

Evaluation of Kickstart

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from an evaluation of the Kickstart Scheme.

The Kickstart Scheme was one of the government's flagship employment programmes to help young people in the wake of the economic downturn caused by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The scheme provided funding to create new jobs for 16- to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit who were at risk of long-term unemployment. Funding applied to jobs starting between September 2020 to the end of March 2022. Employers of all sizes could apply for funding for 100% of the national minimum wage for 25 hours per week for a total of 6 months.

Alongside research with other stakeholders, the evaluation included both qualitative (case study) and quantitative (survey) research with young people and employers. Quantitative interviews with young people took place approximately:

- one-to-three months after they started a Kickstart job ('Starters')
- seven months after they started a Kickstart job ('Leavers at seven months')
- ten months after they started a Kickstart job which equates to around three months after completing ('Leavers at ten months')

The research found that most young people taking part in the scheme were satisfied with their Kickstart job. Seven-in-ten Leavers at seven months reported that they were satisfied.

In some cases, Kickstart jobs led directly to employment with the same employer. Three-in-ten (31%) Leavers at seven months were in paid employment with their Kickstart employer. For Leavers at ten months, the proportion in work that were still with their Kickstart employer had reduced slightly to 27%.

More generally, Kickstart Leavers often had positive employment, education, and training (EET)¹ early outcomes. Two-thirds (65%) of Leavers at seven months reported that they were EET and three-in-five (60%) Leavers reported that they were in work. For Leavers at ten months, the proportion of EET young people increased to more than three-quarters (75%) and 63% reported that they were in work.

Participation in Kickstart appears to have an impact on young people's views on their prospective careers. Just over half of Leavers at seven months (54%) said they would like to develop their careers in the same area of work as their Kickstart job.

Gateways and JCP staff worked to improve challenges around employer expectations of Kickstart candidates. Initially, some employers had too high

¹ Throughout this report, figures referring to EET young people or young people in work include those that were due to start in the next month

expectations in terms of qualification levels and amount of experience desired from candidates. With these employers, gateways and JCP staff explored how job opportunities could be adapted. They also encouraged employers to take more flexible approaches to recruitment better suited to those less experienced in the labour market.

Overall, nearly three-quarters (73%) of employers were satisfied with their experience of Kickstart, even though many were new to this sort of scheme (63% had neither advertised vacancies through Jobcentre Plus / Universal Jobmatch or taken part in any schemes run by JCP or DWP to provide employment).