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Evaluation of basic skills mandatory training pilot: synthesis report

Lucy Joyce
Diana Kasparova
David Wilkinson

BMRB International and the Policy Studies Institute

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Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 385

Evaluation of basic skills mandatory training pilot: synthesis report

Lucy Joyce, Diana Kasparova and David Wilkinson

A report on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions carried out by
BMRB International and the Policy Studies Institute

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Abbreviations and acronyms

BA	Benefits Agency
BET	Basic Employability Training
BSED	Basic Skills Evaluation Database
DMA	Decision Making and Appeals
ES	Employment Service
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FT	Fast Track screening tool
FTET	Full-time Education and Training
IA	Independent Assessment
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
JUVOS	Joint Unemployment and Vacancies Operating System
LMS	Labour Market System
ND25+	New Deal 25 plus
ND50+	New Deal Fifty plus
NDDP	New Deal for Disabled People
NDLP	New Deal for Lone Parents
NDP	New Deal for Partners
NDYP	New Deal for Young People (18 to 24)
SIBS	Short Intensive Basic Skills
WPLS	Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study

Summary

In response to the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills, the Employment Service (ES) (now Jobcentre Plus) implemented a National Basic Skills Programme in April 2001. Under this programme jobseekers who had been unemployed for at least six months or were entering New Deal were screened for a basic skills need. If a need was identified at the initial screening, customers are referred to an Independent Assessment (IA) to further assess their basic skills need. If a need was confirmed, the customer was then referred onto a basic skills training course. There were three main types of provision available: Basic Employability Training (BET); Short Intensive Training; and Full-Time Education and Training (FTET).

Following evidence of low take up of basic skills provision and non-attendance at the IA, a number of small-scale pilots were set up to run between September 2001 and March 2002. These early pilots looked at amongst other things, the impact of sanctions and incentives on participation in the basic skills process. The evidence from these pilots (Peters *et al.*, 2003) indicated that incentive payments did have some effect in attracting customers to attend provision; however, it was less clear whether sanctions had an impact. In order to explore the impact of sanctions on the people taking up and completing basic skills training more thoroughly, an extended 12 month Mandatory Training Pilot scheme was introduced in April 2004.

The Department for Work and Pensions commissioned BMRB Social Research and the Policy Studies Institute to carry out a longitudinal evaluation of the mandatory training pilot. The aim was to measure and assess the impact of the threat of sanctions on customer outcomes. The research commenced in May 2004 and this report brings together evidence from all parts of the evaluation.

The quantitative research looked at programme impacts in terms of the probability of starting and completing training and the probability of getting a job. The qualitative component of the research encompassed three stages: **Stage one:** delivery process study; **Stage two:** a study of views and perceptions in mandatory pilot areas, and **Stage three:** a programme and sanctions impacts study.

Key findings

In the 12 pilot areas considered in the mandatory training pilot evaluation, nearly 14,000 Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants were referred to training provision and thus subject to the threat of being sanctioned. Similarly nearly 8,000 claimants were referred to provision in the ten comparison areas and were not subject to sanctions.

Using a difference-in-difference modelling approach, we found that in pilot areas, out of those who were referred, five per cent more claimants started provision. This is compared with claimants in the comparison areas following the introduction of the pilot compared with the difference before the introduction of the pilot. We attribute this difference to the mandatory nature of the pilot so the threat of sanctions did increase the number of JSA claimants who started basic skills provision.

Similarly, the threat of sanctions was found to increase the percentage of claimants who completed provision once they had started it by around three percentage points. However, we found that the threat of sanctions had a negative impact on the probability of starting a job by around three percentage points. A limited observation window to follow these claimants may partially explain this finding. For the last entrants into the pilot this is just seven months, so it is possible that many claimants were still participating in training at the end of our observation window and thus unable to start work.

Basic skills training was sold to customers using a range of tools, which not only included the mandatory nature of provision, but also promoted financial incentives and possible personal benefits as a result of participation, such as increasing employment opportunities or improving their social skills.

The mandatory nature of training was communicated to customers at the pre-entry to training interview. The level of information provided and the emphasis placed on this by advisers varied according to the perceived needs of the individual customer, with more resistant customers being provided with more information than those who appeared willing to attend. Mandation was communicated by the advisers both verbally and in writing using the mandatory referral letter. Advisers tended to place more emphasis on the verbal communication of mandation compared to the written information, and approaches to delivering the letter varied from advisers outlining the content of the letter in detail, to simply giving customers the letter to read. For the most part, customers suggested they recalled being made aware of the mandatory nature of training, although some exceptions were noted.

Although some resistance was expressed by customers, overall customers generally appeared to understand and accept the mandatory nature of training. This was not only thought to be a result of the explanation they received from their advisers but also due to a general awareness and understanding that in order to claim benefits they would be expected, under the rules of Jobcentre Plus, to engage in certain activities, such as training.

Overall the threat of sanctions was deemed to be effective in encouraging customers to attend training, especially the more resistant customers. Certainly, it was said by advisers and providers to have increased the flow of customers onto basic skills training. However, the threat of a sanction was not effective in encouraging customers to attend training in all cases – rather it was said to have also resulted in a number of other impacts occurring, such as customers signing off (in some cases as a result of finding employment), changing benefit (usually following a period of signing off) or being sanctioned. Following a sanction being imposed customers tended to either comply or, ultimately, sign off or change benefit.

Referral to training was typically said to be a straightforward process: with advisers following recommendations made by the Independent Assessor regarding the type of training provision; and the choice of provider usually made in liaison with customers according to the availability and location of the provider. Notwithstanding this, some problems were noted with the accessibility and availability of provision and, although the latter had generally been resolved by stage two, accessibility continued to be a problem, particularly in rural areas.

Training provision (BET and SIBS) comprised a range of activities including: inductions, basic skills training, Jobsearch, work placements, outings and assessments. Views on training were mixed overall and they were often linked to the perceived impacts of the training. The course content and organisation were generally viewed positively, particularly work placements and Jobsearch. However, the level of inactivity occurring on some courses and the wide range of student ability within each class was deemed problematic. The views of customers towards other students also affected how customers felt about the training: for example, customers mentioned disliking the course as a consequence of the disruptive and aggressive behaviour exhibited by other students; and liking the course as it had provided an opportunity to socialise and make friends. Views on the course tutors were also mixed, with some finding tutors to be friendly and approachable and others describing them as ‘condescending’.

Training was said to have resulted in a range of outcomes, including: improvement of basic skills (level of impact varied); improved Jobsearch skills; development of soft skills; qualifications in basic skills; increased employability and employment. The development of soft skills was seen as being of particular importance, as it was felt this had the knock-on effect on a range of other outcomes such as increased employability or entering subsequent training or education.

Importantly, no discernable benefits or impacts were highlighted by respondents in some cases. Certainly, advisers expressed concern about a lack of improvement to customers’ basic skills levels, which they thought was demonstrated by customers (who had been on basic skills training) returning to the Jobcentre only to be re-assessed as having a need. While it was noted that this could in part be accounted for by customers originally entering training at a low level of literacy or numeracy, advisers were worried about the longer term consequences of this, especially how it would impact on their ability to sell the programme to customers who had already

attended training and ultimately they feared it would undermine the basic skills programme overall.

Once the basic skills courses had been completed, respondents generally followed one of three main routes: either returning to the Jobcentre, embarking on further training or gaining employment. Clearly, the paths followed were not always linear and as a consequence it was usual for customers to have engaged in more than one of these activities at the point of the research interview.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The national programme of basic skills provision and the mandatory training pilot operated by Jobcentre Plus contribute towards the Government's strategy to improve adult literacy, numeracy and English language skills in Britain. The Governments' overall strategy is aimed at several priority groups which include: jobseekers; other benefit claimants; prisoners; low-skilled employees; and other groups at risk of social exclusion. The Government aims to improve the basic skills of 750,000 people by 2004 and 1.5 million people by 2007 (Department for Education and Skills (DfES) 2001)). This aim has been reinforced in the Government's 2003 strategy for improving skills for employability: *21st Century Skills* (DfES, 2003). Since 2001, 4.47 million learners have taken up 9.7 million Skills for Life learning opportunities and 1.416 million of these learners went on to achieve a first Skills for Life qualification.

The Moser report *A Fresh Start* published in 1999 identified that around one in five people in England were not functionally literate and about 40 per cent had numeracy problems. This equates to around seven million adults who cannot read or write at the level expected of an 11-year-old (Level 1). Britain's skill levels compared unfavourably with other industrialised countries'. An OECD survey of 12 industrialised countries in 1997 revealed that Britain had the third highest percentage of adults with literacy and numeracy at the lowest level (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 1997, in Hillage *et al.*, 2000) and that around half a million people in Britain experienced difficulties with basic skills as a result of English not being their first language.

Many of the recommendations of the Moser Report were adopted in the Government's national strategy for improving basic skills: *Skills for Life* (DfES, 2001). The strategy set about tackling the skills problems of those groups where literacy and numeracy needs were greatest. As unemployed people and benefit claimants are at a high risk of basic skills problems and associated disadvantages, the Government specifically targeted them for provision. The aims of the national basic skills programme for jobseekers and benefit claimants were twofold: firstly, it aimed to improve the basic skills of this customer group, and secondly, to improve the employment rate of those with basic skills needs and/or no formal qualifications.

The target of improving the basic skills of 750,000 adults by 2004 included 130,000 jobseekers and 40,000 other benefit claimants. The needs of these groups were to be met by the Employment Service (ES) and the Benefits Agency and, following restructuring in 2002, Jobcentre Plus. This evaluation has focused on the basic skills programme delivered by Jobcentre Plus.

1.2 The basic skills programme

1.2.1 The national programme for basic skills

In response to the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills, the ES (now Jobcentre Plus) implemented a national basic skills programme in April 2001. Under this programme jobseekers who had been unemployed for at least six months or were entering New Deal (usually after 18 months) were screened for a basic skills need. There are four main types of basic skills needs identified – literacy, numeracy, oracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

If a basic skills need was identified at the initial screening process, customers were referred to an Independent Assessment (IA) to further assess their basic skills need. The IA consisted of a nationally standardised, externally contracted test. ESOL customers with a clear language need bypassed the IA and accessed training provision directly.

For inactive groups and those on voluntary New Deals such as New Deal for Lone Parents, New Deal Fifty Plus, New Deal for Partners, New Deal for Disabled People, the IA was optional. However, customers on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and the mandatory New Deal programmes, ie New Deal 25 plus (ND25+) and New Deal for Young People (NDYP), could be issued with a Jobseeker's Direction if they refused to attend their IA. This could ultimately result in benefit sanctions being imposed in the case of jobseekers.

If a need was confirmed (ie the customer was assessed as having basic skills below Level 1)¹ the customer was then referred onto a basic skills training course. There were three main types of provision available:

- **Basic Employability Training (BET)**. This was targeted at those with the lowest skill level (at or below entry level). Provision was full time and lasted up to 26 weeks.
- **Short Intensive Training**. This provision was aimed at those with skills above entry level, but below Level 1. The course was full time, lasted for up to eight weeks and focused on basic skills in a work context.
- **Full-Time Education and Training (FTET)**. This option was only available to NDYP and ESOL customers², lasted for one year and was available to those people below Level 1.

¹ Basic Skills Level 1 is the standard of skill expected of an 11-year-old.

² ESOL customers can undertake either BET or FTET training.

Early pilot research

Following evidence of low take up of basic skills provision and non-attendance at the IA, a number of small-scale pilots were set up to run between September 2001 and March 2002. These looked at, among other things, the impact of sanctions and incentives on participation in the basic skills process. There were three types of pilot: areas where sanctions alone were applied, areas where incentives alone were applied and areas where both sanctions and incentives were applied. The evidence from these pilot (Peters *et al.*, 2003) indicated that incentive payments did have some effect in attracting customers to attend provision. However, it was less clear whether sanctions had an impact.

Changes to the programme April 2004

Leading on from the pilot, the White Paper 21st Century Skills (DfES, 2003) announced a series of changes to the National Programme for Basic Skills from April 2004. The most significant of these changes included the introduction of:

- **the Fast Track Screening Tool** – to be used with all JSA customers at the six-month stage of claim and those joining any of the New Deals;
- **screening for customers on inactive benefits** – basic skills screening to be introduced for customers on inactive benefits when they attend their Work Focused Interview;
- **the Jobseekers Act to direct customers to Independent Assessment** – advisers were encouraged to use their powers under the Jobseekers Act to direct customers who were unwilling to attend the IA;
- **availability of financial incentives, available to customers undertaking Jobcentre Plus basic skills training provision** – customers received an additional £10 a week on top of their training allowance and £100 on the successful completion of an Entry Level 3 or Level 1 qualification.

1.2.2 The mandatory training pilot

Findings relating to the impact of the threat of sanctions explored in the September 2001 to March 2002 pilots were deemed inconclusive for a range of reasons, including: the size of the pilot areas which were considered too small; the short time frame of the pilot; overly complicated pilot initiatives; unreliable management information on which to measure the impact; and weak basic skills delivery infrastructure in place at the time.

In order to explore the impact of sanctions on the people taking up and completing basic skills training more thoroughly, an extended 12 month **Mandatory Training Pilot Scheme** was introduced in April 2004.

There were 12 mandatory basic skills pilot districts in total and they were: Bedfordshire; Berkshire; Bolton and Bury; Calderdale and Kirklees; Cheshire and Warrington; Dorset; Durham; Hull and East Riding; Kent; Lincolnshire and Rutland; South London; and Wolverhampton and Walsall.

The main premise of the mandatory pilot was that customers claiming JSA in the 12 districts may be subject to benefit sanctions if they were referred to provision and either did not attend training or they ended provision without completing it (for any other reason than for entering employment). In practice it was thought that few customers would actually be sanctioned; rather it was thought the fear of being sanctioned might modify customer behaviour. Thus the evaluation has been primarily concerned with the impact of the threat of benefit sanctions on customer behaviour, rather than the impact of being sanctioned itself, although this has also been explored.

In addition to the 12 pilot areas, Jobcentre Plus identified ten national comparator areas to operate as control areas. The areas chosen were: Cambridgeshire; City and East London; Cornwall; Hampshire; North London; Northumberland; Shropshire; Staffordshire; West London; and Wiltshire.

1.3 Research objectives and design

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) commissioned BMRB Social Research and the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) to carry out a longitudinal evaluation of the mandatory pilot and national enhancements. The research commenced in May 2004 and this report presents a synthesis of evidence from all earlier reports.

In its broadest form the evaluation aims to measure and assess the impact of the threat of sanctions on customer outcomes.

The qualitative component of the research encompasses three stages:

- **Stage one:** Delivery process study.
- **Stage two:** A study of views, attitudes and perceptions in mandatory pilot areas (including a study of providers).
- **Stage three:** A programme and sanctions impacts study.

While the national enhancements and mandatory pilot were two separate programmes, it is clear from conducting the research that advisers in mandatory pilot areas tended to see the two programmes as a fluid process (as a consequence of their simultaneous introduction in April 2004). However, we attempt here to isolate the impacts of the mandatory training pilot.

All the depth interviews, group discussions and observations were undertaken by experienced qualitative researchers using non-directive interviewing techniques. They were exploratory and interactive in form so that questioning could be

responsive to the views, experiences and circumstances of the individuals involved. Interviews for each stage were guided by a topic guide developed by BMRB, in close liaison with the DWP. Although topic guides ensure systematic coverage of key points across interviews, they were used flexibly to allow issues of relevance to respondents to be covered.

All the depth interviews and group discussions were digitally recorded in stereo. The verbatim transcripts produced from the digital recordings were subject to a rigorous content analysis, which involved systematically sifting, summarising and sorting the verbatim material according to key issues and themes, within a thematic matrix. Further classificatory and interpretative analyses were then derived from the analytic charts and these formed the basis of the findings reported in subsequent chapters.

The findings reported have been illustrated with the use of verbatim quotations, case illustrations and examples. Where necessary the details of the contributors or their subjects have been moderately changed to protect anonymity.

The quantitative research looked at the impact of the mandatory training pilot on a range of outcomes including the probability of starting training provision; the probability of completing provision; and the probability of getting a job³. We utilise administrative data about the basic skills process together with data from other sources to consider outcomes following participation in the process. In each case the data is first explored descriptively and then Difference-in-Difference models are used to assess the impact of the pilot.

The report is divided into five chapters:

- **Chapter 1** provides background to the research and outlines the design and methodological approaches adopted.
- **Chapter 2** provides an overview of the basic skills process and introduces the administrative data used in the quantitative analysis covered by the report.
- **Chapter 3** looks at the process of delivery and considers advisers and customers experiences and views of them.
- **Chapter 4** considers the impact of the pilot.
- **Chapter 5** provides a summary of the key research findings, and outlines the main conclusions.

³ Initial findings from the quantitative study can be found in the PSI interim report entitled *Basic skills training pilot: An early assessment of the impact on provision starts and provision completed* (Kasparova and Wilkinson, 2005).

2 Overview of the basic skills process

2.1 The basic skills process

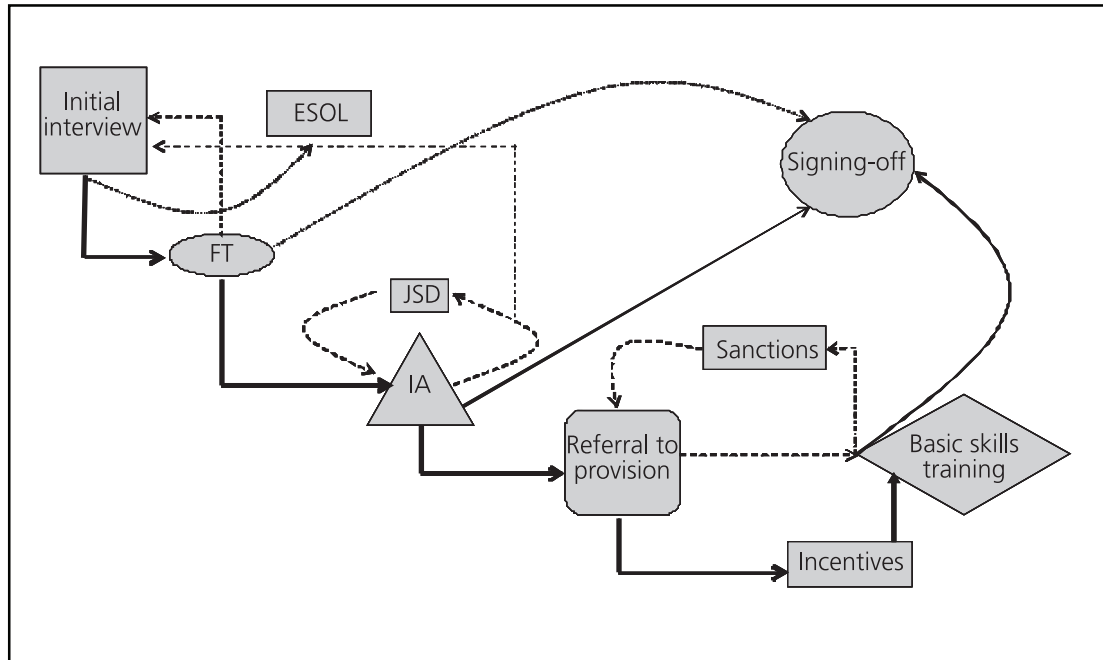
Figure 2.1 illustrates the delivery process of the basic skills programmes from beginning to end, including both national enhancements and mandatory pilot initiatives. The diagram was developed from descriptions of the delivery process given by advisers who took part in the study, and it is this process that is explored in this report.

Claimants had an initial interview at which it was determined whether English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) training was required. If this was the case then they should be directed straight to provision. Claimants without ESOL requirements were subject to the Fast Track (FT) assessment which determines whether they have a potential basic skills need. If no potential need was identified, then they did not proceed further in the basic skills process. If a potential need was identified, then they should have been referred to an Independent Assessment (IA) of their basic skills capabilities. At this stage they should have been subject to a Jobseeker's Direction (JSD) if they did not participate. This was the case in all areas. The JSD was not specific to the mandatory pilot.

If the IA revealed no basic skills need then that would be the end of the basic skills process. If, however, the IA revealed a basic skills training need then the claimant should have been referred to some form of provision. Failure to attend training or complete training would have resulted in a benefit sanction for claimants in the pilot areas except if they had entered a job. Incentives were also available in all areas for attendance and completion of training.

At any point in time a claimant could terminate their benefit claim, so not all claimants will pass through the whole process. However the process outlined in Figure 2.1 should have been applied to all claimants who remain on benefit.

Figure 2.1 The delivery process of the basic skills programmes including national enhancements and mandatory pilot initiatives



We further explored the basic skills process through analysis of the Basic Skills Evaluation Database (BSED). The BSED combines data from a number of sources: the Labour Market System, used in all Jobcentre Plus offices to manage dealings with customers; the Joint Unemployment and Vacancies Operating System, which records details of all computerised claims for JSA; and clerical data keyed into a database, which provides personal information for each customer and details of their basic skills claim.

The analysis reported in this chapter is for people who were identified by the FT assessment as having a potential basic skill need between April 2004 and March 2005, the period when the pilot operated. In this chapter, we consider the numbers flowing through the process in both pilot and comparator areas combined. Elsewhere in the report we consider data back to April 2002 and separately for pilot and national comparator areas to allow us to make comparisons between the areas over time. This is to allow us to determine the impact of the pilot. The latest available data at the time the analysis was conducted was up to the end of October 2005 hence, for the latest pilot entrants – at the end of March 2005 – the available data only allows a seven month follow through following pilot entry. It is worth noting that this may be insufficient to allow full participation in the basic skills process.

2.2 The number of people flowing through each stage of the process

The analysis in the following sections broadly follows the flow diagram in Figure 2.1 and highlights how the basic skills process works in practice. Figure 2.2 indicates the number of JSA claimants at each stage of the basic skills process in pilot and comparison areas.

2.2.1 Screening and assessment referral

Between April 2004 and March 2005, 54,979 claimants were identified at screening as having a potential basic skills need in pilot and comparison areas. Sixty-two per cent of these claimants (34,326) were referred to the IA⁴. A further 4,472 claimants (eight per cent) were referred directly to provision without being referred to an IA. These were typically ESOL claimants who did not have to be referred to an IA.

A total of 2,426 customers were not recorded on the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study as having a live JSA claim at the time of screening and 599 customers were recorded as having ended their JSA claim on the day they were screened. A further 3,894 customers ended their JSA claim within a month of screening, meaning that eight per cent of customers who were screened ended their claims within a month of screening without being referred to an IA.

The remaining 9,262 claimants were recorded as having ended their time on the basic skills programme, but remained on JSA for at least a month after screening without being referred to either an IA or provision. It is not entirely clear why so many customers are recorded on the database in this way, but it may be that referrals to IA and provision were not well recorded on the BSED at least in some districts. This is supported by analysis of the above data by district where there was a large variation in the percentage of claimants who were referred to an IA. In four districts less than 40 per cent of claimants were recorded as being referred to an IA, while in three districts more than 80 per cent of claimants were recorded as being referred to an IA.

2.2.2 Attendance at Independent Assessment

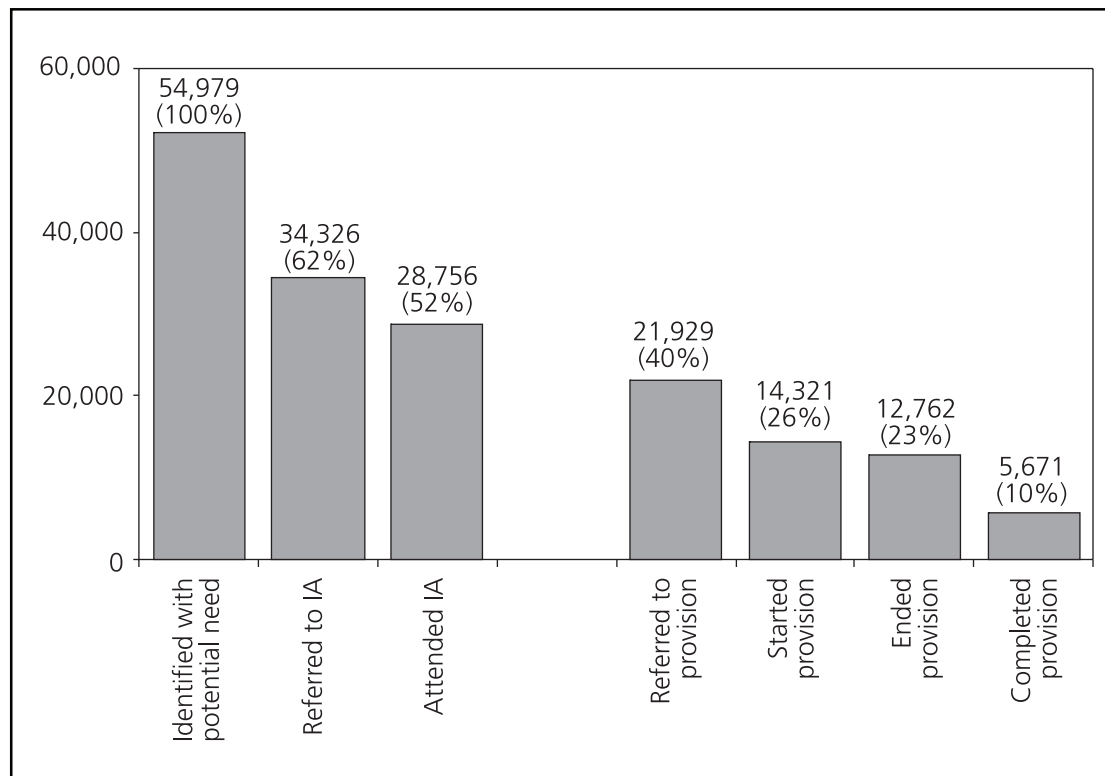
The vast majority of claimants who were referred to IA actually attended (28,756 out of 34,326). While these claimants would not be subject to sanctions, as Figure 2.1 highlights, it was possible for advisers to issue a JSD for non-attendance.

We have not included here details about the recording of assessment results, as there is some doubt as to whether these are fully recorded on the BSED. In practice much of this was done clerically and there is reason to believe that a number of

⁴ This is part of a trend increase in the proportion of claimants who were referred to an IA. In 2002/03, 31 per cent of claimants with a potential basic skills need were referred to an IA and in 2003/04, 49 per cent were referred to an IA.

clerical forms were never input onto the database. Furthermore, the mandatory nature of the pilot does not operate at this stage of the basic skills process so assessment outcome is not considered in this report.

Figure 2.2 Number of JSA claimants at different stages of the basic skills process, April 2002-October 2005



2.2.3 Provision referral

The next stage of the process is the referral to provision. As noted above, 4,472 claimants were referred directly to provision without being referred to the IA. A further 17,457 claimants were referred to the IA and subsequently referred to provision. Thus, overall, roughly 40 per cent of claimants who were identified with a potential basic skills need were referred to provision⁵.

2.2.4 Starting provision

A total of 14,321 claimants (65 per cent of those referred) started provision. This is the first stage of the basic skills process where sanctions would apply. There is no strong evidence of more claimants starting provision in 2004/05 than in previous years. In 2003/04, 63 per cent of claimants who were referred to provision started it, and in 2002/03, the corresponding figure was 62 per cent.

⁵ Again this represents an increase on previous years. For claimants who were identified with a potential basic skill need at screening, in 2002/03, 19 per cent were referred to provision, and in 2003/04, 25 per cent were referred to provision.

Here, in the same way as a large number of claimants ended their claims on the same day as they were referred to the IA, 25 per cent of claimants ended their claims on the same day that they were referred to provision. The remaining ten per cent did not start provision during the period for which we have data. Again we look what happened to these people following referral to provision and find that of the 7,608 claimants who did not start provision, 38 per cent of them ended their JSA claim within a month of the referral. We also suspect that for the remaining claimants data was not included on the database, although further examination of this information by district did not highlight the difference in the same way as for claimants who were not recorded as being referred to an IA.

2.2.5 Completing provision

At the end of October 2005, 1,559 claimants were still on provision meaning that 89 per cent of claimants who had started provision had ended their training in the period for which we have data. Roughly half of these were recorded as having completed provision. The remaining claimants were recorded as ending their provision or having left provision early. Claimants who did not complete training may be subject to sanctions, but many of them will have left training because they ended their benefit claim or because they got a job.

2.2.6 Summary of the basic skills process

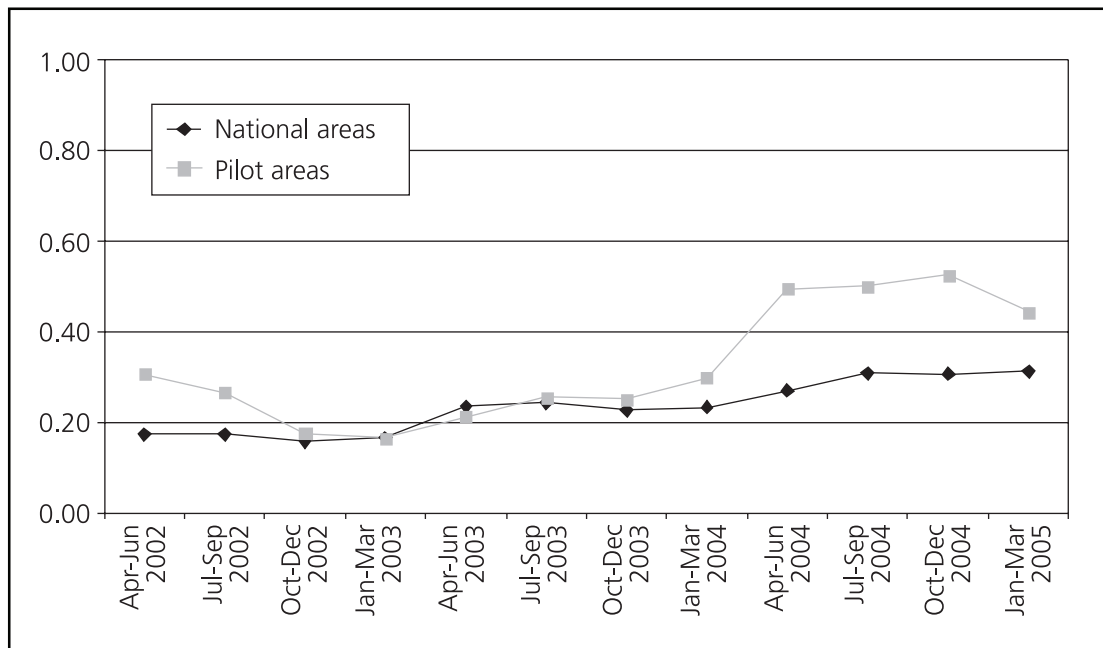
The numbers of people identified as passing through the basic skills process broadly reflect the intended nature of the process. There are relatively few people who were recorded as still on the basic skills programme who were not referred to either IA or provision. However, there was a large number of claimants who were recorded as leaving the basic skills programme on the same day as they were referred to IA or provision. Cross checking this data with their benefit spells indicated that many of these claimants left benefit within a short period of time from their screening. Furthermore, at least in the case of IA referral, there was considerable variation by district which may indicate that data was poorly recorded on the database in some Jobcentres. We will need to be careful to assess whether there were differences in these numbers between pilot and national areas.

3 Delivering the mandatory training pilot

This chapter explores the mandatory training pilot. It looks at the process of delivering the pilot and also considers advisers', providers' and customers' views towards the process. Specifically, it starts by considering the proportion of claimants in pilot and national areas who were referred to provision both before and after the introduction of the pilot, it then looks at the process of referring customers to training; the communication of the mandatory aspect of training; and it also considers advisers' and customers' awareness, knowledge and experience of the sanctioning regime, including Decision Making and Appeals (DMA) procedures.

3.1 Referral to provision

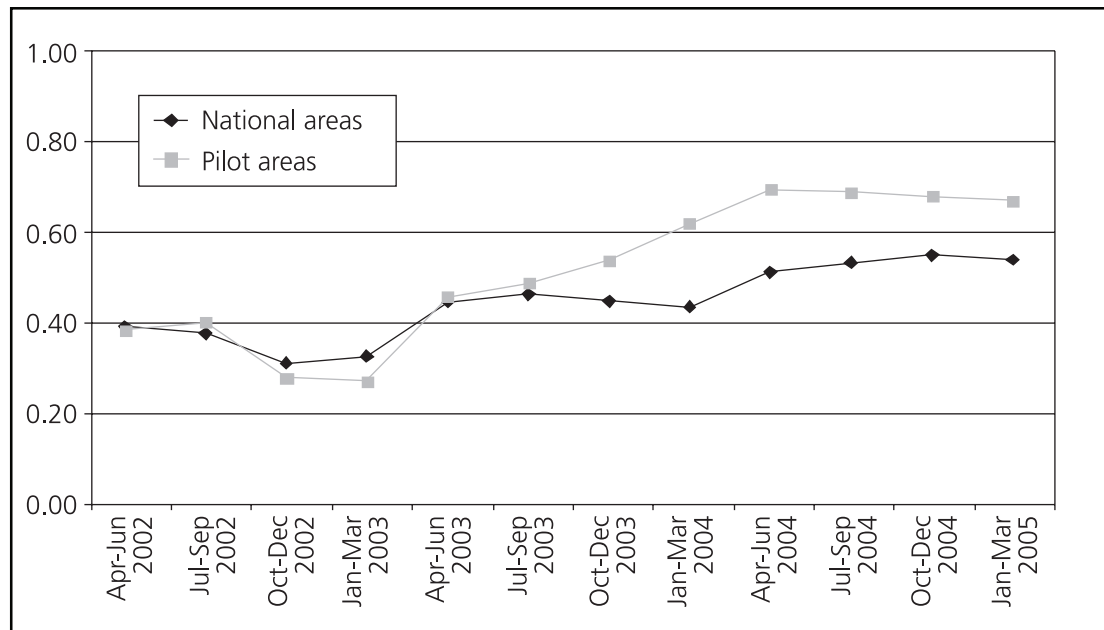
Figure 3.1 plots the proportion of claimants referred to provision who were identified as having a potential basic skills need at screening. The previous section highlighted that in 2004/05 roughly 40 per cent of claimants were referred to provision. Figure 3.1 shows that in 2004/05 in pilot areas roughly 50 per cent of claimants were referred to provision compared to around 30 per cent in comparison areas.

Figure 3.1 Proportion of claimants who were referred to provision

Following the Difference-in-Difference methodology outlined in Appendix B, we assess the impact of the pilot by comparing differences between pilot and national areas after the introduction of the pilot with differences before the introduction of the pilot. Here we observe a large increase in the proportion of claimants that were referred to provision in pilot areas following pilot introduction that is not matched in national areas. Thus it appears that increased provision referral is an impact of the pilot. This is somewhat puzzling because the policy in pilot and national areas is exactly the same regarding referral to provision.

Figure 3.2 sheds some light on the reason why there is an increase in provision referrals in pilot areas. The pattern of the proportion of claimants referred to an Independent Assessment (IA) broadly mirrors that of provision referral above. Clearly more claimants are referred to an IA in pilot areas following the introduction of the pilot and this has a knock-on effect on the number of claimants who are referred to provision⁶.

⁶ We also examined the proportion of claimants who were referred directly to provision without being referred to an IA. In pilot and national areas, roughly seven per cent of claimants were referred directly to provision.

Figure 3.2 Proportion of claimants who were referred to an IA

It is unclear why more claimants are referred to an IA in pilot areas than national areas following the introduction of the pilot, but it is possible that in pilot areas the overall policy is implemented more rigorously than elsewhere precisely because advisers responsible for the pilot know that it will be carefully monitored and ensure that claimants who should be referred to an IA are actually referred. Further analysis of this data indicates that after the introduction of the pilot there was a reduction in the proportion of claimants recorded as leaving the basic skills programme on the day they were referred to an IA and referred to provision in pilot areas compared with national areas.

This may be important for the assessment of the impact of the pilot if different types of claimant are referred following the introduction of the pilot compared with before the pilot. We assess the importance of this issue by conducting all our analysis both including and excluding claimants who leave basic skills on the day they were referred to IA and provision. It turns out that this makes little difference to the nature of the pilot impact.

Referral to training tended to take place during the IA follow-up meeting/pre-entry interview⁷ during which the adviser would provide feedback from the IA and if the customer was found to have a basic skills need they were referred to training at this point. During this meeting advisers would discuss the:

- **type of training provision** the customer was being referred to, such as Basic Employability Training (BET) or Short Intensive Basic Skills (SIBS);

⁷ It varied according to whether two separate meetings took place. This tended to depend on whether it was realistic to fit in another appointment before the training start date.

- **training provider** they would be referred to in the area;
- **course content.** Customers were provided with basic information on the content of the course they were being referred to;
- **financial incentives** provided for attending training⁸; and
- **mandatory nature of training** in outline only.

The referral process was generally seen as being straightforward and there was minimal evidence of any change in the way it was undertaken by advisers between stages of the qualitative research.

3.1.1 Choosing the type of provision

In most cases, discussions regarding the type of provision were minimal, as advisers tended to follow the recommendations made by the IA provider. Advisers were generally of the view that IA results matched well with the type of provision they perceived the customer as needing, and therefore felt customers were being referred to the most appropriate course.

However, in some instances advisers felt the choice of provider was unsuitable, either because they felt there was a 'mismatch' between the customers' skills and the course they were referred to (e.g. referred to BET when they were more suited to SIBS or vice versa); or as vocational training was felt to be more appropriate for a customer in comparison to basic skills training. Adviser discretion was occasionally being used in these situations, for example referring customers to SIBS training instead of the recommended BET where the scores were very close. There were examples of advisers working with the provider to tailor training for customers in cases where they thought it would be inappropriate and not meet customers' needs as it stood.

As might be expected, customers rarely had any input into the type of the provision they undertook.

3.1.2 Choosing the training provider

While recommendations regarding the type of provision were given by the assessors, the decision about the choice of provider was generally taken by the adviser in consultation with the customer. However, this was limited by the fact that in some areas there was only one BET or one SIBS provider from which to choose. Where there was more than one provider for the type of training required, the adviser would generally liaise with the customer about the choice. Decisions were usually based on the location of the provider, for example whichever was geographically closest to the customer or easiest to get to.

⁸ See: *Evaluation of Basic Skills mandatory training pilot and national enhancements: interim report* (Joyce et al., 2005)

3.1.3 Course content

Details about the course content and the provider were also covered as part of the referral process, although generally not in much detail. Typically the adviser would give the customer practical information, such as where the provider was located; details on the course duration; and confirm the start date and time. In terms of the course content, the information given was minimal; advisers would usually say the course included literacy, numeracy and job search.

Customers often suggested they would have liked to have received more information on the provider and the course content before they started in order to give them a clearer understanding of what to expect. It was suggested this information might have helped to prepare customers for the course mentally and practically, as well as having the knock-on effect of reducing anxiety about attending.

Advisers often recognised they had limited knowledge about course content and as a consequence were unable to expand on the nature of training provision.

3.1.4 Difficulties experienced with referral

Although the processes involved in referring customers to provision were generally straightforward, two main problems were highlighted by advisers during stages one and two: the accessibility of training and the level of availability of courses.

Inaccessibility of training

Across the districts, the location of training providers was often identified as being a problem as they were not always deemed to be easily accessible to customers. Advisers often mentioned the need for customers to travel long distances to training and suggested that some customers travelled for up to 90 minutes each way. While this problem was more common in rural areas or larger districts, it was not limited to these areas and was also noted in some urban areas. A number of reasons were given for this by advisers:

- **The geographic organisation of provision** – customers located in the smaller towns and villages often had to travel to larger towns in order to attend provision.
- **Insufficient provision in place at the start of the pilot**, particularly SIBS provision.
- **Training courses being full to capacity**, which meant customers were on some occasions required to travel further than would otherwise be necessary to attend a course with capacity.

Advisers felt that the inaccessibility of the training provision was unfair on those who were required to travel long distances. Moreover, it was also said to make it more difficult to sell the concept of training to customers.

Availability of training

Another difficulty mentioned regarding the referral process was the long waiting lists for provision experienced in some areas. During stage one of the research, advisers reported waiting lists in excess of a month, with waiting lists of two months being mentioned in extreme cases. Waiting time for customers referred to SIBS was often said to be longer than for customers referred to BET training, as although the number of SIBS referrals was lower overall, there was thought to have been less SIBS provision in place at the outset.

'Here there have been problems with provision and I'm aware of one provider in particular who are seven or eight weeks behind because they couldn't cope with the amount of people coming through.'

(Wolverhampton, adviser, stage one)

The lack of availability of training places was generally thought to have been a result of the flow of customers being referred to provision at the start of the pilot, which some suggested was higher than anticipated.

Importantly, lack of availability was said to have resulted in some customers being 'in limbo' while they waited for their courses to commence and this was compounded by the fact that advisers were unable to refer them to any other courses during this time.

The problem of training availability had dissipated over time; this was as a result of; more training providers being brought on board and those who were on board having increased their capacity; and the number of customers being referred onto training having levelled off. For the most part, by stage two customers included in the study said they started training within a week or two of their IA follow-up meeting.

3.2 Communicating the mandatory pilot

The mandatory aspect of training and sanctions was generally communicated to customers at the point of referral to provision, such as the pre-training interview⁹, although the mandatory nature of training had in some instances been mentioned in a general sense during earlier meetings, for example at the point of referring the customer to IA.

The mandatory aspect of training was communicated in two ways, using verbal explanation and using written material.

⁹ Pre-entry to training meeting and IA follow up were often the same meeting. In these cases, the IA follow-up meeting booked in prior to the IA evolved into a pre-entry to training meeting when the IA result suggested a training need existed.

3.2.1 Verbal communication

The nature of the information provided to customers by advisers at this stage was said to vary. Across all districts and Jobcentres, advisers said they informed customers of the mandatory nature of training, for example they told customers that it was a 'compulsory' programme. However, in some instances they provided additional information on the sanctioning regime, such as information on the possible length of the sanction; the benefits affected by a sanction; and details of alternative benefits that could be claimed should a sanction be imposed. Information regarding reconsideration or appeals procedures were usually not said to have been mentioned until a sanction referral was made.

Customers' recall of their pre-entry to training meeting appeared to support this assertion, as customers were generally able to recall a verbal discussion with their adviser regarding the mandatory aspect of training. In addition to this, customers often mentioned mandation being reiterated by providers at their training induction and this latter explanation was often seen as being instrumental to their understanding. Conversely, there were instances where customers were unable to recall this discussion and did not believe they had been informed about their obligation to attend training.

The degree to which mandation was emphasised also varied, with some advisers being upfront about mandation and outlining it in detail and others adopting a more discreet approach to communication. This said, overall the approach adopted tended to be relatively gentle with a light touch.

The advisers generally presented mandation as part of the customers' general contract with the Jobcentre; in the spirit of the Jobseeker's Agreement, for example, to emphasise that the customer was signing on to demonstrate availability for work and not just to receive benefits. Advisers also made it clear that mandation was not discretionary and applied to everyone regardless of race, religion, education and age. Advisers were mindful of the basic skills needs of customers, and tried to use plain language such as saying 'having your money stopped' rather than 'sanctions', although it was said that advisers did use these terms and this was also noted in observations. Customers tended to recall advisers mentioning 'having money stopped', but the term 'sanction' was also recognised in some cases.

Variations in adviser approach were not generally said to be the result of a coherent district or Jobcentre policy, rather differences occurred on an individual basis according to the general approach adopted by the adviser and also based on the perceived needs of particular customer types, with more resistant customers (or those perceived as such) being provided with more detailed information. In some instances, advisers suggested they would not mention sanctions overtly to customers they perceived to be compliant.

Importantly, basic skills training courses were very much sold to customers using the full range of tools available to the advisers, rather than simply using mandation as a threat. Advisers described having a 'package' of incentives to encourage customers

to attend training that included: emphasising the potential employment benefits of attending training; improving soft skills; gaining the required skills to help with their children's education; and receiving a financial incentive or reward. Mandating customers to training, or using sanctions as a threat, was generally seen as a back-up to be used when customers were more resistant, as a last resort. However, the success of this approach was thought to depend on the level of resistance posed by the customer and mandation was used as a threat for resistant customers.

Views on verbally communicating mandation

The ease with which advisers communicated the mandatory nature of training was thought to be dependent on their experience and skill. The more experienced advisers were not only said to have the necessary skills to communicate this, but they were also said to feel more confident when doing so.

Using sanctions as a threat was in some instances seen as a failure on the part of the adviser as it was felt advisers should be able persuade customers to attend training using other means, such as the personal benefits, if they were sufficiently skilled.

Aside from levels of skill and confidence, advisers mentioned other reasons for feeling uncomfortable about communicating mandation, including:

- **disagreeing with the principle of mandation per se;**
- **querying the appropriateness of basic skills training**, particularly for those customers who it was felt would benefit more from vocational training; and
- **geographical inaccessibility of the training provider**, which was said to result in long travelling times for some customers.

Much emphasis was placed on the verbal communication of mandation by advisers and it was generally seen as being the most important and effective form of communication, over and above written information provided.

3.2.2 Written communication

In addition to verbal discussions, advisers also provided customers with written information regarding mandation, usually in the form of the mandatory referral letter. Although the letter was generally delivered to customers, as with the verbal communication, the emphasis placed on this letter by advisers and the method of delivery varied. Findings suggest that where it was being used the mandatory referral letter was either being delivered during the pre-entry to training meeting or it was sent in the post at a later date. There was evidence of a departure from the use of the mandatory referral letter in some areas, according to advisers. For example, in one area advisers were using their discretion and choosing not to issue the letter, and in another an alternative locally constructed letter was being used instead.

Customers' recall of receiving the letter was low overall. In some instances customers were unsure if they had received the mandatory referral letter or not, as

they found it hard to differentiate between the paperwork given at meetings. In other cases, customers had no recollection of a letter and some were categorical in their belief that they had not received it.

Approaches to delivering the letter also varied, with some advisers outlining the content of the letter in detail and others paying it little attention. In these latter cases, advisers generally drew the customer's attention to the letter and then gave it to them to take away and read. Time constraints were given as the main reason for this approach. Explanations and delivery of the letter were in some instances said to be interlinked with the verbal discussion itself and involved the adviser talking to the customer about mandation more generally but using the letter as a prop to assist with the discussion. In contrast, other advisers suggested that it was distributed alongside the delivery of other paperwork, for example, in some New Deal interviews it was completed as part of the Action Plan. This approach might account for some of the confusion expressed by customers regarding the mandatory referral letter and other paperwork received.

Those who thought they did recall the letter varied in their ability to recollect details and were often uncertain about the nature of the content. In cases where customers were able to recall details, they suggested the letter said they would be attending training and that if they did not attend they would lose their benefit. It was described by one customer as an early written warning.

Views on providing written communication

Advisers generally believed that delivery of the mandatory referral letter should occur in conjunction with a verbal explanation in order to ensure its effective communication. Using the two mediums together was thought to be an effective approach, a 'double whammy', to assist customers in their understanding. The letter itself was thought by advisers and customers alike to 'hit the spot' in terms of its message and language and it was thought to make the point very clearly and precisely. Notwithstanding this, the letter was seen as being 'heavy handed', particular the wording which was said to be 'harsh' and 'blunt'. Moreover, it was seen as being unnecessarily complex and couched in hard to understand and legal-sounding language.

Advisers thought it was important to provide customers with a written synopsis of their obligations which customers could use as a reference as required. They highlighted the need for this document to be suitable for customers with basic skill needs. By way of recommendation, they called for an easy to understand booklet or pamphlet outlining the key aspects of training and mandation that could be provided at the referral meeting.

3.3 Awareness and knowledge of mandation and the sanctions regime

Although customers were not usually familiar with the term 'sanction', they were generally aware that if Jobcentre rules were not followed then their benefit could be stopped or suspended. Despite this, customers often suggested that prior to actually receiving a sanction, they questioned whether the Jobcentre would actually follow through with this threat and in some instances they suspected the Jobcentre were 'playing their bluff'. In particular, they did not believe that the Jobcentre would stop all their benefit, especially in cases where they were supporting a family.

'Not really, she did tell me that the sanction would be made, but I didn't think they'd stop my allowance.'

(Wolverhampton and Walsall, sanctioned, male)

More specifically, in terms of training provision, customers tended to be aware that training was 'compulsory' and that they could receive a sanction if they either failed to attend the course or exceeded the permitted level of absence for sick leave or holiday, which respondents often suggested was ten days. Receiving a sanction as a result of misconduct was not usually mentioned.

'Yes, you were permitted ten days off...you could have unexplained absences no more than ten days, and you would get thrown out off the course, that was the major sanction, that is what would happen.'

(South London, completed course, male)

In addition to this, customers mentioned other offences for which they believed customers could be sanctioned, including: not actively seeking work; failure to sign; fraud; or as a result of not reporting a change in circumstance.

In instances where customers had been sanctioned, they generally exhibited a clear understanding of the reasons for this. They also suggested that they had usually been pre-warned by the training provider or adviser, or they were at least aware they were contravening the rules before this occurred. The main exception to this was when a sanction was received for exceeding absence entitlements, primarily when this had been exceeded as a consequence of the accumulation of late attendance rather than non-attendance, as customers suggested they became confused about how many days off they had taken in total.

Customers generally suspected that sanctions were imposed to encourage or 'force' people to comply with the Jobcentre's rules and in some instances it was also perceived as being a form of 'punishment' for not doing as you were told.

Despite this general awareness of the principle of sanctioning and the primary reason for receiving one, the level of knowledge expressed about more specific details of the regime varied, with certain customers exhibiting detailed knowledge and others no understanding at all. This included knowledge on such issues as the

length of a sanction; the type of benefit affected; alternative funds available; and the DMA team. Unsurprisingly, variations in knowledge tended to be related to personal experience of the sanctions regime as well as experience of the benefit system more widely.

A range of time frames were proposed for the possible length of a sanction with customers usually suggesting between four weeks to six months in length. In terms of the type of benefit to be affected by a sanction, customers generally thought it would all be stopped, although there was some confusion and uncertainty about Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and National Insurance.

'Well, the amount of time that you could be sanctioned for could be any time that they see fit and when you get sanctioned its your whole cheque. Its not just like a certain percentage of the money you get, its everything...to resolve it – the best thing that you can do is just wait until the sanction is over.'

(Berkshire, sanctioned, male)

'I did go afterwards when they said if you don't go your benefits can be affected but I didn't realise that they were going to be stopped altogether.'

(Hull and East Riding, sanctioned, male)

Alternative funds, such as the hardship allowance and the crisis loan, were also highlighted by customers. In some instances, customers had experience of actually enquiring about or applying for the funds, although for the most part these applications were either unsuccessful, or customers were put off from applying by the length of time they were told it would take to process a claim and also by the idea that they would have to pay back the money. More exceptionally, customers had received a crisis payment, for example, one respondent suggested they received £80 to help pay their rent.

'Last time I got sanctioned it was for roughly about a month and I think when I went to ask for a crisis loan, they offered me something like £17 and that I'd have to pay back as well when I got my money so I didn't really bother with it.'

(Berkshire, sanctioned, male)

Although customers were often aware of the existence of the DMA team, detailed knowledge was limited overall. They were often identified as being separate from the Jobcentre and in some instances, were linked to the Benefits Agency instead. It was usually understood that they made decisions about sanctions and were described as 'adjudicators' and in addition to this they were also seen as being the 'complaints department'.

Customers' awareness and knowledge of the sanctions regime came from a wide range of sources including:

- verbal and written information provided by the Jobcentre or Benefits Agency;
- verbal and written information provided by training providers;

- word of mouth via family or friends; and importantly through
- direct experience of being sanctioned.

3.3.1 Decision making and appeals

Advisers highlighted some problems with the process of referring customers to decision makers and the decision making process itself, which they believed resulted in overall delays to the process; increased workload; and a lack of trust in procedures. It should be noted these issues were not discussed with the DMA team as part of the research and therefore are only considered from the perspective of advisers. The main problems identified were:

- **DMA staff rejecting referrals made by advisers on the grounds of the wording used.** Advisers explained the wording used in the paperwork needed to be very specific or it was not accepted by DMA. This was thought to make the referral process more time-consuming and ultimately increased adviser workload;
- **sanctions decision made in favour of customers.** Advisers felt that the DMA team often found in favour of customers when they believed they should not have. It was suggested that customers knew how to take advantage of the system by using excuses that they knew would be accepted, such as caring for children or illness and that the perceived leniency of the DMA team was said to foster this mentality. Advisers believed this caused them to have to re-refer customers who would not adhere to the rules and worked to undermine the programme;
- **level of paperwork.** Advisers said that DMA referrals resulted in advisers having to complete a considerable amount of paperwork as well as having to answer a number of questions, both of which were time consuming.

Overall, customers' recall and understanding of the DMA process tended to be rather confused and uncertain, and this included understanding of the referral process and hearing about the decision. Customers tended to recall receiving some communication about the sanction and this communication generally took place in two main ways: either by letter or face to face by an adviser and/or training provider.

Although customers tended to understand the general 'gist' of the communication, i.e. they were being referred to or had received a sanction, in some cases respondents suggested they found it rather confusing, particularly the written communication and this was often said to be a result of the difficulties they experienced with their basic skills and also as a result of receiving multiple letters which were thought to be contradictory.

'I received a few letters, but the letter, it was confusing, one day they'd say something and the other one would say something else.'

(Wolverhampton and Walsall, sanctioned, male)

However, not all respondents who took part in the study recalled being informed about the sanction referral or indeed the sanction decision itself and those who did not recall receiving a letter suggested they often first heard about the sanction when their benefit was stopped, in some cases, at the point of drawing out their benefit only to find they had not received any.

Once they had been informed of the DMA referral, in some cases customers discussed the sanction referral with their adviser; usually it was said to outline the reasons for the referral and see if they could get the referral lifted. In some instances, they recalled the adviser making a note of the reasons they gave and putting these onto the computer and others suggested they completed a statement which outlined the reasons for their conduct and the adviser told them this information would be sent to the decision making team to be considered. In contrast, it was said that advisers did not always ask or appear to be interested in the reason for the sanction referral and these were not always discussed; rather, customers felt they were being passed over to the decision making team for them to deal with the issue.

'They don't really want to listen to you when you get to the Jobcentre at all, they try to fob you off and give you to the complaints department, they don't really listen to you.'

(Wolverhampton and Walsall, sanctioned, male)

Jobcentre advisers were often seen as being keen to follow through with a sanction and they were often criticised for seeming generally inflexible. This said, there were some instances of discretion being used by advisers, especially in terms of changing courses or benefit following a complaint or discussion with customers.

Following initial discussions with the adviser, direct contact with the DMA team tended to be minimal and any subsequent contact was usually made via the adviser. There was some recall of requests for further information being made by the DMA team but aside from this, little contact was highlighted. Ideally, customers suggested they would have liked more contact with the DMA team, particularly verbal contact, primarily in order to outline the reasons leading to the sanction and to more fully outline and express their circumstances.

Experience or at least recall of DMA 'reconsiderations' were minimal. However, there were instances of these having been carried out where additional evidence had been produced by the customers, such as a doctor's certificate. Customers were more familiar with the concept of an 'appeal', although they suggested they were not inclined to make one – it was largely deemed to be a futile exercise once a decision had been made as customers felt it was unusual for the decision to be overturned.

4 The impact of the mandatory training pilot

This chapter explores the impact of the mandatory training pilot. It considers the statistical impact in terms of training provision and job attainment as well as the impact from the viewpoint of advisers, customers and providers in terms of mandation, training and sanctions. Routes undertaken by customers following training provision and receiving a sanction are also considered.

4.1 Impact of mandation

4.1.1 Impact on attending training

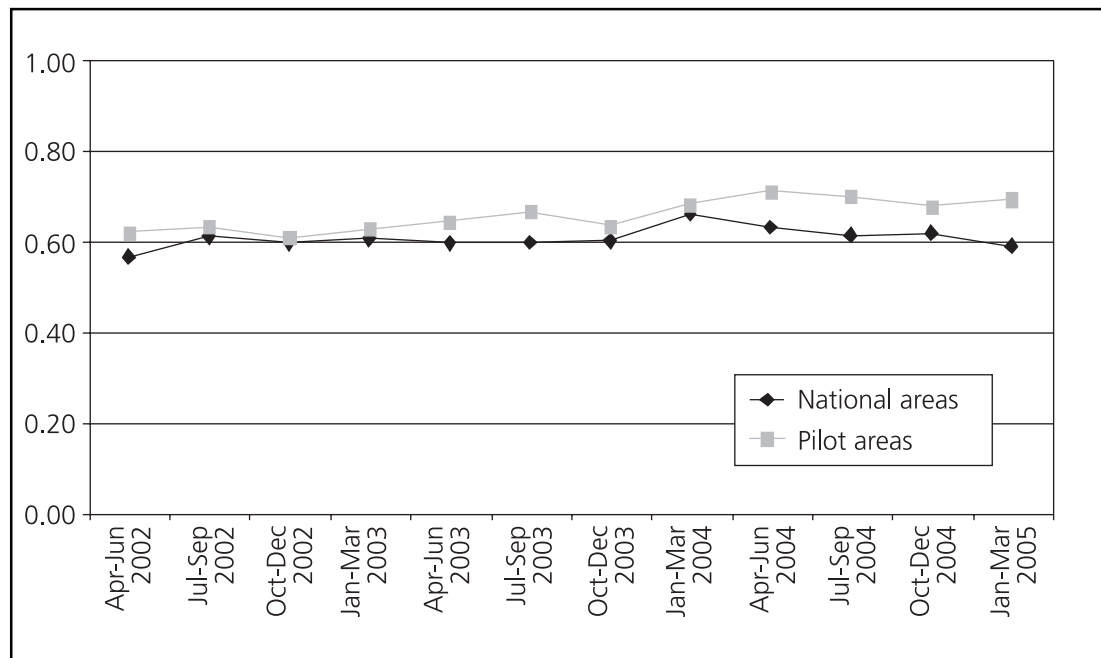
The aim of the pilot was to increase the number of claimants who undertook and completed basic skills training. The previous chapter highlighted that following the introduction of the pilot there were more claimants in pilot areas than national areas who were referred to provision. Given that the pilot policy is not operative for claimants at this stage of the process and without a clear explanation of this increase it is not possible to say that this is a pilot impact that we would expect to see elsewhere if the pilot were introduced nationwide.

The mandatory nature of the pilot is active following the point of referral to provision so here we consider what happens to claimants following referral to provision. Figure 2.2 showed that in 2004/05 a little less than 22,000 claimants were referred to provision. Given the differential rates of provision referral, roughly 14,000 of these claimants were in pilot areas and roughly 8,000 in national areas.

Starting provision

Figure 4.1 shows the proportion of these claimants who started provision following referral in pilot and national areas, given that they were referred to provision between April 2002 and March 2005. Throughout the period, roughly 60 per cent of claimants in national areas started provision. In pilot areas, a slightly higher proportion of claimants started provision before the pilot were introduced, but after the pilot was introduced in April 2004, this proportion increased slightly such that roughly two-thirds of claimants who were referred to provision started it.

Figure 4.1 Proportion of claimants who started provision given they were referred



Thus it appears that the pilot has increased the proportion of claimants who started provision. We assess this in a robust manner by estimating linear probability models for the probability of starting provision given referral. As discussed in detail in Appendix B, we compare differences between the pilot and national areas before and after the introduction of the pilot. However, before we can do this, we need to provide an assessment of the baseline period against which the pilot period can be assessed.

To do this we estimate the probability of starting provision (given referral to provision) over the two year period before the introduction of the pilot and include a variable that identifies the pilot areas relative to national areas in 2002/03 compared to pilot areas and national areas in 2003/04. The aim is to check whether the national areas are a good benchmark upon which to assess the impact of the pilot. If we identify significant changes in our measures of interest between pilot and national areas before the introduction of the pilot and do not understand what causes those differences, then we cannot be confident whether any differences observed after the introduction of the pilot are a result of the pilot or to do with changes before pilot introduction.

The results of our models are presented in Table 4.1, with full models reported in Appendix D. The top panel of Table 4.1 presents estimates of the pre-pilot period and the bottom panel presents the pilot impact estimates.

The estimate for 2002/03 presented in the top row of Table 4.1 indicates that when we estimate a model with no control variables, 1.8 per cent fewer claimants started provision in 2002/03 compared with 2003/04 in pilot areas compared with national

areas. However, this estimate is not statistically significantly different from zero. This means that the difference between pilot and national areas in the percentage of claimants starting provision in 2002/03 and 2003/04 was not significantly different. Similarly, when we include control variables¹⁰ in our model the estimate is not statistically significant and hence we argue that we can include both years in our comparison period.

The bottom panel of Table 4.1 provides the impact estimates against this two-year baseline. Here we find that when including all control variables (bottom row of Table 4.1), the pilot increased the probability of starting training by five percentage points¹¹. The estimate is statistically significant.

This means that following the introduction of the pilot, there were five per cent more claimants who were referred to provision that started it in pilot areas compared to national areas. This is relative to referrals and starts to provision before the introduction of the pilot. We can translate this increased probability of starting training into numbers of people by applying the 95 per cent confidence interval of the estimate to the number of people in pilot areas who were referred to provision in 2004/05. This indicates that the pilot increased the number of people who undertook training in the pilot areas by between 500 and 1,000, with a point estimate of around 750.

Table 4.1 Estimates of the probability of starting provision

	DiD ¹ coefficient	Standard error	Controls included	Sample size
Assessment of pre-pilot period: Models estimated from April 2002 to March 2004				
2002/03	-0.018	0.013	No	22,061
2002/03	-0.014	0.013	Yes	22,061
Pilot impact: Models estimated from April 2002 to March 2005				
2004/05	+0.043	0.009	No	44,046
2004/05	+0.052	0.009	Yes	44,046

For full model results see Appendix D

¹ Difference-in-Difference (DiD)

¹⁰ The control variables included in the model: are an interaction term identifying pilot and year of referral (or starting provision depending on the model); pilot area identifier; year identifier; whether recorded as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); gender; ethnicity; age; proportion of time on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) in previous five years; number of JSA claims in previous five years; district identifiers.

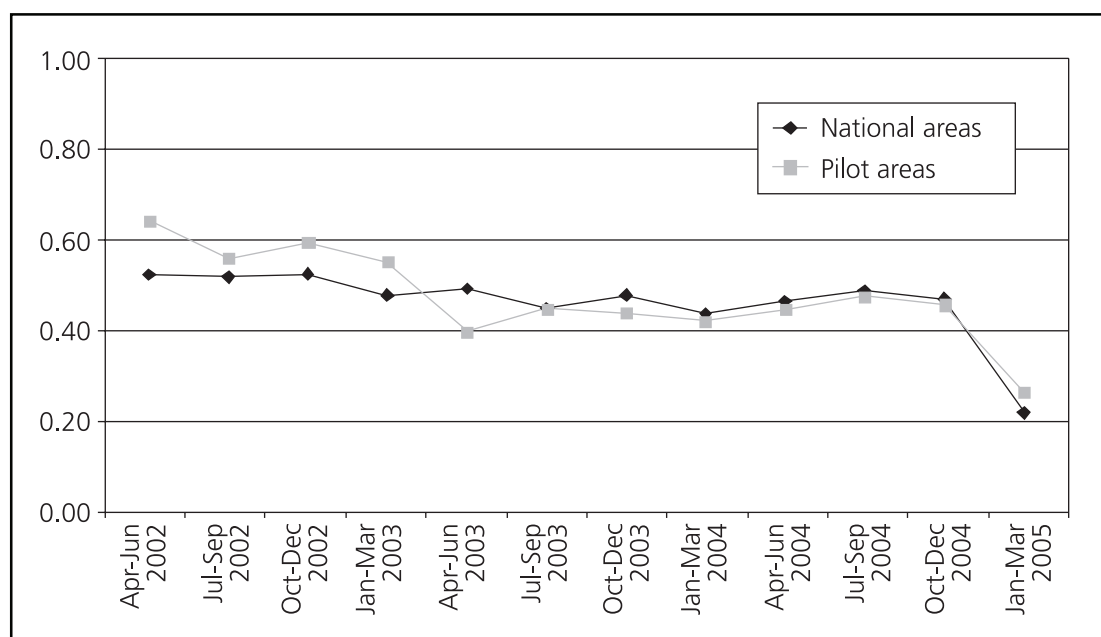
¹¹ Similar results were found when we excluded from the sample all claimants who left the basic skills programme on the same day that they were referred to Independent Assessment (IA) and/or provision.

Completing provision

Figure 4.2 shows the proportion of claimants who completed provision in pilot and national areas given that they started provision between April 2002 and March 2005. From April 2003 to December 2004 roughly half the claimants in pilot and national areas completed provision. Before this, a slightly higher proportion of claimants in pilot areas completed provision, while in the final quarter roughly a quarter of claimants completed provision in both pilot and national areas. The reason for this drop in the final quarter is that the follow-up period is insufficient for all the people to fully participate in training.

This problem is amplified by the fact that in many areas there were considerable waiting times to start provision. We would expect that with a longer follow-up period we would observe a higher proportion of claimants completing provision who started provision between January and March 2005. We have no evidence here of any differential impact between pilot and national areas, hence we believe that this limited follow-up period will not affect the nature of the pilot impact.

Figure 4.2 Proportion of claimants who completed provision given that they started



Again we estimate models for the probability of completing training in the same way as we did for starting training. The top panel of Table 4.2 presents our pre-pilot period estimates for the probability of completing training in pilot areas compared to national areas in 2002/03 relative to 2003/04 which are positive and significant. This reflects the higher proportion of claimants who completed provision in 2002/03 in pilot areas compared to national areas. This poses a dilemma as to what should be our baseline period against which to assess the impact of the pilot. We cannot include both years in our comparison period. We see no reason to exclude the period directly before the introduction of the pilot, especially given it represents a stable pattern within that year, so we choose to use 2003/04 as our comparison period.

The bottom panel of Table 4.2 again provides the impact estimates. The estimates show that when we include all our control variables in the models the pilots have increased the probability of starting training by around three percentage points¹². Again the estimate is statistically significant.

We can again translate this increased probability of completing training into numbers of people. Here the estimates indicate that the pilot increased the number of people completing training by up to 600, with a point estimate of around 300 people.

Table 4.2 Estimates of the probability of completing provision

	DiD coefficient	Standard error	Controls included	Sample size
Assessment of pre-pilot period: Models estimated from April 2002 to March 2004				
2002/03	+0.117	0.018	No	13,065
2002/03	+0.112	0.018	Yes	13,065
Pilot impact: Models estimated from April 2003 to March 2005				
2004/05	+0.046	0.015	No	21,642
2004/05	+0.031	0.015	Yes	21,642

For full model results see Appendix D.

Qualitative evidence

The qualitative data supports the above evidence. It suggests that overall the threat of sanctions was instrumental in encouraging and ultimately persuading customers to attend training, particularly those who were resistant to the idea of doing so.

Certainly, there were customers in the sample who suggested they attended training willingly without the threat of a sanction and indeed in some cases, customers said they actually requested a place on the course. This usually occurred in situations where the customer felt the training would be of benefit to them, either as a result of improving their basic skills and consequently their future employment or training opportunities, or for more personal reasons such as engaging in an activity to occupy their time. On the whole, ESOL customers tended to be much more willing to attend than other customers, primarily as they accepted their basic skill needs and as a result more clearly recognised the need for training.

Despite this willingness, the mandatory aspects of training were overwhelmingly highlighted as the key reason for attending and remaining on the course and it is clear that without the threat of a sanction, a number of respondents would not have chosen to attend. Although the main sway of the mandatory programme rested

¹² Again we find similar results if we exclude claimants who end/leave the basic skills programme on the day that they start provision.

with the threat of loss of benefit, more exceptionally the rules were adhered to simply as respondents felt morally they should 'abide by the law' and conform to the rules of the Jobcentre, even if they did not want to attend.

Although the mandatory aspect of training was usually sufficient to overcome low levels of resistance, it was not always sufficient to ensure customers adhered to the rules and attended or remained on the training course. Certainly there were cases where customers chose not to attend in spite of the knowledge that they could receive a sanction. Primarily this tended to occur in cases where training was perceived as being irrelevant or where customers held negative views about the training course itself.

Clearly, it seems that if people are resistant and determined not to attend training, the threat of sanctions will not impact on their decision. For example, one respondent explained how nothing would have made them stay on the course despite having a family to support, as they did not think it was going to be of benefit to them.

'They just said that my money would be stopped and I said fair enough, there's no way I'm going to do that course, now or in the future. So that was the end of that. I've been stopped about twice now. I'm just waiting to get stopped again now.'

(Hull and East Riding, sanctioned, male)

In addition to the impact of mandation on attendance, the impact on customers' attitude and behaviour towards training was also explored. Again the views expressed by customers tended to be mixed and differed according to whether it was seen as having an impact or not.

As might be expected, training was generally viewed more positively when it was seen as the respondent's own choice as they usually had a genuine desire to succeed. However, the mandatory nature of the course was also thought to act as a positive pressure for those who did not want to attend training and this occurred for a number of reasons:

- Customers understood they had to complete the course and so decided to make the best out of the situation by engaging in the training.
- Customers wanted to prove to the Jobcentre that they did not need basic skills training by showing them that they could easily manage the course and pass the qualifications.
- Customers were concerned that they would lose money if they did not fully engage with the course and behave in an appropriate manner towards the tutors and other attendees.

In contrast, it was also said to have resulted in an apathetic and negative attitude towards training and this occurred mainly as customers felt they had been 'forced' to attend the course against their will and also as they assumed the training would not

be of benefit to them. Although respondents did not suggest this attitude had impacted on their own behaviour during the course (apart from contributing to the reasons why they decided to leave), they did think it had affected the behaviour of fellow course attendees who were described as having been disruptive on occasions.

Importantly, the actual experience of training was usually sufficient to override any preconceived views, either positive or negative, which meant negative views of training that occurred as a result of mandation did not necessarily affect the overall experience or impact of the training. Certainly, there was evidence of people with positive attitudes assessing their experience negatively and those who initially undertook the course with a negative attitude ultimately enjoying the course.

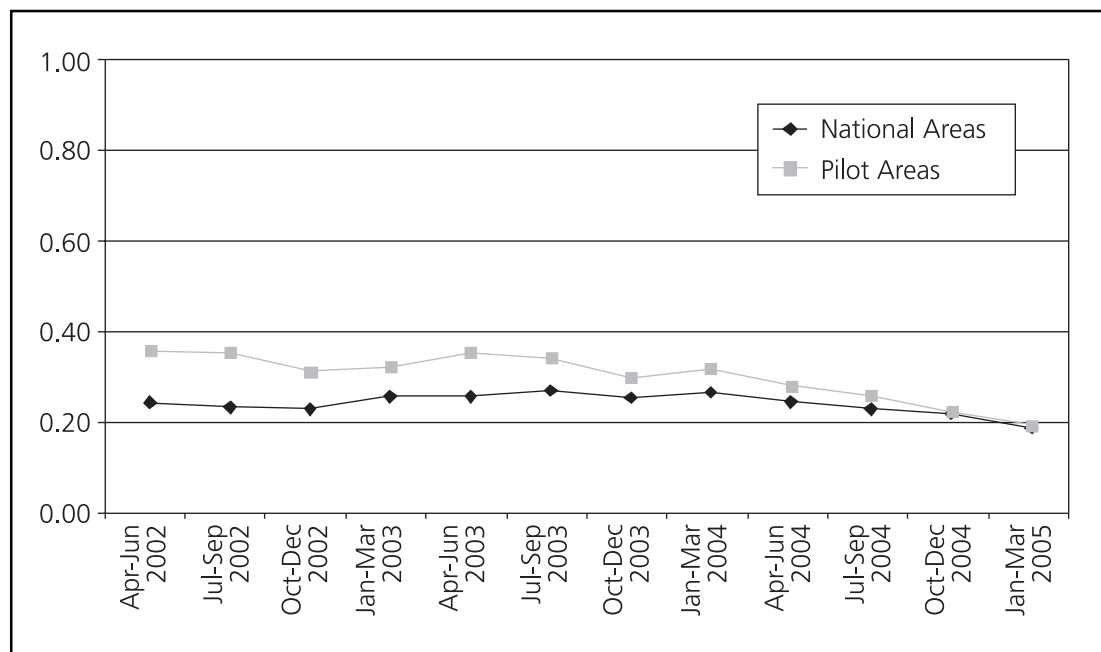
4.1.2 Job attainment

We also examine the impact of mandation on acquiring a job. The pilot may increase job entry for a number of reasons. Participation in basic skills training may improve skills so as to increase the likelihood of getting a job. As we have seen, the pilot increased the number of people undertaking training, so it may therefore also increase the number of people getting a job. An alternative hypothesis is that by making basic skills training mandatory some claimants will find work in order to avoid undertaking the training. In contrast, by making training mandatory some claimants will be directed to training who may at this time have got a job. Thus it is also possible that with our limited follow-up period we may find that the pilot reduced the probability of getting a job.

The job data that we use here is taken from the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study which uses Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs data in combination with Basic Skills Evaluation Database (BSED) data. There are a number of problems with the data, details of which are provided in Appendix C, and thus we are unable to explore in any detail the point in the basic skills process when claimants take a job. Here we focus exclusively on whether claimants who were referred to provision were more likely to get a job in pilot areas compared to national areas after the introduction of the pilot.

Figure 4.3 shows the proportion of claimants who got a job in pilot and national areas given that they were referred to provision between April 2002 and March 2005. Before the introduction of the pilot, a higher proportion of claimants in pilot areas got a job than claimants in national areas. However, following the introduction of the pilot this difference was reduced substantially.

Figure 4.3 Proportion of claimants who got a job given that they were referred to provision



The results of models for the probability of getting a job are presented in Table 4.3. These are similar to the models presented in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. Assessing the pre-pilot period we find that our estimate of the probability of getting a job in pilot areas compared with national areas in 2002/03 compared with 2003/04 is not statistically significant hence we can include both years in our comparison period.

The bottom panel of Table 4.3 again provides the impact estimates. The estimates show a negative impact on the probability of getting a job in pilot areas compared to national areas after the introduction of the pilot compared to before the introduction of the pilot. When we include all our control variables in the model the estimate indicates that the pilot has reduced the probability of getting a job by around three percentage points and this impact is statistically significant. Thus it seems that the pilot has moved claimants into training who may otherwise have got a job.

This may be because the data that we have used here does not provide an adequate follow-up period to allow participants to fully participate in training and then acquire a job. Our results are consistent with those of Bewley and Speckesser (2006) who explored long-term outcomes for participants in Work Based Learning for Adults (WBLA) using a propensity score matching approach. While they acknowledge some matching problems for some elements of the programme, in particular for Basic Employability Training (BET) participants, they find a weak employment impact for BET participants that only becomes statistically significant after 20 months, and a modest employment impact for participants in Short Job-Focused Training and Longer Occupational Training that only emerges six to nine months after starting the programme. For all elements of WBLA the employment impact was negative for the first three months following the start of the programme.

When taking into consideration a lack of providers in some areas and substantial waiting times to start training in some areas it may be that if we allowed a longer follow-up time we would observe some positive employment effects as a result of the pilot.

When applying the estimates to the number of people referred to training in pilot areas in 2004/05 we find that in the period under consideration the pilot reduced the number of people going into a job by up to 600, with a point estimate of around 300.

Table 4.3 Estimates of the probability of getting a job

	DiD coefficient	Standard error	Controls included	Sample size
Assessment of pre-pilot period: Models estimated from April 2002 to March 2004				
2002/03	+0.012	0.018	No	11,009
2002/03	-0.023	0.018	Yes	11,009
Pilot impact: Models estimated from April 2002 to March 2005				
2004/05	-0.063	0.012	No	21,981
2004/05	-0.034	0.012	Yes	21,981

For full model results see Appendix D.

4.2 The impact of training provision

4.2.1 Direct impacts

This section considers the immediate impact of basic skills training provision on customers from their own perspective. Customers mentioned a wide range of impacts resulting from their experience of undertaking the training programme, including: improved basic skills, job search skills and soft skills; gaining qualifications; widening horizons; increasing social activity; and employment experience. Importantly, the impacts mentioned appeared to be interlinked and reciprocally impacted on one another. In this way, increased basic skills led to improved soft skills, which in turn improved job search skills.

It is important to note that in some cases customers were unable to discern any tangible benefits or impacts occurring as a result of their attendance on training. This was generally said to be a result of the experience and quality of the training (which it was suggested varied enormously between courses¹³); the nature of training they had previously been engaged in; and the general attitude of customers towards training, which was often related to the perceived relevance of the course.

¹³ Variation in the quality of training courses was also highlighted in the BMRB qualitative interim report. Joyce *et al.*, July 2005.

The immediate impacts highlighted by customers are outlined below.

Improved skills

Generally customers who completed provision identified an improvement in their basic skill levels as a consequence. However, the improvements made by customers were said to vary according to a number of factors including the customers' experience of the training; their prior level of skill; and importantly, their general attitude towards training.

In terms of literacy skills, customers mentioned improving both their written and spoken English – particularly ESOL customers, and improved grammar and vocabulary were also both mentioned.

'It was good because there is some things which I did not know before and I learn from there. Yes, so for me it was a very good step for my life to get a good basic of English, numeracy, literacy, computer skills, this was very nice.'

(Berkshire, completed BET, male)

'No I wasn't looking for work because my English was poor. Now it's better.'

(South London, completed BET, male)

Improved levels of numeracy were also highlighted and those mentioned included, enhanced mental arithmetic, knowledge of metric measurements and decimal points.

Customers also gained computer skills and these skills were viewed extremely positively by respondents, as they recognised the relevance and value of these in helping them to find employment. Specifically, customers mentioned learning general Information Technology (IT) skills, such as using email and the internet, but also more detailed information about specific IT packages, such as Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

'Very big change, yes because I learn a lot of, for example in computers I learn about Microsoft Word, how to write a letter, how to print it, how to, I mean how to raise the margin, you want to write in a small shapes, I mean I learn more things about computers in Microsoft Word and Excel, PowerPoint and all that, it was very beneficial for us.'

(Berkshire, completed BET, male)

Qualifications

Customers mentioned gaining qualifications as a result of attending the training provision and these included both generic and basic skills certificates. On the whole, obtaining these qualifications was viewed extremely positively by respondents as it was felt that qualifications physically demonstrated the improvements they had made and the skills they had attained. Importantly, certificates were also thought to have worked to improve confidence, as customers felt it demonstrated their capability and they were often very 'proud' of their achievements. However, the usefulness of these qualifications in securing employment was questioned in certain cases.

Job search skills

Although respondents had usually experienced some form of job search training prior to attending the course (which was often said to closely align with that undertaken on the training), job search skills were often thought to have improved as a result of doing the basic skills course.

The activities that were identified as being particularly effective included: learning where to look for job vacancies; how to write or improve their CV; how to complete application forms and speculative letters; and improving interview techniques.

'Well the thing I picked up was more experience and know how to look for a job better than I what I did at the time.'

(Wolverhampton and Walsall, completed BETs, male)

Improved IT skills were said to have a positive knock-on impact on customers' ability to look for work as they were able to use the internet to look for jobs and type-up speculative letters for example. Moreover, increased confidence was said in some instances to have empowered respondents, particularly in relation to how they felt about contacting employers both to enquire about jobs and to gather feedback on interviews or applications made.

Soft skills

Participation in the course was said to have resulted in increased confidence and motivation in a number of cases, and gaining these soft skills was generally identified as one of the primary impacts of the training. Increased confidence and motivation had very much stemmed from the activities engaged in as part of the course as well as from the impacts of these, such as increased social activity, the widening of horizons, learning new skills, attending placements and gaining qualifications. For instance, it was suggested that simply travelling to the course and meeting new people had worked to increase customers' confidence.

In turn, increased confidence and motivation were said to have been hugely beneficial in terms of the knock-on impact this had on customers' ability to further improve other skills, such as their basic skills.

'I'm actually more inclined to go for jobs, I've got more determination, more motivation, I feel more confident about myself, so that's surely got to come across better at interview anyway, and in the way I write letters and everything else I would have thought. So I mean, yes, its definitely going to help matters, what I take away from the course. As to whether the certificate I've got is actually going to mean a lot to a general employer I'm not so sure, but I still think it was worth doing the course.'

(Dorset, completed BET, male)

'I gained the confidence to go out and meet people, and actually work on the computer, and do work, without asking people to help me out all the time.'

(Hull and East Riding, sanctioned, male)

Social activity

The increased social interaction which resulted from attending the course was identified as having a positive impact, mainly as it encouraged customers to mix with other people, often from a range of backgrounds and in some cases also led to friendships being formed that extended beyond the duration of the course. The importance of forming relationships and increasing social interaction should not be underestimated as it was of particular importance to a number of respondents who suggested they were otherwise socially isolated. The social activity created by the course was thought to have resulted in improved confidence.

Widened horizons and honed views

In some instances, involvement in the training was said to have widened customers' horizons and changed the boundaries regarding the types of activities or careers they wanted or were willing to undertake, specifically the type of employment they would consider and the alternative activities they wanted to engage in, such as training.

In terms of widening views on employment, it was suggested that after hearing about alternative careers and realising that there were jobs available in these professions, it made respondents reassess the type of work they should look for.

In addition to this, the course was also said to have helped customers to hone their views on future activities by helping them to decide what they really wanted to do in the future and what activities they would need to engage in to achieve this, such as training.

Employment experience

Although experience of engaging in work placements was minimal across the sample, where it had occurred it was usually viewed extremely positively and was seen as having an impact. The placements mentioned included catering work, removals and retail. The main impacts were said to have arisen as a consequence of the specific skills learnt during the placements and as a result of simply providing a chance to spend time in a working environment, which increased motivation to find employment as well as confidence in abilities and skills.

Lack of opportunity to attend a placement was found disappointing by customers who wanted to do this but for whom a placement could not be secured.

4.2.2 Secondary impacts

It was felt that the immediate impacts highlighted often ultimately worked together to increase customers' employability and in some instances also helped to improve the customers' quality of life more generally.

Employability

Customers often felt that their overall employability had been increased as a result of attending the course. Increased soft skills, such as motivation and confidence were seen as being integral to this as they had far reaching and knock-on impacts regarding their other skills. Additionally, improved basic skills, job search skills, qualifications and the hands-on work experience provided by placements were all thought to be of benefit in the search for work and were in some instances said to have ultimately resulted in employment.

In contrast, customers were often more pessimistic about the significance of the training in terms of gaining employment and even where an impact was identified, they often questioned the value of these in terms of actually finding work, describing them as a 'waste of time'. Specifically, they doubted the relevance of the skills and qualifications in relation to the professions in which they sought work, which were primarily manual.

It was also felt that the ability of the course to improve employability was compromised as a result of the other barriers faced by customers, such as having a prison record or hygiene problems.

Quality of life

The impacts gained from attending the course, particularly improved basic skills, had clearly impacted on the quality of life experienced by a number of customers. Improving literacy, numeracy and computing were said to have helped with:

- general household activities, such as managing the household finances and shopping:

'Like maintenance side of things, go down the DIY shop, you've got so many different colours of paint and that, like before I had to take the wife with me everywhere really, she was like my personal reader. But now, I'm quite happy and so DIY shops now aren't a problem any more whereas I knew what I wanted but to actually go and get what you wanted, now I can just stroll in there and get basically everything I need.'

(Berkshire, attended training but left early, male)

- family life, for example, by enabling customers to help their children with their homework more effectively; and
- developing new interests such as reading and using computers.

4.2.3 Negative impacts

Notwithstanding the plethora of positive impacts highlighted, the training was also said to have resulted in a number of negative impacts: practically, emotionally and physically.

Practical negative impacts

Practically, the basic skills course was thought to have interfered and had a negative impact on other activities customers engaged in, such as other training courses, job search and part-time employment. It was suggested that referral to the course meant, in some cases, that customers had been expected to leave other training courses they were engaged in, including for example accountancy and ESOL training courses which were being undertaken at the local college.

In these instances, respondents usually felt this had been detrimental to the improvement of their skills and their overall employability as it had prevented them from completing training they deemed to be integral to achieving their career goals. Certainly, customers had in some cases signed off the register in order to ensure they would be able to continue with their course.

Similarly, customers suggested that despite part of the course focusing on job search activities, they believed that time spent training was simply a distraction from the business of looking for work. Moreover, on reflection they did not believe the benefits of the course had made up for the time lost. More exceptionally, there were customers who suggested that attending the course had interfered with their part-time employment as they had been told they would need to leave their job to attend the course full time. To overcome this, one respondent had managed to increase their hours at work.

Emotional and physical negative impacts

Attending the course was also said to have a negative impact on customers emotionally, which it was said also translated into physical ailments, either due to their dislike of attending the course or because of the consequences of it, for example being referred for a sanction. Primarily this tended to occur in cases where the respondent already experienced emotional problems such as depression, however, for others the experience of attending the course was said to have triggered this problem.

Specifically, customers disliked spending time in the environment and in particular mixing with other course attendees. They criticised the content of the course and suggested they found it 'boring' and this was said to have caused emotional strain which triggered bouts of drinking and drug taking. Moreover, respondents suggested they were also worried and stressed about the prospect of being re-referred to the course if they did not pass their qualifications and improve their skills.

Furthermore, the experience of attending the basic skills course was said to have resulted in decreased confidence levels, primarily as a result of the connotations associated with having a basic skills need, which some described as 'degrading'. This lack of confidence was said to have been exacerbated by the style of teaching adopted by the tutors and the type of activities in which customers were asked to engage. Both of which were said to be reminiscent of school.

4.3 Routes following training provision

Once the basic skills courses had been completed respondents generally followed one of three main routes: either returning to the Jobcentre, embarking on further training or gaining employment. Clearly, the paths followed were not always linear and as a consequence it was usual for customers to have engaged in more than one of these activities at the point of the research interview.

4.3.1 Returning to the Jobcentre

In cases where the individuals did not move onto further training or find employment they generally returned to the Jobcentre and this tended to be the main route followed by the customers in our sample. For the most part, respondents expressed negative views about returning to the Jobcentre primarily because they felt 'disappointed' and 'de-moralised' to be returning without having secured employment but also as a result of experiencing problems making a new claim for benefit.

Difficulties making a new claim were mentioned by customers, as not only was it seen as being a 'hassle' to make a fresh claim, but it was also perceived as having resulted in delays in receiving benefit. Where this occurred customers suggested they either went without money or they applied for alternative funds, such as a crisis loan.

In contrast to this, other customers were happy to be returning to the Jobcentre, primarily as it meant they would no longer have to attend training.

4.3.2 Undertaking further training

Importantly, attending the basic skills training often acted as a stepping stone to further training for customers, including both Jobcentre training programmes and other courses. The desire to engage in further training was said to have resulted:

- from increased motivation and confidence;
- from a widening of horizons, which resulted in customers identifying new career opportunities for which additional training was required; and
- as a direct result of their improved basic skills, which had provided a foundation on which they could build and continue to develop their literacy or numeracy.

'The first thing that always springs to mind is getting my confidence back with other people, which for me was the big issue of the moment, and has put me forward leaps and bounds, so that aspect ten out of ten, because I dread to think where I'd be without that, to be honest. I certainly wouldn't be doing this other course that I'm doing now because that's totally off my own back – if I didn't do anything it wouldn't happen, so I don't have to go there, its not like a normal course, they don't do a register; you make an appointment and go, or you don't and they don't really care if I don't go. So that's fantastic.'

(Dorset, completed BET, male)

The types of courses mentioned often related to literacy, computing or specific vocational training such as forklift truck courses. Specifically, they included: specialist ESOL courses, literacy level one, computer, literacy and information technology, website design and Sure Start training.

It was often hoped that this subsequent training would lead onto other courses, particularly academic courses such as GCSEs or university. It should be noted that this route was often undertaken by ESOL customers who often had a strong desire to improve their basic skills.

4.3.3 Securing employment

More unusually, customers gained paid employment either directly after being on the basic skills course or following a period of unemployment. As we have seen, pilot participants were less likely to have gained employment in the period of observation. A variety of jobs in a range of professions were highlighted, including horticultural, construction, electrical, retail, factory/ warehouse, catering and security work. In addition to paid employment, respondents also engaged in unpaid voluntary work, which in some instances was a continuation of the training placement they engaged in as part of the provision, for example driving a van for a removal company.

Paid employment was found via the Jobcentre, training providers and other sources such as word of mouth or through private employment agencies. Where employment was secured directly as a result of attending training it tended to be as a result of employer contacts made while on the course, especially those made via work placements.

The security and longevity of the employment gained by customers varied, with certain jobs identified as being secure and permanent and others more unstable and short term, either because of the nature of the job or due to the attitude of the customer towards the job. Certainly, in some instances, customers said they were enjoying the job and intended to continue in employment for the foreseeable future. In contrast, there were a number of customers who had given up or lost their job by the time of the research interview and they had usually subsequently returned to the Jobcentre.

It was felt that following the course customers were often more motivated to find work either as a result of the positive benefits of attending the course or due to their negative experiences of training, which meant they were determined not to continue claiming and not to attend any further courses. In one instance, the respondent explained how they felt the Jobcentre had tried to 'bore' people into trying to find work by putting them on the course and another suggested it made them think '*[I have] just got to get out of here, got to get a job*'.

4.4 The impact of sanctions

This section of the report considers the impact of being sanctioned. It looks at the administrative data on sanctioned customers and then considers the qualitative evidence about the personal impacts of receiving a sanction, such as practical and emotional impacts; the affect it has on customers' views of the Jobcentre; and finally it considers some of the coping mechanisms employed by customers.

4.4.1 Quantitative evidence

We found that out of 13,985 customers who were referred to provision in our sample 424 people received a sanction. A further 40 people were recorded as being sanctioned without being recorded as being referred to provision. Twenty-two per cent of these customers received more than one sanction, with the maximum number of sanctions recorded as seven. For the first sanction received, three out of five sanctioned customers received the sanction because they failed to attend a place on training provision, a further third gave up a place on provision while the remainder refused to accept or apply for a place. The proportions were similar for subsequent sanctions.

With such a small number of sanctioned people it is not possible to estimate models to determine what happened to them following a sanction, but we can consider in a descriptive way whether they ended their JSA claim and whether they got a job. We can then compare these numbers to customers who were not sanctioned.

It is important to be aware that this may not be a fair comparison because customers who receive a sanction may be very different in terms of their observable and unobservable characteristics to customers who were not sanctioned, and these differences may be correlated to leaving benefit and starting work. We have looked for differences by observable characteristics, e.g. age, gender, ethnicity and JSA claim history, and the main difference that we found was that men were more likely to be sanctioned than women. There may be unobservable characteristics that are likely to determine whether a customer is sanctioned which may also be correlated with leaving benefit and starting a job, e.g. attitudes to training which are extremely likely to be correlated to attitudes to work. Hence it is not possible to say that any observed differences in JSA exit and job starts were attributable to being sanctioned. However, the analysis allows us to see if sanctioned customers, on average, behave differently to customers who did not receive a sanction in terms of ending their JSA claim and moving into work.

In our observation window the vast majority of customers end their JSA claim irrespective of whether they were sanctioned or not. However, when we look at when customers ended their JSA claim, we find that, on average, sanctioned customers ended their claim one month sooner than customers who were not sanctioned.

However, when we consider the proportion of customers who got a job following provision referral by whether they were sanctioned, we find very little difference between the two groups of customers. Twenty per cent of sanctioned customers got a job in the period after being referred to provision compared with 22 per cent of customers who were not sanctioned, and this difference was not statistically significant. In addition and on average, customers who were not sanctioned found jobs slightly quicker than sanctioned customers, but this time the difference was just ten days. If we were to attribute the quicker benefit exits to being a sanction effect, there is no evidence that sanctions meant that customers found work more quickly to compensate for loss of benefit – in fact the opposite is the case.

4.4.2 Personal impacts

The financial difficulties associated with receiving a sanction were often seen as the primary impact for customers and their family. Receiving a sanction meant that finances were often extremely limited and the impact was described by some as being 'drastic'. Customers found it difficult to pay bills, such as TV licence and utility bills, and in one case the electricity meter was said to have run down to emergency levels as a result of having insufficient funds to buy electricity.

'The bills couldn't be paid, a lot of bills were not getting paid, sanctioning has also left me bank charges.'

(Wolverhampton and Walsall, sanctioned, male)

'It affected me a great deal, I've got a TV licence to pay, I've got my general electric...I've got my TV licence to pay, don't forget I'm unemployed, so everything I pay is on schemes, I've got a water bill to pay at £2.50 a week, a fortnight, that's £5, I've got electric, I've got my food, I've got a little dog there I have to get him about 12 to 10 tins a week, its not just myself, we're trying to rely on these things, I've worked in the past, I've paid my taxes as well.'

(Wolverhampton and Walsall, sanctioned, male)

Receiving a sanction meant that customers usually only had money for essentials, such as food and this resulted in them not being able to engage in any recreational activities, such as socialising.

In addition to the material impacts, a number of emotional repercussions were also highlighted – primarily these related to feeling: depressed, de-motivated; lacking in self esteem or confidence; anger and humiliation. These feelings tended to relate directly to the financial impacts they had experienced, such as having insufficient money to live on and not being able to engage in any social activities. The very idea of receiving a sanction was perceived as being so 'shameful' that it was also thought

to have contributed to these feelings, especially the feelings of humiliation and anger. In exceptional cases, the emotional impacts had resulted in customers seeking medical help, for example, medication for depression.

'Yes, it affects you, its not good on the mind, you don't eat very well. Yes, it makes you feel angry inside, a bit wound up, you start blaming yourself, and you're thinking like a boy, a lost kid.'

(Wolverhampton and Walsall, sanctioned, male)

4.4.3 Impact on views of the Jobcentre

Customers' reactions to receiving a sanction were mixed in terms of how it affected their views about the Jobcentre and in particular attitudes towards their Jobcentre advisers. Although customers tended to be rather 'annoyed' at receiving a sanction initially, it did not necessarily follow that they transferred these feelings onto the Jobcentre or their adviser.

Certainly, the fact that the Decision Making and Appeals (DMA) team are generally perceived as being separate helped this situation, as customers did not necessarily associate the sanction with the Jobcentre or the adviser. Moreover, their views were also affected by their experiences of dealing with the adviser, for example their views on the quality of their relationship and in particular how much they felt the adviser had helped, supported and listened to them during the sanctioning process. Where advisers were perceived as having been inflexible or unhelpful, customers often had a negative view of them and more generally, it was also said to have resulted in a loss of trust overall.

'Well at the end of the day it is not their fault is it, but I wasn't very pleased.'

(Hull and East Riding, sanctioned, male)

4.4.4 Coping strategies

It was found that customers used a range of coping strategies to manage the sanction they received. The strategies utilised were usually informal in nature, for example borrowing from friends and family. However, more formal methods were also adopted, such as applying for alternative funds. These coping strategies had a real impact on the sanctioning experience and not only diminished worries about losing benefit but also reduced the overall impact when it occurred. Importantly, a number of the same coping techniques were said to have been employed by those who signed off the course to either avoid training or a sanction. The coping strategies highlighted by customers included:

- **Receiving material, practical and emotional support from family and friends**, including parents, partners and siblings. Primarily, the support provided was financial, for example money for rent, food or bills. However, they also provided material support in the form of food or clothes, as well as offering emotional support. Although this form of support was perhaps more widespread among the 18-24 age group, it was evident across the whole sample.

'Well it just means that we had to go around bumming all the time, you know what I mean, lowering ourselves to borrow off my mum and I mean, she's not got no money, so she's like, I can't lend it you, so we'd end up going to my Nan, my Nan is 85, she's only a pensioner.'

(Dorset, sanctioned, male)

- **Savings.** In some cases, respondents had savings they were able to use as emergency finances.
- **Criminal activity.** Although this was not explicitly highlighted as a source of income, respondents often intimated that they would engage in criminal activity, for example suggesting that having your money stopped would 'turn' you to crime, especially if you had engaged in this type of activity before.
- **Working.** Unusually respondents suggested they had worked during the sanctioned period to support themselves financially. The type of work mentioned tended to be informal, for example busking, and it was clear that customers did not necessarily consider this to be employment in the sense that they should declare it to the Jobcentre.
- **Alternative funds.** Applying for and receiving other benefits or allowances, such as the hardship fund or a crisis loan. In one instance the respondent had lived on their family allowance money for two weeks.

'No I was borrowing. I was getting myself in debt and that. But I think the only thing that helped me is the Child Benefit. What we had for the kids and that was like £67 I think.'

(Wolverhampton and Walsall, sanctioned, male)

Although borrowing from friends and family was widely used and identified as a successful method of coping, it was thought to have a number of secondary impacts both on the people customers borrowed from and on the sanctioned customer themselves. Primarily, it was said to have created financial and emotional problems for the person who provided the support, as this often reduced their income and in some instances meant they had to secure employment. As a knock-on affect of this, relationships between the customer and family and friends often became strained and this was said to add further to the emotional impact of the sanction.

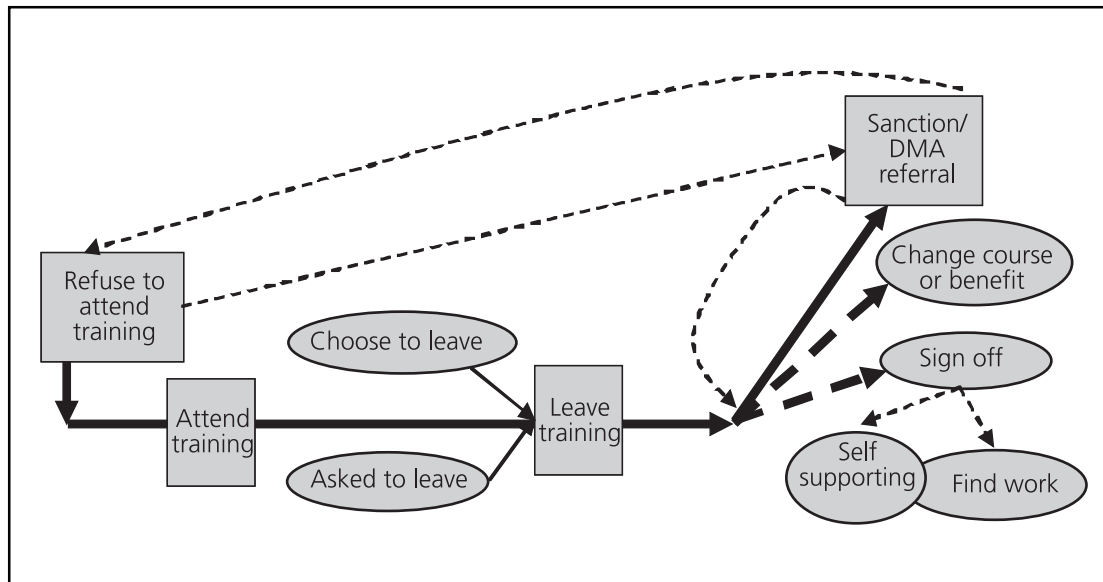
According to customers, it was usual for the impact of the sanction to extend beyond the actual sanction time frame, as once the sanction had ended it took customers time to 'get back on track', particularly in cases where they had borrowed money and had to pay this back or they had used their own savings.

4.4.5 Routes following sanctions

At the point of receiving a sanction (or being referred for a sanction), respondents acted in a number of ways and consequently followed a number of different pathways. The routes highlighted primarily included: signing off; changing benefit or training course; or returning to the Jobcentre and this usually resulted in them

being re-referred to the training course. These routes are outlined in Figure 4.4 and discussed in the following section.

Figure 4.4 Routes following sanctions



4.4.6 Signing off the register

As outlined previously, customers who chose to sign off the register tended to support themselves in a range of ways, which primarily meant being supported by friends and family. In the case of those who signed off this was often a more permanent arrangement and partners often secured work in order to support the family or they made a claim for benefit. In certain circumstances, customers also found work, although as with the other employment highlighted, this was often part-time or temporary in nature. In some instances, following a period of being off the register, the customer had signed back on at the Jobcentre.

4.4.7 Changing benefit or training course

In some instances, respondents suggested they had changed benefit following receipt of a sanction, usually to Incapacity Benefit. This was usually instigated by the customer and accompanied medical evidence from their General Practitioner. However, as previously mentioned, it was also said to have been driven by the adviser in cases where a health problem was suspected, such as depression.

The advisers also exerted discretion and changed the training courses the customers were assigned to. Usually this occurred where customers had complained about the quality or relevance of the course and, although this usually involved changing to another basic skills course operating in the local area, in some situations they changed the type of course completely, such as moving customers onto New Deal, for example New Deal for Musicians.

4.4.8 Returning to the Jobcentre

Finally, customers who returned to the Jobcentre were often said to have ultimately been re-referred onto the basic skills training course and although this usually resulted in the customer attending the course (either because they wanted to complete the course or because they did not want to receive another sanction), in some instances customers refused and this led to a further sanction referral.

Following re-referrals or subsequent sanctions being received, customers again followed a number of trajectories, either deciding to attend training; signing off the register; changing benefit or in some instances they did none of the above and simply refused to attend. Refusing to attend was said in a number of cases to have resulted in customers receiving multiple sanctions, up to six times in some instances. It was unclear how these situations would ultimately be resolved, especially as certain customers were resolute that they would not attend training under any circumstances. In these extreme cases, customers usually cited prior experiences as their reason for non attendance of training, including: past experience of Jobcentre training; education more generally; and experience of other institutions, such as prison. In particular respondents who had been in prison suggested they simply could not face the confinements of having to attend a daily training scheme having been recently released from prison.

5 Summary and conclusions

5.1 Communicating mandation

After some initial uncertainty on the part of advisers, the changes in both pilot and comparison areas introduced in April 2004 had become part of standard procedure and advisers generally felt comfortable communicating and delivering them.

The information communicated to customers regarding mandation by advisers at the pre-entry to training interview varied. Across all districts and Jobcentres, advisers generally provided customers with information regarding the mandatory aspects of the training. However, the level of information provided on the sanctioning regime itself differed.

Variations in adviser approach occurred on an individual basis according to the general approach adopted by the adviser and also based on the perceived needs of particular customer types, with more resistant customers being provided with broader and more detailed information. Some advisers were very upfront about mandation and outlined it in detail, others adopted a more discrete and gentle approach.

Basic skills training courses were very much sold to customers using the full range of tools available to the advisers, rather than simply using mandation as a threat. Advisers described having a 'package' of incentives to encourage customers to attend training.

In addition to verbal discussions, advisers also provided customers with written information regarding mandation in the form of the mandatory referral letter. Findings suggest that the mandatory referral letter was either being delivered during the pre-entry to training meeting, or it was sent in the post at a later date. Advisers who delivered the letter during the pre-entry to training meeting differed in their approach, with some advisers outlining the content of the letter in detail and others paying it little attention.

Explanations and delivery of the letter were in some instances said to be interlinked with the verbal discussion itself and involved the adviser talking to the customer about mandation. Customers' recall of receiving the letter was low overall; in particular customers found it hard to differentiate between the paperwork given at meetings and were consequently unsure if they had received the mandatory referral letter or not.

Findings from both the adviser and customer studies suggest that customers generally seemed to accept the mandatory aspect of training, in as much as in order to claim benefit they were required to adhere to the rules of the Jobcentre.

Overall, advisers tended to agree with the principle of sanctioning per se, as it was felt to have a number of advantages, not least of which is that it is effective in encouraging customers to attend training. Customers accepted the principle of sanctions as they felt it was reasonable for customers to be expected to tackle any barriers to employment, including basic skills needs in return for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). However, there were some reservations and problems highlighted by advisers and customers regarding the principle of sanctions. Primarily advisers simply questioned the principle of 'forcing' customers to engage in a course they were unwilling to attend and, in some instances, also doubted the appropriateness and effectiveness of the courses.

5.2 Training

Between April 2004 and March 2005 slightly fewer than 55,000 JSA claimants were identified by basic skills screening as having a potential basic skills need in the 12 pilot and ten comparison areas considered in the mandatory training pilot evaluation. Roughly 40 per cent of these claimants were referred to training provision, with nearly 14,000 claimants referred to provision in the pilot areas and thus subject to the threat of being sanctioned, and nearly 8,000 claimants referred to provision in the comparison areas.

In pilot areas five per cent more claimants that were referred to provision actually started it compared to claimants in the comparison areas, benchmarked against difference between the areas before the introduction of the mandatory pilot. This difference we attribute to the mandatory nature of the pilot so the threat of sanctions did increase the number of JSA claimants who started basic skills provision.

In a similar way the threat of sanctions increased the percentage of claimants who completed provision once they had started it by around three percentage points. However, for claimants who were referred to provision the percentage of them who started a job following this referral was lower by around three percentage points. The reasons for this are unclear. We only had a limited observation window to follow these claimants. For the last entrants into the pilot this was just seven months, so it is possible that many claimants were still participating in training at the end of our observation window and thus unable to start work.

Referral to training tended to take place during the Independent Assessment (IA) follow up/ pre entry to training meeting at which advisers would discuss the: type of training provision, for example Basic Employability Training (BET) or Short Intensive Basic Skills (SIBS); the choice of provider; the financial incentives, as well as the mandatory nature of training.

The referral process was generally seen as being straightforward. In most cases, discussions regarding the type of provision the customer would be referred to were minimal as advisers tended to follow recommendations made by the IA provider. While recommendations regarding the type of provision were given by the assessors, the decision about the choice of provider was generally taken by the adviser in consultation with the customer. In contrast, there were instances of advisers choosing not to consult with customers regarding the training provider, although they did often try to pick the most conveniently located trainer where possible.

Although the processes involved in referring customers to provision were generally straightforward, two main difficulties were highlighted by advisers: inaccessibly located providers and lack of available training places. The latter was thought to have resulted in customers being 'in limbo' while they waited for their course to commence. The problem of training availability had dissipated over time as a result of the levelling out of flow and increase in provision available.

The broad content of the training did not differ substantially between different districts, providers or types of provision, such as BET or SIBS. The main activities undertaken were classroom-based basic skills and job search activities often involving the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

A wide range of positive aspects were raised by customers, providers and advisers regarding training provision and these related to the content and structure of the course, the teaching methods used, the style and approach of the tutors as well as mixing with other students. Although advisers and customers highlighted a range of positive views regarding training, they also identified some problems, as did providers who operated the training. For the most part these related to similar issues, such as the content, structure, organisation and delivery of the training, as well as to views on other students who attended.

In some cases, customers were unable to discern any tangible benefits or impacts occurring as a result of their attendance on training. Others mentioned a range of impacts: improved basic skills; gaining qualifications; attending subsequent training; improved job search skills; improvement of soft skills; and gaining employment. Some customers dropped out of provision as a result of the quality and ability of training to engage them. Importantly, the impacts mentioned appeared to be interlinked and reciprocally impacted on one another. In this way, increased basic skills led to improved soft skills, which in turn improved job search skills.

Once the basic skills courses had been completed, respondents generally followed one of three main routes: either returning to the Jobcentre, embarking on further

training or gaining employment. Clearly, the paths followed were not always linear and as a consequence it was usual for customers to have engaged in more than one of these activities at the point of the research interview.

1.3 Impact of mandation and receiving a sanction

In a similar way the threat of sanctions increased the percentage of claimants who completed provision once they had started it by around three percentage points. However, for claimants who were referred to provision the percentage of them who started a job following this referral was lower by around three percentage points. The reasons for this are unclear. We only have a limited observation window to follow these claimants. For the last entrants into the pilot this is just seven months, so it is possible that many claimants were still participating in training at the end of our observation window and thus unable to start work.

The qualitative data suggests that the mandatory nature of training was having an impact on initial attendance and the continuation of attendance on basic skills provision. Although the main weight of mandation rested with the threat of loss of benefit, more exceptionally the rules were adhered to simply as respondents felt a moral obligation to comply with the rules of the Jobcentre. However, mandation was not always sufficient to ensure that customers adhered to the rules and this occurred primarily where training was perceived as being irrelevant or where customers had negative views about the training course itself in terms of both their attitude and experience.

Training was generally viewed more positively when it was seen as the respondent's own choice to attend as they usually had a genuine desire to succeed. However, the mandatory nature of the course was generally not thought to affect the overall experience and in some cases even acted as a positive pressure.

The financial difficulties associated with receiving a sanction were often seen as the primary impact for customers and their families and specifically, finding money for accommodation was identified as the main problem. In addition to the material impacts, a number of emotional repercussions were also highlighted: primarily these related to feeling depressed, de-motivated; lacking in self esteem or confidence; anger and humiliation.

Interestingly, although customers tended to be rather '*annoyed*' at receiving a sanction initially, it did not necessarily follow that they transferred these feelings onto the Jobcentre or their adviser.

It was found that customers used a range of coping strategies to manage the sanction they received. The strategies utilised were usually informal in nature, for example borrowing from friends and family, and they did have an affect on the overall impact of the sanction as they nullified the impact of the loss of benefit.

Although ultimately customers who refused to attend and received a sanction as a result did usually attend training following this, others continued to refuse and in these cases they either signed off, changed benefit or they received a subsequent sanction. Certainly some respondents had received multiple sanctions and they continued to be resolute in their decision not to attend. Where this occurred there was a clear sense that no form of sanction would work to influence their behaviour, particularly as the coping mechanisms employed enabled the customer to manage financially without their benefit.

Appendix A

Sanctions policy background

A.1 Background to sanctions regime

Sanctions as penalties date back to the beginning of unemployment benefit in 1913, when they were introduced to protect the fund from abuse by either reducing or stopping payment of benefit for a period of time. Although it has been possible to impose sanctions for leaving voluntarily and losing employment through misconduct since the beginning of unemployment benefit, there have been a number of significant changes to the regime since this time, with the regime evolving to include several types of sanctions (fixed and variable) and complex rules and regulations.

The prime purpose of sanctions is to ensure that jobseekers and lone parents comply with the responsibilities attached to claiming their respective benefits. Sanctions are also important in establishing the wider rights and responsibilities agenda of labour market policy. In 2002/03 there were approximately 185,000 sanctions on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA).

A.2 Current status of regime

Currently a sanction can be imposed at the outset of a claim to JSA or during the life of one. Sanctions can either be imposed for a fixed or variable length, each under different parts of legislation. Sanctions that relate directly to 'employment', such as sanctions for misconduct or leaving voluntarily, are **variable** in form and can be applied for any amount of time between one and 26 weeks. In contrast, **fixed-length** sanctions apply for acts or omissions relating to 'employability', for example failing to complete a mandatory training programme.

The length of a fixed sanction depends on certain criteria: the first sanction will be for a period of two weeks – providing the customer has not had a fixed sanction applied for the previous 12 months. If they have received a previous sanction and it is within

a rolling 12 month period, then the sanction imposed will be four weeks. Subsequent sanctions are then four weeks long unless the sanction relates to a New Deal mandatory Option or IAP, in which case the sanction will be 26 weeks. If it is the third sanction within a rolling 12 month period, then a 26 week sanction will be imposed. Fixed length sanctions also apply to failing to comply with a Jobseekers' Directions (JSD), where the maximum length is four weeks, although these can be re-issued if the customer fails to comply with the regulations.

A number of different sanctions can be imposed at various stages of the process:

- The types of sanctions imposed at the **new claims stage** include: leaving employment voluntarily; dismissal through misconduct; neglecting to take advantage of employment opportunities; being discharged from Her Majesty's Forces.
- The sanctions imposed between the **start of a claim and referral to mandatory programmes or training schemes** are: refusal or failure to carry out a JSD; refusal or failure to apply for employment; not taking advantage of an employment opportunity.
- The sanctions imposed during **training schemes and employment programmes** include: losing a place on a training scheme or employment programme due to misconduct; refusing to take up a place; not taking advantage of the programme; failing to attend.

The effective operation of the sanction regime as it stands relies on a number of factors and groups, in particular on the effective communication and consistent delivery of the programme by advisers; the consistent approach and speed of the decision makers; the willingness and understanding of the customer group; and finally on other parties, such as former employers and training providers, to provide evidence. Fixed-length sanctions also apply to failing to comply with a JSD, where the maximum length is four weeks, although these can be re-issued if the customer fails to comply with the regulations.

A.3 Decision making¹⁴

Sanction decisions are given by decision makers who work for Jobcentre Plus and have a duty to act impartially on behalf of the Secretary of State.

It is the responsibility of advisers to identify 'doubt' (that the customer has not carried out their responsibilities). Following this the adviser makes the referral to the decision maker who then makes an independent decision based on all the evidence available. Decision makers work strictly to legislation, regulations and case law.

¹⁴ Much of this information is taken from a DWP report entitled *JSA sanctions in practice*.

The referrals are entered on the Decision Making and Appeals System, which links in with the Labour Market System (LMS) data from the Jobcentre. The decision maker will then be able to decide whether they need further information or whether all the information necessary was sent from the Jobcentre.

If the decision maker requires further information, they contact the relevant person and await a reply. Customers are given seven days to respond, employers are given ten days to respond, follow-up calls are made to employers after this point to encourage supply of information. Insufficient information could lead to a case being closed or a different decision being made than might have otherwise have been the case. Not only must the decision maker sometimes decide whether a certain action was taken/not taken by a customer, but they must also decide whether the customer had good or just cause for taking that action.

Once a decision has been reached, the Jobcentre is informed. LMS and JSA (JSAPS Payments System) are updated. The customer is sent a letter that is automatically generated by JSAPS informing the customer of the decision (Single Outcome Decision Notification). If the decision was to impose a sanction, the letter includes details of the sanction as well as instructing the customer to enquire for information on appeals and hardship payments at the Jobcentre.

A.4 Decisions

Sector decision makers have targets governing the speed with which they reach decisions. In total, decision makers in Great Britain processed 581,076 cases last year (from April 2003 to March 2004). In the majority of cases referred, a sanction was not imposed. Out of the 340,529 initial referrals on sanctions questions, only in 43 per cent of cases was a sanction imposed initially.

It is sometimes the case that a sanction should be imposed on a customer who no longer has an entitlement to JSA. For instance, the customer may have ceased claiming JSA before the decision was made. This is called a reserved decision. If the decision was for a sanction to be imposed, the decision is reserved and the sanction is applied when the customer returns to JSA within a 13 week period (for fixed sanctions) or (26 weeks for a variable sanction).

A.5 Hardship

Customers who are subject to a sanction are entitled to apply for hardship payments, subject to a number of restrictions. Hardship payments are not made automatically. Jobseekers must make a separate application and illustrate that they or their dependants would suffer hardship unless they receive a payment. This is done by completing a JSA10 form (comprising nine pages, four of which describe the process and provide instructions on how to fill in the form). This completed form is forwarded to hardship decision makers.

A.6 Crisis loans

Customers who are subject to a sanction can apply for an interest-free Social Fund crisis loan. These are severely restricted for non-vulnerable customers during the period they are without income due to ineligibility for Hardship Payments. This is intended to support the JSA sanctions policy by preventing customers who would otherwise be without benefit/hardship payments from using crisis loans as an alternative income.

Crisis loans are discretionary and should be available on the day of the customer's application to prevent any serious risk to health and safety.

Appendix B

The Difference in Difference approach

Our analytical approach to assessing the impact of the pilot is based on comparing differences in outcome measures between claimants in pilot areas and claimants in national areas both before and after the introduction of the pilot. The underlying assumption is that other changes over time, apart from the introduction of the pilot, do not affect the differences in the outcome measures between the claimants in pilot and national areas. The validity of this assumption is assessed by considering the stability of differences in outcome measures between the areas prior to the introduction of the pilot.

The estimator applied in this work is generally known as the Difference-in-Difference (DiD) estimator (Heckman *et. al.*, 1999) because it measures differences between two groups before and after a change.

The requirement for the DiD approach is that before the introduction of the pilot the differences in the proportions should be the same over time. If this is true then any additional differences after the introduction of the pilot may be attributed to the pilot.

The idea behind this approach is that the pilot impact should be assessed against the period directly before the introduction of the pilot. We want this period to be as long as possible in order to give the most robust assessment of the pilot impact. To test how long this period should be we assume that the year before introduction of the pilot should be in the comparison period and then test whether in the preceding year the pilot-national area differences in the chosen outcome measure are different to that year. If the test shows that this difference is not statistically significant then we argue that both years can form the comparison period and proceed to test whether the year before that is different. If the test shows that this difference is statistically significant then we need to carefully consider which period best constitutes a valid

comparison for the period when the pilot operated. Our strong opinion is that this period should include the year directly before introduction, but if there are sound reasons to think that there was a fundamental change between the groups of areas in this period then we may choose an earlier period. To our knowledge there are no such reasons evident.

We will get a good idea of how these differences evolve over time by looking at graphical illustrations of key outcome measures, but for a precise assessment of the differences we will need to estimate statistical models.

The models were estimated with and without the following control variables: age (grouped 16-24, 25-34, 35-44 and 45 or more), gender, ethnicity (grouped: White, Black, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Other), whether recorded as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), proportion of time on JSA in five years prior to screening; number of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claims in five years prior to screening, area and year dummies.

Appendix C

The Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study

The Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS) was introduced in January 2004 and enhanced in October 2005. It links benefit and programme information held by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on its customers, with employment records from Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC).

The employment record includes start and end dates which we use to identify when a Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) customer is in a job and when they start the job. The records require some manipulation before using for analysis. There are some duplicate records and in some cases all that was known was that the employment spell started or ended in a particular financial year. In these cases, if the start date was only known to be in a particular year then it was set as the earliest possible date, i.e. the beginning of the financial year, 6 April. Similarly, if the end date was only known to be in a particular year then it was set as the latest possible date, i.e. the end of the financial year, 5 April.

For some customers there were what appeared to be duplicate records, where two spells started on the same day, one was recorded as completed at a particular date and the other was recorded as completed on 5 April in the same financial year. In these cases we assume that these are the same employment spell and drop the record where the end date was recorded as 5 April. In a similar way, there were cases where two spells ended on the same day, one was recorded as starting on a particular date and the other was recorded as starting on 6 April in the same financial year. In these cases we assume that these are the same employment spell and drop the record where the start date was recorded as 6 April.

Another common scenario was that there were two employment records for individuals which had the same start date. For one of these records the spell was recorded as ongoing, while for the other spell it was recorded as completed. In these

cases, again we assume they are the same employment spell and drop the record where the spell was recorded as ongoing.

All of these above scenarios were extended to cover spells starting and ending in the same months. So that, for example, if two spells started in the same month but one was ongoing and the other was recorded as ended, the ongoing spell was dropped. These decisions reflect our understanding of the way the WPLS was put together and it seems likely that the dropped records are duplicate spells for existing employment spells.

Below is a brief summary of other adjustments made to the WPLS data before we undertook any analysis:

- Employment spells that lasted zero days were dropped.
- Spells that had the same start and end dates were dropped.
- Employment spells that lasted one day implied that the exact end date of the spell was known but the information on its exact start date was missing. The assumption was made that the spell started at some point during the previous tax year and the start date of a spell lasting one day was imputed to be 6 April (i.e. the beginning) of the previous tax year.

Appendix D

Econometric models

Table D.1 Estimates of the probability of starting provision

	(1) Pre-pilot estimates	(2) Pre-pilot estimates	(3) Pilot impact estimates	(4) Pilot impact estimates
In pilot area and referred in 2004/05			0.043 (4.53)**	0.052 (5.52)**
Referred in 2004/05			0.004 (0.59)	-0.001 (0.19)
In pilot area and referred in 2002/03	-0.018 (1.37)	-0.015 (1.11)		
Referred in 2002/03	-0.013 (1.30)	-0.020 (1.96)		
In pilot area	0.039 (4.33)**	0.202 (11.95)**	0.029 (4.37)**	0.201 (16.85)**
Recorded as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)		-0.027 (2.00)*		-0.012 (1.43)
Male		-0.039 (4.97)**		-0.036 (6.53)**
Ethnicity (reference category: White)				
Black		-0.001 (0.05)		-0.010 (0.95)
Indian		-0.020 (0.99)		-0.016 (1.14)
Pakistani		-0.006 (0.32)		-0.015 (1.19)
Bangladeshi		0.071 (2.49)*		0.043 (2.00)*

Continued

Table D.1 Continued

	(1) Pre-pilot estimates	(2) Pre-pilot estimates	(3) Pilot impact estimates	(4) Pilot impact estimates
Other		0.000 (0.02)		0.012 (1.39)
Missing		-0.023 (1.12)		-0.024 (1.71)
Proportion of time on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) in last five years		0.076 (4.76)**		0.101 (9.27)**
Number of JSA claims in last five years		-0.007 (4.11)**		-0.007 (5.95)**
Age (reference category: <25)				
25-34		-0.033 (3.61)**		-0.054 (8.17)**
35-44		-0.004 (0.37)		-0.016 (2.25)*
45+		0.017 (1.61)		0.008 (1.15)
Constant	0.609 (92.36)**	0.516 (35.92)**	0.604 (121.08)**	0.499 (48.73)**
District dummies	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	22,061	22,061	44,046	44,046
R-squared	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.05

Robust t statistics in parentheses; * significant at five per cent; ** significant at one per cent.

Models estimated for all claimants who were referred to provision.

Table D.2 Estimates of the probability of completing provision

	(1) Pre-pilot estimates	(2) Pre-pilot estimates	(3) Pilot impact estimates	(4) Pilot impact estimates
In pilot area and referred in 2004/05			0.046 (3.17)**	0.031 (2.12)*
Referred in 2004/05			-0.065 (5.78)**	-0.059 (5.37)**
In pilot area and referred in 2002/03	0.117 (6.62)**	0.112 (6.35)**		
Referred in 2002/03	0.041 (3.06)**	0.025 (1.86)		
In pilot area	-0.040 (3.37)**	0.033 (1.44)	-0.040 (3.37)**	-0.012 (0.61)
Recorded as ESOL		-0.018 (0.98)		-0.034 (2.76)**
Male		-0.021 (2.01)*		-0.032 (4.03)**
Ethnicity (reference category: White)				
Black		-0.019 (1.00)		-0.011 (0.70)
Indian		-0.050 (1.88)		-0.045 (2.13)*
Pakistani		-0.051 (2.20)*		-0.015 (0.82)
Bangladeshi		-0.040 (1.06)		-0.056 (1.78)
Other		-0.053 (3.54)**		-0.021 (1.63)
Missing		-0.040 (1.48)		-0.080 (3.92)**
Proportion of time on JSA in last five years		0.152 (7.29)**		0.199 (12.58)**
Number of JSA claims in last five years		-0.023 (10.32)**		-0.023 (14.79)**
Age (reference category: <25)				
25-34		-0.044 (3.57)**		0.015 (1.57)
35-44		0.003 (0.25)		0.045 (4.47)**
45+		0.059 (4.18)**		0.091 (8.77)**

Continued

Table D.2 Continued

	(1) Pre-pilot estimates	(2) Pre-pilot estimates	(3) Pilot impact estimates	(4) Pilot impact estimates
Constant	0.477 (55.52)**	0.572 (28.92)**	0.477 (55.52)**	0.501 (30.57)**
District dummies	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	13,065	13,065	21,642	21,642
R-squared	0.02	0.08	0.00	0.04

Robust t statistics in parentheses; * significant at five per cent; ** significant at one per cent.

Models estimated for all claimants who started provision.

Table D.3 Estimates of the probability of getting a job

	(1) Pre-pilot estimates	(2) Pre-pilot estimates	(3) Pilot impact estimates	(4) Pilot impact estimates
In pilot area and referred in 2004/05			-0.063 (5.21)**	-0.034 (2.80)**
Referred in 2004/05			-0.045 (4.93)**	-0.038 (4.11)**
In pilot area and referred in 2002/03	0.012 (0.69)	-0.023 (1.33)		
Referred in 2002/03	0.002 (0.19)	0.007 (0.54)		
In pilot area	0.081 (7.05)**	0.213 (9.47)**	0.088 (9.84)**	0.160 (10.20)**
Recorded as ESOL		0.008 (0.48)		-0.008 (0.69)
Male		0.092 (9.40)**		0.073 (10.85)**
Ethnicity (reference category: white)				
Black		0.072 (3.69)**		0.049 (3.59)**
Indian		0.040 (1.47)		0.035 (1.90)
Pakistani		-0.069 (3.41)**		-0.060 (4.14)**
Bangladeshi		0.019 (0.55)		0.018 (0.68)
Other		0.015 (1.04)		0.004 (0.38)
Missing		0.034 (1.24)		0.013 (0.69)
Proportion of time on JSA in last five years		-0.219 (11.30)**		-0.261 (20.58)**
Number of JSA claims in last five years		0.003 (1.33)		0.007 (4.71)**
Age (reference category: <25)				
25-34		-0.083 (6.58)**		-0.035 (3.92)**
35-44		-0.113 (8.66)**		-0.063 (7.01)**
45+		-0.151 (11.28)**		-0.095 (10.45)**
Constant	0.249 (31.51)**	0.233 (12.68)**	0.251 (39.40)**	0.231 (17.22)**

Continued

Table D.3 Continued

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Pre-pilot	Pre-pilot	Pilot impact	Pilot impact
	estimates	estimates	estimates	estimates
District dummies	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	11,009	11,009	21,981	21,981
R-squared	0.01	0.08	0.01	0.07

Robust t statistics in parentheses; * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%

Models estimated for all claimants who were referred to provision.

Appendix E

Qualitative analysis

BMRB Social Research are always committed to producing a thorough analysis of the data and set procedures are in place to ensure analysis is undertaken in a systematic and comprehensive manner and that the findings are based on the raw data rather than on a researcher's impressions. The interviews are all transcribed verbatim and then analysed by experienced members of the BMRB team.

Material collected through qualitative methods is invariably unstructured and unwieldy. Much of it is text based, consisting of verbatim transcriptions of interviews and discussions. Moreover, the internal content of the material is usually in detailed and micro form (for example accounts of experiences, inarticulate explanations, etc). The primary aim of any analytical method is to provide a means of exploring coherence and structure within a cumbersome data set while retaining a hold on the original accounts and observations from which it is derived.

Our method involves a systematic process of sifting, summarising and sorting the material according to key issues and themes. We use a set of content analysis techniques, known as 'Matrix Mapping', to ensure an optimum synthesis of findings from the verbatim data.

The first stage of 'Matrix-Mapping' involves familiarisation with the data (in the form of the audio tapes or verbatim transcripts) and identification of emerging issues. Based on this preliminary review of the data as well as the coverage of the topic guide and the researchers' experiences of conducting the fieldwork, a thematic framework is constructed.

The analysis then proceeds by summarising and synthesising the data according to this thematic framework using a range of techniques such as cognitive mapping and data matrices. The thematic matrix comprises a series of subject charts displayed either in Word, Excel or Insight qualitative software. In this case Excel software was utilised.

Data from each interview transcript will be summarised and transposed under the appropriate subject heading of the thematic matrix. The context of the information is retained and the page of the transcript from which it comes noted so that it is possible to return to a transcript to explore a point in more detail or to extract text for verbatim quotation. When all the data have been sifted according to the core themes the analyst begins to map the data and identify features within the data: defining concepts, mapping the range and nature of phenomenon, creating typologies, finding associations and providing explanations.

The mapping process is similar whichever of the above features are being considered. The analyst: reviews the summarised data; compares and contrasts the perceptions, accounts or experiences; searches for patterns or connections within the data; and seeks explanations internally within the data set. Piecing together the overall picture is not simply aggregating patterns, but of weighing up the salience and dynamics of issues, and searching for structures within the data that have explanatory power, rather than simply seeking a multiplicity of evidence.

The key issues, and the features that underpin them, are then used as the basis for constructing in this instance the oral presentation and the written report. Verbatim quotes are also used throughout in order to illustrate and illuminate the findings.

We have used, and refined, our analytical procedures over many years. They are highly respected by our customers and are noted for their ability to extract the maximum information from qualitative data. Our methods are very robust and demonstrably able to stand up to public scrutiny. They have been used, for example, in the analysis of difficult and sensitive topics and have provided the analytical structure for many high profile pieces of work.

Appendix F

Fast track assessment

Fast Track Assessment Written

Name:

.....

Results:

Totals

Refer for further assessment if he/she gets:

Task 1

0-4 marks in Task 1

Task 2
Section A

or **any ticks** in Task 2 (Section A)

Task 2
Section B

or **0-4** marks in Task 2 (Section B)

Task 1**BOWATER HOUSING
ASSOCIATION GROUP**HOUSING ASSOCIATION
GROUP**JOB DESCRIPTION**

JOB TITLE:	ASSISTANT CARETAKER
LOCATION:	BOWATER HOUSE
PAY:	£5.20 per hour (overtime at £1 per hour over basic rate)
BENEFITS:	PENSION SCHEME, 3 WEEKS PAID HOLIDAY P.A.
HOURS:	MONDAY TO FRIDAY 8AM-12, 5PM-8PM (35 HOURS PER WEEK) POSSIBILITY OF OVERTIME
REPOSIBLE TO:	SENIOR CARETAKER

DUTIES:

1. To clean all office areas between 5pm and 8pm
2. To lock all interior and exterior doors at 8pm
3. To unlock all interior and exterior doors at 8am
4. To set intruder alarms at 8pm
5. To turn off intruder alarms at 8am
6. To welcome visitors and issue parking permits
7. To dispose of office waste as required
8. To carry out minor repairs to office furniture as required
9. To check and keep clean all toilet areas
10. To carry out any other duties as requested

Read through the job description and then answer the questions on this sheet. You do not need to write in sentences.

For office
use only

1

What are the benefits that are part of this job?

2

How much, in total, would you be paid per hour for overtime?

3

What word or words in the list of duties mean 'to get rid of'?

4

Which jobs in the list of duties are about security?

5

How much would you earn in 20 hours at the hourly rate?

6

On Monday to Friday you would be free during the afternoons. How many hours off would this be each week?

Task 2

For office use only

Section A

Please fill in this section with your personal details.

BOWATER HOUSING ASSOCIATION GROUP



HOUSING ASSOCIATION GROUP

APPLICATION FORM

POST: ASSISTANT CARETAKER

Full Name:

Address:

.....

Post Code:

Date:

Spelling correct

Correct use of upper/ lower case

Section B

Please complete the following sentences by circling the correct words.

1. I will be

<i>available</i>
<i>avaiible</i>
<i>avalable</i>

 for work

<i>imediately.</i>
<i>immediatly.</i>
<i>immediately.</i>

2. I

<i>were</i>
<i>was</i>
<i>are</i>

 employed by the district council.

3. I

<i>wouldnt</i>
<i>would'nt</i>
<i>wouldn't</i>

 be able to work overtime.

Put one word in the gap

4. I wish to for the job.

Appendix G

Qualitative sample profile

Main design advisers stages one and two

	Stage 1					Stage 2			
	Advisers - telephone interviews	Advisers – face to face interviews	Adviser with client: number of observations	Clients - short face to face interviews	Adviser revisits – face to face interviews	Clients – face to face interviews	Providers – face to face interviews		
Mandatory areas									
1. Bedfordshire	4	3	-	-	3	11	-		
2. Berkshire	2	1	2	-	7	-	-		
3. Bury & Bolton	4	3	1	4	3	16	-		
4. Calderdale & Kirklees	4	3	-	-	5	-	-		
5. Cheshire & Warrington	5	3	-	-	1	-	-		
6. Dorset	4	4	-	-	6	-	-		
7. Durham	5	4	-	-	4	-	-		
8. Hull & East Riding	4	3	-	-	5	11	4		
9. Lincolnshire & Rutland	3	3	-	-	4	-	-		
10. South London	5	3	-	-	3	12	5		
11. Wolverhampton & Walsall	5	5	3	3	6	10			
12. Kent	5	5			7	-	4		
Non-mandatory areas									
13. Cambridgeshire	6	4	1	-	-	-	-		
14. Hampshire	8	6	-	-	-	-	-		
15. North East London	5	4	-	-	-	-	-		
16. Northumberland	6	4	3	-	-	-	-		
17. Shropshire	5	4	3	-	-	-	-		
18. Wiltshire & Swindon	5	3	1	-	-	-	-		
Cornwall	4	3	-	-	-	-	-		
North London	5	4	-	-	-	-	-		
West London	4	4	-	-	-	-	-		
Staffordshire	5	5	-	-	-	-	-		
Totals	103	81	14	7	54	60	13		

Main design providers study stage two

Training providers	Number of staff interviewed	Type of Provider	Courses	Age group catered for
Hull & East Riding	2	Adult Education Provider	BET/FTET	25+ only
Hull & East Riding	2	Training Provider	SIBS/FTET	18-24 25+
South London	2	Training Provider	BET/FTET	18 to 24 25+
South London	1	College	BET/ESOL	18 to 24 25+
South London	1	Training Provider	SIBS	18 to 24 25+
South London	1	Training Provider	SIBS/BET	18 to 24 25 +
Kent	2	Training provider	SIBS/BET/ESOL FTET basic skills	18 to 24 25+
Kent	2	Adult education provider	BET/ESOL	25+ only

Main design customers stage two

Sample details	Sample size									
	Number of respondents									
Total	60									
Area totals	South London 12	Bedfordshire 11	Walsall & Wolverhampton 10	Bolton & Bury 16	Hull & East Riding 11					
Client groups	FT to IA	14	IA to training	20	In training	26				
Gender	Male	15			Female	45				
Age	18 – 24	14	25 – 34	13	35 – 44	16	45 – 54	8	55+	9
Ethnicity	Asian	10		Black	5		White	45		

Area	Client group				Total
	FT to IA	IA to Training	In Training	Total	
South London	3	2	7	12	
Bedfordshire	2	3	6	11	
Walsall & Wolverhampton	2	5	3	10	
Bolton & Bury	4	6	6	16	
Hull & East Riding	3	4	4	11	
Total	14	20	26	60	

Main design customers stage three

Client group	Area 1 Hull & East Riding	Area 2 Walsall & Wolverhampton	Area 3 Berkshire	Area 4 South London	Area 5 Dorset	
Sanctioned clients	10	10	10	9	9	48
Clients who left training early but were not sanctioned	9	9	9	9	9	45
Clients who completed training	9	9	9	9	9	45
	28	28	28	27	27	138

48 interviews with sanctioned clients

Variables	Area 1	Area 1	Area 1	Area 1	Area 1	Area 1	Totals
Sanctioned clients	10	10	10	10	10	8	48
Currently in training	1	2	2	2	1		8
Currently in work	2	3	1	2	1		9
Currently on benefits	5	3	4	4	5		21
Inactive (not doing any of the above, or inactive benefits, not JSA)	2	2	3	2	1		10
When sanctioned:	10	10	10	10	8		48
At referral to training	3	2	3	2	3		13
During first 2 weeks of training	2	5	2	4	2		15
After 2 weeks but before end of training	5	3	5	4	3		20

45 interviews with clients who left training early but were not sanctioned (although may have been referred)

Variables	Area 1	Area 1	Area 1	Area 1	Area 1	Area 1	Totals
Clients who left the course:	9	9	9	9	9	9	45
At referral to training	2	2	4	2	1		15
Within the first two weeks of course	2	3	1	3	6		15
After the first two weeks but before the end of the course	5	4	4	3	2		15

45 interviews with clients who completed training

Variables	Area 1 Hull and east riding	Area 2 Walsall and Wolverhampton	Area 3 Berkshire	Area 4 South London	Area 5 Dorset	
Clients who completed training	9	9	9	9	9	45
Claiming at Jobcentre	7	6	5	5	3	26
In employment	2	1	2	1	3	9
In training/education		2	2	3	3	10
Those who attended:						
BETS course (26 weeks)	8	9	5	6	8	36
SIBS course (8 weeks)	1		4	3	1	9
FTET course (1 year)						

Secondary recruitment criteria

The sample should also aim to include a mix of the following variables:

- **Age:**
 18-24 -34
 25-34 -33
 35-44 -34
 45-54 -28
 55+ -8

Sex:
 Male-108
 female -8

- Ethnicity:
 - white - 100
 - black - 13
 - Asian-22

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