LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE: ANALYSIS OF THE BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY READY FOR WORK PROGRAMME IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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Summary

Target population: People with social disadvantages (i.e. people who are homeless, lone parents, have caring responsibilities, ex-offenders, live with disability, low skilled, long-term unemployed)

Country: United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland

Methodology: Quantitative and qualitative methods

Abstract

Objectives: (1) to assess whether personal job coaching within the framework of a privately funded return-to-work programme ("Ready for Work") is positively associated with success in gaining and sustaining employment among disadvantaged groups, and (2) to explore the experiences of clients and Ready for Work Managers concerning the job coaching tool, other programme specific components, and the relevance of other social support agencies.

Methods: (1) Statistical analysis of homeless clients' records (n = 2480, 70% males) and (2) semi-structured interviews with a small sample of clients and Ready for Work managers.

Results: About 30% of clients participating in this program gained employment during the period evaluated by this study. Clients being supported by a job coach have significantly higher chances to gain and sustain employment than those not being supported. This holds particularly true for the youngest age group. Qualitative analyses indicate that this association may partly be explained by individual motivation and a cooperative job coaching relationship. Clients valued the support given by the Ready for Work Managers, especially regarding the personalised approach, their availability and responsiveness.

Conclusions: Specific factors of the Ready for Work programme that may contribute to success in gaining and sustaining employment are (1) access to support that is personalised, responsive and readily available, (2) privileged access to vacancies through the Ready for Work programme, (3) a personalised network of support.

1 Introduction[1]

1.1 Context

In spite of efforts in social policy, homelessness in England, the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland remains a significant problem and one that has been intensified by the recent economic downturn. While in the period 2002 – 2009, the number of people accepted as 'statutory homeless' (where the state has agreed that someone is unintentionally homeless and in priority need of support) declined sharply, the number of acceptances has risen by 34% from 2009 – 2012. This increase was mainly attributed to reforms in housing benefit and the effects of economic pressures on individuals and households [50]. With 57,350 cases, the number of statutory acceptances by local authorities in England represents only a small proportion of the overall number of homeless people in the country [51]. Government statistics showed that in 2012, 2309 people slept rough in England on any one night [52], a figure that represents a 31% increase from 2010 (Fitzpatrick et al. 2013). By including single adults and couples without children, other investigations estimate that up to 380,000 'hidden homeless' people are living in the UK [53].

In the Republic of Ireland, the 2011 Census data recorded 3808 people as either living in dedicated homeless accommodation or rough sleeping [54]. As is the case for the rest of the UK, it is likely that there is a high number of 'hidden homeless' people in Ireland; in an assessment of housing need conducted in 2011, the Irish Government recorded that the number of people who were not reasonably able to meet the costs of their accommodation was 65,643, a 121.9% increase on figures for 2008, while the number of people who were sharing involuntarily was 8,543, up 71.9% from 2008 [55]. Such dramatic increases are most likely due in part to the economic downturn, which resulted in higher unemployment levels in the Republic of Ireland than the rest of the UK. This trend persists; in March 2013 the standardised unemployment rate in Ireland was 11.8% [56], while in the UK the unemployment rate in March 2014 was 7.2% [57].

Homeless and disadvantaged people at risk of homelessness are amongst the groups of people needing intense support in preparing their (re-)integration into work. This is due to the fact that they often suffer from additional problems that act as barriers that reduce their ability to gain work, such as reduced mental and physical health, substance and alcohol misuse, or criminal convictions [58–64]. Employment has been considered a crucial step in ending homelessness, given its central 'protective' role in peoples' lives [65]. Overall, estimates indicate that 77% of homeless people would like to work, yet only 15% currently were doing so [66]. A study conducted in 2012 by homelessness agencies indicates that as few as 2 to 14% of people living in homeless hostels and supported housing were actually engaged in paid employment [67]. In labour market research, education and qualifications,

[1] Parts of this report have been published in Hoven H, Ford R, Hagan S, Willmot A, Siegrist J. Job Coaching and Success in Gaining and Sustaining Employment Among Homeless People. Journal of Social Work Practice; 2014. doi: 10.1177/1049731514562285. Available from: http://rsw.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/12/15/1049731514562285.full.pdf+html

as well as ethnicity and age, are among personal characteristics that are of importance for labour market participation and for sustained integration success of unemployed people [68–70].

Labour market integration of socioeconomically disadvantaged homeless groups has become a challenge of high priority for social protection policies in the UK, Republic of Ireland and the European Union – recognising the important role that employment plays in helping people to integrate into society and in promoting social inclusion [71,72]. The underlying principle governing welfare policy and reform is that work is the best route out of poverty. A fair and affordable benefit system and labour market inclusion are crucial steps in efforts towards reducing poverty and welfare dependency [73]. In 2011, the cross Government Department Ministerial Working Group on Preventing and Tackling Homelessness declared helping people into work as one out of six aims towards reducing homelessness [74]. In 2012, the [75] highlighted "improving access to financial advice, skills and employment services" amongst its five commitments to preventing homelessness.

1.2 The "Ready for Work" programme

The Ready for Work programme run by Business in the Community (BITC) aims to (re-) integrate homeless people or those at risk of homelessness into the labour market and is funded predominantly by the private sector. The programme works with 155 businesses in 20 locations in the UK and Republic of Ireland providing training, work placements and post-placement support and aims to equip people with the skills and confidence they need to gain and sustain employment. A prominent feature of this programme is the degree of business involvement. It comprises an advisory group of senior business leaders who help steer the strategic direction of the programme and the involvement of businesses through the utilisation of employee volunteers in delivering key elements of the programme.

The programme has four stages:

Registration: Programme managers meet prospective clients, referred by agencies such as homeless hostels, probation and other charities, to ensure they are 'work-ready', i.e. that they are willing and eligible to work and have a good command of spoken English.

Pre-placement training: Training takes place over two days to prepare clients for their placement and to build confidence to succeed in the workplace. Companies host this training which is delivered by professional trainers and employee volunteers provide practical support.

Work placements: Companies provide two week work placements. Throughout the placement clients are supported by a trained employee volunteer. Companies provide a written reference to help clients in their future job search.

Post-placement support: All programme graduates are offered access to job coaches, job seeking support and further training. Companies provide employee volunteers to act as job coaches. Some programmes offer weekly job clubs, which are also supported by employee volunteers.

Each client has the opportunity to be matched to a job coach once he or she has completed their work placement. The job coach is a volunteer from a participating company who provides support and advice on a basis, helps with job applications, and who continues to strengthen their self-confidence and resilience. Job coaches participate in a one day training

course, where they are instructed about coaching tools and where they receive information about the typical barriers their client might face. After this, they are matched with a client who has already completed a work placement.

The aim is for the coach and the client to meet face to face on a weekly basis during the first eight weeks. Fortnightly meetings then take place during the next four months. Typically, each meeting lasts an hour. However, both the frequency and duration of the meetings are flexible and are subject to agreement between the job coach and their client. Meetings take place at the job coach's place of employment or another public place, for example a cafe, or at the "Ready for Work club". The content of job coaching meetings is determined by the client and their coach, but it may include job search activities and further preparations for specific job applications.

Business in the Community provide job coaches with a manual of supportive material to help them plan sessions and respond appropriately to queries raised by their client.

1.3 Research aims

1. To assess whether the Ready for Work tool 'job coaching' is positively associated with success in gaining and sustaining employment.
2. Exploration of the experiences of clients and Ready for Work Managers concerning the job coaching tool, other programme specific components, and the relevance of other social support agencies (e.g. other charities, job centre plus).

2 Methods

In order to achieve a breadth of data and understanding, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to investigate the impact of the Ready for Work programme on gaining and sustaining employment.

2.1 Methods concerning the role of job coaching

Population and data

In order to assess whether the Ready for Work tool 'job coaching' is associated with success in gaining and sustaining work, we analyse register data of clients participating in this programme. The data was collected continuously from January 1st 2009 to December 31st 2012. Employment outcomes were monitored up until August 7th 2013. The study population consisted of homeless individuals participating in the Ready for Work Programme. Homelessness is defined according to the European typology on homelessness and housing exclusion (ETHOS) classification that extends homelessness beyond rooflessness (rough sleeping or night shelters) to those living in insecure accommodation (for example 'sofa surfing' or under threat of eviction) or inadequate accommodation (for example, very overcrowded or unfit accommodation) [71]. An adequate home is defined as having an appropriate dwelling (or space) over which a person and his/her family can exercise exclusive possession (physical domain); being able to maintain privacy and enjoy relations (social domain); and having a legal title to occupation (legal domain) [76].

All clients in the programme were eligible to work in the UK or the Republic of Ireland, were 18 years or over when registering to the programme, had been risk assessed by their referral agency if they had an unspent conviction, had expressed an interest in work, and had core

basic skills, such as the ability to communicate and read and write English language. All clients were referred to the programme by a support worker from a homelessness or housing organisation or a statutory service, for example, The Probation Service. Potential clients for the programme were invited to a registration day to see whether “Ready for Work” was the right programme for them. Following this, clients in conjunction with their support worker completed a registration form, submitted online or in paper format, which includes collecting biographical data.

Clients’ progress through the programme and their employment outcomes were continuously monitored. BITC aimed to keep in touch with its clients for at least twelve months, but clients may have chosen not to remain in contact. Twice a year a review of employment records was undertaken and if there has been no evidence of any contact within the last 3 months the employment record was ended.

Overall 4402 clients participated in this programme during the time period described above. In this study we included 2480 clients with full data for analysing the first research question. 746 clients managed to get a job and could therefore be included in the analysis of the second research question, i.e. the association between job coach support and the probability of sustaining employment.

Statistical modelling

Our first research question, the association between job coaching and success in gaining employment, was analysed by multivariate mixed logistic regression with random intercepts by region (Scotland, Wales, Republic of Ireland, and all nine regions of England). Respective analyses stratified by education, ethnicity and age were adjusted for multiple testing. The second research question, the association between job coaching and success in sustaining employment, was analysed by estimating a parametric survival regression model based on a Gompertz distribution for the hazard function. A random-effect intercept adjusting for regional variance was included after consideration of the Akaike (AIC) and Bayesian (BIC) Information criteria. All respective statistical models were adjusted for a number of confounding factors. Factors included sex, year of terminating the programme, ethnicity, length of unemployment (in five categories) prior to involvement in the programme, having ever been alcohol dependent, having ever been substance abuse dependent, having ever been rough sleeper, age (in four categories), and education (higher level (NQF level 3 or higher) and lower level (NQF level 2 or lower)). All analyses were conducted with Stata 11. The coding and sample characteristics of all variables under study are presented in table 1.

2.2 Methods concerning interviews with clients and Ready for Work Managers

In order to explore the experiences of clients and managers concerning the job coaching tool, other programme specific components, and the relevance of other social support agencies, we conduct in-depth face-to-face interviews with former Ready for Work clients and Ready for Work Managers.

The interviews aimed to answer the following:

- What type of support do clients access or receive, and from where, in addition to that provided through Ready for Work following completion of placements?
- What is their experience of and how useful do clients find that support?

- Specifically what is their experience of job coaching and how useful has it been?
- What other factors might influence the chances of gaining and sustaining employment?

Sample

Using purposive sampling, we shortlisted a pool of potential interview candidates from the Ready for Work database in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Brighton, and Plymouth according to the following criteria:

- Have entered work at some point during January 2012 – June 2013.
- Have sustained work for at least 3 months
- Were unemployed for at least 3 months prior to completing Ready for Work
- Presented with at least one barrier from the following list on registering for the Ready for Work programme: former rough sleeper; previous alcohol dependency; previous drugs dependency; criminal conviction; low or no skills; unemployed for 12 months or more; care leaver; ex-armed services.

The time-frame of January 2012 –June 2013 was selected to increase the chances of participants reliably remembering what help they obtained and found most valuable.

As we wanted to understand through the research what help is valuable once in work, we thought that 3 months was a reasonable length of time to allow for valid reflections from participants. Also, the use of formal forms of support like job coaching seems to tail off around this time.

We wanted participants to have had experienced at least 3 months' unemployment before they started the Ready for Work programme, as this aligns with UK Government rules relating to the 'Early Access Group'; that is, Jobseeker Allowance claimants with particular barriers to work who qualify for early support from the Work Programme (social protection regime), as it is recognised that without early specialist support, they are less likely to find work (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012).

Despite creating an initial shortlist of 41 clients from which to draw clients for interview, following conversations with Ready for Work Managers, the shortlist was reduced to 25. This was due to two factors; either the Ready for Work manager had lost contact with some clients or else they felt it would be inappropriate to contact them at the time due to various life events.

Clients were contacted by email or phone, by the interviewer or the Ready for Work Manager. Due to the practicalities of finding clients who were willing to be interviewed and who could be interviewed on specific dates, the decision was taken to relax the criteria on the length of time a client needed to be unemployed following placement to two months in order to hit the target number of 12 clients. Please see appendix 1 for a table detailing the backgrounds of each client.

We took a convenience approach to sampling Ready for Work Managers, targeting those in the locations where interviews with clients were taking place.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted by Rebecca Ford, Policy & Research Manager at Business in the Community. Rebecca has a BSc in Communication and Media Studies and several years' experience of interviewing Ready for Work clients and professionals in the homeless sector.

Interviews lasted around an hour each and took place face-to-face in a private room donated by a different company supporter of the programme in each location. The interviewer spoke to the clients in advance to confirm the location and time and to outline the aims of the interview. An interview guide was prepared and used by the interviewer in each interview. Interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed.

Twelve clients were interviewed in the following locations: Birmingham (2), Manchester (3), London (3), Plymouth (4). Three Ready for Work Managers were interviewed; two in Manchester and one in Birmingham.

Interview Guides

Interview guides were developed by Business in the Community and refined following consultation with colleagues at the University of Duesseldorf. They were reviewed after the first two interviews and found to be adequate.

3 Results

3.1 The role of job coaching

The complete-case dataset consisted of 2480 individuals of which 70% were men (table 1). 638 clients (25%) of the clients were supported by a job coach. The age of clients ranged from 18 to 61 years, and age categories were almost equally distributed across the sample. 65 % are white, and more than 50% have been unemployed for more than one year before start of the programme. 28% experienced a rough sleeping period, 13% have had an experience of alcohol dependency and 20% an experience of substance abuse dependency.

Table 1: Sample characteristics

Variable	Categories	%	N
Sex	Male	70.28	1743
	Female	29.72	737
Age	18-24	27.62	685
	25-34	24.07	597
	35-44	18.31	454
	45-61	30.00	744
Education	Lower level	74.03	1836
	Higher level	25.97	644
Ethnicity	White	64.80	1607
	Black	25.73	638
	Asian	5.24	130
	Mixed race	4.23	105

Job coach	Yes	25.44	631
	No	74.56	1849
Length of unemployment	< 6months	24.23	601
	< 1year	22.86	567
	< 2years	19.64	487
	< 4years	16.69	414
	> 4years	16.57	411
Ever alcohol dependancy	Yes	12.50	310
	No	87.50	2170
Ever substance dependancy	Yes	19.84	492
	No	80.16	1988
Ever rough sleeper	Yes	27.90	692
	No	72.10	1788
Success in gaining work	Yes	30.08	746
	No	69.92	1734

N=2480

Associations between job coaching and success in gaining employment are presented in table 2. The chance of (re-)integration in the labour market is 3.70 times higher among those who were supported by a job coach as compared to those who were not supported by a job coach.

Table 2: Barriers for gaining employment.

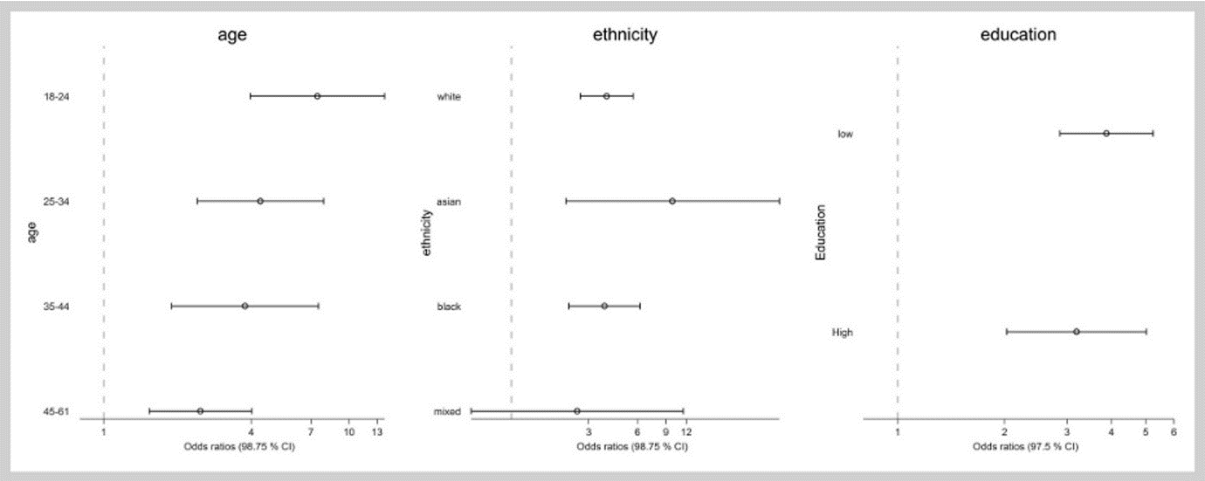
Mixed logistic regression: Odds Ratios (95% C.I.)

Job coach	Yes	3.70 (2.97-4.61)
Age	18-24	Ref
	25-34	1.42 (1.07-1.87)
	35-44	1.63 (1.21-2.21)
	>45	1.55 (1.18-2.03)
Education	High	1.15 (0.92-1.43)
Unemployment	< 6 months	Ref
length	< 1 year	0.84 (0.65-1.10)
	< 2 years	0.63 (0.48-0.85)
	< 4 years	0.72 (0.53-0.97)
	> 4 years	0.66 (0.48-0.90)
ethnicity	white	Ref
	Black	0.88 (0.55-1.42)
	Asian	1.20 (0.93-1.54)
	Mixed race	0.98 (0.58-1.63)
Alcohol	Yes	0.95 (0.70-1.30)
Substance	Yes	0.87 (0.66-1.14)
Rough sleeper	yes	0.62 (0.49-0.78)
Ll: -1348.045		
AIC: 2736.09		
BIC: 2852.41		

N= 2480; Adjusted for sex and year of finishing the programme

This significant association between job coaching and labour market success in the overall group was further analysed according to relevant socio-economic characteristics in order to investigate the effectiveness of job coaching in different subgroups. In figure 1 the odds ratios (OR) and 95% CI of nine regression models are reported. Figure 1 captures the association between job coaching and success in gaining employment by age, ethnicity, and educational level. The association between job coach support and success in labour market entry is significantly higher in persons aged 18-24 (OR: 7.44 (3.96-13.98)) as compared to persons aged 45-61 (OR: 2.48 (1.53-4.01)). Additional analysis with an interaction term in the pooled data (not shown) supports this notion. There is a continuous decline of the Odds Ratios across the age groups. The second graph in figure 1 shows the association between job coaching support and gaining employment in different ethnic groups. The odds ratios of job coaching are similar among all client groups with the exception of Asian clients where job coaching seems to have a slightly greater effect. The regression models stratified by educations show a slightly higher association of job coaching and employment success among the lower educated.

Figure 1: Estimates of the associations between job coaching and gaining employment, calculated by subgroups, N=2480



Returning to table 2, the socioeconomic factors of age, length of unemployment and experienced rough sleeping seem to be important barriers for success in gaining employment across the population. With younger age the chances of reintegration in the labour market decrease. The length of unemployment before participating in this programme seems to be another barrier against employment success.A long period of unemployment (> 1 year) before start of the programme is associated with less chances of successful return to work if compared to a short period of unemployment (< 6 months). Moreover, those with previous experience of rough sleeping have less chance of gaining a job as compared to those who never had this experience. Yet, education, ethnicity, alcohol or substance dependency, and sex (not shown) are factors that are not significantly associated with success in gaining work.

The employment outcomes of clients who gained employment are used to study our second research question, the chances of sustaining employment. The associations between support by a job coach, socioeconomic factors, and the probability of sustaining employment are presented in table 3. In this analysis the probability of sustaining employment is analysed in terms of hazard ratios of losing one's job during the observation period. Values below 1 indicate longer 'survival' in employment as compared to the reference group.

As indicated, this analysis is restricted to clients of the programme who managed to get into employment at all (N=746). Among these, 43.7% were recorded as being supported by a job coach following their work placement. Importantly, we observe again a significant association between job coach support and the probability of 'survival' in employment. Clients being supported by a job coach are more likely to sustain employment than those who were not supported. Subgroup analyses show that other factors do not seem to play a significant role (not shown).

Table 3: Barriers for sustaining employment.

Mixed Gompertz regression: Hazard Ratios (95% C.I.)

Job coach	Yes	0.77 (0.64-0.94)
Age	18-24	Ref
	25-34	0.73 (0.56-0.95)
	35-44	0.77 (0.63-0.95)
	>45	0.69 (0.54-0.89)
Education	High	1.03 (0.85-1.25)
Unemployment	< 6 months	Ref
Length	< 1 year	1.26 (1.02-1.57)
	< 2 years	0.92 (0.71-1.18)
	< 4 years	1.04 (0.79-1.36)
	> 4 years	1.17 (0.87-1.57)
Ethnicity	white	Ref
	Black	0.80 (0.45-1.39)
	Asian	1.00 (0.84-1.19)
	Mixed race	0.68 (0.39-1.16)
Alcohol	Yes	1.20 (0.88-1.63)
Substance	Yes	0.85 (0.64-1.13)
Rough sleeper	yes	0.93 (0.76-1.14)
Ll: -1126.773		
AIC: 2275.547		
BIC: 2326.279		

N= 744; Adjusted for sex and year of finishing the programme

The results in table 3 suggest that age is important for sustaining employment (see table 3). Older clients seem to have a higher chance of sustaining employment compared to the youngest age group. Length of unemployment, alcohol and substance abuse dependency, and former rough sleeping –contrary to the model of gaining employment (table 2) – are not significant factors for the chances of sustaining employment in this model.

3.2 Interviews with clients and Ready for Work managers – Gaining work

3.2.1 Experience of support received through Ready for Work

A. Job Coaching

Five out of the 10 clients that we interviewed had been matched with a job coach. However, in contrast to the positive results from the quantitative study, the qualitative interviews indicate more diverse experiences of the job coaching relationship. It should also be noted that in three cases, clients were recorded on the database as having a job coach when in reality, they had only met once or a few times and the relationship was over at the time of interview.

Common ground

When job coaching worked well, it was usually because the client felt they had something in common with them and/or found they provided valuable insight into the working environment.

"It was a really good pairing, we had a lot in common. I said, 'look, this is what I want to be doing, but I've never done it before. Being in a working environment, I wouldn't know procedures and stuff, you know, I'd be quite lost' and he took me through everything, it was really good."

The experiences of Ready for Work Managers would concur with this view; they felt that for relationships to work, clients had to 'gel' with their job coach and put considerable effort into matching clients with coaches.

"I try to sit in on the job coach training so that I get to know the job coaches a bit…obviously I spend a couple of days with our clients when they're on training and it's, I do try to think about the matches but it's very much in my head: 'so, I think you'll get on with this person'….sometimes it's just the person's approach to life, sense of humour, that kind of thing and I have to say those matches work out even better than I've anticipated."

Despite best efforts on the part of the Ready for Work Manager to establish good pairings, there was a sense that certain elements were beyond their control that had a bearing on whether or not the job coach relationship was successful. For example, managers said that the personalities of the individual clients had a bearing on whether or not a pairing would work, or indeed if a client took up a job coach in the first place.

Unrealistic expectations

When job coaching does not work out, clients and managers felt this was usually down to a lack of understanding about the nature of the relationship and the reality of clients' circumstances. Ready for Work Managers also felt that expecting clients to meet a job coach *in their work environment was a step too far for some.*

> *"I didn't find the job coach very helpful, to be honest. It was more like, I don't know I thought I was fulfilling something that he needed instead of him kinda helping me."*

"..they [clients] live in a different world to our job coaches, the job coaches don't get it…they don't understand: 'well, he's turned up half an hour late, that's disrespectful.' We're just pleased that they turn up…they don't understand that you know those winter mornings when you look outside and you think 'I wish I could go back to bed', our clients do…"

"It's a very big ask of our clients to ask them to go out of their comfort zone into a business environment and to meet with somebody who perhaps doesn't seem to be on their level and to reveal things about their personal background whiehc they probably need to do to get that person on board."

B. Ready for Work Managers

Ready for Work Managers are responsible for delivery of the Ready for Work programme. They are responsible for selecting clients for the programme, setting up work placements, matching to job coaches, running job clubs, where they exist, and providing general post-placement support to clients as capacity allows. They may also be responsible for building and servicing business relationships for smaller programmes; for larger programmes, an additional manager is responsible for the employer engagement aspects of the programme.

The clients we interviewed had a largely positive experience of the support provided by their Ready for Work Manager, and ranked them first in terms of how valuable that support was following placement. In the interviews, a number of dimensions seemed to be important to clients.

Personalised approach

A recurring theme of the interviews was how clients felt that Ready for Work Managers (and specialist charities) 'cared' about them, and this was highly valued. This was often talked about in contrast with their experience of Jobcentre Plus advisors and in a couple of cases, probation officers. Linked to this was the observation that Ready for Work Managers would often go 'above and beyond the call of duty' to help them.

"…when I started my placement it was totally different because I feel I can trust these guys…"

"…they go the extra mile for everyone…they put everyone before themselves…they're heroes in my mind…"

Indeed, this is exactly the approach that Ready for Work Managers reported wanting to take, because they felt that it was important in helping clients fully engage with the programme.

"It sounds very cheesy but I think through the whole programme what I personally want people to feel is that they've been made to feel a little bit special and that they're not being processed…people can be made to feel special just by giving them a bit of time and a bit of patience and support and I think that's what people want, really."

Availability and responsiveness

In contrast to their experiences with Jobcentre Plus, most of the clients we interviewed also felt that they could call upon the advice or support of their Ready for Work Manager at any time, and that the support felt 'personal'; whether it was more emotional or job-focussed.

"[My Ready for Work Manager]…had the time to get far more involved personally with you because obviously through the job centre, obviously through no fault of their own, they have to get through so many people and they're so limited in the time they can spend with one person."

"They were just someone I could come and see and just meet them for a brew…"

Again, Ready for Work Managers felt that being available was important to clients, who were unlikely to find the same level of support elsewhere and who need to know that there is somewhere they can go if and when things go wrong.

"And our message to them is very much the door's always open…there's no such thing as permanent jobs anymore and people are taking temporary contracts and those contracts come to an end so we do have a revolving door of clients simply because they have taken temporary contracts."

C. Job Club

Ready for Work clubs were developed by Ready for Work Managers in Manchester and Birmingham because they found that they were spending too much of their time supporting individual clients following placement, or advising job coaches, which put strain on setting up and delivering pre-placement training and work placements. To make the most efficient use of their time, and provide an opportunity for Ready for Work client to come together on a regular basis for mutual support, Ready for Work Job Clubs are run on a weekly basis and clients can drop in, use computers to search and apply for jobs and take advantage of support provided by business volunteers (also called job coaches in some cities). Clients who had a dedicated job coach are encouraged to hold their meetings at job club.

Access to vacancies

A couple of clients reported that they really valued the additional access that Ready for Work Managers provided to vacancies at the job club or the support that they were able to give with updating their CV. One client in particular was very impressed that the Ready for Work Manager had sourced vacancies specifically for her requirements.

"Maybe they don't know what they did for me or for other people. For example, I was in a job club and the next week, I was one in I don't know how many…they say 'oh, we found it, do you like this job?'….exactly the job I'm looking for they gave me."

"I think that a lot of clients, I am seeing more and more have been through work programmes and they've been to other job clubs but because of the link with businesses, because you know we had Transpeninne Express just offer 15 people jobs, Timpson's are there, Barclays are there…"

Structure, motivation and tailored support

While not strongly reflected in the client interviews, Ready for Work Managers felt confident that the job club model, when well-serviced by business volunteers and used regularly by clients, would deliver employment success. They felt that job clubs offered tailored support to clients and enabled them to encourage clients to apply there and then, with support, for jobs that had been sourced specifically for their needs.

"When someone comes to job club, they get support whatever they need that day so if they need a CV updating, they get it, if they need support applying for work or even just

to talk through something, we're there and we're on hand and I think that makes a big difference."

Limited value for some

A couple of clients felt that looking for a job at job club wasn't that helpful as they felt they were able to do it well enough on their own. One kept going, though, because he said he felt he should do as way of thanks to the Ready for Work manager.

"For me it wasn't that personally helpful…they did my CV, that helped me. Then I just adapted it myself. But the other people [at job club] though, that is a vital thing [for them]."

D. Employee volunteers and employers

A key and unique feature of the Ready for Work programme is the exposure it gives clients to business volunteers and the access it provides to recruiting managers.

Building confidence and self-esteem.

The clients we spoke to all had a positive experience of the Ready for Work programme and for some, it seemed that the pre-placement training and placement itself helped them to re-gain their sense of self-worth and motivate them towards their goal of finding a job. A key factor in this appeared to be the opportunity to interact with and learn from business volunteers. There was a sense from some of the clients that all they needed was an opportunity to transcend their barriers and prove themselves to employers in order to find work, but that they were unlikely to find that opportunity outside of the programme.

"…they just offer you a bit of a life line but then that grows and that gives you a sense of yourself again and it gives you a sense of things you can do rather than things you can't. That makes you want to find new services and want to get that help."

"I always felt that if ever I got an interview I could give a good account for myself but it's just never having the opportunity to do that. I think having the chance to actually have an interview [during Ready for Work training] made all the difference to me; I felt more assertive and self-confident…the course made me believe that actually there wasn't anything wrong with me, I was quite capable of doing something if I had the opportunity."

"By doing a proper interview with business people, you learnt how to portray yourself again because you do get knocked when you're out of work for such a long time."

Access to vacancies

Three of the clients we interviewed landed a job with their placement provider immediately or shortly after the programme, and two got jobs through contacts their Ready for Work Managers had. One Ready for Work manager cited a recent example of being offered 15 vacancies by a local employer for his Ready for Work clients, which he was able to promote through the Ready for Work Job Club. Ready for Work managers also reported pulling together vacancy lists for Job Club each week, comprising vacancies that they had sourced with particular clients in mind.

"I done a two week placement with Carillion…it was good, it was tough, bad weather and stuff but good experience and I ended up getting a job from it so it was well worth it."

"They got me this new one (job). They distribute my CV out so they've been the architects of just getting my CV out."

3.2.2. Experience of support received elsewhere

A. Specialist Charities

As shown in sections 1 and 2 above, most clients were in contact with other charities with specialist expertise in areas such as alcohol/substance abuse, homelessness, ex-offenders or domestic abuse. It was also clear from the interviews that clients highly valued their contact with these agencies but the type of benefit that they gained varied from client to client. In several cases clients were volunteering for the charities rather than in direct receipt of services.

Emotional support

Whether or not clients were making use of the services on offer or volunteering to help others there, it was clear that one of the main reasons they engaged with specialist charities was to help build their confidence and self-esteem. Related to this was the opportunity to do something meaningful with their time instead of sitting around the house all day, or else to keep them away from the influences of old lifestyles.

"I had a meeting with her and she was quite positive she really helped me a lot mentally, because I didn't have that much confidence and stuff so she taught me techniques and stuff…"

"Because it made me feel worthwhile, it gave me self-worth…it was very much feeling that I had some usefulness and I think that helps as well… I found it very fulfilling."

"[The specialist charities] are not the people in a hospital who've got a lot out of a text book and don't really know what they're talking about, they haven't ever really felt degredation and pain…"

Employability

A number of clients saw volunteering through a charity as a good way to gain valuable work experience as well as a productive use of their time. Others reported receiving support with their job search and with interview techniques. In many cases, contact with these organisations preceded Ready for Work and was kept going once the placement had finished.

"*I've been doing voluntary work with them both because I wanted to do some kind of work where you could help people…that was my focus."*

"I would never have found it (current job) without [youth charity]….when you want a new job and you're looking for it you never know where to look".

"It was good, it gave me more of an awareness of how to work and gave me a bit of experience of working and having to be somewhere at a certain time and I learnt a lot from the volunteering….I think I was there for about 3 months."

Finding employment

Two of the clients we spoke to found work through contacts their keyworker at a specialist agency had with employers who actively recruited people facing barriers to work. This involved the keyworker passing on their CV and then coaching them to get the job.

B. Jobcentre Plus

With a couple of exceptions, the experiences clients reported of dealings with Jobcentre Plus were predominantly negative.

Rigid and impersonal

A troubling theme that ran through the interviews was how clients felt they were not treated as 'normal' human beings.

> *"…the jobcentre people just basically have no idea about a person at all…when I went to A4e they were a little disorganised to be honest with you but it was 10 times better than the job centre ever was…"*

> *"They've just got to stick to their things, they don't see the human if you know what I mean. They've just got to stick to their guidelines, their targets…"*

> *"I was in the job centre many times but just imagine the job centre when you're coming you feel guilty…I preferred to hide myself…no-one treat me like a human…if you asked them for anything they have no information."*

Clients also reported that the Jobcentre staff had very little time to spend with them and that the support they did receive was not suited to their needs.

> *"Well, usually I signed on and I said 'is there any jobs?' and they said 'no, look on the Pin Point' so I looked on it and got the jobs that I was looking for and then applied for the ones I could but it was like the job centre weren't really helping they were just wanting me to sign and then fling me out the door quick for the next people."*

Clients also painted a picture of a 'rigid' system, where they had to complete certain job search tasks or attend job clubs irrespective of whether or not the process was actually helping them. There was a sense that clients were just doing what they had to do in order to get their benefits.

> *"You have to do like 15 things to find a job…like look in papers, apply three times…phone two different employers, go into two employers, but that's on no money as well because…you can't commute to all these places with the money they give you so I don't know what they think you are."*

> *"Yeah from job centre they sent me to a work club, exactly the same as this (BITC)…I was at quite a few work clubs, at Aquarius…for me they didn't work it was just applying for jobs basically but I could do that on my own."*

> *"…job centre was more of a hassle for me to be honest with you but I had to do what I had to do…"*

> *"None of my jobs came through the job centre, I just went there as a part of the system."*

"You felt that you wasn't in control of your own life because you had to basically explain it to somebody."

Two of the clients we interviewed did have a positive experience. One client managed to see the same advisor each time and he was proactive in finding suitable vacancies; the other client found using the bespoke job search facility, Pin Point, useful (although she did not find her advisor any good).

"The Jobcentre was very good as well, the chap I saw there pretty well for most of the time I saw one chap and he was very helpful, too…the support that I got was brilliant it really was because it's a tough place to be out there, out of work."

Challenging negative perceptions

One of the Ready for Work Managers reported how clients' perceptions of Jobcentre Plus advisors changed when around 15 volunteered to support clients through the Ready for Work job club. According to the manager, some of the clients found the support that they received from the JCP advisors at job club was really valuable and different to their experience at their jobcentre; JCP advisors enjoyed having the time to dedicate to individual clients and found clients warm and receptive.

"…the clients themselves regularly were coming back saying they had a lot of knowledge…and we've had a few interesting dialogues with our clients who said 'actually, I think slightly differently about the job centre now, I always thought they were mean, horrible people but now I understand that they're just very time limited.'"

C. Probation

Clients' experiences with probation were mixed in terms of the type of support received and the value of that support.

Finding work

Most of the clients who were working with probation talked about the goal of probation to be keeping their risk level (of re-offending) down or steady. Meetings were regular, usually every week, but it was not always the case that clients saw the same officer each week and the overall experience of the interactions with probation officers was mixed. It also seems that the priority given to finding a job depended on the individual probation officer, although this might have been affected also by the nature of the offences of the individuals. One client got his first ever job as a labourer through probation, but others felt that the support to get a job was not very good or non-existent.

"Probation service, I don't think they're much to be honest, especially what I've done. They've not helped me one bit…all they've done is hinder me…putting me in a shared house that I couldn't get a job through because of the rent…it's supposed to be supported housing but it wasn't, they just put it down as supported housing because that's how they were scamming the Government for £168 a week."

"…on a job front there was not really any kind of support or help in me trying to find a job they were more like programmes like anger management or housing programme…they kept me busy and that, I had something to do so I had a bit of structure but not helpful in the sense that it helped me to make any type of progression in my life."

"…because I was at such risk that they have to get me a job kind of so they were doing everything to get me a job to stop me reverting back to what I used to be…"

"…as long as you're not reoffending they're not really bothered if you're working or not I don't really think."

Referrals

The clients that had had good experiences with probation had been referred through to other organisations, such as commercial welfare to work providers, for support with finding work or else were referred to training to make them more employable, for example, to drive a fork lift truck. Some clients reported good experiences with the drugs support on offer through probation and also with the commercial welfare-to-work providers that they were referred to via their probation officer. In several cases, referral to the Ready for Work programme had come through probation.

"Well, just putting me in the right direction to do what I needed to do at that particular time. At them times, I didn't have a CV or CSCS card or a fork-lift truck licence. …that I got through them."

"She asked what I wanted to do and I said I wouldn't mind doing something just to tie my days off so I'm not just hanging around."

D. Commercial welfare to work providers

In contrast to Jobcentre Plus, clients' reported experiences of commercial welfare to work organisations, was positive. In all but one instance, referrals had come through probation and not Jobcentre Plus. Generally speaking, clients felt that these providers had more time to help, were more available and that the support given was more tailored to their interests and needs.

"…they see what you want to do and then you just book in your next appointment but you can go in whenever you want but they book your next appointment and she has all these jobs ready for you, puts you on a computer and goes 'these are the jobs that work for you' and makes you do them. It's pretty amazing."

One of the Ready for Work Managers had a different view on how useful welfare to work providers were for clients:

"When we've approached the work programme to ask if we can work with them, they're more then happy to push that client in our direction because the reality is they aren't doing anything with them apart from sometimes making them go into a room and sit at a computer and look for jobs."

E. Housing Officers/Hostel Keyworkers

Two clients talked specifically about their housing keyworkers; one client, who had been placed in supported housing by probation, had a wholly negative experience. The other, who was living in a hostel following Ready for Work and lived there for over a year, found his keyworker helped when he was feeling overwhelmed, but said he did not find the keyworker helped him to find work. He missed appointments and ended up receiving warning letters as a result.

"Well the hostel I moved into they had like keyworkers so you'd have to see like a keywork person every week…I was feeling a bit like overwhelmed with everything and I explained that to my keyworker and stuff, it used to help a bit."

"As soon as I got out of prison, all I wanted to do was just work and find accommodation…so when I was seeing these people from probation and the key work people and they wasn't really talking about jobs…I used to just get really frustrated and kind of sick of the key work meetings…"

When asked if he saw anyone in the supported housing team, the client replied: "*the maintenance man, that's about it."*

F. Family and Friends

The results from the interviews showed that the experience of the support provided by friends and family was mixed. This could have been due to clients not linking the support they received from these individuals to getting a job, or else feeling sensitive about this area of their lives:

"Yeah, they haven't helped me get a job, I've helped myself…emotional support, I can't get a job if I'm depressed. They're the hidden things though, aren't they? So they have been useful for that support."

"Well I've wrote that one [on the ranking form] but I've not really got friends, I just put that (for) when I did have friends."

One client told how she relied on her sons to buy her groceries every week when she was out of work, and did their housework for them to keep busy. Another indicated that he relied on his family and friends to help him stay out of trouble and away from jail, while another had friends who would look out for jobs for him.

However, the interviews suggest that for around half of the clients, family and friends were not a prominent feature of their lives, which our Ready for Work managers suggest is something that is fairly common to the client group:

"I think it is common for a lot of our clients to not have extensive social networks because of where they've come through relationship breakdowns or you know, people who have offended may maybe have burnt various bridges…so I don't think they have the everyday support networks that I would say the general public have."

G. Employers

Rejection

It was clear from the interviews that looking for a job on the open market was often a demoralising process that affected their motivation and self-esteem. The biggest issue seemed to be getting no response from employers to job applications; all of the clients interviewed reported submitting several, sometimes tens' of applications per week, but only one had ever received a letter to tell them they had not been selected for interview.

"…sometimes you're looking for so many you start to get a bit fed up because you're not hearing anything…so then you start wanting to give up…"

"You don't get no answers back, I sent hundreds out, you don't get one, not even a note, I think I got one note which was good at least….it made me believe I'm not going to get a job."

"It was a little bit daunting because I wasn't really getting any feedback, I wasn't getting like hearing anything from applications."

Perceived discrimination

Some clients also said that they felt employers discriminated against them because of their offending background, lack of experience, age or disability. Given the lack of response from employers to applications, it is unsurprising that this is the conclusion clients came to about their lack of success of finding work.

"I was just trying to find a full time job which I was finding really hard obviously because of my previous convictions."

"When you've got one leg, it's just, I dunno, sort of looked down on sort of thing. It's a bit frustrating."

3.2.3 Individual factors

What was striking throughout the interview process was the determination clients described to get a job, even when their job search seemed to be getting them nowhere. The motivations behind this determination were different for each client; for some, it was because they had made a firm decision to move away from damaging patterns of behaviour; for others, having a job offered the opportunity for greater independence, through having more money, or a new identity far removed from their old life.

Self-motivation

When asked about their motivation to keep looking for work, a couple of clients indicated that self-motivation was something that they simply 'had', which may have contributed to successfully gaining employment:

"I'm always trying to push myself."

"…I kept myself busy, I was never one for sitting around and getting myself depressed, thankfully."

"I just grew up a little bit and I thought I need to do this for myself and not just do it to please other people."

For some, money was their primary motivation. They found it difficult to get by on benefits and desperately wanted to get a job so they could stop worrying about making ends meet.

"I needed money. That was my first motivation. If I could get a job I was willing to do any job, cleaning or something, just to get money."

"I told them I wanted to be back in work, that's why I ended up doing what I was doing (crime) because I was skint; I was desperate."

"Out of work, just survive, just go on survival mode. In work I've got more independence…I can just think about what I am doing rather than stressing about where I'm going to get bill money from."

Again, Ready for Work Managers identified 'motivation' as a key factor in somebody's ability to get a job:

"The people that get jobs are the ones that if you like are lucky, who at the end of the programme they get offered something or they've got the drive."

"It doesn't necessarily depend on the sort of qualifications or even work background but I think if they've got a belief that they will get there and a belief in what we can do to help them then those are the people that stand out…I think it's more of a personality trait of people who have got a little bit more drive and self-belief."

'Turning Point'

A common theme recurring through the interviews with clients who either had an offending background or had struggled with alcohol or drug addiction, or both, was the concept of reaching a 'turning point' in their lives, where they wanted to do all that they could to find a job because they considered working to be their best chance of preventing re-offending or relapse.

"I wasn't really ready for work but I really wanted to get my life back on track so I was at that point, I was willing to do anything."

"Because I've done 20 years in jail and you have to keep going. Out here is not as bad as where I've been. Even though it's bad, to be honest."

The concept of 'transformation' was identified by one of the Ready for Work Managers, too:

"It's difficult to find the ones that have got it in them. There's something that changes in them that says 'I'm going to get a job'."

3.3 Interviews with clients and Ready for Work managers – Sustaining work

3.3.1 Experience of support received through Ready for Work

Six of the clients we spoke to were still in some form of contact with the Ready for Work programme whilst working.

A. Job Coach

Three of the clients still saw their job coach; while the contact was less regular, they valued knowing that they could contact them at any time. One client found their job coach really useful for dealing with work issues, particularly how to behave or what to do in certain situations; another, who had greater work experience, wanted to use their job coach to help them deal with life in general now that they were working.

"I think what's working, from not working for a long time in a sort of structured working environment…I know that I can always phone him up and say 'I've got a situation, I don't know what to do about it and I know he would say, 'right, this is what I would do'. You don't have to take that advice but he just makes things a lot clearer for me."

"With my job coach, I sent an email to her and said, 'I think I need a mentor, someone to help me because, it's ok, I've found a job but I needed a different kind of help because my life is different' and she said 'okay, anytime if you need me just let me know, I'll be there for you'."

B. Ready for Work Manager

Three people were actively in touch with their Ready for Work Manager, with one still attending job club. A further two said that they knew they could contact them at any time for help, particularly if they needed to get another job. The benefits of these relationships were similar for those who had job coaches, but with a slightly more 'personal' element:

"I think if it wasn't the people [Ready for Work Managers], how they come across, I probably wouldn't of kept in touch…it is the people that run it because they really care."

"Well, [my Ready for Work Manager] definitely was one of the main reasons that I managed to find work. He's helped me so much. I still talk to him now."

"You know there's that support behind you, that security blanket that you can always come back to if you need to…and I know the group of people that I was on the course with…they keep in contact with everybody."

3.3.2 Experience of support from elsewhere

A. Employers

Line manager

Only one client reported a positive relationship with her line manager; the company in question was a keen supporter of the Ready for Work programme:

"[The line manager] made it very clear from the outset that he's very philanthropic in his outlook on life, he wants to give people a chance…so he's probably a rare breed."

Progression

Several clients spoke about wanting to progress, whether that was to move up the career ladder, to earn more, or simply find a job that was more suited to their skills and interests. However, all reported challenges in trying to do this. One felt that he was discriminated against because of his disability and also felt that he was a victim of nepotism. This client also reported that he felt he did not need help in work or to find work, he just needed the right job.

Another client found that because of her temporary contract and low wage, it was difficult to find the extra time needed to thoroughly search for jobs, as she could not afford to take time off. A further client, who wanted a job with more regular hours, found that the lack of notice given as to what the weekly shift pattern was, and the unsociable hours she had to work, made it very difficult to keep appointments and look for work. These two clients relied on the support of a job coach and a youth agency to help them in this regard.

"Not so long ago I applied for an apprenticeship, tried to get on the tree side of it because that's what I want to do, it was a 3 year thing, constant work for 3 years…I didn't get it but I don't know how, it really frustrated because…people who were assessing a suitability for the apprenticeship, it was their sons that were on the course which really shouldn't be allowed…I don't really want to kick up a fuss about it to be honest, it's just more earache and ball ache."

> *"…I have no contract…and it is a big problem for me because I can't look for work because my wages is minimum wage…"*

> *"You get one day off but it's either at the end of the week or right at the beginning and then you've got the other days you're in work so then you're all tired…"*

B. Charities

It was less clear from the interviews the extent to which clients were still engaging with charities other than Business in the Community, but a few clients indicated that they would feel able to go back for help should the need arise. One client continued to volunteer ad-hoc for the same charity that she had been involved with prior to Ready for Work and finding a job, and mentioned that she had sought legal advice there on one occasion.

3.3.3 Impact of work on individuals

Transformation

For several clients, working had enabled them to make positive changes in their lives. They reported feeling happier, having more money to do the things they wanted, and more independence.

> *"The fact that I'm not so restricted anymore of things I can do, I've got a greater variety of things I can do as to how I live my life…because I'm earning….it's all positive; the fact that I can give nicer Christmas presents to my children, just silly things like that."*

> *"I think working has been maybe the best thing for me that I've ever done. Before I would just be in and out of prison and just like no structure and everyone who I was around was criminals…I don't know it just feels like it's taken me out of that kind of cycle."*

For one client, working had helped him reconnect with his mother, whom he said had 'given up on him'. He had also stopped seeing so much of his stepdad and aunt, both of whom he had spent a lot of time with before he found work, although it was unclear whether or not the intention behind this was deliberate.

> *"It took [mum] a while still because she was like 'well, you've had a job before' but now she sees me, I was there on Sunday doing the decking in her back garden, stuff like that so it's just good to sort of give her something back."*

Raised stakes

A couple of clients, realising the transformative potential of working, seemed to be anxious about what might happen if they lost their jobs. One client, with a long history of alcohol abuse, felt that he had few chances left to make a fresh start. He also saw work as a way to give something back to his children, with whom he had recently got back in contact. He also said that his children were his main motivation to keep going. For the other client, working represented a chance for him to change who he was and without it, he felt he would simply revert back to his old ways.

"I've been battling this problem for so long I really believe it's my last chance and I can't go back down that road…I want to do something for my kids, you know. Basically, my kids are my energy, now."

"For me, it's not even a job…it's just being someone out here instead of being whoever I was back in the day."

Health and well-being

In a couple of cases, the reality of work was tough and having a negative impact on their health and well-being. One client said that she would go to work even if she felt poorly because she would not get paid; another found the shift pattern particularly gruelling at times and she also felt her personal safety was being put at risk because of the lack of public transport available when her shifts ended.

"…if I feel really sick I can't stay at home because they are not paying me…I ask the solicitor and he said the agency have no right to send you more than 90 days; after 90 days they have to clear your situation."

"it's like putting my safety and my health at risk if you have to walk at night if you miss your last bus…if the trains are late, then you're late and if you miss your last bus then there's only one way of getting home, either a taxi or walking but if you haven't got the money then you have to walk."

"I'm never hungry but I have no money to enjoy myself…I can buy stuff from the charity and no one will know…but I'm thinking I'm working every day a full time job…at the end of the week I have nothing, you know. Still I am excited to do something for myself obviously, I am depending on my parents…"

4 Conclusion

The statistical analyses (aim 1) suggest that the support by a job coach is significantly associated with successful (re-)integration of homeless people into the labour market. Labour market participation can be seen as a crucial step in efforts to assist homeless people to participate in society. Our analyses show significant associations between job coaching and success in gaining employment and with the chances of sustaining employment. This applies to clients of all ages but is most marked amongst younger clients (aged 18-24 years old). Finding positive interventions that help young people into work is key as there is now evidence that a period of unemployment while young can lead to permanent disadvantages over the life-course [77]. However, the validity of the analyses is limited by several aspects, including selection-bias. Concerning the data set of the client's records, some inconsistencies in data collection were detected that may represent additional confounding.

Job coaching as an intervention includes many of the success factors identified by other studies including use of individual work place training (rather than classroom approaches), engaging employers in design and delivery, building in support for transition to work, including support for job search whilst on the programme, and personalised support tailored to the needs of the individual [78–80]. In addition, work place training may be to the employer a more reliable indicator of employability than classroom-based training [81].

The interviews with clients and Ready for Work managers (aim 2) have been useful in trying to understand more about the nature of the association between job coaching and gaining and sustaining employment. While it is not possible to make conclusive statements based on

such a small sample of Ready for Work clients, nonetheless this study has highlighted other factors specific to the Ready for Work programme as contributing to success in gaining and sustaining employment:

- Access to support that is personalised, responsive and readily available – in particular, that given by the Ready for Work Manager.
- Privileged access to vacancies through the Ready for Work programme, either via their work placement, Ready for Work manager contacts, or vacancies that have been identified for specific individuals at Ready for Work job clubs.
- A network of support that is unique to the individual client and which the client knows s/he can call upon at any time when they need help, particularly when the client is in work.

However, the interviews also highlighted the importance of individual client motivation; it would seem that the factors listed above would not be enough on their own to guarantee successful entry into the labour market without the determination and drive of the client; likewise, determination and drive are not sufficient factors on their own to successfully secure and sustain employment, as the additional support sought by clients attests. The extent to which individual motivation plays a role, and how that motivation is created, sustained and can be measured, would need to be the subject of another study, but it is clear from the cases examined in this study that clients who are highly motivated to find work are more proactive at seeking out the support they need to get them into work and help them overcome the challenges they encounter on the way.

In light of the insight gained from the interviews with clients, it could be suggested that the strong association found between job coaching and gaining and sustaining employment could be reflecting the tendency of some highly motivated clients to take up the offer of a job coach. Therefore, job coaching could be seen as a reliable *indicator* of employment success but not as the only cause of labour market re-integration.

5 Recommendations

As we have seen, the factors contributing to employment success are wide-ranging and likely to be different for each client, dependent on client barriers, access to vacancies, the quality of support available through the programme and elsewhere, and individual client motivation.

We recommend further research into the following in order to understand how BITC needs to target resources to further improve job attainment and sustainment rates:

- Identification of the key elements of a successful job coaching relationship for clients, with a particular emphasis on young people.
- Impact of job clubs on job attainment/sustainment.
- Identification of local factors contributing to the performance of individual Ready for Work programmes.
- The applicability to the Ready for Work programme of existing tools for measuring client journeys from homelessness to independent living.
- A review of the programme indicators for ‘work readiness’.

The learning from the study also allows us to make several recommendations for providers of services aimed at supporting homeless people, or those at risk of homelessness, into sustained employment:

- Support should be client-oriented, with sufficient time given to understand individual barriers, characteristics and aspirations.
- Regular access to a single point of contact, responsible for convening/sign-posting to other forms of support throughout the journey to work and once in work, is preferable.
- Employers should be involved at various stages of the return to work journey to contribute to client motivation and skills development and open up access to job vacancies.
- Consideration should be given to the measurement of client motivation and readiness for work at the point of referral so that appropriate support can be provided throughout the journey to work.

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The research is undertaken by a consortium including leading research centres and organisations representing the public health sector, civil society and businesses.