

## In-House Research

# Customer Experience of the Future Jobs Fund: Findings from a Qualitative Research Study

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**Department for Work and Pensions**

**In-House Research No 1**

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## Abbreviations

FJF	Future Jobs Fund
CV	Curriculum Vitae
LAB	Lead Accountable Body
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
JCP	Jobcentre Plus

## **Executive summary**

This report presents the findings of a qualitative research study into the experiences of Future Jobs Fund (FJF) participants, based on interviews conducted two to four months after completing their six month FJF post. The interviews took place between November 2010 and January 2011.

### **Aims of the study**

The aims of this study were:

- To gather customer feedback on their experiences of FJF
- To understand the strengths and weakness of the delivery of the policy from a customer's viewpoint
- To gather the lessons learnt from a customer perspective in order to feed into future policies.

### **Policy Background**

FJF was introduced in October 2009 to support the creation of subsidised jobs primarily aimed at 18-24 year olds who have been out of work for six months or more, and for a smaller number of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) customers aged over 25 in unemployment hotspots. Any organisation from the public, private or third sector from across Great Britain was eligible to bid for funding for the creation of jobs on the condition that the posts met certain criteria. Customers started on FJF posts between October 2009 and March 2011.

The scheme was implemented by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in partnership with the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), and with input from Jobcentre Plus Regional Government Offices in England and Devolved Administrations in Scotland and Wales.

As a key element of the Young Persons' Guarantee (YPG), the primary aim of FJF was to build skills and work experience for disadvantaged young jobseekers to assist them in securing long-term unsubsidised employment.

### **Research methods**

This study comprised in-depth qualitative telephone interviews with 89 FJF participants, who according to DWP records had recently completed their six month post at the time of the interview.

As this study used qualitative techniques, it provides an in-depth view of the experiences of participants interviewed but is not designed to be representative of all FJF participants. However, participants were purposively sampled to ensure representation from a range of age groups and disadvantaged sub-groups in order to capture a spectrum of views across a wide range of different customers.

## Summary

This qualitative research will be supplemented by quantitative analysis, planned to report in early 2012, to determine the impact of FJF on long-term benefit and employment outcomes.

### **Key findings**

#### **Details of posts**

The FJF participants had been employed in a very wide range of roles including retail work, grounds maintenance, health promotion, sports coaching, administration, advice work, construction work, events organisation, youth work, social care and customer service. Many participants had roles with significant levels of responsibility and some respondents highlighted how the length of the post had helped to build their confidence through the opportunity to gradually expand their workload and role. The reported quality of supervision was high overall although there were instances of poor supervision and organisation by the FJF employers. On the whole, respondents reported that supervisors and managers were approachable and available to provide support whenever needed.

#### **Benefits from FJF**

Prior to starting on FJF, many participants reported experiencing a highly competitive and depressed labour market, and a number of participants felt that they would have not been able to get a job without FJF at that point. Almost all participants reported an increase in their skills set as result of participation in FJF, although there was some variation in the breadth and depth of skills gathered. The most commonly mentioned gains were in transferable skills such as interpersonal skills, customer service skills and IT skills. Participants also gained specialist and technical skills in a wide range of areas such as grounds maintenance, construction, coaching and retail work. Most respondents were confident that the skills gained from their FJF posts would be used in future roles. Formal qualifications and accreditations were also obtained by some participants. The predominant view was that an increase in self-confidence and perceived sense of employability were the most useful benefits of the scheme.

#### **Transition to open labour market**

A number of the participants had secured non-subsidised employment at the time of the interviews and a handful had been kept on by their FJF employer via an extension to the FJF grant. Of those currently working, many were sure that the FJF post had played a vital role in getting their job because of the boost to their CV, skills set and confidence in applying for work. The working group had a slightly higher representation of customers aged over 25, with a longer previous work history and higher qualification level. There was no pattern between the type of FJF post and success in securing unsubsidised employment.

## Summary

Respondents had received varying levels of job search support from their employers, during their FJF post. Some participants had received limited or no job search support. Others had received a comprehensive package of support including help with CVs, job applications, interview practice and searching for vacancies. Dissatisfaction with the level of job-search was uncommon and the level of job-search support received did not present as a key factor in terms of which participants had secured an unsubsidised job post FJF.

A widespread view amongst respondents who had not found work was that their six month post would help to secure another job in the future. Some of the respondents who had been unemployed for many months plus prior to starting FJF described how their frustration and despair had changed into a real sense of hope for their prospects.

Across the group, most respondents reported a positive change in their confidence levels and felt better equipped to find suitable work long-term. Some described how getting in the habit and routine of work and doing meaningful activity had significantly changed their attitude to employment, in terms of recognising the personal rewards it could offer. Many respondents reported changes to their long-term aspirations in terms of aiming higher, considering new options and having the self-belief to pursue their goals.

## Conclusions

From a customer perspective, the reported strengths of this policy have been the opportunity to gather a wide range of skills (many of which should be transferable to a range of jobs); a significant improvement in self-confidence; and a positive change in aspirations and motivation to pursue their job goals. However, there was evidence of an inconsistent delivery of policy intent in terms of job-search support from the FJF employers, with some participants failing to receive adequate focus on getting a job post-FJF.

This study suggests that FJF has been successful in preparing customers for work and, for many participants their reported experiences had been to such a high standard, that they could not think of any improvements to the scheme. The significant boost to CVs from six months of work experience and the improvements to customers' skills sets are likely to remain long-term, however there is a risk that some of the softer gains of FJF could dissipate without a swift transition into a non-subsidised job.



## Chapter 1 Introduction and methods

### 1.1 Description of Future Jobs Fund

The Future Jobs Fund (FJF) was introduced from October 2009 as a response to the recession, to support the creation of additional jobs for long term unemployed 18-24 year olds and jobseekers aged over 25 in areas of high unemployment. FJF grants were awarded to suitable organisations to employ eligible customers for six month posts starting between October 2009 and March 2011. FJF was implemented by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in partnership with the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), and with input from Jobcentre Plus Regional Government Offices in England and Devolved Administrations in Scotland and Wales.

The primary aim of FJF was to build skills and work experience for disadvantaged young jobseekers to assist them in securing long-term unsubsidised employment.

Any organisation from the public, private or third sector from across Great Britain was eligible to bid for funding for the creation of jobs. Successful bids had to satisfy a number of criteria including:

- all jobs must be additional to existing labour market vacancies;
- all jobs must provide some form of community benefit; and
- all jobs must be for at least 25 hours per week with employees paid at least the minimum wage.

In the majority of cases, successful bids came from partnerships led by upper tier Local Authorities or Third Sector organisations who acted as the 'Lead Accountable Body' (LAB). In many cases, the LAB was not the direct employer of the FJF participant, this role was often undertaken by a lower level partner organisation. However, the LAB was responsible for organising the HR and training elements of the post in some cases.

FJF is one element of the Young Persons Guarantee (YPG) which offered a range of options to young people reaching six months plus on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). The full list of YPG options included:

- help into a key sector job via the Routes into Work initiative via Pre-employment Training and recruitment subsidy (subsidy discontinued);
- advice and support to become self-employed which includes a £50 per week credit for the first 16 weeks of trading;
- graduate and non-graduate internship places;
- vocational training via the Work Focussed Training scheme;
- Future Jobs Fund job; and
- work experience via the Community Task Force (or via a New Deal option scheme in some areas).

The YPG became mandatory from 26<sup>th</sup> April 2010, from which point, long term 18-24 year old claimants must be in a job, training or work experience by ten months on JSA; if not, they are mandated to attend Community Task Force or a New Deal option to undertake 13 week work related activity.

Customers were referred to FJF posts via Jobcentre Plus advisers. Advisers informed those customers deemed suitable for FJF about the scheme and invited them to apply for a post with the FJF employer. The conditions of the FJF grant required employers to provide the following support to employees throughout the six month post:

- Directed job-search support;
- Access to regular supervision; and
- Access to training and certification opportunities wherever possible, for example NVQ courses.

## **1.2 Aim of Customer research**

There were three over-arching aims of this research study:

- To gather customer feedback on their experiences of FJF;
- To understand the strengths and weakness of the delivery of the policy from customers viewpoint; and
- To gather lessons learnt to feed into future policies to support young people into employment.

These aims were broken down into the following research questions which were then used to develop the interview schedule:

- What is the customer feedback on the quality of supervision and support received from FJF employers?
- What is the customer feedback on the impact of FJF participation on building and improving work related skills?
- What is the customer feedback on the impact of FJF participation on confidence, aspirations, job readiness and other employability issues?
- How have FJF providers helped participants with their transition to the open labour market?
- What can DWP learn from FJF in terms of design of future policies aimed at helping young unemployed customers?

## **1.3 Methodology**

The research was conducted using qualitative research methods. The research sample was selected from the records of participants who had recently completed their six month FJF post at the time of interview. Interviews were completed with 89 FJF participants from across the UK. All interviews were conducted by telephone, recorded and fully transcribed. The interviews took place between November 2010 and January 2011.

Resource limitations meant that the researchers were unable to conduct face to face interviews with participants. This has had an impact on the level of detail gathered within the interviews. However, telephone interviews enabled a greater number of interviews to be achieved. Further details of the research methodology of this study can be found in Annexe A.

As a qualitative study this study can report on the range of views and experiences of participants and where evident distinctions can be made drawn between different sub-groups, such as between the over 25 group and younger customers. However, the size of the sample cannot provide any statistical conclusions on the prevalence of a particular view or experience within the total population of FJF participants.

In order to estimate the overall impact of FJF on long-term outcomes, a quantitative evaluation of FJF is scheduled by DWP for early 2012 which will aim to compare the benefit and employment data for FJF participants with a suitable comparison group who did not participate in the scheme.

#### **1.4 Selection of sample**

The research sample was selected from the population of individuals who were recorded to have started on FJF during March and February 2010 according to Department for Work and Pensions FJF payments database<sup>1</sup>.

The sample was structured to include six key sub-groups listed in Table 1 below. Customers were randomly selected from each of the sub-groups. Each random sample was stratified by gender and Jobcentre Plus region to ensure the representation of these factors broadly mirrored the FJF population. This sampling frame enabled the research team to explore the experiences of participants from a range of backgrounds, including individuals who are likely to face a labour market disadvantage.

The research team made particular efforts to contact those customers from the disadvantaged sub-groups. However, there remained difficulties in achieving a large number of interviews from this group because of the lack of telephone numbers in some cases, or a lack of answers to phone calls despite numerous attempts.

In terms of ethnic minority representation, it was decided to focus on one ethnic minority sub-group of Black Caribbean/African rather than spread a relatively small number of interviews across a wide range of different ethnicities.

The following table summarises the representation of the six sub-groups within the original sample and the final 89 respondents. Sixty-four of the 89 respondents were in the under 25 year old group. Sixty-three of the respondents were male.

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<sup>1</sup> However, when interviewed, a small number of respondents stated they had started their post before or after this period.

**Table 1: Details of research sample**

<b>Sub-group</b>	<b>Original sample</b>	<b>Final respondents</b>
Under 25 years (no disadvantage marker)	<b>700</b>	<b>39</b>
Over 25 year (no disadvantage marker)	<b>200</b>	<b>21</b>
Disadvantaged groups <sup>2</sup> :		
Participants with disability marker	150	9
Ex-offender or substance mis-user	118	2
No Fixed Abode marker	61	2
Black Caribbean/African ethnicity	150	16
Disadvantage groups total	<b>479</b>	<b>29</b>
Grand total	<b>1379</b>	<b>89</b>

Participants from the different disadvantaged sub-groups will clearly experience different types of barriers within the labour market, have different experiences of FJF and will require different types of help and support to overcome these barriers. However, due to the limited number of respondents within each disadvantaged sub-group, responses were grouped together for the purposes of the sub-group analysis for all disadvantaged participants.

The authors acknowledge the risks of this approach given the heterogeneous mix of experiences and backgrounds with this brigaded group of customers. However, the combined group share a commonality in the likelihood of suffering some labour market disadvantage.

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<sup>2</sup> Twenty-five of the disadvantaged respondents were in the under 25 year old group, including all of the Black Caribbean/African group.

## **Chapter 2 Background of respondents prior to starting FJF**

### **2.1 Chapter summary**

In order to place the customer experience of FJF in context, respondents were asked a number of questions about their background. This chapter describes the previous work history of the respondents and their circumstances prior to starting on FJF, in terms of perceived job prospects and confidence about their future. In summary the findings were as follows:

- Most respondents had previous some previous work history, commonly in non-skilled or semi-skilled roles.
- Respondents reported experiencing a highly competitive and depressed labour market prior to FJF, with most reporting mid to low levels of confidence about their prospects.
- A number of respondents felt they would have not been able to get a job without FJF at that point.

### **2.2 Previous work history and recent claim length**

Most, but not all, respondents had some work experience prior to their FJF post. The length and breadth of their previous work history varied greatly. Some respondents had very short spells in previous work or had voluntary work experience only such as charity retail or youth work. Others had experience of a wide range of jobs. The types of previous jobs were dominated by low skilled or semi-skilled jobs within the following sectors:

- Admin/call centres;
- Catering;
- Cleaning;
- Construction work;
- Factory work;
- Gardening work;
- Hairdressing/beauty;
- Retail; and
- Warehouse/security.

Qualification levels also varied across respondents from those with no qualifications to a small number who had degree level or equivalent qualifications.

Most respondents had been claiming benefits (mainly Jobseeker's Allowance with a few respondents claiming sickness benefits or Income Support) for up to 12 continuous months immediately prior to starting on FJF. However, some respondents' most recent claim was over 12 months in duration and in a small number this was over 24 months.

### 2.3 Views on job prospects in absence of FJF

As would be expected, the majority of respondents reported that they were actively looking for work prior to starting on FJF and some were also involved in voluntary work. Respondents were asked about their perception of the labour market prior to starting on FJF. The predominant view was that there were a limited number of jobs available with a large numbers of job-seekers pursuing those vacancies.

*'There was so little to apply for in my area. I applied for as many as there were but none were getting back to me and I was getting pretty desperate about it'*

(Male, aged 23)

This situation was exacerbated for those with little or no previous work experience:

*'To be honest it was pretty tough for me before this job. I had applied for jobs and even had a few interviews, but I could just tell they weren't really interested in me because I've got so little experience. The competition for jobs was just a nightmare. It was real low point when I applied for a job at (supermarket name) and even they didn't want me. It all got on top of me and in the end I was made bankrupt. It was a downward spiral for me to be honest.'*

(Male, age 25)

Respondents were split fairly evenly in terms of whether they considered they would have got to a job without the FJF. Of those respondents who felt they would have got a job without the scheme, some explained that they would have got a job 'eventually' and that FJF had definitely speeded up the process of getting work. However, some were very adamant that they would not have secured a job without the scheme.

*'No. no chance in hell. My main issue was a lack of experience. I wasn't getting anywhere because I've got so little experience. This has turned it around, I wouldn't have a got a job without this scheme.'*

(Female, aged 23)

The pattern of responses were not split by age and work history, with many respondents with over a years work experience saying that they would not have obtained work without the scheme. However, respondents from the disadvantaged sub-groups and with lower qualifications tended to be more likely to state that they would not have been able to secure a job without the FJF scheme.

## 2.4 Confidence about future prior to FJF

One aim of the research was to explore how FJF had impacted on participants' confidence about their long-term job and careers prospects. Respondents were asked to rate their confidence about getting a suitable job prior to starting on FJF on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 5 equalled 'very confident' and 1 equalled 'very unconfident'). This provided an indicative baseline to compare against post FJF. Responses varied, but most commonly respondents reported mid to low levels of confidence in getting a suitable job. Those who were more confident tended to be from the group who had high levels of previous qualifications and/or were doing voluntary work. The over 25s tended to report slightly lower levels of confidence than their younger counterparts. Some respondents had become less confident over time:

*'To be honest, when I started signing on, it (my confidence) was quite good really. But by the time I found out about FJF, I wasn't very confident at all. I was feeling pretty down at that point, because I just couldn't find anything that I could get. I was going for jobs and I wasn't really getting past the phone call stage.'*

(Male, aged 25)

Respondents who had worked prior to the FJF generally had higher levels of confidence, particularly those with a longer work history. Some respondents described the frustrating challenge of not being able to get work without existing work experience or losing faith through the accumulating number of unanswered job applications. Length of time on benefit was a factor affecting the confidence levels of some respondents who expressed the view that, even in a recession, a long spell on benefits can act as a deterrent to potential employers:

*'(I was) feeling a bit low. I was about four and half, five months, unemployed and I thought 'oh no, this isn't good'. Most employers I spoke to, it was like if you've been unemployed for more than 2 months, it really puts people off. I knew how to do a job; it's just the fact that I'd been unemployed for nearly 5 months. Almost half a year, which was quite embarrassing really. I know there was nothing out there, but it was still kind of embarrassing.'*

(Male, aged 18)

The disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged groups reported similar confidence levels, a number in both groups reported confidence levels of 2 and below.

## Chapter 3 Details of FJF posts

### 3.1 Chapter summary

It is assumed that the customer experience of FJF will be affected by the nature of each placement and the quantity and quality of supervision received. This chapter provides details of the FJF posts undertaken by the sample including how employees were recruited to the post, employer type, job description, community benefit aspect and supervision received.

In summary, the findings were as follows:

- Respondents had been employed in a very wide range of roles via FJF, including many with significant levels of responsibility, which was commonly welcomed by participants.
- On the whole, respondents reported high levels of quality of supervision although there were instances of poor supervision and organisation by the FJF employers.
- Generally, respondents reported that supervisors and managers were approachable and available to provide support whenever needed.

### 3.2 Application process

On the whole, respondents found the FJF job application process, which usually involved an application form followed by a face to face interview, relatively easy and straight-forward. In some cases, the process was shorter than that associated with non-subsidised jobs, for example, where Jobcentre Plus were able to organise interviews on-site within a short time of the original referral. Participants with a longer prior work history were more likely to find negotiating the process straightforward because of their previous experience.

*'(The) Jobcentre called me and told me I was eligible for future jobs fund because I had been on JSA for 6 months. I took the number of the employer off them and then phoned up X and arranged the interview. I went down had the interview and they phoned me the day later to say I had been successful and that I started the following Monday. Nice and smooth'*

(Male, aged 20)

However, there were instances of a lack of clarity about whether posts were still open when the customer first enquired about the vacancy, which caused delays. In addition, there were occasional instances of a complex application process with mixed messages of what the applicant should do next in order to progress their interest.

Where respondents reported difficulty with the application process, a lack of experience with job applications or literacy problems were sometimes a factor:

*'(I found the process) quite hard because I can't read or write.. I felt quite awkward, because I couldn't do the forms. I had to go to the interview and if*



## Details of FJF posts

*they ask me to fill something in and I can't do it....Jobcentre Plus was very supportive. They helped me with my reading and writing and basically everything they could to help me get the job.'*

(Male, aged 19)

Participants were generally referred to FJF via their Jobcentre Plus adviser, although there were some examples where respondents' could not accurately recall how they had been referred. Or, as the quote below illustrates, it was sometimes the case that the participant became aware of the FJF post through their own initiative. However, it is important to note that this was not a common route.

*'No they (JCP) actually didn't tell me, my next door neighbour is the manager of the x shop and she told me about it and helped me out a little bit. I went back to the Jobcentre to help me out with the paperwork.'*

(Male, aged 24)

Most commonly, respondents reported that the FJF job was accurately described to them in the application process and that they were not surprised when they started the post. However, there were some instances where information about the post had caused confusion. For example, in one case the respondent had hoped to gain experience and training for using machinery in ground maintenance posts, but this did not materialise.

There were also examples of respondents who had relatively low expectations, but were surprised by the quality of the post, and said that it was better than described, both in the variety of tasks given and the responsibilities they were trusted with.

*'The job was pretty different from what they described to me at the Jobcentre. But actually it was better than I expected. I thought I would just be working on the computer by myself. But I got to do a lot of coaching, showing people how to use software and stuff like that.. That was a bonus for me.'*

(Male, Age 22)

### 3.3 Nature of FJF employers

The nature of FJF employers varied greatly across the respondents covering a wide range of areas of work including:

- Grounds and parks maintenance;
- Recycling;
- Construction;
- Advice organisations (e.g. housing advice, legal advice, help for refugees);
- Health and social care;

## Details of FJF posts

- Drug and alcohol rehabilitation;
- Other community services (e.g. local authorities, crime reduction, outreach support work, community fire service);
- Childcare and youth work;
- Arts;
- Charity retail;
- Sports/leisure; and
- Business support services (e.g. marketing and IT support).

The nature of the FJF scheme meant that many employers were part of a consortium of organisations who had worked together as a partnership to bid for FJF funding. Hence, there were occasional instances where participants were confused by the management structure of their FJF employers, especially those who had used separate partners for human resource purposes or were engaged in complex partnership arrangements. In some cases, respondents were unclear about which organisation was their official employer and paying their wages and exactly who they should approach for help with any queries.

*'It was all very confusing. I was employed by X; at least I thought I was. But they didn't pay my wage. That was someone else but I didn't understand who was paying me and who I should talk to about my money. It just didn't make sense to me. I asked them to sort it but they kept giving me confusing information. They sorted it in the end, but I felt like I was passed from pillar to post.'*

(Male, aged 20)

### 3.4 Job Roles and responsibilities

The job roles of participants varied widely across the sample reflecting the range of sectors described above. Typical roles were administrative, grounds maintenance and gardening, support and advice workers and sport coaching and youth work. Other examples included:

- construction worker;
- caretaker;
- marketing assistant;
- archaeology worker;
- nursery nurse;
- animal care worker;
- community fire officer;
- tour guide; and
- social care worker.

Participants described a wide range in the level of responsibility they were given in post. Commonly, respondents were given significant levels of responsibility, particularly those in advice and support roles or roles in coaching and teaching. In these cases, respondents found themselves

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providing one to one or group support in a wide range of areas, for example, sport activities, after-school clubs, youth activities, housing advice, conservation events, health promotion, substance misuse, skills training and welfare advice. Other jobs involving significant levels of responsibility were fire safety work, outreach first aid and maintenance of public facilities such as leisure centres. In the most part, respondents very much welcomed this level of responsibility and the opportunities it provided to develop their skills and build confidence. Respondents from a disadvantaged background were also represented within this group who were employed in posts with significant levels of responsibility.

There were occasional instances where participants felt that they been under-employed on their post. For example, one participant felt that the tasks allocated to him over the six months period could have been achieved in much shorter time-frame and the lack of organisation within the company had lead to poor performance against its business goals. In another case the over-recruitment of FJF employees had left the respondent with not enough work to do.

There were occasional instances were respondents complained of a lack of quality support and supervision, stating they had been overwhelmed by the responsibilities asked of them. In one isolated case, a respondent had been dismissed because of their refusal to take on further responsibilities without extra supervision. However, this experience was not commonplace and on the whole participants reported consistently high quality support and supervision (see section 3.6 below).

FJF bids stipulated that employees should work 25 hours per week and this was generally the case. However, there were some participants that had been working extra hours and this was welcomed by participants because of the extra opportunity to learn and earn more pay.

### **3.5 The community benefit of FJF posts**

The FJF bid criteria stipulated that there had to be an element of community benefit to the jobs created, in order for employer organisations to secure funding. Respondents were asked if they felt their own job had proved to be of benefit the community. Their responses indicate that the community benefit aspect of FJF were strongly represented in this sample of posts; and employees had a good understanding of the role they played in helping their community, for example, via help and advice roles, environmental work and supporting public services. In addition, the majority of respondents commented positively on the job reward and satisfaction this aspect of their job provided.

In a few cases where respondents were employed in 'back room' roles, there was some uncertainty about their contribution to community benefit. However, this was not always the case:

*'The place I was working provides basic legal advice for people who can't afford it. I do think it was there was clear community benefit from my role. I worked in the background on administration side. But the organisation as a whole was making a difference, definitely.'*

(Male, aged 22)

### **3.6 Induction and supervision provided**

Respondents typically received an informal induction into their role. This tended to involve one to one sessions with their supervisor, learning from more experienced colleagues, distribution of procedural guidance and a step-wise increase in responsibilities over the first few weeks of their post. Less commonly, respondents received formal induction courses which took place on-site or another location organised by the LAB.

The informal approach was welcomed by many respondents, particularly where learning the role was more suitably covered by such an approach.

*'It was very hands on I suppose, if there was anything I wasn't sure of I was shown how to do it, and then I'd be given a chance to do it myself under supervision by my boss, and once he could see that I was confident enough to do it then he was happy for me to go off and do it by myself or working alongside him'*

(Male, aged 25)

The predominant view expressed by respondents was that the supervision in the first few weeks had been of high quality and participants felt well supported in learning their new role. An occasional negative view was expressed where the participant had been left to decipher their role and responsibilities alone or was given confusing messages about the job.

*'I had to go to (place name) for an induction about the company – and then we had to go to (place name) for an equal opportunities programme. But it wasn't enjoyable at all. It was 8 hours talking about common knowledge but that was pretty much all the training I had. We weren't told much apart from being told what would happen if we didn't turn up. Other than that, nothing, I went my own personal way'*

(Male, aged 22)

In terms of post-induction support, most participants were very satisfied with the quality and quantity of supervision received and felt that it was proportionate and relevant to their requirements. Many respondents had time set aside weekly, or daily, to talk to their supervisor about their work and discuss any problems. Some described the use of training reviews, where discussions took place between participant and supervisor regarding learning and development to date and how outstanding goals would be met. On

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occasion, participants remarked on the particularly positive relationship they had developed with their supervisor or line manager.

*'I was supervised by the head gardener. He showed me the ropes and helped me with everything really. He turned out to be a really great guy to be honest and he's a good mate of mine now. He let me work unsupervised. He could see I can be trusted. We got on great.'*

(Male, aged 20)

There were occasional instances of dissatisfaction. When complaints did arise this was linked to a lack of supervision, confusion about who the employee should refer to with problems or the quality of supervision. For example, a sense that their work was not being recognised by management that, in turn, had led to a negative impact on motivation.

*'Nobody was being recognised, they didn't receive any recognition. It shouldn't be like that. If you get praised, that pushes you to work harder. You should have someone to give you the motivation. They should have motivated the people. It gets you down, it sort of feels like you're not doing anything, when you know that you are.'*

(Female, aged 19)

A handful of respondents complained that the amount of supervision had diminished after the initial few weeks. For example, in one case the presence of a team leader became less common as the post progressed causing frustration and confusion for employees. However, in other cases respondents welcomed the opportunity to work without close supervision as it reflected a level of trust in the abilities of the participant.

Support was commonly available for participants to talk about non-work issues, in that, respondents felt they could approach supervisors about such problems whenever needed. But in this particular group, this type of support was rarely needed.

## **Chapter 4 Skills and qualifications gained from Future Jobs Fund**

### **4.1 Chapter summary**

The primary aim of the Future Jobs Fund scheme was to build skills and work experience for disadvantaged young jobseekers in order to help them secure sustained unsubsidised employment. This chapter summarises the skills and qualifications gained by the sample in this study and their views on the most valued gain from participation.

In summary, the findings were as follows:

- Almost all respondents reported an increase in their skills set as result of participation in FJF, although there was some variation in the breadth and depth of skills gathered.
- The most commonly mentioned skills gained were transferable skills such as interpersonal skills, customer service skills and IT skills.
- Respondents also gained specialist and technical skills; and formal qualifications and accreditations were obtained by some participants.
- The predominant view was that an increase in self-confidence and perceived sense of employability were the most useful benefits of the scheme.

### **4.2 Increase in work skills and capabilities**

A key aim of the FJF scheme was to provide young and disadvantaged jobseekers with an increase in work-related skills. Almost without exception, respondents stated that their post had provided new skills and work-related capabilities. Transferable skills were the most common gain, for example, communication and people skills, IT skills and dealing with customers. There were also a range of other more specialist skills mentioned including:

- Health and safety knowledge;
- Administrative skills (e.g. dealing with phone queries, maintaining; databases, organising travel and meetings);
- Technical skills such as use of groundwork and construction equipment;
- Retail skills (stock control, till use, serving customers);
- Teaching and coaching skills;
- Dealing with the general public;
- Marketing skills (designing leaflets and posters); and
- Working with vulnerable adults and children.

Across a very wide range of different jobs, there were numerous examples of how the experiences of working within a team of colleagues and/or with customers had produced a real boost to respondents' work-related confidence. Participants described how they had enjoyed this aspect of the

Skills and qualifications gained from FJF

job, such as, meeting new people and developing their interpersonal skills and professionalism in dealing with others.

*'Well basically my people skills really improved, I was talking to people on a daily basis. Now I feel that I can pretty much can talk to anyone face to face and help them solve their problems. That was one of the great plusses of the job, interacting with the public'*

(Male, aged 22)

Some respondents specifically mentioned how their posts had given them a new confidence to deal with a challenging work-load, learning how to prioritise and multi-task which would be especially useful for future roles. This was particularly commonplace where they had not had experience of similar levels of responsibility in previous posts.

The breadth and depth of skills acquired by respondents seemed to be related to the quality of placement. In a handful of cases, respondents said their responsibilities had been too mundane or familiar to pick up new skills of any significance. However, this was not always received negatively; some stated that although their skills level had not increased they remained positive about their post because of the work-experience boost to their CV, an increase in confidence or because it had reinforced existing skills.

*'I had some of those skills under my belt in the past but I'd not really used them for a while. It was a chance for me to refresh them or maybe in other instances I hadn't quite been shown the correct method and this gave me a chance to understand how to do it absolutely correctly. That was a real bonus for me.'*

(Male, aged 25)

Some participants had been able to pass on their existing skills to other colleagues in the organisation. For example, a respondent who had previous experience of databases and was able to pass this on within their marketing post. In general, similar skills were gained regardless of the customers' age. However, the younger respondents and those with lower qualifications levels were more likely to report gaining administrative and IT skills.

### **4.3 Use of FJF skills in future**

Respondents were asked if they felt they were going to use the skills gathered during their FJF post in future jobs. A small number of respondents were unsure if they would use these skills, either because they were undecided on the career path, or because the skills picked up were rather minimal or too specific to a particular role. However in general, respondents were confident that the skills and experience gathered would be used within future positions, especially the transferable skills described above and the more specialist skills that would help develop their chosen career such as sports coaching, gardening, conversation work, retail or administration. Again the theme of

## Skills and qualifications gained from FJF

increased confidence was common here, where respondents described how their experience had increased their confidence in using these skills in the future.

### 4.4 Formal qualifications and certificates gathered

FJF employers were encouraged to facilitate and arrange the acquisition of formal qualifications and certificates for participants. Many respondents had gathered qualifications in range of areas including:

- Health and safety
- First Aid
- Food hygiene
- Manual handling
- CSCS card (Construction Skills Certificate Scheme)
- Fork lift truck licence
- NVQs (e.g. administration, retail, working with children)
- City and Guilds in Basic Construction Skills (carpentry, plumbing, scaffolding, painting etc)
- Software and IT certificates e.g. Excel, Word and CLAIT (Computer Literacy and Information Technology)
- Use of machinery certificates (such as using strimmers, dumper truck, hedging equipment, use of chainsaws)
- People skills certificates (such as working with children, working with vulnerable adults, diversity and equality training, activity leader)

Responses reflected a wide range of experiences from those participants who acquired no qualifications to those who completed their post with a range of certificates and qualifications. Some respondents reported that the qualifications gained would not have been available from the local college and therefore represented a significant shift in their prospects. Other respondents knew they had obtained certificates, but could not remember the details. Occasionally, the certificate received was simply a written confirmation they had completed the six month post.

Occasionally, respondents expressed frustration where promises of qualifications were not followed through:

*'Someone did come in once and said they would get me on various courses for some certificates, but nothing came of it. It was offered by not followed through in my case.'*

(Male, aged 23)

The number of formal qualifications gathered was not related to previous qualification level or age.



#### **4.5 Other skills or qualifications requirements**

Respondents were asked if there were any other skills or qualifications they would have wanted to acquire from the post. A request for more skills was rarely mentioned, but some participants expressed an interest in more certificates and qualifications to solidify or develop the skills they had developed.

NVQs and other certificates were requested including those in administration, housing advice, sports coaching, counselling, first aid and use of machinery (such as forklift truck licence and use of chainsaws). Software certificates were also mentioned such as higher level Word or Excel certificates.

There were instances of participants being kept on by their FJF employer who were pleased to be able to continue with their studies towards certification. Another respondent was continuing with his studies after the post concluded as the providers had arranged for the course to continue. However, at the time of the interview the arrangements for continued study were uncertain.

There was no pattern between previous qualification level and the desire for extra qualifications. Although respondents with high qualifications tended to be more interested in administrative and IT certificates compared to those from a lower qualification background who had a tendency to cite technical certificates. Those with the longest previous work history were least likely to want further skills from their post

Occasionally, the quality of the delivery of NVQ tutoring support was reported to be patchy and some individuals were unsure how to progress their studies. This was exacerbated in one case where the participant struggled with the distance learning arrangements. However, more commonly, respondents reported satisfaction with the distance learning approach and the support provided by tutors.

#### **4.6 Most valued benefit from FJF**

Respondents most commonly reported an increase in their self confidence and acquisition of work experience, with the subsequent impacts on their employability, as the most important gain from FJF. This was mentioned more often than formal qualifications or training. Other commonly mentioned benefits were the acquisition of people skills and having experience of responsibility at work. The benefit of experiencing a work routine was another key theme and provided some examples of significant change in attitude:

*'I'd say (the most important gain) is getting back into work again and getting used to a work pattern. It got me out of the house and hanging around with people. I genuinely want to carry on working now. So that's a real change.'*

(Male, aged 23)

## Skills and qualifications gained from FJF

Even some of the respondents who had a significant employment history cited having a work routine as the most important aspect of the FJF post. Recognition from employers was also cited by some as the most important benefit which could produce a substantial change in levels of self-belief:

*'Trust in my determination (was the most important gain). Self belief, the belief from my employer that I am able to succeed in what they teach me.'*

(Male, aged 22)

The length of post was an important factor for some individuals in providing opportunities to challenge their limitations and build up their confidence over the six month period. For example, retail workers who were given the chance to run the shop at later points in the post, or activity leaders who were given sole responsibility for leading groups after working with colleagues for some time.

There were some differences on this issue according to the background of participants. Participants with a lower qualification background were more likely to cite technical skills, health and safety skills, improving English and work routine, as the most important things gained from FJF. Participants with high qualifications were more focused on the work experience, communication skills and employer recognition of their worth.

In general, disadvantaged respondents reported similar gains to participants with no disadvantage. However, there were specific gains for this group such as improved English or help with rehabilitation from drug use.

## **Chapter 5 Transition to the Open Labour market**

### **5.1 Chapter summary**

A key to the success of a job creation scheme is what happens to participants after the subsidised post has concluded. This chapter describes the help FJF employers provided to respondents to aid their transition into the open labour market, levels of satisfaction with that help and current progress with this transition. It also describes the impact FJF has had aspirations and confidence and suggested improvements for the scheme from participants.

In summary, the findings were as follows:

- Respondents had received varying levels of job search support, during their FJF post. Some received a comprehensive package of support and others received limited or no job search support.
- Dissatisfaction with the level of job-search was uncommon and the level of job-search received did not present as a factor in terms of those who had secured an unsubsidised job post FJF.
- A number of the participants had secured non-subsidised employment at the time of the interviews and a handful had been kept on by their FJF employer via an extension to the FJF grant.
- Many respondents reported changes to their long-term aspirations in terms of aiming higher than previously, considering new options and having the self-belief to pursue their goals.

### **5.2 Help with Job-search from FJF employers**

One of the conditions of the FJF grant to employers was a commitment by employers to provide structured job-search support to the FJF employees. In some cases this was organised by the consortium lead (LAB) rather than the frontline employer.

The range of the job search support provided by employers included help with CV writing, application forms, and interview practice. Some employers also provided general job search advice, circulated notification of external and internal vacancies, and allowed time for FJF employees to conduct web-based job searches.

Many participants reported receiving help with three or four elements from this list, whilst some received the whole package and others reported receiving no job search support at all. The most commonly mentioned job search support was help with CVs, closely by followed by help with application forms. Help with interview techniques was provided in some cases and was thought to be particularly useful by those participants with limited previous work history.

Within the group who had received very limited or no support, some reported that the employer had planned to provide job search support but failed to 'get round to it' or provided patchy help at the end of the post. On occasion participants declined the offer of job-search support because they felt too busy

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'concentrating on the job itself' or because they were unwilling to travel off-site.

Some respondents reported that their employers had not provided job-search support because of a stated hope of retaining participants beyond the six month post. In most instances, the participants concerned were not kept on.

*'No (there was no job search help). Theoretically, whilst I was in the post, there was half the chance it could be made permanent. But, because the (company name) had recent cut backs it didn't happen. That is why they didn't help to look for other jobs. I wasn't aware that they were supposed to help me look for jobs. I would have liked to have the help because it would have helped.'*

(Male, aged 48)

A number of participants who had not received job search support were unaware of the help they should have been offered:

*'No I wasn't aware and I don't think they were either. There was a lot of different people communicating with the people who worked there, so if they if they didn't do something useful I don't think it was their fault. There was a lot of mixed messages at that time.'*

(Male, aged 20)

Some participants had access to a 'job club' style session where participants were sent to another location (often on a Friday) for a third party to provide the job-search support. The popularity of such an arrangement varied between participants. Some respondents were reluctant to attend every week either because of a reluctance to travel or because they felt the most useful help had been covered in the first few sessions.

There was a range of experiences as to whether time had been set aside for job search whilst on post. Some respondents said that a day or five hours were allocated each week to job-search. In other cases the allocation was less than five hours or nothing. Within this group many said that they had done regular job search activities in their own time during the six month post.

### **5.3 Satisfaction with job-search support**

Reported satisfaction with the job-search support received was relatively high amongst the respondents interviewed. Some, but not all, of the group who had received little or no job-search expressed some dissatisfaction with the lack of help. In some cases this dissatisfaction was linked to mixed messages and false promises concerning an extension of their post. Some respondents who received no or limited help, were unconcerned because of their own commitment to regular self-directed job-search. Another was not concerned because the employer extended their post and in a different case the respondent felt the provision of contacts was more helpful:

*'No (they didn't provided job search help), but they did give me a few contacts. There were always contacts within the council, who knew about contracts, so it was 'do you want to give these guys a call and see if they're hiring'. They didn't help with any applications forms or to develop a CV. But they said you can add us to your references, we'll give you a good reference, we like you and all that. I made a few friends on the council which is good, something to go back to maybe if I can.'*

(Male, aged 19)

However, other participants felt they would have benefited from more help where job search support was limited:

*'I didn't know they were supposed to help find another job. I think that would have been really helpful for me. I would like some help with that. I knew really early on that I would need to get another job. I was looking but it would have been better if they could help me. Interview practice, that kind of thing.'*

(Male, aged 25)

#### **5.4 Impact of FJF on confidence in future**

As previously described, respondents were asked to rate their level of confidence in their job prospects at the point just before they started on FJF. They were also asked to give a rating for immediately after they had completed the FJF post. Comparisons were made between the before and after scores to provide a view of how FJF had impacted on their long-term confidence. Most commonly, respondents reported a positive change in their confidence levels and felt better equipped to find a suitable job after their six month post for a variety of reasons including an increased skills-set; improved self-belief in their abilities; better looking CV and renewed commitment to the benefits of working:

*'Definitely, yes, more confident. I'm confident about getting a job now. Before this, I was in despair, to be honest. I was frustrated about the difficulty in getting work. Now I've got a foot in the door and more of a chance and I've found I really like working.'*

(Female, aged 25)

However, not all respondents reported an increase in their career confidence after completing their FJF post. Some reported no change in their confidence levels and others reported a decrease. A decrease in confidence was sometimes related to respondents' experience post FJF, for example where numerous applications had received no positive outcomes; or knowledge of their peers' lack of job-search success; or a thwarted request for more help to secure the most appropriate training to take their career forward. But the most

commonly expressed reason for a decrease or no change in confidence was the lack of change in the depressed labour market.

*'Yes, I think after the six months, you're like back to square one. Your confidence has been built up. You're getting up early, you're going to work, and you're coming home. You're getting back to normal life and all of a sudden it just finishes. You've got one more week left and then you're back to square one again. If the person's not strong enough, not strong enough mentally, they can go back to a situation where they were six months ago. The FJF was good, it was positive, but there wasn't all that change. There's still no jobs out there. It brings you up and then it brings you back down after the 6 months.'*

(Male, aged 25)

There was some difference in the response to the question of confidence change by customer background. Disadvantaged customers and those with longer previous benefit claims were more likely to cite a large increase in confidence, whereas 25 plus respondents were somewhat more likely to state they had experienced a smaller positive change. This difference can be linked to the differences in distance from the labour market between these two groups.

## **5.5 Current employment status of participants**

Most respondents were interviewed between two and four months after completing their post with the majority of interviews taking place within three months of completing their post. At the time of interview, a number of participants had secured work<sup>3</sup>. The working group tended to have more over 25 customers with a longer previous work history and higher qualification level. There was a slighter greater representation of disadvantaged customers in the non-working group.

The types of the jobs taken up by the working group covered a wide range of areas, but were dominated by low skilled or semi-skilled jobs such as:

- Cleaner;
- Bricklayer;
- Call centre;
- Receptionist;
- Caretaker; and
- Extended subsidised post with FJF employer

Many respondents in the working group felt sure that the FJF post had played a vital role in getting their job because of the boost to their CV, their skills set

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<sup>3</sup> There was a potential bias towards customers out of work in the final sample as we conducted interviews between on weekdays between 9am and 7pm, hence excluding those who were working during those times.

and their confidence in applying for work. There was no pattern in the type of FJF post and moves into unsubsidised employment.

Most of the currently employed group were using at least some of the skills they had picked up from the FJF post for example, working with children, construction skills and general people skills. For a handful this was because they were continuing with the same (or very similar) role with the same employer. Other participants had not be able to transfer the skills gathered into their new posts, for example, a respondent who was working as a sports stadium steward but held an office based role under FJF.

## 5.6 Views of those currently unemployed

A widespread view amongst respondents who had not found work was that their six month post would help them to get another job. The common reasons given were having gathered a significant length of work experience on their CV, having the confidence to apply for a wider range of jobs, having confidence in themselves and having a reference to back up their application. Some respondents highlighted that their FJF work experience would have much more positive impact on their prospects than college qualifications previously gathered. And some were already experiencing the reality of these benefits:

*'I've definitely getting more interest. This time round I've been on (benefit) for a month maybe 2 months. I've had a lot more people responding now I've had some proper experience....before I wasn't getting any replies, I was getting a lot of rejection. So this time its better than before.'*

(Male, aged 22)

Of those who were hopeful rather than definite that the FJF post would help them secure work, some said this is because they had not started looking in earnest for work, some mentioned the depressed labour market and one mentioned that working for charity under FJF was different from 'normal jobs' so was unsure of the particular advantage it would give. A small group of respondents felt that their FJF position would not help them in finding future work. Again the depressed labour market was highlighted and on occasion the lack of skills gathered from their post:

*'To be honest I don't the Future Jobs Fund will help me and my chances of getting work. I didn't really learn anything new for me and really there is little I can add to my CV. It would have definitely been better if I had been given some proper training.'*

(Female, aged 21)

Respondents currently unemployed were asked what else Jobcentre Plus could do to help them to get employment and they provided a range of answers that included:

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- Help to get onto training courses e.g. care work and IT courses
- Help to get a fork lift truck licence
- Fully functioning job-points
- More feedback from unsuccessful interviews

Some respondents concluded that the Jobcentre was doing all they could to help but acknowledged some residual barriers to which there was no practical solution, such as being too young and the depressed labour market.

*'It's just luck. You've just got to be lucky. It's all luck, it doesn't come down to how much you do now; it comes down to being in the right place at the right time. I have got everything they are asking for but so can loads of other people. So you've just got to be lucky and sell yourself now.'*

(Female, aged 19)

### 5.7 Impact of FJF on aspirations

Respondents were asked about the details of the long-term career aspirations. Generally, participants had clear views on their chosen career paths and a lack of plans was exceptional. The goals described covered a wide range of industries and positions including teaching, construction, gardening, leisure industry, marketing, events planning, youth work, the music business, retail, care, IT and admin work. Many of the respondents said that their experience on FJF has made a positive change to their future aspirations and career goals in the following ways:

- More confidence to pursue interests;
- More focus and/or determination;
- Widening of horizons with a view to consider new options;
- More motivation to succeed;
- Increased confidence in existing skills; and
- An improved work attitude and commitment to work.

Another key theme was that of aiming higher than previous aspirations:

*'Before that, I was just applying for jobs so that I could work and pay the bills. Now it's made me look at a job that I can get a career out of. That I can work me way up the ladder. Possibly even get an education around the job that I'm doing.'*

(Male, aged 24)

Again confidence was a key theme for participants. Some respondents who had been unemployed for over 12 months prior to starting FJF described how their frustration and despair had changed into a sense of a real hope and confidence in getting work. Others described how their experience in the habits and routines of work and doing meaningful activity had radically



changed their attitude to work, by recognising the personal rewards it could offer.

*'When I was younger I was happy with next to nothing. I never had any real drive. The money aspect of the job was neither here nor there. But this job gave me the actual realisation that I actually enjoyed it for what it was. It wasn't about the money. It was more just the experience from it. The work thing, it has changed my perspective on work. It has.'*

(Male, aged 46)

There were rare occasions of respondents being put off seeking a job in a particular sector because of their FJF experience. The reasons given for this were either due to poor supervision and support on the job, or in another example, because the post had provided experience of the less positive aspects of the sector (in this case the bureaucracy).

Some respondents' goals remained the same as pre-FJF, but they described a better understanding of how the 'world of work' operates and what employers are looking for in staff. This was particularly true in the 18-24 year old group.

## **5.8 Suggested improvements for the scheme**

For many of the participants, their reported experiences had been to such a high standard, that they could think of no further improvements other than extending the scheme so they could stay on with their employer or provide opportunities to take on another post. Respondents reiterated the gains they had acquired from the scheme in terms of new skills, confidence, work experience and training. However, a smaller group of respondents identified some room for improvement summarised under the following headings:

- More follow-up for FJF participants completing their posts (for example a handover plan given to Jobcentre Plus)
- Better supervision
- More training
- More formal qualifications
- More recognition and feedback at work
- More checks by DWP with employers
- Better organisation and management on the job

There were examples of customers who were unhappy with how placements had been organised, for example, on a construction site where the health and safety issues had not been probably addressed. One respondent described a need for clearer messages on their role and how their training would be organised. Another respondent was concerned about the number of FJF recruits taken on within one organisation that had led to a 'two tier' staff system from his point of view. In this instance, the respondent felt that FJF employees were seen by permanent staff as less valued staff and he also felt

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that the main beneficiary of the scheme had been the employer rather than the participants.

*'My experience on FJF would have been a lot better if there had been a clearer structure at (employers' name). The management there was just disorganised. I'd have liked more back-up from them when I finished - more help to get on. I felt like I was just left. The company just wiped their hands me and wanted nothing to with me. To be honest I don't my employers really cared about me, they just wanted to get the money from the government and that was it.'*

(Male, aged 26)

One participant felt that the FJF scheme could have been better targeted towards disadvantaged job seekers to make sure only those with very limited work experience were offered a place. Another participant suggested that the FJF scheme could have been run more like an apprenticeship scheme with an opportunity to gain professional or industrial qualifications and to be taken on permanently by the employer.

Finally, some respondents felt that the post could not be faulted in terms of the work experience and range of skills gathered but were frustrated by the limits of help provided at the end of the post to help them find their next position:

*'It's good. It helps young people, because it's really hard for them to get a job. Everyone's asking for experience, especially in retail. But I would have liked more support to find work, to get interviews for you, because there are a lot of people applying for jobs. If they know about you, they can fit the job with the person.'*

(Female, aged 20)

## Chapter 6 Conclusions

This study has reported a wide diversity of experiences from a sample of FJF participants, which in the most part have been positive.

The background of respondents prior to starting FJF varied in terms of previous benefit history, work history and qualification level. However, a pervasive theme at this point was respondents' perceptions of a highly competitive labour market, which had prevented them from entering employment prior to starting on FJF.

Participants were employed in a broad range of organisations, conducting a very wide range of roles including retail work, grounds maintenance, sports coaching, administration, advice work, construction work, social care, customer service and recycling, the majority of which were seen to have a community benefit. Many participants had roles with significant levels of responsibility and some respondents highlighted how the length of post had helped to substantially build their confidence through the opportunity to gradually expand their workload and role.

Respondents reported substantial gains as a result of their FJF post in terms of the breadth and depth of their skills set and the acquisition of a range of qualifications and accreditation certificates. The most commonly mentioned benefits were an increase in interpersonal skills, IT skills and customer service skills and work related confidence. An increase in technical and specialist skills were also commonplace. Linked to this, respondents generally reported high quality supervision and support from management and other colleagues, although there were some instances of poor supervision.

There is some evidence that FJF may have helped to increase participants' motivation and optimism about their future. Respondents regularly reported a positive change in their confidence in future career prospects due to taking part in FJF and a number had secured work since completing their post. Furthermore, many respondents reported a constructive change in their long-term aspirations, in terms of considering new career options, improved self-belief and in some cases a significant shift in attitudes towards work.

This sample of participants reported an inconsistent delivery of job search support with some participants receiving limited or no help. Nonetheless, this tended not to be perceived as a problem, perhaps because many were regularly conducting their own jobsearch or on occasion because they were primarily focussed on their current post rather than their next steps.

A closer monitoring of FJF employers may have helped limit the occasional occurrence of poor quality posts and limited job-search support. It also may be appropriate for any future scheme to include an element of job-outcome funding within the employers contract to limit the risks of poor employment outcomes on finishing the subsidised post. However, it is noted that many participants considered their experiences had been to such a high standard,

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that they could think of no further improvements required other than extending the scheme.

Regardless of the immediate job outcomes from FJF there is potential for some long lasting human capital returns for participants. The timing of this study was too early to report on this issue but, at the time of interview, there was evidence of significant personal changes in terms work attitude, self-belief and up-skilling which might last.

A qualitative study cannot provide a statistical measure of the impact of FJF on outcomes. Some early quantitative analysis of benefit outcomes for a cohort of FJF participants has recently been published separately<sup>4</sup>. In addition, a measure of the 'additionality' of Future Jobs Fund will be available via an assessment of the long-term employment and benefit receipt rates of participants, with a suitable comparison group, to be conducted in early 2012.

Overall, the evidence from this study suggests that FJF has been successful in up-skilling and preparing customers for work, particularly in terms of increased confidence and belief in capabilities. However, there is a risk that some of these softer gains from participation may begin to dissipate without a swift transition into a non-subsidised job following the completion of FJF.

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<sup>4</sup>[http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc\\_analysis/2011/early\\_analysis\\_of\\_fjf\\_participant\\_outcomes\\_march2011.pdf](http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc_analysis/2011/early_analysis_of_fjf_participant_outcomes_march2011.pdf)

## **Annexe A: Further Details of Research Methodology**

### **Opt-out letter**

Opt-out letters were sent to the selected sample of 1,379 FJF participants two weeks before the DWP research team began to make telephone contact. The opt-out letter explained the aims of the research and invited individuals to take part or opt-out by contacting the research team via email, phone or letter. The letter clearly stated that participation in the research was voluntary and decisions about participation would not affect any benefits currently received.

### **Telephone Interviews**

Individuals who had not opted-out were contacted by telephone by a member of the DWP research team and asked if they would provide their consent to take part in the survey. Telephone interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes and covered a wide range of closed and open-ended questions concerning the participants' experience of FJF (please see topic guide in Annexe B). A £10 shopping voucher was offered to participants as a thank you for taking part in the research.

According to research protocol, respondents were reminded that they could terminate the research interview at any point and/or request that their responses in the analysis. Individuals were reassured that they would not be identifiable within the final report. Telephone interviews were conducted in-house within DWP buildings and recorded using dictaphone machines.

Research interviews were conducted Monday to Friday between 9am and 7pm. Consequently the final sample will exclude those who were unavailable during those hours and it will also exclude those without a functional phone number.

A total of 89 interviews were conducted in between November 2010 and January 2011.

### **Coding of interview data**

All interviews were fully transcribed. The interview data was transferred to a database structured around the list of questions and coded according to a framework developed by the research team. The coding of the data was used to help produce summaries to the range of the responses, which in turn were used as aid in the writing up process.

## **Annex B Interview Topic Guide**

The following topic guide was used for all interviews. The topic guide provides a list of all the subjects that needed to be covered in each interview. The research team were able to use their discretion in terms of the exact wording they used in asking the questions as long as the core meaning was retained.

### **Participant background**

1. Age of participant
2. Living arrangements – living with parents/on own/other
3. Details of any paid work prior to the six month FJF temporary job
4. Details of highest level of qualification/training prior to FJF
5. Activity prior to FJF e.g. looking for jobs, at college, waiting for course to start, other.
6. Perception and experience of job search and local labour market prior to starting on FJF
7. Confidence in job-prospects prior to hearing about FJF
8. Confidence rating prior to FJF in terms of finding suitable employment where 5 is very confident and 1 is very unconfident.
9. Details of FJF employer
10. Details of FJF role and hours worked
11. Feedback on application process – easy/difficult, time taken etc
12. Did FJF job fit with description given prior to start?
13. Perception of whether FJF job helped local or wider community. If so, how?
14. Participant response to this aspect of the post
15. Feedback on supervision whilst employed  
Probe on:
  - allocation supervisor/line manager
  - quality of supervision
  - approachability
  - allocated time for supervision
  - availability of help with non-work issues

### **Training and job search**

16. Full details of training received on post
17. Full details of skills picked up post
18. Details any certificates or qualifications obtained
19. Details of which skills gathered would be of use in future
20. Any other skills or certificates wanted from the post
21. Did employers help with looking for work whilst on post?  
If yes, probe on:
  - time at work for on-line search?
  - notification of vacancies
  - help with developing CV?
  - practice with interviews
  - any other help?
22. Amount of time set aside for job-search support
23. Satisfaction from participant with amount and quality of job-search support.
24. If no job-search support received, check whether aware that job-search help was requirement of post
25. If no job-search support received, would participant have wanted this help?
26. Feedback on own self-directed job-search outside work.  
Probe on
  - activities undertaken
  - time spent

### **Overall rating of FJF**

27. Perception on whether participant would have got a job without FJF  
If no, ask for reasons why
28. Feedback on the most important/useful gain from FJF
29. Feedback on whether FJF has increased work capabilities and skills
30. Feedback on whether FJF has changed long-term aspirations. If so, in what way?
31. Feedback on current career goals and long term aims
32. Any else that could have improved experience of FJF

**Current status and future career**

33. Current employment status. If yes, gather details.
34. If working, feedback on whether FJF was factor in getting post
35. If working, feedback on whether skills from FJF post used in current job.
36. If working, feedback on long-term prospects. Confidence about prospects rated out of 5.
37. If not working, benefit status.
38. Ask if seeking work and how that is going.
39. Feedback on help from JCP and whether want any other help.
40. View on whether FJF post will help secure a job
41. Feedback on confidence of getting suitable job post FJF. And rating of confidence out of 5.
42. Any other feedback about FJF not covered by interview
43. Any queries about research



Future Jobs Fund was introduced in October 2009, as a response to the recession, to support the creation of subsidised jobs primarily aimed at 18-24 year olds who have been out of work for six months or more, and for a smaller number of Jobseeker's Allowance customers aged over 25 in unemployment hotspots. This report presents the findings of a qualitative research study conducted by Department for Work and Pensions into the experiences of Future Jobs Fund participants. The interviews took place between November 2010 and January 2011, two to four months after the sample of participants had completed their six month post.

If you would like to know more about DWP research, please contact:  
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