

December 2022

# London JETS Programme

## Evaluation

### Final report



**SQW**

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# Executive Summary

## Key findings

- The programme was set up at pace during the Covid-19 pandemic and was the first welfare to work programme designed and implemented online. It also brought new staff into the sector.
- All sub-regions received high numbers of referrals and outperformed against profile. This good performance reflects strong relationships. With referrals above expectations in the early months, there was a challenge of managing the process and converting those referrals into starts.
- The conversion rate of referrals to starts generally improved over time. Providers found that increasing the intensity of the initial contact between the provider and potential participant led to a higher conversion rate.
- Participants joining near the start of the programme had higher skill levels and were more job ready, only requiring some light-touch, employability support. Linked to this, outcomes appear highest for those who joined the programme early on.
- Provider staff felt that the programme added value by being able to dedicate more time to working with participants than was offered by JCP staff. In this time they could support job search, which was important for many participants who had not looked for work for some time or were looking to change sector.
- All providers had been exceeding the DWP-set outcomes target by some distance, month-by-month, with performance often between 150-200% of this target.
- Two of the London regions (SLP and WLA) are ahead of the average performance in DWP areas for converting starts to earnings outcomes, and CLF is equal to the average. This is a positive reflection on delivery, especially as labour market recovery from COVID-19 was slower in London than other areas.

## Background

1. Against a backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and concerns around subsequent high levels of unemployment, the Government decided to expand the Work and Health Programme (WHP) to provide additional voluntary support for those on benefits who has been unemployed for more than three months. This was named the Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) programme.
2. The JETS programme was designed to provide six months of early light-touch personalised employability support to help people return to employment. It launched in October 2020, initially with recruitment until September 2021, which was then extended to September 2022. The four contract package areas (CPAs) and providers across London are the same as

for WHP: Central London Forward (CLF), Local London (LL), South London Partnership (SLP) and West London Alliance (WLA).

3. The report draws on monitoring data from the CPAs and fieldwork with sub-regional leads, providers, JCP staff, participants and wider stakeholders undertaken between June and August 2022.

### Provider delivery models

4. Across the four sub-regions, two different payment mechanisms had been adopted. CLF and LL used a 'cost plus' model, whilst WLA and SLP used a payment-by-results model. Three sub-regions set providers an earnings outcome target of 22% at the beginning of the programme whilst WLA set their earnings outcome target at 25%. In all sub-regions, the earnings outcome threshold was set at £1,000 (the same as the national level). Both the target and earnings threshold were lower than those set for the WHP.
5. The programme was set up at pace and the first welfare to work programme designed and implemented remotely. It was noted in several sub-regions that employment advisers had come from varied backgrounds, including from outside the employability sector. The influx of new staff on the JETS programme increased the importance of training and upskilling staff, but new staff members also brought a fresh pair of eyes and enthusiasm.

### Referrals, starts and conversion rates

6. All sub-regions received high numbers of referrals, particularly at the start of the programme, and outperformed on total referrals against their original profile. High referral numbers early on reflected the sharp increase in the claimant count rate as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was also felt that strong working relationships with JCP staff, which had been built up through working on WHP, helped to ensure a steady flow of referrals.
7. With referrals above expectations in the early months, there was a challenge of managing the process and converting those referrals into starts. This was partly due to the providers struggling to have sufficient staff in place early on, but was also affected by the quality of referrals received, with many being ineligible to join the programme due to not meeting the criteria, including not meeting the ESF requirements in WLA. In addition, various methods were implemented to improve the conversion rate, most notably increasing the intensity of the initial contact between the provider and potential participant. In most sub-regions, referral-to-start conversion rates did improve over time suggesting that this intervention worked.
8. Performance on start numbers has been fairly similar to original expectations in CLF, LL and SLP, with these three sub-regions very close to profile. In contrast, WLA underperformed against profile figures with almost 4,000 fewer starts than expected. WLA was the only provider to receive additional funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) which increased

their starts profile and meant stricter compliance checks on eligibility were needed. This led to more people being deemed ineligible, often due to a lack of evidence.

### Programme participants

9. Participants on JETS were fairly young, with over half aged between 18 and 39, fairly evenly split by gender and ethnically diverse. Overall, staff at the providers felt that the profile of participants on the JETS programme was as they expected and generally ready for work. However, all felt that the profile had changed over time. Initially, participants joining the programme were those who had lost their job due to the Covid-19 pandemic, including being made redundant after a long period in work. They tended to have higher skill levels and were more job ready; requiring light-touch, employability support.
10. In contrast, provider staff thought that participants who had joined the programme more recently had more barriers to work, were lower skilled, and/or had been out of work for longer. These participants often had greater issues with confidence, mental health and motivation. Whilst providers felt that participants' barriers to work had increased over time, they still thought that participants were the right fit for the programme and that those with more severe barriers would go onto the WHP.

### Support delivered

11. The most common support need among participants was employability support. This covered help with CV writing, interview skills, job searching and confidence and motivation. For some, the support has centred around navigating the labour market and applying for jobs after being in work for a long time. Participants have also required support with identifying transferable skills, particularly for those moving into a different sector. Some participants have required mental health and wellbeing support, and the focus on this has been greater than initially expected with two providers introducing external support. This is one of the ways in which provision has developed and been greater than originally anticipated.
12. Providers have adapted their provision over time. For example, in the second year of the programme, Shaw Trust increased the amount of 1-2-1 provision and introduced a voluntary mentoring service which was delivered by their contracted supply chain partners. During the course of the programme, Reed in Partnership started offering additional direct support by introducing a week-long pre-employment training bootcamp.
13. Initially, all support was delivered remotely via email, telephone or video calls. This had some benefits, such as reducing travel for participants and advisers, but did not suit everyone, especially those who were lacking digital skills. Therefore, when restrictions eased, providers started introducing an element of face-to-face support.
14. Integration with local training providers and other support services was less of a priority on the JETS programme than WHP. Some participants were referred to external support and this tended to cover sector-specific upskilling and retraining, mental health and wellbeing. The

level of external provision utilised had increased over time, particularly as the profile of participants had shifted towards those facing more barriers to employment. Some providers had also put a particular focus on external training courses that led to a guaranteed job interview, such as sector-based work academy programmes (SWAPs).

15. Based on a small number of interviews, participants were satisfied with the support they had received and found their employment advisers friendly and approachable. All of the participants had received employability support on CV writing, job searching and interview skills, but also appreciated the emotional and wellbeing support which helped to reduce feelings of isolation or anxiety.
16. Provider staff felt that one of the places where the programme added value was being able to dedicate more time to working with participants than could be offered by JCP staff. Reflecting on the length of the programme, provider staff felt that as participants were only on the programme for six months, the support was more intensive and focused. However, the short-term nature of the programme did restrict the possibility to of reskilling.

### Earnings Outcomes

17. All providers had been exceeding the DWP-set outcomes target by some distance, with performance often between 150-200% of this target. To be so far ahead of target is encouraging and a real achievement. Alongside strong delivery, two external factors likely contributed to this performance. Firstly, the outcomes target for the programme was set during Covid when there was much uncertainty about labour market prospects and, with hindsight, the target was too low. Secondly, the labour market has been very buoyant for much of the life of the programme which has led to more favourable conditions than expected.
18. The performance in London is often above that in the DWP managed CPAs. SLP and WLA are achieving a higher share of starters in to earnings outcomes, while CLF is matching the DWP average. All four areas are outperforming the DWP average in converting job starts to earning outcomes. This may be partly due to the fact that all providers introduced in-work support during the programme in order to help improve job sustainment, once again expanding the original offer to participants.
19. In all four sub-regions, earnings outcomes were highest for those aged 18-29, followed by those who were aged 30-39 which may reflect the fact that younger people are generally more employable. Across the four sub-regions, outcomes by ethnic group have been fairly consistent. There were also limited differences by gender.
20. Providers reported that early on in the programme, participants were more flexible in terms of job role and were more open to taking any available job role in order to get back into work, even if this meant moving into a new sector. Staff at the providers felt that JETS had been able to help people make this transition into another sector. This is a useful role for the programme in speeding up the rate of labour market adjustment.

- 21.** As the labour market opened up, provider staff felt that the programme was increasingly working with those who had not been able to secure a job role by themselves even in a buoyant labour market. This was related to a lack of job search skills, not wanting an entry level role or having unrealistic or changed expectations. This meant that, despite a high level of vacancies in the labour market, the vacancies were not always suitable/attractive or in sectors that participants were seeking to move into.

# 1. Introduction

## Background

- 1.1** Against a backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and concerns around high levels of unemployment, the Government launched the Plan for Jobs<sup>1</sup> in July 2020. This document formed part of the second phase of the Government's response to the pandemic and set out how it intended to support the UK's economic recovery. One of the measures announced in the Plan for Jobs was an expansion of the Work and Health Programme (WHP)<sup>2</sup> to provide additional voluntary support for those on benefits who had been unemployed for more than three months. This additional programme was later named Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS).
- 1.2** The JETS programme was designed to provide six months of early light-touch, personalised employability support to help people return to employment.<sup>3</sup> It launched in October 2020, initially with recruitment until September 2021, which was then extended to September 2022.<sup>4</sup> The scheme is being delivered in the same contract package areas and by the same providers as the WHP, with the sub-regional partnerships responsible for contract management. The four contract package areas (CPAs) across London cover:
- Central London Forward (red)
  - Local London (blue)
  - South London Partnership (green)
  - West London Alliance (purple).

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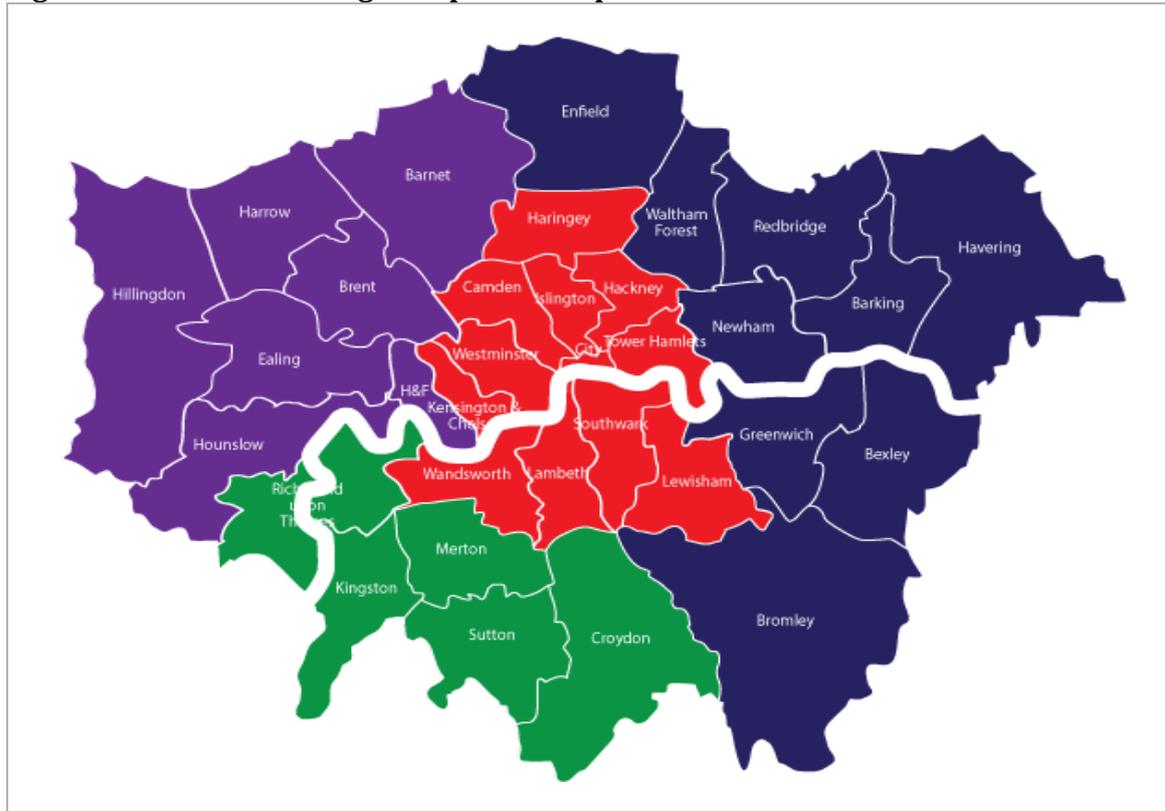
<sup>1</sup> [CP 261 – Plan for Jobs \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> The WHP launched in 2017 and aimed to provide employment support for people with health and disability issues, the long-term unemployed and the early access group.

<sup>3</sup> [Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [£500 million Plan for Jobs Expansion - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

**Figure 1-1: London sub-regional partnerships**



*Source: London Councils*

- 1.3** JETS is a national programme, and in most areas commissioning and management of the Programme is led by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). However, in line with the WHP, in two city regions (London and Greater Manchester) commissioning and oversight of JETS has been devolved. Although devolved, programmes still have to replicate many elements of the national programme, including aspects of the programme’s design, there is also scope to implement certain programme enhancements in each sub-region.

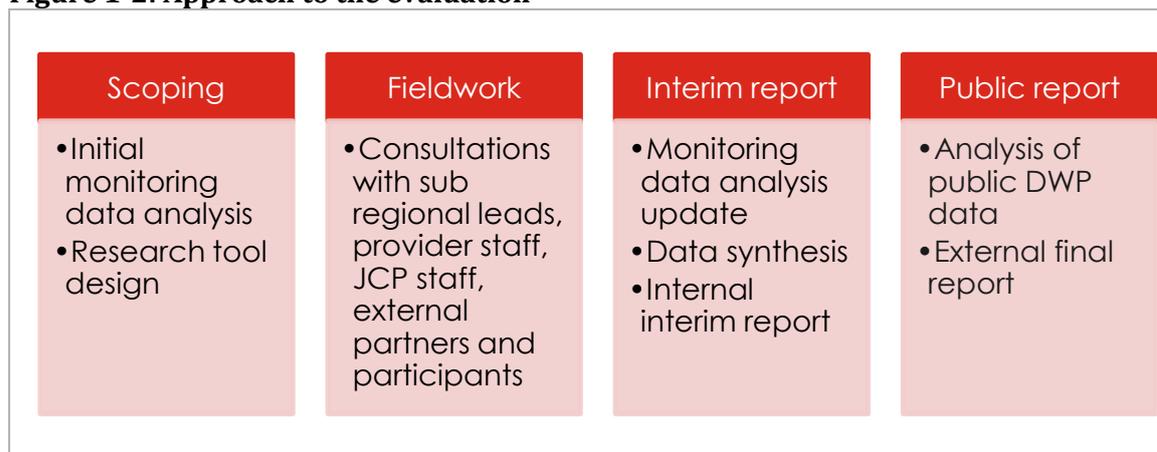
### **Purpose of the study**

- 1.4** The key objective for the evaluation is to understand as far as possible what is working and not working with programme delivery, and what leads to higher outcomes for programme beneficiaries. A range of themes and topics were explored including:
- The nature of local delivery and support models, including key worker ratios, client contact and integration support
  - How the delivery and support models have been enhanced through devolution, and what any additional elements have added to the offer for clients
  - How JETS delivery is integrated with other provision, especially adult education
  - The workings of the referral and start process, including differences from WHP experience

- The nature and characteristics of the client group
  - Employment outcomes – variations across CPAs and for different client groups
  - Lessons learned about where the programme has added most value for participants.
- 1.5** This final bullet point is important given that JETS was an unusual programme which: was introduced in response to the pandemic and targeted people who were relatively short term unemployed, many of whom in regular circumstances would have been viewed as being at low risk of unemployment and certainly long-term unemployment. Those coming on the programme were expected to have recent employment experience and work habits but may lack skills and experience in applying for work. In addition, reflecting Covid restrictions at the time, the programme was designed to be delivered remotely (building on the experience of other programmes which had had to transfer to this way of working part way through due to Covid).
- 1.6** Therefore, the evaluation sought to find learnings around: the length of time that different groups needed support for; the types of support that they needed and valued; the nature of jobs they found, and how if at all these differed to what they had done before.
- 1.7** In addition, the programme was designed at a time when large parts of labour market were closed down or severely restricted. However, over time, the labour market has opened up, had high levels of vacancies and there has been much more support to people seeking to find work. Therefore, the context for the programme has changed significantly during the programme's operation. The evaluation would seek to explore how the programme adapted and performed in light of this.

## Approach

- 1.8** The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach, including both quantitative data analysis and qualitative interviews with a range of key stakeholders. Initial monitoring data analysis was undertaken and used to identify areas to be explored in the qualitative fieldwork. Alongside the consultations, the monitoring data analysis was updated as additional data was received. The findings from the data analysis and consultations were synthesised to inform this report.
- 1.9** To date, there has been no publicly available data on the performance of the JETS programme. Therefore, monitoring data has been collected via the sub-regional leads and the figures included in this report are based on currently unpublished data. In the nature of such data it is inconsistent across providers and in reviewing the data we have identified some issues around quality and consistency which have arisen over the life of the programme. As such the data analysis should be treated with some caution.

**Figure 1-2: Approach to the evaluation**

Source: SQW

**1.10** The analysis and findings presented in this report come with some limitations and caveats, set out below:

- The key one is the limitations in the data as flagged above
- In examining learning around how the programmes have been implemented and the success of approaches taken by different providers, this evaluation has drawn primarily on self-reported qualitative feedback from different stakeholders. To mitigate against any response bias (e.g. unwillingness on the part of any stakeholder to report the shortcoming of their own organisation's approach), this feedback has in all cases been triangulated with: feedback from other stakeholders/beneficiaries in the same sub-region and type of role; feedback from stakeholders in other organisations involved in the same processes; and quantitative data, for evidence of any trend's/issue's likely prevalence.
- Provider recruitment of participants for fieldwork risks biasing the interview sample towards participants who have remained well engaged with the programme, as employment advisers cannot recruit those participants they no longer have close/any contact with. This limits the evaluation's ability to examine or draw conclusions about the experiences of participants who have disengaged at any point in their support, who might have had more to say about existing challenges facing each Programme.

## Structure of this report

**1.11** This report presents the findings from our evaluation of JETS, and is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** provides an overview of each sub-regional programme's delivery model
- **Chapter 3** examines referrals and starts on the programme
- **Chapter 4** details the profile of programme participants
- **Chapter 5** explores the support needs of participants and the support delivered on the programme

- **Chapter 6** outlines data on earnings outcomes and covers employment opportunities and in-work support
- **Chapter 7** sets out conclusions and implications.

## 2. Provider delivery models

- 2.1** This chapter outlines key elements of the delivery model used by providers in the four sub-regions, including payment mechanisms, client contact, staffing and devolution enhancements.

### Local delivery and support models

#### Payment mechanisms and targets

- 2.2** Across the four sub-regions, two different payment mechanisms had been adopted. Central London Forward (CLF) and Local London (LL) used a 'cost plus' model, whilst the West London Alliance (WLA) and South London Partnership (SLP) used a payment-by-results model. The 'cost plus' model, with payments based on numbers of starts and provider costs, does have targets but does not give providers a financial incentive to achieve outcomes. Instead, it was noted in CLF and LL that staff were encouraged to achieve outcomes by reference to professional pride and improving their ranking in the national performance tables. In WLA and SLP, 50% of provider payments are front-loaded as a service fee when clients join, whilst the remaining 50% of provider payments are outcome dependent. This model was chosen as it meant the provider had money to invest through the service fee, but also retained an incentive to achieve outcomes.
- 2.3** Three sub-regions set providers an earnings outcome target of 22% at the beginning of the programme whilst WLA set their earnings outcome target at 25%. In all sub-regions, the earnings outcome threshold was set at £1,000. DWP set a 22% target for the National JETS Programme. Both the target and earnings threshold were lower than those set for the WHP. Some providers increased their own internal targets for the second year of the programme. LL raised their own target to 30%, whilst SLP raised theirs to 38% in the second year.

#### Client contact

- 2.4** There are a number of Customer Service Standards<sup>5</sup> (CSSs) relating to client contact that the providers have to adhere to:
- Providers are to contact potential participants within two working days of receiving a referral to set up an initial appointment
  - The initial appointment will take place within 15 working days of the provider receiving the referral

<sup>5</sup> [Chapter 16: Performance Management, Assurance and Compliance Monitoring - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/614442/Chapter_16_Performance_Management_Assurance_and_Compliance_Monitoring_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

- Providers are to work with participants to explore their ambitions, goals, priorities and personal needs in order to formulate an action plan. This action plan must be finalised within 10 working days of the participant's start on the programme
- Providers are to engage participants every 10 working days as a minimum
- If a participant misses a meeting and the provider is not contacted by them with an explanation, the provider is to attempt to contact the participant within two working days with a view to resolving any issues.

**2.5** The referral and start process, and how well they are working, are discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters. In terms of contact with participants, in practice, contact has often been more frequent than every 10 working days. One provider was aiming to contact participants once per week, prioritising those who need more support for more frequent contact. Across the sub-regions, this more intensive support was partly to achieve good progress but also influenced by the stage of the participant's journey, with more frequent contact if a participant was doing a job application or preparing for an interview.

**2.6** There was much variation in terms of caseload sizes, both over time and in each sub-region. Generally, caseloads were higher towards the start of the programme and had gradually come down in most areas. This reflects the fact that the scale of initial recruitment was much higher than expected, as discussed in the next chapter. At the time of the evaluation, in SLP, the average caseload per employment adviser was 50-55, whilst the average across the contract for CLF was 64. In WLA, the average caseload was currently around 45, whereas one employment adviser reported having a caseload of 70 towards the beginning of the contract. In contrast, in LL, caseloads were still fairly high with one adviser reporting a current caseload of over 70 and generally they ranged from 60 to 100.

**2.7** As the JETS programme was introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was set up as a remote contract with all support delivered online, via email, telephone or video calls. One benefit of this approach was that it allowed employment advisers to book more calls in their diaries and accommodated participants who were anxious about travelling or could not afford to travel or had social anxiety. However, over time, some face-to-face elements have been introduced by providers, particularly for participants with language barriers or those who lacked digital skills. Remote support was still used predominantly but face-to-face provided an alternative approach if required.

## Staffing

**2.8** Providers in the four sub-regions had a number of core staff who were dedicated to working on the JETS contract. These tended to be at the managerial level (e.g., operations and/or delivery managers) and employment advisors. Alongside this, there were a number of support staff who either solely focused on the JETS contract in some sub-regions or had a remit that covered both the JETS programme and WHP in other sub-regions. These roles

included integration coordinators, employer engagement staff and support staff with a specific focus on skills or health and wellbeing.

- 2.9** It was noted in several sub-regions that employment advisers had come from varied backgrounds. Some had experience from working on previous welfare to work programmes, but others had come from outside the employability sector. This was in contrast to staff on the WHP, many of whom were very experienced employment advisers. The influx of new staff on the JETS programme increased the importance of training and upskilling staff, but it also meant that these new staff members were reported to bring a fresh pair of eyes and enthusiasm. Some advisers were also recruited after being on the JETS programme. For both of these groups, their background helped improve their relatability to clients.

### **Devolution enhancements**

- 2.10** As the JETS programme is devolved in London, the sub-regions have scope to implement certain enhancements that go above and beyond what is required. In general, the short time available to set up the programme and the light touch nature of support meant there was limited scope for real design changes. Rather the focus was on building on the infrastructure and ways of working developed through the Work and Health Programme. For example, in WLA, the introduction of the JETS programme led to the provider recruiting new, additional Integration Liaison Officers (ILOs) to improve relationships with JCP and local support services. There is at least one designated ILO for each borough and borough partners helped to design these roles to ensure they met local needs.
- 2.11** Less specific was a focus on local management seeking to work alongside providers to enhance performance and ensure alignment with local priorities. Again, this would build on the WHP experience and result in more scope to be flexible as needs arose through the programme. In Chapter 5 we describe a number of such changes. The view from providers was that the relationships and structures that they had with local commissioners enabled them to make these changes.

## 3. Referrals, starts and conversion rates

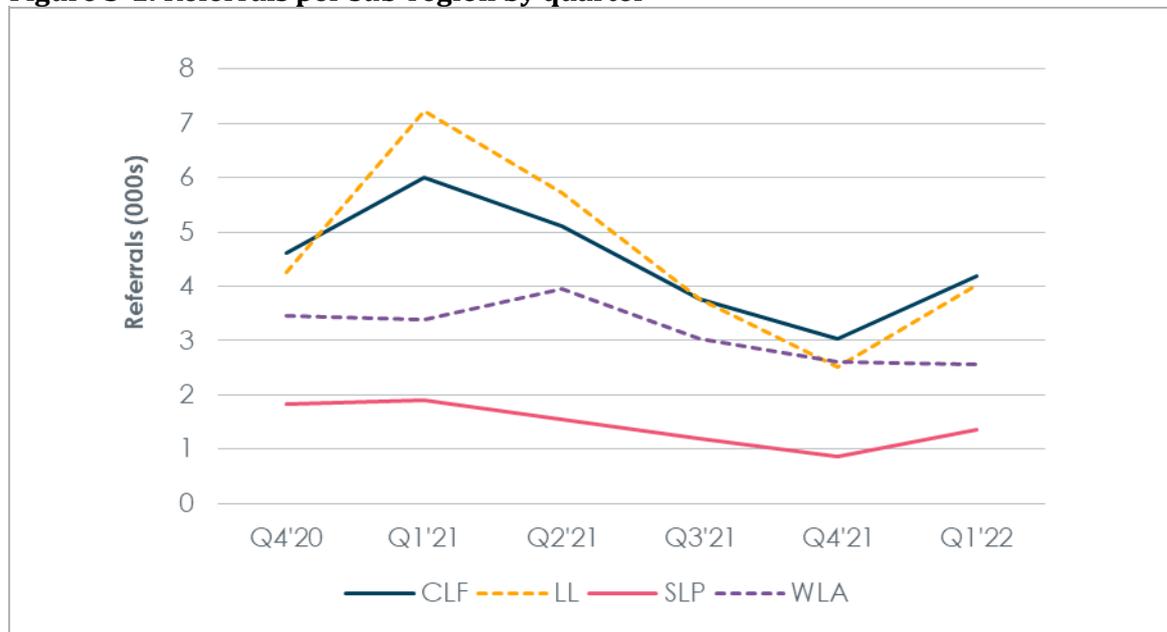
### Introduction

- 3.1** This chapter focuses on the beginning of the customer journey. It describes referral and start numbers and processes, including conversion rates and the transfer to the provider.

### Referral numbers

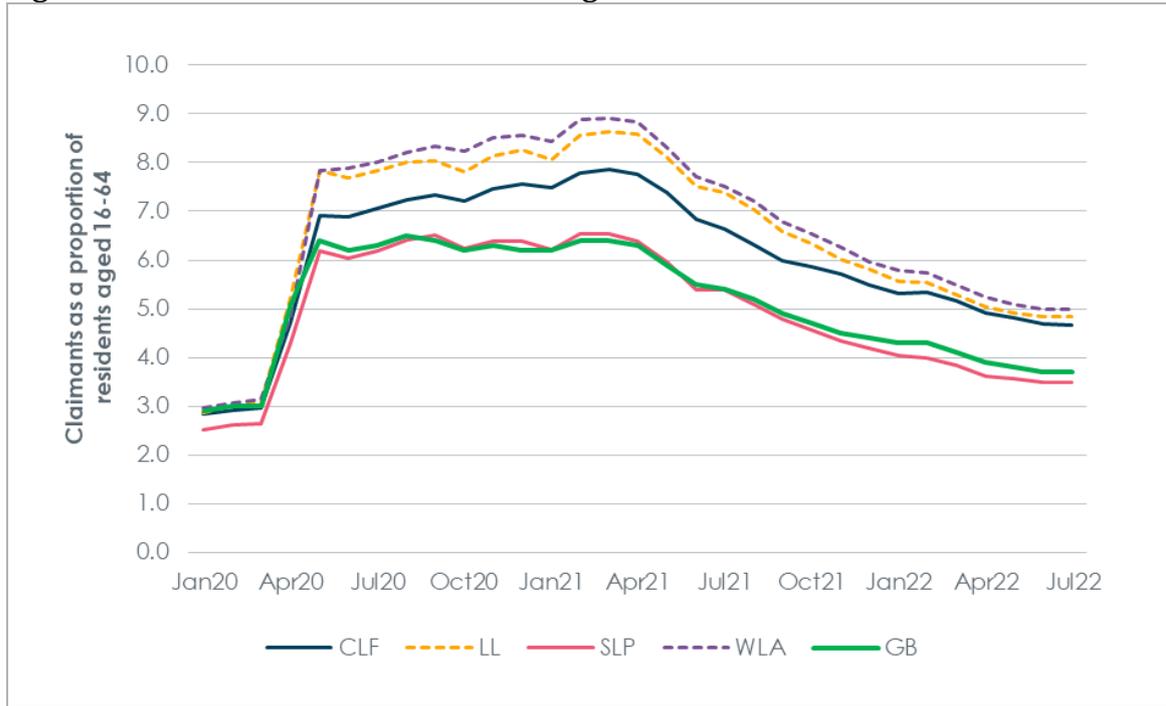
- 3.2** Across the four sub-regions, referral numbers peaked in either the first or second quarter of 2021, before declining throughout the remainder of the year. All sub-regions except WLA saw a slight recovery in referrals in the first quarter of 2022. The high number of referrals at the start of the programme reflected the sharp increase in the claimant count rate as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, as shown in Figure 3-2. In WLA, the proportion of claimants among residents aged 16-64 increased from 3.1% in February 2020 to 8.2% in August 2020, a 5.1 percentage point difference. The claimant rate rose 3.8 p.p. in SLP, 4.3 p.p. in CLF, and 5 p.p. in LL across the same time period. This created a pool of people looking for support in a very uncertain labour market, just before and as the programme was launched.
- 3.3** In a similar way the decline over time in 2021 may reflect the buoyancy of the labour market. That in turn could have led to people feeling that they could find work without the need for support. These figures were also influenced by the providers working with JCP to improve the referral process, as outlined below.

**Figure 3-1: Referrals per sub-region by quarter**



Source: SQW analysis. All charts use calendar year quarters.

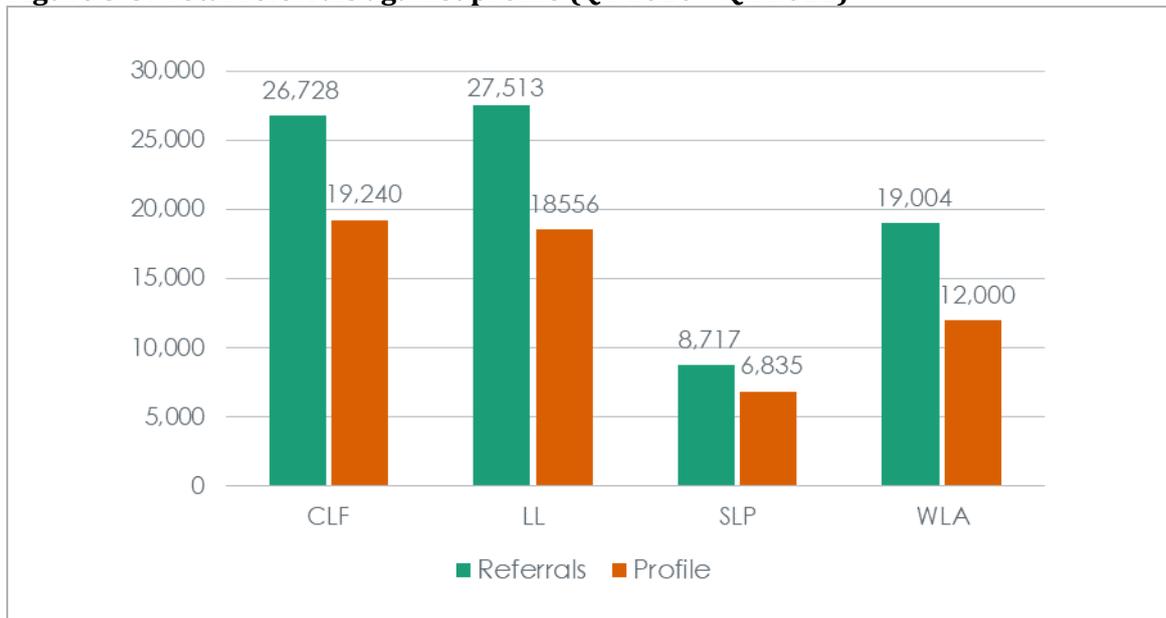
**Figure 3-2: Claimant rate in London sub-regions and Great Britain**



Source: SQW analysis of ONS claimant count data

**3.4** All four sub-regions have outperformed on total referrals against their original profile. Total referral volumes against profile ranged from 128% in SLP, 139% in CLF, 148% in LL and 158% in WLA. In WLA, the introduction of Integration Liaison Officers as a result of the JETS programme helped to improve relationships with local job centres, which is reflected in the high level of referrals against profile.

**Figure 3-3: Total referrals against profile (Q4 2020 – Q1 2022)**



Source: SQW analysis

- 3.5** Feedback from consultations reflects the findings from the data analysis. Initially, when the programme launched in October 2020, levels of demand were high which resulted in large numbers of referrals coming through to the providers. One provider commented that they were hitting around 400% of their referral target in the first few months which became difficult to cope with. This led some providers to put more emphasis on making sure those who started on the programme were the most suitable. For example, the provider in CLF used the first call with participants to test how motivated they were to find work and whether JETS was the right programme with the right type of support for them. They would also spend time explaining to job centre staff the reason their did not start rate was so high as a result of this.
- 3.6** However, while there was a very high number of referrals, providers reported issues with referrals not meeting the basic eligibility criteria. This may partly be due to high levels of recruitment within JCP during the pandemic as well as work coaches dealing with a higher number of claimants and thus having shorter calls with individual customers and less time to discuss and explain the programme, and of course the programme was new. Several initiatives were introduced to improve this situation, which are covered in more detail below.
- 3.7** Since the initial influx of referrals, providers reported monthly peaks and troughs in referral numbers, which partly reflected seasonal patterns (e.g., Christmas and summer holidays), as well as changes in the labour market (e.g., removal of the furlough scheme) and the tightening and relaxing of restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Ongoing work with job centre plus was required to maintain the profile of the programme and ensure a steady flow of referrals.
- 3.8** There has also been tension with the Restart programme, which was also introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic. The first referrals to the Restart scheme were in July 2021 with an initial focus on those who had been on Universal Credit in the Intensive Worksearch Regime for between 12 and 18 months. From January 2022, the eligibility criteria were widened so that Universal Credit claimants could be considered for Restart after nine months and with no upper limit.<sup>6</sup> The provider guidance produced by the Department for Work and Pensions also states that there is “*an opportunity for discretionary referrals to Restart at the right time in an individuals’ journey*”.<sup>7</sup>
- 3.9** With the Restart scheme targeting those who have been out of work for at least nine months there has been some overlap with the JETS programme, which has no upper limit on time out of work. Providers reporting receiving some participants who had been out of work for a long time. In addition, it was reported that the eligibility criteria for Restart had been relaxed at certain points which led to fewer referrals coming through to the JETS programme. This overlap between the programmes has caused some competition for referrals.

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<sup>6</sup> [How the Restart Scheme will work - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/how-the-restart-scheme-will-work)

<sup>7</sup> [Chapter 1: Introduction and overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/restart-scheme-introduction)

## Transfer to provider

- 3.10** Strong relationships between providers and JCP were seen as crucial to the delivery of the programme and all providers were keen to ensure frequent, two-way communications were in place. Ongoing resourcing was required to maintain this relationship and improve the profile of the JETS programme. Across all providers, weekly calls with JCP were in place as well as a single point of contact, the providers delivered presentations to staff, and good news stories and updates on new training providers were regularly shared. In WLA, after concerns about high numbers of ineligible referrals the provider introduced daily updates to JCP on referrals in order to address any issues in a timely manner, instead of waiting for the weekly update.
- 3.11** In LL, the provider introduced a Partnership Lead whose remit is to work with JCP to make sure the right referrals are coming through and ensure two-way communications between work coaches and advisers. As soon as they were able to, the Partnership Lead was based in the JCP offices as it was felt that this was more efficient and enabled them to quickly resolve issues with referrals as they happen. Since this role was introduced, the provider felt that communications with JCP had improved.
- 3.12** Another initiative being trialled in WLA to improve the volume and quality of referrals was the introduction of referral fairs. A referral fair was a specific day on which work coaches were invited to book potential participants onto a 15-minute slot to hear more about the JETS programme from provider staff. It was hoped that eight people would be booked into each 15-minute slot across five hours. This would be set up across three job centres, with the potential for the provider to speak to 480 potential participants in one day. This was a relatively new initiative so it was not possible to comment on how effective it had been.
- 3.13** Since autumn 2021, provider staff had started to go into job centres in person. In general, employment advisers or integration staff would go into the job centre at least once a week to speak to potential participants about the programme. They would also often deliver refresher training on the programme with work coaches and answer queries. Consultees commented that having this in-person presence helped to improve relationships and the quality of referrals being received.
- 3.14** Providers have also increased the amount of pre-screening before participants are referred. For example, in CLF, once a work coach identifies a potential participant for the programme, an Integration Coordinator will speak to the participant to explain the programme and ensure that it is appropriate for them, i.e. they are motivated to find work, interested in and able to benefit from the support on offer, and have a reasonable expectation of finding work in the period of the support. This information is then fed back to the work coach and suitable customers are referred to the programme.
- 3.15** Feedback from work coaches indicated that the referral process for JETS was one of the easiest, when compared to other similar provision that customers could be referred to. This was due to the limited amount of information that needed to be inputted into the system in

order to make a referral. Due to work coaches are often being short on time, a quick and simple referral process was seen as beneficial.

## Referral to start conversion rates

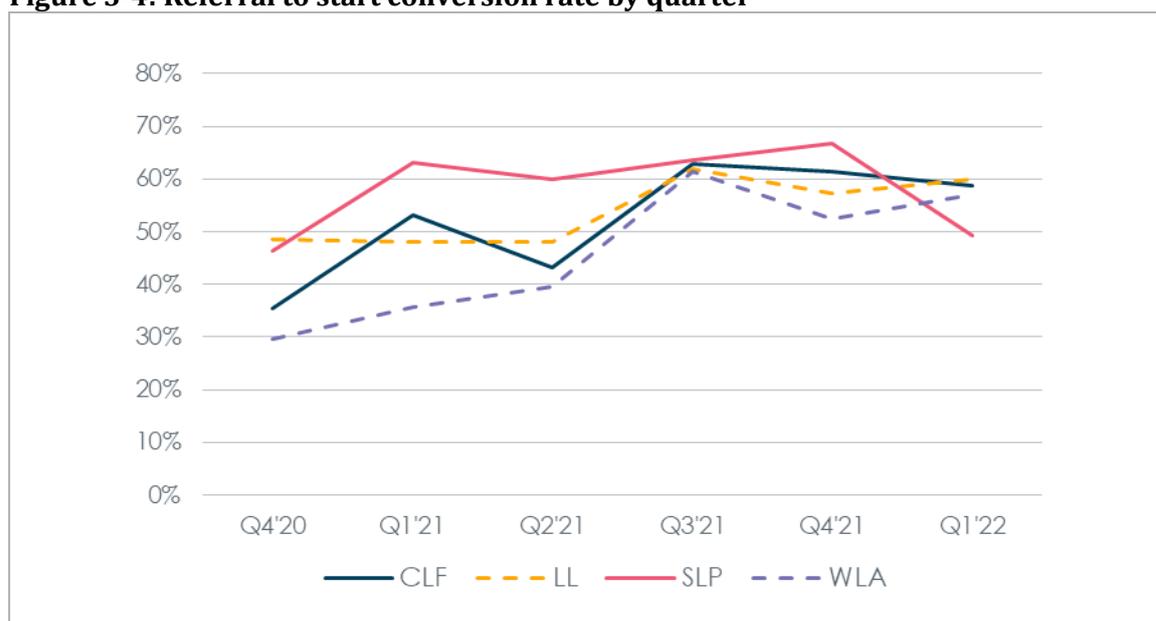
**3.16** The referral to start conversion rate indicates how effectively providers are converting referrals from JCP into starts on the programme. For the contract as a whole, the referral-to-start conversion rate has been highest in SLP at 58%. This is followed by two sub-regions where roughly half of referrals are converted to starts (LL at 53%, and CLF at 51%). WLA has had the lowest conversion rate at 43%.

**Table 3-1: Total referrals and starts**

Oct'20-Mar'22	Total referrals	Programme starts	Conversion rate
CLF	26,728	13,734	51%
LL	27,517	14,465	53%
SLP	8,717	4,991	57%
WLA	19,004	8,498	45%
<b>Total</b>	<b>81,966</b>	<b>41,688</b>	<b>52%</b>

*Source: SQW analysis*

**3.17** However, when considered at a more granular level, the referral to start conversion rate has fluctuated over time in all sub-regions. In Q4 2021, SLP recorded the highest conversion rate at nearly 70%, but dropped 16 p.p. in the next quarter. In the first quarter of the programme, WLA recorded the lowest conversion rate at 30%. It was felt that this was due to receiving a high number of ineligible participants (a common issues across areas) and stricter compliance checks due to receiving ESF match funding. The conversion rate did improve, due to increased communications with JCP and changes to the start process, and peaked in Q3 2021, but has since declined. The conversion rates in CLF and LL have generally improved over time and have remained fairly stable since Q3 2021.

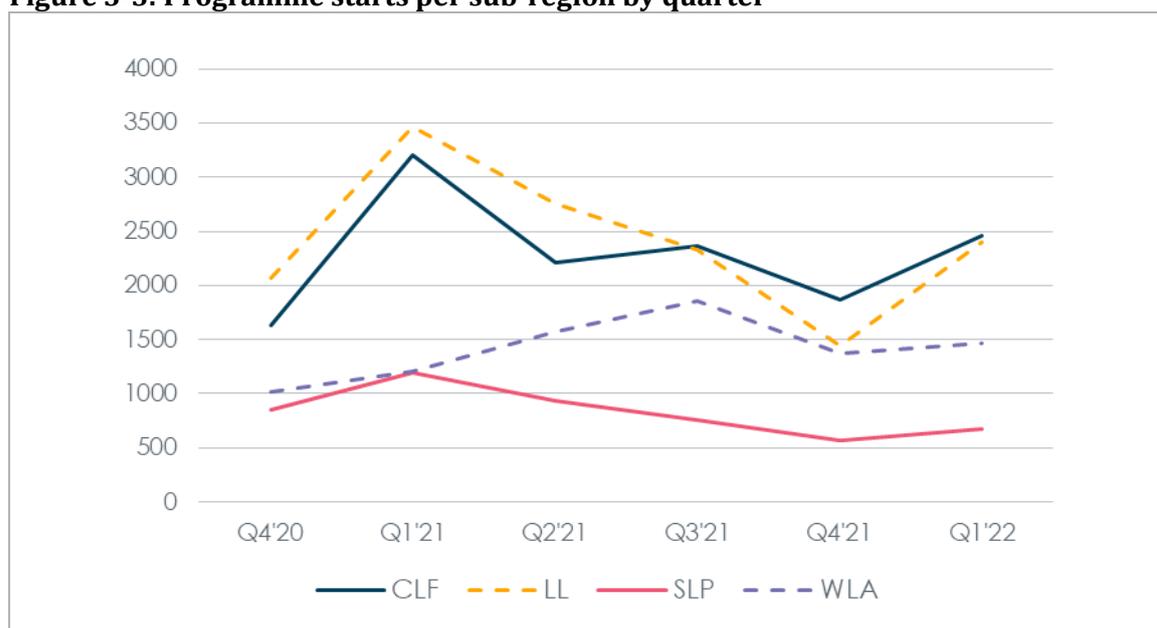
**Figure 3-4: Referral to start conversion rate by quarter**

Source: SQW analysis

- 3.18** Providers felt that their referral to start conversion rate was affected by the quality of referrals they received, with many being ineligible to join the programme, and a result of being unable to contact potential participants. One provider suggested that the latter was partly due to participants finding work between the referral and initial appointment.
- 3.19** Various methods had been implemented to try and improve the conversion rate, most notably increasing the intensity of the initial contact between the provider and potential participant. For example, the provider in CLF has learnt from a supply chain partner who had a higher conversion rate and will try to contact a participant at least five or six times using both text messages and emails in the course of a few days. When an initial appointment is booked in, the details of this are shared with the work coach so that they can add it to the customer's journal. If the initial appointment is missed, a follow-up appointment will be immediately booked.
- 3.20** A similar approach was also being taken by the provider in SLP. Provider staff will call customers five times within two days, follow up by email and if there is no response by day three, this will be raised with the relevant work coach at the job centre. In addition, a diagnostic call will be booked in regardless. Once provider staff speak to potential participants, they feel they are strong on the upfront sell.

## Start numbers

- 3.21** In line with referrals, starts on the programme peaked for three sub-regions in early 2021. The exception was WLA, where starts were at their highest in Q3 of 2021 and have declined and stabilised since then. In LL and SLP, starts on the programme declined across 2021 before recovering somewhat in early 2022. CLF has seen the most fluctuation over time in terms of start numbers with performance improving slightly in early 2022.

**Figure 3-5: Programme starts per sub-region by quarter**

Source: SQW analysis

- 3.22** Performance on start numbers has been fairly similar to original expectations in CLF, LL and SLP, with these three sub-regions very close to profile (97%, 99% and 102% respectively). This is in contrast to the overperformance on referral volumes and highlights the importance of the discussion on conversion rates above. It may also reflect the challenges of dealing with such high referral volumes at the start of the programme.
- 3.23** In contrast, WLA has underperformed against profile figures with almost 4,000 fewer starts than expected (70% of profile). As noted above, WLA had received many more referrals than expected but generally had the lowest conversion rate of the four sub-regions, hence a lower number of participants joining the programme. WLA was the only provider to receive additional funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) which increased their starts profile and meant stricter compliance checks on eligibility were needed. This led to more people being deemed ineligible, often due to a lack of some evidence. Due to the initial challenges with this, the provider implemented compliance team leaders and compliance officers to meet these requirements and improve their evidence base and internal processes.
- 3.24** The provider in CLF initially introduced similar compliance checks as they expected to use ESF money to increase starts but due to delays with receiving this, it has not been used. Due to this, the provider reduced their compliance checks and saw an increase in their conversion rate and the volume of starts on the programme.

**Figure 3-6: Total programme starts against profile**

Source: SQW analysis

- 3.25** For three providers, a specific team completed the initial appointment before participants were assigned an employment adviser. This was the case in CLF and LL where the initial appointment included some administrative tasks (e.g., collecting contact details, demographic data), providing an overview of the support available on the programme and getting to know the participant. This was seen as a key opportunity to ‘sell’ the programme to participants, in particular the upskilling and in-work support that was available. In LL, if a participant agrees to join the programme, they are then sent a welcome pack.
- 3.26** At the start of the contract, the provider in WLA did not have a team dedicated to initial appointments, but in order to improve their referral to start conversion rate this was introduced around July 2021. This team do not hold a caseload, instead their diary is dedicated to conducting the initial appointment. This makes it easier to book in meetings with potential participants and this team can be expanded and contracted as required. Another benefit has been a reduction in administration for employment advisers who can now focus on getting to know the participant and their support needs during their first call. The positive impact of this change can be seen in Figure 3-4 and the significant increase in the conversion rate from c.40% to c.60% between Q2 2021 and Q3 2021.
- 3.27** In SLP, the initial call and appointment was conducted by employment advisers alongside their other work. This caused some challenges with diary management during busy periods given how resource intensive this process could be, especially when contact details were incorrect or missing. However, advisers felt that the call covered all the information needed and provided a good foundation for the subsequent support.

## 4. Programme participants

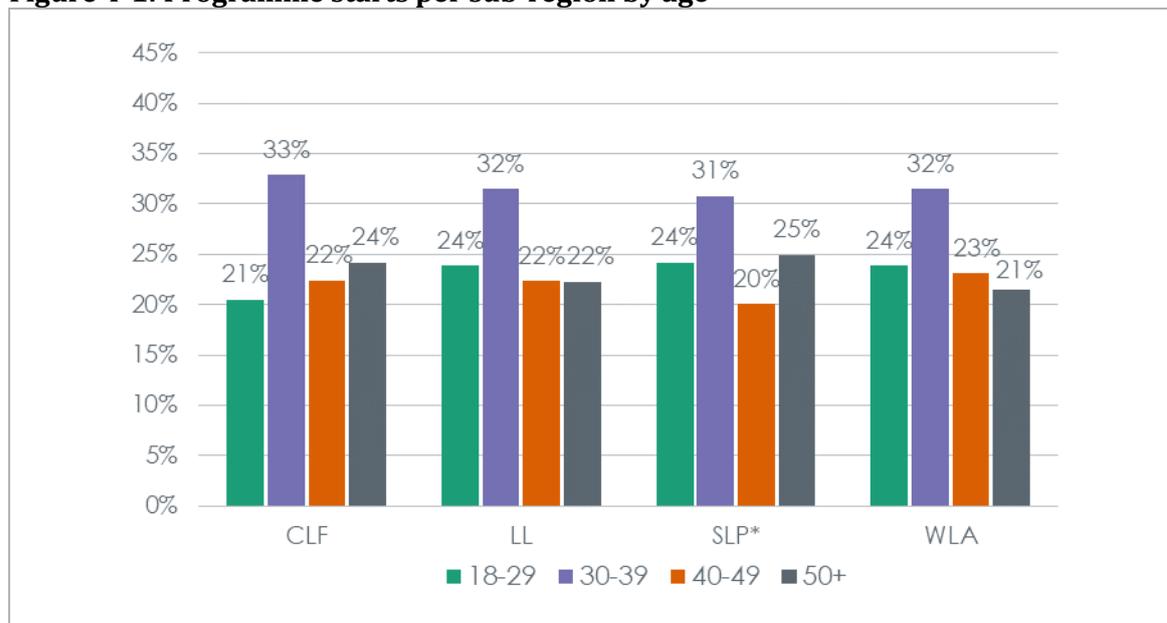
### Introduction

- 4.1** This chapter provides an overview of the profile of participants, and outlines how this has changed over time and how it compares to the WHP. It should be noted here that data received from the providers was of variable quality, with some significant gaps. Therefore, the data included may not always present a full picture of participants on the programme. Where there are particular issues we have sought to flag these. It is hoped some of these issues can be resolved when (if) DWP publishes official data on JETS, in the same way as it has one WHP.

### Participant profile

- 4.2** For all four sub-regions the ages of those starting the programme were very similar, with around one third aged 30-39 and one fifth to one quarter in the other age groups.

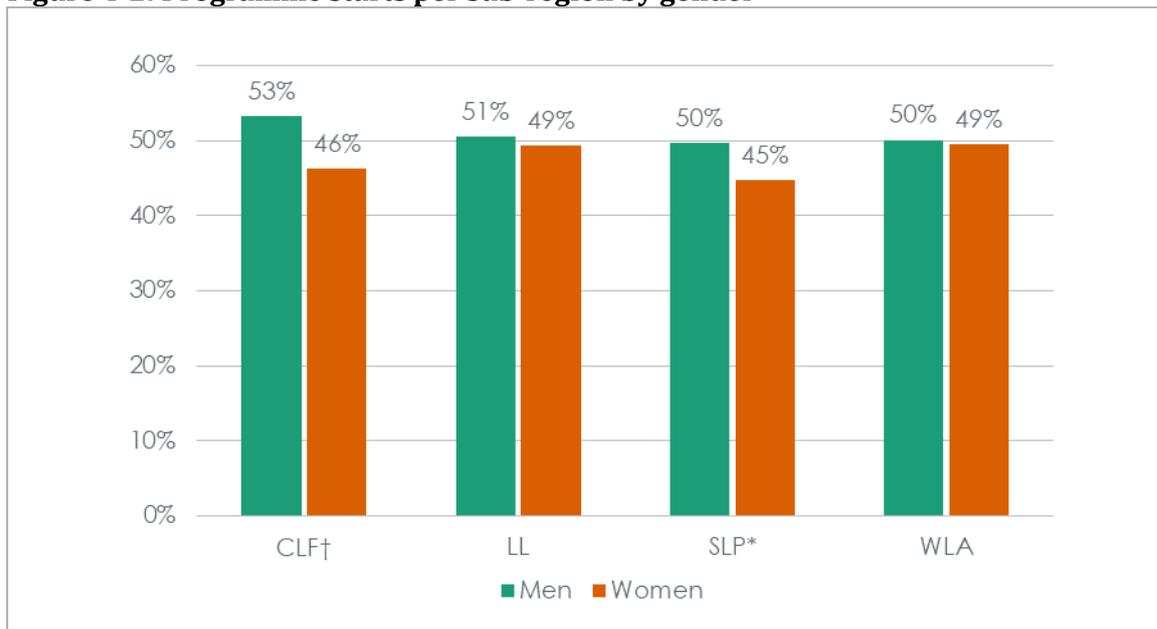
**Figure 4-1: Programme starts per sub-region by age**



*Source: SQW analysis. \*SLP data is missing 1,915 programme starts observations for data at the individual level, which is used to calculate these figures. Percentage baseline is total number of people starting the programme in the respective provider.*

- 4.3** In two sub-regions (LL and WLA), participants on the programme are very evenly split between men and women. The proportion of men is higher in CLF and SLP, although this may be skewed due to missing data in both areas.

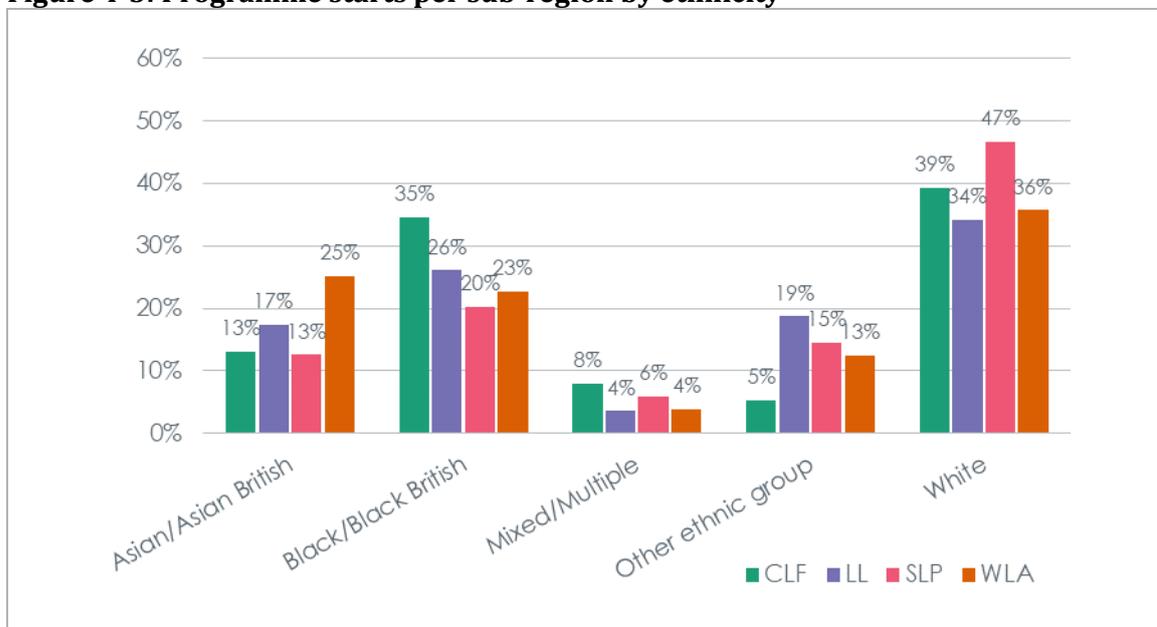
**Figure 4-2: Programme starts per sub-region by gender**



Source: SQW analysis. Note: chart does not include those who responded as 'Other'. †Excludes missing data from the baseline (3,916 missing). \*SLP data is missing 1,915 programme starts observations for data at the individual level, which is used to calculate these figures. Percentage baseline is total number of people starting the programme in the respective provider..

**4.4** As would be anticipated, programme participants were ethnically diverse. In all sub-regions white participants accounted for fewer than half of all participants, down to around one third in LL.

**Figure 4-3: Programme starts per sub-region by ethnicity**



Source: SQW analysis. Base line calculation does not include responses where the ethnicity was not stated. These were CLF = 4,359; WLA = 792; LL = 529; SLP = 992. In addition, SLP data is missing 2,397 programme starts observations for data at the individual level, which is used to calculate these figures. Percentage baseline is total number of people starting the programme in the respective provider.

- 4.5** Data on qualifications was only available from CLF and WLA. The two areas used different scales (and CLF is missing data on almost one third of participants). Both areas have a significant proportion of highly skilled participants on the JETS programme. In CLF, almost half of participants are educated to either A level, NVQ 3 or degree level, whilst in WLA, over 60% of participants have post-secondary or tertiary level education.

**Table 4-1: Highest qualification (CLF and WLA)**

CLF	%	WLA	%
No qualifications	3	Below Primary education (ISCED level 0) – Other disadvantaged	1
Below GCSE level	3	Primary education or equivalent (ISCED 1)	3
Under 5 GCSEs at grade A*-C or eq.	8	Lower secondary education or equivalent (ISCED 2)	8
5 or more GCSEs at grade A*-C or eq.	8	Upper secondary education or equivalent (ISCED 3)	25
A levels of NVQ level 3 or eq.	22	Post-secondary (non-tertiary) education or equivalent (ISCED 4)	30
Degree or higher	25	Tertiary education or equivalent (ISCED 5-8)	33
Don't know	2	Missing	0
No data	29		

Source: SQW analysis

### Change over time

- 4.6** Overall, staff at the providers felt that the profile of participants on the JETS programme was as they expected, in particular that they were generally ready for work. However, all felt that the profile had changed over time. Initially, participants joining the programme were those who had lost their job due to the Covid-19 pandemic or had been made redundant after a long period in work. Some participants came from sectors that had been closed down or severely restricted due to the pandemic, such as hospitality or aviation. Participants joining near the start of the programme had higher skill levels and were more job ready, only requiring some light-touch, employability support, such as updating their CV or adapting to online job searching and applying process.
- 4.7** However, provider staff thought that participants who had joined the programme more recently had more barriers to work, were lower skilled, and/or had been out of work for longer. Those who were long term unemployed often had greater issues with confidence, mental health and motivation. This reflects changes in the labour market as the unemployment rate in London declined throughout 2021 and the redundancy rate had returned to pre-pandemic levels by spring 2021. In addition, at this time, those who lost their job during the Covid-19 pandemic but did not want to re-enter the labour market (due to a health condition or care responsibilities) might have been returning to work. These changes

meant a different pool of potential participants who could join the programme, who would likely be less immediately employable than those joining at the start of the programme.

**4.8** Providers were also seeing more participants who faced language barriers, which may partly be a result of refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine joining the programme when eligible, although this was likely to account for a small proportion of participants.

**4.9**

**4.10** Table 4-2: below illustrates how WLA saw the proportion of participants who were long term unemployed when they joined the programme increase from a quarter (25%) in the first half of the programme to over half (55%) in the second half of the programme.

**Table 4-2: Unemployment status upon joining the programme (WLA)**

	Oct 20 – Jun 21	Jul 21 – Mar 22
Inactive	0.1	0
Long term unemployed	25	55
Unemployed	75	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: SQW analysis of WLA monitoring data*

**4.11** The implications of this change in profile for the support delivered to participants and outcomes achieved is explored in the next two chapters.

### Comparison with the Work and Health Programme

**4.12** Whilst providers felt that participants' barriers to work had increased over time, they still thought that participants were the right fit for the programme and that those with more severe barriers, such as a long-term health condition, criminal conviction or those dealing with issues of homelessness or addiction, would go onto the WHP. This suggests that the referral process was working well with the right people going to each programme. As noted earlier in the report, this reflects the work done by the providers to raise awareness and improve understanding of the programme among work coaches and other DWP staff, with frequent, two-way communications in place.

**4.13** WHP can offer more support over a longer period of time, whilst JETS was seen as better suited to those requiring lighter touch support that was more immediate employability focused. In addition, it was also acknowledged that people can receive support from the JETS programme and then go onto the Restart or WHP afterwards if they still need support, and this has influenced some decisions to refer participants to the JETS programme.

**4.14** There were also demographic differences between the profile of participants on the JETS programme and WHP. As the charts below demonstrate, roughly one in four participants on the WHP were over 50, with remaining participants fairly evenly split between the other three

age categories. In all four sub-regions, over half of participants were male. This shows that compared to WHP, JETS clients were:

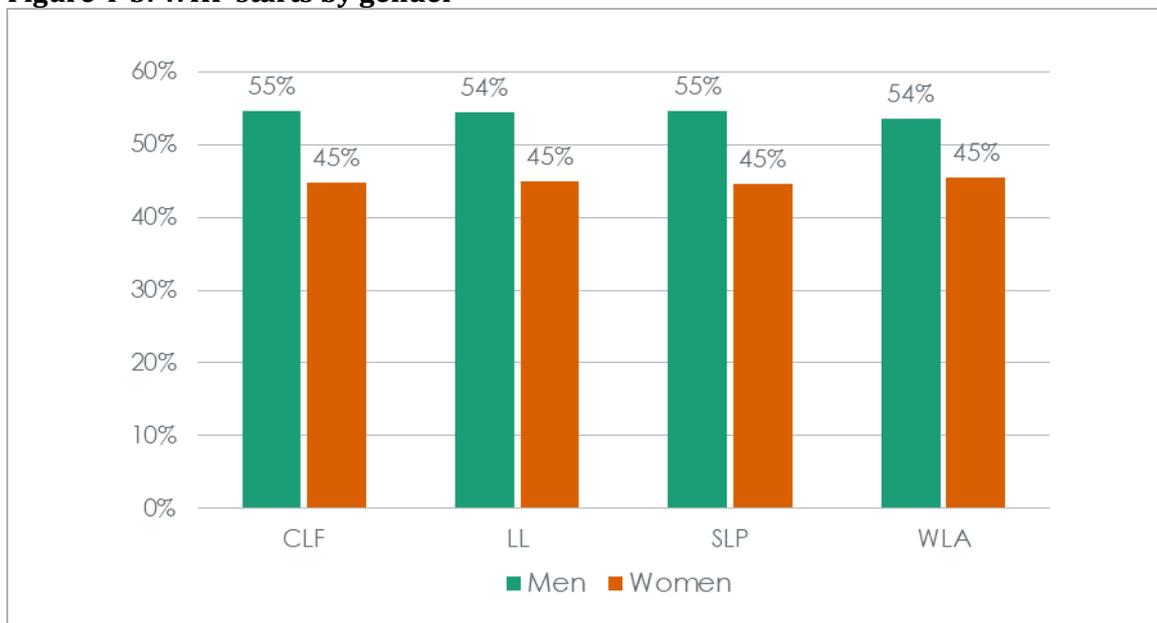
- Generally younger, about half as likely to be aged over 50
- Very slightly more likely to be male.

**Figure 4-4: WHP starts by age**



Source: DWP Stat X-plore data

**Figure 4-5: WHP starts by gender**



Source: DWP Stat X-plore data

## 5. Support delivered

### Introduction

- 5.1** This chapter covers the support needs of participants, how this has been reflected in the support being offered, and the role of integration with other local support services.

### Support needs

- 5.2** Once participants are onboarded onto the programme, they are assigned an employment adviser. All participants receive personalised support from the adviser, who oversees their journey through the programme. The employment adviser would work with them to put together an Action Plan based on their ambitions, goals and support needs.
- 5.3** The most common support need among participants was employability support. This covered help with CV writing, interview skills, job searching and confidence and motivation. For some, the support has centred around navigating the labour market and applying for jobs after being in work for a long time, especially getting used to job searching online and digital application processes. Participants have also required support with identifying transferable skills, particularly for those who have had to look for work in a different sector to the one they were previously working in. For example, a survey of participants<sup>8</sup> by Shaw Trust in September 2021 found that 41% were applying for jobs that were unrelated to their last role, 44% were applying for all jobs and 15% were applying for jobs in their previous sector. These types of support are different to that delivered through WHP, reflecting the different nature of the client base.
- 5.4** There has also been a need for upskilling. For some participants, this has been in relation to basic functional skills, digital literacy or basic IT skills. Over the course of the programme, providers have also seen more participants with language barriers or English as a second language. Other participants have gone on short training courses to help them upskill in a particular area or to help them move into a new sector, e.g. getting an SIA license or undertaking HGV driver training.
- 5.5** Some people have also required mental health and wellbeing support. The focus on this has been greater than some providers expected initially, with some issues growing as a result of living through the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of this support was delivered internally, e.g., Reed in Partnership had a health and wellbeing adviser who would undertake 1-2-1s with participants on an ad-hoc basis, but if needed participants could be signposted to external support. Two providers, Ingeus and Maximus have been referring participants to Better Health Generation, which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. This external support was introduced as the growing need for support was recognised.

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<sup>8</sup> The survey was completed by 218 participants.

- 5.6** Providers in each sub-region had also been able to offer material support to participants, such as covering travel costs for interviews and during the first few weeks at work, buying clothes in which to attend an interview or specialist equipment for a particular role.

## Support delivered

- 5.7** A key focus for the initial support was checking and updating participant's CVs. Providers noted that they would try to update or create a CV for participants within their first four weeks on the programme in order to get participants ready to start applying for vacancies. Staff at the provider in SLP felt that having quite intensive initial support, e.g., putting together an action plan, looking at possible training courses and having a CV within four weeks, helped to get buy-in from participants, most likely because these people had recent work experience and were keen to find work quickly. Taking immediate steps would show that the programme was supporting their ambitions.
- 5.8** Alongside this, two providers, Shaw Trust and Maximus, would invite participants to join a group induction session. At Shaw Trust, this was titled 'Your JETS journey' and gave an overview of the programme, the support on offer (e.g., training courses, mentoring) and what participants can expect. After about four weeks on the programme, participants would be invited to a separate session run by the employer account managers (EAMs) in order to introduce themselves and some of the job roles available. This was also an opportunity for the EAMs to get to know what jobs participants were looking for.
- 5.9** During the programme, advisers had to be in contact with participants every 10 working days as a minimum, but support was often more frequent than this, as noted earlier in this report. During these regular check-in calls, employment advisers would discuss a participant's progress against agreed actions, potential job opportunities or sectors, and provide support with wellbeing and motivation. Participants could also be directed to training courses, which were either delivered internally by providers, or by external training partners (as discussed later in this chapter). The providers had their own digital college or hubs, which they could refer participants to in order to complete online courses.

## Changes to the support offer during the programme

- 5.10** During the second year of the programme, Shaw Trust increased the amount of provision which was delivered 1-2-1, with one staff member stating that almost 85% of support was being delivered in this format by summer 2022. Previously, the majority of support had been delivered in a group format but, after conducting research with participants and other stakeholders, it was decided that this was not the most effective format for the support and instead they wanted the support offer to be more person-centred. Provider staff felt that it was also easier to build rapport in a 1-2-1 setting and help progress participants towards the labour market.

- 5.11** Alongside this, a voluntary mentoring service was also introduced which was delivered by Shaw Trust's contracted supply chain partners. This was introduced to provide additional personalised support to participants on a more frequent basis, with over half of participants having a mentor at the time of the evaluation. Employment advisers meet with participants roughly once a fortnight, but it was felt that this was a long time between 1-2-1 contact, so, if a participant chooses to have a mentor, they will meet with the mentor the week between meeting with their employment adviser. It was felt that this increased intensity of support helped to keep momentum in the participant's journey.
- 5.12** The mentors were not given KPIs or targets, so that the relationship could be focused on removing any barriers to work. There were frequent communications between mentors and employment advisers to share updates and sometimes they organised three-way review meetings. Anecdotally, provider staff felt that this additional support had helped participants secure a job outcome sooner.
- 5.13** During the course of the programme, Reed in Partnership had started offering additional direct support by introducing a week-long pre-employment training bootcamp. This was led by an employment and skills tutor and was mostly delivered remotely, with some face-to-face sessions for those who struggled with technology. The course covered CV writing (including the purpose of a CV and linking it to a particular job role), transferable skills, effective job searching (including open and hidden job markets, how to use social media, and how to research and contact employers), interview skills (including practice questions and scenarios in break out groups) and mock interview sessions. On day three, which focused on effective job searching, the recruitment managers joined the session to explain their role, the support they offered and to reiterate how to tailor a CV for a specific employer or role. Staff at the provider felt that this support, especially in a group format, helped to build participant's confidence and motivation and move them closer to the labour market.

### Reflections on remote delivery

- 5.14** Due to the programme being set up during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was designed as a remote support programme with all support delivered via email, telephone or video calls. Delivering remote support had some benefits, such as making the programme more convenient and accessible to those participants who did not want to travel (especially during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and related to the costs of travel) and convenient to advisers who did not need to travel between appointments. It also meant that the providers could employ individuals who were not living in London as employment advisers, opening up a wider talent pool to draw upon.
- 5.15** However, remote support did not suit everyone, especially those who were lacking digital skills. Digital accessibility was a key issue faced by providers who recognised that identifying any digital support needs as early as possible was important. Accessing remote support was also more challenging for those who faced language barriers. In addition, it was felt to be easier and quicker to build trust and rapport with a participant face-to-face.

**5.16** Therefore, when restrictions eased, providers started introducing an element of face-to-face support when appropriate, with one provider planning to move increasingly to this format. This was due to the fact that most jobs were in person, and it was felt that participants needed to get used to travelling and meeting people. All provider expected to deliver a hybrid model going forwards to reflect that while the online model was thought to have been effective there were concerns that it worked less well for some people and made it harder to build relationships in the early stages of people joining the programme.

### **Integration and external support**

**5.17** In general integration with local training providers and other support services was less of a priority on the JETS programme than WHP, partly due to the light touch, short term nature of the support and the related lower levels of need among participants. All providers utilised links with local colleges, training providers and other support organisations that had been established through the WHP. This made it easier when setting up the JETS programme as there was a base to build on for wider support.

**5.18** Some participants were referred to external support. This covered sector-specific upskilling and retraining, particularly accredited courses, mental health and wellbeing, and addressing homelessness or language barriers amongst other things. Integration coordinators or skills provision managers, who often worked on the WHP as well, were responsible for building and maintaining relationships with external organisations. Frequent communications between these staff members and employment advisers meant that changes to support needs could be raised and appropriate provision sourced.

**5.19** The level of external provision utilised had increased over time, particularly as the profile of participants had shifted towards those facing more barriers to employment. For example, in CLF, Ingeus had introduced a social inclusion course run by an external partner for those who had been out of work longer term. The course focused on building participant's confidence, provided opportunities to meet others and raised awareness of community activities. Support with mental health was another area where the support offered had been enhanced. Over the course of the programme, Maximus and Ingeus had commissioned support from Better Health Generation who offered physical and mental health clinical support. Each provider had commissioned them to deliver two of the following three programmes:

- Steps2Work – a five session structured programme for participants who were looking for work, considering work or transitioning into work who had mental/physical health or confidence challenges
- Health Advisory - up to five sessions, for participants at any point in their journey. This course was appropriate for participants who may have had a FIT note and those who may have had more moderate to complex barriers
- Engage2Evolve – a five session structured programme for participants who were engaging sporadically with the mainstream work programme due to a health, confidence

or motivation barrier. The aim of this programme was to remove barriers and progress the participant to engage more consistently with the employment adviser.

- 5.20** For some providers, there had been a particular focus on external training courses that led to a guaranteed job interview, such as sector-based work academy programmes (SWAPs). Provider staff generally preferred these opportunities to other training courses as they supported participants with vocational training and were more likely to lead to a sustainable job outcome. SWAPs were run in a variety of sectors, including hospitality, customer service, security and construction. Provider staff responsible for skills provision had been able to identify external organisations which were delivering SWAPs and organise participants to attend these courses.
- 5.21** Maximus were working with their community partnership network to provide external support. The network consisted of over 100 local suppliers who could offer holistic wraparound support for participants in a range of areas, including mental health, debt management and counselling. Maximus had appointed a manager to oversee the network and this role involved regularly reviewing the offer, making sure it continued to meet participant needs and maintaining relationships with suppliers.
- 5.22** Some external support was delivered by contracted supply chain partners. For example, in WLA, Shaw Trust worked with four supply chain partners who offered employability support, language support, homelessness support and support with drug and alcohol rehabilitation. For example, one of the partners offers fast-track one-week courses on customer services, counselling skills and understanding children and young people's mental health.
- 5.23** Provider staff felt that the programme was well integrated with these partners, with regular information sharing on participant journeys. Staff at the partners would also undertake a three-month review with participants. This was viewed as an employability reassessment to reflect on what had been achieved to date and where the focus needed to be going forward. The outcome of this meeting was fed back to the employment adviser either through sharing notes or setting up a follow-up call. It appears a good example of integrated working between the lead provider and its supply chain.
- 5.24** A small number of interviews were conducted with external partners and, in general, staff at these partners had good working relationships with provider staff, with regular communications and smooth referral processes. Some partners had joined internal team meetings at the provider in order to explain their provision and how they can support individuals. For most external partners, the level of referrals had been as expected, but for a couple the referral volumes had been lower and more sporadic than expected. It was felt that there needed to be a level of trust between employment advisers and external partners so that advisers felt comfortable referring participants, knowing the level of support they would be getting from the external organisation and that there would be feedback on what had happened. Regular communications and interactions between provider and external partner staff, as well as a good level of feedback on how the participant had got on, was one way of building this trust.

## Participant feedback

**5.25** Based on a small number of interviews, participants were satisfied with the support they had received and found their employment advisers friendly and approachable. All of the participants had received employability support on CV writing, job searching and interview skills, but also appreciated the emotional and wellbeing support which helped to reduce feelings of isolation or anxiety. One participant commented that staff had “*brought out the best in me*”. For some, the programme was seen as playing a ‘critical friend’ role on their way back into employment with the support more light-touch and tailored. For others, there was a greater focus on upskilling or developing their written and spoken English through conversation clubs. Participants were happy with the frequency and format of the support they had received, with one participant wanting weekly rather than fortnightly calls.

## Reflections on support offer

**5.26** Provider staff felt that one of the places where the programme added value was being able to dedicate more time to working with participants than was offered by JCP staff. Work coaches often had 5-10 minute appointment slots with customers and were limited in the support they could provide, whereas provider staff could arrange longer appointments and provide more personalised support. Provider staff commented that participants appreciated having someone they could talk to, who would guide them through their journey back to work. In addition, as the programme was mostly working with those who were short-term unemployed, they tended to be more motivated to find and get back into work, which made it easier to work with them.

**5.27** Reflecting on the length of the programme, provider staff felt that as participants were only on the programme for six months, the support was more intensive and focused. It was felt that advisers and participants worked together with a bit more pace and urgency than on other, longer-term programmes. One staff member felt that participants were more engaged knowing the support was only available for six months and it gave them impetus to push ahead to get things done.

**5.28** However, the short-term nature of the programme did lead to some tensions with the amount of reskilling that could be achieved and the length of training courses that could be provided. Any training courses that lasted longer than five or six months were not viable, which imposed some limits on what could be offered and so the extent the programme could support those people who wished to make a major career change.

## 6. Earnings Outcomes

### Introduction

- 6.1** This chapter examines work with employers, progress made in moving participants towards work, performance on job outcomes, and in-work support.

### Working with employers

- 6.2** At each provider there was a team dedicated to engaging employers and sourcing vacancies who either worked solely on the JETS contract or worked across multiple employment support programmes. These roles involved reaching out to employers through various means, which included organising jobs fairs, sharing labour market knowledge and available vacancies with employment advisers and participants, and screening participants for certain job roles. Within their employer engagement team, Ingeus had staff members who specialised in self-employment and executive employment coaches who worked with participants who had previously been in senior management or worked as directors and had higher salary expectations. Having a dedicated employer engagement team was valued by provider staff and led to a greater range of available job opportunities for participants.
- 6.3** It was felt that close communications and collaboration between employment advisers and employer engagement staff was important in making things work smoothly. This was especially important as the nature of vacancies being sought by participants changed over time, as discussed in more detail later in this chapter. At Reed in Partnership, the employer engagement team would join monthly caseload reviews with the employment advisers to understand which vacancies participants were looking for and would then use this information to target their business development work with employers. This process was greatly valued by employment advisers and had led to employer engagement staff sourcing vacancies that were more suitable for participants. At Shaw Trust, the employer engagement team joined the weekly training session for employment advisers. During this session, there was an opportunity for the employer engagement team to share current vacancies and for employment advisers to ask questions the available about job roles.
- 6.4** Employer engagement teams tried to target employers who would offer some form of advantage to JETS participants which was different to how they would treat the open market. For example, this might be a sector-based work academy, a guaranteed interview, specific recruitment events for JETS participants or exclusivity to certain vacancies. This also offers benefits to employers who can access a new talent pool, reduce their recruitment costs, have participants pre-screened by the providers and address corporate social responsibility commitments. Working with good quality employers was important to providers who wanted participants to enter good work and be able to sustain their employment.

## Moving participants towards work

- 6.5** Whilst no systematic data was available on soft outcomes achieved by participants, provider staff reported participants realising positive outcomes from the programme, including increased confidence and motivation, improved wellbeing, improved job searching and interview skills and gaining skills and accreditations. A survey conducted by Shaw Trust of participants who exited the programme during Q2 2021 found that 71% of participants were either satisfied or very satisfied with the programme, 73% rated the level of support they received as good or excellent, and 77% would recommend the programme to friends and family. A similar survey conducted by Ingeus in August 2021 found that 80% of participants were very or fairly satisfied with their overall experience of the services provided by the programme.
- 6.6** Based on a small number of interviews as part of this evaluation, participants reported a range of outcomes, including:
- Increased confidence and motivation
  - Improved job searching and interview skills
  - Improved wellbeing.
- 6.7** For some participants, and particularly those who had been struggling to secure a job by themselves, the programme gave them:
- Structure and focus
  - Encouragement and motivation
  - Helped improve their ability to sell themselves and explain their transferable skills and work experience to employers.
- 6.8** For those who had not yet secured a job through the programme, there was a sense of optimism about their employment prospects.

*I put in all my strengths and energy [to job searching], but I need someone there for me to give me constructive feedback and be a critical friend – participant*

*I thought it was great. If someone's been unemployed for a little while, and is looking to make a leap – either to a new field or in seniority – I can see there being a benefit to this type of support – participant*

*I don't think I would have found the job without JETS. Although I did search for options, JETS gave me confidence and belief in myself... JETS enabled me to retrain and get a job that has a real future for me – participant*

*I haven't found a job that will work for me at the moment...but I now feel prepared to continue to research and find a new job - participant*

## Job outcomes

- 6.9** Feedback from sub-regional leads and providers on programme performance was very positive with a sense that the programme was performing well and was a long way above where it needed to be. This was strongly related to achievement against the DWP-set outcomes target of 22%. All providers had been exceeding this by some distance, month-by-month, with performance often between 150-200% of this target. As shown in Table 6-1, 36%-51% of all starts before the end of March 2022 had recorded a job outcome on or before 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022.
- 6.10** To be so far ahead of target is encouraging. This type of performance is being achieved in other areas also delivering JETS (see below). As such while the performance in London should be praised, it is also likely benefitting from a target that was set during Covid when there was much uncertainty about labour market prospects, when in fact the labour market has been very buoyant for much of the life of the programme. This has meant a high level of vacancies, especially in some sectors, which has created more favourable conditions than expected for those seeking work. We describe this in more detail below.
- 6.11** Overall, the job start to earnings outcome conversion rate is high in all sub-regions. The low threshold of £1,000 will help this figure as will the fact that all providers introduced in-work support during the programme in order to improve job sustainment and this is described in more detail later in this chapter.
- 6.12** There are also notable differences across the four London CPAs, in particular that:
- WLA has a much higher percentage of starts entering employment (job starts)
  - SLP has a much high rate of conversion from programme starts to earnings outcomes
  - Significant variation in the conversions of job starts to earnings outcomes.
- 6.13** However, some of these differences may be due to data recording, as we show below the table.

**Table 6-1: Overview of performance**

Oct'20- March'22	Programme starts	Job starts	PS to JS conversion rate	Earnings outcomes	PS to EO conversion rate	JS to EO conversion rate
CLF	13,734	5,661	41%	5,266	38%	93%
LL	14,465	6,541	45%	5,255	36%	80%
SLP	4,991	1,928	39%	2,535	51%	131% <sup>9</sup>
WLA	8,498	4,308	51%	3,142	37%	73%
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,688</b>	<b>18,438</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>16,198</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>88%</b>

<sup>9</sup> As mentioned above, EOs are above JS in SLP due to EOs coming from HMRC data, whereas starts are recorded by the provider. The implication is that some people are starting work without the provider knowing.

Source: SQW analysis

**6.14** To manage the data risk we present below a similar table using unpublished DWP data. It covers a slightly longer period than the data above, but re-assuringly is broadly consistent. Importantly, it confirms the generally good performance in London, with SLP and WLA achieving a higher rate of starts to EOs, and CLF in line with the average.

**6.15** Looking at the detail, Table 6-2 shows some differences to the data supplied to the evaluation. It indicates that:

- SLP perform strongly in supporting programme starters in to work, while the three others areas are below the level in the DWP areas
- The conversion of job starts to EOs is higher in all four London areas than the DWP average. This allows WLA and CLF to 'catch up' and exceed / match the average for EOs.

**Table 6-2: Performance compared to other areas (to June 2022)**

	CLF	LL	SLP	WLA	DWP areas
% of starts with FEP	42%	42%	47%	45%	46%
% of starts with EO	36%	34%	41%	38%	36%
JS to EO conversion rate	86%	82%	86%	85%	79%

Source: SQW analysis of DWP performance pack data

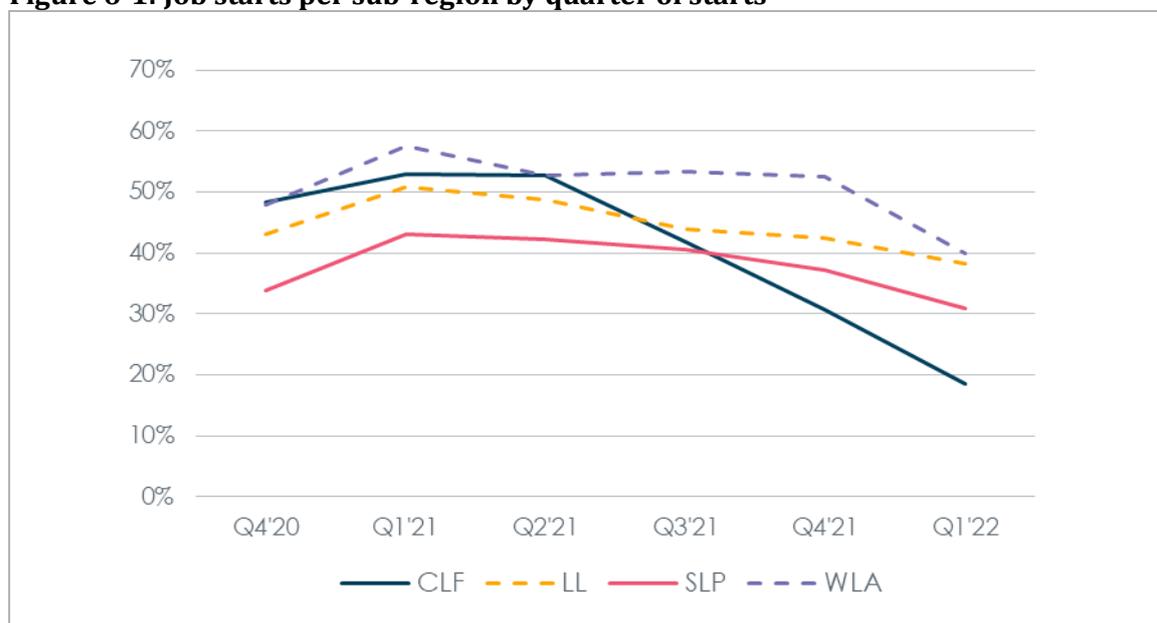
**6.16** It is also interesting to note that all four providers have exceeded target, with two very different contracting approaches (cost plus versus payment by results). In the absence of contract issues to drive performance, the providers had used several approaches to motivate staff and drive performance:

- Using the national performance data from DWP to compare local performance to other areas and hence introduce a positive sense of competition. This also worked with supply chain partners who were sighted on the contract numbers
- Not sharing contract targets with staff, and instead referring to constant improvement or having a stretch target.

**6.17** Looking across the duration of the programme, job starts were generally highest for those who joined the programme in Q1 and Q2 2021. Since then, job starts have been at a fairly consistent level for participants in WLA, but have declined in all other sub-regions, with CLF seeing the steepest drop in performance. It should be noted that, at the time the data was collected, those who joined the programme in Q4 2021 or Q1 2022 may still have been on the programme and receiving support so the figures for these quarters may improve over time. However, the decline may also be due to changes in the participant profile, with participants

joining the programme more recently having higher support needs. This is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

**Figure 6-1: Job starts per sub-region by quarter of starts**



Source: SQW analysis. Only includes people who secured a job on or before 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022

**6.18** Clients in WLA and LL were more likely to find a job quickly, with around 15% of job starts occurring inside one month. In these two areas, over half of the clients who found work did so inside three months. Clients in SLP and CLF appear to take longer. In part this may reflect data recording, with one quarter of CLF job starts coming after their time on the programme. That said, it is noticeable that the two areas where people took longer to find work are those reported above as having the best conversion rates of starts to outcomes. This might suggest that taking time to find the 'right job' improves the likelihood of that job being sustained.

**Table 6-3: Length of time to get a job start**

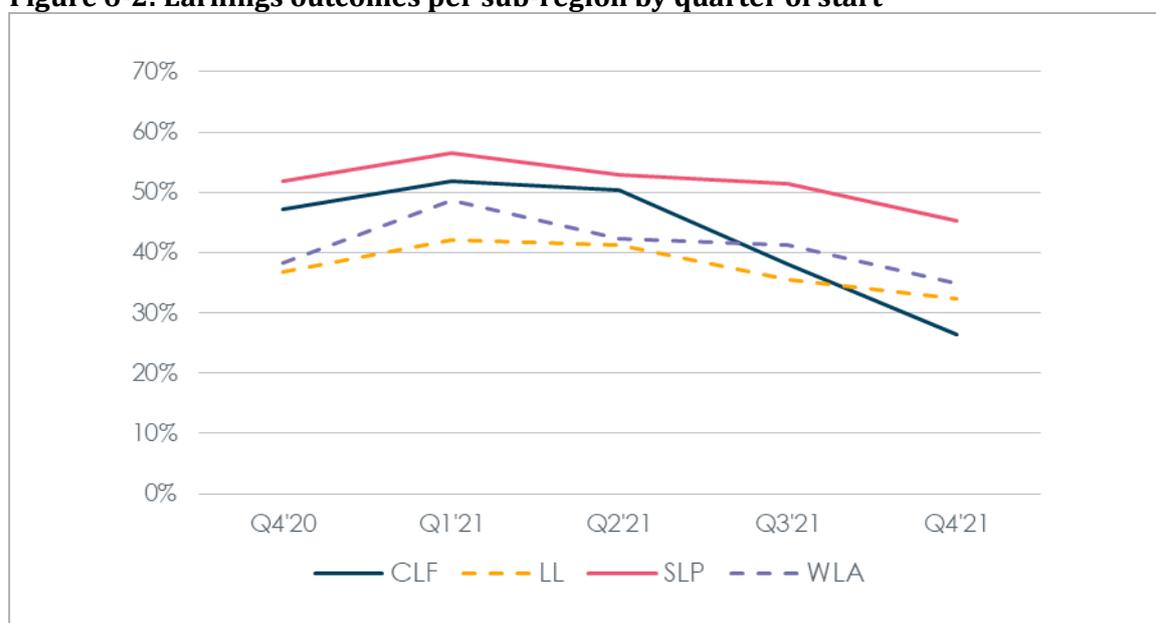
	CLF	LL	SLP	WLA
Less than a month	5%	14%	9%	15%
1 ≤ - ≤ 3 months	34%	40%	50%	41%
3 < - ≤ 6 month	35%	36%	35%	37%
6+ months	25%	9%	6%	8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: SQW analysis

**6.19** Earnings outcomes by quarter of start follow a similar pattern to job starts by quarter of start above. Outcomes are highest for those who joined the programme early on, before steadily declining from the second half of 2021. As above, it can take time for earnings outcomes to be achieved and registered, so it is likely the later figures will improve. However, performance would need to improve substantially in order to match that seen early on in the programme.

As above, the decline may also be due to the increase in client needs over time which may have led to lower levels of earnings outcomes.

**Figure 6-2: Earnings outcomes per sub-region by quarter of start**



Source: SQW analysis. Only includes people who secured a job on or before 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022

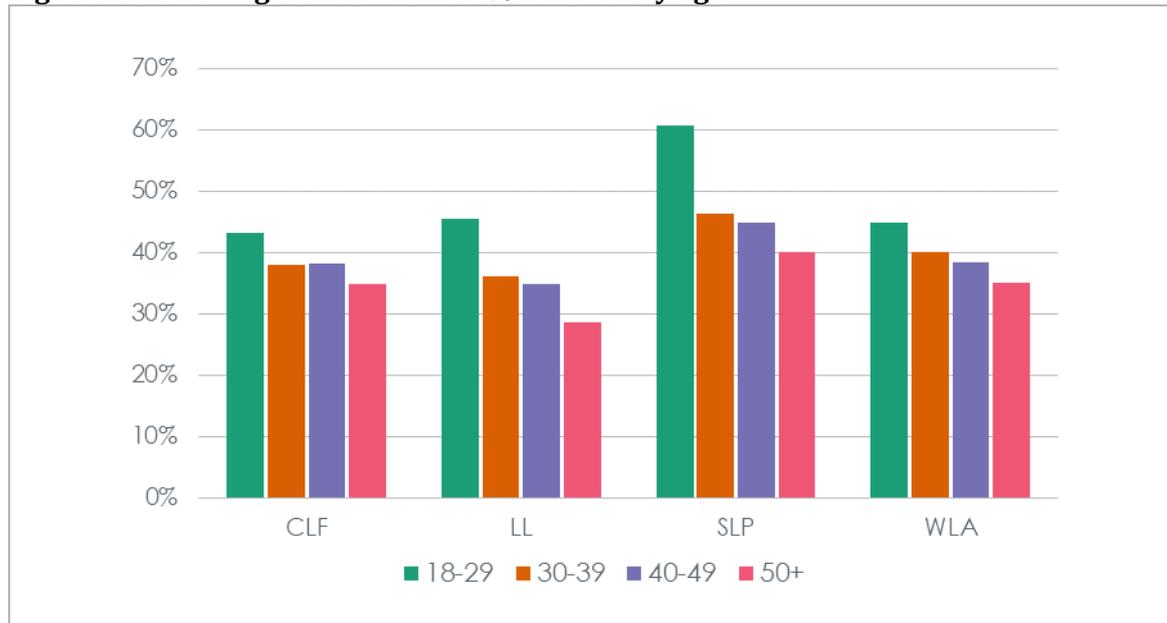
**6.20** Across all sub-regions, participants were most likely to secure an earnings outcome within three to six months of starting on the programme, with around a third achieving an earnings outcome within one to three months in LL and SLP.

**Table 6-4: Length of time to get an earnings outcome**

	CLF	LL	SLP	WLA
Less than a month	2%	1%	5%	0%
1 ≤ - ≤ 3 months	27%	28%	35%	23%
3 < - ≤ 6 month	39%	39%	36%	44%
6+ months	32%	31%	24%	32%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

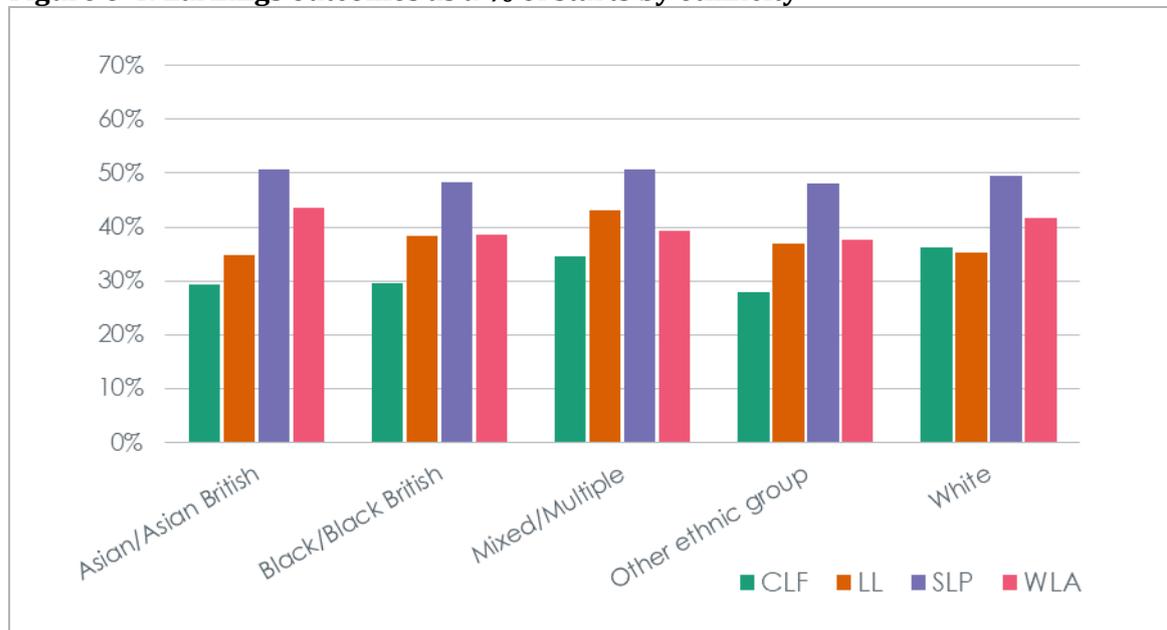
Source: SQW analysis

**6.21** In all four sub-regions, earnings outcomes were highest for those aged 18-29, followed by those who were aged 30-39. As younger people are generally more employable, this might explain the sub-region's strong performance on earnings outcomes. Outcomes were lowest for those aged over 50, a group which tends to find it harder to re-enter work.

**Figure 6-3: Earnings outcomes as a % of starts by age**

Source: SQW analysis. Percentage baseline is taken from the number of people who started the programme in the respective bracket and category.

**6.22** Across the four sub-regions, outcomes by ethnic group have been fairly consistent, each in a range of around 8 p.p.. The highest performing ethnic group varies by sub-region.

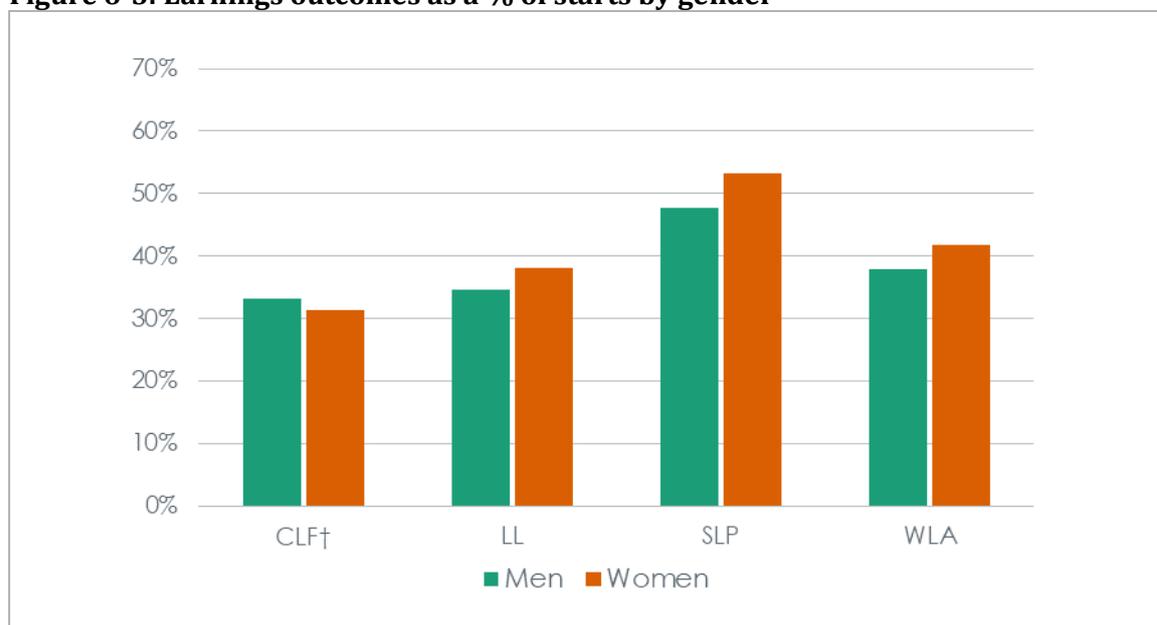
**Figure 6-4: Earnings outcomes as a % of starts by ethnicity**

Source: SQW analysis. Percentage baseline is taken from the number of people who started the programme in the respective bracket and category.

**6.23** Earnings outcomes are higher for women in LL, SLP and WLA, suggesting the programme does a little bit better with women as the overall cohort of starters was evenly split between both groups. The proportion of men achieving an earnings outcome is higher in CLF.

However, the difference between groups is very small (below 5 p.p.) suggesting little real difference.

**Figure 6-5: Earnings outcomes as a % of starts by gender**



Source: SQW analysis. Percentage baseline is taken from the number of people who started the programme in the respective bracket and category. †Excludes missing data from the baseline (3,916 missing).

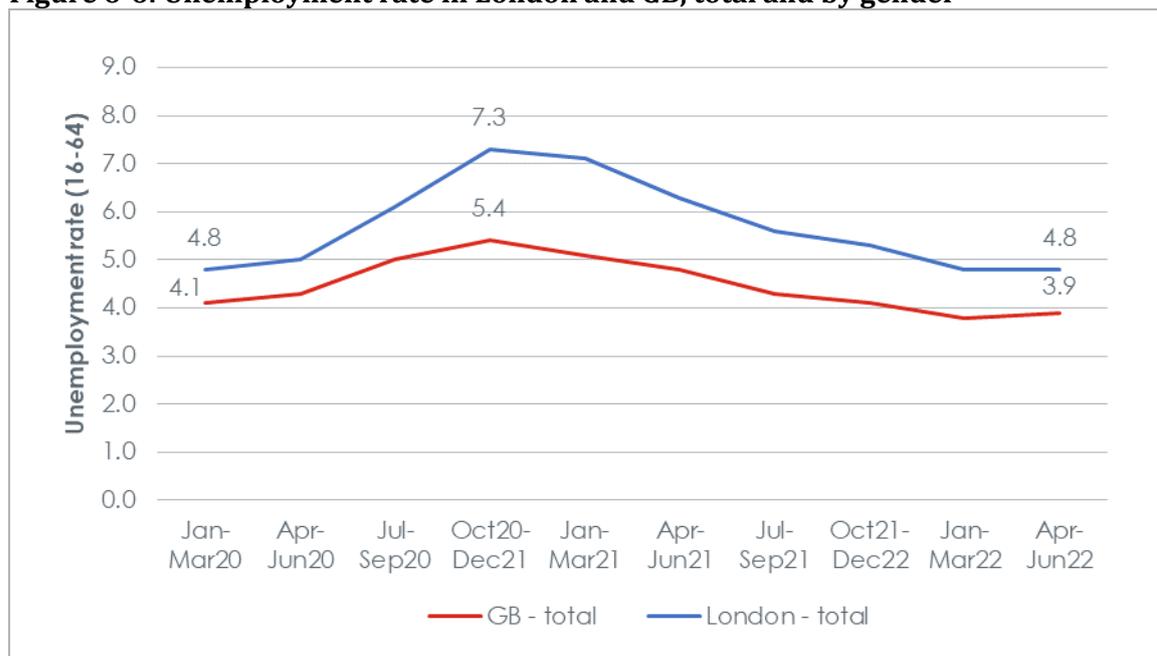
## Changing context

**6.24** The performance of the programme needs to be viewed against the backdrop of a changing labour market. Several major developments over the past few years, mostly notably Britain's exit from the European Union and the Covid-19 pandemic, have had a significant impact on the labour market in the UK. Several forecasts suggested that there would be high levels of unemployment in the UK. For example, Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts for unemployment in April 2020, around the time that the JETS programme was being developed, suggested unemployment rising from c.4% to a peak of 10 per cent<sup>10</sup>, whilst analysis undertaken by Volterra Partners LLP<sup>11</sup> on behalf of London Councils in March 2021 suggested three economic forecasts of unemployment in London, with the core scenario forecasting a peak in London's unemployment rate at 9.4% in December 2021.

**6.25** The jobs market in London and elsewhere has held up better than expected, with ONS Labour Force Survey data suggesting unemployment peaked in London at 7.3% in October – December 2020 and now stands at 4.8%, the same level as it was in January – March 2020. However, the unemployment rate continues to be higher in London than the rate for Great Britain and the decline appears to over levelled off in the latest quarter.

<sup>10</sup> <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9152/CBP-9152.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/economic-development/employment-support/detailed-study-unemployment-london>

**Figure 6-6: Unemployment rate in London and GB, total and by gender**

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey

- 6.26** The level of vacancies has also changed substantially over the last few years. ONS has released experimental statistics which use Adzuna data to compare online job adverts by region and sector. Data on total job adverts in England and London shows a slow recovery in the second half of 2020, followed by a much greater number of vacancies through 2021. This higher level was largely sustained in early 2022. It has created a very favourable context for the programme, particularly the sharp increase in vacancies between February and June 2021, and people seeking work, as it indicates a high number of opportunities.
- 6.27** When the level of online job adverts is indexed to February 2020, just before the first Covid lockdown, the recovery of vacancies has largely been slower in London compared to the rest of England. It has only been in spring-summer 2022 that London has had a similar level of vacancies to the average for England. This may reflect the sectoral mix of the London labour market but does suggest the context was less favourable than elsewhere. This makes the good performance of the programmes in London more impressive.
- 6.28** By August 2021, vacancies data by industry suggests that, across the UK, almost all sectors had higher vacancy levels than before the pandemic, with high levels of vacancies in industries including transport and logistics, manufacturing, construction, retail, catering and hospitality and customer service/support.

**Figure 6-7: Total job adverts, England and London**

Source: ONS Online Job Advert Estimates

## Change over time

- 6.29** Providers reported that early on in the programme, participants were more flexible in terms of job role and were more open to taking any available job role in order to get back into work, even if this meant moving into a new sector. Staff at the providers felt that JETS had been able to help people make this transition into another sector. This is a useful role for the programme in speeding up the rate of labour market adjustment. There was also an expectation that some of these participants may switch back to their previous industry when restrictions eased. Participants with higher levels of skills were able to secure suitable roles during this time, and whilst many sectors were closed, other participants were able to secure jobs in sectors that saw high demand during the pandemic such as security and cleaning as well of Covid related roles amongst other things.
- 6.30** As the labour market opened up, provider staff felt that the programme was increasingly working with those who had not been able to secure a job role by themselves even in a buoyant labour market. This was related to a lack of job search skills, not wanting an entry level role or having unrealistic or changed expectations. Whilst some participants were moving back into the same sector they had worked in previously, there was also a feeling amongst provider staff that other participants had become more selective about which job roles they wanted to move into. For example, some participants were reluctant to go back into retail, hospitality or care due to the lack of job security, unsociable hours, low pay and requirement to stand for long periods of time. For other participants, they had been out of their previous sector long enough that they wanted to try something new. Providers had also seen an increase in requests for flexible or remote jobs, which had been harder to find and can be highly competitive.

- 6.31** This meant that, despite a high level of vacancies in the labour market, the vacancies were not always suitable/attractive or in sectors that participants were seeking to move into. Due to this, provider staff were spending more time managing expectations and encouraging participants to consider other opportunities. There was also a focus on supporting participants to identify and sell their transferable skills. Another approach was to present a 'stepping stone' process whereby participants moved into one job role that might lead to another job role which was closer to their desired career. Again, the programme is helping people adjust to the new labour market.
- 6.32** The perceived mismatch between participant expectations and available vacancies was also a challenge for employer engagement staff. Sectors and roles which had been attractive previously or with high levels of vacancies were not attractive to programme participants. This was creating issues both for clients seeking other roles and in managing employer expectations about the potential supply of prospective employees. For example, employer engagement staff in CLF had been advised to focus less time on securing hospitality roles as these were not of interest to participants.
- 6.33** For those who do not secure a job whilst on the programme, which despite very good performance against target is still sizeable group, there was a feeling that this was due to a lack of motivation, an unrealistic job goal or training requirements that could not be met due to the length of the programme. In contrast, it was felt that those who gained the most from the programme were those who needed support to improve their job searching skills, those who want to move sector but do not know how to approach this and identify their transferable skills, and those who have limited availability (e.g., single parents) and need a tailored job role.

*Those people who are open to trying something new but they don't know the route to go down...benefit from the skills, experience and training that the programme can offer – provider staff member*

### **Job quality**

- 6.34** Feedback from provider staff suggested that the quality of jobs offered to and obtained by participants was important and would help ensure job sustainment. This was in addition to, but also related to the types of role participants were seeking. Providers were targeting good quality employers and job opportunities, with two providers trying to find employers that paid London living wage, or as close to this as possible. Other employers who were targeted included those who were disability confident or those who could look past a criminal record. Providers were also trying to avoid zero hours contracts due to the unpredictability of work, although it was noted that this could be suitable in some short-term cases as a step before a longer-term role, e.g., exam invigilator.

## In-work support

**6.35** In general, job sustainment was not highlighted as a key issue on the JETS programme. This was partly due to the relatively low earnings threshold at £1,000, which led to a lack of tracking as it did not take participants very longer to pass this threshold. In addition, many of those who joined the programme had a recent work history which made it easier for them to adapt to being in work.

*I honestly believe that people who are on the Jets programme are less likely to see themselves as long term unemployed and more likely to see themselves as someone who's between jobs, even if it is six months and therefore when they move into work, that transition into work and being in work and...becoming a worker again is less difficult than it is for someone who's 12 months plus – employer engagement staff member*

**6.36** Despite this, providers in all sub-regions had introduced an element of in-work support during contract delivery and felt that this had improved job sustainment and helped to secure alternative job roles for those who had fallen out of their first job. In CLF, the provider stated that implementing an in-work support team had led to quicker reactions to people falling out of work and a 225% increase over three months in people getting a second job if their first job did not work out.

**6.37** The in-work support offer was fairly light-touch and flexible around participant needs. It tended to involve checking in with participants on a regular basis to see how they were getting on at work and to resolve any issues that had cropped up, such as changes to shift patterns or how to handle certain situations. Providers also continued to support participants materially, such as purchasing specialist equipment or covering travel expenses until the first wage. At Shaw Trust, participants could continue to access the support provided by the supply chain partners until they hit the £1,000 threshold.

## 7. Conclusions and implications

- 7.1** This final chapter draws together the key findings from the report to address the key research questions and consider lessons arising from the evaluation of JETS.

### Programme development

- 7.2** **The JETS programme was an unusual labour market intervention set up at haste in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.** The early months of the pandemic in spring and summer of 2020 had seen a sharp rise in unemployment, and this was expected to continue. Sectors of the economy were closed, many people were on furlough and there was understandable pessimism about when, how and to what extent the labour market would recover.
- 7.3** It was therefore decided to implement a JETS programme to support people who had been unemployed for at least three months to find work, a group that would not normally be a focus for public sector employment programmes. Also, reflecting the timing of the launch, JETS was to be the first welfare to work programme designed and implemented online.
- 7.4** The programme was set up at speed. It was able to build on the existing WHP infrastructure through the awarding of contracts to the same providers. Even so, **commissioners and providers had to work at pace to agree contracts and recruit staff.** Interestingly the recruitment of staff was highlighted as a high point of the programme by some of those interviewed, as it brought new people to the sector. These new people brought new experiences which augmented those of people of had worked in the sector for some time.

### Programme outcomes

- 7.5** The key outcome from the programme was the number of people who subsequently found work. The initial target set nationally and in most parts of London was for 22.5% of participants to gain employment (the target was set at 25% in WLA). **In all four sub-regions performance was a long way ahead of target, running at 150-200%.** Being so far ahead of target was viewed as a real achievement by all of those we interviewed and is a credit to those involved in making it happen.
- 7.6** Three broad factors likely contributed to this achievement. Firstly, **the economic conditions for the programme were much more favourable than expected.** Unemployment peaked around the time the programme was introduced and vacancies rose, hence creating opportunities for people to move back in to work.
- 7.7** Secondly, and related to this, **with hindsight the target set was probably too low.** This is understandable given the change in economic conditions. A different way of assessing the performance of the four London providers is against each other and against other parts of the country. Unfortunately, as yet there is no publicly available performance data from DWP, but

we understand that in general the London areas are performing well and broadly in line with other areas.

**7.8** We can also see some differences across the London providers. Based on the data available to the evaluation, which as noted above has a number of limitations, it appears that:

- **Referrals were well above profile** in all four sub-regions, especially WLA which was running at 158% of target
- **Conversion of referrals to start was more challenging and fell below expectation.** The highest conversion rate was in SLP, with the lowest in WLA which probably reflects the high number of initial referrals
- **SLP reported the highest share of starters achieving an earnings outcome**, and in addition **WLA is above and CLF in line with the level achieved across the DWP areas**
- **All four London areas have very high conversion of job starts to earnings outcomes.**

**7.9** These variations lead to the third factor driving programme performance, namely delivery by the providers. We now turn to the lessons around delivery.

## Programme delivery

**7.10** The high number of referrals to the programme is an important achievement. JETS was set up quickly, with other programmes already in operation (and others to follow). It appears that the providers were able to build on the relationships that they had developed with Jobcentre Plus to ensure that Work Coaches did refer people. Along with demand being driven by rising unemployment in the months before launch, **the investment through integration co-ordinators and the like in building and maintaining these relationships was likely a key factor in the high level of referrals.** Indeed, we understand that referrals in London were higher than most other areas.

**7.11** **It is also positive that the characteristics of clients starting on JETS appear so different to WHP.** There was concern in the early days that they would be in competition. Avoiding this issue again reflects the value of investing in the process and provision of information.

**7.12** With referrals above expectations in the early months, there was a challenge of managing the process and converting those referrals into starts. This challenge reflected several points which were addressed over time, but represent learning for the future:

- The providers struggled to have sufficient staff in place to make contact and on-board people being referred. This likely means some people were lost to the programme, some of whom it is thought simply found jobs, but others may have benefited from support but were put off by the quality of their initial experience. **Greater lead in time would likely have helped, but was challenging in the circumstances**

- A number of those referred were not eligible for the programme. This reflected both people who did not meet the conditions for support and information missing when JCP provided the referral. **The lesson here is around stressing to Work Coaches the need for complete and accurate referral.**

**7.13 After the initial surge in referrals and starts, the level of demand has both declined and changed.** Again, this likely reflects the wider labour market, but it did mean that programme delivery had to adapt as client needs were seen to be increasing in two ways: more people with greater needs, especially around their mental health and wellbeing; and people being more selective about the types of job they wanted. The latter is noticeable because it led providers to change their approach to employers, becoming much more client led rather than seeking out larger employers with numerous, often relatively low-level opportunities (which were not of interest to clients).

**7.14** The reportedly more challenging client group appears to have led to a slight decline in outcomes over time, although still running ahead of target. **It also led providers to adapt the support offer.** For example, by offering more:

- Access to enhanced wellbeing support, as in CLF and LL
- Intensive support, e.g. the introduction of mentoring in WLA
- Face to face delivery as part of a hybrid offer.

**7.15** These bullets highlight important lessons. For those in this client group who were highly motivated, working at the speed they wanted to go was seen as important. Similarly, recognising that **while online support had worked for many, it did not appear to be as effective for others.** This has implications for future delivery, suggesting a hybrid model may work, but would need to be implemented flexibly in response to different clients.

**7.16** They also highlight the responsiveness of providers and commissioners who were willing to flex and change as issues arose. This was viewed positively through the interviews undertaken and seen as a real strength of the devolved programme management.

**7.17** While the overall level of employment outcomes is viewed as good, and well above expectation, there are three issues to reflect on from those figures. Firstly, while the threshold set for an employment outcome of £1,000 was seen as relatively low (and below that for WHP) **it appears that a notable minority of around one in five job starters in some areas did not achieve this level of earnings.**

**7.18** The low threshold likely reflected the expectation that this group were generally employable and needed some short-term support to ease them back in to work, and for the most part this appears to have happened. However, it is noticeable that **all of the providers moved to introduce an in-work support offer when they realised that job starts were not converting to outcomes as expected.** This again highlights good, in-programme learning and flexibility by providers and commissioners, and learning for the future.

**7.19** It may also raise a question about long term sustainability of the outcomes reported. However, there is no available data on this and we do not anticipate any becoming available in the future.

**7.20** The second broad issue is around what can be learned about the nature and importance of contracts. Across London there were a mix of cost plus and payment by results contracts. The former had been introduced for the WHP at the onset of Covid to protect provision. While two sub-regions carried this approach forward, two others reverted to some element of payment by results, viewing it as a way to incentivise providers.

**7.21 The outcomes achieved through the different mechanisms do not provide a clear answer about the merits of one contract approach against the other.** Interesting the two regions with payment by results do report a higher percentage of clients attaining an employment outcome, but in one of the cases the difference is very small (1 p.p.). Instead, the feedback tended to centre on:

- Those involved in the programme being motivated by the sense of achievement, which was reinforced by being ahead of target. This came through strongly from those we interviewed
- The use of stretch targets and reference to performance against other areas were viewed as motivating people to continue to push even when they were ahead of target (conversely, there was no sign of ‘slacking off’ because a target had been achieved)
- The ethos of staff involved, who wanted to help people.

**7.22** While not conclusive about the mechanism, these points do highlight good learning about key principles to build into future programmes.

**7.23** Thirdly, it is worth reflecting that while viewed very positively, a programme that was targeting people who were recently unemployed and delivered at a time of a tight labour market, actually saw around half of participants enter employment. **Provider staff thought those who struggled tended to have wider barriers or unrealistic job expectations.** However, it does suggest this group may require further support, which may come from their subsequent referral to other programmes. **The learning may be that more intensive up-front support could have been beneficial to this group,** although we were not able to explore this.

## Programme additionality

**7.24** One important reason that people who are short term unemployed are not targeted by employment programmes is that they are expected, in most cases, to be able to return to work without support. The client group have a recent work history and by implication work habits and skills. The Covid-19 pandemic changed this and created a major labour market shock which resulted in a sharp spike in unemployment and some sectors of the economy being shut down for an unknown period.

**7.25** For those becoming unemployed this created a very challenging set of circumstances. For some the jobs that they had been doing simply were no longer there. Therefore, the opportunity which would have existed in 'normal' times to find the same type of job with a similar employer did not exist. Moreover, many of those impacted, as we found, did not want to go back to their old job, either because they could not or saw their period of unemployment as a chance to do something different.

**7.26** The employment history of those affected was also seen to be different to people who more normally come on to employment programmes. Those impacted through Covid were thought to have much more stable employment histories. While this should help them in finding work, for many it was reported that they did not have recent experience of job seeking. This lack of skill could be a barrier on them finding new employment.

**7.27** This rationale for support was played back through the interviews for the evaluation. We were told of **widespread need from participants who needed support:**

- To recognise their transferable skills and to find suitable employers to allow them to change occupation/ sector
- With job search skills.

**7.28** In this context, the **JETS programme was helping people respond to a major labour market shock, and it appears to have been successful in context of supporting a labour market adjustment.** There is likely an on-going need for the types of support offered. Inevitably, people will become unemployed and some will be in a better position than others to re-enter employment. However, the number of people entering unemployment over a short term and nature of labour market opportunities are likely to be very different to Covid, even considering the forecasts of possible coming recession. The lessons from JETS should be used to ensure that there is good support available to those who require it.

# SQW

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## About us

### SQW Group

SQW and Oxford Innovation are part of SQW Group.

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### SQW

SQW is a leading provider of research, analysis and advice on sustainable economic and social development for public, private and voluntary sector organisations across the UK and internationally. Core services include appraisal, economic impact assessment, and evaluation; demand assessment, feasibility and business planning; economic, social and environmental research and analysis; organisation and partnership development; policy development, strategy, and action planning. In 2019, BBP Regeneration became part of SQW, bringing to the business a RICS-accredited land and property team.

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