ For more details on the delivery of the IAP experience, see Chapter 6.

A further difference surrounded the **point of referral to the second IAP workshop**. In most instances, claimants were referred to the second workshop as quickly as possible with the decision not conditional on completion of work at home tasks from Workshop 1. In one Jobcentre Plus office, however, the booking was not made until claimants were judged to have satisfactorily completed Workshop 1 tasks and this judgement involved quality checks. In terms of the assumptions within the theory of change, the IAP was undoubtedly judged to be an intensive experience, but equally, the quality of claimants' engagement was a crucial factor. Where claimants were rapidly referred to Workshop 2 there was greater chance that the groups formed for Workshop 1 would be maintained, but it was unclear how quality was being fully assured. In contrast, where quality checks took priority this was not the case and, as such, there were implications for group cohesion but the assumption that a constant attention to quality would be maintained was better met.

The third structural difference was in the **allocation of Work Coaches to provide ongoing support** to claimants. In several instances there was role separation between those involved in delivering the IAP and those leading ongoing meetings with claimants. A different approach was also evident for each age group in the office that segmented claimants by age, i.e. one age group experienced continuity in that their IAP Work Coach continued into the later stages of their claim; for the other age group, there was a handover to generalist Work Coaches on completion of the intensive support package. Similarly in one other office, IAP Work Coaches provided end-to-end support, i.e. until employment entry or off-flow while handovers prevailed in the final office selected for the research.

Where this role separation operated, in some examples, Work Coaches leading the ongoing meetings had received the IAP training which suggested they would understand the behavioural techniques that this embedded, but in other cases, these staff had not received training. It was not clear whether, in either situation this was a strategic, planned approach or a pragmatic one. However, where generalist Work Coaches took over, it had potential to undermine the assumption that the IAP would be a non-stop experience until claimants entered work or closed their claim. However, in respect of the randomised controlled trial, if staff who were not involved in the delivery of IAP successfully adopted the coaching strategies that the programme envisaged, this would narrow the difference between IAP participation and business as usual provision, which could mean any impacts deriving from the trial were understated.

A final difference between offices was whether **staff had volunteered** to be trained for IAP or had been selected for this role by their managers. In one of the offices visited, staff had been selected to lead the IAP role, whereas in the others they had volunteered. The theory of change envisaged proactive and engaged staffing for the IAP who would provide cohesion between the elements and fully embed behavioural science approaches. If they were selected to lead the IAP, this could mean that staff did not portray the same enthusiasm for the IAP and might not fully adopt the coaching strategies breaking with the theory of change. However, any effects of this decision on staffing were not hugely apparent within the qualitative data collected.

5 Entry into IAP

This chapter explores claimants' experiences of the Initial Work Search Interview (IWSI), and how the Intensive Activity Programme (IAP) was introduced as part of this. It also examines their expectations for the support that Jobcentre Plus would offer in order to understand how far the IAP would meet or exceed these.

5.1 Key findings

- At the early stage of their claim, claimants had some anxieties about the new claims process and what this would entail.
- They expected support from Jobcentre Plus as well as to have to complete work-related activities. Some expected that their Work Coaches would help to motivate them in their work search.
- For many participants, the IAP was welcome because it offered an intensive start to the claiming experience which would bring them up to speed with current job seeking techniques. Some welcomed the idea of being able to learn from others.
- Others believed that the IAP had not been well explained. However, they were prepared to attend to avoid the risk of being sanctioned as well as to understand any benefits the programme could offer.
- In general terms, most claimants said they had relatively high levels of commitment to the job seeking process and activities.

5.2 Experiences of the Initial Work Search Interview

All claimants attend an IWSI with a Work Coach. As part of the IAP randomised controlled trial, the random allocation to IAP participant or control group was made prior to this meeting. This section explores experiences of the IWSI from the perspective of all claimants taking part in the research in order that 'the sell' expected for those allocated to IAP could be differentiated; as such it provides some insights into 'business-as-usual' as well as the IAP participant experience.

Observation data suggested that **initial meetings lasted around 30 minutes**, and that Work Coaches went over a check list of items including accessing the Universal Jobmatch; employment history, skills and experience; reviewing claimants' CV; the Claimant Commitment (CC); and sometimes providing help with other benefit entitlements such as Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. This first meeting was used to get a sense of individuals' current job searching practices. While those allocated to IAP typically had meetings of longer duration (in order to accommodate discussion of the IAP, the Department had allowed up to 15 minutes of extra time in the initial meeting for the IAP participant group), the duration of meetings was more often determined by claimants and the extent of their needs, or by the style of the Work Coach. In addition to the subjects above, Work Coaches also used the IWSI to discuss **conditionality within the job seekers regime**.

It seemed that most Work Coaches took a friendly but firm approach on this, and were clear about what activities were mandatory.

For those claimants who had previously claimed Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), the **content of first meetings was often tailored** towards finding out what had changed for them since their last claim, and updating their CC accordingly. When this resulted in a chance to address claimants' individual skills and experience, it was viewed positively by claimants.

The next section considers how the IAP was featured in the IWSI and particularly how it was discussed with claimants.

5.3 Engaging claimants in the IAP: the sell

Policy makers and designers believed that making a 'sell' would help IAP participants to understand the benefits of the IAP for their job search activity. The intention was that they would be encouraged to engage with the programme on this basis alone and would actively choose to participate, as opposed to feeling acquiescent and getting involved only because they believed that IAP was mandatory⁷. It was assumed that selling the IAP as a positive, new opportunity rather than as part of the standard claim process would help in establishing an equitable relationship between Work Coach and claimant at the outset. This would go some way to ensuring that IAP participants were receptive and actively engaged with the support offered throughout the rest of their claim, rather than adopting a passive attitude at an early stage.

To enable 'the sell' to take place, as stated above, the trial's implementation allowed Work Coaches additional time during the Initial Work Search Interview. In the remainder of this chapter, the experiences of those in the IAP participant group are contrasted with those of the control group as relevant in order to allow the nature and effects of 'the sell' to emerge.

5.3.1 What claimants were told and understood about IAP

The observations indicated that the IAP was described as a trial or as an 'added extra' that had positive impacts. Work Coaches explained that there were two workshops, each covering different topics, which would last for around one and a half hours each. IAP participants were advised that **they would pick up some useful hints and tips** about their work search activities, but it was also noted that they would be expected to complete some tasks between the workshops, and to expect telephone calls to follow up on how they were getting on.

The **Work Coaches spoke about the IAP in a positive and informative manner**, offering their thoughts on the relevance of the programme to participants' job seeking activities. In one example, a Work Coach went into specific detail on how long the tasks might take, emphasising that the claimant would find them relatively simple given his prior (high) qualification level. In this instance, the Work Coach emphasised that the tasks should not be seen as a 'challenge', but that by putting in the effort, the claimant would get more out of the workshops.

⁷ As stated in chapter 1, the IAP as a whole was not mandatory; however if claimants failed to attend, they could be mandated to specific elements such as workshops and meetings.

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The **added benefits of participating in the IAP were often sold as receiving dedicated support from a Work Coach**; at one Jobcentre Plus office, a Work Coach emphasised what Jobcentre Plus would do alongside commitment from the claimant. Within behavioural insights framing, this could be viewed as a means to establishing a reciprocal relationship where claimants have a powerful incentive to undertake their job search and work-related activities in return for this support. Reinforcing this, the claimant evidence suggested that the IAP was received most favourably when it was sold as a two-way relationship and commitment was shared between participants and Work Coaches.

‘What I’ve heard is the Jobcentre expect you to do it all on your own and then come to them if you’ve got some questions, but at least with this IAP it actually seems like they’re doing something for you rather than just sitting round a desk and judging you.’

(IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

Within interviews, IAP participants reported being advised by their Work Coach that they had been selected to take part in a trial that, if they put in the effort, would provide support in addition to what they would otherwise receive. Participants recalled being advised that their eligibility was based on their National Insurance number⁸. These findings accorded well with the theory of change which anticipated that once claimants understood the benefits of participation they would willingly wish to engage with the programme. However, these positive views were not universal.

Some participants said that Work Coaches had not gone into any detail about benefits of IAP which had made it harder for them to understand what, of value, might emerge from taking part. Many did not recall receiving any information on what to expect from the workshops. Some of these said that the IAP was not adequately explained; that the volume of information covered at the initial meeting was ‘overwhelming’ and as a consequence, these described the IAP as ‘meaningless’. These individuals reported intending to attend the IAP first workshop simply to find out more about what they would be expected to do as part of their JSA claim as, on the basis of their IWSI, they felt the sessions would only supply ‘basic’ information, i.e. they did not understand that the workshops would provide an interactive, learning experience.

In contrast, **when Work Coaches used their additional time allocation to explain the activities in more detail, participants’ anxieties were reduced.**

‘I was thrust some sheets of paper with things I could start doing. I was given a signing on date and a work coach day and I just came home overwhelmed feeling like “oh, where do I start, what do I do?!”’

(IAP participant, female, 45+)

‘They were very clear that it is a lot of paperwork and some people do it in a couple of days and some people take a couple of weeks so don’t stress about it.’

(IAP participant, Female, 18-24)

⁸ Random assignment, as part of the randomised controlled trial implementation of IAP, was based on the National Insurance number.

These findings indicated that making an initial positive sell for the benefits of IAP during the IWSI as anticipated by the IAP theory of change was beneficial. This allowed IAP participants to understand that they would receive support that would help them to meet the conditions of their JSA claim and CC, improve their job search and increase the likelihood that they would find work. Where claimants understood the IAP offer, they were positively disposed to engagement. However, the variation in the recall of the information covered during 'the sell' linked to the differing motivation level amongst those claimants who recalled only limited information having been given, may have indicated that 'the sell' required greater specification in guidance for IAP delivery.

5.3.2 General views of the IWSI

It was notable that there were few differences between the IAP participant and control groups in views of their Work Coaches following the IWSI, which suggested firstly, that the IAP offer was not a central factor in the rapport that established between claimants and Work Coaches and that the additional time for the sell to take place had little effect on claimants' perceptions of the IWSI. As such, the observational and interview data demonstrated that Work Coaches were generally perceived as **friendly and avoided intimidating language**. Overall claimants were positive about their Work Coaches, particularly in respect of their friendliness and willingness to empathise with personal circumstances. However, some claimants said they had received inadequate information on other support or entitlements.

When Work Coaches did not focus solely on the outcome of employment, they were more likely to be understood by claimants as empathetic, and in turn as more effective in the support they offered. Many claimants reported feeling they were in capable hands when their Work Coach was able to help them to tailor their job search, or enabled them to understand how they might extend and apply their existing skills and experience to a wider range of job-roles.

Claimants' accounts indicated that Work Coaches had different approaches: some were described as encouraging claimants not to settle for any job whereas others were seen to be solely focused on getting individuals back into work in general. No particular differences between IAP participant and control groups on this point were discerned. While the IAP theory of change placed an emphasis on claimants being encouraged to find the right job since this was more likely to lead to sustained employment, it appeared that the individual style of Work Coaches had a greater effect in this regard, than any particular features of the programme.

5.3.3 Perceptions of the intensity of the IAP

For many claimants, **the intensity of the IAP from the start of their claim was viewed as helpful**. Many expected that Jobcentre Plus would support them in their job search and the IAP fulfilled this expectation. For some, having the term 'intensive' in the programme title emphasised that from the outset the IAP would help them in their job search. This aligned well with the theory of change which suggested that claimants would be motivated to take part because of the additional support they would receive early on in their claim.

'If anything is intensive, then it tends to be more focused, more driven and therefore by its very nature it's probably got more of a chance to be successful.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

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The only further assumption on claimants' perceptions of the intensity of IAP that emerged from the discussions with policy makers was that some would find this demanding, particularly if they had been unemployed for a long period or had health conditions or disabilities that affected their ability to engage.

Accordingly, for some IAP participants, the intensive start to their claim was viewed as more problematic. This was because it did not take into account their own views of their capabilities and for some, this related to the accommodations they expected in terms of their health (particularly fluctuating mental health conditions) and their circumstances (often the availability of additional childcare provision at short notice). There were some younger claimants with mental health conditions who said that they had not felt comfortable to discuss their needs during their IWSI and for whom, no accommodations were made.

Views on the necessity of such accommodations did not vary particularly between the IAP participant and control groups. In creating the conditions that would support behavioural changes to emerge, ensuring ease of access was an important consideration.

5.3.4 Speed of entry to the IAP workshops

IAP participants had a period of time, typically a few days, to decide whether or not they would attend the workshop. The behavioural insights literature indicated that this period of reflection would involve an evaluative element (i.e. weighing the benefits and drawbacks of attending) and a degree of planning (i.e. the outcome that an individual achieves as a result of attending).

While **most IAP participants said that the limited time between their first interview and their first workshops had allowed them to quickly access support**, there were some individuals who said that the time available had not allowed them to adequately complete the preparatory activities asked of them.

Added to this, **some reported that they might have benefited from being given some space to think more deeply about how they might use the information from the IAP workshops and activities to better direct their own personal job searches**. This was linked to the speed at which claimants completed their IWSI, were told about the IAP and then received a letter giving them workshop dates. They believed this had given them insufficient time for preparation as well as for this deep level understanding to emerge. This view was more prevalent amongst older IAP participants who were less familiar with current work search techniques, such as using the internet to look for jobs, as well as participants who were newer to unemployment and job searches in a Jobcentre Plus context.

'The amount, the time and that they're expecting you to do these things and apply for jobs, I don't know. I appreciate this intensive activity, but it felt for me personally, like I want a job, I'm going to get a job, but I don't just want any job, and I need time to source the right jobs for me. Maybe the Intensive Activity Programme should have come a little bit later, when I wasn't panicking and thinking I can't do this on my own. I need some help, so for me it should have come later and been a bit more spaced out.'

(IAP participant, Female, 45+)

The findings indicated that for most participants, taking part in IAP activities and the speed of entry to the workshops met expectations. However, balancing this were those who required their personal circumstances (for example, health conditions and/or care arrangements) to be accommodated in order to attend, and some who preferred time to think independently before engagement. For this reason, some strengthening of ‘the sell’ to ensure the fullest information was given in order to set expectations more accurately could be valuable. Some element of personalisation in the timing of the referral to the workshop might also be valuable for example, where claimants required personal circumstances to be accommodated. This would allow time for them to put suitable provision in place (for example, in respect of care responsibilities), to feel that their implications of their health condition had been considered, or that there had been sufficient time to consider the benefits they might derive from participation.

5.4 Commitment and motivations to participate in the IAP

There were two sources which could provide insight into participants’ commitment to the IAP. Firstly, the theory of change contained the assumption that IAP participants would voluntarily engage with the IAP and the workshops. This voluntary engagement would result from understanding the benefits that might be derived, which would lead to a commitment to the completion of the programme. The second source related to the behavioural insight framework MINDSPACE⁹ which indicates that individuals seek to be consistent with promises made publicly (which in the welfare-to-work arena might include those made within the CC) and seek to reciprocate acts (for example, the support received from a Work Coach) which again instils commitment. Combined these sources suggested that IAP participants who voluntarily engaged at the outset would be more likely to remain committed throughout the programme than those who did not make an autonomous choice to participate.

The data indicated that **Work Coaches did not introduce the IAP as mandatory**, in line with this assumption. However, claimants’ accounts (gathered as part of interviews) indicated they had not always taken this message on board. As such it was relevant to understand the messages that were internalised by claimants and how this informed motivation and commitment to the IAP workshops.

5.4.1 Wishing to engage with the IAP

There were positive reports from some IAP participants (often those with less experience of unemployment) who believed that they were volunteering to take part because the IAP would provide additional support and demonstrate to Jobcentre Plus that they were investing time and effort to finding work. This aligned with the theory of change which suggested those who were new to claiming would be open to support.

⁹ See Chapter 2 for further details.

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These positive motivations primarily concerned: the anticipation (at least to some degree) of finding something new in the material that would be covered, and openness to self-improvement and skills development.

'No I didn't mind doing it, any course that you can go on or anything to help you find a job I think it is relevant at the moment. I think it's a good thing at the moment yes.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

The identification of new areas of, or scope for improvement in work-related activities meant the workshops were perceived by participants as opportunities to build skills and garner extra support. Not attending, these participants felt, could leave them with greater challenges to labour market (re-)entry. Furthermore, participants' openness to self-improvement and skills development led them to be more willing to 'go over old ground' and/or to see reflecting on their job seeking skills as beneficial.

'I saw a lot of benefits. At the end of the day speaking with eight, nine or ten other people it might actually give me another idea for something that might need to change on my CV, something might need to change on my interview skills. So just being in another room with ten other people that have different experiences to you is a good thing, I didn't really see any cons to this workshop.'

(IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

Those **individuals with less experience either of the labour market, of being unemployed or of the welfare system were more likely to report feeling positively committed to their IAP activities** than others. The accounts of some suggested a need for support and enhanced job search skills which the IAP sought to deliver. This also aligns with the theory that newer claimants would be more open to the IAP.

In some cases, **claimants were more positively disposed towards attending the workshops where Work Coaches made allowances or adjustments**, e.g. for caring or parenting responsibilities, or for medical appointments. This demonstrated some personalisation within the IAP process, which may have been important in light of the assumption that some claimants in these situations would initially find the intensity demanding.

'It was nice to have somebody who actually cared. Because obviously there is a lot going on and sometimes there is just nothing you can do but not do anything.'

(FTA IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

There were, however, **varying views on whether attending a workshop of mixed participants would be beneficial to addressing individual needs.** Some claimants did not want to miss out on an opportunity to learn from others and as such were positive about the sessions. Others who were more experienced in the labour market and/or in particular sectors, were put off because workshops might not be relevant given the differing experiences and work histories of attendees. While the positive perspectives on group mix, and opportunities to learn from other claimants, accorded well with the theory of change, the assumptions were challenged by those claimants who wanted to be part of a group more similar to themselves.

5.4.2 Neutral stances on involvement in IAP

Another cluster of participants were neutral in respect of their general level of commitment to IAP activities. There was a widespread acceptance that in order to meet the conditions of their claim, the IAP activities and tasks, including workshops, would have to be completed. Many of the IAP participants who had previously claimed either JSA or ESA thought that the IAP activities were ‘just another’ thing that they had to do in order to receive their benefit. Notably, there were claimants with similar neutral attitudes to job search activities in the control group thus IAP was not strongly differentiated in this regard.

‘When she said about this workshop and this pilot programme I didn’t see it as part of the job seeking time but the other flip side is I didn’t see it as an added extra either. I just saw it as something I had to do.’

(FTA IAP participant, Female, 18-24)

5.4.3 Feeling that participation was necessary

Where **IAP participants did not perceive their participation to be voluntary** this was either because their Work Coach had not made this clear within ‘the sell’, or due to the letter they received following their IWSI which stated the workshop dates, along with the consequences of non-compliance with the job seeking commitments. The nuanced position that mandation could only be applied to particular elements of the IAP, and not to the programme as a whole, was not clear to claimants. Moreover, the observations indicated that this was not something that Work Coaches emphasised during the IWSI possibly due to the implementation advice that conditionality should not be overstated. Instead, for these claimants, the IAP was conflated with conditionality within the JSA regime.

‘Not everyone would have appreciated it, they would have just seen all the punitive actions [in the letter], “If I don’t do this, if I don’t turn up for this then they’ll go stop my benefits”. I wish it was explained in a more positive light but that’s on the letter...So on the letter, it is not sold very well; when you’re there, it’s quite obvious what it was all about.’

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

Particularly in respect of attending the IAP workshops, **some claimants felt strongly that they had been mandated and could face sanctions if they did not comply.** For many, the potential cost of not attending was predominant in their decision and was their overriding, or only, motivation. The IAP participants who held this belief did not appear to have engaged in any further discussion with their Work Coach about how the workshops or the IAP support package more generally could potentially be relevant to their circumstances and could benefit them. Based on the experience of other interviewees, had this occurred, this conversation may have provided them with more positive motivations for attending and minimised their initially passive attitude as the theory of change expected.

‘It was mentioned by the lady I did my work commitment thing [with], the first lady that I had, that they’re compulsory, that if you don’t go you, you probably won’t get any benefit.’

(IAP participant, Female, 18-24)

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Despite this, **a number said they would not have gone to the workshops if they thought it was voluntary**. With the benefit of hindsight, these claimants indicated that they would have missed out on something they now perceived as useful. However, others felt that having to go detracted from both the time they had available to look for work and even their engagement with Jobcentre Plus.

'I can't say that they actually misled me or anything like that but it wasn't very obvious that it was voluntary until I realised that lots of people weren't attending.'

(IAP participant, Female (age not available))

'No I was told I had to go. But I didn't mind because at the end of the day it is experience for me to help me to learn. If it is going to help me to learn I am going to do it.'

(IAP participant, Female, 25-44)

A small number of individuals mentioned that **they had explained to their Work Coach that participating would not be of any benefit to them**, but were advised that they had no choice.

'I said "well is there any way of opting out because that's not going to help my job search or anything, me being a part of a research project for you" and she said "no, it's compulsory". Well I don't think that's the case, I don't think it can be the case. I can't see how they can force me to be part of a research study. You can't make anyone do that.'

(IAP participant, Male, 25-44)

Despite feeling that attendance was necessary, some **IAP participants who did not believe participation was voluntary were not overtly worried about taking part in IAP** or the activities would be expected to complete¹⁰. Instead, they accepted that their participation was necessary in order to comply with the conditions of benefits receipt, but this did not mean they could not see benefits from engagement. While the theory of change envisaged that voluntary engagement would be a crucial lever to engagement, the analysis of expectations did not necessarily support this.

5.4.4 Reasons for not wishing to attend IAP workshops

Where participants did not want to attend the workshops, one reason given was that they believed it would not be relevant to their skills and experience. Having to comply with attendance was a slight frustration because perceived benefits of participation were few, although they could see how the IAP might benefit others who were newer to employment. Such participants included the highly skilled who were predicted in the theory of change to be more open to practising their skills in the workshop environment, and as such, being part of the creation of positive social norms. However, policy makers did not provide insight into whether this group would be open to engagement with IAP from the outset or whether this positive engagement would emerge once they were attending. These claimant findings indicated that the latter was more likely to be the case.

¹⁰ It must be noted that only a small number of claimants in the interviews had failed to attend workshops; in contrast, observation evidence suggested that fail to attend rates might be higher.

'As a highly skilled professional sending out, you know, to person in a position of...of senior management, I didn't need those...I didn't need it drummed out in front of me like that.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

For others, **the time they would spend in the workshops was seen to reduce the time they could dedicate to what they saw as more valuable job seeking activities.** The commitment of such participants to the IAP activities more generally was thus perhaps a little less than others, but they remained willing to engage with them in order to show willing, meet their obligations as set-out in their CC and reciprocate the support they had either received or anticipated they would receive during their claim. There was some recognition that IAP activities had to contain generic content in order to allow for the diversity of experiences and skills of its participants. On this point, it is notable that the theory of change expected the curriculum would not present completely new information for all participants, however, all would derive some benefit; in addition, and as noted earlier, more highly skilled individuals would share their knowledge with other participants, and act as role models for the desired behaviour and willingness to engage.

A final point was that a small number of participants from two of the Jobcentre Plus offices involved in the research discussed **reasons for not having attended workshops.** These encompassed personal family matters, caring responsibilities and having secured temporary employment. Outcomes of non-attendance included re-arranging a workshop slot, ending a claim and/or facing sanctions. Their accounts, however, highlighted the need for personal circumstances to be accommodated.

5.4.5 Flexibility and personalisation

The theme of personalisation and claimants' wish that their personal circumstances be accommodated emerged at several points in the early stages of the JSA claim and IAP. As such, the following section provides some further detail on how personalisation emerged in the claiming experience and touches on the views of both the IAP participant and control groups.

In general, **IAP participants had mixed views on the relevance of the job seeking activities they were expected to undertake as part of IAP and thus their JSA claim.** These related to personal needs and experiences. For those newer to unemployment, a focus on how to use the internet and in particular how to use the Universal Jobmatch site was viewed as a very helpful and relevant job search activity. However, claimants in both the IAP participant and control groups believed that some of the work-related activities they were expected to undertake were too generalised (often because they lacked relevance to individuals' sector or occupation), and hence less relevant to their circumstances.

Evidence from observations and interviews with claimants in the IAP participant and control groups suggested that the **CC was often seen by them as a space for allowing more flexibility over the intensity of job seeking activities.** When the CC was perceived as being collaboratively agreed and a realistic reflection of what claimants felt able to achieve given their personal and labour market circumstances, individuals tended to report being more committed to their work-related activities. This point meets the expectations of the behavioural insights literature: that making a commitment in writing or in public increases the likelihood that an action is taken, providing flexibility is present.

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In an example of this, in one area competition between job seekers was said to be high which meant that eight hours of looking for work each day might be ineffective given the small number of jobs advertised daily. In this case, a Work Coach emphasised that the CC is adaptable; examples of this flexibility and tailoring could be found across the samples (i.e. IAP participant and control groups).

In respect of personalisation, however, the IAP did not appear to generate an additional effect, over and above the CC and degree of individualisation experienced by the control group.

5.4.6 Commitment to finding work

A final consideration in this chapter was to what or whom claimants made a commitment in respect of their job search or joining IAP. In terms of motivations and commitment generally to job seeking the IAP participant and control groups were not particularly differentiated, despite the additional support received by the IAP participants. **Many interviewees – whether in the IAP participant or control group – reflected that they were making a commitment to themselves** in respect of their job seeking activities. Finding work would enable them to move forward in their lives and this was their key concern.

Some claimants had the mentality that ‘a job is a job’ and were committed to generalised job searches covering multiple occupations and sectors. This stance was present in both IAP participant and control groups. In contrast, others who reported being motivated to look for a job, felt overqualified for the job-roles that they had agreed to within their CC; for these claimants, there was more of a need to feel stimulated in order to be committed to taking their job searches.

‘I don’t see myself as a claimant, but I see me with 30 years’ experience working, plus my qualifications, so I can see me being a little bit or slightly different. Whether that’s right or whether that’s wrong...I would need a role that would not just purely not pay my mortgage, I need a role that would stimulate my interests.’

(IAP participant, Female, 45+)

6 The IAP Support Package

A key aspect of the Intensive Activity Programme (IAP) was its intensity. Activities and workshops occurred within a three-week intensive experience for most participants. However, it was intended that IAP support would continue beyond this in the form of ongoing meetings which involved coaching and quality checking of job seeking activities. This chapter explores the delivery of the IAP and participants' perceptions of this, as well as some of the short-term outcomes that were achieved.

6.1 Key findings

- In line with the theory of change, IAP workshop facilitators were effective in fostering in most instances a positive and inclusive group dynamic that increased the likelihood of mutual learning; IAP participants who attended IAP workshops expressed very few negative views of the facilitators
- Whether IAP participants gained helpful advice regarding their job search from the workshops depended on the age of other participants as well as whether they had similar occupational backgrounds.
- A number of participants identified elements of the curriculum that they found useful, either because the content was new to them or because it provided them with the opportunity to refresh pre-existing skills and remind them of best practice in different areas.
- Where participants expressed negative views on the content of the IAP, this was generally because they already felt highly familiar with practicing the approaches discussed, or believed that these were not relevant to their job-goals or personal circumstances.
- How the activities were introduced to IAP participants by facilitators and how well their purpose was explained appeared to impact on the perceived relevance of activities and the extent to which claimants engaged with them.
- Initial follow-up meetings held shortly after each workshop were an important opportunity for Work Coaches to provide claimants with advice and feedback on IAP activities, and support and encouragement around their job search activities as the theory of change predicted. IAP participants could be disappointed and demotivated where they did not receive detailed feedback on their activities.
- Participants' views on the potential move to a more digitalised IAP experience were affected by their familiarity with and access to IT software and facilities. Individuals who lacked confidence in their IT skills and/or who had limited computer/internet access were concerned about the prospect of completing IAP activities online in a public environment, such as their local Jobcentre Plus office or library.

6.2 The workshop experience

Participants typically were involved their IAP **workshops** in the first two weeks of their claim. Workshops were used to explore different aspects of the IAP curriculum in a group setting with other claimants. Discussions were facilitated by trained Work Coaches. Their successful delivery, in which claimants could engage with and derive benefits from these sessions, would be dependent on two key elements: the skill and capability of the facilitator and the group mix. These separate elements will be explored in turn following a brief description of the physical environment in which the workshops took place.

6.2.1 The workshop environment

Each Jobcentre Plus office involved in the IAP trial had discretion in terms of the design of the workshop environment. In the three observed sites, the IAP workshops were held in dedicated meeting rooms. Each of the sites used wall-displays which the Work Coaches facilitating the workshops had designed. These displays served several purposes:

- The displays included facts and statistics that could inform the nature of claimants' job search (e.g. the proportion of employers that referred to social media when making recruitment decisions; the proportion of job vacancies that were not advertised and so on).
- Displays also provided visual aids for the topics discussed during the workshops. For example, in one Jobcentre Plus office the workshop facilitators pointed participants to what they described as 'subliminal messages', which appeared in the displays around the room. These were keywords that claimants could use to describe themselves when writing a CV or covering letter (for example, motivated and/or proactive and so forth).
- Job search techniques introduced in the workshops, such as the STAR method for answering competency-based questions on application forms, were included in the displays.
- An ordinance survey map of the local area was featured in each of the offices visited. This was used when discussing the 90-minute travel to work area; it helped to highlight the distance and areas that claimants might be expected to extend their job search to potentially increase their chances of finding employment.
- The rules for the workshop (described as the 'contract') were also displayed. These were used by facilitators to introduce the standards of conduct for all participants such as respecting each individual's contribution, and reminding participants that all information shared would remain confidential.

A wall-display in one Jobcentre Plus office detailed the 'modern work search journey'. This comprised a tube map of colourful lines and stops that laid out a route from Workshop 1 to employment. Apart from providing an overview of the IAP process, including the topics covered in each workshop and the intervening 'check points', it outlined possible deviations into other forms of support (homelessness or health advice, work experience, and traineeships).

The layout of the dedicated meeting rooms was such that participants and facilitators faced each other and could have roundtable discussions. Pens and paper were placed on each desk/table prior to participants' arrival. Name signs for participants and Work Coaches were prepared beforehand and given out as each individual arrived.

6.2.2 How workshops were facilitated

As detailed in the IAP theory of change, policy makers and designers saw the role of facilitators in the workshops as operating as follows:

- Facilitators would use the workshops to explore claimants' understanding of their responsibilities and their views and experiences of job searching in relation to the curriculum.
- They would emphasise interactivity and elicit contributions from participants, value their ideas and expertise, as well as adapt and personalise the workshop to those in attendance to create an engaging experience.
- This would be in contrast to the group information sessions (GIS) that were sometimes offered to claimants, which did not emphasise interaction as much as IAP would.
- Facilitators would assist in creating **social norms** about what being an active and effective job seeker entailed.
- Facilitators would also be able to apply some of the coaching techniques taught through the IAP training, some of which had been informed by behavioural insights approaches. This would be demonstrated through open questioning and other techniques to which promoted self-reflection, such as use of quality rulers and nudging.
- As such, facilitators would stress the importance of ensuring that the work-related activities participants completed as part of their job search were to a high quality.

Evidence obtained from the observations and both waves of interviews with participants indicated that, **in line with the IAP theory of change, workshop facilitators were skilled in creating a positive, interactive learning environment**. Specifically, in many cases they appeared to deliver the workshop in a way that made attendees feel relaxed and at ease, brought them into the discussions and encouraged the sharing of views and experiences on various job search techniques and approaches. This promoted participants' engagement, and made it more likely that they would take something away from the workshop experience.

Facilitators fostered this workshop environment using several observed and reported techniques and approaches. While the Work Coaches set the agenda and steered the workshop discussions, across each Jobcentre Plus office, most of the topics they raised and their information and advice on job search methods/activities were introduced by asking participants about their experience or level of confidence in using them, reflecting the IAP implementation guidance and training. Examples included:

- Asking participants about whether they had an up-to-date CV and what should feature on this document
- Whether they knew what a covering letter was, if they had one and what it should contain; whether they used the internet for their job search, which websites they used and how they accessed the internet
- Whether they had ever used recruitment agencies and their experience of them.

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Facilitators also presented information by taking votes from participants on the 'correct' answer or the accepted convention, such as the national minimum wage rate, and how to address a covering letter to a person whose name is unknown. In either case, facilitators would go around the room, posing the question directly to each participant, in order to elicit a response from everyone. Subsequent open-questions, prompts and cues were used to guide participants towards the desired answer or conclusion. This was a clear example of some of the open-questioning approaches that the implementation plan, and thus the theory of change, expected IAP facilitators and Work Coaches to apply throughout the IAP support package and beyond. The purpose was to prompt claimants to reflect on these issues, rather than be passive recipients of information, and being told the 'correct' answer or approach at the outset of the discussion. This approach and the broader group discussion it elicited also helped in setting the job search approaches and/or techniques that were mentioned in context and in making their purpose clear.

Beyond this general approach to interacting with and promoting discussion among workshop participants, in line with the original policy intention, there were several instances where the techniques included in the IAP training package were clearly utilised among facilitators in the observational data. An example of this was the use of the quality ruler in one workshop, with which Work Coaches prompted claimants to consider how many of the nine key skills needed to be effective job seekers they had and therefore reflect on areas where they needed to develop further.

Group interaction was also encouraged through activities devised by the IAP facilitators in each of the Jobcentre Plus offices. These included an initial 'ice-breaker' where participants were asked to find out some personal details about the person sitting next to them (i.e. work history and dream job) and present this to the group. As well as helping to establish a positive group dynamic, a second purpose was to demonstrate to participants that they were all capable of public speaking and of presenting to a group.

In another Jobcentre Plus office, a role play between the two Work Coaches took place in every workshop. The purpose of this was to illustrate and discuss best practice in approaching an employer when making a speculative application in a way that was inclusive. Participants were invited to shout 'stop' as soon as they noticed something they considered inappropriate or problematic about the situation being role played.

IAP participants responded well to these approaches. Information from both waves of research interviews showed that these ways of encouraging contributions and discussions were viewed positively given that they were inclusive and facilitated conversation between group members. They helped to ease participants into the workshop and feel comfortable in being active participants.

The participants also reflected that this format prompted them to make the effort to consider what makes an effective job seeker perhaps more so than they might otherwise have done. In addition, they believed they gained more through this approach because they had the opportunity to hear the views and experiences of other job seekers through which they could gain advice that Work Coaches might not be aware of. This supported the theory of change assumption that workshops would encourage shared learning between claimants and that they would pick up new advice around conducting their job search from each other.

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'There was a lot more sharing than there was input from the work coach because when it came to things like the CVs and the personal statements and things like that they asked us questions and it was like "what do you think you should put on your CV" and everybody inputted. [...] A lot of it was guided by the work coaches but they were expecting us to give an answer so it's like ok we'll give them a head start or we'll give them a starting point and then we'll let them talk and then give feedback towards the end of it [...] I think it's the best way to do it. You don't want to be forced upon by just people speaking at you.'

(IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

'It was a group discussion. [...] He [the facilitator] would say right, what do you think and what do you think and are you going to do that, if you do that, then what about, why don't you do this?'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

Facilitators further cultivated the feeling that **the IAP workshops were an inclusive and engaging environment** through the weight they attributed to their own views as well as those of participants. For instance, while facilitators formulated questions and steered discussions in such a way to deliver the key messages, information was presented as their personal opinion, rather than as fact. Work Coaches stressed that their ideas were a suggested approach, the implication being that participants or other Work Coaches might disagree, and that participants were to choose whether to take this advice on board or adapt it depending on the nature of their job search, own preferences, and the approaches and/or techniques that were most effective for them.

The workshop facilitators were also happy to admit when they were ignorant of elements of the application process, or had been ignorant prior to helping to deliver the IAP curriculum, such as how to start and end a covering letter.

There was also a lot of **positive reinforcement from facilitators** when participants made a contribution, who stressed the quality and value of their inputs. This helped to show that everyone's contribution was equally valid, and was in line with one of the expectations of the theory of change that facilitators would value the ideas and expertise put forward by participants in the workshops. It also helped to establish that what made an effective job seeker was subjective, would differ according to individual needs and preferences, and therefore that people's opinion about what constituted best practice would differ. It appeared that this approach further contributed to claimants' positive perceptions of the workshops since they were seen as a relaxed, open forum in which they were able to make a meaningful contribution.

'They [the facilitators] have had experience of applying for jobs going through the process and they put some of their own personal experience into the workshops, which I think is always a good thing. They don't just throw it down your throat like, "this is what I did; this is what you should do". They do like constructive criticism on behalf of the people in the group.'

(IAP participant, Male, 25-44)

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By making contributions based on personal experiences and work histories, **facilitators were able to show that they were empathetic, understood and could relate the difficulties and frustrations that participants encountered** when looking for work. Examples included feeling pressurised and being unable to come up with adequate answers when being interviewed for a role, and concerns that applying for job vacancies online with no results could be a demoralising experience. Again, this technique also allowed facilitators to provide the IAP participants with advice or suggest job seeking approaches in a non-didactic way.

Facilitators were further able to establish rapport with participants through the **language and style with which they delivered the workshop and steered the group discussions**. Interviews with IAP participants suggested that facilitators presented information in simple, clear and engaging terms. They were described as being polite and friendly, and were able to inject an element of humour into their script which made workshops feel less formal.

These approaches again had a number of **positive effects, which enabled participants to engage with the IAP workshop and help them to take something away from the experience**, as anticipated by the theory of change. For instance, some participants commented that they were more comfortable with self-disclosure, given the positive perceptions they held of the IAP facilitator.

'He [the facilitator] was quite friendly and like he was someone you felt comfortable to be able to just say what was on your mind kind of thing. He added a bit of humour to it, like everyone was making jokes every now and then kind of thing, so again it was quite a light atmosphere, so it was nice.'

(IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

Others stated that Work Coaches had allayed their initial apprehension and nerves about having to potentially take part in a group discussion, and thereby enabled them to contribute.

'I felt a bit nervous that I was in a group, but I think he [the facilitator] kind of knew that some people were a bit like oh, so again I think he added a bit like light to the mood. I don't know, it was just a nice, it was a nice session like we all had a bit of a laugh, but he gave us information he needed to, but he just did it in a nice way.'

(IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

There was some suggestion among IAP participants that **the informal feel of the workshop and relaxed atmosphere made it easier to digest all the information** presented, as did the group format which may have helped in pacing participant contributions and attention, as opposed to a one-to-one session.

'I think if it was one-to-one giving you all that information I think even I would have struggled to concentrate, I would have been drifting off by the end of it but I think because it was in a group it was a bit different it was more relaxed. I think he [the facilitator] managed to make everyone feel a bit more at ease about it.'

(IAP participant, Female, 18-24)

Observations showed that some facilitators also offered a **degree of tailored support to claimants during workshops** based on their personal circumstances and the type of work participants were looking for. This personalisation of the workshop experience again supported policy intentions outlined in the theory of change. For instance, in one workshop, in describing the language that job seekers could use in their covering letter, the facilitator

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suggested several buzz words for each participant that they could use to show prospective employers that they were familiar with the sector. It appeared that this enhanced the perceived relevance and value of the IAP workshops for the participants involved since they reacted positively and were receptive to these suggestions.

Statements made by some also suggested that **IAP participants had internalised messages from the IAP workshop facilitators**; they were now able to explain the importance of the new techniques or approaches they had learned in terms of enhancing the strength of their applications. This lent some support to the theory of change, that the workshops would assist in creating **social norms** or a shared idea of what being an effective job seeker entails, which were cultivated via some of the facilitation techniques outlined.

'They want two covering letters and how you should tailor that and your CV to the job you're applying for rather than just being a general overview one. It showed that you're taking an interest in the company you're applying for and that you'd done your research.'

(IAP participant, Female, 18-24)

The messages internalised by IAP participants had a second purpose, in some instances, of providing them with a clearer understanding of current expectations within Jobcentre Plus around how they should conduct their job search. For instance, there was general message that Jobcentre Plus saw a wide-range of activities as contributing towards the job search, which provided evidence participants were doing all they reasonably could to look for work. These activities went beyond simply searching for vacancies and making online applications. Examples included:

- researching employers;
- practicing and preparing for job-interviews;
- planning travel to attend these interviews; and
- attending the IAP workshops and completing related activities.

Some individuals welcomed this flexibility, and had clearly taken these messages on-board in terms of how they conduct their job search going forward. Again, this provided further support for the expectations outlined in the theory of change that the workshops would allow IAP facilitators to explore participants' understanding of their responsibilities as job seekers and come to a shared idea of what this should entail.

A further example provided illustration of how the research findings matched the assumptions of the theory of change in respect of **the emphasis now placed on making a few, high-quality job-applications** as opposed to numerous applications of a poor standard. Evidence from the IAP participant interviews and observations showed that this message was consistently delivered in the workshops taking place in one Jobcentre Plus office. Facilitators explained that the completion of lengthy application forms should not be rushed, and that it was perfectly acceptable for participants to focus on filling out just a couple of these in a single week in order to ensure they are of high quality.

'They went through application forms with us and they explained that it was about quality when you were doing application form and they understood that you're not...you might not get one done in five minutes if they're asking for like an essay and this would take time.'

(IAP participant, Female, 18-24)

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During the research interviews, **participants expressed very few criticisms or negative views of the IAP facilitators**. Where they did, one said that when discussing the use of social media in searching for vacancies, they had the impression that the Work Coaches had little experience or knowledge of using the sites they discussed. Others felt that having a better understanding of these resources would allow IAP facilitators to provide more expert advice on the topic and better examples of what claimants might gain from using them.

'I don't know whether anyone in the Jobcentre can have a LinkedIn account, so they talk about LinkedIn, but it's clear [...] they don't know about LinkedIn, so it's almost saying if you want to be the expert and really give a feeling of being expert on that, you know, your frontline guys have got to be allowed to get a better experience of LinkedIn and be able to talk about it with more confidence.'

(IAP participant, Male, 25-44)

Another participant commented that the presentation of the content of the workshop had not been sufficiently tailored to people's different learning styles. This view was based on their own experience of delivering short courses to learners, and the various needs they were taught to consider.

'I thought they [the facilitators] were rubbish! I mean when I delivered short courses for parents, we had to do a course on presentation skills and looking at learners' abilities and trying to find different ways in giving information to people of different abilities... it just felt none of that had been taken into account for all the different kind of learning styles that people might have in that room. I don't think that one size is going to fit everybody.'

(IAP participant, Female, 45+)

6.2.3 How the group mix affected the workshop experience

As outlined in the theory of change, the universal nature of the IAP (that it was open to almost all new Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants) was intended to have a positive impact on what IAP participants could gain from the workshops. The composition of each group was intended to be mixed; not segmented by characteristics such as age, work experience or other factors. **There was an assumption that a varied group mix would facilitate greater learning between participants**, as individuals with more knowledge and experience of using particular job search techniques (such as the use of social media, or recruitment agencies for example) or of applying for work within certain occupations and/or sectors shared this information with less knowledgeable and experienced participants.

From a social perspective, policy makers also believed that the workshops would encourage **bonds to form between IAP participants** and a sense of camaraderie to emerge. While there was recognition that not all members of the group that attended Workshop 1 would attend the second workshop, the majority would and, as such, there were expectations that this camaraderie would continue into Workshop 2. There was also an assumption that networking space would be available to IAP participants. This would be important because the group cohesion and enthusiasm created by the workshops would mean that participants would wish to continue their discussions.

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Regarding shared learning among workshop attendees, interviews with participants during both waves of research showed that **many were able to cite examples from their sessions where they had gained some helpful advice from other participants** or had been able to provide these themselves. Examples of what they gained or contributed included:

- Advice on how to sensitively ask about salary levels during job interviews.
- Recommending companies that would be good to work for within a particular sector based on the individual's prior work experience.
- Receiving advice on which local recruitment agencies would be suited to each participant, based on the sector they wanted to work in.
- Recommending websites that listed job vacancies within particular industries.
- Receiving advice from other group members about applying for vacancies via lesser known online resources, which contained vacancies not advertised elsewhere.

In line with the IAP theory of change, there were clear instances where the contributions of IAP participants with perhaps more experience in the labour market or with greater familiarity with certain job search approaches or methods benefited others in the group.

[The other workshop participants] were all quite experienced apart from me and the other student. They were just saying about trying to get us to join...recruitment agencies is it? Where they just hire you out for a day. They were saying "don't do it", their experience was quite bad.'

(IAP participant, Female, 25-44)

'The STAR method was useful for me, because some of the younger people [...] they were applying for retail jobs, but they seemed to know about it. Whether they'd done it through school or something that they'd been coached through, I don't know, but I was impressed. [...] I was like sitting round listening to them saying, "yeah, well done", because they were talking in those terms and I thought that was probably one of the biggest things and it kind of made me think this is very widespread, I need to know much more about this!'

(IAP participant, Male, 25-44)

However, **the likelihood that participants would be part of a group where they could either benefit from or make these contributions did not always appear to be linked to the age or level of experience of the other workshop attendees**. Comments made by participants during research interviews suggested that the particular occupations and sectors that other group members were seeking to enter and how this differed could equally affect the perceived value and usefulness of the group discussion and the experiences that were shared.

Where IAP participants were looking for work in vastly different occupations, they reportedly gained little from other members of the group. This was an example of where the varied group mix built into the IAP workshop design did not facilitate, as was expected by the theory of change, greater mutual learning among participants, even where attendees were enthusiastic and willing to contribute towards the discussion.

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'I did try [and share information with other members of the group] but I don't think anyone was that bothered because they wasn't looking for the type of work that I was looking for.'

(IAP participant, (no gender), 18-24)

'There'd be two or three [participants] who were cleaners and maybe one and she was like in office staff and this young kid he'd been in about 10 or 11 jobs, do you know what I mean, so I didn't pick up anything off them really.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

As such, the segmentation that occurred in one Jobcentre Plus office (see Chapter 4), where workshop groups were not mixed but were split between different age groups, may not have had a significant impact, in all cases, on what individuals were able to gain from attending the workshops; the mix of occupational goals within the group could also affect these gains.

Evidence from both waves of research interviews suggested that **where factors such as age, gender or educational level may have affected the IAP workshop experience was in relation to the group dynamics and the degree of cohesion** among participants. For instance, a number said they were apprehensive about attending the workshop and nervous about the prospect of having to participate in a group discussion, either prior to their arrival or when they first had the opportunity to see the composition of the group.

For some, these feelings were based on the assumption that other workshop participants would be unlike them in terms of their background. Others recognised clear differences when they arrived at the workshop, for instance, in terms of the gender balance within the room. These IAP participants indicated that self-disclosure and contributing towards the group discussion was easier where other participants were similar in respect of these characteristics.

'I thought I would feel odd because I had been to university and now I had come back and I thought that might be quite different from other people's situation there. But no it was great, there were two guys that had been made redundant and there was another student there so I felt quite comfortable.'

(IAP participant, Female, 25-44)

'I was the only female in the first workshop which was a bit daunting. I sort of sat there and, "Oh. Do I...?" And I thought, "No, stop it. I will actually open my mouth".'

(IAP participant, Female, 25-44)

IAP participants who were anxious about group setting were more comfortable in taking an active role if the group was small. Larger groups were seen as intimidating and discouraged these individuals from contributing towards the workshop.

'What made me feel more comfortable in the first group was it was only four of us because people didn't turn up. But that made me feel really comfortable.'

(IAP participant, Female, 25-44)

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'Group meetings, that's when I go a bit shy. It's like people are talking and if it was like maybe one on one, or maybe two people and one of the teachers, then it'd have been a lot easier, but when there's six and seven of you, it's a bit too much.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

Others observed that the extent to which participants were familiar with participating in interactive workshops or group discussions – for instance, through their educational and work history – could also affect the extent to which they were willing to contribute towards the session.

'I found it [the workshop] okay because that's the sort of thing I'd done at uni where we'd be in a group or there'd be quite a few of us, there was always 40 of us in the Studio so but other people that were more quiet during this discussion I felt were a bit, you know, maybe intimidated by it.'

(IAP participant, Female, 18-24)

Understandably, some IAP participants were also uncomfortable in disclosing personal and/or sensitive information on the factors affecting their job search activities and their ability to look for work to other members of the group, such as caring responsibilities or learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

One or more of these factors may have contributed in those instances **where participants reported that others in the workshop were reserved** and where the level of discussion among group members was restricted. In these instances, participants said they had gained little from other attendees and the extent of mutual learning was limited. Where this happened, it clearly departed from the policy assumptions and expectations laid out in the theory of change: namely that workshop participants would positively engage with the process and would be willing to share their experiences with others, and that the workshop experience would encourage social bonds to form between claimants.

However, the findings also showed that **after being initially quite shy and anxious some participants eased themselves into the session** and gradually gained the confidence to make more of a contribution. The workshop atmosphere and capability of the facilitators were clearly important in setting participants at ease and encouraging them to actively participate in group discussions.

Where these anxieties and concerns did not seemingly predominate among those attending the workshops, or were gradually offset as the session progressed due to the factors noted above, in line with the theory of change, IAP participants appeared to like the workshop format and responded positively to the group dynamic. Aside from the advice and guidance on effective job search approaches, they were enthused by the motivation of others to find employment and found it encouraging to discuss this with individuals in a similar situation to themselves.

'The other two [participants], they seemed really, really keen on getting into work as quick as possible which is good to hear, you know, because if you surround with people like that, who are slightly negative, you can sort of like absorb that, you know.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

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'It [the workshop] was good. There was a guy in from banking, you know, similar to me. It happened to him, he'd been in banking for a while and it just reminds you that you're not on your own. There was someone who'd come back after having a kid and lots of different people.'

(IAP participant, Male, 25-44)

The extent to which these **bonds and the sense of camaraderie** they engendered were able to be maintained throughout the three-week intensive experience was, however, limited. Contrary to policy intent outlined in the theory of change, the observational research showed that attendees were not made aware of break-out spaces that would have allowed them to continue their discussions in any of the Jobcentre Plus offices visited. Some individuals commented that they went to local cafes instead although many did not consider continuing their discussions with other group members.

The theory of change acknowledged that some claimants would not return for the second workshop because they would find work or off-flow. However, it was assumed that the majority would, allowing the bonds formed in workshop 1 to be sustained. However, **the composition of the group that had attended the workshop 1 could change considerably by the second workshop**. However, some IAP participants welcomed this and commented that it was good to be exposed to different viewpoints and experiences across the two workshops. Others were disappointed as a positive group dynamic, for instance, had been established in the first workshop, only for this to change in the second where participants were seemingly less interested in making a positive contribution towards the topics. In this respect the delivery of the workshops departed from the intentions of the policy makers and designers of IAP, as outlined in the theory of change, such that the composition of the group would remain largely intact between Workshops 1 and 2. However, the findings indicated that there were pros and cons to each approach which centred on claimants' views of the group of participants that they encountered during Workshop 1.

6.3 Claimant views on the IAP curriculum

With respect to the IAP curriculum, which formed the basis of the discussions in the workshops, policy makers believed that it would have the effect of bringing IAP participants up-to-speed with modern recruitment practices and would help them to become familiar with some key job searching skills that they may not have covered before.

During both waves of research interviews, **many participants identified elements of the workshop curriculum which they found useful**, although this varied greatly from person to person. It appeared that what they gained most was dependent on their level of prior experience in searching for employment and the extent to which they had received advice and guidance on employability skills from other individuals and/or support organisations. This appears to reflect policymakers' thinking, documented in the theory of change, that individuals would have different starting points, but all would be able to learn something as a result of IAP.

Most commonly, **elements of the curriculum were perceived to be useful by participants when they presented new job search approaches or techniques** that individuals had previously been unaware of or had not considered using. It was predominately young claimants (i.e. those aged 18-24) who said this. Information that was new to participants included:

- Use of the STAR method to structure answers to competency-based questions on application forms.
- Registering with recruitment agencies and potentially finding repeat employment with one of their clients.
- Applying for 'hidden' vacancies by making speculative applications.
- Visiting employer websites directly to search for job vacancies, rather than only looking via internet search engines.
- Broadening the geographic scope of a work-search area in order to increase the number of vacancies available.

Where IAP participants expressed negative views on particular aspects of the curriculum, this was generally because they felt that they were already highly familiar with the approaches concerned, or that these were not relevant to their personal circumstances. In the latter case, examples included information presented on the 90-minute travel to work area and how participants could plan their journey to an employer using public transport; individuals who had access to a car did not feel that this was applicable to their situation. Further, the information provided on speculative applications was not deemed appropriate when individuals were applying for more senior roles within a company.

6.4 Claimant views on work at home and feedback

6.4.1 Views on the work at home

IAP participants were given work at home to complete following each workshop, which related to different aspects of the curriculum. At the end of each session, IAP guidance stated that facilitators would book and notify them of a follow-up telephone call that would take place with each individual in two to three days' time. The purpose of the call would be to get feedback on how participants had found the work and to offer advice and support on the activities if it were needed. Work Coaches undertaking these follow-up calls in two of the Jobcentre Plus offices where observations were conducted also booked participants into Workshop 2, providing that individuals were on track to complete the work at home before the session, i.e. did not require extra time to finish the work at home. However, as noted in Chapter 4, policy makers had intended that this booking should not be made until IAP participants were judged to have satisfactorily completed Workshop 1 tasks and this judgement involved quality checks. As such there was no set period during which participants should complete the work at home, and Work Coaches should have been able to use their discretion where necessary. However, the policy intention was still for claimants to progress through the IAP curriculum during the first 21 days of their claim where possible.

Within the research interviews claimants expressed **mixed views on the activities they were asked to complete at home** following each workshop.

For example, views varied on **the rationale underpinning certain tasks and their perceived relevance to IAP participants' circumstances**. Some commented that these IAP activities had helped them to practice a wider range of job search skills than they would have done otherwise. This included developing answers to competency-based questions that could be used when completing application forms and attending job-interviews, as

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well as receiving helpful feedback from employers on how claimants' applications could be improved.¹¹

'It prepares you for upcoming interviews [...] the questions that I had to answer as part of the assigned work from the workshops. I just read over them. Well a lot of the questions didn't come up but a couple of them did, like a time when you were part of a team and what was the result. Just general questions like that, which I [...] looked at and thought I've answered that, I know the answer to this.'

(IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

However, **some did not perceive all activities as helpful** in their search for employment. Some repeated complaints that activities such as the travel to work task and the work search diary were not worthwhile given their access to private transport or already effective organisational skills. Others again commented that they were already familiar with techniques covered in the workshop, and did not see the need to repeat these, such as developing a CV from scratch.

'The second homework that we were given, I'll be honest, I didn't do that bit because I didn't see the point, you know. Part of it was sorting out travel. To me it's common sense if I've got an interview in, like, [local town] I'm going to do the journey before I go to find out how long it's going to take me and how much it's going to cost. It gave only bus and train as an alternative travel option. It didn't say anything about if you've got a car.'

(IAP participant, Female, 45+)

These **differing perceptions were explained in some instances by the way in which activities were initially introduced** to IAP participants. For example, in examples where participants had already developed a CV, some reported receiving advice from Work Coaches that they should just look over the hand-out and see whether there was anything they could adopt to improve their own. Further, in one Jobcentre Plus office, the Work Search Diary that participants were asked to keep was described as helping them to prepare for the new evidence requirements that would be introduced as part of Universal Credit. Participants who received this sort of tailored guidance did not appear to be opposed to engaging with the activities, while those who did not saw these tasks as an unreasonable and inflexible requirement.

IAP participants' **experiences of undertaking the activities following each IAP workshop also varied**. Some said that they did not feel that Jobcentre Plus staff put a great deal of pressure on them to complete the tasks. When they were first introduced, they were informed that a Work Coach would call them in a few days' time to check how they were getting on. While these individuals were advised that they should try to complete some of the activities by the time of the telephone call, they were aware that they could have extra time and support if needed. This group appeared to respond well to this lack of pressure as they reported that they found the activities relatively straightforward to complete.

¹¹ One of the IAP activities that claimants had to undertake was to approach employers for feedback on their application.

'They said [...] you need to do this work, but they weren't pushy. They said someone will call you on this day, if you have any trouble, just tell them that you're having trouble with the work. It's not like a deadline. You don't have to do it for this date. There was no pressure really.'

(IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

Others seemingly did not share this impression, and **these believed that they were being pressurised to undertake the tasks** within a relatively short period. Again, this appeared to be linked to how activities were initially described and the level of explanation provided, which could allay any concerns.

IAP participants varied in how difficult they found it to complete the activities at home in the time available. Several commented that, while they may have had to seek advice on how to apply techniques they were unfamiliar with, such as the STAR approach for answering competency-based questions, they found the process of completing the activities simple, easy and relatively straightforward. Others struggled for a number of reasons:

- The most common complaint was that the activities were quite time consuming, and were seen to detract from job search activities from which they would see more immediate, tangible benefits.
- Some of the tasks were perceived to be hard to complete in full, such as the one that asked IAP participants to request feedback on previous applications from employers. Some individuals complained that not all companies were willing or able to provide feedback. In the Jobcentre Plus office where participants had to complete all the IAP activities to a satisfactory standard in order to progress, this activity raised considerable concerns.
- Another common issue was that participants received a follow-up call from a Work Coach at Jobcentre Plus before they had time to attend to tasks, such as registering with five recruitment agencies. These individuals identified that they did not fully understand all of the activities they had been asked to complete and/or felt that they needed more explicit guidance on certain elements, such as step-by-step instructions for putting together a CV.
- A few participants stated that they were not aware that they would need to access the internet for the tasks, including researching local employers. These commented that this had not been raised in the workshop, and that it presented unexpected hurdle given either a poor, home internet connection or none at all.

These individuals would have appreciated greater flexibility in respect of the time they had to complete activities, as well as further detailed guidance from Work Coaches on what the activities would entail and how they might best be approached given the individuals' personal situations and circumstances.

6.4.2 Jobcentre Plus feedback on IAP activities in the first three weeks

The IAP work at home was checked by Work Coaches during short, follow-up meetings at Jobcentre Plus offices. The IAP theory of change contained an assumption that trained IAP Work Coaches would check the quality of these and provide advice, feedback and encouragement in order that participants could improve further and sustain the positive momentum created by the workshops. Further, it was envisaged that this support would not just be provided in these initial follow-up meetings, but would continue throughout the duration of an individual's claim.

During both waves of research interviews, participants were asked to recount their experiences of the initial follow-up meetings to review the work at home completed. Their descriptions suggested that in line with the theory of change some of this support was being given, albeit not in every case.

Some **IAP participants highlighted the useful advice that they received as part of these meetings**. Examples included:

- Receiving advice on how they might 'sell' themselves more in the personal profile section of their CV.
- Work Coaches providing guidance on where claimants could source references.
- Advice on developing a more tailored covering letter, which explained why the applicant was suited to the company in question.
- Guidance on how to improve the structure of a covering letter.
- Encouragement to include more of their employment history on their CV.
- Advice on how to better phrase the reason why participants had left their previous role, which in one example concerned having a baby. The Work Coach advised on how to frame this positively: *'I left my previous job because of maternity leave, but I'm now ready for full-time work'* (IAP participant, Female, 24-44).

Beyond this practical advice, **some IAP participants also reported receiving encouragement from their Work Coach** during these initial follow-up meetings. Work Coaches indicated that participants were doing well, were on-track, that they were happy with their progress and with the work completed. Some stated they had expected the individual to excel at the tasks they had been given.

Where participants had struggled to complete all the activities, there was evidence of Work Coaches providing reassurances on the exact requirement, and of highlighting how the task could be tailored to their particular needs or circumstances. Examples included advising participants that the suggested length of answers to the mock application form questions was a guideline, and that this word count did not have to be strictly adhered to.

Where participants expressed negative views about the follow-up meetings, these mainly centred on not having received any detailed feedback on the completed tasks. In these instances, Work Coaches simply acknowledged that participants had completed the work at home but did not provide feedback on its quality, which represented a clear departure from the model of support expected as part of the IAP theory of change. This frustrated participants, made them question the purpose of the work at home as well as

created a perception that completing these activities had been a box-ticking exercise.

Individuals who expressed these views believed that they had expended effort and should thereby receive some feedback in return. This suggested a desire for a reciprocal two-way relationship, which behavioural insights literature suggested would instil commitment. Participants expressed this view even if they were already fairly confident in their work-search capabilities and did not necessarily feel that they would benefit from feedback; they had engaged with the process in the spirit of co-operation and felt that this should be reciprocated by Jobcentre Plus staff. Even in cases where the Work Coach provided encouraging comments after seeing the work completed, participants wanted something more tangible that would help to improve their job search in order for the tasks to be seen as worthwhile.

In some cases, participants speculated that their Work Coach may have taken this approach because they could see that individuals were doing all they could to look for employment and as such were not concerned about their progress; some felt they were not the target group for the programme, because their job search skills were already advanced.

'I brought all this stuff to the appointment [...]. Obviously she took them all out and photocopied them, but she didn't read them, or give me any feedback to any of it, other than like oh you've done a lot of work there and that's the best I've seen. [...] I just thought it was a farce, to be honest and again it just felt like some kind of paper exercise that I'm doing, unless whether they could see the amount of work that I'd done made them realise that actually I am looking for a job and they don't need to worry too much about me and don't need to give me any further help.'

(IAP participant, Female, 45+)

When recounting their experiences, **some participants remembered being switched to a new Work Coach prior to their initial follow-up meeting** and suggested that this may be a possible explanation for the lack of feedback they received. This matched evidence from the observations, which showed participants being allocated to non-IAP Work Coaches on completing both workshops in two of the Jobcentre Plus offices visited (see Chapter 4). Although not all participants who expressed negative views about the initial follow-up meetings had experienced this, the finding has implications for the level of continued support and encouragement they were able to receive from Work Coaches throughout the duration of their claim as envisaged in the theory of change.

6.5 Ongoing review meetings

Beyond the three-week experience, the theory of change envisaged that the work-related activities completed by participants would continue to be checked by IAP trained Work Coaches for the duration of their claim. This was to ensure that these activities were being completed to a high standard, and to provide participants with advice and guidance on how they might be improved if needed. Again it was believed that Work Coaches would employ behavioural science and coaching techniques in order to prompt participants to reflect on their job search skills and self-identify possible areas of improvement. In order to test these policy expectations, participants who were still claiming JSA at the time of the Wave 2 research interviews were asked about their experience of any continued support they had received; again, this appeared to be quite varied.

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Several participants in one area stated that they had received the type of ongoing support from Work Coaches that policy makers had envisaged. They commented that as well as checking that they had provided sufficient evidence of work-related activities since their last appointment, Work Coaches would also ask to see or be talked through the applications they had submitted for vacancies.

Participants who received this form of ongoing support clearly valued the feedback from their Work Coaches and believed that it helped to improve the strength of the applications they were making and would continue to do so in the future.

'I tell her I've done my application tell her what it's about she might say I've missed something or advise me on how I can make it better for next time so yeah it's very useful.'

(IAP participant, Female, 18-24)

'I will review my CV with him and tighten up where I need to tighten up or expand where I need to expand. Of course it is a template CV and needs to be further honed depending on the opportunity [...] And I think that feedback from my work coach has been good, excellent in actual fact.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

Not all participants, however, received continued feedback on the work-related activities during their ongoing meetings with their Work Coach. Where they did not, participants stated that their Work Coach simply checked that they had supplied sufficient evidence of these activities and asked them to sign-on with little or no further interaction beyond this. This led to complaints at having to provide the evidence, with some participants stating that it felt again like box-ticking exercise. Others clearly wanted feedback, given that they were not seeing any results and wanted to know where they were going wrong.

'I just get no feedback basically so it's just sort of all the applications that I do and there's no results so overall my confidence has probably been knocked a bit because well I haven't got a job yet. [...] I don't know what I'm doing wrong if anything or if it's just other candidates that are better suited.'

(IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

As with the lack of feedback on their work at home, **a few participants speculated that the change of Work Coach following the three-week IAP experience explained this,** given that the new Work Coach was not aware of and not able to refer back to the workshop activities. While in two of the Jobcentre Plus offices visited for the research, participants were switched to a non-IAP Work Coach following attendance at both workshops, this was not the case for all claimants who had experienced a lack of continued support. This suggested that not all IAP-trained Work Coaches were delivering ongoing support to participants in the way policy makers and designers intended; that is, that individuals would be supported to continually improve their job search skills throughout the duration of their claim. It was unclear whether this was affected by Work Coaches being selected for IAP delivery, rather than volunteering for this.

No evidence was found of Work Coaches employing behavioural science or coaching techniques in ongoing meetings, although this was difficult to discern on the basis of participant recall as not all of the coaching techniques deployed would have been clearly recognised by them; unfortunately compounding this, it was only possible for the Research team to observe a small number of ongoing review meetings due to decisions made by the participating Jobcentre Plus offices.

6.6 Short-term outcomes of the workshops, curriculum and work at home

As outlined in the theory of change, policy makers and designers believed that as a result of IAP, IAP participants would demonstrate attitudinal and behavioural changes, including more positive attitudes to finding work and **increased persistence** in their job search. In the longer term, it was also envisaged that IAP would help increase their skill level or capability with respect to their job search and better enable them to find employment. However, it was recognised that the extent of this change would vary between participants because of their differing starting points.

During the first wave of interviews participants were asked about **the impact that engaging in the IAP had so far had on their job search skills** and ability to look for and find work, given that many had already progressed rapidly through the curriculum and activities. Even at this early stage and in line with the outcomes predicted by the theory of change, they were able to identify benefits that they had derived from the IAP support package.

Some indicated that already they believed **they were now conducting their job search in a more professional and structured way**, for instance, in terms of how they set out their CV and covering letter, and in their responses to questions on application form. They also believed that engaging with the curriculum and activities had helped broaden the range of job opportunities available to them and had therefore increased their chances of finding work. This included using social media sites as part of their job search, registering with recruitment agencies, widening their work-search area and making speculative applications. Some participants could point to immediate 'hard' outcomes from applying these techniques in the work at home, including securing job-interviews.

Aside from prompting IAP participants to consider new job search techniques or approaches, some stated that they also had found the content of the workshops useful in terms of **refreshing their pre-existing skills** and in providing helpful reminders of best practice in different areas.

With regards to the initial follow-up meetings between IAP Work Coaches and participants to review the activities completed after workshops, **participants who received advice, feedback and encouragement from their Work Coach reported that a good personal rapport had developed and as a result, they were more motivated and positive about their job search going forward**. This was as intended by policy makers and designers and these intermediate behavioural outcomes predicted to emerge in the theory of change.

'She looked through them [the activities] and then like she did give me some feedback, like you could have done this there, or you know, you could have expanded a bit more in this, so again she was really helpful and she didn't just obviously make sure I'd done it and she gave me some good feedback, but she said that I'm doing pretty well so far, like I seemed to be, you know, on track. [...] She made me feel a bit more motivated, you know, it was nice to get some feedback.'

(IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

6.7 The move to a more digital IAP

The work at home that participants were expected to complete and present to their Work Coach was in the form of paper hand-outs, although certain activities involved an online component. As part of this research, participants were asked for their views on the potential for the IAP to be further digitised in the future, which would mean that IAP participants could complete more of the requisite forms online.

Those who were adept at using IT said that they would have **preferred a digital format**; being able to type their responses would have been more efficient than hand-writing responses. Participants who expressed this preference commented that being able to submit their work online would also bring benefits. For instance, it would save time and money in terms of travelling to Jobcentre Plus offices to have their work checked by a Work Coach. It would also allow the process of completing and receiving feedback to be more continuous, allowing them to pace the activities rather than complete a lot of work in a short time.

A participant who was partially sighted emphasised that moving to a digital service would be helpful as they could use their specialist software to complete the work at home. This would make content more accessible; a concern likely to apply to some of those with learning disabilities or difficulties.

Some participants admitted to not being particularly tech-savvy and said that they had preferred completing the documents by hand. These stated that it helped them to work through activities by developing an initial, handwritten draft for questions or tasks. Some said that having a physical document served as a useful prompt to complete the work, and that it was harder to forget about doing so in this format. Being able to complete the forms in hard-copy also reduced the need for participants who did not have access to adequate IT facilities at home, to decamp to complete tasks. Moreover it allayed fears for some individuals about having to use IT facilities at Jobcentre Plus; those who were not confident in using IT, felt the local Jobcentre office was not a sufficiently private space in which they could make mistakes and gradually build their familiarity with IT software.

'I think I preferred that it was all on paper in front of you because you can't really forget about it. I think it catered for everyone that way because it doesn't matter if you have got easy access to a computer or not because if you don't you have to use the Jobcentre computers and they are never free, you have to wait ages for them, so that is a bit of a pain. No I liked that it was all on paper in front of me.'

(IAP participant, Female, 18-24)

7 Beyond the intensive period

This chapter explores the short-to-medium outcomes of participants in the Intensive Activity Programme (IAP). While the theory of change identified the types of impact that should be achieved (entry into sustained employment), soft outcomes were identified as necessary precursors to this. Given the short timeframe of the research¹², it was also more likely that soft outcomes, rather than longer-term impacts, would be discerned within the evidence.

7.1 Key findings

- The IAP enabled many participants to pick up hints and tips to refine their job search activities. Help on CVs, cover letters, applications and travel to work distances were all valued.
- Younger participants tended to be more open to learning from IAP activities and showed greater confidence in the application of new techniques. Older participants took longer to increase belief in their capabilities.
- Typically IAP participants tended, by the follow-up interviews, to indicate increased confidence and enthusiasm although this often was linked to having found work. Older participants, however, found it harder to sustain initial positive attitudes following IAP.
- IAP participants did not articulate particular behavioural changes; instead they highlighted the practical benefits such as a reworked CV or better grasp of the cover letter.
- Health conditions and disabilities could reduce the momentum of the job search over time. Participants with such conditions believed the barriers to their employment lay with employers and not themselves.

7.2 Destinations

The IAP intended to support the achievement of hard, employment outcomes through equipping job seekers with the skills and capabilities they would need to be fully effective in their job search. According to the theory of change, this would lead to them making successful applications, since IAP would build the skills and behaviours that would enable individuals to stay in work, as well as support attitudinal changes to take root such as being more focused on remaining in employment rather than making a claim. In addition, the theory of change focused on entry to sustainable jobs, not just any job, which would reduce churn between claiming and working as well as increase motivation amongst individuals to stay in work. In terms of hard outcomes, claimants in the second wave of interviews described a mix of job entry, off-flow from claiming and continued unemployment. However, the research took place at too early a point to comment on sustained or sustainable hard outcomes emerging from IAP¹³.

¹² There was an interval of six to eight weeks between the initial and follow-up interviews with claimants.

¹³ Follow-up interviews were timed between six and eight weeks after the initial interview when claimants were about to, or already, taking part in IAP.

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A number of **younger IAP participants** talked about moving into work. Several discussed how this had been facilitated by recontacting an old employer to take up a previous role or enter a new vacancy. However, the impact of IAP on these outcomes was not wholly clear, as for example, an individual explained that their previous employer had contacted them to offer them the position. Other younger participants had entered new roles, often as part of fixed-term contracts, work trials, zero hour contracts, freelance work or seasonal positions, i.e. often temporary positions. Some of these therefore continued to look for further opportunities having secured such positions.

Alongside these individuals were also younger participants who continued to be unemployed. Some of these had taken up zero hours contracts or volunteering opportunities alongside their claim to enhance their chances of finding more permanent work. While the theory of change did not specifically identify combining flexible or voluntary work with Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) as a precursor to finding more stable employment, this change in participants' activity could be interpreted as a changed attitude towards working and progression in employment that policymakers hoped would emerge as an outcome of IAP.

'I've been doing some freelance work for a company. It's seasonal work and it is only one day a week or two days a week or sometimes nothing. So that's been ok and I've recently tried for a job that I really, really, really want and I've got an interview on Tuesday.'

(IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

'Well I'm still claiming JSA but I started doing volunteer work to get something on my CV because it will probably...help my chances of getting jobs if I have some sort of work on my CV.'

(IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

Outcomes for **IAP participants aged 25 and over** were likewise mixed, although those who had entered work had generally acquired more stable and long-term forms of employment than the younger age group, albeit part-time in some cases. Of those who were still claiming JSA, some felt there had been no change in their situation, whereas others believed that, despite their continued claim, they had made positive steps. For example, one participant described how they were now getting more invitations to interview. Others had moved to and from claiming (i.e. churned between employment and unemployment and thereby not fitting the assumptions of the theory of change), were in the process of moving to a different welfare benefit or had found work and were waiting for a start date,

'I did sign back on briefly again for another I don't know maybe two weeks maybe not even that and then I took some more contracting work. I'd mentioned that I'd had a few health problems and I'd been on an ESA before that...It's sort of comeback round again I'm not really in a position where I can be working at the minute so I've now just started an ESA claim again.'

(IAP participant, Male, 25-44)

'Well I'm still on JSA, nothing has altered on that side but still signing on looking for work and the good news is I got a letter through the other...they are going to retire me on pension credits.'

(IAP participant, Female, 45+)

Older claimants in the control group also demonstrated this split in outcomes – continuation of JSA claiming or having entered employment.

Overall, there were signs that some assumptions of the theory of change were holding true in the respect that some individuals showed positive changes towards sustaining employment and progressing in employment. There was seemingly some increased flexibility to take up part-time or voluntary opportunities as a means to enter more secure work. However, more time would be needed for sustained employment outcomes to emerge and the quantitative assessment of the programme, based on data from the randomised controlled trial, should be more reliable on this point.

7.3 Distance travelled and intermediate outcomes

The next section explores the changes that claimants identified resulting from the support they received.

The theory of change envisaged that as a result of IAP participants would become more effective, active and persistent job seekers. This would entail an understanding of approaches that were effective and greater confidence in their application. This effectiveness and more so, the more active job search would be evidenced by participants rejecting a passive stance and taking ownership. They would also display positive attitudes to finding employment. Behavioural changes that according to the theory of change would emerge included: a continuous focus on identifying opportunities, making applications, communicating with employers, planning and prioritising work-related activities. However, within the assumptions there was also recognition that ‘distance travelled’ would vary between participants because of these differing starting points.

This section compares and contrasts experiences between claimants of differing ages and in differing circumstances, as well as between the IAP participant and control groups. Throughout, experiences at the outset of the claim are compared with those some six to eight weeks later.

7.3.1 Improvements in job search knowledge and capability

Throughout the first wave of interviews, younger IAP participants (aged 18–24) clearly articulated what they perceived as their personal strengths in relation to finding work, listing a wide range of skills and attributes. In particular, compiling CVs and using the internet to look for work were common areas in which there was a high level of self-confidence and self-efficacy. These younger participants were often highly computer-literate and adept at using technologies in their job searches. Some described how their experiences in higher education had led to transferable skills as well as qualifications, for example, they believed their writing ability would serve them well. Furthermore, for those with prior work experience, this level of familiarity gave them a greater degree of trust in locating and securing employment. They believed they had the necessary foundations in place.

However, these younger IAP participants also identified potential weak spots, and were for the most part open to learning and developing the skills they needed to plug these gaps. Their concerns surrounded making career decisions and drawing upon their social or professional networks to find work.

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[I'm] not very confident [about career decisions]. I'm just worried, if I take a step wrong, I don't want to end up in...I just want to take a step towards the career that I want.'

IAP participant, Female, 18-24

In addition, some said that devising covering letters was a new area, and that they did not have as much practice as with writing CVs, or interviews. Attending interviews produced a more mixed response. Some were 'terrified' at the prospect, whilst others professed to be 'totally confident' in their ability to interview well.

Similarly-aged claimants in the control group shared confidence to provide an up-to-date CV, complete application forms and in respect of being interviewed although as with the IAP participant group, writing covering letters was a new concept.

Compared to the younger cohort, during the first interviews **IAP participants who were aged 25-44** were somewhat more positive and self-assured in their own abilities. Many felt they possessed highly-developed work- and job search skills and needed no support on where or how to look for work. They reported being adept at capitalising on word of mouth approaches, job sites and social media. When it came to drawing on personal networks and/or specialised, professional contacts, views varied. This was a core part of job search activities for some of this group, whereas others were uncomfortable with the idea and had reservations about using these approaches. This group had additional concerns including out-of-date or not-so-good references which they believed would hamper their job search.

Control group claimants of this age were also broadly confident in their skills and experience during the first interview. They professed particular strengths in effective or sustained use of online resources and targeted searching focused on more specialised occupations. That said, others mentioned obstacles such as one claimant who described how their lack of a laptop was challenging as it meant that they had to use their smart phone for filling in application forms, which was highly frustrating.

First interviews with **older IAP participants (45+)** indicated a mix of views in respect of the calibre of their work and job search specific skills. Some were positive about their abilities, describing themselves as being highly self-motivated and confident in their ability to secure employment. These did not identify any issues or gaps in their skills and they felt secure in the knowledge that they could find work. Furthermore, where such individuals asserted that they had 'one or two things to pick up', their sense of their underlying skills level meant they were unperturbed about finding work, whether by word of mouth, newspapers or using online or virtual forums.

Nevertheless, other IAP participants in this age group (45+) had some reservations, and described the ways in which practices and processes were tricky for them. This included writing a CV (having never done so before), obtaining valid references and using the internet to search and apply for jobs. On this, some mentioned that they would welcome support. Furthermore, some voiced disquiet about unfamiliar strategies in the job search, which included using agencies.

'It's not necessarily learning new skills but maybe a bit of assistance, of pointing in right directions of how to use skills I've already got.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

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'I do have wide networking, social networking and professional networking...I have used personal networks too, to see if there's anything available.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

Older claimants (45+) in the control group at the first interview were, for the most part, highly confident in their ability to identify employment opportunities as well as in their work-related skills. This was in contrast to IAP participants of this age where levels of confidence in these capabilities were more mixed. For instance, many in the control group said they already possessed advanced skills which they would put into play as part of effective job search strategies. They emphasised their ability to: use contacts to find work, put together a CV (aside from those in sectors where this was deemed irrelevant) and use online resources and portals. Two common areas of concern that were identified among the control group, however, surrounded signing up with agencies and the provision of references. Various, these claimants described how prior negative experiences meant they were now unwilling to sign up for agency work. In addition, some emphasised that agency work made it hard to obtain references.

By the second wave interviews, there were a number of **clear positive changes in the skills and/or experience of younger IAP participants (i.e. aged 18–24)**. Many described how they strongly believed that their applications and cover letters had greatly improved. The opportunity to practice these and receive feedback had facilitated this change in their view. Other positive changes included the sense that job search approaches had become more considered, and more focused. However, alongside this encouraging picture, there were negative changes. These were characterised by a drop in confidence about job searching in general, which was brought on by: a lack of success in the job market; dissatisfaction with having to look for work that was not seen as desirable; or negative anecdotal feedback concerning agencies.

'I've just done so many [cover letters]...because I'm very dyslexic...just kind of learning to take my time and just sit down and do it and that has made a big difference...lots of practice.'

IAP participant, Female, 18-24

'I'd still say I'm confident and all that but I'd say overall probably not as confident when you get jobs...I just get no feedback basically. So...all the applications that I do and there are no results. Overall my confidence has probably been knocked a bit because I haven't got a job yet.'

IAP participant, Male, 18-24

IAP participants aged 25–44 also noted a number of positive changes in their work- and job-related competencies during the second wave of interviews, which covered a wide range of areas. A number had obtained or updated their references (with one wholly attributing improvement to the efforts of their Work Coach). Others placed greater faith in their CVs or applications on the basis of tips and hints from IAP workshops and Work Coaches. Furthermore, advice they had on interview techniques was welcomed, and was linked to increased confidence. However, increased confidence could be attributed to other sources. For example, a claimant had decided to self-fund evening classes in an area they wanted to specialise in and attributed the course to their increased confidence.

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'It was a little bit of advice that made me confident in interviews...They said I would rather take on somebody who obviously is still taking it seriously but can have a laugh and a joke at the interview, because I don't want somebody who is sat there shaking because they are nervous, scared...After that I felt so much more relaxed.'

IAP participant, Female, 25-44

Claimants in the control group of this age also described having improved CVs and cover letters by the second wave of interviews. However, they also expressed some concerns with what they described as more 'formal' parts of applying for jobs.

Opinions concerning changes in skills and experience amongst the older IAP participants (45+) proved to be mixed during this second wave. Some had greater conviction in their capabilities, including with regards to CVs and covering letters (although change was not consistently attributed to Jobcentre Plus activities). Using the internet was a notable area in which a number of participants described feeling more secure, having made efforts to become more familiar in using online resources and ICT. Nevertheless, it was apparent that various factors could impact on individuals' belief in their skills, including the impact of rejection for jobs, a lack of experience, or the persistence of fear, around job interviews.

'Well I have been filling applications...where you've got to put all your work experience in every detail and write statements about yourself and have your references and all that...I think I've got my head around it now...I wouldn't particularly attribute that to the course though, that is just me having to do it.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

'I've had a couple of interviews that have not been successful so that knocks your confidence a little bit especially when you don't get feedback.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

Views on changes achieved amongst claimants of a similar age in the control group were similarly diverse. Some had a high level of confident engagement with job search activities, whilst others indicated persistent concerns about compiling a CV, and demotivation following lack of success in the labour market.

These findings suggested that, as anticipated by the theory of change, the IAP had supported the acquisition of job search skills and techniques that would assist participants to be effective job seekers at the earliest possible opportunity and there was clear evidence of gains having been made that were not seen amongst control group members. Further, the benefits to different age groups were quite distinct.

Receiving continued feedback on the job search skills and techniques that were developed during the three-week experience was also highlighted as being important to retaining any perceived gains. This would provide the validation envisaged by the theory of change. On this, participants prioritised tangible evidence such as an increased likelihood to be shortlisted for interviews, which served to increase confidence and ownership. However, for some, being shortlisted was insufficient to retain an increased level of confidence when a job offer was not subsequently received and other feedback was seemingly required. Policy

makers expected this to emerge from ongoing review meetings with Work Coaches who continued to apply behavioural science and other coaching techniques – however, as seen in Chapter 6, within delivery this was a challenged facet of the theory of change.

7.3.2 Attitudinal changes

Despite varying degrees of self-belief in their ability to look for work, **younger IAP participants (aged 18–24)** during the first interviews fairly consistently identified areas where they would welcome support; a ‘little bit of extra help’ in their search for work. There was a sense that this group was open to developing their own skills. Interviewees broadly felt assured in obtaining references and putting together a CV, but also described particular concerns over cover letters and their level of work experience. A number of individuals explicitly linked career-related activity in Further or Higher Education (including target-setting or structured planning) to what they perceived as their proactive, focused approaches. In contrast, a (perceived) lack of experience generated less clear ideas, and less confidence in job search approaches.

‘I’m looking for either Administration because I’ve done that previously...[or] Fashion Retail and Visual Merchandising...I did a five-year plan at uni.’

(IAP participant, Female, 18-24)

‘I need to hurry up and get [experience], so I can move on and do work, so I need to talk to [my Work Coach] more about that...I’m feeling eager to get a job, but the only thing that’s pushing me back is the fact that I haven’t got experience.’

(IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

Most of these young IAP participants had high levels of motivation at the start of their claim to move forwards, secure work and earn money. However, a few described feeling low when they commenced their claim to the point where they did not want to socialise or leave the house. To a lesser degree, there was also level of apprehension about finding work.

The first interviews with claimants of this age group in the control group indicated similar attitudes. Some portrayed a greater degree of self-confidence (borne of previous experience of finding work) and an open attitude to accessing support with job search. Others indicated that they felt demotivated, and unsure of their ability to perform well in interviews.

By the second wave of interviews, **younger IAP participants were broadly more confident and motivated to find work than they were during the first wave**. Some discussed this in loose terms, noting simply that they had a better sense of their own abilities or that they felt very ready for work. However, a number of others had secured work (either self-employment or odd jobs), which they explained boosted their self-belief and the drive to continue to look for (additional) opportunities for employment. This supported the theory of change, which envisaged that participants would continue to apply their newly developed job search skills and that this would enable those entering employment to remain in work. However, a few individuals were demotivated or held more negative perceptions of their own abilities. Primarily this was explained by a lack of success in the labour market, or by personal or contextual factors such as mental health problems.

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In contrast, **IAP participants aged between 25 and 44** in the first wave of interviews were altogether more focused on finding 'suitable' work, including employment with convenient hours or a varied and stimulating job rather than one with repetitive tasks. However, more often this was in terms of clearly identified sectors or occupations they wished to (re) enter. This group was more demanding in respect of their work goals, and appeared both more autonomous and more confident in their ability to find such work than the younger participants. However, while this age group was far from unreceptive to support, the support they wanted was linked to their more focused goals. For example, one individual outlined how they wanted help with their CV to help them access a graduate position related to their degree.

Many of this group had a greater level of confidence in their own skills, which had been commonly gained from their career or work history to date. In contrast, where individuals were some distance from the labour market – for example, having spent some years bringing up children – there was a tendency for them to feel less secure in their own abilities.

Claimants aged 25–44 in the control group in the first wave of interviews were also highly positive about their ability to secure employment, and also focused on specific and particular work goals, such as specialised trades or segments of a single sector. Some were considering self-employment. Even where claimants were demotivated following a lack of success in the search for work, individuals contended they remained job-ready, and positive about looking for work.

By the second interviews, **many of IAP participants aged between 25 and 44 were as, or in some cases more, positive about their job search skills than they had previously been**. The degree to which involvement in IAP was believed to have affected this varied, however, and similar changes were also noted in the control group between the first and second wave interviews. Some IAP participants traced a link between the activities they had engaged in and the attitudinal change they had experienced. Others stated they had already been undertaking the same approach, and as such had experienced no additionality from carrying out the IAP tasks. Despite reasonably high levels of confidence in the group as a whole, some individuals explained their confidence had been dampened, or that they were becoming increasingly frustrated in the search for work. Limited success and distance from the labour market proved to be crucial obstacles to attitudinal change.

'Getting my references and my CVs and covering letters and things like that, it does make you a positive [person], so I would said all the little things I've learned are positive.'

(IAP participant, Male, 25-44)

Where members of the control group discussed increased confidence, they attributed this to having secured work or having received advice about moving to self-employment.

IAP participants aged 45+ were similarly motivated as those in the middle age group, but were a degree more open to wider opportunities and therefore specified their job search in less narrow terms. A number discussed how for them, the potential to be working (and having a sufficient income) was a far stronger driver than either high earnings or a building towards a very particular career.

'I just want to get back, no matter what it is, I ain't bothered.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

'I'm not looking for a career now you see. That's it. I'm never going to be a millionaire.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

Older claimants in the control group similarly just wanted to get into work, were motivated in their job search, but there was a degree more apprehension, with claimants noting that the experience of claiming was daunting and had dented their confidence, which was not helped by a lack of success in searching for work. This group were as content with their work-related skills and attributes as the IAP participants, but some mentioned a need for IT skills development. Despite demonstrating high levels of motivation, a number of these claimants discussed how hard it was to find work, citing the local labour market as limiting opportunities for them.

At the second wave of interviews, **older IAP participants showed a split in terms of their attitudes**. Some remained keen or were more eager to find work as time went on, were motivated to find (well) paid work and did not like being at home not working. However, a number of others noted it was becoming harder to maintain the same level of activity, energy, positivity and confidence in the face of rejection and a lack of communication from employers.

'It takes a lot of energy to maintain this positive discipline of sitting down for four hours, to do this every day, I mean it is harder than actually having a job.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

'I've got to that point now I've done both the workshops and, like I say, I had those interviews and I didn't get them, and from then on I've felt like on a little bit of a downward spiral, that I've done all this work and I still haven't got a job and I actually feel what's missing is like some support.'

(IAP participant, Female, 45+)

Interviewees of this age in the control group had mixed attitudes, with some remaining (mutedly) confident or positive, and others describing they felt at 'an all-time low' or facing the brunt of ageism in the labour market.

Again, the attitudinal findings suggest some traction with the assumptions within the theory of change – that as a result of IAP, participants would feel capable, motivated and confident. There was evidence of IAP participants being decisive and attending to quality in their job applications. However, the findings further reinforced the need for feedback (i.e. validation as envisaged by the theory of change), as well as support on resilience when applications were unsuccessful.

The age dimensions to attitudinal changes again meet with the assumption that distance travelled will vary upon claimants' individual starting points. For older participants, there was greater divergence both in attitudes at the outset and distance travelled. Those who were less confident in this age group when they commenced their claim required tailored support to help build and retain confidence and motivation.

7.3.3 Perceived benefits of IAP

As outlined, many participants believed that the IAP assisted them by delivering hints and tips on job search practices, however, it could prove harder for individuals to identify hard outcomes, behavioural changes or significant benefits. Instead, **participants tended to highlight the small, practical benefits that they had gained from the IAP**. This included information gleaned in relation to CVs, cover letters, and using the computer. Nevertheless, IAP participants drew a link between identified improvements (or absence of improvement) across skills, experiences and attitudes, and the effect on their wider strategy of job search and job-readiness. While exploring these findings by age did not reveal clear-cut distinctions, comparing claimants in receipt of JSA to those in employment identified some notable comparisons in terms of whether and how IAP contributed.

7.3.4 Perceived benefits for claimants still in receipt of JSA

Many **IAP participants who continued to be in receipt of JSA** had already engaged with IAP three-week support package by the first wave of interviews, and so were able to comment on the impact of both Jobcentre Plus and IAP support on their job search during those initial conversations. Satisfaction with support was divided between those that held the Jobcentre Plus offer in high esteem (in some cases, IAP in particular), those whose responses were more muted, but nonetheless who saw there was 'something for everyone' in IAP (confirming an assumption in the theory of change), and finally those who felt there was no additional value of engaging with activities that were seen as too basic, general or lacking in relevance.

Amongst those who held positive views, IAP support was believed to have improved job searches frequently through enhanced tools or strategies, in particular CVs, cover letters and speculative applications.

'Now I know what options are there, so I feel like it's broadened my options, so there's more chance of me finding jobs, especially with the speculative approach. I just never thought of emailing companies my CV and writing a cover letter saying that I wanted to work and to contact me if there's any vacancies and things like that. So that's been a big help.'

(IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

These 'small changes' were perceived as mechanisms which improved the overall quality or breadth of participants' job search, expanding the range of options at their disposal. Their accounts indicated that approaches could be diversified, or applications made more tailored and more 'fit for purpose'. Likewise, for some interviewees, factual information gained from the workshops had a similar effect. Suggestions concerning where or how to look for work had introduced participants to new opportunities, such as looking further afield, or considering a wider variety of occupations, and they felt that this expanded the likelihood of finding work. However, such an expansion was not universally welcomed; for example, one participant noted that they were expected to apply for roles which were too divergent in content.

'It's widened my job search definitely and it's motivated me to just keep on applying... [the most important thing has been] personalising your application actually and tailoring it for each job.'

(IAP participant, Female, 18.24)

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Alongside those who had, to a greater or lesser degree, found value in IAP activities, a number of participants instead felt them to be a 'waste of time' which they could more usefully have used applying for work. Such individuals said they had an in-depth knowledge of the industry in which they worked, or that they already were well-versed in a range of job search techniques. Where information was seen as basic or repetitive, individuals were especially unreceptive to the IAP support offer. Furthermore, a lack of success in the labour market devalued any positive impacts perceived by participants, limiting the perceived usefulness of the activities they were required to complete.

'I already know what most of the sites, quite a lot of sites to go on, so...But no, they probably won't help me. I already knew what sites to go on, I already...I know how to do job searches.'

(IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

'Like I say, I know my industry inside out pretty much. I know when there's likely to be jobs around and when there isn't.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

In the control group, the views of JSA claimants during the first wave of interviews were similarly mixed, but marginally more negative. Some individuals felt there had been a positive impact from the support they received as part of 'business as usual', and welcomed the input of suggestions of how to find work. However, these interviewees were less able to clearly articulate the nature of that positive impact, or the precise elements of Jobcentre Plus support that had led to this change as the IAP participant group had. More negatively others said it was highly unlikely Jobcentre Plus support could be effective or help to find work because it was too basic.

'I'd have given it a go, because more heads are better than one, so they might have thought of something that I hadn't.'

(Control, Female, 18-24)

'Unfortunately the Jobcentres are not aimed at people who have necessarily been in work all their lives or have been in executive posts.'

(Control, Female, 45+)

By the second wave of interviews, **perceptions on job search capability amongst a number of JSA claimants participating in the IAP appeared more positive than previously**. Some believed themselves to be better able to 'sell' themselves in their applications, and felt they were engaged in more activity to find work, which included individuals now looking at new sectors or alternative occupations (including those with lower levels of responsibility). As in the first wave of interviews the **advice, hints and tips they had received as part of IAP were cited as the primary drivers of this change**. However, others stressed that they would have, for example, updated their CV and submitted speculative applications regardless of Jobcentre Plus in general, or IAP in particular. These conceded that their job search may have improved, but they did not identify any additionality in the IAP or wider Jobcentre Plus support offer. Furthermore, there was some lack of clarity on whether an improved job search strategy impacted on either the likelihood of entering employment, or the skills to succeed in work.

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'I think it has helped me position myself better to be able to find a job.'

(IAP participant, Male, 45+)

'I think it hones the skills that you've already got, you know. There were a couple of hints and tips like I said you could follow up from workshop one.'

(IAP participant, Female, 45+)

Despite some positive trajectories, negative views persisted amongst JSA claimants taking part in IAP in the second round of interviews. Some of these remained broadly similar to those voiced in the first wave, coalescing around the lack of relevance of IAP content, particularly for those in professional roles. However, new concerns were also raised. For example, individuals noted their dissatisfaction with the lack of tailoring across IAP provision, explaining that the 'one size fits all' approach was inappropriate. In addition, some described how their motivation was lower after all the compulsory activities in IAP, and seeing no positive returns.

'I don't feel that anybody's really interested in me as a person finding a job. I mean I am, obviously I'm just a number aren't I, you know, but I think that's what's missing, it's building that rapport up with somebody that can keep you motivated, you know, you're doing a great job.'

(IAP participant, Female, 45+)

'Some aspects of it were they sort of opened me up to different ways of applying for work and what you should and shouldn't write and things like that but it can only help you so much I guess because, if you're like me and you don't have any previous experience, you can't really. I don't know, it makes it a lot harder.'

(IAP participant, Male, 18-24)

By the second wave interviews, JSA claimants in the control group were notably more negative than IAP participants on whether Jobcentre Plus had contributed to the job search. Individuals overwhelmingly stated that the activities they had undertaken as part of 'business as usual' support had made no difference to their capability to look for work.

Findings from those claimants who had transferred to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) (a small group) in the IAP participant or control groups suggested that those in the IAP participant group believed that while they were more informed about finding work as a result of IAP, it was not going to be the 'magic push' through which they would readily achieve an employment outcome. Members of the control group stated that Jobcentre Plus support was not useful, and they were looking for work prior to the help offered.

Perceived benefits for those in employment

For **IAP participants in employment** at the first wave of interviews, perceptions of Jobcentre Plus and IAP support were notably more negative than amongst those in receipt of JSA. Generally it was suggested that the offer had little relevance to them and there was no difference in their ability to find work as they had only claimed for a few days in some instances.

'The trouble I have with the Jobcentre in what I do is they just they can't find me work because it's absolutely impossible for them to do.'

(IAP participant, Male, 25-44)

Those in the control group who had found employment indicated that helpful support from Jobcentre Plus had been advice with self-employment and the New Enterprise Allowance.

In the second wave of interviews, **perceptions amongst employed individuals in the IAP participant group were more mixed than they had been previously** regarding any contribution of IAP to their job search and employment outcome. Positive impacts were now identified, and the ways in which IAP and Jobcentre Plus support was perceived to have made a difference were quite varied. As with those claiming JSA, this included improvements in terms of quality, related to applying the tips and hints gained during IAP (including tailoring of CVs). Likewise, interviewees also discussed having a better knowledge of the local area, and being more open to part-time or alternative employment. Where individuals had entered employment through personal contacts, they noted they would not have thought to ask, or would not have had the confidence to put themselves forward without the lessons learned from IAP. Some positive impacts were however not specific to IAP, as individuals also cited a combination of meetings with their Work Coach and Universal Jobmatch as drivers of expanded or improved job search.

'I personally think they helped me quite a lot and I feel a bit more confident applying for positions. I'm not saying I feel confident I'm going to get the position, but I feel more confident in applying for them now because there's so many positions that I wouldn't have even looked at twice.'

(IAP participant, Male, 25-44)

However, negative views persisted for some individuals, which were focused mainly on the inappropriateness or lack of sophistication of job search strategies that they were taught as part of IAP. Other concerns were raised about the apparent lack of support around work at home

'I think it was the first one, which was things like how to write a CV, how to...it was just very, very basic tasks. I don't know whether that was just like an introduction to the second workshop but I just found a lot of it to be useless.'

(IAP participant, Male, 25-44)

7.3.5 Factors that encourage or inhibit changes to take root

In terms of achieving these outcomes as well as behavioural and attitudinal changes, it was important to consider the levers to their achievement (i.e. what encouraged them), as well as factors that served to act as barriers (i.e. inhibit) to changes take root. Within the claimant research, there were perceived to be two key dimensions to this: health and disabilities, and local labour market conditions.

Implications of health conditions and disabilities

In all age groups during the first wave of interviews, some IAP participants discussed health conditions and disabilities that to greater or lesser degree affected their job searching or the type of work they were able to do. A small number of these also described having recently moved from ESA to JSA. Musculoskeletal and mental health problems were particularly common and believed to inhibit work-related activity.

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Segmenting this by age, **some participants aged 18 to 44** described experiences of mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder. These individuals described how these conditions could affect their motivation to find and to travel to work. Furthermore, a number discussed the fluctuating nature of their conditions, from manageable to severe, and how 'flare ups' could affect them in unanticipated ways. Their ability to effectively manage mental health problems was limited in their view by the long waiting lists for statutory cognitive support. In terms of support from Jobcentre Plus, when it came to these issues, a claimant described how they felt their Work Coach had been understanding, responsive and accommodating of their condition.

A number of participants also discussed how their experience of dyslexia impacted on both their job search (in terms of writing cover letters, for example) and also on completing the 'work at home' component of IAP. However, they felt that, particularly concerning the latter, Jobcentre Plus support had not been as extensive as they would wish, and their dyslexia had not been fully taken into consideration.

'I have dyslexia and they didn't, they didn't say like, "Oh if you've got any problems or come back in and we'll help you," and stuff like that.'

(IAP participant, Female, 18-24)

For those over the age of 25, musculoskeletal problems were more common. They believed this limited the particular types of duties and work they could do.

At the second wave of interviews, a small number of the IAP participants discussed how their mental health condition continued to be the primary obstacle affecting their job search and ability to work. One explained that the impact of their condition had prompted them to move to ESA, whilst another outlined a need for their Work Coach to take a more flexible, supportive and responsive approach in agreeing work-related activities. The desire amongst those with dyslexia, for flexible and responsive provision persisted in respect of the required work at home. Participants experiencing stress were concerned about the impact of anxiety attacks if they re-entered work, and there was a desire for greater access to cognitive behaviour therapy.

For the **older IAP participants (aged 45+)** a much broader range of health conditions and disabilities were cited during first wave interviews. These included visual impairments, alcoholism, caring responsibilities for family members with chronic illness and a greater incidence of musculoskeletal issues which needed time to heal and workplace adjustments to lighter duties. This older cohort did not conceive of Jobcentre Plus as an actual or potential source of support for health or other conditions.

In the control group, older claimants had similarly diverse health conditions. Individuals described how they felt unfit for manual work, or were not ready for work at all and were moving to ESA.

While the effect of health conditions and disabilities on employment was a concern for policymakers given the relatively poorer outcomes for this group of claimants generally, within the IAP theory of change none identified the potential effects of these. The key assumption that these claimants' experiences address was that everyone could derive some benefit from IAP. This did not appear to hold true as for many in this group their primary barrier was perceived to be their health which the IAP did not address. Moreover, where conditions were not fully understood or accommodated, this was a source of frustration

undermining the value of IAP. It may be that claimants in these circumstances required an addendum to IAP that considered the implications of ill-health for the return to work to ensure they understand the benefits of IAP engagement and can see it running in parallel to their particular circumstances. More firmly, improvements for those with dyslexia should be considered to ensure the IAP is fully accessible.

Labour market context

Claimants' views of how their local labour market affected their job search were often highly mixed, making it difficult to draw out common themes and experiences. For example, in the first wave of interviews with **younger IAP participants** highlighted concerns about working for agencies (including the lack of guaranteed hours) and the level of experience required to work in certain sectors. In the control group, younger claimants discussed how they saw limited opportunities for work in the local labour market, and they held similarly negative views of agencies.

Amongst **IAP participants aged 25 to 44**, these discussions were also wide-ranging. For this group, concerns encompassed the impact of recession, limited opportunities for specialised job roles and/or sectors and shift work being at odds with caring responsibilities. An example of capitalising on the labour market context was a participant who outlined how they had identified a skills shortage locally, and used this as the basis for retraining.

First wave interviews with the **older IAP participants** demonstrated greater consistency. This coalesced around: ageism amongst local employers, and the limited numbers of professional or managerial vacancies in the area (linked to sentiments that the local labour market lacked buoyancy). Likewise, older claimants in the control group believed that their age was acting against them, both in recruitment and also in retraining. Similarly the lack of higher-skilled jobs locally was considered to be an obstacle to finding work.

'A big side of it is age, I mean I'm 52 and I can feel it now. I'm not getting response I used to get when I was 30 or 40.'

(Control, Male, 45+)

Concerns about ageism in the local labour market continued to be perceived to inhibit changes amongst both IAP participant and control groups in the second wave of interviews, with some explaining that the earnings expectations or reluctance to accept zero-hours contracts of older adults may have led employers to prefer younger workers.

The IAP theory of change envisaged that local labour market context would be used to tailor the content of workshops, such as the number of agencies to be applied for being adapted, or the 90 minute travel distance being explained in varying ways according to local infrastructure. Policymakers, however, did not identify a distinct effect of the local labour market on the traction of IAP messages. Nevertheless, there were clear effects as with health, which when left unaddressed could mean key barriers (even if only perceived) were not tackled. These findings again suggest some further tailoring may be required to help individuals gain confidence in respect of taking jobs with low security (this group would be expected to continue applying IAP once in work in order to progress into a different job or advance in the current one), and in how to frame age more positively for employers as being older appeared to dent the confidence of older individuals which meant that IAP had less positive results.

7.4 Changed perceptions of Jobcentre Plus

The penultimate section in this chapter explores whether claimants' perceptions of the welfare system changed as a result of IAP participation. While not a central theme within the theory of change, the IAP was implemented at a time where Jobcentre Plus was undergoing a fundamental shift in its focus with the introduction of Universal Credit, and the theory of change acknowledged this, placing IAP in this context and drawing links between this cultural transformation and the coaching techniques that Work Coaches would use to facilitate IAP workshops and lead one-to-one meetings with claimants. As a consequence, this section traces shifts and changes in claimants' perceptions since the outset of their claim (see Chapter 5), which adds to the assessment of distance travelled.

7.4.1 Changed perceptions of staff attitudes

Those who perceived the most pronounced changes in Jobcentre Plus staff attitudes were those who had claimed previously and those whose expectations of the welfare system had been misinformed; these changed perceptions emerged early on in the claiming experience. However, there was a difference in the language used to describe the attitude of the Work Coach among this subset of the sample between the IAP participant and the control group such that those in the control group tended to use less positive language. **Those in the IAP participant group perceived a far more positive change in the attitudes of Work Coaches.** Many noticed a stark contrast between their previous and current experience claiming JSA. In particular, whereas previously participants' experiences of meetings with advisers were brief, not tailored and sometimes condescending, during their current claim, they explained that they had experienced far more empathy towards their situations. Many also highlighted the additional time they now spent with Work Coaches.

'She will take her time with me, it won't just be signing me off, she will listen, you know, and she spends twenty minutes with me just talking about everything.'

(IAP participant, Female, 18-24)

However, other claimants held negative perceptions of staff attitudes and believed that their Work Coaches showed little sympathy towards their individual situation. These experiences were not limited to those in the control group and were more likely to concern the personal style of the Work Coach and whether a rapport had been established between the claimant and the Work Coach.

7.4.2 Changed perceptions of Jobcentre Plus staff capabilities

When discussing the capability of the staff at Jobcentre Plus, claimants spoke about information made available by staff which increased their capability to find work. There was a widespread perception that Work Coaches were very capable and, where claimants had previous experience of claiming, Work Coaches were deemed more capable than before.

Some claimants involved in the IAP stated that they had not had high expectations of the information that Jobcentre Plus could offer at the outset but **were pleased by the information available at their interviews with Work Coaches and by the content of the workshops.**

'I wasn't really sure what to expect. Again I had this stereotype in my head that it wouldn't be very useful and it was just part of the process that I had to get through to be eligible for help. But it was, yes, I was pleasantly surprised'

(Treatment, Female, 18-24)

Those claimants who compared their previous to their current experience of claiming JSA were impressed by the amount of support and information available, and were confident in the Work Coaches' capability of making a tangible difference to their job search. Claimants generally felt confident in their Work Coaches' knowledge of the labour market, compared to their expectations or their previous experience. While this affected both claimants in the IAP participant and control group, it appeared more prevalent amongst those who had experience of IAP.

A small number of claimants perceived no change in the information and support available at Jobcentre Plus. Such perceptions were more common amongst the control group than the participant group.

However, some claimants explained how their perception of staff capabilities had changed from a positive to a negative view, between the Wave 1 and Wave 2 interviews. This sometimes occurred in the IAP participant group as a result of receiving little further support following the completion of the workshops. For example, some claimants, despite previously feeling positive about the support they had received, felt less supported by their ongoing review meetings. These negative views appeared to centre on whether Work Coaches were able to apply (or continue to apply) the coaching techniques envisaged by the IAP.

'The interacting part on the adviser's part has been rubbish'

(Treatment, Female, 25-44)

In sum, the data suggested that applying an IAP coaching style, and facilitating workshops and meetings through tailoring content meant that support was perceived as more personalised, and Work Coaches were perceived as more professional and capable. This in turn suggested the value of the new approach within Jobcentre Plus as well as of the IAP since this allowed Work Coaches opportunities to demonstrate their skills and knowledge, and to personalise content.

7.5 Behaviour change among claimants

The Department was keen to understand the behavioural effects of the IAP which would be demonstrated through the application in analysis of the behavioural insights framework COM-B (see Chapter 2). This would help to elucidate the intermediate outcomes from participation more clearly. A systematic exploration of the various interacting components that led to or inhibited claimant behavioural change as a result of the programme is thus next covered. This considers the elements of the IAP experience that most benefited or inhibited claimants on their journey towards becoming active, effective and persistent job seekers, as the policy intended.

Intensive Activity Programme trial evaluation: Claimant research

Through the research findings, it can be observed that for those participants who understood a need to further develop their job search skills, the **opportunities** provided by IAP to engage in this activity – providing they perceived the curriculum and/or the contribution of others in the workshops as relevant to their circumstances, and they were capable and had access to the necessary supporting infrastructure to fully participate – were effective in the short term in terms of increasing the motivation to look for work and deploy the techniques learned. Specifically, these participants perceived that the programme had been of value and that they had increased their chances of finding employment by:

- Engaging in a wider range of job search activities.
- Making applications to a higher and more professional standard, for instance, by better structuring and improving the content of their CVs, covering letters and company application forms.
- Having increased confidence in their **capabilities**, for example, through feedback from Work Coaches after completing IAP-related activities.
- Picking up helpful hints and tips and local labour market knowledge from other claimants.

However, the longitudinal interviews with participants showed that these intermediate benefits started to wane if individuals did not see any results from their job search. Those who were not getting very far through the application process (i.e. not shortlisted or invited to interview) or were not receiving feedback from employers expressed a need for external validation of their job search skills as well as encouragement to keep going. This feedback and encouragement would help either to confirm that their applications were appropriate and of a high standard, or would suggest further areas of improvement. It would also help in maintaining their motivation to persist in their job search and in exhibiting these behaviours by supporting the view that they would soon see a return to the effort they had made to find work, such as being invited to attend a job interview.

This type of long-term support was lacking; as the discussion on the theory of change highlighted, the assumption that IAP would be a continuous cycle of skills development and improvement for claimants – centred on skilled Work Coaches providing validation, advice and feedback – was not supported in practice. Had IAP been implemented in this way, the intermediate behavioural outcomes that the three-week intensive experience delivered for some claimants may have been greater and more sustained. As it stands, participants who initially benefited from the programme faced the risk of regressing because of a lack of feedback and validation.

In contrast, participants who were shortlisted to job interviews and could see that their job search skills were effective in terms of getting them through to the latter stages of the application process appeared to be more motivated to continue with these behaviours, given that they believed they would eventually lead to them finding employment. In these cases, employers provided the external validation necessary to sustain these outcomes.

8 Conclusions

This chapter draws together some key points and conclusions arising from the research into claimants' experience of the Intensive Activity Programme (IAP). It particularly considers how well the theory of change described this experience and it considers the behavioural effects of IAP, using an established behavioural insights model.

8.1 Key findings

- Many positive messages emerged from the claimant research. This indicated that the programme met expectations of receiving support at the outset of the claim. Many claimants were satisfied with their experience.
- The assumptions within the theory of change for the large part held true, particularly those concerned with the three-week intensive experience. These included the IAP being welcomed and viewed positively, that the workshops would deliver useful hints and tips in a setting conducive to their understanding, and that Work Coaches would be facilitative and ensure non-judgemental environments.
- A couple of areas were identified where the delivery of the IAP did not conform with the assumptions of the theory of change. These surrounded the nature of the sell in that some participants felt ill-prepared for workshops, and in the provision of ongoing review meetings beyond the initial intensive period.
- The IAP had immediate, positive behavioural effects on many participants which included:
 - Engaging in a wider range of job search activities.
 - Making applications to a higher and more professional standard, for instance, by better structuring and improving the content of their CVs, covering letters and company application forms.
 - Having increased confidence in their capabilities, for example, through feedback from Work Coaches after completing IAP-related activities.
 - Picking up helpful hints and tips and local labour market knowledge from other participants.
- However, sustained behavioural impacts could be at risk where participants did not receive feedback, either from external sources such as employers, or from Jobcentre Plus staff on the improvements to their job search approaches.
- Based on these findings, two key implications were discerned:
 - Some form of preparatory self-assessment could be introduced (or use of the Getting Started Handbook strengthened) to help participants prepare for the first workshop by exploring their strengths and weaknesses in relation to job search activities.
 - Greater emphasis should be placed on ongoing quality checking as part of regular, review meetings for those participants whose re-entry to employment took longer.

8.2 Main conclusions

An overall assessment of the IAP based on the claimant data has to be positive. The research indicated that participants believed an intensive experience at the outset of their claim would be of value and many wished to receive support and additional motivation in their job searches. Participants praised the positive attitudes of Work Coaches who were involved in their one-to-one meetings as well as in the workshops they experienced. Work Coaches engendered the open and negotiated approach that the programme envisaged. Potentially confirming the extent to which the Jobcentre Plus has transformed services, many participants reported their Work Coaches as capable professionals who were able to tailor the support they offered to personal needs.

To deepen the insights and conclusions that might be drawn on the basis of this research, two angles were probed. These were the adequacy of the theory of change and how far it described the experience of IAP; the second concerned mapping claimants' intermediate outcomes using behavioural insights. A final section of this chapter considers the implications of these findings.

8.3 Assessment of the assumptions of the theory of change

In order to reach an assessment it was worth considering the elements of the IAP which were most crucial for the desired effects to emerge, map these against how it was meant to work and then assess for data that confirmed or denied this.

Key features of the theory of change included assumptions that:

- The IAP would support individuals to become effective, active and persistent job seekers from the earliest stage of their claim. As such, it would accelerate entry into employment and the end of their claims.
- The IAP would assist claimants to find sustainable work, not just any job, and equip them with the skills to master transitions between employers. Participants would recall the IAP activities and would be effective in applying them in future situations.
- The planned provision would be tailored towards individuals' skills and capabilities and would encourage attention to quality of job seeking activities.
- Through engaging with IAP, individuals' confidence and ownership of their job search would increase and they would display more positive attitudes to the process – because they understood it better.
- While the curriculum would not be needed in full by all claimants, all would be able to benefit from some learning that it delivered.
- Work Coaches would be at the heart of IAP, emanating the Jobcentre Plus cultural transformation and leading coaching and quality-checking activities that encouraged continuous improvement in job search activities.
- During an Initial Work Search Interview Work Coaches would encourage claimants to want to engage with the IAP for the benefits they would gain. As such Work Coaches would make a sell and claimants would not need to be mandated to attend.

- Being part of IAP workshops would have several positive effects: workshops would deliver hints and tips on job seeking, being part of a group would reduce any sense of isolation in unemployment while also developing positive social norms.
- The workshop environment would foster collaboration and sharing of ideas and experiences, while networking space would allow claimants to continue discussions with peers after workshops.
- While few obstacles to the achievement of eventual outcomes were perceived, local labour market conditions, logistical issues and the adequacy of staff training were identified.

Whereas theory of change begins with the end-point that an intervention expects to achieve, this report has used the claimants' journey as a guiding narrative. As such, it perhaps makes sense to consider the early part of the claim first. In addition, it must be noted that the claimant research as formulated could not explore the longer-term outcomes and impacts expected by the theory of change; the intermediate outcomes and perceptions of the experience thus underpin this assessment.

8.3.1 Entry to the IAP and the sell

IAP participants often disclosed a sense of anxiety ahead of their initial Jobcentre Plus meetings which concerned how the welfare system operated as well as whether Jobcentre Plus would help them – many wanted support. For many participants, the Initial Work Search Interview (IWSI) was the opportunity for Work Coaches to set out the benefits of IAP. The sell was framed positively and included that individuals would pick up hints and tips on the job search. Where the sell indicated that the IAP would be a two-way relationship between the participant and Jobcentre Plus this engendered the most positive responses. This accorded well with the assumptions of the theory of change.

However, some participants did not recall the positive elements of the sell and instead were more concerned about their mandatory responsibilities as set out in the letter they received following the ISWI. For these, being part of IAP became inextricably linked to the activities they had to complete to meet the terms of their claim. In this respect, the letter appeared to have caused participants to view the IAP in a way that did not match the assumptions of the theory of change.

More generally, the evidence from this stage of the claim highlighted the importance of Work Coaches being specific about the benefits of the IAP workshops. While most participants indicated that with hindsight, attending had been useful, some said they had not understood this would be the case, and that they would not have attended without the knowledge that they could be subject to a sanction if they did not.

Overall the findings on the sell speak to its importance in creating the conditions in which IAP might be best received. There were indications that greater uniformity and consistency in the sell would increase the perceived benefits of the IAP amongst participants, and thus increase their likelihood of positive engagement with the programme.

8.3.2 The intensive experience

For IAP participants, the intensive experience commenced rapidly. This matched with concepts from the theory of change that the IAP would support effective job searches from the earliest stage of the claim. However, while most participants were content with the speed of the process, some believed that it had not allowed them sufficient time to consider the content of the Getting Started Handbook and prepare for the tasks they would be engaged in during workshops.

The workshop environments, as expected by the theory of change, included visual displays, buzz words and hints and tips that were drawn on during the workshops. Participants were referred to these items, and potentially the information they shared and discussed could be used to add to these displays. Room layouts fostered an atmosphere of being amongst equals, as did Work Coaches' focus on ensuring all participants contributed. This served to break down any sense of isolation as a result of unemployment and highlight how unemployment could affect people in all occupations and social situations. In addition, there was substantial evidence of information being shared between participants and some providing advice and support to others based on prior experiences. These were positive signs that the theory of change had captured the experience.

However, being part of a mixed group was not appreciated by all. Some would have wished to be grouped with people from similar sectors or with similar levels of experience. There was also evidence that participants believed that disclosing their own situations and capabilities was easier with individuals with whom they shared characteristics. These findings indicated that some customer segmentation could be appreciated although this was not anticipated by the theory of change.

Staff were viewed positively, in line with the theory of change and this was particularly the case when they tailored the workshops to participants' situations and circumstances and guided individuals to adapt the hints and tips received to their own contexts. Again, this evidence suggested that these assumptions behind the intervention held true.

An area where the theory of change lacked traction was in respect of the continuity of the workshop group – in terms of the transition between workshops 1 and 2, as well as continuing discussions beyond the workshop schedule. However, despite the theory of change not providing an accurate summation of this, there also appeared to be little impact from these differences. Some participants chose to continue discussions in public spaces such as cafes although this did not appear the norm. Others welcomed a changing workshop mix, as this could generate further insights into the job seeking process.

The area where the theory of change appeared most adrift from the participants' experience of IAP was in the delivery of the continuous, ongoing coaching that would help to sustain their motivation as well as encourage them to constantly attend to quality in their job seeking activities. Where participants did not receive it, the lack of coaching could undermine the value that they perceived IAP to have. This had the effect of making individuals question the value of the activities as well as to be critical of a box ticking exercise on behalf of Jobcentre Plus.

8.3.3 Distance travelled

The theory of change suggested that IAP activities would bring about behavioural change by increasing individuals' skill level or capability for their job search. Some practical benefits were clear within the claimant data, with individuals in the IAP participant group reporting

a wider range of gains than those in the control group. For example, IAP participants often said that their CVs, cover letters and applications were much improved, particularly following practice in form of work at home, and feedback on quality from Work Coaches.

As noted, some individuals in the control group identified similar areas of improvement, which suggested a focus on quality of the job search extended beyond the IAP and potentially related more to the cultural transformation of Jobcentre Plus services; this may be unproblematic since policy makers located the delivery of IAP within this context.

Several participants also drew a clear link between IAP activities, new information and an expanded job search. This encompassed new regions, new positions and new opportunities for work. Furthermore, some individuals were as or more positive about their search for work, in part on the back of new skills and strategies gained.

However, obstacles such as lack of local opportunity or success in the labour market and ageism amongst employers could demotivate individuals, and make them question their own skills and capability. This again indicated that the assumption in the theory of change – that there would be a continuation of IAP approaches until participants found work – was not embedded within the IAP implementation and would be particularly important for individuals who did not move swiftly into employment. Ongoing support and motivational techniques appeared the most important need amongst this group.

8.4 Supporting behavioural changes to emerge

In applying the COM-B framework (see Chapter 2), factors were identified that triggered behavioural outcomes among claimants in relation to their search for employment (see Chapter 7).

The effectiveness of IAP in shaping participants to become successful job seekers was highly individual and dependent on their varying levels of capability, their distance from the labour market, and their personal circumstances. However, it was notable that for participants who understood a need to further develop their job search skills, the opportunities provided by IAP to engage in this – where they perceived the curriculum and/or the contribution of others as relevant, and they were capable and had access to the necessary supporting infrastructure to fully participate – were effective in the short term to increasing the motivation to look for work and deploy the techniques learned.

However, these intermediate benefits could erode if individuals did not see immediate, labour market-related results from their job search nor receive any feedback and encouragement to validate their efforts. Strengthening the ongoing reviews following the intensive experience could help these to maintain their motivation to persist in their job search.

In contrast, participants who were shortlisted to job interviews and could see that their job search skills were effective in terms of getting them through to the latter stages of the application process appeared to be more motivated to continue with these behaviours; these could see the link with maintaining their effort and eventual employment. While most often employers provided the external validation necessary to sustain these outcomes, there were also instances where this validation was supplied by Work Coaches and this supplied an effective, alternative interim source.

8.5 Lessons learned

This section considers the lessons for future IAP implementation, which might also be formulated as good practice guidance. These include:

- Voluntary engagement in the IAP was not, as assumed by the theory of change, a highly crucial lever in terms of what participants were able to gain from the programme. Many expected that Jobcentre Plus would supply a provision such as IAP to support them and expected to have to do agreed tasks in return for their Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). However, wanting to take part remained valuable to positive engagement within the intervention.
- Seeking to achieve greater consistency in 'the sell' of the IAP could improve engagement. While some degree of personalisation was valuable within the sell, and certainly different Work Coach styles should be supported, it was also crucially important that participants understood the benefits of taking part since this increased their commitment to the IAP and their motivation to attend workshops. Increasing the emphasis on making a sell, as well as providing more guidance on the factors that this should promote, would be of significant benefit.
- There was space for greater personalisation in the referral process and this would accommodate the needs of participants with health problems and disabilities, learning disabilities and difficulties, caring responsibilities and anxiety-type disorders. Allowing these a little more control over the point at which they entered the programme would ease their access, thereby attaining greater engagement.
- Tailored advice during workshops and in meetings increased participants' views of Work Coach professionalism and competence but also increased the relevance and therefore the retention of IAP messages. Flexibility on the activities required increased the relevance to individuals' situations and circumstances, and this also increased relevance and traction of IAP messages.
- Validation and continued encouragement was important, but was a weak link in delivery. Whether IAP Work Coaches continued to provide the ongoing support or not, there needed to be attention to quality as well as to providing feedback and seeking to motivate participants, which not only helped them to improve their job seeking activities, but also to sustain effectiveness and persistence in this. It increased views of reciprocity in the relationship which again increased commitment amongst participants.
- Moreover, validation from Work Coaches was particularly important where participants did not receive feedback from other sources such as employers, or see their outcomes, such as chances of being shortlisted for interviews, improving. The evidence suggested that for those who remained unemployed for some time, this could be particularly effective in retaining the IAP messages and keeping the momentum established during the early part of their claim going.

8.6 Policy implications

Evidence from the other elements of the IAP evaluation was not available when this report was drafted. However, a conclusion that may be drawn on the basis of the claimants' qualitative data is that participants showed some considerable support for the IAP programme. There was an appreciation of an early offer of support and it appeared to be focused in such a way that many IAP participants perceived there would be benefits – and for many these were realised.

Moreover, the IAP intensive experience appeared to deliver results, although as anticipated these varied between individuals. Most participants, however, gained something from the experience and this included attitudinal changes such as increased confidence and motivation as well as harder outcomes in terms of improved understanding of how to present CVs, covering letters and application forms.

Despite these positive outcomes, there were also some indications that the IAP could be strengthened to ensure that maximal results were achieved with most participants. There were two elements to highlight on this:

- Firstly, many participants did not feel well informed at the outset of the IAP and while this did not deter their engagement, they could have been better prepared for the workshops, which may have better supported sustained outcomes. On this basis, a greater focus on self-assessment of job seeking skills may have helped them understand their own situation prior to workshops as well as what the workshops would cover. The Getting Started Handbook was meant to be issued to participants prior to attending the workshops for this purpose. The observational research and interview data suggested that this tool was not frequently issued or used, however. If more consistent access to this or other preparatory self-assessment were provided and used to help inform the delivery of the workshops and meetings, this could have increased the degree of personalisation, which in turn could have enhanced the perceived value of IAP and thus participants' motivation to engage with it. This would have also created greater certainty of behavioural changes taking root and being sustained.
- The second issue concerned the ongoing experience of those participants who did not readily enter work. Greater attention to providing coaching support to this group, to help sustain motivational and confidence gains, as well as to keep quality of job search activities high, would be valuable. Moreover, since the group had struggled to find work, consideration may also need to be given to any other obstacles to employment they faced, which might include advice on how to frame applications in light of age, health problems or disabilities.

Appendix A

Opt-out letter for attendees



Department
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10th June 2015

Research with new Jobseeker's Allowance claimants – Intensive Activity Programme

Dear

We would like to speak to you for a research study about the support offered by Jobcentre Plus and the experiences of new job seekers within the first few weeks of claiming. Your name has been selected from people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance in West Yorkshire and North East Yorkshire and the Humber, and we are contacting you for research purposes only.

The research has been commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions and is being carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES), an independent research organisation. Someone from IES may call you later this month/next month to ask if you are willing to take part in a face-to-face interview. If you choose to take part, the interview will last for approximately one hour and will take place at a location convenient to you. Any travel costs you incur can be claimed at the interview.

Not everyone who receives a letter/e-mail will be followed up to arrange an interview, so if you particularly wish to take part please get in touch on the contact details below to let us know as soon as possible.

Intensive Activity Programme trial evaluation: Claimant research

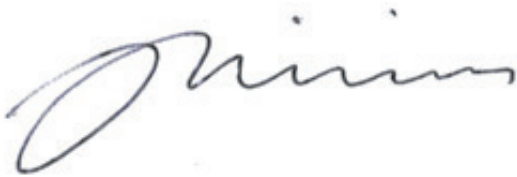
Any information you provide will be held in the strictest of confidence and will be handled securely throughout the study. The research findings will not identify you and no personal information will be shared with any third parties. Participation in this research is voluntary and will not affect any benefits or tax credits you are claiming, now or in the future. **Everyone who participates in an interview will be given a gift of £20 of high street shopping vouchers, as a small token of thanks. The gift will not affect your benefits.**

If you **do not** want to take part please let **IES** know by **Wednesday, 17th June**. You can contact Karen Patient on 01273 763460 or via email karen.patient@employment-studies.co.uk. Alternatively you can complete and return the opt-out form enclosed and return it in the pre-paid envelope provided.

If you have any questions about the research please contact Jonathan Buzzeo at IES on 01273 763405 or jonathan.buzzeo@employment-studies.co.uk, Joy Williams on 01273 763443 or joy.williams@employment-studies.co.uk, or DWP Project Manager Will Downes on [telephone number] or [email address].

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

Yours sincerely



Joy Williams
Institute for Employment Studies



Will Downes
DWP Project Manager

Appendix B

Project briefing sheet

Intensive Activity Programme trial evaluation

The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) is evaluating the Intensive Activity Programme (IAP), on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Testing this programme has involved some new job seekers in West Yorkshire and North Yorkshire and the Humber being asked to undertake extra work-related activities during the first few weeks of their claim, and others claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) as normal. DWP have allocated people to one of these groups randomly. To conduct this research, we were given a list of people who had made new claims to JSA over a certain time period and contacted people to see if they were willing to take part.

How you can help

IES would like to compare the experiences of people who have been asked to do the extra activities and people who are claiming JSA as normal. To do this we will be:

- Interviewing JSA claimants to find out about what activities people have been undertaking during the first few weeks of their claim to JSA and how they might help with finding work.
- Observing interviews and workshops at Jobcentre Plus to find out how these are working in practice.

Confidentiality

All information gathered during the interviews and observations will be kept confidential, and will not be shared with your Work Coach, Jobcentre Plus or DWP. People who take part will not be able to be personally identified from any published results. Taking part in the interviews and observations is voluntary, can be ended at any time and will not affect your benefits.

Contacts

If you would like any more information about this research, please do get in touch with one of the key contacts for the project:

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IES is an independent, apolitical, international centre of research and consultancy in employment policy and human resource management issues. IES is a not-for-profit organisation.

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Appendix C

Intensive Activity Programme claimant interview guide – Interview 1 – Treatment

Introduction

I work for the Institute for Employment Studies, an independent research organisation. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have asked us to do some research looking at the experience of new Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants in North Yorkshire and Humberside and West Yorkshire. As part of this we are looking at the support that people have had from their Work Coaches and any steps they have taken to get into work.

To conduct this research we were given a list of people who had made new claims to JSA over a certain time period and contacted people by letter to see if they were willing to take part. Taking part in the research is completely voluntary, it will not affect your benefits if you agree or decline to take part. You agreed with one of my colleagues that you would be happy to take part in an interview today, is that still ok?

All of the information we collect is held securely and will be anonymised. DWP and staff at the jobcentre will not know who has spoken to us.

As a thank you for taking part today you will receive shopping vouchers worth £20. I will ask you to sign a form to say you have received these at the end of the interview. This form is for our accounts department only. If we have to stop the interview for any reason – for example if you are no longer comfortable answering the questions, we will still give you the vouchers. The vouchers will not affect your entitlement to benefits.

The interview today will last around an hour. Is that ok?

I would like to record the interview – this ensures that I can pay attention to you rather than taking notes. The Dictaphones are password protected and encrypted so that no one else can access the recordings.

If you are ok with taking part today I have a form for you to sign which confirms your permission, please sign it now. Do you have any questions?

Turn on Dictaphone and repeat consent to record interview.

Background

1. Can we start by getting a bit of background about yourself? What is your work situation at the moment? (make a note if they have signed off JSA) What kind of work have you done in the past? What level (broadly, i.e. school college, university) of qualification do you have? How long ago did you make your claim to JSA?

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2. Why did you claim JSA? Were there any alternatives?
3. Have you ever claimed Jobseeker's Allowance before? If yes, when was this?

At the beginning of the claim

Researchers – it is important to keep to time in this section to allow adequate time for later questions

I would like to begin by talking about when you first made this most recent claim to benefit, so we can see if anything has changed over time.

4. How ready for work did you feel when you first made this most recent claim to Jobseeker's Allowance? Prompt – some people are ready to get straight back into work, others may have come off sickness benefits/Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and so want some time to get job ready, were you ready to go or need time? Did you want to work, were you able to work? **Researcher note to keep this answer focused on when they first contacted – will check later on how they feel now)**
5. When you started your most recent benefits claim, what type of work were you looking for? Why were you seeking this type of work? How quickly did you think you would find work?
6. What methods for looking for work did you intend to use when you first made your claim to benefit? Probe for use of agencies, application forms, asking around their networks.
 - a. How easy/difficult did you find it to make job applications? What was easy/difficult about it? Probe: ICT and basic skills here as appropriate.
7. When you first made your new claim, how receptive to support were you at that time? Were you looking for support with looking for a job or did you think you would be able to do it on your own?

Researchers – please use the additional sheet 'Skills Score' here.

8. Can you please rank the following by how you felt when you first made your new claim (so before you met face-to-face with a Work Coach for the first time). 5 is very confident about, 1 is not at all confident with.
 - a. Were there any of these that you were looking to improve? Was there anything else you wanted to improve that isn't mentioned on this list?
 - b. **(Researcher note – must ask so can track at second interview).** If I were interviewing you for a job right now – what skills would you say you could bring to that employer? You could use the skills scoring sheet you have just done to help you answer this.
9. When you first made your new claim, did you feel capable of learning new job knowledge and/or skills?

Contact with the jobcentre

10. What sorts of contact have you had with the jobcentre so far? Check for interviews with Work Coaches, workshops and telephone calls from Work Coaches.

Researchers – adapt the timing of the following sections depending on how many meetings and workshops they have been to, if lots cut the highlighted questions

First interview with Work Coach

I would now like to focus on the first interview you had with a Work Coach at the jobcentre, this appointment is called the initial Work Search Interview. They are 30-40 minutes long and at this meeting you set a 'Claimant Commitment'.

11. Can you briefly tell me about what you talked about at that first meeting (you do not have to divulge anything sensitive to me).
- Were you asked to take anything to that meeting? Do you know why? Did you take it?
 - Do you remember the name of your Work Coach?
12. What did you think of your Work Coach? Were they helpful? Did you feel as if you were in capable hands?
- What kind of language and/or tone did they use to speak to you? For example friendly or forceful.
 - What one word would you use to describe your Work Coach?
13. Did you think you were making a commitment when you went to the first meeting with a Work Coach? To whom or what?
14. Thinking now about the 'Claimant Commitment' document, why did you sign it? **(Researcher note this is the new approach to the Jobseekers Agreement – a document that sets out what steps the individual will take to prepare or look for work.)** Did you have an input into your Claimant Commitment? Do you feel like it reflects what you are willing and able to do?
15. What did you think of the activities that happen with new job seekers when they were described to you?
- What was described? **How was IAP 'sold' to you?**
 - Were they relevant to you? Were they suitable to your circumstances?
 - Were there any benefits that you could see from these activities?
 - Was there anything that put you off? What and why?
16. What was most attractive? What was least attractive?
17. Were you given any tasks to complete? What were they? Did they link to your original job searching goals?

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18. How were they agreed on? How did you feel about being given tasks to do?
19. Will you do/Have you done them? Have you had any feedback from the Work Coach – how did that happen, what did they say?

First workshop

20. How soon after this first meeting was your first workshop? What did you think of that gap? Probe for too soon, not quick enough.
21. Did you attend?
 - a. **If no** – Why did you not attend? Have you attended another one since?
 - b. **If no** – Why not? Has anything happened as a consequence of you not attending?
 - c. **If no** – At that time, did you think that the other people who were invited to the workshop were going to attend?
22. Why did you attend? Was it a positive decision – you hoped to get something out of it, or a negative one – wanted to avoid being penalised/worried what would happen if you didn't?
23. What topics were talked about at the first workshop? Did you learn anything?
24. How well did the Work Coach facilitate or lead the workshop?
 - a. Did they steer the discussions? How?
 - b. Were they helpful? Did you feel as if you were in capable hands?
 - c. What kind of language did they use to speak to you and the group? For example friendly or forceful.
 - d. What one word would you use to describe the Work Coaches who facilitated the workshop?
25. What did you think of the workshop and being there with other job seekers?
26. How did you feel about sharing information about yourself in front of the group?
27. Did you gain anything from the other job seekers who were there?
 - a. Probe for sharing information about the local labour market such as local employers who were recruiting or how they recruit, agencies to use or avoid, experiences they had with job searching or employment.
28. Do you think the others gained anything from you?
 - a. Probe for sharing information about the local labour market such as local employers who were recruiting or how they recruit, agencies to use or avoid, experiences they had with job searching or employment.
29. Did the other people at the workshop engage with the Work Coaches who were leading the workshop? Did you get the impression any of them were there unwillingly?

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30. Did you think you were making a commitment when you went to the first workshop? To whom or what?
31. Were you given any tasks to complete? What were they? Did they link to your original job searching goals?
32. How were they agreed on? How did you feel about being given tasks to do?
33. Will you do/Have you done them? Have you had any feedback from the Work Coach – how did that happen, what did they say?
34. What one word would you use to describe the workshop?
35. How easy was it for you to attend?
 - a. Prompt – were there any issue for example with childcare, travel arrangements, understanding where/when to attend?
36. *If not covered:* Have you attended any other meetings at the jobcentre or had any phone calls from the staff (about the work search activities rather than their claim to benefit)?
 - a. Were these meetings/calls with the same Work Coach as your first interview/workshop?
37. If yes – Please tell me about these. Probe for what type of contact (telephone, face-to-face), what was discussed, any feedback provided by Work Coach.

If attended second workshop go to Q39, if not go to Q54

Second workshop

I now have some questions about the second workshop that are very similar to the questions I asked about the first workshop:

38. How soon after the first workshop was your second workshop? What did you think of that gap? Probe for too soon, not quick enough.
39. Did you attend?
 - a. **If no** – Why did you not attend? Have you attended another one since?
 - b. **If no** – Why not? Has anything happened as a consequence of you not attending?
 - c. **If no** – Do you think all the other people who were invited attended the workshop?
40. Why did you attend? Was it a positive decision – you hoped to get something out of it, or a negative one – wanted to avoid being penalised/worried what would happen if you didn't?
41. How did you feel about being asked to attend a second workshop?
42. What topics were talked about at the second workshop? Did you learn anything?

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43. How well did the Work Coach facilitate or lead the workshop?
 - a. Did they steer the discussions? How?
 - b. Were they helpful? Did you feel as if you were in capable hands?
 - c. What kind of language did they use to speak to you and the group? For example friendly or forceful.
 - d. What one word would you use to describe the Work Coaches who facilitated the workshop?
44. Was it broadly the same people in the second workshop as you first? What did you think of that?
45. Did you gain anything from the other job seekers who were there?
 - a. Probe for sharing information about the local labour market such as local employers who were recruiting or how they recruit, agencies to use or avoid, experiences they had with job searching or employment.
46. Do you think the others gained anything from you?
 - a. Probe for sharing information about the local labour market such as local employers who were recruiting or how they recruit, agencies to use or avoid, experiences they had with job searching or employment.
47. Did the other people at the workshop engage with the Work Coaches who were leading the workshop? Did you get the impression any of them were there unwillingly?
48. Were you given any tasks to complete? What were they? Did they link to your original job searching goals?
49. How were they agreed on? How did you feel about being given tasks to do?
50. Will you do/Have you done them? Have you had any feedback from the Work Coach – how did that happen, what did they say?
51. By the end of the workshop, how did you feel about being asked to attend two workshops?
52. What one word would you use to describe the workshop?
53. How easy was it for you to attend?
 - a. Prompt – were there any issue for example with childcare, travel arrangements, understanding where/when to attend?
54. Were you aware that in certain circumstances benefit can be affected if job seekers fail to take steps to look for work? Was this mentioned to you by a Work Coach during this claim? Has this happened to you? If you had been required by the jobcentre to do any of the activities you have done, how would it have affected you i.e. motivation, attitude?

Reflections so far

55. Having taken part in a few meetings now, what do you think of the service that is being offered by the Work Coaches at the jobcentre? Were there any elements you particularly enjoyed or found useful?
56. Have you had any feedback on the tasks you were agreed to complete?
57. How does what you have experienced do far compare with what you were told about at your first meeting?
58. Have your views on the job options available to you changed since you first made your benefits claim?
59. Has what you have done as a result of contacting the jobcentre made a difference to your chances of finding work?
 - a. If a positive effect – do you think this will be a lasting effect?
60. **If claimed JSA before** – How does your experience over the last few weeks compare to the first few weeks of previous claims that you have made?
 - a. Probe on, level of help from Jobcentre Plus staff, information they were given, usefulness of the activities, level of activity they were expected to undertake, attitude of the Work Coach, language that the Work Coach used, anything else they noted was different.
61. I asked you earlier how job ready you felt when you first contacted the jobcentre, how do you feel now?
 - a. Probe: Is this due to the support provided? Any particular factor that really helped this?

If signed off JSA

62. You mentioned at the beginning of the interview that you are no longer claiming JSA, why is that?
63. **If found a job** – How did you find out about the job you have – jobcentre, own contacts, advertisement?
 - a. Did anything about your recent claim to JSA help you to get this job? Probe for result of specific activity such as registering with agencies, by product of activities such as increased motivation, a reaction to the expectations placed on job seekers, or something else.
 - b. Would you say this is a long-term job or a 'will do for now' job? How long will the job last?
 - c. If the job doesn't last, what will you do? Probe for looking for work, contacting jobcentre and in what order they would do things.
64. **If claiming another benefit** – What prompted the change in benefit? Did anything about your responsibilities under JSA make you feel like it wasn't the right benefit for you?

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Demographics and close

65. I would like to record some information about you so that when we are analysing the interviews we can see if there are any similarities between different types of people:
- a. Gender
 - b. Age group
 - c. Ethnic group
 - d. Highest qualification
 - e. Most recent job and when
 - f. Health problems or disability
 - g. Caring responsibilities
 - h. Most recent claim to JSA (prior to this one) [if not captured at start of interview]
66. That is the end of my questions, is there anything else you would like to add about your recent experience of claiming JSA?

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us.

Now you know a bit more about the types of information we are interested in I'd like to ask if you would be willing to participate in another interview, this time by phone. We would like to speak to you again in one month's time to see how things may have changed for you during that time and reflect on any difference that the jobcentre has made to you.

The next interview would be a bit shorter, around 30 minutes. You would receive a voucher as a thank you for taking part, £15 as we will take less time than today. The interview will be arranged at a time that suits you, for example if you are working we could speak in the evening.

You can say yes today and still change your mind when we re-contact you. I need to collect some contact details so that we can get back in touch.

Get verbal agreement, turn off Dictaphone and fill in forms.

Appendix D

Intensive Activity Programme claimant interview guide – Interview 2 – Treatment

Introduction

You will remember that I/a colleague [adapt wording throughout] interviewed you in July about your early experiences on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and the intensive Activity Programme (IAP) workshops. Although I/my colleague will have explained the purpose of the research then I will recap that information for you now.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have asked us to do some research looking at the experience of new JSA claimants in North Yorkshire and Humberside and West Yorkshire. As part of this we are looking at the support that people have had from their Work Coaches and any steps they have taken to get into work. To do this research we interviewed a sample of people who had all made a claim to benefit at during the same period, or who had taken part in the IAP workshops in July. We are now following up with those people to see what has been happening since July with their claim to benefit, encounters with the Jobcentre and how work searching activities have been going. We are also interested in whether you have found any work.

As with the information from the first interview, all of the information we collect is held securely and will be anonymised. The interview is strictly confidential. DWP and staff at the jobcentre will not know who has spoken to us, and the research will not identify you.

As a thank you for taking part today you will receive shopping vouchers worth £15. At the end of the interview I will take an address for you where we will send the vouchers. There will be a receipt form in with the vouchers and it is important that you send that back to us. This form is for our accounts department only. If we have to stop the interview for any reason – for example if you are no longer comfortable answering the questions, we will still give you the vouchers. The vouchers will not affect your entitlement to benefits.

The interview today will last up an hour. Is that ok?

I would like to record the interview – this ensures that I can pay attention to you rather than taking notes. The Dictaphones are password protected and encrypted so that no one else can access the recordings.

Turn on Dictaphone and get verbal consent to proceed and record the interview.

Researchers – it is important to read through the transcript of the last interview and check the spread sheet to see where in IAP they were up to at the last interview

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Update on circumstances

Last time we spoke, you were claiming JSA and you had (use whichever is relevant)

- Attended 1 of the 2 IAP workshops
 - Attended both IAP workshops
 - Not yet attended the IAP workshops
1. (if relevant) Did you go on to attend both IAP workshops? If not, why not?
 2. What is your situation at the moment?
 - a. Are you claiming benefits, if so which? Has this been continual since we last spoke?
 - b. Are you in work? When did this start? Gather brief details about work (type of work, full/part time, permanent/temporary, locality/travel distance etc).
 - c. Have you had a job that has now finished?

If not working:

3. What kind of work are you looking for – has this changed since we last spoke?
4. What are you doing to look for work? How long do you spend on job search activities each day/week?

If had a job but now unemployed:

5. When you returned to the Jobcentre, were you allocated to the same Work Coach as before?
6. Did the IAP restart from the point at which you left it? [Tailor prompts as appropriate] e.g. by which I mean, did you have to complete the workshops or tasks that you hadn't done previously?

Further IAP activity since Wave 1

First workshop

ASK if not covered in research interview 1

Soon after your IWSI (Initial Work Search Interview) with a Work Coach they arranged for you to attend a workshop at the jobcentre. [If prompt needed] This covers application forms, CVs and references, interview skills.

7. Did you attend the first time it was booked for you?
 - a. **If no** – Why did you not attend? Have you attended another one since?
 - b. **If no** – Why not? Has anything happened as a consequence of you not attending?
 - c. **If no** – At that time, did you think that the other people who were invited to the workshop were going to attend?

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8. How easy was it for you to attend?
 - a. Prompt – were there any issue for example with childcare, travel arrangements, understanding where/when to attend?
9. How much did you know about what the workshop was for or what it would cover?
10. Why did you attend? Was it a positive decision – you hoped to get something out of it, or a negative one – wanted to avoid being penalised/worried what would happen if you didn't?
11. Did you learn anything from the workshop?
 - a. Did you gain anything from the other job seekers who were there? **Probe for sharing information about the local labour market such as local employers who were recruiting or how they recruit, agencies to use or avoid, experiences they had with job searching or employment.**
12. How well did the Work Coaches facilitate or lead the workshop?
 - a. Did they steer the discussions? How?
 - b. Were they helpful? Did you feel as if you were in capable hands?
 - c. What kind of language did they use to speak to you and the group? For example friendly or forceful.
 - d. What one word would you use to describe the Work Coaches who facilitated the workshop?
13. What did you think of the workshop and being there with other job seekers?
 - a. How did you feel about sharing information about yourself in front of the group?
 - b. Did the other people at the workshop seem 'like you' in anyway, did you have things in common such as age or employment background? What did you think of this?
 - c. If they were different, how did you feel about that, would you have preferred to be with a group similar to yourself?
14. Do you think the others gained anything from you?
 - a. Probe for sharing information about the local labour market such as local employers who were recruiting or how they recruit, agencies to use or avoid, experiences they had with job searching or employment
15. Did the other people at the workshop engage with the Work Coaches who were leading the workshop?
16. People are given tasks to complete after the workshop, have you done them?
 - a. Have you had any feedback from the Work Coach – how did that happen, what did they say? Was it useful for your job searching?
17. What one word would you use to describe the workshop?

Second workshop

ASK if not covered in research interview 1

I would like to ask you about the second IAP workshop. This was probably arranged shortly after I interviewed you last time. [If prompt needed], this workshop tends to cover using the internet to look for work, making speculative approaches to employers, using recruitment agencies and creating a work search diary

18. Did you attend the first time it was booked for you?
 - a. **If no** – Why did you not attend? Have you attended another one since?
 - b. **If no** – Why not? Has anything happened as a consequence of you not attending?
19. How easy was it for you to attend?
 - a. Prompt – were there any issue for example with childcare, travel arrangements, understanding where/when to attend?
20. How much did you know about what the workshop was for or what it would cover?
21. Why did you attend? Was it a positive decision – you hoped to get something out of it, or a negative one – wanted to avoid being penalised/worried what would happen if you didn't?
22. Did you learn anything from the workshop?
 - a. Did you gain anything from the other job seekers who were there? Probe for sharing information about the local labour market such as local employers who were recruiting or how they recruit, agencies to use or avoid, experiences they had with job searching or employment.
23. How well did the Work Coaches facilitate or lead the workshop?
 - a. Did they steer the discussions? How?
 - b. Were they helpful? Did you feel as if you were in capable hands?
 - c. What kind of language did they use to speak to you and the group? For example friendly or forceful.
 - d. What one word would you use to describe the Work Coaches who facilitated the workshop?
24. What did you think of the workshop and being there with other job seekers?
 - a. Was it broadly the same people in the second workshop as you first? What did you think of that?
 - b. How did you feel about sharing information about yourself in front of the group?
 - c. Did the other people at the workshop seem 'like you' in anyway, did you have things in common such as age or employment background? What did you think of this?

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- d. If they were different, how did you feel about that, would you have preferred to be with a group similar to yourself?
25. Do you think the others gained anything from you?
- a. Probe for sharing information about the local labour market such as local employers who were recruiting or how they recruit, agencies to use or avoid, experiences they had with job searching or employment.
26. Did the other people at the workshop engage with the Work Coaches who were leading the workshop?
27. People are given tasks to complete after the workshop, have you done them? Have you had any feedback from the Work Coach – how did that happen, what did they say? Was it useful for your job searching?
28. What one word would you use to describe the workshop?
29. By the end of the workshop, how did you feel about being asked to attend two workshops?
30. Were you aware that in certain circumstances benefit can be affected if job seekers fail to take steps to look for work? Was this mentioned to you by a Work Coach during this claim? Has this happened to you? If you had been required by the jobcentre to do any of the activities you have done, how would it have affected you i.e. motivation, attitude?

After the workshops

You might remember that when you started your JSA claim you were assigned to the IAP (Intensive Activity Period). This involves some workshops where you discuss job search skills with a Work Coach and other claimants, and you are asked to carry out some tasks related to your job search. I'd like to ask you about the time after you did the workshops.

31. Did you continue to see the same Work Coach (prompt with name) after you had done all of the tasks on IAP? Some people are referred back to sign on with the 'mainstream Work Coaches and assistant Work Coaches
32. If yes, what did you think of this? Was it useful? Would you have preferred to move to another Work Coach? Why?
33. If not, were other staff at the Jobcentre aware of the activities that you had done as part of IAP? Did they follow up on them? For example, did they check to see if you had any response on speculative applications?
- a. If not followed up on tasks, do you think this Work Coach should have followed up on the IAP activities you did? Why/why not?
 - b. Do you see the same person each time you go to meetings at the Jobcentre? How would you describe that relationship?

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34. **If now working with a non-IAP Work Coach** – Are you able to meet with the IAP Work Coach if you want any further help or information? If yes, have you taken this option up – why/why not?
- How have you found the service from this/these other Work Coach(es)?
 - Would you have wished to continue seeing the IAP Work Coach? Why/why not.
 - How would you describe the style of the IAP Work Coach compared to the non-IAP Work Coach? Which style do you prefer?
35. Did you get any further feedback on the activities you had undertaken? From who?
36. Does your Work Coach ask what you have been doing to look for work? Do they give you feedback on your approaches to finding work? Would you say they have checked the quality of your job seeking activities? If yes, how useful has this been to your job search goals?
37. Do/have staff encourage you to think about different approaches to job seeking? Do they encourage you to improve on the things you are doing to find work?
38. From your point of view, has there been any connection between the activities you did in the workshops, and your ongoing meetings with jobcentre plus staff?
- What, if anything, have you put in action from the workshops?

Views on IAP

39. Now that some time has passed since you undertook the Intensive Activity Programme, how do you feel about it? How useful was it?
- Do you think it will/did help you find a job?
 - Which part of it was most useful – the first workshop; the second workshop; or the activities that you had to complete? Why?
40. What do you think of the service that is being offered by the Work Coaches at the jobcentre? Were there any elements you particularly enjoyed or found useful?
41. Was there anything about the style of the Work Coach and the way they interacted with you that helped you or made you think more about your job search skills?
42. How does what you have experienced so far compare with what you were told about at your IWSI/initial meeting?
43. Have your views on the job options available to you changed since you first made your benefits claim?
- If yes, explore how and why. If not volunteered, did your Work Coach or the IAP play a role in your changing view of job options?
44. Has what you have done as a result of contacting the jobcentre made a difference to your chances of finding work?
- To what extent has the support from the jobcentre made a difference to your chances of finding work

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45. **(If not covered in earlier section on workshops)** Did you learn anything? From the Work Coaches, the materials or other job seekers? What did you learn?
- Are you using anything you learnt? If yes, How?
 - If a positive effect – In what way? Do you think you will apply the same knowledge/skill again in the future? Do you think this will be a lasting effect?
46. **If claimed JSA before** – How did your experience during IAP compare to the first few weeks of previous claims that you have made?
- Probe on, level of help from Jobcentre Plus staff, information they were given, usefulness of the activities, level of activity they were expected to undertake, attitude of the Work Coach, language that the Work Coach used, anything else they noted was different
 - If not covered – What had the greatest influence? Probe on Workshops, activities or the nature of meetings
47. **If not claimed JSA before** – As this is your first time claiming JSA, what do you think of the service being offered by the Jobcentre?
- Probe on, level of help from Jobcentre Plus staff, information they were given, usefulness of the activities, level of activity they were expected to undertake, attitude of the Work Coach, language that the Work Coach used, anything else they noted was different.
 - Did you expect that Jobcentre Plus would offer these services/this support to you?
48. I asked you earlier how job ready you felt when you first contacted the jobcentre, how do you feel now?
- Probe: Is this due to the support provided? Any particular factor that really helped this?
49. Have you found that your job searching activities increased as a result of IAP?
- Would you say they have improved?

People who have worked since last interview

Ask Q50 in relation to each job entry achieved since last interview

50. Did any of the activities you undertook for IAP help you with securing this job?
- For example; updating your CV, practicing application form questions, travel planning, interview advice, speculative approaches to employers
 - If yes, in what way?
51. If you were facing unemployment again, what would you do? **Researchers – we don't want to prompt here as don't want to lead the respondent but answers expected here could include contact the Jobcentre about claiming, start putting up to date CV together, start job searching during the notice period.**

Follow-up questions

Researchers – please check transcript for how ready for work they were at the end of the last interview and use as prompt for next question

52. How ready for work do you feel at the moment? How does that differ from last time do you think when you said to us you were...?
53. You may remember last time we asked you to fill in a skills scoring sheet that asked you how confident you were in your skills. I would like to go through that list again with you now to see if things have changed. 5 is very confident about, 1 is not at all confident with:
- a. Preparing an effective CV
 - b. Making career decisions
 - c. Providing useful references
 - d. Making good contacts for work
 - e. Writing a covering letter
 - f. Travelling to get to work
 - g. Registering with agencies
 - h. Completing application forms
 - i. Doing well in job interviews
 - j. Using the internet to look for work
 - k. Applying for jobs that were not advertised

If appropriate; this is different from last time, why do you think that is?

54. These next questions are ranked 'Not at all like me' to 'Very like me':
- a. Motivated (to find work and in general)
 - b. Committed
 - c. Good communicator
 - d. Enthusiastic
 - e. Confident (about work and in general)
 - f. Responsible
 - g. Able to complete tasks and set my own goals

If appropriate; this is different from last time, why do you think that is?

55. **(Researcher note – must ask so can track back to first interview)** If I were interviewing you for a job right now – what skills would you say you could bring to that employer? You could use the skills scoring sheet you have just done to help you answer this.

Intensive Activity Programme trial evaluation: Claimant research

56. Overall, what have you enjoyed and found useful about the Intensive Activity Programme? What did you not enjoy and what has not been useful?
57. What, if anything, would you change about the Intensive Activity Programme (workshops, meetings or curriculum)?
 - a. Would you prefer that the IAP was more digital? For example, that handouts could be emailed to you or the paperwork could be completed electronically? Why/why not
58. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank and close

Appendix E

Skills scoring sheet

How did you feel when you made your new claim? Please tick one box for each question

	Not at all confident	Not very confident	Neither confident/not	Quite confident	Very confident
Job search related					
Preparing an effective CV					
Making career decisions					
Providing useful references					
Making good contacts for work					
Writing a covering letter					
Travelling to get to work					
Registering with agencies					
Completing application forms					
Doing well in job interviews					
Using the internet to look for work					
Applying for jobs that were not advertised					

Attributes	Not at all like me	Not very like me	Quite like me	Very like me
Motivated (to find work and in general)				
Committed				
Good communicator				
Enthusiastic				
Confident (about work and in general)				
Responsible				
Able to complete tasks and set my own goals				

Appendix F

Intensive Activity Programme claimant interview guide – Interview 1 _ Control

Introduction

I work for the Institute for Employment Studies (IES), we are an independent research organisation. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have asked us to do some research looking at the experience of new Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants in North Yorkshire and Humberside and West Yorkshire. As part of this we are looking at the support that people have had from their Work Coaches and any steps they have taken to get into work.

To conduct this research we were given a list of people who had made new claims to JSA over a certain time period and contacted people by letter to see if they were willing to take part. Taking part in the research is completely voluntary, it will not affect your benefits if you agree or decline to take part. You agreed with one of my colleagues that you would be happy to take part in an interview today, is that still ok?

All of the information we collect is held securely and will be anonymised. DWP and staff at the jobcentre will not know who has spoken to us.

As a thank you for taking part today you will receive shopping vouchers worth £20. I will ask you to sign a form to say you have received these at the end of the interview. This form is for our accounts department only. If we have to stop the interview for any reason – for example if you are no longer comfortable answering the questions, we will still give you the vouchers. The vouchers will not affect your entitlement to benefits.

The interview today will last around an hour. Is that ok?

I would like to record the interview – this ensures that I can pay attention to you rather than taking notes. The Dictaphones are password protected and encrypted so that no one else can access the recordings.

If you are ok with taking part today I have a form for you to sign which confirms your permission, please sign it now. Do you have any questions?

Turn on Dictaphone and repeat consent to record interview.

Intensive Activity Programme trial evaluation: Claimant research

Background

1. Can we start by getting a bit of background about yourself? What is your work situation at the moment? (make a note if they have signed off JSA) What kind of work have you done in the past? What level (broadly, ie school college, university) of qualification do you have? How long ago did you make your claim to JSA?
2. Why did you claim JSA? Were there any alternatives?
3. Have you ever claimed JSA before? If yes, when was this?

At the beginning of the claim

Researchers – it is important to keep to time in this section to allow adequate time for later questions

I would like to begin by talking about when you first made this most recent claim to benefit, so we can see if anything has changed over time.

4. How ready for work did you feel when you first made this most recent claim to JSA? Prompt – some people are ready to get straight back into work, others may have come off sickness benefits/Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and so want some time to get job-ready, were you ready to go or need time? Did you want to work, were you able to work? **Researcher note to keep this answer focussed on when they first contacted – will check later on how they feel now**

Researchers – please use the additional sheet ‘Skills Score’ here.

5. Can you please rank the following by how you felt when you first made your new claim (so before you met face-to-face with a Work Coach for the first time). 5 very confident about, 1 is not at all confident with.
 - a. Were there any of these that you were looking to improve? Was there anything else you wanted to improve that isn't mentioned on this list?
 - b. (Researcher note – must ask so can track at second interview) If I were interviewing you for a job right now – what skills would you say you could bring to that employer? You could use the skills scoring sheet you have just done to help you answer this.
6. When you first made your new claim, did you feel capable of learning new job knowledge and/or skills?
7. When you started your most recent benefits claim, what type of work were you looking for? Why were you seeking this type of work? How quickly did you think you would find work?
8. What methods for looking for work did you intend to use when you first made your claim to benefit? Probe for use of agencies, application forms, asking around their networks.
 - a. How easy/difficult did you find it to make job applications? What was easy/difficult about it? Probe: ICT and basic skills here as appropriate.

9. When you first made your new claim, how receptive to support were you at that time? Were you looking for support with looking for a job or did you think you would be able to do it on your own?

Contact with the jobcentre

10. What sorts of contact have you had with the jobcentre so far? Check for interviews with Work Coaches, group information session and telephone calls from Work Coaches.

Researchers – adapt the timing of the following sections depending on how many meetings and workshops they have been to, if lots cut the highlighted questions

First interview with Work Coach

I would now like to focus on the first interview you had with a Work Coach at the jobcentre, this appointment is called the Initial Work Search Interview (IWSI). They are 30-40 minutes long and at this meeting you set a 'Claimant Commitment'.

11. Can you briefly tell me about what you talked about at that first meeting (you do not have to divulge anything sensitive to me).
- Were you asked to take anything to that meeting? Do you know why? Did you take it?
 - Do you remember the name of your Work Coach?
12. What did you think of your Work Coach? Were they helpful? Did you feel as if you were in capable hands?
- What kind of language and/or tone did they use to speak to you? For example friendly or forceful.
 - What one word would you use to describe your Work Coach?
13. Did you think you were making a commitment when you went to the first meeting with a Work Coach? To whom or what?
14. Thinking now about the 'Claimant Commitment' document, why did you sign it? **(Researcher note this is the new approach to the Jobseekers Agreement – a document that sets out what steps the individual will take to prepare or look for work.)** Did you have an input into your Claimant Commitment? Do you feel like it reflects what you are willing and able to do?
15. What did you think of the activities that happen with new job seekers when they were described to you?
- What was described?
 - Were they relevant to you? Were they suitable to your circumstances?
 - Were there any benefits that you could see from these activities?
 - Was there anything that put you off? What and why?
16. What was most attractive? What was least attractive?

Intensive Activity Programme trial evaluation: Claimant research

17. Were you given any tasks to complete? What were they? Did they link to your original job searching goals?
18. How were they agreed on? How did you feel about being given tasks to do?
19. Will you do/Have you done them? Have you had any feedback from the Work Coach – how did that happen, what did they say?
20. Have you attended any other meetings at the jobcentre or had any phone calls from the staff (about the work search activities rather than their claim to benefit)?
 - a. Were these meetings/calls with the same Work Coach as your first interview?
21. If yes – Please tell me about these. Probe for what type of contact (telephone, face-to-face), what was discussed, any feedback provided by Work Coach.
22. Were you aware that in certain circumstances benefit can be affected if job seekers fail to take steps to look for work? Was this mentioned to you by a Work Coach during this claim? Has this happened to you? If you had been required by the jobcentre to do any of the activities you have done, how would it have affected you i.e. motivation, attitude?

Comparator questions

23. Have you gained anything from other job seekers?
 - a. If yes, were they new claimants like you or had been claiming for longer?
 - b. If they had a group information session – did you gain anything from the other participants? Probe for sharing information about the local labour market such as local employers who were recruiting or how they recruit, agencies to use or avoid, experiences they had with job searching or employment
 - c. Have you asked anyone other than your Work Coach for advice on work searching skills/methods?
24. Do you wonder about what other work search methods others use may be effective? Do you think about how long most people spend looking for jobs?

Reflections so far

25. Having taken part in a few meetings now, what do you think of the service that is being offered by the Work Coaches at the jobcentre? Were there any elements you particularly enjoyed or found useful?
26. Have you had any feedback on the tasks you were agreed to complete?
27. How does what you have experienced do far compare with what you were told about at your first meeting?
28. Have your views on the job options available to you changed since you first made your benefits claim?
29. Has what you have done as a result of contacting the jobcentre made a difference to your chances of finding work?
 - a. If a positive effect – do you think this will be a lasting effect?

Intensive Activity Programme trial evaluation: Claimant research

30. **If claimed JSA before** – How does your experience over the last few weeks compare to the first few weeks of previous claims that you have made?
- Probe on, level of help from Jobcentre Plus staff, information they were given, usefulness of the activities, level of activity they were expected to undertake, attitude of the Work Coach, language that the Work Coach used, anything else they noted was different.
31. I asked you earlier how job ready you felt when you first contacted the jobcentre, how do you feel now?
- Probe: Is this due to the support provided? Any particular factor that really helped this?

If signed off JSA

32. You mentioned at the beginning of the interview that you are no longer claiming JSA, why is that?
33. If found a job – How did you find out about the job you have – jobcentre, own contacts, advertisement?
- Did anything about your recent claim to JSA help you to get this job? Probe for result of specific activity such as registering with agencies, by product of activities such as increased motivation, a reaction to the expectations placed on job seekers, or something else.
 - Would you say this is a long-term job or a 'will do for now' job? How long will the job last?
 - If the job doesn't last, what will you do? Probe for looking for work, contacting jobcentre and in what order they would do things.
34. If claiming another benefit – What prompted the change in benefit? Did anything about your responsibilities under JSA make you feel like it wasn't the right benefit for you?

Demographics and close

35. I would like to record some information about you so that when we are analysing the interviews we can see if there are any similarities between different types of people:
- Gender
 - Age group
 - Ethnic group
 - Highest qualification
 - Most recent job and when
 - Health problems or disability
 - Caring responsibilities
 - Most recent claim to JSA (prior to this one) [if not captured at start of interview]

Intensive Activity Programme trial evaluation: Claimant research

36. That is the end of my questions, is there anything else you would like to add about your recent experience of claiming JSA?

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us.

Now you know a bit more about the types of information we are interested I'd like to ask if you would be willing to participate in another interview, this time by phone. We would like to speak to you again in one months' time to see how things may have changed for you during that time and reflect on any difference that the jobcentre has made to you.

The next interview would be a bit shorter, around 30 minutes. You would receive a voucher as a thank you for taking part, £15 as we will take less time than today. The interview will be arranged at a time that suits you, for example if you are working we could speak in the evening.

You can say yes today and still change your mind when we re-contact you. I need to collect some contact details so that we can get back in touch.

Get verbal agreement, turn off Dictaphone and fill in forms.

Appendix G

Intensive Activity Programme claimant interview guide – Interview 2 _ Control

Introduction

You will remember that I/a colleague [adapt wording throughout] interviewed you in July about your early experiences on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). Although I/my colleague will have explained the purpose of the research then I will recap that information for you now.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have asked us to do some research looking at the experience of new JSA claimants in North Yorkshire and Humberside and West Yorkshire. As part of this we are looking at the support that people have had from their Work Coaches and any steps they have taken to get into work.

To conduct this research we were given a list of people who had made new claims to JSA over a certain time period and contacted people by letter to see if they were willing to take part. Taking part in the research is completely voluntary, it will not affect your benefits if you agree or decline to take part. You agreed with one of my colleagues that you would be happy to take part in an interview today, is that still ok?

As with the information from the first interview, all of the information we collect is held securely and will be anonymised. The interview is confidential between you and me. DWP and staff at the jobcentre will not know who has spoken to us or what they have said.

As a thank you for taking part today you will receive shopping vouchers worth £15. At the end of the interview I will take an address for you where we will send the vouchers. There will be a receipt form in with the vouchers and it is important that you send that back to us. This form is for our accounts department only. If we have to stop the interview for any reason – for example if you are no longer comfortable answering the questions, we will still give you the vouchers. The vouchers will not affect your entitlement to benefits.

The interview today will last up an hour. Is that ok?

I would like to record the interview – this ensures that I can pay attention to you rather than taking notes. The Dictaphones are password protected and encrypted so that no one else can access the recordings.

Turn on Dictaphone and get verbal consent to proceed and record the interview.

Researchers – it is important to read through the transcript of the last interview and check the spread sheet to see where in IAP they were up to at the last interview

Intensive Activity Programme trial evaluation: Claimant research

Background

1. Last time we spoke, you were claiming JSA. What is your situation at the moment?
 - a. Are you claiming benefits, if so which? Has this been continual since we last spoke?
 - b. Have you done any work? When did this start? Gather brief details about work (type of work, full/part time, permanent/temporary, locality/travel distance etc).

If not working:

2. What kind of work are you looking for – has this changed since we last spoke?
3. What are you doing to look for work? How long do you spend on job search activities each day/week?

Ongoing contact with the jobcentre

4. What sorts of contact have/did you had with the jobcentre after we last spoke? Check for interviews with Work Coaches, group information session and telephone calls from Work Coaches.
5. How often have/did you met with your Work Coach?
 - a. Have/did you change Work Coach during the time you were claiming JSA?
 - b. If no, how would you describe your relationship with your Work Coach?
6. Can you briefly tell me about what you talked in your interviews over the last few weeks (you do not have to divulge anything sensitive to me)?
 - a. Did you have to do any tasks between meetings?
 - b. Were you asked to take anything to those meetings? Do you know why? Did you take it?
 - c. Do you remember the name of your Work Coach?
7. Did/have you see the same Work Coach (prompt with name) throughout the time since we spoke?
8. **If yes**, what did you think of this? Was it useful? Would you have preferred to move to another Work Coach? Why?
9. **If not**, were other staff at the jobcentre aware of the activities to find work that you had been doing?
10. Did/have you had any further feedback on the job seeking activities you had undertaken? From who?
11. Do/have staff ask what you have been doing to look for work? Do they give you feedback on your approaches to finding work? Would you say they have checked the quality of your job seeking activities?

Intensive Activity Programme trial evaluation: Claimant research

12. Do/have staff encourage you to think about different approaches to job seeking and ways of doing or if you can do the things you are doing better?
 - a. If yes, How do/did they encourage you? What, if anything, would you say you are doing better as a result of this encouragement?

Comparator questions

13. Since we spoke last time, through things you have done and been involved in to find work, have you had any interaction with other job seekers?
 - a. **If yes**, have you gained anything from other job seekers?
 - b. **If yes**, were they new claimants like you or had been claiming for longer?
 - c. If they had a group information session – did you gain anything from the other participants? Probe for sharing information about the local labour market such as local employers who were recruiting or how they recruit, agencies to use or avoid, experiences they had with job searching or employment.
 - d. Have you asked anyone other than your Work Coach for advice on work searching skills/methods?
14. Do you wonder about what other work search methods others use may be effective? Do you think about how long most people spend looking for jobs?
15. Have/Did you get any feedback on your job search activities? From who?
16. Does your Work Coach ask what you have been doing to look for work? Do they give you feedback on your approaches to finding work? Would you say they have checked the quality of your job seeking activities? If yes, how useful has this been to your job search goals?
17. Do/have staff encourage you to think about different approaches to job seeking? Do they encourage you to improve on the things you are doing to find work?

Views/reflections on business-as-usual support

18. Now that some time has passed since you first made your claim, how do you feel about the effectiveness of your job search?
19. What do you think of the service that is being offered to you by the Work Coaches at the jobcentre? Were there any elements you particularly enjoyed or found useful?
 - a. Are you aware of any other services at the jobcentre that you would find useful? If yes, what and why?
20. How does what you have experienced so far compare with what you were told about at your first interview?
21. Have your views on the job options available to you changed since you first made your benefits claim?
 - a. If yes, explore how and why. If not volunteered, did your Work Coach or the support at the jobcentre play a role in your changing view of job options?

Intensive Activity Programme trial evaluation: Claimant research

22. Has what you have done as a result of contacting the jobcentre made a difference to your chances of finding work?
- Are you using anything you learnt?
 - If a positive effect – In what way? Do you think you will apply the same knowledge/skill again in the future? Do you think this will be a lasting effect?
23. **If claimed JSA before** – How did your experience of claiming this time, compare to the first few weeks of previous claims that you have made?
- Probe on, level of help from Jobcentre Plus staff, information they were given, usefulness of the activities, level of activity they were expected to undertake, attitude of the Work Coach, language that the Work Coach used, anything else they noted was different.
24. **If not claimed JSA before** – As this is your first time claiming JSA, what do you think of the service being offered by the job centre?
- Probe on, level of help from Jobcentre Plus staff, information they were given, usefulness of the activities, level of activity they were expected to undertake, attitude of the Work Coach, language that the Work Coach used, anything else they noted was different.
 - Did you expect that Jobcentre Plus would offer these services/this support to you?
25. I asked you earlier how job ready you felt when you first contacted the jobcentre, how do you feel now?
- Probe: Is this due to the support provided? Any particular factor that really helped this?
26. Have you found that your job searching activities increased as a result of the support you have received?
- If yes, Whose support was important to this? Probe on role of the Work Coach or other Jobcentre Plus staff
 - Would you say they have improved? If yes, in what way? What made this difference?
27. Was there anything about the style of the Work Coach and the way they interacted with you that helped you or made you think more about your job search skills?

People who have worked since last interview

Ask Q27 in relation to each job entry achieved since last interview
--

28. Did any of the activities you undertook, or any support you received, while claiming JSA help you with securing this job?
- For example; updating your CV, practicing application form questions, travel planning, interview advice, speculative approaches to employers
 - If yes, in what way?

29. If it looked like you were not going to continue in this job (for example, through your own choice or because of a redundancy etc) what would you do? **Researchers – we don't want to prompt here as don't want to lead the respondent but answers expected here could include contact the jobcentre about claiming, start putting up to date CV together, start job searching during the notice period.**

If signed off JSA

30. You mentioned at the beginning of the interview that you are no longer claiming JSA, why is that?
31. If found a job – How did you find out about the job you have – jobcentre, own contacts, advertisement?
- Did anything about your recent claim to JSA help you to get this job? Probe for result of specific activity such as registering with agencies, by product of activities such as increased motivation, a reaction to the expectations placed on job seekers, or something else.
 - Would you say this is a long-term job or a 'will do for now' job? How long will the job last?
 - If the job doesn't last, what will you do? Probe for looking for work, contacting jobcentre and in what order they would do things.
32. If claiming another benefit – What prompted the change in benefit? Did anything about your responsibilities under JSA make you feel like it wasn't the right benefit for you?

Follow-up questions

Researchers – please check transcript for how ready for work they were at the end of the last interview and use as prompt for next question

33. How ready for work do you feel at the moment? How does that differ from last time do you think when you said to us you were...?
34. You may remember last time we asked you to fill in a skills scoring sheet that asked you how confident you were in your skills. I would like to go through that list again with you now to see if things have changed. 5 is very confident about, 1 is not at all confident with:
- Preparing an effective CV
 - Making career decisions
 - Providing useful references
 - Making good contacts for work
 - Writing a covering letter
 - Travelling to get to work
 - Registering with agencies

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- h. Completing application forms
- i. Doing well in job interviews
- j. Using the internet to look for work
- k. Applying for jobs that were not advertised

If appropriate; this is different from last time, why do you think that is?

35. These next questions are ranked 'Not at all like me' to 'Very like me':

- a. Motivated (to find work and in general)
- b. Committed
- c. Good communicator
- d. Enthusiastic
- e. Confident (about work and in general)
- f. Responsible
- g. Able to complete tasks and set my own goals

If appropriate; this is different from last time, why do you think that is?

36. **(Researcher note – must ask so can track back to first interview)** If I were interviewing you for a job right now – what skills would you say you could bring to that employer? You could use the skills scoring sheet you have just done to help you answer this.
37. Overall, what have you enjoyed and found useful about the support you have had from Jobcentre Plus? What did you not enjoy and what has not been useful?
38. What, if anything, would you change about the support you have had?
39. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank and close

Appendix H

Intensive Activity Programme observation extraction framework: Initial Work Search Interviews

Observation reference:

Jobcentre Plus office:

Researcher:

Treatment/control:

Extraction framework

Please provide a summary of the observation data under the headers given. This may include short quotations from either adviser or claimants during the meeting/workshop itself.

Elements of the observations that map to the MINDSPACE framework are highlighted in red. See the appendix for a complete breakdown of what we were looking for under each component.

Format of the meeting

Face-to-face/telephone; duration; **Priming** – use of tools (computer, information sheets etc.)

Overview of meeting content

Summarise the content of the meeting and the relative emphasis/detail placed on each topic. How much time each actor spent talking versus listening.

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Barriers and skills

Was any sensitive personal information sought/discussed? Were skills discussed- how/ what skills? Did the Work Coach probe claimant on their barriers to work? Were any barriers raised by the claimants e.g. health, **Ego** – confidence in abilities? What were the key barriers identified? **Salience** – How were they addressed by the Work Coach?

Work-related activities

What work-related activities was it suggested that the claimant undertake? What was the claimant's reaction towards this? (**Affect** – discussion of past experiences, **Ego** – Level of claimant confidence in their abilities) How was agreement reached? **Incentives** – Were the benefits of these activities emphasised by the Work Coach? **Commitment** – Was conditionality mentioned? Did the claimant appear committed to undertaking these activities?

Job-search skills

What first-hand advice was offered by the Work Coach in relation to: writing a CV/cover letter, using job-search sites, applying for jobs (e.g. identifying transferable skills), acquiring references (e.g. through voluntary work), contacting recruitment agencies. How did this come up in the discussion? Was the importance of these skills emphasised? How was this advice received by the claimant? (**Affect** – capture any feelings about past job-search training)

IAP activities (Work Coach)

How was the pilot described to the claimant? How was it 'sold'? (i.e. **Incentives**, **Salience** – relevance to claimant and their circumstances, potential benefits of attending, format of the group session, **Norms** – attitudes of other claimants towards IAP)

IAP activities (claimant reaction)

What was the claimant's reaction to the pilot? **Commitment** – Were they enthusiastic or hesitant about the prospect of attending? (i.e. the need to arrange childcare, inappropriate for their circumstances/level of experience, **Affect** – feelings about past job-search training, **Defaults** – activities they were required to complete in previous claims, **Ego** – potential for negative feedback about themselves) How were these concerns addressed by the Work Coach?

Referrals and signposting

What external/internal sources of support were mentioned during the meeting? Was the claimant signposted or referred? How did this come up in the discussion? **Priming** – Was any promotional material used? How was this support 'sold' to the claimant? (i.e. **Incentives**, **Salience** – relevance to claimant and their circumstances, potential benefits of attending, format) What was the claimant's reaction?

Engagement and motivation

Messenger – In general terms, how did the Work Coach seek to engage and motivate the claimant? Was a specific style adopted? (e.g. challenging, directive, responsive, flexible, engaged, process- or claimant-led); **Priming** – Was any ‘coaching’ language used? (e.g. social norms, ‘most successful job seekers do X’; use of quality rulers, ‘On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your CV?’)

Rapport and reaction

Messenger – Have the Work Coach and claimant met before? Was there evidence of an existing relationship – positive or negative? Note the demographics of Work Coach and claimant, and whether and how this appears to affect their interaction **Defaults** – How was the claimant reacting within the meeting (high level), e.g. active engagement, passive, monosyllabic, distrustful, compliant, motivated. Verbal and non-verbal cues; **Commitment** – Has the claimant bought into and engaged with the idea of IAP? Is any key reason for commitment given? [How much of a focus was the computer screen during the interview?]

Work Coaches’ views

Are there any points about attitudes towards IAP and its operation from the Work Coach perspective that are salient to understand this observation? Does the Work Coach have any prior involvement with/knowledge of the claimant that is important to understanding their behaviour? What indications are there of the Work Coach adopting the IAP coaching style or, in contrast, using transmission mode – please add examples.

Appendix I

IAP observation extraction framework: Follow-up interviews

Observation reference:
Jobcentre Plus office:
Researcher:
Number of workshops completed:

Extraction framework

Please provide a summary of the observation data under the headers given. This may include short quotations from either adviser or claimants during the meeting/workshop itself.

Elements of the observations that map to the MINDSPACE framework are highlighted in red. See the appendix for a complete breakdown of what we were looking for under each component.

Format of the meeting

Face-to-face/telephone; duration; **Priming** – use of tools (computer, information sheets etc.)

Overview of meeting and content

Summarise the content of the meeting and the relative emphasis/detail placed on each topic. Provide an overview of the tasks being reviewed by the Work Coach. How much time each actor spent talking versus listening.

Quality check, validation and feedback (Work Coach)

What tasks was the claimant asked to complete? Did they complete them? Which aspects? How did the Work Coach check this? **Messenger** – How did the Work Coach react to this? (e.g. supportive, accommodating/forceful, strict) Did the Work Coach encourage the claimant to reflect on their work? How did they do this? **Priming** – Was any ‘coaching’ language used? (e.g. social norms, ‘most successful job seekers do X’; use of quality rulers, ‘On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your CV?’) What feedback did they provide? Was the claimant asked to complete any tasks again?

Quality check, validation and feedback (claimant)

How did the claimant find the tasks? i.e. Were they easy/difficult to complete? Did they understand why they were being asked to complete them and view them as relevant to their situation?; Did they follow the advice provided in the workshops or did the Work Coach remind them of the key points? If they were asked to complete any tasks again how did they react to that? If relevant – were they able to critically appraise their own work?

Job-search advice

What further advice was offered by the Work Coach in relation to: writing a CV/cover letter, using job-search sites, applying for jobs (i.e. identifying transferable skills), acquiring references (e.g. through voluntary work), contacting recruitment agencies. How did this come up in the discussion? **Incentives** – Was the importance/benefits of these skills emphasised? How was this advice received by the claimant? (**Affect** – capture any feelings about past job-search training and possibly how this relates to the support offered as part of IAP)

Further discussion around skills

Were skill/job-search experiences discussed – how/what skills? Did the Work Coach probe claimant on their barriers to work? Were any barriers raised by the claimants e.g. health, **Ego** – confidence in abilities? What were the key barriers identified? **Salience** – How were they addressed by the Work Coach? Any external/internal sources of support mentioned?

Future behaviour

Did the Work Coach mention anything about future behaviour (i.e. Jobcentre Plus/the Work Coach's expectations around job search behaviours and what the claimant should be doing to find work) or recommended steps/actions the claimant should take?

Engagement and motivation

Messenger – In general terms, how did the Work Coach seek to engage and motivate the claimant? Was a specific style adopted? (e.g. challenging, directive, responsive, flexible, engaged, process- or claimant-led); **Priming** – Was any 'coaching' language used? (e.g. social norms, 'most successful job seekers do X'; use of quality rulers, 'On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your CV?') **Commitment** – Was conditionality mentioned? Did the claimant appear committed to undertaking the activities mentioned?

Rapport and reaction

Messenger – Have the Work Coach and claimant met before? Was there evidence of an existing relationship – positive or negative? Note the demographics of Work Coach and claimant, and whether and how this appears to affect their interaction **Defaults** – How was the claimant reacting within the meeting (high level), e.g. active engagement, passive, monosyllabic, distrustful, compliant, motivated. Verbal and non-verbal cues; [how much of a focus was the computer screen during the interview] **Commitment** – Has the claimant bought into and engaged with the idea of IAP? Is any key reason for commitment given?

Work Coaches' views

Are there any points about attitudes towards IAP and its operation from the Work Coach perspective that are salient to understand this observation? Does the Work Coach have any prior involvement with/knowledge of the claimant that is important to understanding their behaviour? What indications are there of the Work Coach adopting the IAP coaching style or, in contrast, using transmission mode– please add examples.

Appendix J

Intensive Activity Programme observation extraction framework: Workshops

Observation reference:

Jobcentre Plus office:

Researcher:

Workshop no.:

Extraction framework

Please provide a summary of the observation data under the headers given. This may include short quotations from either adviser or claimants during the meeting/workshop itself.

Elements of the observations that map to the MINDSPACE framework are highlighted in red. See the appendix for a complete breakdown of what we were looking for under each component.

Format of the group sessions

Priming – Layout of the room, use of materials (e.g. nametags, posters, wall displays), house rules

Intensive Activity Programme trial evaluation: Claimant research

Overview of workshop

Note which workshop was observed, the elements of the curriculum that were covered, the relative amount of time devoted to each topic [and overall time taken if noted] and the main methods of delivery (i.e. use of slides, group discussion) Include here any important contextual information, such as experience of the Work Coach, whether or not they have received IAP training (if known), the number of attendees etc. How much time (broadly) each type of actor (claimants/Work Coach) spent talking versus listening.

Curriculum

Provide examples of how elements of the curriculum were introduced. What questions were asked of participants on these topics? What were their responses? **Incentives** – What examples (of good practice/bad practice) were provided? Was the importance of particular job-search skills (e.g. having a high quality CV) emphasised? Were the benefits of particular skills and techniques (e.g. STAR method for competency-based questions) emphasised? What were these? What were participants' reactions to this advice? **Salience** – What topics generate most discussion?

Tailored support

Salience – How was the content of the workshop made accessible to participants and adapted to their needs? (e.g. providing examples relevant to claimants' own circumstances, highlighting how particular barriers to employment will be addressed) **Commitment** – Were any difficulties/concerns raised by participants in terms of completing the tasks away from the workshop? How were these addressed by the Work Coach? **Ego** – Did any claimants raise concerns about the potential for negative feedback about themselves? Was the Work Coach able to address/allay such fears and help create/gain commitment to the desired 'IAP' behaviours? (i.e. becoming an active, persistent and effective job seeker)

Facilitator

Messenger – Did the Work Coach manage to keep the discussion on-topic? How structured or fluid was the workshop? Did they encourage claimants to contribute towards the discussion, or are they 'lecturing'? How did they attempt to maintain participants' attention? (e.g. changes in format of delivery, **Priming** – use of displays). What indications are there of the Work Coach adopting the IAP coaching style or, in contrast, using transmission mode – please add examples.

Engagement & motivation

Messenger – In general terms, how did the Work Coach seek to engage and motivate participants? Was a specific style adopted? (e.g. personable, engaged, participant-led discussions) How did this affect claimants' reaction towards IAP activities?; **Priming** – Was any 'coaching' language used? (e.g. social norms, 'most successful job seekers do X'; use of quality rulers, 'On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your CV?'); **Norms** – Are the experiences of previous groups shared? Are the behaviours of 'effective' job seekers mentioned?

Signposting

What external sources of information or support were mentioned during the workshops? How did this come up in the discussion? **Incentives** – What were the (described) benefits of these sources? What were participants' reactions? (taking notes etc.)

Claimant interaction

Norms – Did claimants talk to each other and the group? How was interaction encouraged? (e.g. use of icebreakers, activities in pairs) Did they share their own experiences? Was this relevant/on-topic? What kind of effect did they have on the others in the group (positive/reinforcing, or negative)?

Rapport and reaction

Messenger – Note the demographics of Work Coach and workshop participants, and whether and how this appears to affect their interaction. **Defaults** – How did participants react during the workshops (high level) e.g. active engagement, passive, monosyllabic, distrustful, compliant, motivated? Verbal and non-verbal cues **Commitment** – Have participants bought into and engaged with the idea of IAP? Is any key reason for commitment given? **Affect** – What is the mood of the workshop? (Awkward/shy attendants, embarrassed) How does it change at specific points?

Appendix K

Observation extraction framework

Use of MINDSPACE within the IAP observations

- **Messenger** – has the Work Coach managed to establish rapport with the claimant? If so, how does this affect the claimant's reaction towards the IAP activities? Is an amicable tone/constructive dialogue maintained? Does the Work Coach command respect, authority and do they establish trust? Does the data gathering tool affect the delivery of service from the Work Coach?
- **Incentives** – Are the benefits of IAP clear to the claimant (i.e. will learn something from the workshop, will get into work quicker)? Which benefits have most resonance – for claimant and what examples are used by the Work Coach? Have these been emphasised by their Work Coach and positioned against potential trade-offs (i.e. in terms of time, effort)?
- **Norms** – Are the behaviours or attitudes of other claimants towards the IAP/workshops/tools mentioned in the discussion? Are these used to argue for attendance, or to express reservations?
- **Defaults** – Is the claimant passive (i.e. do they behave as if the decision to attend a workshop has already been made for them)? For previous claimants – do they (or the Work Coach) revert to an existing Claimant Commitment or Jobseekers Agreement? Do they refer to what activities they were required to undertake in previous claims?
- **Salience** – How has the Work Coach attempted to make the discussion around IAP accessible to the claimant and relevant to their own experience? (i.e. highlighting how particular barriers to employment will be addressed)
- **Priming** – Is any promotional material (i.e. flyers, posters, leaflets, 'success' stories) presented to the claimant or displayed in the Jobcentre Plus office? Any examples of the use of language to prime claimants for activities, ie asking and coaching techniques, prompting responses from the claimant through 'priming' their memory?
- **Affect** – Over the course of the discussion, does the claimant relate or apply their feelings about past job-search training to the IAP workshop and activities? Are their inclinations positive or negative? What is the general mood of the interview? Did any specific moments in the interview shift the mood?
- **Commitment** – Has the claimant bought into and engaged with the idea of IAP? Are they enthusiastic or hesitant about the prospect of attending? Is any key reason for commitment given? Any mention of Jobseeker Direction if claimants fail to attend? How are challenges presented by claimants and tackled by Work Coaches?
- **Ego** – Does the claimant raise any concerns about the potential for negative feedback about themselves by engaging IAP/the workshop? Are these related to their perceived capabilities? How confident is the claimant in their abilities/ does the Work Coach use this point to encourage behaviour?