



Department
for Education



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Evaluation of the 18-21 Work Skills Pilot 1: final report

Research Report

September 2018

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Acknowledgements

The research team is sincerely grateful to the support offered by the research managers, Robin Elliot Marshall, Andrew Stocks and Richard Ward.

We also wish to thank the policymakers within the Departments who supported and contributed to the research.

We are indebted to the Jobcentre Plus offices and Pilot providers who hosted visits by members of the research team during the testing phase to enable insight to emerge into the Pilot's operation and implementations

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Contents

Executive Summary	7
1 Introduction	13
1.1 About the 18-21 Work Skills Pilot 1	14
1.1.1 How the Pilot was implemented	14
1.1.2 Subsequent developments	15
1.2 About the evaluation	16
1.3 Report structure	18
2 Expectations for the Pilot	19
2.1 Aims and outcomes	19
2.2 Key operating principles	21
2.3 Conditions for success	22
2.3.1 Communication and collaboration	22
2.3.2 Learner support and management in light of mandation	22
2.3.3 Access to information and communications technology and facilities	23
2.3.4 Effective randomisation procedures	23
2.4 Policy perspective on the commissioning process	23
2.4.1 The providers	24
2.4.2 Provider experiences of the commissioning process	24
2.5 Concerns about the viability of the Pilot contracts	25
2.6 Messages from the ex-ante cost benefit analysis	25
3 Entry to the Trial	27
3.1 Pre-Pilot provision	27
3.2 Participation in the Pilot	28
3.3 New claim interview and qualification screening	30
3.4 Assessment	33
3.4.1 Format of the assessment	33
3.4.2 Referral to assessment	34
3.4.3 Attending the assessment	36
3.4.4 Assessment results and feedback	37

3.5	Randomisation to online training or control group	39
3.5.1	Referral processes and online training	43
4	Training Provision	45
4.1	Learning infrastructure	45
4.1.1	Issues raised by the analysis of provision	48
4.2	Online training experience	49
4.2.1	Treatment engagement	49
4.2.2	Differences to school learning	50
4.3	Business as usual provision	51
4.4	Training and take-up of other provision	53
5	Outcomes	56
5.1	Training completion and achievement	56
5.2	Destinations	57
5.3	Receipt of Welfare Benefits	60
5.4	Analysis of sanctions	61
5.5	Individual learner experiences	62
5.5.1	Experience of the training and any changes	63
5.5.2	The difference the training made	63
6	Discussion and conclusions	65
6.1	Evidence on the key principles	65
6.1.1	The role of mandation	65
6.1.2	Attitudinal and behavioural changes amongst learners	66
6.1.3	Value for money	67
6.1.4	Market capacity	68
6.2	Conclusions and lessons learned	68
	Appendix 1	71
	Appendix 2	72

List of figures

Figure 1: Youth Claimant Count (18-24 years) November 2013-2014	15
Figure 2: 18-21 WSP Pilot volumes using 'Marker data'	29

List of tables

Table 3.1: Randomisation Test: Multinomial Logit Regression (Blended Online Group) .41	.41
Table 3.2: Randomisation Test: Multinomial Logit Regression (Pure Online Group).....41	41
Table 3.3: Geographical Location by gender of 18-21 WSP programme participants42	42
Table 4.1: Overview of teaching and learning models by provider.....47	47
Table 4.2: Number of learning aims started by JSA/ESA(WRAG claimants) aged 19-24 51	51
Table 4.3: Learning Aims Recorded by Treatment Group53	53
Table 4.4: Recorded Pilot participants in LMS Opps data with least 1 opportunity after assessment (other than Assessment) by status in Marker data (%)55	55
Table 5.1: Number of individuals with at least one Pilot aim achieved by subject, by group56	56
Table 5.2: ILR recorded destinations by RCT group57	57
Table 5.3: Regression results on recorded destinations comparing the blended or online group with the business as usual group.....59	59
Table 5.4: Regression results on each type of destination.....60	60
Table 5.5: Duration before the assessment61	61
Table 5.6: Duration of spells after assessment61	61
Table 5.7: Individuals in the RCT with a sanction referral marker recorded.....62	62

Executive Summary

Introduction

In response to persistent youth unemployment and causal links between unemployment, low skill levels and poor long term economic and social outcomes, the Departments of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) (transferring to Department for Education in the 2016 Machinery of Government change), and Work and Pensions (DWP), collaborated to launch a new Pilot in November 2014. Known as the 18-21 Work Skills Pilot 1, it aimed to investigate whether the provision of online training in English and maths could help increase the skills and employability of young Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants aged 18-21 years who could not provide evidence of possessing these skills at Level 2.

The Pilot was delivered through a randomised controlled trial (RCT). This meant that 'treatment' (access to online training through the pilot) could be systematically compared to business as usual (BAU) (i.e. what would have been offered in the absence of the Pilot). As part of BAU, Jobcentre Plus (JCP) staff had discretion to decide the support young people required which could include access to provision such as work experience, sector-based work academies, traineeships, as well as SFA-funded training.

The Pilot required JCP staff to screen claimants' qualifications and to mandate them to an assessment where Level 2 skills could not be proven. Assessments and online training provision were operated by 5 providers who bid for Pilot delivery. Where assessment showed claimants' English and maths skills to be below Level 2, JCP staff used a random allocation tool to mandate them to 1 of 2 treatments (pure or blended online training) or to the control group, where claimants would receive the BAU provision.

The Pilot initially operated across 3 DWP districts in 62 JCP offices. Providers were contracted to deliver in 5 Skills Funding Agency (SFA) contract package areas with 1 provider allocated to each of these. This meant that in 1 of the DWP districts, 3 providers were responsible for Pilot delivery while in the other 2, only 1 provider operated. All providers offered pure as well as a blended online training provision.

Subsequent closure of the Pilot

Subsequent to the Pilot's launch, there was a significant change in the economic context and rates of unemployment started to reduce. Between November 2013 and November 2014 the youth claimant count (18-24 years) dropped by 2.3 percentage points and by

22,600 young people.¹ In parallel, an accelerated implementation of Universal Credit (UC) was announced. These factors reduced the availability of young jobseekers to participate in the Pilot. Efforts were made by both Departments to overcome the consequences: the Pilot was extended into a further DWP district (14 JCP offices), with an existing provider winning the delivery contract. Consideration was given to involving UC claimants although the evaluation team advised that the differences in the UC and JSA regimes meant that data could not be combined. Even with these changes, however, the decision was taken to close the Pilot after its testing phase as it was judged that it would take an unsustainably long time to obtain the volume of claimants required for a reliable analysis and that this would be at an unrepresentative cost per learner.

The evaluation

An evaluation was underway at the point of closure. This had collated a sizeable evidence base about the Pilot's implementation through qualitative research with policymakers, strategic-level provider staff and case studies involving JCP staff, provider staff, BAU providers, and learners. In addition, 2 intervention studies were completed: 1 into assessments and the other into online training. Further, a preliminary forecast of the economic and social gains and losses that could arise from the Pilot had been completed. As part of closure activities, the RCT data was analysed and follow-up, qualitative interviews were conducted with learners already recruited to the research.

This report collates and synthesises all the evidence emerging from the evaluation and draws lessons for future RCTs in this policy arena. The associated technical report contains a full description of the quantitative analysis undertaken with the RCT data available during the closing stages of the pilot.

Findings

Pre-Pilot approaches and provision

The available evidence confirmed that pre-Pilot there was no consistent mechanism to check claimants' qualification levels, not least since there is no requirement or expectation that JCP staff screen qualifications under BAU arrangements (Section 3.1). Until the Pilot introduced systematic qualification screening, JCP staff asked about skill levels as part of initial claim interviews and took decisions about whether to refer claimants to provision based on their own judgements. Commentary from JCP staff taking part in the process evaluation about the English and maths provision to which they

¹ Based on ONS data, downloaded October 2016 from:
<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/submit.asp?menuopt=201&subcomp=>

could refer claimants pre-Pilot, suggested that the availability of this provision was quite variable across the Pilot areas. Forms of training thought by JCP staff to be useful for the age group were traineeships, not necessarily because of the English and maths content, and sector-based work academies.

Pilot data sources and entry into the Pilot

Data on participation in different stages of the Pilot were recorded using 3 different sources across DWP and BIS. However, there was variation in those recorded as participants between these sources, which led to difficulties reconciling the data to fully understand Pilot participation (Section 3.2). Using Pilot marker data from the DWP Labour Market System (LMS),² it was estimated that 8,160 young JSA claimants were available to enter into the pilot and have their qualifications screened. Of these:

- 76 were out of scope because they needed language support, and 1,253 were exempted because they were vulnerable or had other special circumstances.
- 2,977 produced evidence of being qualified to Level 2.
- A further 1,632 were recorded as 'left pilot', and 134 as 'left pilot/error'.

Following screening, this left a minimum of 2,088 who were referred to assessment³ and according to the marker data, subsequent to this, 1,919 were allocated to the RCT i.e. were randomised to either treatment or the control group. However, once decode data from the BIS Individualised Learner Records (ILR) dataset were examined in addition to the Pilot marker data, the treatment group became smaller (1,211 claimants).⁴ The data showed that those who left following assessment (e.g. due to exemption) tended to have shorter spells of unemployment than those who continued into the Pilot at this point.

The qualitative accounts of JCP staff taking part in the process evaluation indicated that, for the large part, Pilot guidance was being followed correctly in respect of screening procedures and exemptions. This was confirmed by the analysis of Pilot marker data on randomisation. However, the analysis of the ILR decode data indicated some differences in characteristics between the 2 treatment groups and the BAU control group once randomised into training. This was problematic as there should not be a statistically significant relationship between the group a claimant was randomly allocated to, and other characteristics, if the process was truly random. The effect was observed in area C

² Please refer to section 3.2 in this report and the technical report that accompanies this synthesis for a full description of each of the sources available and of each stage of the quantitative analysis.

³ The combined data suggested a much higher number of assessments at 4,042 although for 2,370 of these (about 60%) no further Pilot participation could be established

⁴ Again, please refer to the Technical Report for a full discussion of the various data-sets and how they reported Pilot participation

(Provider 4) where claimants appeared to be more likely to be allocated to the pure or blended online treatment groups. There was also a weak difference by gender across areas. This meant that, in some respect, Pilot guidance was not consistently applied. The early end to the Pilot meant it was not possible to unpick this conflicting evidence.⁵

The assessments

In most cases providers used a commercial assessment package although they had selected different packages. The assessments shared similar relationships to the Functional Skills standards although there were differences which potentially could weaken their reliability and comparability for the RCT.

Handover and referral processes between JCP and providers varied between areas, and in some cases there could be lengthy delays between referral and assessment. This was due to difficulties in matching supply with demand. There were anecdotal accounts of high rates of failure to attend assessments, which meant that while all assessment appointments were booked, only half were used at any time in some areas.

There was varying practice in respect of communicating the results of assessment. Most providers gave young people a result on the day of the assessment. Providers said they rapidly communicated the results to JCP offices, although JCP staff could note delays. The point at which JCP staff told claimants their results could also vary; where this took time, any referral to training also became delayed. For those claimants who received an assessment but for whom no further record of Pilot participation could be found, the quantitative analysis showed spells of claiming JSA were, on average, shorter than those entering treatment (pure or blended online training).

Practice varied in respect of approaches with the control group (BAU). Some JCP staff believed it was no longer possible to provide training or work experience, whereas 1 office had devised a bespoke training provision for the control group with a BAU provider, which included English and maths training combined with work placement.

Referral to training and the training experience

The learning infrastructure and platforms implemented by providers were varied and there was not a consistent difference between blended and pure online training between the 5 providers (i.e. each provider configured the 2 forms of training differently and for example, some included an element of face-to-face provision in the pure online training, and the extent of face-to-face training in the blended models varied substantially between

⁵ Although it must be noted that only a small sample of JCP offices were visited for the process evaluation and these may not have been representative of practice across contract package areas or districts

providers). Thus considering all the blended forms to be the same, or all the pure forms to be the same, was unlikely to be reliable, with consequences for understanding the RCT data. Moreover, provision and platforms were still in development at the time of the research which meant there was potential for change in the future, again with implications for assessing the RCT data.

Nonetheless, young people in the process evaluation who joined the online training were often positive and appreciated the training environment and experience. They liked the employability content although this varied in format between providers. This content helped young people to see the applicability of their training to the world of work.

Outcomes

The RCT data was drawn too early to demonstrate long term outcomes and outcomes that were captured were unlikely to be representative of the Pilot if it had continued to operate as planned. Hence while a completion rate of c.10% was seen for learners involved in either pure or blended online training this captured completion only at the point data were drawn. The data also showed that many treatment learners were continuing training. It was thus unlikely that a 10% completion rate was representative of what could have been achieved with more time.

The qualitative accounts from the limited number of Pilot learners involved in the follow-up interviews showed that employment and training outcomes had emerged with some working and others involved in apprenticeships. Only those in this small sample who remained unemployed continued with Pilot training. Many said they had realised benefits including improvements to literacy and numeracy skills which they attributed to Pilot training. Some saw attitudinal and behavioural changes such as understanding how and why employers valued core skills, and feeling more control over their own situations.

Discussion and lessons learned

Overall, many of the key principles set out by policymakers for the Pilot held true in practice. Young people could be convinced of the value of returning to English and maths learning and found the online training format engaging. The applied nature of the training was also important to their engagement. JCP staff and providers were largely able to provide sufficient encouragement for a positive engagement to emerge and were able to supply the level of learner support that helped learners persist in training. As a result of training, learners believed they gained benefits including in respect of skills as well as attributes and behaviours.

The role of mandation was less clear from the available data and it was not heavily emphasised by any party. While those involved in learning believed they were self-motivated, the research did not engage with those who did not attend assessments or

training. It was thus impossible to say what would have happened without the lever of mandate being in place.

The Pilot had great potential to add to the evidence base of what works for young, unemployed people and particularly whether improving core skills could make a difference. However, its delivery was undermined by the changed economic environment and notably by increasing levels of youth employment. In combination these undermined not only the financial planning but also the judgements that it was possible to draw based on the RCT data. Lessons could however be drawn from its operation which included:

- The value of testing the RCT and referral process as part of a Pilot implementation before any national roll-out: this delivered insights into the effects of the reduced on flows to the unemployment register as well as operational factors that could have improved delivery and consistency, making the resulting data more reliable.
- The lack of time for outcomes to emerge: an unfortunate consequence of closure before main-stage implementation was the lack of time for longer term outcomes to emerge which meant the impact of the Pilot could not be determined.
- More consistent data source(s): the analysis of the RCT data was hindered in part by a lack of consistency, particularly between the different data-sets that had to be used. A more consistent source would have allowed a clearer picture of operation, and with time impact. Without this, the research relied upon estimated effects.
- Ensuring key staff understand the rationale for an RCT and comply with procedures: to avoid any disruption to the randomisation process and to prevent baseline practices changing during operation. Within the Pilot, a longer lead time to delivery to allow for communications and to provide guidance on relevant procedures would have been valuable. Being clear on the benefits of the new provision over BAU could also have increased staff support of the Pilot.
- The need to commission training provision as tightly as possible for an RCT: while providers met high level definitions for blended and pure online training, delivery models varied considerably which brought uncertainty for the validity and utility of the RCT data to understand the relative impact of these two forms of training.
- The challenges of matching supply with demand: doing more to facilitate communications at an earlier stage and intervening to address these issues, again could have minimised some area differences that were emerging.

1 Introduction

The dominant theme guiding UK labour market policy over the last decade has been to encourage labour-market participation and as such, reducing the proportion of young people who are unemployed has been a key priority. While youth unemployment has been falling in recent years it remains higher than the adult rate; the economic downturn had a disproportionate effect on young people's transitions into work.

A review led by Sir Jeremy Heywood in summer 2013, collated the evidence on youth unemployment with an aim to make recommendations for government on how to improve labour market outcomes for young people. Given the importance of Level 2 qualifications in English and maths (i.e. GCSE A*-C) to longer term outcomes, his recommendations included the implementation of Pilot support for low skilled, unemployed 18-21 year olds. This was announced in the Autumn Statement⁶ in 2013, with further details contained in a speech by the Deputy Prime Minister in February 2014⁷. Thus the 18-21 Work Skills Pilot 1 was introduced which aimed to support new Jobseeker's Allowance claimants aged 18-21 who did not have Level 2 maths or English to improve their skill levels through mandating them to an English and/or maths GCSE or Functional Skills⁸ online training.

Alongside this, a second Pilot, 18-21 Work Skills Pilot 2, sought to test whether employment outcomes for 18-21 year olds still on benefit after 6 months could be improved by mandating them to participate in a work, skills or work/skills intervention most appropriate to them (for example, a traineeship or other training intervention, a Sector-Based Work Academy, or work experience, although the latter could not be mandated). Pilot 2 operated between November 2014 and September 2015.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) jointly led the Pilots and jointly commissioned their separate evaluations. Pilot 1, the subject of this report, was launched in late November 2014 and continued to operate until February 2016.

⁶ For more details on the Autumn Statement 2013 pilot announcement, see paragraph 1.197 (p53) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/263942/35062_Autumn_Statement_2013.pdf

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/better-choices-better-prospects-helping-young-people-succeed>

⁸ Functional Skills are the skills of English, maths and information and communication technology essential for life, learning and work.

1.1 About the 18-21 Work Skills Pilot 1

The 18-21 Work Skills Pilot 1 was introduced with the intention of improving young jobseekers' outcomes by improving their maths and English. The aim was to test the impact on employment outcomes and the development of these skills of systematically mandating (i.e. requiring as a condition of benefits receipt) all 18-21 year old Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants who had not achieved Level 2 in English and/or maths to English and/or maths training. The training provision available was designed to be in 2 distinct forms: 'blended' or 'pure' online learning. Blended online was defined as predominantly online but offered a combination of online learning with face-to-face support from a tutor. 'Pure' online which was defined by policymakers as 100% online learning with only virtual support from a tutor

The Pilot operated through a randomised controlled trial (RCT). It required Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches to screen the qualifications of new claimants aged 18-21 years at their New Jobseeker's interview. Where claimants could not demonstrate possession of a Level 2 qualification in both English and maths they were mandated to attend a skills assessment at a learning provider. In addition to English and maths skills, this assessment covered information and communication technology (ICT) skills and capabilities. Where the assessment found claimants to possess English and maths skills beneath Level 2, and adequate ICT skills, they were judged as eligible for the Pilot and subject to the randomisation. This referred them to 1 of the 2 treatments (blended or pure online training) or to business-as-usual (the offer typically made available to such claimants pre-Pilot).

Where they were randomised to training this was on a mandatory basis, following the provisions of the Jobseeker's Allowance (18-21 Work Skills Pilot Scheme) Regulations 2014.⁹ The DWP supplied JCP offices with a random allocation tool, which used national insurance number as the basis for allocation, and JCP staff notified claimants of the result of randomisation. Where JCP staff believed young claimants were not suitable for the Pilot, for example, due to chaotic lifestyles or substance misuse problems, they were able to apply a discretionary exemption if approved by their manager.

1.1.1 How the Pilot was implemented

Delivery commenced on the 25 November 2014 in 3 DWP districts which between them had 62 JCP offices: Cornwall, Devon and Somerset; Kent; and Mercia. DWP provided funding for the additional advisory and management time the Pilot required. In the lead

⁹ The regulations can be found here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3117/contents/made>

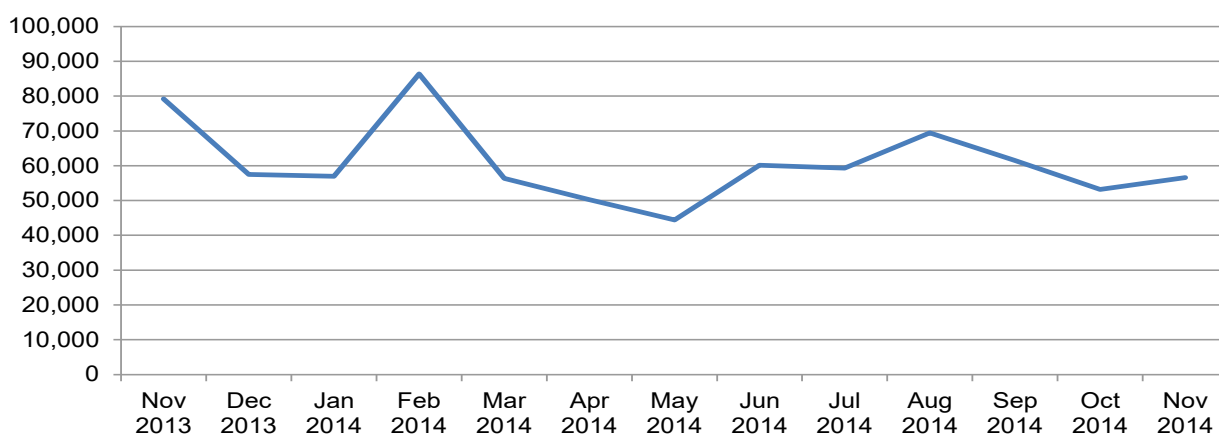
up to the Pilot's launch, it delivered training to JCP staff to equip them to operate the Pilot.

The online learning was commissioned by the SFA on behalf of BIS. It had 5 contract package areas covering the 3 districts; this meant it commissioned provision separately in each of the counties in the Cornwall, Devon and Somerset district.¹⁰ The maximum duration for learning was 6 months and claimants were able continue training during this time even where they entered employment. Following a competitive tendering process, 5 providers were selected by the SFA; 1 to deliver in each of its contract package areas. Each was contracted to offer both pure and blended online learning and each was granted development costs for their online learning infrastructure. Beyond this start-up payment, the Pilot delivery contract offered an agreed fee for the assessments, and for supporting learners in training. The funding included the entry fees associated with the qualifications (Functional Skills or GCSEs) that learners could take.

1.1.2 Subsequent developments

After the Pilot had been launched, the economic environment started to improve. The unemployment register showed a significant decline in the period between November 2013 and November 2014. The overall claimant count dropped by 1.2 percentage points or by around 362,00 individuals. The decline amongst young claimants (aged 18-24) was sharper across the same period at 2.2 percentage points and 22,6000 individuals (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Youth Claimant Count (18-24 years) November 2013-2014



Data downloaded 25 October 2016 from:
<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/submit.asp?menuopt=201&subcomp=>

¹⁰ A coding structure for districts and providers is used throughout the report to protect identities. Appendix 1 maps DWP district codes and with the SFA's provider contract package areas.

Crucially, the impact of this was lower than forecast numbers of young people coming onto the unemployment register which affected numbers entering the Pilot. For example at the end of February 2015, the number of people referred to the trial was only 15% of the forecast for this point. In addition, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions announced an accelerated roll-out of Universal Credit¹¹. Since the Pilot targeted JSA claimants once this took effect it would further reduce Pilot flows.

In efforts to address the effects on the Pilot's implementation, the 2 Departments systematically explored options to increase the volume of new claimants who could enter random allocation. This included extending the Pilot's reach as well as its duration. The outcome was that the Pilot was extended into 1 further DWP district (the Black Country¹²) which had 14 JCP offices, with 1 of the existing 5 providers selected to operate in this area following an additional procurement exercise. Delivery in the Black Country commenced on 2 March 2015. The Departments also considered extending the Pilot's duration by several months. Finally, policy officials explored the option of including Universal Credit claimants.

In light of these new options, the evaluation team provided advice on whether the reduced onflows meant an impact analysis remained viable at the level of detail expected by policymakers within a reasonable period of time (i.e. being able to measure an outcome effect of around 2 to 3 percentage points) and judged that it was not. The number of new claimants in the Black Country district could not compensate for the overall reduced onflow of young people to the unemployment register. In addition, the different conditions that apply to Universal Credit meant that this would have to be considered as a separate Pilot – losing the advantage of increasing numbers.

Consequently by June 2015 policymakers decided to close the Pilot early with the last skills screenings taking place on 22 June 2015 and last assessments funded within 2 weeks of this date. Registered learners were able to continue their training until completion. The total number of learners entering the trial, by the end of July 2015, was significantly lower than originally forecast.

1.2 About the evaluation

The Departments set multiple aims and objectives for the evaluation across the planned course of the Pilot's delivery and an extensive period beyond this to allow longer term

¹¹ More detail is available from this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plans-announced-for-accelerated-rollout-of-universal-credit-after-success-in-north-west>

¹² Which covers: Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton

outcomes to emerge. As such, the original intention was that the evaluation would supply a full impact assessment, an assessment of cost-effectiveness, and a process evaluation including studies into the online training packages, including the assessment tools.

It was possible to complete many, but far from all, of these elements in the period before the decision was reached to close the Pilot and these data are synthesised within the current report along with some additional elements that were agreed once the decision to close the Pilot had been reached. This report is thus based on the following methods; the latter 2 of which were agreed as part of wind-down activities:

1. Process evaluation involving qualitative interviews with 6 national stakeholders, 12 strategic-level contacts and 25 operational contacts within providers, as well as case studies¹³ which included group interviews with 34 JCP staff and observations of 25 meetings associated with the Pilot in JCP offices, 8 observations of skills assessment meetings in online learning centres, interviews with 33 young people who participated in learning as part of the Pilot and interviews with 8 providers of the BAU offer in local areas.
2. Intervention studies drawing on qualitative interviews and desk-based research to explore the assessment tools and the characteristics of the 2 forms of online learning provision in each provider.
3. A preliminary ex-ante cost benefit analysis (in essence, a forecast) of planned spend and the social returns to investment that could emerge from individuals completing training and acquiring qualifications. This quantitative analysis drew on the planned spending for the Pilot from provider contracts and used the original estimates of Pilot flows. An achievement rate for qualification attainment through the Pilot was based on assumptions drawn from the existing evidence. Further information on the approach to the ex ante CBA may be found in Appendix 2 to this report.
4. Quantitative assessment of the randomised controlled trial data including flows through the various stages of the Pilot. Data from 2 sources within the DWP's Labour Market System (LMS) were used and were linked to the Individual Learner Record (ILR) to understand more about individuals' experiences of learning and outcomes. This analysis is available in full in the technical report that accompanies this synthesis.
5. Follow-up telephone interviews with Pilot learners who had been recruited to the case study element of the process evaluation. All learners were contacted for this element, although the contact telephone numbers for many had changed. Consequently, 8 of these interviews were completed.

¹³ Each of the 5 providers was involved in case study research but in the DWP District that covered three contract package areas, the JCP element was conducted in only 2 of the provider contract areas.

1.3 Report structure

This report contains synthesised findings from all strands of work completed during the testing phase of the Pilot and during the period of its closure. The expectations for the Pilot held by national stakeholders, policymakers and the strategic-level staff in providers are set out in Chapter 2. This includes some evidence on the commissioning of the Pilot.

In Chapter 3, the data on entry into the Pilot is presented. This chapter includes a description of pre Pilot provision in local areas, claimant flows including into assessment and subsequently referral to training. This includes an examination of the qualifications screening process as well as of the assessment tools in use.

Chapter 4 focuses on the online training provision and the experience of training. It includes coverage of what was available to the control group and provides some evidence on training and other outcomes.

A more detailed discussion of outcomes is contained in Chapter 5, which covers the available data on destinations, welfare claiming, and rates of sanctioning as well as learners' views on their achievements.

The report concludes in Chapter 6 which discusses some key principles associated with delivery and draws some lessons for future delivery of RCTs in this policy arena.

2 Expectations for the Pilot

This section reviews the initial expectations for the Pilot among policy stakeholders and providers and perspectives on the commissioning process.

To build up a picture of how the Pilot was developed, establish the key principles that underpinned it, and understand how it was intended to work in practice; interviews were completed with representatives from BIS, DWP, Cabinet Office and the SFA as well as staff operating at a strategic level within the selected providers.

2.1 Aims and outcomes

Policymakers felt that the Pilot reflected the findings of the Heywood Review, and that it aimed to find the best way of improving young people's English and maths skills which were seen as crucial to improving their employability, productivity and earnings. Other, more limited, outcomes were also envisaged such as improving the engagement and commitment to progression among the more disaffected young people. However the main aim was clear: to improve young people's basic skills and thereby their employment prospects.

Following on from this, there was a consensus about the types of outcome for young people that should result from the Pilot, namely increased skill levels, and employment activity leading to sustained employment, although some policymakers also identified softer outcomes such as ongoing engagement with the support available and being able to use time more productively. However, there was no shared definition about what constituted either sustained work or skill acquisition when these interviews were undertaken.¹⁴

While some stakeholders indicated that sustained employment should mean holding down 1 job for a specified period, this was far from a universally accepted definition. Alternative definitions included a period of time (e.g. 6 months) during which a young person mostly remained employed, to shorter durations (3 or 4 months) in continuous employment in a series of jobs. Given the low skill levels and lack of experience that the target group might have, some stakeholders suggested that getting a short-term or temporary job was a key achievement and could provide the platform for future advancement in terms of pay and job security. The quality and sustainability of jobs was also a consideration raised.

¹⁴ Interviews were conducted some weeks prior to the Pilot's launch

Similarly, definitions of what appropriate skill acquisition would entail varied at this early stage of the pilot. Some believed that the achievement of a Level 2 qualification was the key measure. However, as young people could not be required to pass qualifications, a qualification measure was not felt to be appropriate and it was recognised that some participants would not be able to achieve Level 2 within the time-frame of the Pilot due to their prior level of achievement. In addition, policymakers perceived that measuring skills gains in the absence of qualification gains would rely upon providers' initial, interim and final assessments which in turn would rely upon reliable and consistently applied diagnostic tools. As the Pilot contract had allowed providers to select the initial assessment tools as well as those for interim and final assessment, it was judged that this could be challenging.¹⁵

Some policy stakeholders also expressed interest in outcomes related to behaviour change, such that:

- Participants would take control of their learning and engage in a positive manner that would lead them towards skill improvement; that through online learning with an employability focus, learners would understand that employers value these skills as part of 'work cultures'; that they would also understand the value of these skills to their own situations and circumstances; and that their behaviour would change in that they would recognise they could achieve a Level 2 qualification and above, through a non-traditional approach i.e. they would gain confidence and a greater sense of agency.
- Jobcentre Plus advisers would see that discussion of skills and mandation to assessment where a good level of achievement (e.g. A*-C or equivalent) was not clear should be the norm and should be the starting point in any claimant's journey. It was proposed that it should become the norm that people who lack English and maths qualifications and skills be referred to provision that addressed this.

Providers were concerned that prior educational experiences and notably a sense of failure in education could act as a barrier to learners' engagement. They expected that young people would need to be encouraged to participate, which would emerge in part from mandation, from being advised of the benefits that would result and the reassurance that the training experience would differ substantially from their prior experiences.

¹⁵ This led the Pilot steering group to conclude, ahead of the Pilot's launch, that it was not feasible to measure skills acquisition in the absence of qualifications gain.

2.2 Key operating principles

In order to achieve the expected outcomes and behavioural changes policymakers identified a number of levers for change:

- Mandation – seen as part of the policy framework and as such a necessary element of the Pilot. While some stakeholders saw it as the crucial means to ensure individuals engaged with the Pilot’s processes, others believed that it would only work in conjunction with, for example, a compelling case being made for taking part in assessment or training, with work coaches providing the means to motivate engagement and participation.
- Qualification screening was viewed as a necessity by some stakeholders in order to avoid duplication of prior learning, but they did not see much of a role for it beyond this. The wish to avoid learners being required to repeat a level of learning applied to the assessment.
- Assessment was believed to be crucial in order that learning could be pitched to the capabilities of individuals and to provide learners with feedback from which they could measure their own progress. There was recognition that an assessment that was not engaging could have negative impacts on learners’ willingness to take part in training.
- Randomisation – while understanding the benefits of a randomised controlled trial in terms of a robust evidence base, not all stakeholders believed online learning would be suitable for all young people who would enter the trial and some believed that the process of randomisation would mean that some learners would be entered into training that would not be effective for their needs. Providers were further concerned that randomisation meant they could not offer guidance to learners.
- Online learning provision – for some policymakers the Pilot was an opportunity to prove the value and benefits of online learning and particularly to test the differences between the pure and blended treatment arms. Others hoped that more personalised provision would emerge, which was dynamic and adaptive as individuals progressed. Policymakers hoped that the new format might engage those learners who had become disaffected with or had failed in traditional education settings and provide them with a valuable second chance of learning. Providers planned various approaches to making the learning provision relevant to employment. Most noted that learning would be contextualised in everyday life requirements; beyond this, there were differing emphasises on: employability (CV development, job search skills, work behaviours and attitudes); and vocational skills (preparation to work in particular jobs or sectors).

2.3 Conditions for success

2.3.1 Communication and collaboration

The policymakers conceptualised the conditions that would be necessary for success in different ways. For some this surrounded the effective operation of the Pilot by Jobcentre Plus and online learning providers who would need to communicate effectively, collaborate on individuals' cases and provide effective handovers between each other. A lack of understanding among Work Coaches of the benefits of training to individual outcomes would mean that they could not effectively sell this new provision to claimants to encourage their engagement.

Providers engaged with Jobcentre Plus offices across their local areas and viewed these relationships as crucial to successful delivery. They showed a willingness for collaboration, such as offering to share feedback on claimants' assessment results and to allow Jobcentre Plus staff access to the online provision in order that they would understand more about it and could provide positive encouragement to engage amongst claimants.

2.3.2 Learner support and management in light of mandate

Personal support for learners, to help them address their barriers to work and learning, was viewed as crucial by policymakers although there was some considerable confidence in both advisers' and providers' ability to supply and signpost the nature and types of support likely to be required. This confidence was well placed and all strategic-level contacts within the providers were planning to supply learner support in a variety of forms, including peer support online, access to mentors on- and off-line, as well as learning support assistance.

Some policymakers anticipated a need for providers and Jobcentre Plus to be able to effectively handle behavioural issues and non-compliance and to be able to win around young people to more proactively engage with the Pilot. These framed the conditions for success in respect of learners' confidence in the provision and belief that it could help them. There was recognition that learners needed to engage positively, despite the stick of sanctioning. All strategic-level contacts within the providers shared these concerns and as such would again have welcomed earlier engagement with Jobcentre Plus. They were keen to supply information that would enable Work Coaches to speak to the benefits of training, particularly online learning in order that learners would be keen and motivated to take part.

2.3.3 Access to information and communications technology and facilities

Some policymakers identified potential issues surrounding learners' access to suitable IT facilities including smart phones, laptops and computers, 3G, 4G or wifi networks speedy enough to support online learning, as well as IT skills that would enable effective online learning engagement. However, some also had concerns that the Pilot should not be sold in a way that individuals would believe that they might be given IT equipment; if they lacked these, access would be offered via learning centres and expectations should be set accordingly to avoid misunderstanding, and more importantly, disengagement.

Some providers were particularly concerned about supporting pure online learners who needed access to IT facilities. Most planned for such learners to use facilities at the assessment centre although 1 planned to make laptops and dongles available.

2.3.4 Effective randomisation procedures

For policymakers, the Pilot as a randomised controlled trial could only be successful if it was properly implemented with some expressing concerns that Jobcentre Plus would find 'work-arounds' that would undermine randomisation.

2.4 Policy perspective on the commissioning process

It was reported by policy makers involved in the commissioning process that a good number of providers had come forward in response to the invitation to tender though not so many to make the commissioning process unwieldy. Some policymakers recognised that entering a relatively new market for online learning would not be the choice for all further education (FE) providers because their physical infrastructure created overheads such that traditional models of delivery made commercial sense. Moreover, policymakers pointed to lessons from the Higher Education (HE)-sector that suggested not all providers would want to enter the pure online learning market because this could only comprise a small niche in an overall much larger portfolio.

The provider information event held as part of the commissioning process was viewed as effective and successful in weeding out those providers who had not fully understood the innovative approach required.

The out-turn from the process was that policymakers believed that a good spread of provider types had been commissioned although a view was put forward that more innovative solutions might have been offered if it had been possible to forward the invitation to tender to a wider range of organisations. Procurement had been limited to the current SFA supplier list for quality assurance and regulatory reasons.

2.4.1 The providers

The organisations selected to deliver the Pilot were a mix of FE colleges and private training providers. Some had national footprints and others were more localised. The majority had worked in their contract package¹⁶ area for some time, although 1 had not.

All had significant track records in the delivery of maths and English, and all had delivered provision for similar target groups, for example, as part of the Jobcentre Plus Offer (although not necessarily working within the Skills Conditionality regime¹⁷) and/or provision under the European Social Fund (ESF) umbrella. Some were highly experienced in the provision of online learning although more often delivered in a blended rather than pure online form. The providers viewed the Pilot as a means to build on their existing expertise and to repackage their provision for a new audience or with a more applied, employability feel. Some also saw the Pilot as a means to start to respond to the recommendations Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (FELTAG).¹⁸

'One of the reasons for us getting involved with the Pilot was to see how we could deliver things in reaction to that document [FELTAG report]... especially as [area] is rural so online could be vital for some of our students.'

Strategic-level member of staff, Pilot provider

2.4.2 Provider experiences of the commissioning process

For the most part, providers were satisfied with the operation and experience of commissioning. Most were used to using the electronic portal system. Most were content with the level of detail offered within the invitation to tender, and some said that a lack of very detailed information on certain points had encouraged innovative approaches and new thinking. There was a mix in terms of the number of contract package areas that providers had bid for. Some had kept within their immediate locality (despite having a bigger overall footprint) whereas others had bid in all areas. Providers were aware that the SFA intended to fund 1 in each of its 5 areas for the Pilot, rather than appointing any to cover multiple areas.

¹⁶ This term refer to the geographic areas in which providers have been commissioned to operate by the SFA

¹⁷ The process of Jobcentre Plus referring claimants to a skills training provider, FE college or Next Step adviser with potential benefit sanctions for non-participation.

¹⁸ <http://feltag.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/FELTAG-REPORT-FINAL.pdf>

2.5 Concerns about the viability of the Pilot contracts

Within the theme of commissioning, 1 policymaker highlighted the impact of the lower than expected flows onto the Pilot which changed the estimates of the costs of online learning at the individual and overall contract level¹⁹. The viability of providers delivering in light of this change was raised as a risk by this policymaker which would have to be balanced against paying a higher cost per individual for training. A consequence of the reduced flow was stated by the policymaker to be that information on the costs of online English and maths learning, compared to BAU would be far less easy to ascertain because volumes were much lower than expectations in the original budget forecasts. This meant investment in the fixed cost of learning platform development would be spread over a smaller number of learners, thus increasing its unit cost as an overhead.

2.6 Messages from the ex-ante cost benefit analysis

This element of the research aimed to supply a preliminary cost-benefit assessment (CBA) for the Pilot.²⁰ The approach to this ex-ante CBA is contained in Appendix 2 of this report. There were some limitations, in that (i) the estimates assumed that the comparator group (which was based on the approach taken by Buscha et al, 2013 as individual participant data was unavailable that would allow a comparison group to be drawn from administrative data sources) comprised individuals who held no qualifications rather than English and maths qualifications below Level 2; (ii) there were benefits that were not examined, related to health and reductions in criminal activity that derive from Level 2 achievement; (iii) in assessing costs, only operational costs were included, with opportunity costs disregarded; and, (iv) tax effects, in terms of increased revenues resulting from individuals' entry to work and subsequent earnings were not considered.

In addition, the estimates were based on cost data contained within provider contracts (see Appendix 2) which were based on the original forecasts for Pilot inflows, rather than those that were revised down (as these data were consistent). With smaller numbers entering the Pilot, the costs of platform development per learner would increase. While the overall effect of these limitations could not be stated with certainty they were likely to mean the results of this analysis were over-stated.

With these limitations in mind, the preliminary ex-ante CBA estimated the lifetime economic return to individual learners achieving Level 2 English and/or maths as part of the Pilot, net of those individuals who would have achieved these qualifications without

¹⁹ Early data were indicating that some of the estimates in the Departments' flow model were over-stated

²⁰ A full CBA based on actual costs was planned towards the end of the evaluation however the early closure of the pilot meant this was not possible as data on learning outcomes was inadequate and likely to be unrepresentative.

the Pilot and taking account of training costs, would be £7.82 per every £1 invested by government. This was slightly higher than the estimate of the returns to Below Level 2 qualifications, established in Wiseman et al, 2013²¹ and demonstrated positive prospects for participants resulting from Pilot participation.

Adopting the same achievement rate as Wiseman et al (i.e. 63.2%), and subject to the limitations already noted, it was estimated that a break-even point on spending would be reached if 4% the originally forecast learner population was achieved (i.e. if 237 individuals were referred to training, 150 would achieve qualifications with a 63.2% achievement rate).

This 4% was arrived at as follows: if lifetime benefits of £25,000 resulted per treatment completer (this is a well-established figure from past BIS research; see Wiseman et al, 2013²²) then 150 completers would cover an investment of £3.75m. If it was safe to assume a 63.2% achievement rate, then 237 treatment learners would generate 150 completers.

However, it was possible that this achievement rate was too high for the cohort and form of learning involved in the Pilot. Hence, some scenarios were built using lower achievement rates. These showed that if the achievement rate was a little lower, at around 57%, the break-even point would be reached at nearer 5% of the original forecast for learners. A scenario where the achievement rate was much lower (at 31.6%) showed the break-even point at 23% of the original forecast volume i.e. 1,361 learners generating 430 completions.

In essence, if the assumptions contained within the ex ante held true, the Pilot could have broken even financially on a very small number of learners (430 to be precise) completing qualifications because the returns to achieving Level 2 English and maths qualifications to individuals and society are so great.

²¹ Wiseman J, Roe P, Parry E, Speckesser S, Gloster R, (2013) Evaluation of the Impact of Learning Below Level 2, Research Paper 150, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), Oct 2013

²² Wiseman J, Roe P, Parry E, Speckesser S, Gloster R, (2013) Evaluation of the Impact of Learning Below Level 2, Research Paper 150, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), Oct 2013

3 Entry to the Trial

This chapter looks at the operation of the Pilot and how the qualification screening, assessment and allocation to the trial worked in practice. To do so it draws on the process evaluation case study data as well as the quantitative data arising from the RCT.

3.1 Pre-Pilot provision

Pre-Pilot provision for English and maths and for the development of other employability skills varied greatly between areas according to the accounts of JCP staff taking part in case studies. For instance, in some areas, there was little referral to maths and English provision of the target group, while in others provision was available though only at Entry Level or with long waiting lists operating. In contrast, staff in some areas said they had pre-Pilot provision that was very well matched to the need for English and maths skills development, often combined with other activities, such as work placement, industry accreditations (such as CSCS or SIA cards²³) or soft skills development activities. Staff in some areas noted the availability and suitability of sector-based work academies for the target group. Classroom and face-to-face learning was said to work well for the target group.

JCP advisers typically described how they would use their judgement, pre-Pilot, as to whether to refer claimants to English and maths provision and it must be noted that prior to the Pilot there was no requirement or expectation for JCP advisers to use a qualification screening procedure. Rather, at the time of the Pilot, it was JCP policy to leave skills screening up to adviser discretion. Tools were available to support advisers to make such assessments and they were able to refer claimants to an in-depth skills health check led by the National Careers Service, or skills assessment with an SFA-funded provider where they deemed it appropriate. Thus, as expected, it was apparent there was no systematic consideration of English and maths skills as part of the early discussions with claimants and certainly no requirement for claimants to demonstrate adequate skills level through producing certificates or attending an assessment. Instead, advisers described using their judgement about whether to refer claimants to training.

'We would just gauge it ourselves whether they needed help with their English and maths... We had no tests.'

Jobcentre Plus staff member

The line of questioning surfaced some other concerns that potentially had implications for Pilot operation. In 1 area, when discussing pre-Pilot provision, staff discussed how no

²³ Construction Skills Certification Scheme and Security Industry Authority

such provision could now be made available to those claimants allocated to the control group. In contrast, another area discussed how they had worked with an established provider to ensure the high quality business-as-usual model could be made available to those assigned to the control group. These points suggest shifts to the baseline which could affect the integrity of the RCT.

'...When we heard about Pilot coming in and heard about the control group I made contact with them [the pre-Pilot provider] and asked if they could send a rep up here so we could have a chat. That is where I met the lady I spoke to on the phone to discuss how she wanted us to refer [the control group]'

Jobcentre Plus staff member

3.2 Participation in the Pilot

Information on Pilot participants was contained in the DWP's Labour Market Systems (LMS). This system collates information new Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants who attend a new claims interview, including subsequent referrals to labour market provision, and participation in pilots and trials. Pilot participation was recorded in two different parts of LMS (opportunities dataset and the pilot marker dataset). Due to recording differences by work coaches, the number of people flagged as being eligible for the Pilot in 1 part of the LMS system was different to the number recorded as having had an assessment for the Pilot in another part of the system. In addition, a third data source, the Individual Learner Record (ILR), owned by BIS, was used to record Pilot assessment and training participation. However there was variation between those recorded as participants in the DWP-owned data and those in the BIS-owned data.

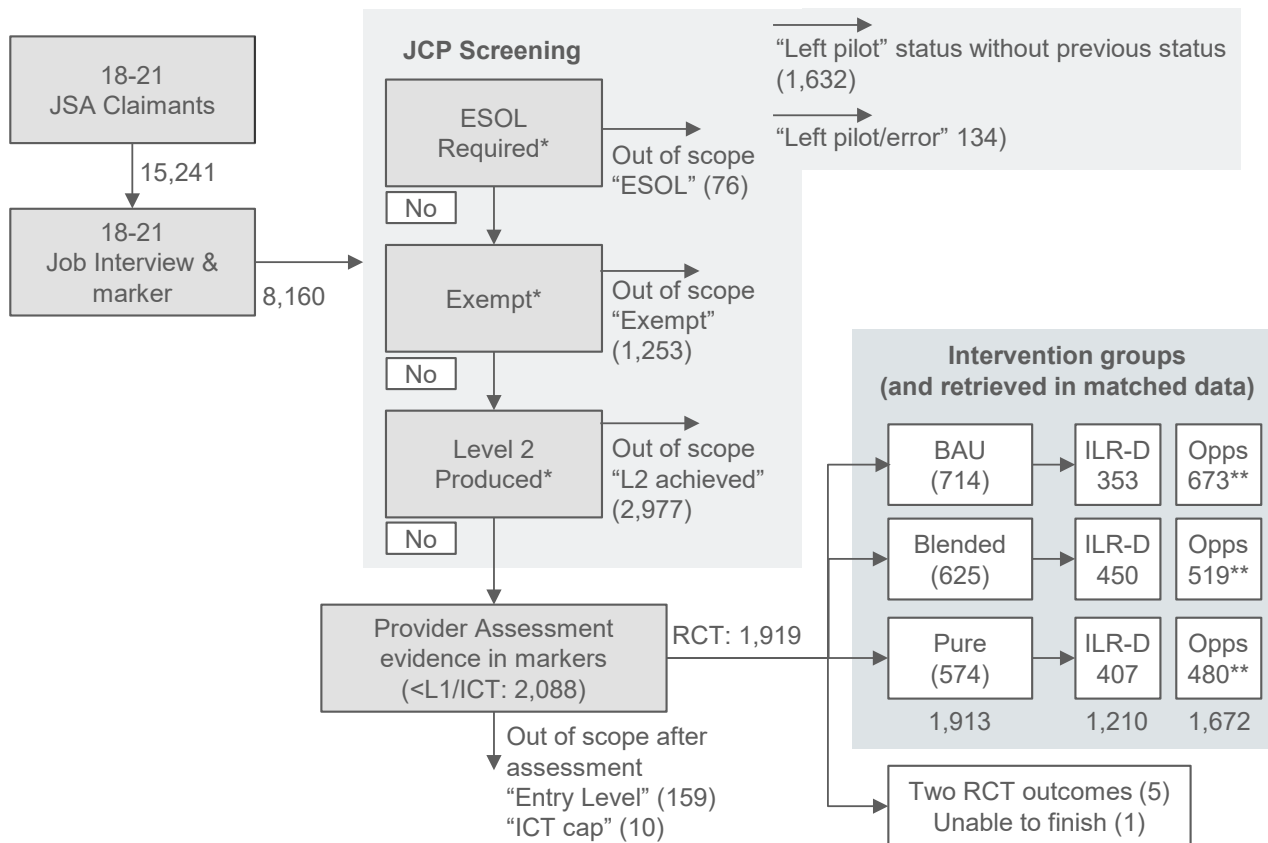
Due to the inconsistencies in recording Pilot participation in each of the 3 sources, it was not possible for the data in all parts of the system to be fully reconciled which meant there was no means to derive a definitive set of participants. For the purposes of this report the Pilot marker data is used to report on the early pilot stages (through to assessment) while individuals in the combined data source deriving from Pilot Marker data, LMS Opportunities and the ILR Decodes with Pilot records are reported on in the analysis of treatment and outcome.

On the basis of these data,²⁴ there were 15,241 claimants aged 18-21 who either started or had an ongoing JSA claim in the Pilot areas during the relevant period. Only those starting a new claim were eligible for the Pilot. As such, 8,160 were marked as in focus for the Pilot and had their qualifications screening. However it must be emphasised that this was a broad estimate as the marker data did not allow an exact number of

²⁴ Please refer to the technical report that accompanies this synthesis for a full discussion of the available data and how the analysis was conducted

individuals, who participated in the Pilot to be derived. Of the 8,160 that were identified by these means, at least 2,088 claimants had an assessment²⁵ (see Section 4.4) and 1,210 were allocated to the in RCT based on the ILR Decode data (see Section 4.5). A flow diagram setting out the Pilot volumes extracted on this basis and tracking how the above numbers were identified is set out in Figure 2.

Figure 2: 18-21 WSP Pilot volumes using 'Marker data'



Notes:

1. The chart shows the planned flow through the Pilot stages however, it must be noted that 'out of scope' markers were not set in this order in practice and each could be set at any stage before and after assessment
2. The term 'Marker data' refers to the data on people marked as eligible for the Pilot on the DWP's Labour Market System
3. Group size based on final Marker (or RCT status if in experimental group). Final Marker left/error replaced by earlier Marker if different
4. * includes late produced; might also follow provider assessment
 ** Marker status in intervention groups and Opps consistent in Marker data and LMS Opps (Online and blended) or referred to initial interview (BAU)

²⁵ As an illustration of the inconsistency in the data the 'Opportunity' element of the LMS data system suggest that 4,290 people were referred to a 'work skills referral assessment' – more than double those identified among people marked in the data as being eligible for the pilot – although for 60% of these no further Pilot records could be found.

3.3 New claim interview and qualification screening

Discussions with JCP staff indicated that Pilot guidance was followed with qualification screening taking place in order to identify young people eligible for the Pilot. Typically, the appropriate letter (known as WSP01) was issued during the new claims interview, and some staff described how this offered a very useful description of the Pilot, which streamlined the verbal information they need to give about the Pilot.

Of the 8,160 claimants marked in the available data as being in focus for the Pilot and who had a qualification screening: 76 were deemed out of scope because they needed language (ESOL²⁶) support; 1,253 were classified as 'exempt' as individuals were vulnerable or subject to special circumstances and 2,977 produced evidence that they were qualified to Level 2 or above. A further 1,632 were recorded as 'left pilot' and 134 as 'left pilot/error'. The group who were assessed as exempt or left without a reason specified had shorter spells of unemployment than those who continued to further Pilot stages.

This left 2,088 unemployed young claimants theoretically eligible to receive an assessment (See Figure 2 above).

The accounts of JCP staff taking part in the process evaluation indicated that they were meeting the requirement to see physical evidence of qualifications in order to reach a decision about eligibility for assessment and to set the appropriate marker on the LMS. Consequently, in some areas claimants who said they had Level 2 qualifications but who could not prove it, were referred for assessment. For the most part, staff did not believe there were considerable numbers of claimants in this situation although 1 example that was noted was that a claimant who said they had A* grades but did not have certificates. The cost associated with requesting copies from his school meant he did not pursue gathering his evidence. In another area, JCP staff were frustrated that they had to refer claimants who possessed relevant Level 3 qualifications but who could not prove they held Level 2 qualifications for English and/or maths. However, this may have represented a misunderstanding of the guidance since it was intended that claimants with higher qualification levels in these subjects should be exempted.

²⁶ English for Speakers of Other Languages

'The other issue is if they have A levels or a degree... I had 1 with English Literature, maths plus or something and English A levels and a degree but couldn't find his GCSEs and we had to still refer them'

Jobcentre Plus staff member

Evidence from the observations and interviews with claimants tended to confirm this picture. However, it was apparent that frequently claimants either forgot to bring certificates to their appointments or could not locate them, which started to build in delays in terms of the flow through Pilot processes. Typically claimants appeared at ease about the qualification checks and JCP staff made the process supportive and straightforward. In 1 instance, an assessment referral was made without the certificate being checked but the process evaluation evidence suggested this was unusual.

In all areas, JCP staff taking part in the case studies said they made very little use of discretion to exempt claimants from the Pilot for example, where individuals had very poor English language skills or chaotic lives. However, 1,253 individuals were recorded in the Pilot marker data as exempted on this basis. It was not possible for the evaluation, on the basis of the evidence collected, to explain the discrepancy between the quantitative data and the qualitative accounts of JCP staff. Typically, few claimants were said by JCP staff to fall into these exemption categories. In 1 area, staff described exempting individuals on the basis of inadequate IT skills and said they assessed this through discussion. Generally, their accounts suggested that there was little discretion available to them and some JCP staff said they referred young claimants into the Pilot who they believed would be better served by other provision or support, for example those with significant learning disabilities or difficulties (LDD) including autism and Asperger's syndrome, as well as those with criminal convictions still working with the probation service. From the perspective of the Pilots' planned process, the process evaluation data suggested that case conferences with senior managers were held if staff did believe an individual should be exempted.

'I feel that the steer is that they go on and do the assessment, and it is only in extreme cases that they would be excluded, so I don't even feel it is a discretionary issue. It's just something they have got to do.'

JCP staff member

There were some variations in processes operated and some challenges encountered that were worth exploring in more detail.

First, the national call centre for new claims was said to be unable to mention the requirement to bring qualifications to the new claim appointment because the Pilot operated in a relatively small proportion of areas, rather than being a national programme. There were differing responses to this within the JCP offices. For the most part, during the new claim interview the requirement to demonstrate qualifications was stated, and a follow-up appointment for this was made.

The point at which this follow-up appointment took place varied with 1 area requiring claimants to bring their certificates within 3 days, and other areas requiring them at the next standard appointment which could be a week or fortnight away. In 2 offices, a text was sent or a telephone call made ahead of the new claim interview to tell claimants to bring their certificates to the meeting. However, staff in offices where reminders were not sent ahead of the initial claim meeting stated that they had no time or resource to lead this additional activity. Where claimants brought their certificates in response to reminders, the process evaluation evidence suggested it reduced the elapsed time in Pilot processes. In contrast, where they were required to bring them to a follow-up meeting at some delay from the initial 1, they might forget which increased the elapsed time.

Secondly, in 1 area, staff were uncomfortable having to discuss the Pilot before randomisation because of the impact on those allocated to the control group. In this area staff believed they were unable to offer any training or intervention to support the control group. They also believed that most eligible claimants were excited by the opportunity presented by the Pilot and keen to access training; consequently being allocated to the control group – with no training made available – was a huge disappointment.

Finally, in 1 area, the new claim interview and the referral to assessment were combined. Claimants were asked to read the introductory letter (known as WSP01) which explained the Pilot during their new claim interview. A telephone call was made during the appointment to set-up the assessment unless claimants had brought their certificates to the meeting and had grades below Level 2. Claimants could subsequently take their certificate to the JCP office or to the providers' learning centre and should their grades be sufficient, they would be exempted from assessment at this point. Again, this approach reduced the elapsed time within Pilot processes although conflicted with legislative requirements for claimants to have sufficient time to understand the information they were given and choose to comply (or otherwise). It was reported that the referral caused some young people to sign-off, although this could not be verified in the data. More generally, the staff involved believed it was motivational for claimants to see that they would gain support from the very first stage of their claim. However, the observations data indicated that some claimants had little time to absorb the information and the experience could appear highly process driven.

3.4 Assessment

At least 2,088 of the 18-21 year old claimants in focus for the Pilot received an assessment.²⁷ This minimum was derived from the DWP's Pilot marker data. Following assessment 1,919 were recorded in the LMS as being randomised for the Pilot. From those referred to randomisation, 1,210 claimants could be found within the ILR decode data as referred to BAU or 1 of the 2 treatments. There were no data to report on destinations for the remaining 709 cases; where data could be retrieved on benefit duration for this group (in 584 cases) this showed a spell of unemployment very similar to those who could be found in the treatment groups.

3.4.1 Format of the assessment

Information drawn from the assessment study showed that in conducting the initial assessment, in most cases, providers used a commercially available package. In only 1 case did a provider, working with an awarding organisation, develop a bespoke individual assessment tool for the Pilot.

Interrogation of the tests, whether online, or less frequently, on paper, with expected answers revealed that typically the initial assessments were referenced to the Functional Skills standards. It also showed that they tended to measure coverage and range (i.e. knowledge) elements of the Functional Skills rather than process skills (i.e. application of knowledge). This was thought to matter because Functional Skills qualifications (which providers predicted most learners who did the training would sit) tended to place emphasis on process skills. If input and output assessments measured different things, there was a risk of mis-measuring learners' progress.

In addition, the initial assessments were similar in type and had a similar relationship to the Functional Skills standards, although with probable differences in reliability and utility as initial assessments. As such, as an indicative measure of learners' attainment at the outset of the Pilot, the assessments were judged as broadly comparable although potentially weak tools to use within an RCT, because it could not be stated categorically that they were similar in ways that are scientifically demonstrable. This could matter because typically within RCTs there is an emphasis on ensuring key elements such as this are subject to tight control to avoid the skewing of outcome and impact findings.

²⁷ This figure is referred to as a minimum as some claimants were recorded on the LMS as being referred to an assessment but were not marked as in scope of the pilot. It was also not clear from the data whether these claimants attended an assessment. When the DWP's LMS Opportunities data was assessed this indicated that 4,290 individuals had been assessed. Furthermore, when these sources were merged with BIS-owned ILR decodes 4,042 assessments were found to be associated with the Pilot however for 60% of these there were no further Pilot records.

A final point on the initial assessment was whether any data would be captured that would allow a measure of distance travelled in terms of skills acquisition in the absence of qualifications gains (see Chapter 2). Policymakers were keen to understand the progress that learners could make and were aware that they could not require learners to sit qualifications. The analysis showed that none of the providers required learners to repeat the same initial assessment at the end of their programme of learning. One had trialled this approach but found that the data were compromised because learners did not complete the assessment accurately or well.

3.4.2 Referral to assessment

Most providers said that the handover processes between themselves and JCP offices took some bedding down as referrals started picking up. Most providers liaised with individual JCP offices to establish the best methods of working together and to formalise processes. As a result, they operated several models for referring claimants and transferring information. The method differed depending on the size of the JCP office. For larger offices, it was common to send a booking sheet whereas small offices were encouraged to telephone a named contact at the provider to make referrals.

While the process and means of making a referral was jointly agreed between providers and local JCP offices, the speed with which an assessment appointment could be accessed was determined by the provider, the resources they had at their disposal and their ability to organise these. It was clear that the slow start and low referral numbers in the early stages made it difficult for training co-ordinators to predict how many sessions to make available, and how much tutor time to book.

As such, there was a great deal of variation between areas in when assessment appointments could be booked following a referral. In some, JCP staff reported (and observation evidence confirmed) that bookings could be made for a couple of days after their referral appointment with claimant. Arrangements were in place that allowed them to call through for an appointment or to block book a day or half day for their office's assessment appointments. Where a telephone booking approach was used, it was common for JCP staff to complain that providers were not always available, which particularly affected the lunch time period. In these instances, JCP staff understood that only 1 or 2 provider staff were involved in the Pilot and bookings but they remained frustrated that the process did not work as smoothly as they wished. In most areas, it appeared assessments took place within a week or so.

The delay was more significant in some areas – typically between 1 and 2 weeks although it could take up to 1 month. JCP staff in 1 affected office said that the provider had halved the number of appointments between initial go-live to a more steady state, from 2 days with 12 slots each, to 1 day with 12 slots in response to high failure to attend rates which meant appointments were not used. The reduced schedule of appointments

was rapidly booked up hence elapsed time between referral and appointment lengthened. At a general level, JCP staff believed that rapid assessment was the best way forward since it would allow an intervention to commence more quickly within the claims process.

'It would be better if they said could you come in tomorrow or the next day... and you could get the assessment done and are moving them on because every week that we're waiting it feels like we're not doing anything else with them... so we can't get them doing something else useful'

JCP staff member

Typically, in making the referral to assessment, observation evidence indicated that JCP staff were able to give procedural information about what would be entailed. Where significant travel was involved, they also ensured young people were equipped with information about how to get to the learning centre, and how long it would take. Young people were able to claim travel costs. The picture was more varied in respect of whether the JCP staff discussed the benefits of being assessed, and this tended to stem from their views of the Pilot and the knowledge they had. Where they felt they lacked knowledge about the provision and what the assessment involved, they were unable to offer much information to claimants. Typically, JCP staff highlighted that the assessment would help them understand the claimants' skills and decide whether they would need training. Similarly the emphasis on mandation varied. In some meetings it was mentioned several times, and from an early point, whereas in others it was touched on but did not form a particular focus. Again JCP staff managed the procedure in a sensitive but straightforward manner and there was little to indicate that many claimants were resistant to the process and referral.

This was confirmed through the research interviews with learners assigned to treatment, which showed that the process of attending the assessment seemed uncontroversial for most. It was more common that learners had been anxious about what the assessment would entail, and whether the experience would be like being at school.

Despite some learners being well prepared for the practical elements of getting to the assessment, in line with the observational data, others described that the information they had received from JCP was not very comprehensive and that they did not have a clear idea of what the assessment would entail before they attended or that it was compulsory.

'When I first went to [provider] my tutor, she got us to do an initial assessment, but before that, before I even went there my advisor at the Jobcentre didn't tell me what was going to go or anything. It was just like, turn up and hope for the best. There wasn't really any information in the Jobcentre about it.'

Treatment learner, blended

3.4.3 Attending the assessment

Across all Pilot areas, both JCP offices and providers involved in delivery observed that failure to attend rates to the assessment were higher than expected (by their estimates during qualitative interviews, between 40-60%²⁸). The travel involved in order to attend the learning centre was generally thought to be a barrier to attendance, particularly in rural locations. Some providers and JCP advisors, however, said that this barrier was more complex than the practicalities of the time involved; the prospect of travelling long distances and using public transport, to unfamiliar places, could be daunting and off-putting, especially for younger claimants and those with additional needs. JCP advisors also felt that where claimants had to wait a number of weeks for their assessment appointment following a referral that this further contributed towards high failure to attend rates, for instance, as there was a greater likelihood that claimants might find work or stop their claim.

Some provider staff explained that they had started to contact learners using a variety of methods (text, phone, email) to remind them of their assessment appointment. This was believed to have had some effect. However, many reported that, despite their efforts, numbers in attendance still fluctuated considerably. JCP staff felt unable to consistently provide reminders to attend because they lacked the time so to do.

Providers' accounts indicated that those claimants who attended the assessment had not been fully briefed on the reasons for the referral; providers cited examples where claimants arrived without much knowledge or understanding of why they had to attend the assessment and as a consequence, had not brought necessary identification documents with them.

Providers also perceived that most claimants did not seem too concerned that they were mandated to attend the assessment, and the assessment was considered to be beneficial in terms of encouraging claimants to engage with the Pilot. However, provider staff also reported that they had encountered some hostility from a minority of claimants in respect of mandation. In these cases, providers saw it as their role to clearly explain the Pilot, help claimants understand what they were being asked to do and sell the benefits of the training. They discussed employing a range of techniques to support engagement, which included making efforts to speak to the young people with respect and positioning the potential training as an opportunity. The importance of securing engagement from those who were more negative was stressed, especially in group assessment settings where negativity from 1 or 2 learners might spread to others attending the session.

²⁸ There were no quantitative data on rates of failure to attend to triangulate with these accounts

All providers regularly reported information back to JCP offices on attendance and assessment outcomes. Respondents knew that failure to attend could result in claimants being referred for 'decision making action', which could involve sanctions, so several reported spending time, (at least in the early stages of the Pilot when numbers were relatively low) attempting to contact claimants who did not attend, as they did not want the claimants to be sanctioned without due cause. There were financial benefits to providers from getting claimants to engage and attend assessment which may also help to explain why they followed up learners to investigate their reasons for not attending.

3.4.4 Assessment results and feedback

Providers found the majority of claimants were 'in scope' for the Pilot; and several estimated that between 70 to 80% were eligible for support in at least 1 of the subjects. Most providers gave a binary judgement following assessment in that they indicated either that claimants should be put forward for random allocation or not. Few claimants were assessed as working above Level 2 and in 1 contract package area the assessment worked in such a way that no claimant would be found to be at Level 2. Instead, the assessment found claimants to be 'working towards Level 2'.

'I don't recall anybody coming out as a complete Level 2... Because it gets broken down [by different skill sets]... on some things it will come out they are a Level 1 and working towards a Level 2 but I've not had anybody come out as a full Level 2 so far.'

Provider staff

According to the Pilot marker data of the 2,088 people assessed, 169 were found to be out of scope either because they were deemed below Entry Level 1 (so their skill levels too low) (159 cases) or because they did not have relevant ICT skills (10 cases) (see Figure 2 earlier).

In most areas, where a claimant was ineligible for the Pilot, due to assessment showing that their existing skills were above Level 2, JCP advisers taking part in the case studies said that either no action was taken or that claimants received the offer of an alternative intervention from JCP such as work experience or occupational training. The quantitative data was examined to understand more about decisions made at this point.²⁹ These suggested relatively low rates of referral to alternative provision particularly for those judged to be at Level 2 already. Where alternative provision was made available, it was said to be encouraging for those who showed enthusiasm about the Pilot from the outset.

²⁹ Analysis of participation in alternative provision amongst those who were ineligible is examined in the technical report that accompanies this synthesis report (see Technical Report, Table 26)

All providers reported instances where claimants were assessed as working at below Level 1 and several expressed doubt that they would be able to work with these individuals to achieve Level 2 qualifications within the period anticipated in the Pilot. It appeared that decisions were taken on a case-by-case basis as to whether such claimants would be found out of scope for training. Similarly respondents identified only a handful of instances where individuals were found out of scope due to other barriers³⁰. Examples were found in the claimant qualitative sample of a young person being found in scope despite disclosing an alcohol problem and another young person who had a vulnerable living situation.

Most providers gave young people their results on completion of the assessments. While several staff reported that they did not feel that it was particularly beneficial to discuss the detail of results at such an early stage, others said that relaying this information was a good opportunity to start to engage and encourage young people who might end up on the programme.

The degree to which learners³¹ perceived the assessment results to actually reflect their skills levels and needs varied. In some cases, learners believed that the assessment accurately reflected their prior skills levels, whilst in other instances this was not the case. Some were disappointed that the results did not show an improvement since they were last assessed i.e. at the end of Key Stage 4. However, some were also pleased with their results.

The process for relaying assessment results to claimants' JCP advisors was fairly straightforward. Most provider staff said that they reported results to JCP offices on the same day of the assessment or very soon after, and claimants were told that they would hear from their Work Coach at their next meeting to discuss next steps. However, this departed from the accounts of JCP advisors, with some offices reporting receiving weekly or daily updates on results, and others saying the process took a couple of weeks. In these latter examples, if review meetings were held with claimants every fortnight there could be considerable elapsed time between the assessment taking place, result being received and discussed and randomisation if appropriate. Again, there was a possibility during this time was that claimants would find work or stop their claim.

Results were typically communicated by email. In all cases, JCP received either the result or a record that claimants had failed to attend (FTA) and reason where this was known. In some areas, the Pilot providers supplied the claimants' assessed level

³⁰ Other barriers could for example include special educational needs, criminal, health or substance misuse barriers.

³¹ The evaluation only recruited young people referred to treatment (pure or blended online learning) to qualitative research interviews

whereas in most, they indicated whether the claimants was, for example, in or out of scope, or met or did not meet the criteria. These latter results initially caused some problems with JCP staff being unclear about whether they meant a claimant should be randomised or otherwise. Over time, this issue was resolved.

3.5 Randomisation to online training or control group

Following assessment, 1,210 people were referred to the trial.³² Again this figure is likely to be a minimum due to difficulties tracing all the participants through the data. Of these, 353 were referred to the business as usual' control group; 450 to the blended learning option and 407 to the pure online learning option.³³

JCP staff reported that the random assignment tool (RAT) appeared to operate effectively and indicated there were no ways in which they could over-ride the result or find anyway to exert their own preference for the route they thought would be best matched to individuals. As a consequence, concerns were expressed about whether the pure online learning would be suitable for some amongst the eligible group, as some stakeholders feared at the outset (see Section 2.2).

Analysis of the available management information, however, provided more mixed results about the efficacy of the randomisation process. Merging the data on the participants marked as in scope of the Pilot and who were entered into the trial with their Individual Learner Record (ILR) provides a range of further information on the characteristics of learners and their learning although not all participants in the trial had records in the ILR – particularly those from 1 Pilot area (Provider 4³⁴) which may have related to individuals leaving the benefits register before commencing training.

If the randomisation was correctly implemented, the distribution of individual characteristics across the 3 groups should not have statistically significant differences. To test the validity of the randomisation process, a multinomial logit model was implemented.

Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 report the estimated coefficients from the model, for the blended and pure online groups respectively. Each coefficient refers to a base category group ('business as usual' (BAU)), and should be interpreted as the increase (or decrease) in the probability of being in the group in focus compared with the BAU group. If the randomisation was properly implemented, the coefficients in the model should not be

³² This group is drawn from the merged data source based on the ILR Decode data – please see the technical report for further details

³³ A further 5 were coded with 2 RCT options and 1 was classified as 'unable to finish'.

³⁴ See Chapter 4 for a brief pen portrait of the provision made available by each provider

significant,³⁵ and individual characteristics should not affect the probability of being in 1 group rather than another.

The analysis of the sample before the merge with the ILR (columns 2 and 3 of Table 3.1 and Table 3.2) showed that there was no difference between the blended and the BAU groups, while there was a slightly significant difference in terms of gender composition between the pure online and the 'BAU' groups. However, this difference was only marginally significant (at the 10% level). Thus, female participants were less likely to be included in the pure online group.

The analysis of the sample after the merge with the ILR (columns 4 and 5 of Table 3.1 and Table 3.2) suggested that some differences between the groups had emerged. More specifically, the blended and 'BAU' groups differed in respect of the employment status of participants, and the pure online and 'BAU' groups in terms of gender. Thus, employed individuals were more likely to be included in the blended group than in 'BAU', while females were more likely to be included in the pure online group than in the 'BAU'. Furthermore, there was a more important significant difference regarding the geographical location: participants from Provider 4 were more likely to be in either blended or pure online than in 'BAU'. In the other areas, randomisation based on these data appeared to be successful.

There were thus some differences between the treatment groups, mainly driven by the effect in the 1 Pilot area, which suggested that, in some cases, the randomisation was not successfully removing all differences in observable characteristics, in the sample of those participants who received the treatment. The source of the bias, in the 1 geographic area, is unknown. There were no other evaluation data available that were suggestive of a non-compliance issue. Nonetheless, the implications of such a bias are that firm conclusions may not be drawn on the basis of the available data, since it cannot be stated categorically that effects are causal. This would also have affected the assessment of longer-term impact if it had been possible to deliver the pilot for its planned full duration.

To explore the source of this bias further, a chi-square test for joint significance of the variables was utilised, to test whether these factors had an impact on group allocation. The p-value of this test was 0.85 for the sample before the merge with the ILR and 0.000 after the merge. Thus, this test suggested that some factors were significantly impacting on group allocation for the sample of individuals who received the treatment. The broad breakdown of the distribution of trial participants (once the data had been merged with

³⁵, i.e. p-values should be greater than the reference value of 0.05

the ILR) are set out in Table 3.3, which shows the numeric breakdown of these data by area and by gender.

Table 3.1: Randomisation Test: Multinomial Logit Regression (Blended Online Group)

Variable	Blended Online			
	Before merging with ILR		After merging with ILR	
	Coeff.	p-value	Coeff.	p-value
Gender	-0.14	0.22	-0.00	0.99
Age	0.01	0.53	-0.04	0.42
Employed†	0.20	0.18	0.44**	0.04
Disabled	0.03	0.83	0.11	0.56
Other Disadvantage	-0.54	0.36	-1.63	0.31
Non British	0.18	0.35	0.34	0.19
Area A	0.13	0.55	0.16	0.50
Area C	0.15	0.45	2.73***	0.00
Area D	0.15	0.49	0.21	0.33
N	1,909		1,207	

Notes: The reference categories are: BAU group, and for gender: male; employment: unemployed; disability: no disability; area: Area B. Marginal coefficients reported from a multinomial logit regression. The dependent variable is being assigned to the specified group.

*/**/** denote 10%/5%/1% levels of statistical significance of estimated coefficient.

† Employment was recorded in the ILR and may be subject to bias since there was no requirement for providers to collect this information and record it in the ILR.

Source: National Benefit Database, Pilot Marker data and merged Individualised Learner Records.

Table 3.2: Randomisation Test: Multinomial Logit Regression (Pure Online Group)

Variable	Pure Online			
	Before merging with ILR		After merging with ILR	
	Coeff.	p-value	Coeff.	p-value
Gender	-0.22*	0.05	-0.22	0.16
Age	0.03	0.37	0.03	0.54
Employed	0.05	0.74	0.23	0.29
Disabled	0.04	0.81	0.00	0.99
Other Disadvantage	-0.51	0.37	-0.89	0.53
Non British	-0.17	0.43	-0.02	0.93
Area A	0.14	0.53	0.26	0.29
Area C	0.19	0.35	2.77***	0.00
Area D	0.14	0.49	0.33	0.15
N	1,909		1,207	

Notes: The reference categories are: BAU group, and for gender: male; employment: unemployed; disability: no disability; area: Area B. Marginal coefficients reported from a multinomial logit regression. The dependent variable is being assigned to the specified group.

*/**/** denote 10%/5%/1% levels of statistical significance of estimated coefficients

† Employment was recorded in the ILR and may be subject to bias since there was no requirement for providers to collect this information and record it in the ILR.

Source: National Benefit Database, Pilot Marker data and merged Individualised Learner Records.

Table 3.3: Geographical Location by gender of 18-21 WSP programme participants

Jobcentre Plus District	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Area A	172	23.5	106	22.1	278	23.0
Area B	114	15.6	58	12.1	172	14.2
Area C	136	18.6	98	20.5	234	19.3
Area D	305	41.7	214	44.7	519	42.9
Contact Centre Direct Group 1	1	0.1	3	0.6	4	0.3
Missing	3	0.4	0	0	3	0.3
Total 18-21 with ILR	731	100	479	100	1,210	100

Source: National Benefit Database, Pilot Marker data and merged Individualised Learner Records

The data gathered as part of the process evaluation showed that practice varied in respect of discussing the randomisation with young people. Some JCP staff did not mention it particularly, whereas others gave a brief explanation since it was touched on in the letters and written guidance. This also meant they could communicate that the decision was out of their hands, which some thought was important to their relationship with the claimant. JCP staff commented that the tool was simple and easy to use.

Following randomisation, JCP staff typically discussed next steps with claimants which involved telling them about the form of their online training and the location for any induction or the blended element (if relevant). Again, procedural aspects were well communicated to ensure young people were equipped for any travel involved. In some instances, discussions extended beyond practicalities and into the benefits of undertaking English and maths training and how important these subjects are for employers. Some JCP staff described how it was difficult to motivate some young people to take part. Consequently mandation was viewed as a crucial tool with those claimants who were not enthusiastic about their referral as identified by the stakeholders (see Section 2.2).

Where claimants were randomised to the control group, staff stated either that they discussed alternative provision such as traineeships and in some cases, mandated claimants to this or expressed dismay that little was available for the group. Where alternative provision was not offered to the control group (either because JCP staff believed those in the control group were not entitled to training or did not deem a referral to BAU provision appropriate), it was reported that the claimants randomised to the control group saw it as the lesser option and were disappointed with the result of randomisation. In other areas, business-as-usual provision was believed by JCP staff to be a superior option to the Pilot, since English and maths were integrated into other

elements of skills development, hence JCP staff were pleased to maintain control over the claimants' case. Staff in 1 case indicated that it could be hard to motivate control group claimants to take part in English and maths training. A final point was that in at least 1 area the limited information arising from the assessment meant that it could not be used by JCP staff to help them determine the best possible support for control group claimants.

3.5.1 Referral processes and online training

As with the referral to assessment, the processes and elapsed time within the referral to training varied. When the process was protracted several, sometimes competing, explanations were given. For instance, JCP advisors stated that the randomisation process and referral to training occurred in the meeting they had with claimants immediately following receipt of a claimant's initial assessment results. However, as highlighted in Section 3.4.4, where assessment results were only transmitted every couple of weeks and review meetings with claimants were held every fortnight, the process could be protracted. JCP advisors felt that it also took time for providers to contact young people and agree a date for training to start. In many cases, there was a delay of around a week or so. JCP staff understood that training could not be immediately started because providers wished to lead an induction to ensure learners felt capable to use the learning platform and online tools or to conduct detailed diagnostic assessments.³⁶

From interviewees' overall description of the trial process - and the time that elapsed between assessments taking place, claimants' meeting with Work Coaches to be randomised, referrals to treatment, and induction/diagnostic appointments, it could take up to 6 weeks before eligible claimants started training.

In 1 area, this process of referring claimants to training was said to take even longer and to have been complicated by the provider allocating different call centres to pure and blended online learning referrals. In this area, there were significant delays which again had the impact of high rates of failure to attend. JCP staff believed that during the time they waited for an assessment appointment, claimants were likely to have left the unemployment register or failed to attend because they forgot about appointments that were booked some weeks in advance. JCP staff also said that the provider was slow to supply information on individuals' attendance. In addition, they noted that they did not

³⁶ Diagnostic assessment helps to identify specific learning strengths and needs, and usually follows an initial assessment at the beginning of a learning programme, where there is an indication of the need for further, more detailed assessment. It is related to specific skills needed for tasks. The diagnostic information can be included in the learner's individual learning plan. It is recommended that diagnostic assessment is conducted by specialist teachers of literacy, language or numeracy. (From Education and Training Foundations website: <http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/Diagnostic%20Assessment/>)

have the time to provide claimants with reminders or to check whether they had left the unemployment register before the assessment appointment had taken place.

Sanctioning procedures had not been used in most areas at the time of the research however the JCP staff across pilot areas were aware that these would need to be implemented.

Providers meanwhile tended to highlight differences in the speed and efficiency of the randomisation and referral process between JCP offices within their contract package areas as an explanation for some delays.

'It does seem to take quite a while and also some of the Jobcentres are quite on the ball with ringing us back with what group they've been put into from the random allocation tool. Whereas others are a bit slower with that.'

Provider staff

One BAU provider (in Area C where the Pilot was operated by Provider 4) was explicit that the lower than expected volumes referred to them for training were due to a significant backlog of claimants waiting for randomisation appointment at Jobcentre Plus.

Across the piece, concerns were expressed about the consequences for resourcing and managing the Pilot. Tutors that participated in research interviews stressed that they knew little about referrals and booking processes since this was managed by training coordinators, and so did not have much insight into why such low numbers were flowing through to treatment provision.

4 Training Provision

This chapter examines the pure and blended online provision made available as part of the Pilot, based on data from the intervention study into this subject, followed by experiences of training based on the qualitative accounts gathered during the process evaluation case studies. Business as usual provision is also covered and the chapter concludes a brief assessment of training outcomes, based on the RCT data.

4.1 Learning infrastructure

The 5 contracted providers were responsible for setting up the online learning as well as the infrastructure to support learners on the Pilot. This had to include facilities to allow pure online learners without computers and/or access to the internet to be able to take part, as well as learning centres for the blended element. Some providers established supply chains using third party contractors for delivery while others provided the end to end experience for all learners. All providers ensured that online learning could be accessed via multiple devices and had functionality to support specific access requirements. All provided the initial assessments in local learning centres. The providers' learning packages were examined in respect of functionality, content, the practice and method of teaching and level of support; as well as to identify, where possible, common features and core characteristics of the blended and pure online offers across providers. This information is summarised in Table 4.1 with those aspects where there was a difference between providers' models or a potential for difference highlighted in grey shading. Before that, a brief pen portrait of each provider's offer is presented.

Provider 1 had an established learning platform and purchased Functional Skills for the Pilot. Where learners did not have access to a computer or tablet they were offered advice about local venues with free IT facilities. Learning content included personal development, employability, rights and responsibilities and equality and diversity in addition to English and maths. All learners referred to treatment were subsequently required to attend a learning centre for a diagnostic assessment and familiarisation session so that tutors could individualise learning programmes. Pure online learners were supported by a tutor and if necessary an additional learning support practitioner via phone, Skype, and/or email and had 1-to-1 tutorials, some in person. Blended learners completed the same online package but also attended drop-in sessions at a learning centre. During these, tutors offered 1-to-1 or group support.

Provider 2 developed an online learning platform for the Pilot and used a commercial product for assessments and learning content in the short term (Functional Skills with plans to develop GCSE provision). Learning was internet-based, with content downloadable. In addition to maths and English, employability modules were available. Provider 2 screened out any learners with disabilities, learning difficulties or insufficient IT

skills who would not thrive in the digital environment. It offered IT facilities to pure online learners at the same learning centres as pure online learners and noted that this was not a 'teacherless' environment. Pure online learners were assigned to a tutor who offered support by telephone, email and messaging. Tutors were qualified to deliver the two subjects. Blended online learners followed the same training; in addition they attended learning centres half-day per week. It was envisaged that they would learn online learning during the face-to-face sessions with tutors providing individual support.

Provider 3 worked with a partner to ensure adequate facilities were available to learners. Online learning was sourced from 2 commercial providers (one for initial assessments, the other for diagnostic assessment and learning content). Pure online tutors were based outside the area, while blended tutors were based in learning centres. Provider 3 offered Functional Skills and GCSE and modules on employability. Learners were screened out following initial assessment stage if their abilities fell below Entry Level 1, if IT skills were limited and/or where their needs were complex. Once assigned to the Pilot, learners were required to undertake a diagnostic assessment, the results of which were used to personalise learning. All learners followed the same online learning programme with novel employability modules developed for the Pilot. Pure online learners were supported by tutors via telephone, email and Skype. Blended learners attended a learning centre 3 days a week, for around 5 hours a day over 6 months with sessions staffed by tutors supplying individual support to learners.

Provider 4 had learning centres across its area. The online platform was still in development during fieldwork. This provider enabled as many as possible eligible learners to participate through the provision of learning support assistants but screened out any learner who will be disadvantaged by online learning. Provider 4 offered Functional Skills and GCSE with employability skills as an integral part of the programme. Once randomised, learners were enrolled onto the programme and did not complete a diagnostic assessment. The platform provided 'blended learning' with facilitated live classroom sessions through webinars. Tutors supported blended learning online and face-to-face through teaching, monitoring and supporting learners. Mentors supported pure online learners to maintain motivation and enthusiasm through calls and texts. The training consisted of a 3-week introductory phase in which learners worked through themes of identity, place, employability and aspirations. It was planned that they would then move onto the main learning programme. Learners on blended training followed the same programme but had face-to-face contact with a teacher as part of regular workshops.

Provider 5 had learning centres across its area. The area had pockets of poor broadband reception consequently it supplied learners who lacked IT and internet facilities with laptops and dongles. The online learning platform was purchased from a commercial provider. Provider 5 screened out any learner who will be disadvantaged by

online learning. It offered Functional Skills and GCSE in both subjects complemented by modules on employability. Claimants allocated to treatment then took a diagnostic assessment from which an individual skills plan was generated. Pure online learners were supported by tutors via telephone, email, messaging, texts and Skype with group tutorials delivered via webinars. The provider also provided face-to-face support for the pure online learners. Blended learners followed the same learning package but in addition attended drop-in sessions at a learning centre.

Table 4.1: Overview of teaching and learning models by provider

Teaching and learning model	Provider				
	1	2	3	4	5
Both online and pure learning					
Follow Functional Skills criteria	X	X	X	X	X
Functional Skills qualifications offered at centre	X	X	X	X	X
Pure online					
Model of learning: learning materials – activities – assessment	X	X	X		X
Model of learning: themed scenarios – group work – individual work – assessment				X	
Online tutorials (potential for teaching)				X	X
Webinars			X	X	
Face-to-face tutorials (potential for teaching)	X				X
Additional content/ learning materials introduced by tutor as needed	X		X	X	X
‘Speaking and listening’ online approach confirmed (other tbc)				X	X
Learners <i>can</i> communicate informally with each other	X			X	
Mainly short-answer formative assessment questions		X	X		X
A range of formative assessment questions	X			X	
Embedded online tools for monitoring progress	X	X	X	X	X
Feedback and support from tutors	X	X	X	X	X
Formal support: weekly or monthly	X	X	X	X	X
Informal support, as and when (extent will vary between providers and learners)	X	X	X	X	X
Asynchronous support	X	X	X	X	X
Synchronous depending on time/day	X	X	X	X	X
Support by phone, email and/ or messaging	X	X	X	X	X
Web-based support e.g. skype				X	X
Mentor support				X	
Support from fully qualified English/ maths specialists ³⁷	X	X	X	X	X
Support from tutor experienced in online work	X	X	X	X	
Learning support assistant (LSA) support	X				X

³⁷ All providers when questioned said that their staff were fully qualified. The definition of ‘fully qualified’ varied between providers from a requirement for a Level 2 qualification in maths or English (and working towards a level three qualification) to the Level 5 English and maths specialist qualifications.

Teaching and learning model	Provider				
	1	2	3	4	5
Both online and pure learning					
High-level of support for learners with a disability or complex learning needs	x			x	x
Platform can be used with recognised support software packages	x	x	x	x	x
Blended learning: all of the above plus: (proportion of blended to pure online varied between providers and learners)					
Grouped geographically – centre close to home	x	x	x	x	x
Grouped by level	x				
Grouped by learners' interests				x	
Model of learning: online package only with individual face-to-face support (individual working)		x	x ³⁸		
Model of learning: online package and some new content (<i>individual and some small group work</i>)	x				x
Model of learning: mainly new content (<i>whole group, small group and individual work</i>)				x	

Note: The grey shaded cells indicate aspects where there was a difference between providers' models or a potential for difference

Source: Data gathered as part of the intervention study on provision, 2015

4.1.1 Issues raised by the analysis of provision

Providers had different approaches to the inclusion of learners with some level of learning difficulty or disability. Some were willing to accept and support these learners whereas others believed they would not thrive within the digital learning environment. While contractually it was for providers to make the decision on inclusion, the differing practices meant that there would be differences in the populations of learners between areas, which would need to be considered in analysis of the RCT data.

While in all areas the learning provision was broadly aligned with the high-level definitions (see Chapter 1), in practice there was not a uniform 'gap' between the different providers' pure online and blended treatments. In some providers, the difference between the 2 treatments was narrow. It was notable, for example, that some pure online learning provision included face-to-face contact. Additionally, at the outset of delivery, the online learning provision and infrastructure was still in development in some cases, and likely to change over time. The implication was that the 'gap' between treatment arms at

³⁸ Except for the employability module, which was expected to be delivered as a group activity (although this was still in development and the exact nature of the teaching and learning approach was still to be confirmed).

the start had the potential to narrow or grow as providers improved the learner experience to maximise learning and opportunities for success.

The training experience for both pure and blended online learning differed depending on the provider. There were substantial differences between the pure online treatments across providers as well as substantial differences between blended learning treatments across providers. The proportion of online to face-to-face training on the blended online learning treatment arm varied between providers and was likely to vary between learners.

The implications of the observed variety of approaches and the differing gaps within and between the 2 treatments, and the potential for the gaps to narrow would have had to be factored into the analysis of the RCT data if it had been possible to undertake this. There was sufficient information to indicate that the different pure and blended provisions of the different providers differed in terms of teaching and learning approaches and learner support which would have had an impact on the results measured by the RCT. This evidence indicated that not all forms of pure online learning were alike, neither were all forms of blended online learning identical. This created the potential for impact to be skewed in some way that was not observable and thus could not be controlled for in the analysis (if this had gone ahead). A further implication was that the pure and blended online training could not have been analysed as separate entities.

4.2 Online training experience

4.2.1 Treatment engagement

Overall, while enthusiasm amongst young people referred to training was said to vary, providers believed that most were reasonably willing to participate, which suggested some traction with policyholders' expectations (Chapter 2). Typically tutors reported that individuals seemed to be content to be on the Pilot, but they thought that some learners had yet to be convinced of the potential benefits of training. With these, tutors believed it was particularly important 'sell' the benefits of training; they also emphasised the importance of treating learners as adults and fostering an informal and supportive training environment. More generally, provider staff said that some young people responded and engaged more positively when they understood that the online mode of teaching and learning would be different from school. This was an important message for young people who had negative past experiences of school or formal classroom environments. Being able to relate to and encourage the young people was seen as vital.

While encouraging positive learner engagement with training was viewed as achievable, some tutors were concerned that it might be challenging to engage pure online learners because of the lack of contact with tutors or peers. Some staff believed this was fundamental to a positive and effective training experience, especially with a group who

may not have undertaken much self-directed learning, or struggled with education in the past.

'They're not ready to just be self-directed learners and they haven't got that level of motivation... it's not that they've chosen to be on a course online.'

Provider staff

4.2.2 Differences to school learning

Learners generally seemed to appreciate what they perceived as significantly different training mode from their experiences of learning in school, as hoped by policymakers (Chapter 2). Those who had found classroom-based learning difficult liked that the learning was more individualised and that they could proceed at their own speed on the online platform, with the availability of 1-to-1 support from their tutors when needed.

Generally, many learners believed that tutors made a genuine effort to understand their individual learning styles and tailor the teaching around their needs, as the policy stakeholders had initially hoped (see Section 2.2). In some cases, individualised approaches helped learners to overcome initial anxiety with undertaking training again, and/or taking subjects with which they had struggled in the past.

'I was thinking I'm going to be sitting in a classroom, listening to someone talk about maths and I'm not going to get it, but it's a lot different to that. It's an actual nice environment... and if you need help... they sort of adapt to the way that you learn.'

Treatment learner, blended

In general, the positive training environment helped to increase the motivation levels even of those learners that had perhaps been less motivated at the outset.

Learners indicated that the focus on employability within the training content varied. However, it seemed that this focus was, or would be, appreciated. For example, a learner assessed as working towards Level 2 was strongly critical of content that related to a celebrity which bore no applicability to employment. In other instances, learners were far more positive about the employability content of their course, and believed it had made a positive difference to their job search and future potential to find work. They appreciated, for example, support with writing CVs or practicing presentation skills, something that in some cases they felt they had not had the chance to develop or get help with in the past.

'[Employability] it's something that I haven't done before. [...] Well, I started doing it the other day with [the tutor]. I've got a new CV, but I've never had help with it before. I've never had a CV until 3 days ago.'

Treatment learner, blended

In general, learners considered the level of support they received from tutors (either online or face-to-face) to be good; they were also satisfied with the quality and positive

attitudes of tutors. Again this suggested the policymakers' expectations for the Pilot had been met (Chapter 2). Satisfaction, however, also depended on the provider's location or set up and the number of learners attending training at any one time. The accounts of learners indicated there were some challenges for providers to respond to, and resource, which centred on changing levels of demand.

'It's a struggle because there's so many people to 1 tutor... At first we had 1 person who [looked after] 6 of us, but as the weeks have gone we've got a lot more people. We have a helper, but it would have been good to have 1 more ... because there were 15 people ... I was put into another room because they ran out of room.'

Treatment learner, blended

4.3 Business as usual provision

Where individuals were allocated to the control group, Work Coaches could decide upon the best course of action for them. This could include attendance at skills provision should Work Coaches believe this to be in claimants' best interest in respect of being successful in their job search. Data published by the DWP indicates that significant numbers of claimants nationally in the target age group were referred to non-pilot English and/or maths provision at or below Level 2 prior to the Pilot and during the time of its delivery. While this might be understood to negate the need for the Pilot, this was not the case since it tested the effects of mandatory JCP qualification screening, and systematic referral to skills assessment and subsequently online English and maths training where claimants did not possess skills at Level 2.

Table 4.2: Number of learning aims started by JSA/ESA(WRAG claimants) aged 19-24

English and/or Maths	13/14	14/15
Entry Level	13,700	10,000
Level 1	15,600	12,200
Level 2	10,600	9,400
Total	39,900	31,600

Notes: data downloaded, 7 Oct 2016, from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/further-education-for-benefit-claimants-2014-to-2015>

Source: Further education for benefit claimants (BIS/DWP)

The process evaluation findings suggested that referral to the control group often meant that Work Coaches would seek alternative provision through other local skills providers.³⁹

³⁹ Only where they understood they could intervene with the control group to offer business as usual activities

To understand more about the local offer, providers offering 'business as usual' provision were interviewed where possible, based on the recommendations of Jobcentre Plus staff. These were a mix of public and private adult education organisations that delivered: a range of Functional Skills qualifications up to Level 2, traineeships and less formal training in a range of learning settings such as non-classroom-based short courses.

These data showed that most business as usual providers offered training (or at least elements of their training) in fairly traditional adult learning environments. The contacts described how teaching was mostly delivered face-to-face, although several said that some modules of their English and maths courses were designed to be completed online or through self-directed learning. Overall, the use of online learning was minimal. All business as usual contacts reported that there was an employability focus to their provision, but some focused more on this than others. For example, traineeships had a strong employability focus and combined work experience placements with English and maths learning. Other examples included employability elements such as CV and application letter development, and interview skills. Most of the business as usual providers had long-established relationships with the Jobcentre Plus offices that had recommended them to the research, which they described as having changed often in line with skills provision, funding opportunities and policy priorities over the years. This had led to peaks and troughs in referrals over the years.

Several of the BAU providers interviewed for the research reported an increase in referrals to their English and maths courses since the Pilot started, and whilst they did not seem to know much about the Pilot, these providers had benefited from this increase. Some of these reported that the young people referred were now being mandated to attend which was positive in terms of pushing them to engage with the learning offer. One provider had yet to establish working practices with Jobcentre Plus, for instance to report back information on the attendance and engagement of mandated learners. Their accounts suggested some change in the baseline of BAU from which the difference made by the treatment would have been measured.

'Because of this control group that we are getting more referrals, but obviously they're still referring to us in the way that they always did but we probably have noticed maybe perhaps an increase would you say.'

Business as usual provider staff

Not all business as usual providers had experienced the same positive increase in referrals of young people, however. Several reported that they had noticed a marked decrease in referrals since the Pilot started. In an example of this, a traineeship provider was unsure whether this was as a result of a backlog of claimants awaiting assessment on the Pilot or whether this would be the trend in the future. The provider suspected that until young people were allocated to the control group, Jobcentre Plus would not be able to refer them to alternative provision. Furthermore, the provider believed that Jobcentre

Plus might in future refer young people in the control group to other support, such as work placements, to meet their own organisational targets. The decrease in referrals was said to be putting the ongoing provision of the traineeship at risk.

'But then this Pilot came along and it's ruined everything...we cannot take anyone between the age of 18-21 onto a traineeship because the traineeship dictates that they are not allowed to be doing any other training'

Business as usual provider staff

4.4 Training and take-up of other provision

Table 4.3: Learning Aims Recorded by Treatment Group

Aim	BAU				Blended				Pure				Total
	Pilot Aims		Non-Pilot Aims		Pilot Aims		Non-Pilot Aims		Pilot Aims		Non-Pilot Aims		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Maths only	0	0	11	3.12	58	12.89	8	1.78	42	10.32	7	1.72	126
English only	2	0.57	5	1.42	58	12.89	8	1.78	32	7.86	4	9.83	109
Maths and English	3	0.85	106	30.03	199	44.22	89	19.78	205	50.37	59	14.50	661
Total in learning	5 [†]		122		315		105		279		70		896
Total Participants	353				450				407				1,210

[†] Learners in the BAU group should not have been registered to Pilot training. Based on these data it is not possible to categorically state whether they were or not, however there was no other evaluation evidence on non-compliance in learner registrations. The possibility exists that these registrations may arise from misrecording of training enrolment data.

Source: National Benefit Database, pilot marker data and merged Individualised Learner Records

Table 4.2 shows the learning aims data registered in the ILR for the 3 treatment groups. These data show where Pilot participants were signed up for either or both English and maths provision (in pure or blended online format) and also where the BAU group went on to undertake an alternative form of English and maths learning. The majority of those assigned to the treatments were referred to undertake both English and maths training, Similarly considerably more BAU learners undertook alternative training in both English and maths than each subject individually. Notably, 5 BAU learners are recorded as taking part in Pilot provision and 175 Pilot learners are recorded as taking part in alternative English and/or maths provision. On the basis of the available evidence it is not possible to know if this represents some element of non-compliance in allocation to training or errors in entering learner registrations into the ILR.

Information on the labour market interventions taken after the initial assessment was extracted from the DWP's LMS opportunities data. All record interventions that took place during the period the Pilot operated. These data recorded a range of activities, referred to as opportunities, and in Table 4.4 they are grouped under 2 headings: those associated with skills conditionality (the process of Jobcentre Plus referring claimants to a skills training provider, Further Education College or National Careers Service adviser with potential benefit sanctions for non-participation) and those linked to gaining labour market experience, e.g. work experience. The analysis in Table 4.2 excluded the assessment itself as an intervention. Not surprisingly it demonstrates that much higher proportions of young people in the pure online and blended groups received at least 1 opportunity in 'other training' (47-48%) or 'basic skills training' (34-36%) categories – both of which codes were used for Pilot provision – than people in the BAU group, who had 1 of these interventions (19% in 'other training' and 2% in 'basic skills training').

The analysis also provided some evidence of a 'work-first approach' where generally claimants were being steered away from basic skills training in favour of work-focussed provision. This suggested that policymakers' expectations of the Pilot were well placed in that a systematic approach to skills screening and referral would be substantially different to standard JCP practice. The quantitative data showed that a quarter (25%) of the young people assigned to the BAU group had at least 1 opportunity of Get Britain Working (GBW) work experience, which was slightly higher than for those in the pure and blended online groups. Furthermore, 10% of the BAU group were referred to sector-based work academies at least once (compared to 5% and 6% of blended and pure online groups) and 5% of the BAU group were at least once referred to a traineeship (compare with 2 and 3% in the treatment groups).

There was also a higher proportion of the BAU group referred to at least 1 skills or employment experience opportunity (57% compared to 51% for both the treatment groups).

Table 4.4: Recorded Pilot participants in LMS Opps data with least 1 opportunity after assessment (other than Assessment) by status in Marker data (%)

Group in Marker LMS Opp type	Skills conditionality						Employment experience				Total (N)
	SFA Basic Skills Training	Initial Provider Interview	Occupational Training	ESOL	Other Training	Basic Skills Training	GBW Work Experience	Sect. Based Work Acad. (Pre-emp. Tr.)	Trainee-ships	Other	
BAU*	0	12	7	0	19	2	25	10	5	57	714
Blended*	0	2	2	0	48	34	23	5	2	51	625
Pure*	0	3	2	0	47	36	22	6	3	51	574
Total	0	2	1	0	6	4	6	2	1	16	12,574

* Excluding people reporting 2 different RCT-outcomes (N=5); total number of participants: 12,579 based on combined sets of Marker and LMS Opps

Source: DWP Pilot Marker data linked to LMS Opps data

5 Outcomes

Data on the outcomes of the Pilot were limited due mainly to the early closure of the Pilot and hence a lack of time for sufficient learners to complete their training and gain a qualification. Inconsistencies in some of the management information also reduced the data available for analysis. In this chapter key data from the available management information and also the findings from a limited number of follow-up interviews with learners are drawn upon to provide some insights into outcomes that were achieved. However the caveats about the lack of time for outcomes to emerge and the inconsistencies in some of the data, and the limitations of the employment outcomes reported in the ILR, must be remembered throughout. What is reported here is unlikely to represent the final out-turn from the Pilot.

5.1 Training completion and achievement

The ILR data contained information on the completion of learning aims which included completion of Pilot learning, shown in Table 5.1. Again it must be cautioned that these are unlikely to represent the final out-turn for the Pilot. While a completion rate of c.10% was seen for learners involved in either treatment (i.e. pure or blended online) this analysis was based on completion at the point data was drawn and these data showed that many treatment learners were continuing their training. It was thus unlikely that the 10% completion rate was representative of what could have been achieved with more elapsed time.

Table 5.1: Number of individuals with at least one Pilot aim achieved by subject, by group

Aim	BAU*			Blended			Pure		
	N completed	N enrolled	%	N completed	N enrolled	%	N completed	N enrolled	%
Maths only	0	0	0	9	58	2	5	42	1.2
English only	0	2	0	3	58	0.7	0	32	0
Maths and English	0	3	0	14	199	4.0	21	205	5.2
Total	0	5	0	26	315	5.8	26	279	9.3

Notes: * BAU completion in respect of those registered on the Pilot training only; not alternative English and maths provision; Column '%' reports the percentage of individuals enrolled in the subject who achieved at least one aim.

Source: National Benefit Database, pilot marker data and merged Individualised Learner Records

As such, a judgement could not be drawn on whether this was the rate of completion that could be expected for the Pilot or whether the data were drawn at a point too soon for this outcome to be seen. The latter is most likely since it was also the case that substantially more Pilot learners continued in training thus had yet to achieve their

outcome than did participants in BAU alternative English and maths provision – however the comparability of the two types of training could not be assessed due to the difference in delivery models.

Nevertheless, it is possible to assess, that if these rates of completion were representative, it would mean that the assumptions in the ex-ante CBA were some way out and the Pilot would have required more completions to reach financial break-even. Balancing this, given the Pilot introduced a new form of training for the target group, for which no equivalent existed previously. Thus, there was little information on which to base a prediction of the likely completion rate within the ex-ante CBA.

5.2 Destinations

The ILR data also included some information on the destinations of learners after their last learning aim and the results for those trial participants for whom there was data are set out in Table 5.2, which shows destinations for ‘business as usual (BAU); the blended and the pure online training group. It must again be cautioned that these data are unlikely to be fully representative of the Pilot⁴⁰, and are not fully reliable on employment outcomes, as no requirement was placed on providers to identify, track and record these. As such, the analysis simply reports the available data and does not provide an indication of what might have been expected for employment outcomes if Pilot participation data were merged with more robust sources on employment outcomes such as HMRC data.

Table 5.2: ILR recorded destinations by RCT group

Destination	BAU		Blended		Pure	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Continuing	19	5.1	231	51.3	237	58.5
Employment/Education	6	1.7	18	4.0	12	3.0
Inactive	197	56.1	120	26.7	69	16.7
Missing	131	37.1	81	18.0	89	21.9
Total Participants	353	100	450	100	407	100

Note: these data should be treated with caution as the ILR does not consistently capture employment outcomes; missing notes those cases where a destination could not be detected within the data.

Source: National Benefit Database, pilot Marker data and merged Individualised Learner Records.

Nonetheless, it can be seen that substantially higher proportions of individuals in the blended and pure online groups were continuing their Pilot training or progressing to employment or another form of education (51% and 59% respectively) compared to the

⁴⁰ They reflect destinations only at the point at which the data were drawn which are unlikely to represent the final out-turn of the Pilot

BAU group (5%). The BAU group had a higher percentage of individuals who were recorded as having become economically inactive after the learning period.

Table 5.3 shows the coefficients of 2 Logit regressions on the probability of continuing in learning, progressing into further training or entering employment combined: the first included only the indicators for the Pilot groups and the geographical location, while the second also included further individual controls. Each coefficient should be interpreted as the increase (or decrease) in the probability of the combined measure of progress (i.e. continuing in education, progressing to further training or entering employment) due to an increase in 1 unit of the variable in focus.

The first 2 columns demonstrated that those individuals in the blended or pure online groups (compared to being in the BAU group) had an increased probability of continuing in learning, progressing to further training or entering employment by 53% and 58% respectively. Given the truncated length of the trial and that those in the blended or pure online groups were referred to learning, this was to be expected. When other individual characteristics were introduced into the model, the effect of the Pilot decreased to 8% and 12% for both the blended and pure online groups. The other characteristics did not have a significant effect on the probability of continuation or progression which was to be expected due to the randomisation allocation process. The only exception was the number of learning aims learners were undertaking⁴¹, with those registered as engaging in more than 1 having an increased chance of being in education or learning by 3.2%.

The geographical effect was still statistically significant: being in the area covered by Provider 4 (Area C) increased the probability of progressing into employment/education learning by 16%, while being in the area covered by Area D decreased it by 12%, compared to the area covered by Area B.

⁴¹ In the ILR each individual has one or more 'learning aims' – the individual learning units or qualifications a learner is working towards. Learners often have more than one aim

Table 5.3: Regression results on recorded destinations comparing the blended or online group with the business as usual group

Variable	Without Controls		With Controls	
	Coef.	Std.Err.	Coef.	Std.Err.
Blended	0.53***	0.028	0.08***	0.024
Pure	0.58***	0.028	0.12**	0.050
Ever Assessed	-	-	-0.53	0.096
Learning Difficulty	-	-	-0.032***	0.012
Prior Attainment	-	-	0.02	0.018
Number of Aims	-	-	0.16***	0.024
Female	-	-	0.01***	0.006
Employed	-	-	0.026	0.021
Disabled	-	-	0.002	0.012
Age	-	-	-0.001	0.002
Not British	-	-	0.02*	0.012
Area A	-	-	0.003	0.005
Area C	-	-	0.27***	0.135
Area D	-	-	-0.12***	0.017
N	1,210		1,207	
Pseudo R2	0.19		0.56	

Notes: The dependent variable is progressing into education or employment.

The base category is a Pilot participant in the 'BAU' group, in Area B.

Standard errors are clustered at the district level. ***/** denote 10%/5%/1% levels of statistical significance of estimated coefficients from a logit regression (shown as marginal effects).

Source: National Benefit Database, Pilot Marker data in LMS and merged Individualised Learner Records.

This regression showed the odds for each type of destination (see Table 5.4). Where a coefficient was less than 1 this indicated lower odds than the base outcome, and where a coefficient of greater than 1 this indicated increased odds of a particular outcome. As sample size is small when segmented in this detail, the following results should be viewed as descriptive rather than indicated a systematic effect.

It can be seen being in the 'blended' group increased the odds of being in either further education or employment, the odds of continuing in the current learning aim, and slightly reduced the odds of not having a reported destination. Being in the 'pure' group significantly increased the odds of all the 3 outcomes occurring.

Thus, participating to the Pilot appeared to increase the probability of progressing in education or into employment, or to continue the learning aim started, when compared to becoming economically inactive. However, these results should be treated with some caution since they were based on very small numbers of treated learners and if the Pilot had operated longer, different trends might have emerged.

Table 5.4: Regression results on each type of destination

Variable	Missing	Std.Err.	Employment/ Education		Continuing		
	Coef.		Coef.	Std.Err.	Coef.	Std.Err.	
Blended	0.50***	0.05	2.01***	0.15	1.99**	0.59	
Pure	0.95	0.18	2.60***	0.60	3.59**	1.81	
Learning Difficulty	0.71**	0.10	1.27*	0.17	0.75	0.13	
Prior Attainment	0.79	0.35	0.67	0.29	1.09	0.35	
Number of Aims	4.65	4.82	5.07	5.50	15.50**	20.02	
Female	1.10**	0.04	1.26***	0.03	1.09*	0.05	
Employed	1.36	0.42	4.60***	1.43	0.85	0.20	
Disabled	1.09	0.07	1.11	0.09	1.17	0.18	
Age	1.07	0.04	0.96	0.03	0.67	0.06	
Not British	0.22***	0.10	0.61	0.20	0.64*	0.15	
Constant	0.5	0.16	0.01	0.02	0.01**	0.02	
N						1210	
Pseudo R2						0.32	

Notes: The dependent variable is progressing into education or employment. The base category is a Pilot participant in the 'BAU' group, in either 'Black Country' district or 'Direct Centre'. The base outcome is being reported as 'not in education or employment'. Robust standard errors are clustered at the district level. ***/**/* denote 10%/5%/1% levels of statistical significance of estimated coefficients from a multinomial logit regression (shown as relative risk ratios).

Source: National Benefit Database, Pilot Marker data and merged Individualised Learner Records.

5.3 Receipt of Welfare Benefits

No significant differences were found between the 3 trial groups on the average length of time on benefits before or after their assessment.⁴² It must be noted that this analysis was based on data drawn from the National Benefits Database and covered only legacy benefits (such as JSA) and not UC which in future would be the regime new claimants would experience.

Duration on welfare benefits was measured in 2 ways:

- The number of days between the date on which an individual started on benefits and the date of their assessment, referred to as benefit duration before the assessment (Table 5.5)
- The number of days between the date of an individual's assessment and the claiming spell end-date after assessment (Table 5.6).

⁴² For the duration on benefit analysis, intervention groups were derived from the marker data (please see technical report).

Table 5.5: Duration before the assessment

	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
BAU	25.15	22.63	0	164	693
Blended	24.09	19.83	1	157	611
Pure	24.87	20.35	0	146	558

Source: NBD, Pilot Marker data in LMS.

Table 5.6: Duration of spells after assessment

	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
BAU	78.19	46.34	0	206	693
Blended	77.28	46.59	0	268	611
Pure	75.75	49.09	0	202	558

Source: NBD, Pilot Marker data in LMS.

This shows a very similar average duration across the different randomised groups (BAU, pure and blended online training).

The length of time spent on benefits was, on average, twice as long after the assessment date than before (Table 5.6). Again there was little difference in the average length of spells among the randomised groups.

5.4 Analysis of sanction referrals

Referrals to sanctioning were analysed (Table 5.7). Only those claimants with sanction referral markers were included and importantly, this referral marker might apply to any part of the JSA claim, not simply non-participation in Pilot or other skills provision. It should also be noted that the data refers to sanction referrals, not sanction decisions

The pattern of sanction referrals is fairly consistent across the 3 trial groups; thus being part of the treatment did not lead to a greater or lesser likelihood of being referred to a sanction.

Table 5.7: Individuals in the RCT with a sanction referral marker recorded

	Total sanctions referrals	Individuals with a sanctions referral marker	Number in each trial group	Mean referrals for those with a sanctions referral marker	Overall mean
BAU	396	250	693	1.58	0.57
Blended	330	216	613	1.53	0.54
Pure	315	191	560	1.65	0.56

Note: A sanction marker could be associated with any part of the benefit claim and did not necessarily relate to the Pilot

Source: DWP Pilot and sanctions markers.

5.5 Individual learner experiences

Before the evaluation closed, 8 follow up interviews were conducted with learners who had been originally interviewed at an earlier stage in the Pilot⁴³. Although very limited in number they provide some indicative information about their experiences of the Pilot and the differences it made to their employment experience and attitudes to further training.

Of the 8 interviewees, 4 had secured and started full-time employment, 2 interviewees were working full-time as part of an apprenticeship and the other 2 were still unemployed and actively searching for work in the childcare and retail sectors.

Only 1 participant completed the course and took all the exams while another was preparing to take the exams at the time of the second interview. Notably these were the 2 interviewees who were unemployed. All of those who were working full-time or undertaking an apprenticeship did not complete the online training. In all but 1 case, this was because now they were working full time they either; did not have enough free-time or flexibility with work to continue studying or believed they were no longer eligible to continue the course because they had stopped claiming JSA.

All the interviewees perceived it to be important to have good English and maths skills and, at the time of the second interview, recognised that employers valued these qualifications and that it would improve their job prospects.

⁴³ An attempt was made to contact all learners recruited to the process evaluation case studies, but only eight of these providing an interview. It was not possible to speak to most of the others, potentially due to changed mobile numbers.

Those in full-time work were particularly positive as they had used the English skills to write CVs and covering letters and to take part in interviews that had secured them their jobs. Most were also using their Maths skills on the till and had been given more responsibility and chances to develop as a result.

5.5.1 Experience of the training and any changes

Six of the 8 were positive about the nature of training delivered. Participants enjoyed the relaxed, respectful atmosphere of the classes and the freedom to move around and work at their own pace and thought the tutors friendly and helpful. Participants appreciated the 1 to 1 support they were given and efforts made by the tutors to adapt the delivery to meet their learner needs.

Criticisms of the training were 2 fold. One participant, who was undertaking a pure online course, felt the training was disorganised. This was partly due to a poor internet connection that made online study difficult, as well as feeling that the tutor was not available when needed. A second criticism was from a participant who had already completed Level 1 courses, but was put onto them again, even though she had produced evidence of prior completion. She felt this was a waste of time and should have been moved into the Level 2 class sooner.

Advantages of the online learning were seen to be convenience as well as the time and money saved. However, disadvantages were more widely mentioned and included a lack of support or sense of community from tutors and other students.

All participants were aware that participation on the course was mandatory although only 1 participant in the research sample spoke negatively about this. The issue had only become problematic when he was offered work, but it clashed with the course and he had to prioritise attending the course.

'I was really annoyed with that because they want me to go out and work and then when you go out to work they want you to not work and do this course'

Male, pure online learner

5.5.2 The difference the training made

Most participants felt the training had made a measurable difference to them and often in unanticipated ways. Participants on the English course felt more able to write cover letters and CVs and also to express themselves verbally. This translated to an increased confidence in interviews and on the telephone when speaking to agencies. Besides practical language skills such as accurately using grammar and punctuation, some felt more able and understanding of how to 'sell themselves', demonstrating greater self-esteem but also versatility in applying language to different situations.

Participants on the maths course noted considerable differences since attending the training. In addition to improving their ability to work with numbers, many found they could do maths faster and said this was improving their job prospects as they were being entrusted with greater sums of money and more responsibility.

The acquisition of greater practical skills on both courses has brought about greater confidence, social skills and the ability to work with others.

Participants noted not only improvements in core English and maths skills, but much wider benefits resulting from the training. Many acquired a greater thirst for learning and were been motivated to attend more training as a result of a positive and enjoyable experience.

6 Discussion and conclusions

This chapter draws together the evidence on the key principles underpinning the Pilot and addresses some key questions posed for the evaluation by the 2 Departments. Following this, some conclusions are drawn in respect of its operation, with some lessons for future delivery of RCTs identified.

6.1 Evidence on the key principles

An overall assessment could be made that many of the key principles expected by policymakers held true in practice and the Pilot operated – at least in respect of learners' experiences – in a way that policymakers had anticipated. In an example of this, many learners believed that tutors made a genuine effort to understand their individual learning styles and tailor the teaching around their needs, which led to a positive engagement with the online training.

6.1.1 The role of mandation

Mandation was seen as a necessary part of the Pilot implementation by both policymakers and providers in order to ensure claimants would engage with the training. This conditionality applied from the point of being referred to assessment, through to participating in the training if allocated to the treatment group. New legislation was required to allow for the mandation to assessment. It was crucial that young people were only referred to training if they did not possess English and/or maths skills at Level 2, as policy did not allow claimants to be required to repeat a training level. While mandation was seen as a crucial lever to ensuring young people's engagement by policymakers and providers, they also believed that training would be most successful where claimants willingly engaged. Thus, they hoped that JCP and provider staff would set out the benefits that young people would accrue through taking part.

In practice, the process evaluation evidence broadly suggested that these initial design ideas had some traction. The data showed that conditionality appeared to be most emphasised in respect of attending the assessment although claimants did not show particular resistance to doing so. However, countering this were qualitative accounts of high rates of failure to attend the assessment in some areas. While perhaps not openly hostile to the concept of conditionality, it may have caused some claimants to reconsider their claim, to not engage with the Pilot or to try and find work and leave the benefits register as a result.

Once the result of assessment was known there was a clear focus on helping claimants to understand the benefits of training – with staff emphasising the importance that employers place on English and maths skills, as well as the benefits of a new form of

training that would be significantly different to prior educational experiences. Young people who engaged appeared open to the idea of training and welcomed the opportunity to have another chance to gain English and maths qualifications despite being, in some cases, disappointed that their skills had not improved since leaving education. Their accounts also indicated they were motivated by the opportunity to improve their skills in an adult learning environment rather than by the threat of mandation – although balancing this, the fieldwork was conducted only with those young people taking part in training and not with those who did not either because they had stopped a claim or because they chose not to attend.

The quantitative data collected for the Pilot indicated that sanctions had been a feature in young people's experience but the degree to which young people had been sanctioned did not vary particularly by whether they were in the treatment group or not. Moreover, the qualitative research found only 1 case of a claimant experiencing a sanction which appeared to concern some mix up in their claim and entitlements which had little to do with the Pilot.

The role played by mandation was thus not entirely clear from the evaluation data. While legislatively, it was important to create a new policy lever for the assessment element this did not appear to greatly affect participating claimants' motivations to attend assessment. Similarly, those who engaged in learning believed they were self-motivated to do so, rather than the threat of being sanctioned causing this. However, it is common for claimants of all ages to state that they do not need the threat of sanction to comply with policy. What it is not possible to say is how they would have acted without this lever being in place.

6.1.2 Attitudinal and behavioural changes amongst learners

Again, in setting out their expectations for the Pilot policymakers hoped that young people would engage positively with the Pilot, and that this would lead to skill improvement but they would also come to understand the value of English and maths skills and knowledge in the workplace. There was a desire that young people would take control of, as well as responsibility for, their own development, as well as gain confidence and increased sense of agency when they saw that they could make progress.

There was some evidence that claimants' attitudes and behaviours could change as a result of the Pilot, though this was qualitative and gathered from the small number of young people who it was possible to contact for the follow-up interviews. During these interviews, claimants emphasised that they now understood that employers valued English and maths skills and improving these skills in turn had improved their prospects of employment. Similarly, some cited how their improved skills had led to improved CVs and applications. One who had gained employment stated he was entrusted to cash up

the till at the end of the day, which he believed would not have happened without the training.

Where young people had felt uneasy about returning to studying in English and maths, this had been overcome by the adult learning environment and the flexibility presented by the pure and blended online provision. It was apparent that taking part engendered increasing levels of confidence and with this an appetite for further training. For those in the blended online training, being part of group training experiences had the benefit of developing social and interpersonal skills including team work and problem solving that they saw as beneficial.

In sum, it appeared that pure and blended online training could provide a means to engage a group of young people who had struggled in educational environments and could help them to improve their skills. It appeared too that along with improved skills, came positive attitudinal and behavioural effects that supported transitions into employment as well as into further learning which previously they may have discounted.

6.1.3 Value for money

In order to progress the Pilot, the Departments made an investment in infrastructure to support providers to develop and refine their online learning platforms and provision. This was in addition to planned spend per assessment and per learner in online training, which was delivered through an outcomes-based funding model.

The ex-ante cost benefit analysis conducted for the evaluation included a number of assumptions that needed to be tested in practice. These included the rate of completion and qualification gain that might be expected for this claimant group, taking part in this form of training. While the data available to the evaluation following the testing phase of the Pilot did not allow these assumptions to be verified, to a degree this did not matter. On the basis of the extant evidence base, it is possible to say that the potential returns to people with low skill levels improving their skills were significant and high which in turn would deliver reduced costs to the State because of claimants' improved economic and social outcomes. It was unfortunate that when the quantitative data were drawn, only a limited number of individuals had experienced sufficient time in training to allow robust data on completion to emerge. This paucity of data on outcomes meant the breakeven point on investment in the Pilot could not be tested.

More certainly, the investment in infrastructure meant that providers were a key beneficiary from the investment in the Pilot and they could pass on this benefit to further learners through extending the treatment provision to other publicly funded learners.

6.1.4 Market capacity

The planned investment in provider infrastructure potentially made the Pilot an attractive prospect for providers to bid for. Those policymakers involved in commissioning noted that a good range of providers had come forward – some of these with significant experience in the provision of online learning (mostly blended online) and others who were keen to innovate and commence delivery in this model. Thus, it could be judged there was some appetite and capacity to take forward online learning and the Pilot supported this by enabling some providers new to this market to develop an infrastructure and provision. In the background to the Pilot's implementation were policies to increase the use of online learning in further education and apprenticeships which formed a driver to provider involvement at least to a degree.

It was not however possible on the basis of the evidence available to the evaluation to assess the effect of a relatively small scale provision on overall market capacity. As the evaluation at the point of Pilot closure did not include a provider follow-up to understand about their future intentions for their provision there was no insight into whether providers saw the new provision and infrastructure as a valuable asset to use within their wider portfolio of provision. Nonetheless, it was certain that as a result of the Pilot, 5 providers were able to make available English and maths online training, with options to achieve either Functional Skills or GCSEs that could help future learners to make progress.

6.2 Conclusions and lessons learned

The Pilot was a valiant attempt to test the means to improve the skills of young, low skilled unemployed people in order to increase their future resilience in the labour market, improve their social and economic outcomes and reducing the negative consequences that time spent NEET (which particularly affects those with low skills) has on long term outcomes. Being introduced at a time of labour market improvement and in particular improving levels of employment for young people meant that the assumptions that had been made in respect of claimant numbers could not hold. This undermined the financial basis for the Pilot, as well as the judgements that could be drawn on the basis of the RCT data, and it was this in combination that led to the Departments' eventual decision to close it prior to main-stage delivery.

Despite this, claimants did achieve outcomes: the available evidence showed an increased propensity amongst those treated to continue in learning, which suggested a positive trajectory in respect of future outcomes through increasing skill levels. There was, however, a lack of evidence on whether the Pilot affected likelihood to reduce benefits dependency, not least because insufficient elapsed time was available on which to make an assessment. It is perhaps the lack of time for outcomes to emerge that is the

most disappointing aspect in respect to adding to knowledge and evidence of what works in addressing the consequences of being NEET at a young age.

Some lessons could be gleaned from the Pilot's operation in respect of running trials in this social policy environment. The Pilot demonstrated the saliency of **testing the delivery of an RCT**. The testing period allowed clear messages to emerge that the assumptions on which the financial planning and plans for the judgements that could be drawn from the data were not safe given the improving economic environment and increasing rate of employment. The testing period also showed some areas where the model could be tightened if it had gone into its main-stage delivery which would have helped to ensure the validity of the results that would emerge.

An unfortunate consequence of the necessity to close the Pilot early was the **lack of time for outcomes to emerge**. While those engaged in the training were offered the opportunity to complete their courses, it was unclear from the quantitative and qualitative data whether more would have continued to training completion and would have achieved qualifications. Outcomes in respect of duration and spells of welfare claims were similarly limited. In assessing a provision such as the Pilot, more time would be required.

Further lessons emerged in respect of data captured on the Pilot's operation. Some **indicators for stages of the Pilot's process had to be derived** and assumptions made about whether stages had been completed. While operationally the need to complete more detailed management information might be judged for example by JCP staff to be prohibitive, such data would have allowed a clear picture of the Pilot's operation to emerge. In addition, a lesson should be drawn in respect of the sources and quality of the data associated with the Pilot. As different sources were used to capture data about different stages of participation, namely LMS, a separate database of some but not all Pilot markers and ILR, and the quality and consistency of data capture within these were variable, it was not possible to present a clear picture of participation and movement through Pilot stages. In part this was because the Pilot was operated by two departments with differing data systems. A recommendation on this basis would be to implement a more consistent source of data to cover the full process, despite the administrative implications that might be entailed.

In respect of ensuring a tight and consistent implementation of an RCT, it is important **that those involved in delivery understand the rationale for and the full remit of the policy**. Both providers and JCP staff would have benefitted from communications that started earlier in the process. A longer lead in time would have ensured greater consistency of understanding and could therefore have increased the consistency of practice between Pilot areas. This would have provided greater assurance that the RCT data would not be skewed by local variations. A further point on this theme was that JCP staff particularly needed to support delivery as it meant that some of their autonomy to

make decisions was lost. Convincing JCP staff that there would be benefits from this new form of training, over and above what was available as a matter of course (i.e. BAU) would have been valuable in winning their support. Moreover, these staff also needed to understand what the RCT meant for those allocated to the control group. The evidence suggested a change to practice – with some areas offering nothing where before they might and others agreeing a bespoke provision for the control group; both of these shifted the baseline for measurement of impact through the RCT.

There is also a **need to tightly commission provision**, and a question is raised by the Pilot about whether open tendering processes and outcomes-based funding can achieve provision that is sufficiently consistent for an RCT. On this, the evidence showed the providers used different assessments that measured Functional Skills levels in different ways. In addition, the provision in respect of pure and blended online learning was heterogeneous with an inconsistent gap between what constituted the 2 treatments between providers. Whether 1 providers' provision of blended online training (or pure online training) could be considered the same as another's was dubious based on the evidence gathered. Moreover, the speed at which the provision was developed meant that the provision was still in development as the Pilot rolled out which meant the baseline measured in respect of the provision during the testing phase was likely to change bringing with it more uncertainty for the validity of the RCT data that would emerge.

The testing phase demonstrated the **challenges of matching supply and demand** and this was not resolved. This may have led to the high rates of failure to attend assessments noted by those involved in delivery. This mismatch could also lead to increased periods of elapsed time between Pilot stages – i.e. into assessment then random allocation then enrolment and induction – further diminishing the claimant cohort that could be involved. More time for providers and JCP staff to liaise on arrangements and how these were working might have addressed this. Guidance and intervention from the Departments would have been needed to improve this for main-stage delivery. A picture emerged of a leaky pipeline with an already small claimant population becoming smaller (as individuals ended claims) as the elapsed time grew.

Appendix 1

Providers and Areas

	Provider Codes (SFA Contract Package Areas)				
Area Codes (DWP Districts)	1	2	3	4	5
A	✓				
B	✓				
C				✓	
D		✓	✓		✓

Source: IES 2016

Appendix 2

Approach to the ex ante CBA

Estimating the benefits

When estimating the economic benefit of any programme it is crucial to find an appropriate comparison or control group (also known as counterfactual), with which participants' outcomes can be compared. However, the ex-ante CBA reported here (which in essence aims to forecast the return that might be expected) was undertaken at an early stage of 18-21 Work Skills Pilot 1 delivery. As such, the outcomes for participants and the control group within the randomised controlled trial (RCT) were not available.⁴⁴ For this reason, the analysis instead compared returns based on estimates of achieving Level 2 qualifications to counterfactual non-achievement as published by Buscha et al. (2013)⁴⁵ and applied these to the Pilot. It should be noted however that the estimates supplied by Buscha and colleagues were not constrained to English and Mathematics qualifications.

In order to estimate monetary values for these impacts, the four quarters of 2014 of the Labour Force Survey were pooled. From these data on employment and earnings for people classified as not holding qualifications (the control or comparison group) were identified and the monetary value of the incremental life-time earnings gain by achieving the qualifications was derived.

The valuation of programme benefits assumed that impact estimates as published by Buscha et al. (ibid) affected the full life course trajectory of people both in terms of employment and earnings. Further, individual increases in lifetime earnings, multiplied by the total number of participants, were assumed to provide a measure of social benefits, i.e. that individual income increases provide an approximation of the growth of Gross Value Added (GVA) in the economy resulting from the programme. This disregarded further benefits such as improved health and well-being, which were challenging to value, as well as potential benefits to employers. Therefore the analysis presented a very cautious measure of the social benefit of 18-21 WSP.

The estimated monetary value of increased life-time earnings was multiplied with a qualification achievement rate to obtain an Expected Value (EV) of life-time earnings

⁴⁴ It could also not be known that the Pilot would be closed early

⁴⁵ Buscha F, Urwin P, Thomson D, Knight T and Speckesser S (2013). Estimating the Labour Market Returns to Qualification gained in English Further Education using the ILR. In: Skills, D. F. B. I. A. (ed.). Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

increases for all programme participants. This EV represents the monetary benefit of all participants at the onset of the programme.

The qualification achievement rate was estimated by blending two different sources from the SFA.^{46,47} For the calculations, the rate adopted was the success rate of further education students up to 19 years old who attempted English and maths studies at Level 2 in academic year 2013/14 ($\approx 62.81\%$). It was judged that this may have been an over-estimate of the completion rate amongst treatment learners. Consequently, further scenarios were built simulating different achievement rates within a $\pm 10\%$ range of this rate and a rate that was much lower (30%).

Cost Analysis

The main inputs to the cost analysis were the operational costs of the Pilot. These were derived from the estimated costs for Jobcentre Plus and the different providers in the different districts. These costs were then multiplied by the estimates of flows into the Pilot, based on the original model of these provided by the two Departments.

Operational costs were the expenses necessary to operate the Pilot, which were: costs supported by Jobcentre Plus; and, costs incurred by the providers

Operational costs for Jobcentre Plus were composed of officer time (Work Coach), management, travel and a £5 reward for each individual obtaining the Level 2 qualification. Travel costs were estimated for the maximum six months duration of the training.⁴⁸ For each successful individual Jobcentre Plus paid £5 to the provider concerned. Not all participants would achieve the qualification and thus the number successful trainees was estimated by multiplying the total participation by the success rate used for the benefit analysis noted earlier, i.e. 63.20 per cent (UK Government SFA, 2015) and then reduced within a $\pm 10\%$ range of this rate and to a rate that was much lower (30%). Costs supported by Jobcentre Plus (Table A2).

⁴⁶ UK Government SFA (2015). Further Education and skills by geography and equality and diversity: participation 2002/03 to 2013/14 [Online]. Available:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/378262/feandskills-participation-by-geography-learner-demographics.xls [Accessed 25th of March 2015].

⁴⁷ UK Government SFA (2015). Further Education and skills by geography and equality and diversity: achievement 2002/03 to 2013/14 [Online]. Available:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/378265/feandskills-achievement-by-geography-learner-demographics.xls [Accessed 23rd of March 2015]

⁴⁸ Not all participants are expected to stay on the training for six months, although this is the maximum time they can spend in training as part of the pilot.

Table A2: Current JSA Pilot costs supported by Jobcentre Plus (£s)

District	A	B	C	D
Assessment unit cost	7,265	11,096	12,720	10,707
Travel costs (£25.74 per month x 6 months)	189,959	290,977	295,291	137,776
Consumables/Staffing (£0.25 per head)	1,322	2,025	2,055	1,917
Success prime (£5 per successful trainee)	3,887	5,953	6,042	2,819
TOTAL	202,432	310,051	316,108	153,219

Source: data on Pilot costs supplied by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)

To estimate providers' operating costs, information from their contracts was provided by the SFA which enabled an estimate the overall and per-head costs. The providers' costs were enumerated as:

- Development costs: these were the fixed costs involved in the creation of online learning infrastructure and design of the two forms of online learning. Providers would incur these whether or not there were any participants.
- Assessment costs, which included the costs for those who were randomised to the training as well as those who were not.
- Training: there were different costs associated with the blended training or the pure online training. Training costs and assessment costs in district D were reported as an average since multiple providers operated in this district.
- Among those young people being trained there would be some who required additional learning support, involving extra costs for providers. The rate of people needing this type of support is unknown at this stage of the Pilot. Based on The Equalities Toolkit (2014)⁴⁹, which explored rates of additional support needs of learners within the JCP Skills Conditionality Offer, it was assumed that 17% of Pilot learners would require additional support. This was applied as a flat rate across districts.

The breakdown of providers' costs (based on current data) together with the total costs for JCP is shown in Table A3.

⁴⁹ The Equalities Toolkit (2014). Raising the retention and achievement of learners in Skills Conditionality provision (EDI4) [Online]. Available: <http://www.equalitiestoolkit.com/content/raising-retention-and-achievement-learners-skills-conditionality-provision-edi4>

Table A3: Total current JSA Pilot costs (£s)

District	A	B	C	D
Development costs (Fixed costs)	148,900	-	480,000	911,458
Assessment	46,150	141,383	32,609	146,060
Assigned to training				
Blended delivery	301,347	393,772	450,279	186,449
Pure delivery	193,723	236,452	450,279	146,751
Learning support				
Learning support to blended delivery	3,241	6,566	25,353	7,431
Learning support to Pure Delivery	3,241	6,566	25,353	6,218
Total providers	696,601	784,738	1,463,873	1,404,367
Total costs (JCP + providers)	899,034	1,094,790	1,779,980	1,557,586

Source: DWP and SFA data combined

Overall, total costs summed to £5,331,390. In order to provide a cost per learner, these were divided by the number of individuals expected to complete qualifications. Only a subset of participants would do this, and the rate of achievement for participants could not be known at the point the ex ante CBA was undertaken. Thus the number of participants was multiplied a range of success rates (as noted earlier).

Thus, using the success rate derived from Buschka et al, (63.20%) and based on a total flow of 5,920 trainees through the Pilot, 3,740 individuals would achieve qualifications. Under this estimate, the operational cost per head of successful trainees would be circa £1,430.



Department
for Education



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for Work &
Pensions

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Reference: DFE-RR845

ISBN: 978-1-78105-930-2

This research was commissioned under the 2010 to 2015 Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government. As a result the content may not reflect current Government policy. The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.

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