



Department
for Education

Using behavioural insights to examine benefit claimants' approaches to training opportunities

July 2017

Rosie Gloster, Christine Bertram, Jonathan
Buzzeo, Luke Fletcher, Arianna Tassinari,
Annette Cox – Institute for Employment Studies
Ivo Vlaev – Warwick Business School



Social Science in Government

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Acknowledgements

The research was commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and supported by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The research was undertaken by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES). Rosie Gloster is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Employment Studies and led the research. She was supported by Dr Christine Bertram, Dr Annette Cox, Dr Ivo Vlaev, Matthew Williams, Jonathan Buzzeo, Rosa Marvell, Arianna Tassinari and Dr Luke Fletcher. Karen Patient at IES provided administrative support to the project and recruited our respondents.

The authors would like to thank Phill Lacey, Sophie Gerrard and Katya Williams for providing us with assistance and support throughout the project, as well as their colleague at BIS, John Madill who provided helpful insight into the policy agenda. Our thanks also go to Richard Ward and Ella Taylor at DWP for their guidance and feedback on drafts of the research tools and earlier drafts of this report, as well as their support in helping us to access samples of benefit claimants and Jobcentre Plus staff.

Finally, the team would like to thank the interviewees who gave their time to be interviewed. They candidly reflected on their work and learning histories, providing us with the rich data that is presented in this report. The authors' thanks also go to the Jobcentre Plus staff and staff at training providers in our four fieldwork areas who shared their experiences of Skills Conditionality and mandating benefit claimants to training provision.

Glossary

Acronyms

COM-B framework	Capability, Opportunity, Motivation, Behaviour framework
CSCS card	Construction Skills Certificate Scheme Card
CV	Curriculum Vitae
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
ESOL	English for Speakers of other Languages
IT	Information Technology
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
SIA	Security Industry Authority

Technical terms

Claimant Commitment	The Claimant Commitment is a new form of the Jobseeker's Agreement that outlines what job seeking actions a claimant must carry out while receiving Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). It emphasizes claimants' responsibility to do all they can to look for work in return for the support they receive from the state.
Conditionality	The conditions or requirements that claimants must meet in order to continue to qualify for the receipt of benefits (see also Mandation).
Construction Skills Certificate Scheme Card (CSCS card)	CSCS cards provide proof that individuals working on construction sites have the required training and qualifications.
Mandation	The process of requiring benefit claimants to undertake certain activities, under the threat of benefit sanctions. An alternative expression is conditionality.
National Careers Service	The National Careers Service provides impartial information, advice and guidance on a range of careers to all adults aged 19 and over and 18 year old Jobcentre Plus customers and those in custody. National Careers Service advisers are professionally qualified and trained to ensure that they can quickly understand individual needs and agree the best way forward to meet career and learning aspirations.

SIA licence	A licence for individuals to work in specific areas of the security sector.
Skills Conditionality	The process of Jobcentre Plus referring claimants to a skills training provider, Further Education College or Next Step adviser with potential benefit sanctions for non-participation.

Summary

This report presents the findings of research, which uses behavioural insights to examine the training behaviour of benefit claimants, undertaken by the Institute for Employment Studies between February and July 2015.

Background

The current systems of benefit conditionality have developed following a series of reforms carried out since the mid-1980s, and most recently the Jobseeker's (Back to Work Schemes) Act 2013. Skills Conditionality was introduced in 2011 and as a result claimants can be mandated to participate in training. In implementing this policy, the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) aim is to ensure that claimants for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and in the Work-Related Activity Group of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA-WRAG) that have a skills need take steps to address this, as a condition of their benefit, in order to help them move back into work. Conditionality is used in the benefit system with intent to increase the likelihood of claimants finding employment. The sanctions system seeks to encourage claimants to comply with conditionality requirements to help them move into work by applying financial penalties to those who do not meet their obligations. In 2013 there were just under one million Skills Conditionality referrals in Great Britain, of which 380,000 were to training.

This study uses behavioural insights to explore decision-making and approaches to training in the context of Skills Conditionality and mandation, with the aim of improving attendance at training interventions and ensuring that training opportunities for benefit claimants are based on an understanding of their motivations and the other factors that influence behaviour. The research focuses on the behaviour of training participation and in doing so aims to:

- Understand how the skills offer is experienced by claimants;
- Identify key influences on behaviours and decision-making by claimants;
- Understand influences on the type of training claimants undertake.

Methodology

The study consists of qualitative interviews with sixty benefit claimants, and twenty Jobcentre Plus staff and providers across four Jobcentre Plus districts. Qualitative research provides a detailed understanding of how and why decisions are made and supported and it provides depth of insight. It does not provide evidence about the incidence of these decisions and is not statistically representative. Claimants were invited to recount their experiences of training and the skills offer whilst claiming benefits. By design therefore the methodology does not take into account the automatic or

uncontrolled forms of mental processing outlined by the behavioural science literature that can affect work and learning decisions, as individuals are unaware of these effects, and therefore unable to report them in answer to research questions.

The research tools were designed drawing on the recent behavioural insights research **Capability, Opportunity, Motivation – Behaviour (COM-B) framework**. The COM-B framework depicts behaviour as a system in which capability, opportunity, and motivation interact to generate behaviour that in turn influences each of these components.

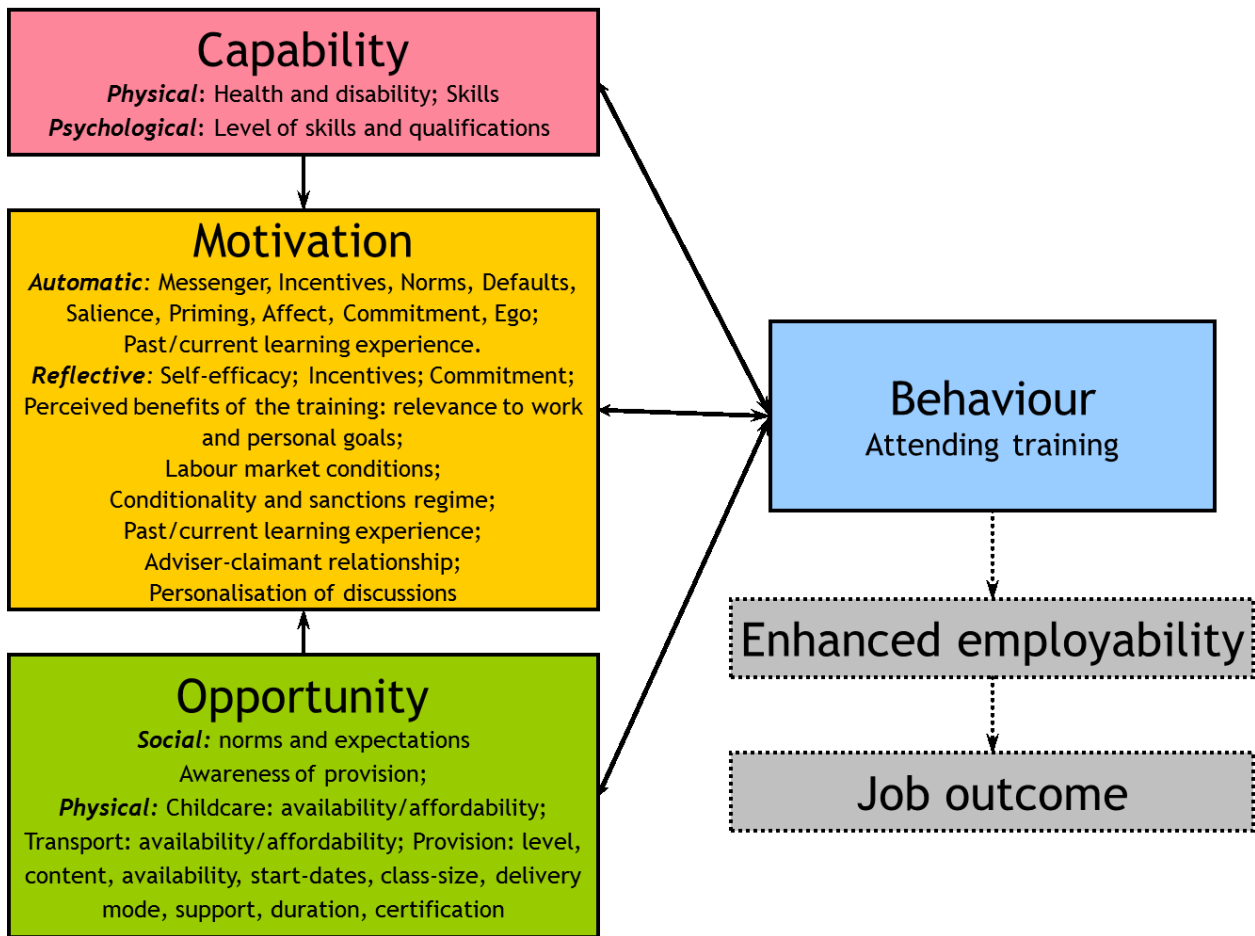
Within the claimant sample, half were selected because they had recently attended training, and half were selected because they had not recently taken part in training. Half the respondents in each of these samples had been mandated to training as part of their benefits claim.

The analysis process again drew on the COM-B framework, as well as the **MINDSPACE** (Messenger, Incentives, Norms, Default, Salience, Priming, Affect, Commitment, Ego) framework which draws together evidence to explore how behaviour change theory can help to meet policy challenges. Together they provided an analytic framework for the data to identify influences on training behaviour. The resulting suggestions for implications were framed in light of the EAST framework, which argues that for policy interventions to be effective and successfully influence the behaviour of the target audiences they need to be Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely (EAST).

Factors affecting training behaviour

Figure 1 details the factors affecting training behaviour found in the research which are applied to the COM-B framework and then discussed in turn.

Figure 1: Factors affecting training behaviour



Source: IES adapted from Michie et al, 2011

Capability to train

Capability is defined in the COM-B model as an individual's psychological and physical capacity to engage in the activity concerned, which includes having the necessary knowledge and skills.

Respondents had varied levels of **skills, qualifications and experience**, and therefore different levels of capability from which to build further learning. Claimants that reported high levels of skills or experience, but who lacked qualifications tended to see themselves as capable of undertaking and succeeding at a course in order to gain a qualification. Some claimants, such as those with certain health conditions, felt they were not capable of learning at the time of interview. Claimants' capability to conceptualise and discuss their qualifications, work history, and other related life experiences in terms of skills varied considerably. Some struggled to articulate this and by contrast others, typically those with higher levels of qualifications or significant work experience, demonstrated an excellent ability to communicate their skills and how they had

developed them. There were several JSA claimants who described lacking any basic IT skills. All of these respondents were aged 25 or over, and they all had qualifications at Level 2 or below.

Seventeen out of the sixty claimants interviewed reported that they had a **health condition** or disability that limited the kind of work they could do or their day to day activities, including sometimes their ability to learn.

Opportunity to train

Opportunity is defined by the COM-B model as all the factors that lie outside the individual that make the behaviour possible or prompt it. These are both social, and physical.

The Jobcentre Plus staff interviewed reported that their areas had a good variety of **learning provision** and had a responsive and competitive provider market. All of the staff interviewed reported that their district or office undertook formal gap analyses of training provision each year. One provision gap identified in more than one area was a lack of intensive, long-term English and Maths training.

The **awareness** of training opportunities among claimants was very varied. Voluntary learners were most likely to actively seek out information about training. Lack of IT skills limited claimants' ability to find information in order to increase their awareness of training opportunities in some cases. Mandated learners were generally more passive and did not actively seek information about training, tending to rely on Jobcentre Plus advisers and training providers.

The skills offer had met the needs of several claimants. A number also expressed satisfaction with the **supporting infrastructure** that enabled them to attend training, such as the reimbursement of travel expenses. Others wanted greater access to training leading to recognised qualifications, training of longer duration or at a more advanced level, access to impartial careers information, advice and guidance to help when selecting courses or online access to information about available training opportunities.

Motivation to train

The COM-B model defines motivation as the brain processes that energise and direct behaviour and includes automatic as well as reflective and reasoned responses.

There was no difference in the factors outlined below that influenced motivation to learn between claimants that had been mandated and those that had self-referred to training.

Respondents tended to have had a positive experience of **past learning** prior to their current training. Negative attitudes towards learning were often founded on lack of support, for example with bullying. Most respondents displayed some **confidence in their ability to learn**. Some felt very capable of achieving in learning and had been successful learners in the past while others had a recently found confidence in their ability. Another group of respondents were fairly confident in their capability to learn, but their self-belief depended on factors such as the subject, the level of support available.

The **potential contribution of training** to career and employment goals was generally more important and motivating to respondents than its potential contribution to personal goals. Reported potential benefits of training included: developing employability skills (e.g. CV writing); advancing employment prospects within a specific occupation/industry; gaining qualifications and/or broadening experience to wider potential employment/career opportunities; addressing a particular skills gap or need (e.g. literacy and/or numeracy); building self-confidence and self-esteem; and gaining a sense of personal satisfaction and achievement.

There were varied examples of claimants' awareness of training opportunities and different approaches taken by staff introducing and discussing training. A number of claimants that reported having a positive interaction with their adviser about training opportunities stated that their adviser engaged them in discussion that covered one or more of the following: their work goals, employment history, their skills gaps and individual support needs. These claimants reported that this type of discussion increased buy-in and helped them to understand the potential value of the training. Where claimants had been mandated to training without a discussion, they said they had little choice or ownership, and often struggled to see the value of the opportunity.

Staff expressed that claimants were generally compliant and committed to training, and consequently were unlikely to fail to attend. All claimants identified some positive aspects of **mandation** and generally accepted conditionality as part of the benefits system. Some highlighted that mandation to a course had helped them to make a positive change. However, one of the most frequent themes across all claimant and training groups was that of anxiety and stress caused by mandation.

One group of Jobcentre Plus staff reported following a relatively prescribed and uniform process with regards to training mandation.¹ Another group of Jobcentre Plus staff approached training mandation with some degree of flexibility. This variation in implementation both between and within Jobcentre Plus districts and approach to mandation highlights the potential differences between claimants' experiences of being

¹ It is DWP policy to ensure that claimants are mandated to training under requirements that are reasonable to their circumstances.

mandated to training and is supported by earlier research which found varied implementation of mandation and sanctioning between Jobcentre Plus offices.

The **relevance of the course** claimants were mandated to was a key influence on their reported motivation. Claimants expressed little concern at being mandated so long as the activity was relevant to their goals and job aims. Motivation to train in the future was affected by **course experience**.

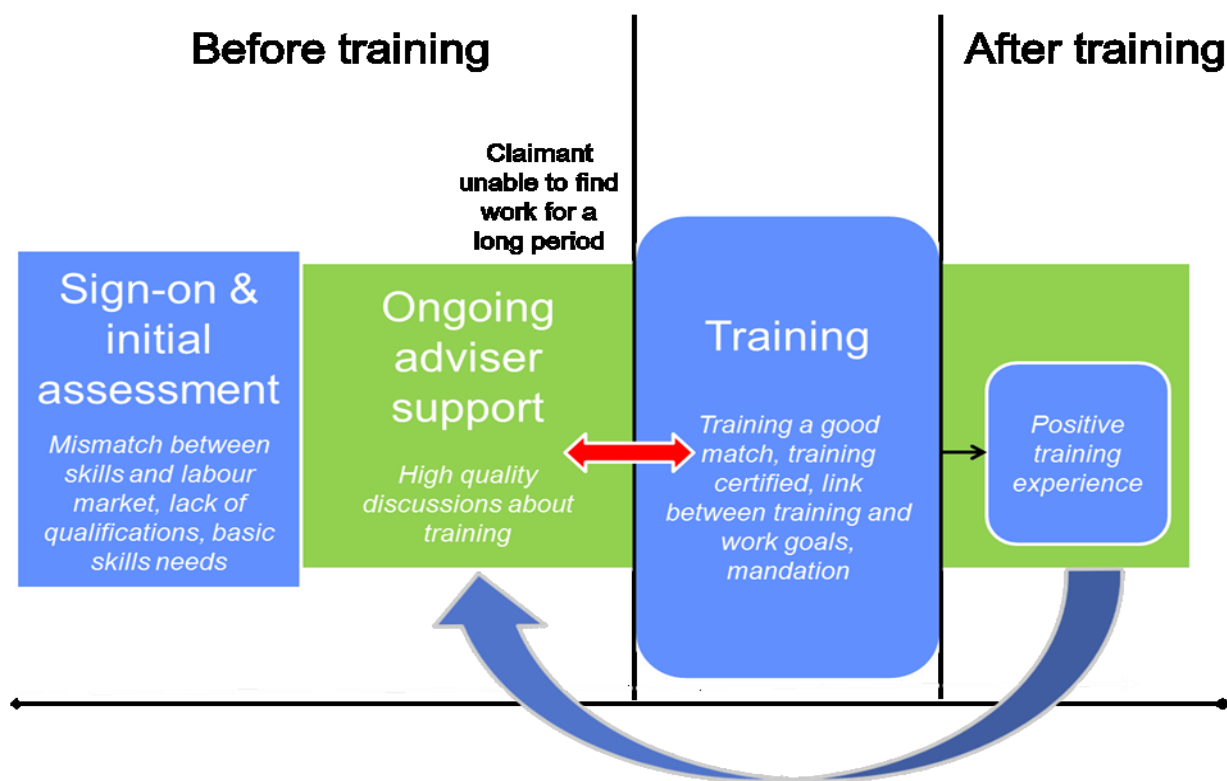
Some mandated claimants did not attend training because of a change in their circumstances which meant that the training referral was no longer required. For example they started work, or found a work experience placement. Others described a significant change in their personal circumstances, such as being required to care for a relative. Several claimants who were mandated to training were not aware of a mandation.² There were other examples where a lack of communication or understanding seemed to have resulted in non-attendance at training. Other reasons for non-attendance at mandated training related to the perceived suitability of the training opportunity, or because the claimant was participating in other training at the time their mandated provision became available.

Critical moments: when claimants are most receptive to training

It is important to identify when claimants are most likely to be receptive to training so that interventions can be timed for greatest effectiveness. Some of these times are created by changes in circumstances, such as a change in health that requires a change of occupation. These changes will only result in training behaviour if other aspects, such as opportunity and motivation are also positive. Other triggers are driven by interactions between claimants, advisers and training providers. They are mapped in Figure 2 to the JSA customer journey, from the sign-on and initial assessment, through training, and after training.

² Due to the nature of the evidence collected and this study's reliance on claimant recall it is not possible to say, in these instances, whether or not claimants were told of the mandatory nature of the training opportunity and in what terms.

Figure 2: Factors creating motivation to train throughout the JSA customer journey



Change in health, becoming aware of training opportunities, change in personal circumstances

Conclusions

How is the skills offer experienced by claimants?

Among the claimants in the sample, some had a good understanding and awareness of training options, while others had a limited understanding and felt there were no or few training options for benefit claimants, these claimants tended to be non-trainers.

Jobcentre Plus advisers were frequently used as a source of information about training provision among claimants. Generally claimants were open and willing to train, particularly if they perceived that the training opportunity was a good fit with their skills and experience and would add value by helping them to work towards their employment goals.

There was variation in the length of time advisers spent discussing training with claimants as part of their regular meetings (if at all) and the extent to which claimants felt they had a choice or ownership of the training they were due to attend. All of the claimants who described a constructive, two-way dialogue around training options decided to undertake training. While many claimants discussed the positive and supportive relationship they had with their Jobcentre Plus adviser, some felt there was a degree of mistrust particularly where they were mandated with training with little discussion of other options.

All the interviewees were aware of conditionality in the benefits system. While in general they accepted it as a tool, when it applied to their own experiences of training their response was more mixed. For some claimants, mandation created a sense of anxiety that overshadowed the learning experience. When asked for their experience, Jobcentre Plus staff also indicated that mandation could change the terms of the training interaction and made some claimants automatically more defensive or dismissive of the training opportunity, undermining personal motivation.

Whether or not claimants found the skills offer effective depended on their personal circumstances and needs and the match to local provision, but overall the skills offer had met the needs of many claimants. However, some wanted greater access to training leading to recognised qualifications, training of longer duration or at a more advanced level.

What influences claimants' training behaviour and decision-making?

The three dimensions affecting training behaviour – capability, opportunity, and motivation - are multifaceted and different aspects of the same dimension may influence claimants' decision-making either positively or negatively. Some elements of a dimension may override others in decision-making. For example, a claimant could decide that the negative of a long journey to training is outweighed by the potential benefits of the opportunity to further their employment goals, or this negative could undermine other positive factors and create a barrier, meaning they do not attend.

Mandation is one element of motivation. Mandation may not result in training where other influences affect training behaviour more negatively than mandation acts as a force to create the behaviour. For example, a training mandation may be ineffective when a claimant lacks awareness of their mandation to training, or if a claimant perceives the training provision to be located too far away. Where mandation is used, then for training to be a positive experience, an adviser should be sure that the opportunity is the right one and a good match to the individual, otherwise mandation to training can create a sense of disillusionment with training.

Overall, the balance between capability, opportunity and motivation that produces training behaviour will depend on a claimant's individual characteristics, circumstances and preferences. Matching a claimant's capability to training opportunities and generating motivation requires an in-depth understanding of the individual's skills, experiences and their work goals, as well as an understanding of the local labour market. This process takes time. Some claimants were sufficiently skilled and able to analyse this by themselves and self-refer to training. Others lacked an understanding of one or more of the dimensions above, such as an awareness of potential opportunities, which prevented them from self-referring to training. Decision-making about training may therefore need to

be supported by Jobcentre Plus advisers, or the National Careers Service, for some claimants.

What influences the type of training claimants undertake?

The nature of a training opportunity is one part of the element of opportunity that influences training behaviour (see Figure 1). The type of training claimants in the sample took was influenced by whether they had self-referred or were mandated to training. This in turn was influenced by their awareness and understanding of provision. Mandated claimants were more likely to be undertaking employability courses, such as CV writing or job-search skills, whereas self-referred learners were more likely to be undertaking vocational courses, such as Security Industry Authority qualifications, Accountancy qualifications, or National Vocational Qualifications. Jobcentre Plus advisers were the gatekeepers to training opportunities for several claimants. The nature of the interaction between claimants and advisers also affected the type of training and the quality of these discussions seemed to affect the extent to which claimants felt the chosen training met their needs.

Implications

The findings illustrate the complexity of training behaviour and the factors that influence it. The implications for interventions to increase the take-up of training among claimants who do not currently do so and to improve the effectiveness of training are:

- **Build English and Maths skills:** Consider operating a default policy of giving all claimants the opportunity to build their English and Maths skills, implemented with a degree of adviser discretion based on a claimant's prior levels of qualification. A few claimants in the study felt they needed to develop these skills, but said they had not been offered opportunities to do so and were reluctant to ask for them (see section 2.1.2, English and Maths skills).
- **Build IT skills:** IT skills are required for claimants to conduct effective job searches. Some of the claimants in this study felt they had few or no IT skills. Consider how best to support these claimants to develop basic IT skills and then provide on-going support in order for them to develop sufficient confidence and to embed what they have learned. Many do not have access to IT at home (see section 2.1.3, IT skills).
- **Help claimants to think about their capabilities and build their capability and understanding:** Claimants' abilities to think about and conceptualise their capability in terms of skills and skills gaps were varied and some will clearly need support and guidance to think about what they have to offer an employer. Having an understanding of a claimant's skills and attributes, was both necessary for effective job search, but also for identification of appropriate training and seeing its

value and potential contribution to achieving work goals (see section 2.1.4, Job search skills). Consider how advisers can best work with claimants to understand their skills, experience and capabilities. How can claimants be encouraged to develop career management skills over the medium-term? For example, can services that offer CV writing support, such as the National Careers Service, help claimants to draft a CV themselves rather than (re)draft it for them? Services should encourage claimants to take ownership and develop skills for the future so, for example, they can refresh and update their CV themselves (see section 2.1.3, IT skills).

- **Evaluate the communications and reminders used to mandate claimants to training:** some mandated claimants had not attended mandated training seemingly because they were not aware of their mandation (see section 4.3, Why claimants mandated to training did not train). The recent Oakley review of JSA sanctions (2014) made a series of suggestions for how communications could be improved, many of which apply to Skills Conditionality. The Oakley review recommendations were accepted in the Government response.
- **Make the training offer clear to all claimants:** Claimants have varying degrees of awareness and understanding of training opportunities (see section 3.1.2.2, Claimants' awareness of training opportunities). While some claimants were very proactive, others received their information about training as part of their benefit claim and hence adviser practice largely influenced their understanding of available courses. For most claimants, Jobcentre Plus advisers are a key source of information. Consider how best to increase awareness among all claimants about available training and encourage them to ask questions and discuss training with their advisers. This could be a menu of options for example or creating and publicising online resources. There should be a clear, consistent offer. Increasing the awareness of all claimants about available training opportunities would help claimants:
 - who can self-serve most effectively to identify relevant training opportunities within the rules of claiming JSA;
 - who do not discuss training options with their adviser to have an increased awareness of the training opportunities available;
 - who are presented with a limited range of options to understand why some have been eliminated and others prioritised.
- **Provide tasters:** Give claimants the opportunity to try different courses in order to test whether a course is relevant and to become familiar with an adult learning environment. This latter is particularly important for claimants who may have had negative educational experiences in the past (see section 3.1.2, Information about training opportunities).
- **Fund courses with most impact and most likely to meet claimants' needs:** Many claimants were motivated by having clear links between training and their

work and employment goals (see section 4.2.2, The potential contribution of training to achieving goals). Some of the staff interviewed highlighted a need to monitor the progression of learners attending Skills Conditionality provision in order to inform future provision and referrals. Specifically, one member of Jobcentre Plus staff stated that they would like more information on how many learners, after attending a particular course, entered into work or further learning and what qualifications they achieved. This would allow both Jobcentre Plus and provider staff to better assess the impact of courses and to determine whether further provision/support is needed in order to improve training outcomes. Jobcentre Plus staff could use information about claimant satisfaction with and the quality and effectiveness of provision in helping to secure job outcomes to inform future referrals and the brokering of provision.

- **Clearly make links between training and employment/personal goals:** Claimants had a range of motivations for training, but most commonly advancing their employment prospects was most important. Advisers should try to make clear links between the training being offered and the claimant's work or personal goals and ensure that the claimant understands the potential benefits, especially if they are not immediately clear to the claimant. For example, explaining the need for IT skills in a variety of sectors.
- **Create sufficient opportunity for a two-way discussion in order to promote claimant choice and ownership of training.** Claimants say that their relationship with their adviser is central to how they experience back to work support. Claimants report being more motivated to train where they feel there has been a two-way discussion of training options and they have had some control and input into the decision-making process (see section 4.2.3, The skills offer and adviser-claimant relationships). Advisers need sufficient time to be able to have in-depth discussions and to be sufficiently skilled. This discussion could include explaining the training content and available support to ensure a good match to the claimant's needs, demonstrating a link between a training opportunity and the claimant being able to work towards or achieve a career or employment goal, and referring to certified training opportunities.
- **Only mandate to training where it is necessary to change training behaviour rather than across the board:** The motivations for training are complex and personal. Claimants react to mandation to training differently. For some it does not affect their planned behaviour and they continue to train. For others it can create a sense of anxiety that overshadows their learning experience. Mandation changes the nature of the interaction, and it made some claimants more defensive or dismissive of the training opportunity. Interviewees generally felt unable to question a training referral as they were aware that attending can be a condition of receiving benefits and that they could face the risk of sanctions if they do not comply (see section 4.2.4, Mandation). Indeed, the lack of agency or choice that some claimants felt they had over training decisions was reported by some training

providers to have an adverse effect on the extent to which claimants engage in courses and providers reported how they seek to re-engage mandated claimants in learning at the outset of courses. Claimants tended to be motivated by choice and a sense of ownership so consideration could be given to wider use of adviser discretion to target mandated training appropriately and sensitively, as several claimants did not feel they had been offered a choice.

- **Inform claimants about the financial cost and value of training:** Many claimants automatically viewed training as an investment in order to make them more attractive to employers (see section 4.1, Automatic motivations to train). Consider giving claimants details of the monetary value of any training they are referred to in order to increase their perception that it is an investment being made to strengthen their ability to gain employment.

1 Introduction

The current systems of benefit conditionality have developed following a series of reforms carried out since the mid-1980s, and most recently the Jobseeker's (Back to Work Schemes) Act 2013 (Oakley, 2014). Skills Conditionality was introduced in 2011 and as a result claimants can be mandated to participate in training. Conditionality in the benefits system aims to serve as a means to reinforce the responsibilities of benefit claimants to seek work and to participate in relevant support. The sanctions system can apply financial penalties to claimants who do not meet their obligations.

1.1 Research aims and objectives

Within the context of behavioural insights this project aims to explore training behaviours and decision-making in order to test the effectiveness of Skills Conditionality and mandation; to improve attendance at interventions; and to ensure that training opportunities for benefits claimants are based on an understanding of people's motivations and behaviours. The research focuses on the behaviour of training participation and in doing so aims to:

- Understand how the skills offer is experienced by claimants;
- Identify key influences on behaviours and decision-making by claimants;
- Understand influences on the type of training claimants undertake (where they undertake training).

It aims to explore the factors influencing training decisions over time, specifically before a claimant considers training, when they are considering training and when they are doing or have completed training.

1.2 How the mandation process works

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) are subject to mandation as a condition of receiving benefits. Conditionality in the benefits system aims to serve as a means to reinforce the responsibilities of benefit claimants to seek work and to participate in relevant support. Some behaviours and requirements of mandation apply to all claimants, such as being available for work and actively seeking work for individuals claiming JSA. In addition, claimants may also be mandated to specific programmes or activities depending on their situation and the outcomes of discussions with Jobcentre Plus or Work Programme advisers. Claimants are required to agree and sign up to a Claimant Commitment. This is a new form of the Jobseeker's Agreement and makes explicit the job seeking actions a claimant must carry out while receiving Jobseeker's

Allowance (JSA). It emphasises claimants' responsibilities to do all they can to look for work in return for the support they receive from the state.

Requirements are enforced through the sanctions regime. An adviser can raise a sanction referral. This referral acts as a statement that, in the opinion of a personal adviser, a claimant may not be fulfilling the conditions required to receive benefits and therefore may not be entitled to a benefits payment. The referral is passed to a decision maker who will decide if a sanction is to be applied. Once the claim has gone forward to a decision maker, a claimant may have their benefit suspended pending a decision being made. A decision to apply a sanction is termed an adverse decision. A sanction will not be applied if the claimant can show that they had good reason for the action that led to a sanction being applied.

From October 2012, a new conditionality regime was introduced. For JSA claimants it included three levels of sanction (higher, intermediate and lower) depending on the nature of the breach, different levels of sanctions for the first, second and third breach, and a change to the date a sanction would start. Lower level sanctions lead to claimants losing all of their JSA for a fixed period of four weeks for the first failure, followed by 13 weeks for subsequent failures (within a 52 week period of their last failure). Breaches that will incur a low level sanction include:

- voluntarily leaving a place on a training scheme or employment programme without good reason;
- refusal of a place on a training scheme or employment programme without good reason;
- failure to participate in a scheme for assisting them to obtain employment without good reason (Skills Conditionality).

Not actively seeking employment or not being available for work are failures of entitlement and incur an intermediate level sanction, which result in losing all JSA for four weeks for a first failure, rising to 13 weeks for a second or subsequent failures (within a 52 week period of their last failure). High level sanctions are used for breaches such as leaving employment voluntarily without good reason, losing employment through misconduct or failure to participate in mandatory work activity without good reason. Higher level sanctions lead to claimants losing all of their JSA for a fixed period of 13 weeks for a first failure, 26 weeks for a second failure and 156 weeks for a third and subsequent failure (within a 52 week period of their last failure).

In December 2012, a revised sanction regime was introduced for ESA (WRAG) claimants. Under the previous sanction regime, ESA (WRAG) claimants that failed to comply with the conditions of receiving benefit received an open ended sanction which was lifted when they recomplied. From December 2012, ESA (WRAG) claimants who fail to comply with the conditions of receiving benefit receive an open-ended sanction,

followed by a fixed period sanction when they re-comply. The fixed period sanction is one week for a first failure, two weeks for a second failure and four weeks for a third and subsequent failure in a 52 week period. Claimants who are sanctioned lose all of their personal allowance, but their work related activity component is not affected.

Skills Conditionality was introduced for JSA and ESA (WRAG) claimants in August 2011. This policy allows Jobcentre Plus advisers to mandate benefit claimants to undertake activities that address an identified skills gap. The purpose is to ensure that these claimants undertake activities to bring them closer to the labour market and support them to secure employment. Claimants can be referred to an Initial Provider Interview, support from the National Careers Service, or to training.

If advisers are unable to identify a customer's skills needs at the new claims stage, claimants will be referred to the National Careers Service for a 'Skills Health Check'. The National Careers Service adviser will then recommend a course of action based on the results of this assessment, which Jobcentre Plus advisers then follow-up with the claimant. Other instances in which customers may be referred to the National Careers Service are for the provision of careers information, advice and guidance when a claimant lacks clear and achievable career goals.

1.3 Behavioural insights approaches

In order to understand how people respond to mandation, it is helpful to apply frameworks that explain individual decision-making, which are rooted in emerging behavioural insights approaches. Implications for policy design can then be drawn out from applying these methods of analysing human behaviour. Recent behavioural insights approaches contain advantages over many previous policy approaches which have been based on the assumptions underpinning neoclassical economic theory: that individuals are fully informed and effective at processing and weighing information to make a 'rational' decision that is in their best long-term interest to 'optimise their utility'. These simple rational choice assumptions are the foundations of economic man (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008). These assumptions apply best to behaviour where there is a choice between options with clearly perceived costs and benefits (Darnton, 2008). This simple rational choice model is a useful predictor of choice over a wide range of phenomena, but there are areas of human behaviour where rational choice modelling is less helpful. Hence behavioural economics and insight aim to account for human limitations in the decision making process (Darnton, 2008). These combine economic and psychological theory, each of which qualifies and augments rational choice theory.

Behavioural economics recognises that individuals tend to accept suboptimal outcomes on a regular basis, not because they are irrational, but because they operate under cognitive constraints e.g. of time, imperfect information, or limited capacity to assess it.

Types of information processing undertaken by humans divide into System 1 (automatic and tacit) and System 2 (consciously reflective and explicit). Because humans are not aware of what the 'automatic' part of our brain is doing when they make decisions, much of the information processing has been done by System 1 before System 2 starts. Therefore individuals may have already ruled out pieces of information or options before they start to make a decision at a conscious level. This means that often, humans make decisions based on partial or incomplete information. Given the limited time and resources available to them, people tend to 'satisfice', that is, to choose something that is 'good enough' (for now) rather than 'optimal'. In the context of using training as a route into employment, it is important to understand how far individuals are shaped by their personal histories, how far they are able to rationalise and change their attitudes based on previous adverse experience, how far they are able to think long-term, and what support and actions might enable them to focus on such goals.

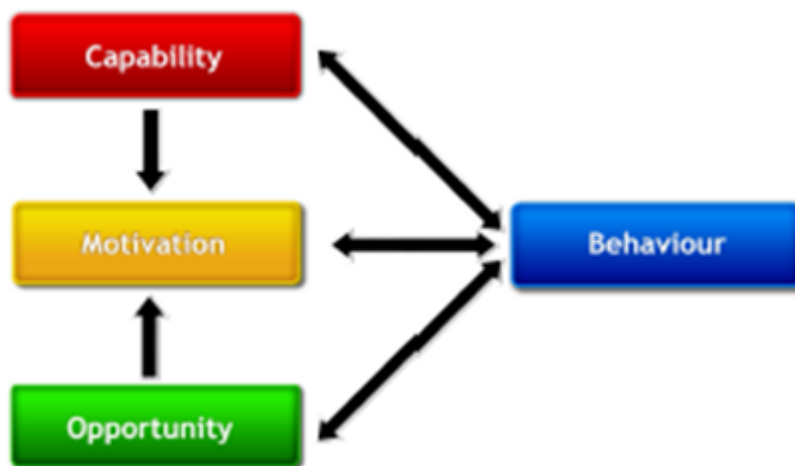
Behavioural theories have examined the types of cognitive heuristics and biases (or 'shortcuts') which people use in forming judgements (see Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Heuristics are experience-based techniques for problem solving, learning, and discovery that are used to identify a solution as rapidly as possible. This could include an intuitive judgement, an educated guess, or using a rule of thumb. Bias is often caused by heuristics and is the tendency to make errors in certain circumstances based on cognitive factors rather than the presented evidence. Consequently, people may take decisions which may not be based on pure probabilities but on their likelihood when compared to previous outcomes (representativeness) and the ease with which an event can be recalled (availability). This is important for decisions about training, where the experience of learners with low skills and possibly low self-confidence may be strongly shaped by perceptions of norms of training behaviour and outcomes for groups which influence them. They may also be overshadowed through broad perceptions of factors such as the state of the (very) local labour market or the employment circumstances of individuals known to them and selected as personal comparators, regardless of whether or not they are the most appropriate reference points.

Behavioural change principles have been popularised recently through 'nudge' theory (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). The key insight of 'nudge' theory is that instead of correcting biases, interventions should be designed to go with the grain of human nature and change choices in a way that promotes human welfare. 'Nudge' interventions (cf. Thaler and Sunstein, 2008) are those in which people are offered incentives to change their behaviour, or change the architecture of their choices, but without being deprived of their freedom of choice. 'Nudge' approaches are based on an understanding of individuals as impulsive, short term and emotion-driven, individualised but subject to social norms and responsive to external 'nudges'- coming either from the state or from the social networks in which they operate - that influence their choices in a 'soft' way. The insight from this evidence forms the core of the understanding of human behaviour represented in the

'MINDSPACE' framework and more recently the EAST model devised explicitly as a framework to help policy makers incorporate behavioural insights in policy design to maximise effectiveness of their interventions (Dolan et al., 2010; BIT, 2014). Overviews of the MINDSPACE and EAST frameworks are provided in the Annex (Overview of MINDSPACE framework and Overview of the EAST framework). MINDSPACE is incorporated alongside the COM-B framework to provide the analytic framework for this research and the EAST framework is drawn upon when considering the implications of the research in Chapter 7.

Another recent and integrative framework for designing behaviour change interventions is the COM-B system which is the result of a review and synthesis of 19 other behavioural insights models which have been developed and applied in the social intervention literature (Michie et al, 2011). The model illustrates that behaviour is an interacting system in which capability, opportunity, and motivation interact to generate behaviour that in turn influences these components (the COM-B system, see Figure 3). The single-headed and double-headed arrows in Figure 3 represent potential influence between components in the system. For example, opportunity can influence motivation as can capability; enacting a behaviour can alter capability, motivation, and opportunity.

Figure 3: The COM-B system: a framework for understanding behaviour



Source: Michie et al, 2011

The authors define the aspects of the framework as follows:

- Capability is the individual's psychological and physical capacity to engage in the activity concerned. It includes having the necessary knowledge and skills.
- Opportunity is defined as all the factors that lie outside the individual that make the behaviour possible or prompt it. Opportunity can be either social or physical.
- Motivation is brain processes that energise and direct behaviour, not just goals and conscious decision-making. It includes habitual processes, emotional responding,

as well as analytical decision-making. Motivation is therefore automatic or reflective (Michie et al, 2011, p. 4).

Analytic framework

In this report, the COM-B system is used as a theoretical framework, and combined with MINDSPACE to make sense of the factors gathered from qualitative interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff, training providers and benefits claimants which affect claimants' behaviours and attitudes to training and mandation. The framework is used to analyse, and interpret the findings related to the influences on training participation behaviour. Allocating themes to each of the dimensions was undertaken with the guidance of Dr Ivo Vlaev, a behavioural insights expert. The COM-B framework was chosen because it is based on a review and synthesis of other behavioural insights models and takes into account both automatic and reflective factors and behaviours.

Chapter 3 covers factors affecting Capability, which in this context include health and physical ability to learn, as well as knowledge and psychological skills to engage in the necessary mental processes to learn. Chapter 4 covers factors affecting Opportunity. In relation to training, this includes, for example, the availability and affordability of learning provision. Chapter 5 details the factors affecting Motivation, and includes data relating to the MINDSPACE components. This includes both reflective and automatic motivations which for example in relation to training behaviour include the effects of family and friends potential learners interact with, and relationships between claimants and Jobcentre Plus staff.

An alternative way of conceiving behaviour change interventions is in terms of 'think' approaches. 'Think' interventions are policy interventions in which individuals are given information, the opportunity to discuss and deliberate on a subject, and then the chance to act and determine their own preferences, objectives and behaviours on the basis of their deliberative activity. 'Think' interventions rely therefore on an understanding of human agents as rational and purposeful, and are characterised as less paternalistic as they do not presume a priori to know the best outcome in advance (Leggett, 2014).

1.4 Methodological summary

The research consists of **20 interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff and training providers** about mandation and training and **60 qualitative interviews** with JSA claimants and ESA (WRAG) claimants in four geographic areas. Claimants were sampled based on whether or not they had participated in training and whether or not they had been mandated to training creating four groups (see the Annex for full details about the sampling approach). These are referred to throughout the report as follows:

- **Mandated trainers:** respondents who had been mandated by Jobcentre Plus to training between August and October 2013 and who participated in training offered.
- **Mandated non-trainers:** respondents who had been mandated by Jobcentre Plus to training between October and December 2013 and who did not participate in training offered.
- **Voluntary trainers:** respondents who had self-referred to training between August and October 2013.
- **Voluntary non-trainers:** respondents who had not been mandated to training, nor self-referred to training between August and October 2013.

The data were analysed for differences in responses by these sample groups, and where there were differences these are noted throughout the text (see the Annex for details of the analysis approach). There were, however, few differences between these sample groups because in reality, claimants' experiences were more varied than envisaged in the sample design. In the recent past, or during previous benefit spells, many respondents had been in one of the other categories (i.e. current mandated trainers had been voluntary trainers in the past). In addition, most respondents had at some point attended training throughout a benefits claim, either recently or in the past. This suggests that each category is not as 'pure' a type as the original research design suggests.

1.5 Overview of report structure

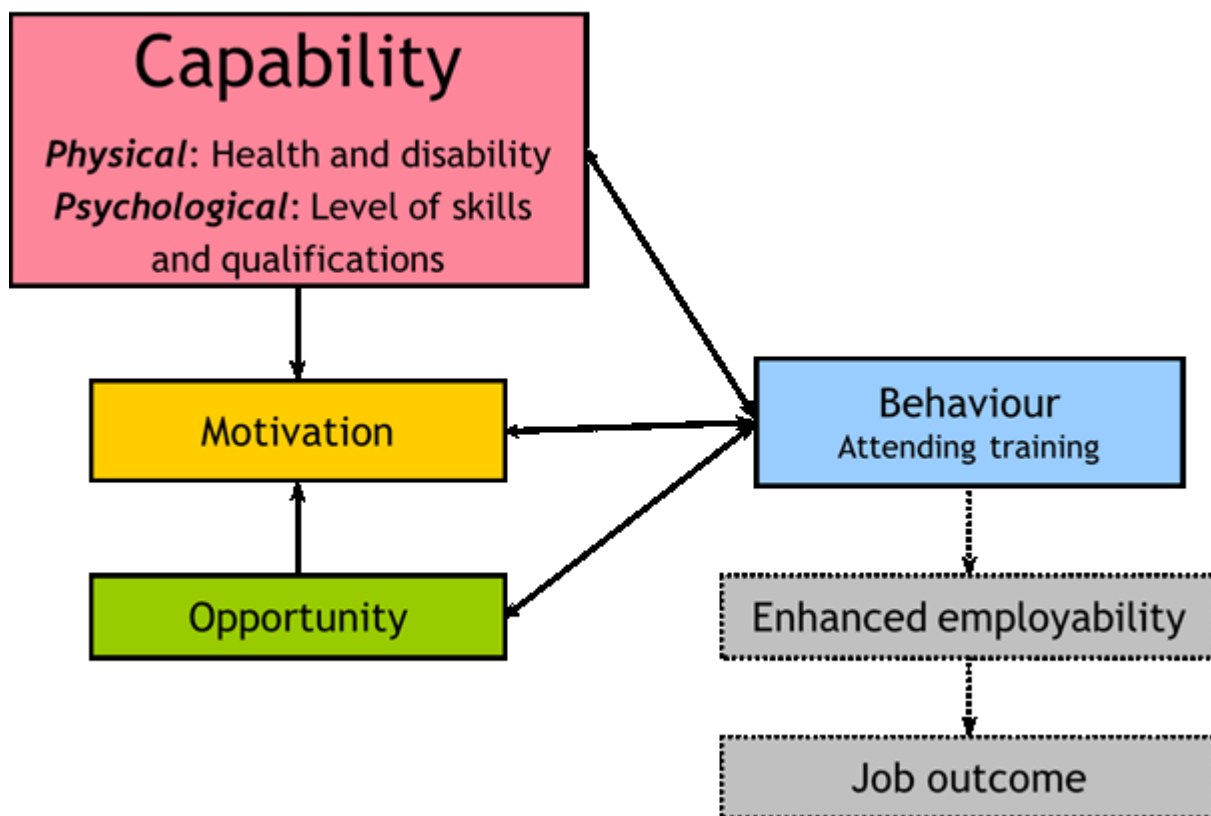
The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** presents the findings relating to claimants' capability to train from qualitative interviews with benefit claimants, drawing out psychological and physical factors.
- **Chapter 3** presents the findings relating to claimants' opportunity to train, such as awareness of opportunities, social norms and expectations, and the learning infrastructure. The chapter draws on qualitative evidence from interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff, providers and benefit claimants.
- **Chapter 4** details the findings from qualitative interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff, training providers, and benefit claimants relating to motivations to train. This includes findings relating to the influence of mandation, and the potential and actual value and contribution of training to claimants' work goals.
- **Chapter 5** provides data about the critical events, people, and circumstances that have influenced claimants' training decisions, identifies triggers and maps these against a JSA customer journey.
- **Chapter 6** reports the evidence-based conclusions and suggested areas for intervention based on the findings using the EAST framework.

2 Claimants' capability to train

This chapter presents the capability factors that influence claimants' training behaviour (see Figure 4). It draws on data from interviews with benefit claimants about their perceptions of their psychological and physical capability to engage in training. As the majority of claimants were also actively seeking work, their assessment of their capability to learn was bound up with considerations about their job search success. Capability to learn was influenced by respondents' views of their existing knowledge, skills and experience, and in some cases how these matched the labour market. Levels of existing IT and English skills influenced respondents' capability to learn, and particularly to job search effectively. These psychological capabilities are discussed first, followed by evidence relating to physical capabilities. Where there were differences between capabilities by sample group these are noted.

Figure 4: Capability factors affecting training behaviour



Source: IES, 2014, adapted from Michie, 2011

Key findings: Claimants' capability to train

Claimants' capability to conceptualise and discuss their qualifications, work history, and other related life experiences in terms of the skills they had developed varied

considerably. Some struggled to articulate this and by contrast others were able to communicate this succinctly.

Respondents had varied levels of skills, qualifications and experience, and therefore different levels of capability from which to build further learning. Claimants with high levels of skills or experience, but lacking qualifications tended to see themselves as capable of undertaking and succeeding at a course in order to gain a qualification.

There were three people in the sample that felt that they lacked a basic level of English. Generally respondents felt that their English and Maths skills were sufficient for them to job search effectively and to work and learn.

There were several JSA claimants who described lacking any basic IT skills. All of these respondents were aged 25 or over, and they all had qualifications at Level 2 or below. Some respondents had used family to help them job search and to write a CV and others had used services that can offer this as part of their support, such as the National Careers Service. However, for most of these claimants the effectiveness of their job search was limited by their lack of IT skills.

Seventeen out of the sixty claimants interviewed reported that they had a health condition or disability that limited the kind of work they could do or their day to day activities, including sometimes their ability to learn. However, the most common way that health influenced the training behaviour of respondents was as a trigger for retraining. Several respondents who developed a health condition then lacked the physical capability to perform the skills they had used in past employment.

The variety in the capability of respondents and the differing ability to describe their skills and experience will require tailored responses from advisers to engage claimants in training. Some claimants will be able to identify potential gaps in their skills and experience and suggest solutions themselves. Others who struggle to assess their own capability are likely to need more support and encouragement firstly to recognise the skills and experience they have, and then to identify any gaps.

2.1 Psychological capability

The psychological capability factors identified by claimants that affect their training behaviour related to their skills, qualifications and experience. These are discussed in general, before specific attention is given to English and Maths skills, IT skills and job search skills.

2.1.1 Claimants' skills, qualifications and experience

Respondents in the sample had very varied levels of skills, qualifications and experience, and therefore different levels of capability from which to learn further. Some respondents did not have any significant work experience, either because they had recently finished school or college, or because of time spent caring for children or other family members, whereas others had significant work histories spanning decades and covering several job roles and occupations.

The qualification levels of respondents were also quite varied but the majority of respondents in the sample had low level or no qualifications; just nine respondents reported they had qualifications at Level 3 or above. A few respondents held occupational licences such as the CSCS card, a forklift licence or the SIA licence. Respondents had gained qualifications through learning at school, college or university, while making a benefits claim, and through previous work experience. They had developed their skills through learning, working either in a paid or voluntary capacity or through undertaking caring roles and household management.

Respondents reporting that they had a high level of skills did not necessarily correlate with them having qualifications. For example, one group of respondents typically with a long work history felt they had high levels of skills, but were unable to demonstrate or signal them to employers now they were out of the labour market because they did not have a related qualification:

"I mean literally I only went on the training course so I could put down that I had some tangible qualification."

(Bridget, 25-49, Highest qualification level not known, Mandated non-learner)

"I wanted to basically grow with my education because obviously it wasn't that good... I decided it was now or never basically to go and do the course."

(Julie, 25-49, Level 2, Voluntary learner)

Claimants who self-reported high levels of skills or experience, but who lacked qualifications tended to see themselves as quite capable of undertaking and succeeding at a course in order to gain a qualification. Respondents in this group were essentially seeking to learn in order to certify existing skills and experience.

Conversely there were a few young people in the sample who were trying to enter the labour market and that felt they had relevant qualifications, but not the required level of experience to successfully find work. Two women in the sample shared similarities to these young people as labour market entrants as they were seeking to return to employment after bringing up a family and had a considerable gap in recent employment

history. Both women returners discussed ways they had been developing their skills through volunteering over recent years in preparation for work when their children started school and felt they had the capability to develop new skills and learn. Overall, respondents with little or no recent work experience, but recent learning or voluntary experience, tended to be confident in their ability to learn, but less so in how they could apply this capability to finding work.

Claimants' capability to conceptualise and discuss their qualifications, work history, and other related life experiences in terms of the skills they had developed varied considerably. Some respondents struggled to articulate this. For example:

"I'm getting better as I get more interview experience I remember my first interview when they asked what skills could you bring to this company I panicked and said none."

(Shona, 19-24, Level 3 and above, Mandated non-learner)

"That's one of my worst things if people say what skills have you got, I never know what to say and I don't know what to say, you know, it's like... but like I can do maths and stuff, but I never know whether to say that as a skill."

(Louise, 19-24, Level 2, Voluntary non-learner)

By contrast other claimants demonstrated an excellent ability to communicate their skills, such as one young person who had completed an apprenticeship and had since had periods in and out of work:

"At the apprenticeship was definitely confidence and that is what kick-started my way to retail and you know, the communication as well and being more mannered and more polite. Prince's Trust again self-confidence [...] time keeping and definitely communication [...] I felt that all these experiences I had I brought to [name of large retail employer]."

(Gary, 19-24, Level 1, Mandated learner)

Some claimants described assessing their existing skills against local vacancies and decided to volunteer in order to gain relevant experience. For example, one respondent hoping to work in administration volunteered at a hospital. Others had assessed their skills and matched them to local vacancies and decided to undertake a course or retrain. One respondent with a significant work history felt that their skills were too specific to their previous industry. They had skills that would transfer to other sectors, such as customer service skills, but felt that a relevant qualification would better signal and certify their transferable experience to employers.

The variety in the capability of respondents to describe their skills and experience will require different and tailored responses from advisers. Some claimants will be able to identify potential gaps in their skills and experience and suggest solutions whereas claimants who struggle to articulate their skills and experience and assess their own capability are likely to need more support and encouragement to first recognise the skills and experience they have, and then to identify any gaps. Recognising the need for or value of a course is important in generating motivation to train (see section 4.2, Reflective motivations to train).

2.1.2 English and Maths skills

Generally respondents felt that their English and Maths skills were sufficient for them to effectively job search and to work and learn. There were just three people in the sample that felt that they lacked a basic level of English. For example, one respondent who was in the ESA (WRAG) group said:

“I can’t read and write very well. I can do it I’m not saying I can’t do it, just not as well as you’d want for somebody who does a job.”

(Annie, 25-49, Highest qualification level not known, Voluntary non-learner)

This claimant had not received any training recently, but in the past had attended an IT course. Their lack of English skills had been a major barrier to their ability to successfully participate in this IT course:

“I can’t read the computers so and I was spending my day sitting on a computer looking for jobs what I couldn’t read anyway and there wasn’t anybody there to help.”

(Annie, 25-49, Highest qualification level not known, Voluntary non-learner)

One JSA claimant rated his English and Maths skills: *“spellings poor, and not good at maths, get by like”*. He recalled having a test of his English and Maths skills several years earlier during a previous spell claiming benefits, but was not offered any training at that time. More recently he had not discussed his level of English skills with his Jobcentre Plus adviser and he reported that he would like to *“brush up”* these skills.

2.1.3 IT skills

There were several JSA claimants in the sample who described lacking any basic IT skills, for example being unable to turn on a computer, use the internet or send an email. All of these respondents were aged 25 or over, and they all had qualifications at Level 2 or below. Respondents did not discuss how a lack of capability in IT had or might affect their capability to undertake learning, they focused on the impact it had on their capability to undertake effective job search. Some respondents described how they managed to

overcome a lack of IT skills and still use a computer to job search with the help from friends and family (typically their children) to write their CV and others had relied on organisations such as the National Careers Service which offer CV writing support as one of their services. However, for most claimants lacking IT skills the effectiveness of their job search was severely limited, as these two respondents described:

“My CV, I’ve got one, but I actually have trouble actually sending it across online.”

(Graham, 50+, Level 2, Voluntary learner)

“[The adviser] left me with the bits and I just had to put it [a CV] proper on the computer. But I can’t write it or do that sort of thing. I’ve got my 17-year old daughter... and she can do it.”

(Mike, 25-49, Highest qualification level not known, Mandated learner)

A detailed example of how a lack of IT skills to conduct effective job search were the main driver to train is given in Box 1.

Box 1: Case-study example: Training behaviour influenced by capability

One respondent in her early 60s was currently claiming JSA and had recently been mandated to attend an IT course. She left school without any formal qualifications and had a varied career, working as a solicitor’s secretary, carer, and retail assistant. Her last period of employment was in 2004 working in a care home. For most of the intervening years she claimed Incapacity Benefit because of several health conditions that limited her ability to work. Her husband died during this time and for a short period she also received a Widow’s Pension. Following recent welfare reforms she was moved from Incapacity Benefit to ESA and most recently in 2013 was deemed fit for work. She appealed this decision, but was unsuccessful and so changed her benefits claim to JSA in summer 2013 and has since been looking for retail and care work locally.

She has been supported by a number of different advisers in her local Jobcentre Plus. At an early appointment an adviser mandated her to attend an IT course in order for her to develop the necessary skills to conduct an effective job search online. She had no knowledge of a computer. When she was a secretary she had used typewriters and in her more recent employment had not been required to use a computer. She described why she was mandated to attend the training: *“I couldn’t do a job search until I learned the computer. So I was there until I could learn to do the job search on my own type of thing”*. When she started the IT course she was unsure how to switch a computer on and she does not have a computer at home. The course was in a nearby town and her travel costs for attending were reimbursed by Jobcentre Plus.

The IT course was run in a group environment which the interviewee initially welcomed as she also viewed training as a way to meet new people and to “*get out of the house*”. In reality she found the different levels in the group slightly intimidating and would have preferred to be in a class with absolute beginners like herself.

She attended the course for two three hour sessions a week for twelve weeks. Due to health reasons she was unable to attend two of the sessions. She tried to rearrange these appointments to make up the time and attend other sessions as she was keen to develop her IT skills and to “*keep the Jobcentre off my back*”.

She described herself as finding it difficult to learn new things, and needing ample time to understand, and practice. At the end of the twelve weeks she took an exam to test her knowledge. She was surprised when she passed the exam, and wanted to continue to attend the course because she felt that she had not yet fully absorbed the course content. However, this was not possible: “*I wanted to go an extra day but it wasn't allowed, just to try and do a little bit extra... because I'd get to know the computer a little bit more*”.

Since the course she has been attending a local community centre two or three times a week which provides access to a computer and the internet for job search. She also continues to use her previous work search methods, asking friends and family and visiting employers directly.

2.1.4 Job search skills

The confidence and effectiveness with which respondents felt they could search for jobs was largely related to their IT skills. Many job adverts were online and applications also needed to be made electronically, either by submitting a CV or completing an online application form and tests. Some respondents were confident at drafting and maintaining their CV, as the following examples illustrate:

“I mean I've got two CVs. I've got my agricultural CV, which is separate, and it's brilliant, and then there's my retail CV, which I keep adding to every time I get experience.”

(Louise, 19-24, Level 2, Voluntary non-learner)

“My CV was already done and I showed them and they went, “Oh yeah, we can't improve that, that's fine”.”

(Peter, 25-49, Level 2, Mandated learner)

Others felt less well able to job search online. For example:

“That [IT skills], that’s pretty poor because I know you’ve to do that... The actual job match thing now... So this is why I’ve got to do the computer course, but I was okay like looking through the paper and going and putting me CV into nursing homes.”

(Lisa, 25-49, Level 2, Voluntary non-learner)

Among those who felt less well able to job search were examples of claimants that had been well-supported to develop these skills by Jobcentre Plus and its agencies, for example by having support to develop or review and amend a CV, or via workshops introducing job websites, how to set up job email alerts and to apply online for vacancies.

There were other claimants who lacked confidence in their ability to effectively job search, in large part because of their (perceived) lack of IT skills and in some cases lack of English skills in addition. Compare and contrast the situations of the following two claimants, the first had had support from a provider to develop their CV; the second was struggling with applications:

“If you go on a course they kind of say you’ve written it wrong and stuff, not enough information and stuff [...] I had gone on a couple of day courses [...] You would be on computers, you would do it yourself but they would come over and see if you were alright and they would help you how to word it right.”

(Neil, 19-24, Level 3 and above, Mandated learner)

“It’s hard to do a CV yourself... I just find it’s difficult... when I was to sit down and do a CV it would have been 20 pages long because I wouldn’t have known how to break it down properly... and there again it’s the spelling side and all of that. Even though you are doing it on a computer and I know you’ve got spell check and all of that but it’s still difficult.”

(Julie, 25-49, Level 2, Voluntary learner)

2.2 Physical capability

Just one dimension of physical capability was identified as affecting training behaviour: health and disability.

2.2.1 Health and disability

Seventeen out of the sixty claimants interviewed reported that they had a health condition or disability that limited the kind of work they could do or their day to day activities, including sometimes their ability to learn. However, the most common way that health influenced training behaviour among the respondents was as a trigger for retraining.

Several respondents who developed a health condition then lacked the physical capability to perform the skills they had used in past employment.

There were several respondents who had lost their most recent job due to ill-health, including a driver who had a stroke and had his driving licence suspended on medical grounds, a manual worker who developed a heart condition and was advised to no longer undertake heavy lifting, and a hairdresser who developed a musculoskeletal condition and could no longer stand for long periods. These health issues now meant that undertaking their previous area of work was no longer possible, so they wanted to retrain in order to find work. For example:

“I had to retrain in something I had to retrain in something that wasn’t going to be a physical job... While the last three years I was self-employed I basically did the majority of my accounts myself anyway. My accountant was hardly charging me anything because she basically said to me you’re doing most of the work yourself and because I was doing that I thought I’m going to try and do this as a full time career because I can’t physically work anymore.”

(Dean, 25-49, Highest qualification level not known, Voluntary learner)

For most claimants their health condition did not affect their capability to learn. Only a small number of learners with a health condition described the effects it could have on their capability to learn, such as this learner:

“I found it a real struggle to go there you know because sometimes I really had days where I’m in very bad pain like now. And it really gets you down so I think that affects my concentration sometimes.”

(Brian, 50+, Level 1, Mandated learner)

Several respondents with existing health conditions had had accommodations made by a training provider. For example, one respondent who was dyslexic described how her tutor had been very supportive and another learner with a mental health condition undertaking an ECDL course said the provider had enabled her to work flexibly towards the qualification, splitting her learning time between the provider’s office and her home depending on her health.

There was one recent JSA claimant who described how a mandation to a training course which she felt was inappropriate had exacerbated her underlying health condition, causing her to return to her doctors and to change her benefit application to ESA:

“I’m usually alright to go on courses, but this particular one straight after, the typing one, I was getting anxious about it and I thought why am I getting anxious about it? Because I’d just come off one course and they’re sending me on something that I don’t need. I don’t

need to learn about typing, I've done it all; I'm not going to go into that sort of job. And I said I don't want to do it, can you send me on something else, which he didn't want to know, and so I had to go back to the doctor and said look this is what's happening, they're trying to send me on a course and getting me stressed and everything, you know, I'd only just come off the sick, to go back on it again because they're trying to send me on a course."

(Sue, 25-49, Level 2, Mandated learner)

2.3 Conclusions

Claimants' perceptions of their capability to learn were entwined with their motivation. For example, some who reported career and employment motivations assessed their capabilities against the skills, qualifications and experience that local employers were requiring which determined the labour market value of their capabilities and where they felt there were gaps were keen to train in order to fill them.

The variety in the ability of respondents to describe their capability in terms of skills and experience will require tailored responses from advisers to engage them most effectively in learning where appropriate. Some claimants will be able to identify potential gaps in their skills and experience and suggest solutions themselves. Claimants who struggle to assess their own capability are likely to need more support and encouragement first to recognise the skills and experience they have, and then to identify any gaps. Some claimants in the sample were struggling to effectively job search as they lacked basic IT skills. Advisers will need to encourage a culture of open discussion and disclosure for claimants to discuss their skills needs, including lack of IT skills or English skills. There were several respondents who felt unable to discuss these issues with their advisers and in relation to lack of English skills, these appeared not to have been picked up in skills screening as these respondents were not undertaking related training. Some claimants relied on the support of providers, such as the National Careers Service which offers CV writing support among other services, to design and write a CV. They tended to describe a process whereby this was done to them, rather than being involved in a joint-process where they learned and developed their career management skills for the future. The implications for supporting claimants' capability are discussed further in Chapter 7.

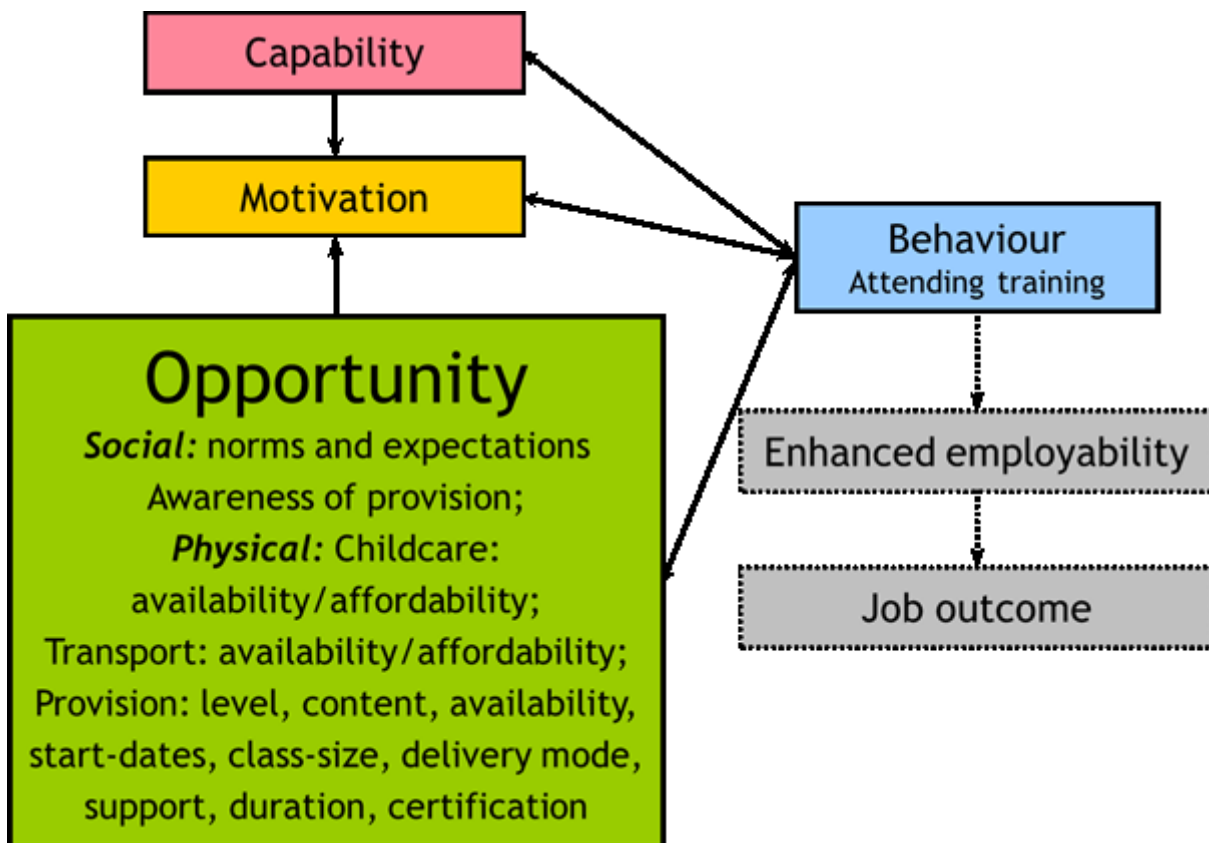
Provision needs to continue to be tailored to the needs of claimants. For example, several discussed the good practice of providers in accommodating their health conditions during learning. Flexible provision is also required for IT skills. It needs to start from a most basic level (i.e. switching on a computer), and also to provide learners with on-going support, building their confidence and ensuring they continue to maintain their newly developed skills. Where claimants do not have access to computers at home,

community organisations were a useful source of access to IT and support for some claimants.

3 Claimants' opportunity to train

This chapter presents the opportunity factors that influence claimants' training behaviour (Figure 5). It draws on interviews with benefit claimants and Jobcentre Plus staff and training providers. Opportunity factors are those that lie outside the individual that make training behaviour possible. They consist of physical opportunity, which is afforded by the environment, and social opportunity which relates to how people think about things. First, this chapter discusses how social opportunities and the expectations of friends, family and the welfare system influenced claimants' perceptions of their training behaviour. Next it explores how training opportunities were influenced by claimants' awareness and understanding; some actively sought opportunities, whereas others were more passive. Lastly, the physical opportunities affecting training behaviour are discussed: learning provision and the supporting infrastructure. Where there were differences by sample group these are noted.

Figure 5: Opportunity factors affecting training behaviour



Source: IES, 2014, adapted from Michie, 2011

Key findings: Claimants' opportunity to train

The Jobcentre Plus staff interviewed reported that their areas had a good variety of learning provision and were operating in a responsive and competitive provider market. All of the staff interviewed reported that their district or office undertook formal gap analyses of training provision each year. One provision gap identified in more than one area was a lack of intensive, long-term English and Maths training. The courses currently on offer were seen as being too short in duration to address some claimants' needs.

The awareness of training opportunities among claimants was very varied. Voluntary learners were most likely to actively seek out information about training. Lack of IT skills limited some claimants' ability to find information in order to increase their awareness of training opportunities. Mandated learners were generally more passive and did not actively seek information about training, tending to rely on Jobcentre Plus advisers and education and training providers.

Most respondents were informed about training opportunities during one-to-one interviews with advisers. Claimants that had a good relationship with their adviser and confidence in the support offered tended to be more receptive to the prospect of training and attentive to any information presented.

Training providers who work with Jobcentre Plus also had a role in enhancing claimants' awareness of training opportunities. Some undertook regular visits to Jobcentre Plus offices where claimants who have been signposted or referred to training had the chance to have one-to-one discussions with course tutors. In some districts, providers also offered 'taster' sessions for courses, providing an overview of the content and structure of the programme, as well as the learning facilities available.

The skills offer had met the needs of several claimants. A number also expressed satisfaction with the supporting infrastructure that enabled them to attend training, such as the reimbursement of travel expenses. Others wanted greater access to training leading to recognised qualifications, training of longer duration or at a more advanced level, and training with a work experience component, and access to impartial careers information, advice and guidance to help when selecting courses or online access to information about training opportunities available to claimants.

3.1 Social opportunities

Two social opportunities affecting training behaviour were identified: norms and expectations; and awareness. These are discussed in turn.

3.1.1 Norms and expectations

The claimants interviewed for this study were asked about the extent to which they believed their training behaviour had been influenced by social norms and the expectations of their family and peers, as well as the expectations of the welfare system.

Interviewees largely described the positive role their family and friends had in their training decisions as they felt that they had their best interests at heart. A number of claimants stated that while the input of their family or friends was not crucial in determining the nature of their decision, they did offer emotional support and encouragement while they were determining what action they would take. This appeared to provide interviewees with greater confidence and self-efficacy in their training decision-making and discussions with friends and family made them more positively inclined towards it.

Other interviewees described the role played by their friends and family as more consultative. In one instance the customer's immediate social network had helped sell to them the potential benefits of an English and Maths course that had been suggested by their adviser that they were initially not overly enthusiastic about:

"I spoke to them about it, I didn't want to do it to be truthful but some [family and friends] turned round and said well it's not going to do you no harm. It will just bring you up to date on your maths and English because obviously it's changed over the years."

(Jared, 25-49, Below Level 1, Mandated non-learner)

In relation to claimant views about the social norms and tacit expectations of the welfare system and the impact this has on training decisions, one interviewee described the transactional nature of their benefits claim and felt that, using the analogy of being in employment, as a claimant it is perfectly reasonable and necessary that they should be expected to 'work' for their money:

"It's like if you want wages you have to work... I treated the course the exact same way. It was a necessary part of the system."

(Kevin, 50+, Level 3 and above, Mandated learner)

Another interviewee commented that they did not believe the benefit system expected them to train. This claimant, in their late 50s, had over 40 years of work experience alongside a Masters degree. As such they did not consider themselves a priority for training. The interviewee stated that Jobcentre Plus staff tended to focus on offering support to their largest customer demographic, which they saw as individuals with low-skill sets and/or a lack of work experience, such as young people and manual workers,

who they are able to offer beneficial training and support to and thereby, “get a good return on” (Sean, 50+, Level 3 or above, Voluntary non-learner).

3.1.2 Information about training opportunities

Awareness of training opportunities varied between claimants and they used a variety of ways to find information. This section first presents staff approaches to raising claimants' awareness of training opportunities and then claimants' awareness.

3.1.2.1 Staff approaches to raising claimants' awareness of training opportunities

The Jobcentre Plus staff interviewed as part of this research explained that when claimants first start receiving benefit they have varying expectations and awareness about whether they will be required or encouraged to undertake skills training as part of their claim. Returning claimants who may have temporarily stopped claiming benefit, for instance, after securing a short-term employment opportunity (so called, 'rapid re-claims') will be familiar with how Jobcentre Plus operates and the support on offer. They may also have been referred to training before by an adviser, and could therefore have some knowledge of the type of provision on offer.

In contrast, some Jobcentre Plus staff believed that customers who had recently found themselves out-of-work after a prolonged period of employment did not expect to train as part of their claim and believed that they would be able to move into another job almost straight away without updating their job-search and/or vocational skills. Other staff interviewed, however, felt that some of these customers would be aware that the job market and recruitment practices had changed since they last sought employment, and that they might need support in the area of employability skills as a result.

In spite of these differing expectations, Jobcentre Plus staff across all district areas stated that the actions and activities that an individual will be expected to undertake as a registered job seeker and the support that the Jobcentre Plus can afford them in their search for employment, including updating their job-search and/or vocational skills by attending training sessions, are made clear to claimants during their first meeting with an adviser. In two areas, this information was disseminated through group sessions with customers at the new claims stage, prior to their first meeting with an adviser. As highlighted by one member of Jobcentre Plus staff, a group approach can help to ensure that customers receive a consistent message from the Jobcentre in relation to their roles and responsibilities, and the actions they will be expected to undertake as part of their claim.

After claimants are made aware that they may be required to engage in skill development and attend training as a condition of their receiving benefit, the Jobcentre Plus staff and local training providers interviewed as part of this research cited several measures that

they will typically use to build customers' understanding of local training opportunities that they may be recommended. Staff reported that the main way of informing claimants about training provision was via adviser interviews. Following a diagnostic interview, and the identification of a customer's skills needs through a collaborative dialogue, the claimant will be made aware of training courses that may help to address any identified skills needs. The options presented will be derived from the adviser's district provision tool, and from any updates that the local Jobcentre Plus Partnership Manager has provided to the office.

A few of the Jobcentre Plus staff interviewed reported that the extent to which customers understand the training options available to them is based on the depth of conversation they have with their adviser, and the rapport established between adviser and claimant. Customers that have a good relationship with their adviser were felt to be more receptive to the prospect of training and attentive to any information presented about training opportunities.

Local training providers also have a role in enhancing customers' knowledge of training opportunities. Some training providers undertook regular visits to local Jobcentre Plus offices. As part of these visits, interviewees commented that claimants who have been signposted or referred to training would have the opportunity for one-to-one discussions with course tutors and to engage with their marketing materials in the form of brochures and displays, which generates awareness and interest in the courses on offer.

In some districts, providers also offered 'taster' sessions for particular courses. Tasters provide an overview of the content and structure of the programme, as well as the learning facilities available. According to staff, such sessions are also an effective means of engaging customers in the prospect of (re)training, by helping to make them aware of other courses that are available through the provider and various learning pathways open to them.

3.1.2.2 Claimants' awareness of training opportunities

The claimants interviewed as part of this research had varying degrees of awareness and knowledge of the training courses available to them. Further, the awareness claimants demonstrated had been acquired through a number of different information sources, both formal and informal. These included adviser discussions, but also training providers, friends and family and via research on the internet:

- **Adviser discussions:** For several claimants, awareness of the provision available to them was determined by the discussions they had with their adviser. Two respondents who had a good awareness of the training that their local Jobcentre Plus was able to offer appeared to have established a constructive two-way dialogue with their advisers. One of these respondents was claiming ESA and

received support from a disability adviser. The claimant commented that their adviser took a relaxed approach when discussing potential training opportunities and always ensured that they were comfortable about the prospect of attending a particular course before they made a referral. The adviser dedicated a large part of their appointment to explaining what training options Jobcentre Plus had to offer, for example the content, structure and length, and in some instances allowed the claimant to view their computer and see the opportunities listed on the district provision tool. As a result of this interaction the customer was aware and was able to list a number of vocational, basic skills and employability programmes that claimants could be referred to; they also had knowledge of the length of these courses. Due to their level of understanding, the claimant in question felt that they had a good range of options if they decided to undertake more training in future. Another claimant expressed similar sentiments when explaining how they had heard about employability courses. They commented that this awareness had developed organically through discussions with their adviser around what aspects of their job search they might need support with:

“Well it kind of came up in conversations you know. Because you take your CV in and they kind of look it over sort of thing and sort of ask you if you are happy with it and, well, if I can do anything to help and look for courses that way.”

(Neil, 19-24, Level 3 and above, Mandated learner)

In contrast, some respondents who had a poor awareness of training opportunities stated that their adviser did not engage them in detailed training discussions during their regular appointments. Instead they felt their adviser focused time on checking whether they had been applying for a sufficient number of jobs. As such, in some instances, these claimants were largely unaware of the training opportunities that were available to them. As one claimant commented:

“Every time I’ve been [to the Jobcentre] they haven’t really given me options, they’ve just sort of asked me to sign on and then leave. But then they’ve looked at my jobs and things like that, and sometimes when I go and see my personal adviser they don’t always have a lot to say.”

(Stacey, 25-49, Level 2, Voluntary non-learner)

However, a lack of dialogue about training between claimants and advisers did not always preclude claimants from acquiring knowledge of the short courses they could undertake through the Jobcentre; in two cases, interviewees stated that they had been made aware of potential training opportunities by their friends, who had also claimed JSA at one time.

Other claimants who lacked awareness of the courses offered by Jobcentre Plus, and felt that they had limited opportunities to consider and undertake training as a

result, stated that the only time their adviser raised the topic of training was when they informed the customer that they were referring them to a particular course; this sample of customers felt that they were being mandated to training without a two-way dialogue regarding what programmes they may be interested in or that might help address their individual needs. As one interviewee commented:

“I didn't know what training there were [...] I wasn't given nothing to say you've got all these training options that you can go for if you want to learn this or that skill. It was just what they put to me when I went in. I wasn't given no document to say here look through these, see if any of these skills that you'd be interested in.”

(Jared, 25-49, Below Level 1, Mandated non-learner)

- **Training providers:** Another common way in which claimants developed an awareness and understanding of the available training options was by attending a course. This gave learners, both mandated and voluntary, the opportunity to situate themselves in a learning environment and to interact with other learners and provider staff and learn more about local courses on offer. The main difference between how voluntary and mandated learners developed their awareness and knowledge of local training opportunities was that voluntary learners actively sought out and asked provider staff for advice and to discuss potential learning pathways with them. As a result of these discussions, in many cases, voluntary learners were receiving help from provider staff to find other training opportunities. In one instance, staff at a large education provider were helping a claimant to look for an apprenticeship. Mandated learners, meanwhile, were generally more passive and did not actively look for this type of information. This group of claimants typically developed their understanding of the training opportunities available through the standard information distributed by the provider to all learners via displays, and brochures.
- **Online resources:** Voluntary learners also cited several additional ways in which they proactively sought information and developed awareness and understanding of local training options outside of Jobcentre Plus contracted provision. An important information source was the internet. Several of the voluntary learners interviewed for this study, after considering the job-role they wanted to go into, and what qualifications they would need to attain in order to apply for such work, commented that they had searched for suitable courses on the websites of local Further Education (FE) colleges. This means increasing awareness and understanding of available courses would not be open to claimants lacking IT skills (see section 2.1.3, IT skills). Another factor determining claimants' awareness of local training opportunities was their proximity to education and training providers. Claimants who searched online for relevant courses, in most cases, tended to look at the website of their closest FE College and did not consider any other possible providers.

- **Friends and family:** Some voluntary learners, who had developed an awareness of local training provision, stated that they had acquired information through their social networks; in particular, from family and friends. In two instances, interviewees had initially heard about training courses, which they subsequently enrolled on, through either a friend or sibling who had recently completed the programme. In another case, an interviewee's father had pointed out an advertisement by an FE college for an Entry Level engineering course that the claimant enrolled on.

While the three cases presented above demonstrate how an awareness of training opportunities developed through word-of-mouth approaches can be effective in enabling individuals to undertake training, if it is one of the only information sources an individual has it can restrict their chances of engaging in learning, because individuals only hear about training opportunities in a sporadic and piece-meal fashion. This was the case for one interviewee whose partner was making a joint JSA claim on their behalf, and so had limited interaction with Jobcentre Plus. This claimant acquired all their information about local training courses from people they knew, and felt as a result that they were potentially missing out on vocational programmes relevant to their interests, or were hearing about them too close to the course start date without sufficient notice to enrol.

3.2 Physical opportunities

There were two main groups of physical opportunities affecting training behaviour. First the nature of the learning provision is discussed and then the influence of the supporting infrastructure.

3.2.1 The skills offer and learning provision

This section presents the evidence about staff and claimant views of the skills offer and learning provision available to benefit claimants, and the extent to which it meets claimants' needs.

3.2.1.1 Jobcentre Plus staff and provider views of the skills offer for claimants

All of the Jobcentre Plus districts included in this study followed a largely similar approach in determining whether claimants required training in order to improve their chances of gaining employment. The Jobcentre Plus staff interviewed as part of this research stated that their advisers complete a diagnostic interview with customers shortly after a new claim has been made. These are designed to identify the work a claimant is capable of undertaking based on their skills, previous work experience and the opportunities available in the local labour market, as well as any health conditions or disabilities that limit the type of work they can do.

Advisers will then attempt to judge whether customers lack any of the job-search or vocational skills that are essential to successfully acquiring these vacancies. If either they or the claimant are able to identify clear barriers to employment, then the adviser will discuss appropriate training provision with the claimant and make a referral/recommendation, based upon their knowledge of available provision. This knowledge is usually derived from the district provision tool and updates that their managers receive via Local Partnership Managers.

It is clear from the staff interviews that Jobcentre Plus advisers are not primarily concerned, in the first instance, with matching training referrals to claimants' career goals, where these are present. Rather, referrals to training are made on the basis of which courses, in the joint view of the claimant, their adviser and the training provider, will move the claimant closer to employment. This may require managing claimants' expectations especially in context of mandation if a course doesn't fit their career goals.

One member of staff interviewed observed that under the previous Jobseeker's Agreement arrangements, customers were encouraged to think about their priority job goals and to structure their job search and related activities around these objectives. With the introduction of the Claimant Commitment, however, there has been a change in emphasis. The focus is now on highlighting to customers the realities of the local labour market, making them aware of the nature and range of job vacancies that are currently available and what they could be capable of doing based on their previous experience, and drawing out through discussions with claimants the areas in which they may need to up-skill in order to find such work. As one member of staff stated, advisers now concentrate on *“educating [...] [claimants] about what's actually out there and what opportunities they can take advantage of”*.

A few staff mentioned that, on occasions, claimants had unrealistic expectations about the type of training that Jobcentre Plus would fund as part of their claim. Interviewees stated that their advisory teams had encountered instances where claimants had suggested training that was either too expensive or was selected as it would help the customer to fulfil a life-long ambition, but which wasn't necessarily wholly appropriate for their job search. When deciding what training provision to refer claimants to or to recommend, the Jobcentre Plus staff interviewed cited a number of factors that may enter into an adviser's selection. These included one or a combination of the following:

- An adviser's knowledge of the content of a particular course and whether it will address a claimant's skill requirements.
- What courses have the earliest start date; advisers want to ensure that claimants do not have pro-longed periods of inactivity and that performance targets are met.
- Whether provision was contracted or not; advisers prefer to refer claimants to training provision that the Jobcentre Plus district has a contract for. This makes for

an easier referral process administratively and helps to ensure value for money, as funding for these courses is already secured.

- Whether upcoming courses have a sufficient number of attendees; in some district areas, advisers will occasionally be encouraged to make referrals to courses where more attendees were needed in order to increase class sizes and make the delivery of training cost effective for the provider.

After advisers have referred or sign-posted customers to training, they will then typically arrange for claimants to meet with one of the course tutors. During these one-to-one sessions, tutors will conduct a diagnostic assessment of a claimant's level of English and Maths as well as their IT capabilities, if appropriate. The results of this assessment again help staff to check that the course is the right level and whether the claimant would benefit from any alternate/additional provision.

In general, the staff interviewed as part of this research reported that their respective Jobcentre Plus districts had a good variety of contracted provision in the areas to which they could refer or signpost claimants. Many of the courses offered were roll-on roll-off, which means that they are not tied to the term-times of education providers and are available all year round.³ These courses were typically short in duration, lasting anywhere between two to twelve weeks with learners attending training between one to four days a week.

In the area of English, Maths, IT and ESOL, courses were available to claimants in each district. The employability courses on offer provided advice to claimants on CV writing, techniques to employ within job interviews and how to conduct online job-searches, for instance, using Universal Job Match.⁴ These courses also sought to develop the 'soft-skills' of learners: confidence and team-building sessions typically featured, and tutors also taught study skills such as self-organisation.

Vocational training available to claimants included courses in health and social care, construction, warehousing, logistics, forklift driving, hospitality and catering and were offered across nearly all the four Jobcentre Plus areas. Short one to two day courses in occupational skills – such as health and safety, first aid and food hygiene – were also available and were typically taken alongside longer programmes of vocational training.

The majority of the contracted provision available in the four Jobcentre Plus districts is part of Skills Conditionality and was thereby funded by the Skills Funding Agency.

³ It was not uncommon for Jobcentre Plus districts to have overlapping provision in some areas of training. This had purposefully been secured in order to ensure that advisory teams had regular start dates for the courses that they typically refer claimants to.

⁴ In some of the Jobcentre Plus districts included in this study, National Careers Service delivered components of employability training – such as interview techniques, confidence building etc. - in house.

Management staff from some districts also mentioned that they had secured some of their existing training provision through separate DWP contracts. In all areas, advisers were able to fund specialist occupational training for claimants through Low Value Procurement where suitable contracted provision was not available. In such cases, claimants would generally need to have a realistic prospect of gaining employment as a result of undertaking training and staff will have to put together a business case on this basis in order to access these funds.

Many of the staff felt that they were operating in a responsive and competitive provider market; several interviewees were able to cite examples of times when their Local Partnership Manager had quickly been able to secure a training course that addressed a gap in local provision. Such gaps were usually identified in meetings between members of the advisory team and through feedback from customers. Providers that were already delivering contracted training in the area also contribute to this process by attending meetings of the advisory team and by liaising with Local Partnership Managers.

All of the staff interviewed reported that their district or office undertook formal gap analyses of learning provision each year. These processes were instigated by Local Partnership Managers, and their frequency appeared to vary between districts. For example, one respondent stated that at a minimum their district undertook four gap analyses every year, although they felt able to approach their Local Partnership Manager at any time to discuss gaps in provision. In contrast, staff from another district commented that gap analyses in their area occurred once a year, and that outside of this formal process they did not feel that the training available could be substantially altered. The staff interviewed saw this as being detrimental to some customer groups: the longer it took Jobcentre Plus to secure appropriate training provision, the longer it could take for claimants in the area to be work-ready.

In terms of current gaps in training, several members of staff identified ESOL courses as being in high demand in their area; in each case, there were too few courses on offer and, as a result, a lack of regular start dates. This has created a backlog of claimants waiting to access ESOL provision in each district.

Another gap identified across more than one area was a lack of intensive, long-term English and maths training. The courses currently on offer were seen as being too short in duration to address what are for some claimants' life-time barriers to education and employment; as one member of staff commented, *“one day a week for somebody who’s got basic skills issues is not enough. So we don’t see many of those on basic skills provision move on. It needs to be more intense, less numbers and some people need one-to-one”*. Some claimants with low levels of English, Maths and IT skills also felt that the courses available were not of sufficient length to develop their capability (English and Maths skills and IT skills).

Interviewees also highlighted a need to monitor the progression of learners attending Skills Conditionality provision. Specifically, one member of staff stated that they would like more information on how many learners, after attending a particular course, are entering into work or further learning and what qualifications they are achieving. This would allow both Jobcentre Plus and provider staff to better assess the impact of courses and determine whether further provision/support is needed in order to improve training outcomes.

3.2.1.2 Claimant views of learning provision

The claimants in the sample were asked for their views on the availability and suitability of the training courses in their area, both in terms of the provision available through Jobcentre Plus and more widely. Claimants had widely varying views on these issues, especially with regards to the suitability of the training courses on offer. Their perceptions appeared to be strongly linked to their personal circumstances highlighting again the diversity of the training provision required in terms of content and mode and location of delivery. Claimants' views were also influenced by their awareness of the training offer and the depth of discussion they had had with their adviser (see section 3.1.2.1, Staff approaches to raising claimants' awareness of training opportunities). Where claimants had limited awareness of provision, for example if they were mandated to a course with little discussion of alternatives, then they tended to be more negative about availability than customers who had done research themselves.

The issues with availability highlighted by a few respondents related to:

- The **extent of the offer**: Some claimants felt that their local Jobcentre Plus had a limited offer. One interviewee believed that the lack of provision in their area helped to explain why an IT training course they had been referred to had initially been overbooked: they recounted how when they attended their first training session at the provider there were 25 learners in the class, and only 15 computers. As a result, the training had to be rescheduled for some claimants, including the interviewee.
- The **level of provision**: A handful of interviewees felt there was a lack of provision that advisers could signpost or refer them to that would make a meaningful contribution towards the achievement of their work goals. Two interviewees, for instance, commented that the courses that they had been offered were too basic for their training needs. One of these claimants had over twenty years work experience, including at a managerial level, and the other had qualifications at Level 3 or above and they summarised their views on this issue in the following way:

“On Jobseeker’s you don’t get the opportunity to do things other than what I call basic stuff - maths, English and computers - which for someone like myself it’s ok but it’s not

really very beneficial for anything that I could move onto. It's pointless really actually for me."

(Yvonne, 25-49, Level 3 or above, Voluntary learner)

- The **availability of some vocational courses**: One interviewee perceived a lack of vocational training courses in their locality relevant to the types of work they were hoping to move into, security or warehousing. They also criticised the prevalence of employability skills training courses available through the Jobcentre, stating that the aim of this training was in their view to return the claimant to any form of work. For example:

"You've got the back to work training which is like the workability training. There isn't any special training for a certain job. So if you want to go into care, there isn't a specific training for that. Which in one respect I can understand because you've got colleges, you've got universities which they can go up and do that there. But just having the basis, the basic knowledge of certain things would be nice."

(Barry, 25-49, Level 1, Mandated learner)

- **Frequency of start dates**: An issue with course start dates was cited by another customer: they had wanted to undertake security training at the beginning of their most recent benefits claim but they were informed by their adviser that there were no upcoming start dates for such courses.

Claimants' perception of the suitability of provision was affected by the time, location and mode of study, and attendees' experience of the learning environment and level of the course. Some claimants who had been referred to training had a broadly positive view of the structure and format of their course. One claimant stated that they had a good experience attending a basic IT skills course they were referred to by their adviser, as the training provider was close by. They were also happy with the learning environment; the class size was quite small, so the claimant was able to receive one-to-one support from the course tutor, which they stated was important to their learning requirements and to them gaining new skills from attending training.

However, when discussing these issues, it was more common for interviewees to focus on the negative aspects of the training provision they had either been referred or signposted to by their adviser, albeit for a variety of different reasons. The factors determining claimants' views of unsuitability included:

- **Course duration**: A few interviewees were critical of the duration of the course they had been referred to. One claimant indicated that they were more of a practical learner; as such, they had struggled with the duration of an employability skills training course which was delivered in a traditional learning environment

where attendees had to sit at a desk for most of the day. For the course in question, learners were expected to attend training four days a week from 9am to 4:30pm for two weeks. Other respondents felt their course duration was too short. For example, two interviewees felt that the length of their course was too short to provide them with sufficient time to absorb the information they were given. For one customer who attended an employability course where learners were shown how to use Universal Job Match (UJM), this had quite serious negative repercussions. Due to the brief duration of the course, the interviewee claimed that they subsequently forgot how to log on to UJM and apply for work using the job board. As a result, the claimant was sanctioned, as they had been unable to apply for the specified quota of jobs through the service.

- **Course level:** Other claimants stated that the course they attended had not been pitched at an appropriate level, given their prior level of knowledge. For example, one customer had asked their adviser to refer them to a Level 2 English and Maths refresher course, in order to enhance their CV. However, upon starting the course, the learning provider took the decision to begin all attendees at Level 1 given that a few learners had learning difficulties and generally quite poor English and Maths skills. The claimant said that the provider did not want to split the class and deliver the training to several different groups of learners. As a result, the length of the course had to be prolonged for those learners who wanted to attain a Level 2 qualification. The course was thereby not entirely suited to the learning aims of the claimant and they subsequently left after a couple of training sessions.
- **Disruptive participants:** When discussing the suitability of an employability skills training course they had been mandated to, one claimant observed that while they had found the course helpful, a few other attendees were disruptive in the classroom:

“I know people that were on the course with me, they didn't want to be on it. They were troublemakers and everything. It was hard sometimes being in the same room with them.”

(Joan, 19-24, Level 1, Mandated learner)

- **Distance and travel:** A few claimants identified themselves as having anxiety and they tended to have concerns about the suitability of training provision they would have to travel to attend. In several instances, claimants expressed concerns regarding the need to travel on busy public transport and to arrive at the training provider at a specified time, usually early in the morning.

The mode and location of courses were also important determinants of whether self-referred learners felt able to engage in learning, albeit typically for reasons related to claimants' childcare responsibilities and their ability to pay the costs of travel. For example, for interviewees with young children in full-time education, half-day courses in

close proximity to where they lived worked well in terms of providing learners with enough time to attend training and to drop off and pick up their children from school. It is also apparent that training providers with on-site childcare facilities, such as Sure Start centres, were helpful in enabling claimants with pre-school age children to participate in training. Proximity to education and training providers was also important for some self-referred learners who stated that they would not be able to afford any travel costs associated with attending training.

3.2.2 Claimant experience of the skills offer through Jobcentre Plus

Claimants had different experiences of the skills offer available through Jobcentre Plus. To some extent this reflected whether or not they proactively sought training opportunities. While Jobcentre Plus and provider staff reported that generally they were able to secure the provision they needed for claimants, claimants sometimes identified gaps in what had been offered to them, and therefore felt that this provision was not available.

3.2.2.1 Claimant views on training and support they would have liked

After gauging claimants' views on the suitability and delivery of training in their local area, claimants were asked what additional training provision or support they would have liked to have received during their most recent benefit claim. Again, interviewees provided a differing range of responses to this question, which in many cases were linked to their personal circumstances.

Claimants would have welcomed additional support with:

- **Paying for recognised qualifications:** Several interviewees reported that they would like Jobcentre Plus to pay for certification necessary to work in particular occupations, such as an SIA badge for security work and a CSCS card for jobs in the construction sector, without requiring claimants to show that they had a realistic chance of finding employment within this area, which is necessary under the terms of low-value procurement. Many interviewees felt that they did not have the means to provide such evidence, which some claimants were told must take the form of a firm job offer from a potential employer. One claimant who had been mandated to undertake a course in security training but was unable to find funding for their SIA badge believed that they were therefore in a 'catch-22' situation, as they felt that potential employers would not consider their application without this licence.⁵

⁵ In order to help unemployed people compete for jobs, BIS is funding certain qualifications for individuals in receipt of JSA and ESA (WRAG), as well as unemployed people on Universal Credit who are mandated by their Jobcentre adviser. In the 2014-15 academic year this includes specific qualifications in security

- **Access to longer and more advanced training:** Other claimants stated that they would have liked to have accessed training programmes that were more advanced and intensive, and which could be completed over a longer duration, than the short-term training they were offered by advisers. They believed that more in-depth training courses would have enhanced their job prospects to a much greater extent. For example:

“I just wish [...] there were more, more courses available through the Jobcentre that give you, more diverse courses that give a little bit more meat on the bone than the basic perhaps English and computers.”

(Yvonne, 25-49, Level 3 and above, Voluntary learner)

Linked to this issue, several customers expressed their dissatisfaction with the fact that in order to undertake such courses on a full-time, voluntary basis they would need to stop claiming unemployment benefit as they would exceed the maximum amount of guided learning hours that they are allowed to have each week. This sample of claimants stated that it would be too great an expense for them to pay for these courses using their own monies, and a few were also reluctant to get into (additional) debt by taking out a loan in order to fund study.

- **Training with a work experience component:** A few interviewees also called for more vocational training courses with an extended work experience component that would afford the opportunity to become accustomed to performing a particular job role and to develop links with local employers.
- **Impartial careers information, advice and guidance:** Claimants stated that they would have liked the opportunity to see a careers adviser, who they could inform of their existing skill-set and who could suggest a number of training options on the basis of this information. The crucial factor for respondents who made this suggestion was that they would like the chance to select the provision that best suited their work goals and training needs; they did not want this decision to be left entirely to their adviser.
- **Online access to training information:** one customer commented that they would have liked the chance to view the training opportunities that are available through their local Jobcentre Plus using an online platform, rather than just being provided with, “random piles of leaflets” to scan through (Shona, 19-24, Level 3 and above, Mandated non-learner).

where there is a locally agreed commitment (for example, from the Jobcentre or Work Programme provider) to fund the relevant SIA (Security Industry Authority) licence application fee.

Finally, a number of interviewees making a joint JSA claim who were not registered as head tenant of their household stated that they would have liked to have had more contact with Jobcentre advisers and to have been able to access some of the one-to-one support available to other JSA claimants, particularly with regards to training opportunities. This sample of respondents, who had all self-referred to training, believed that they would have found out about and undertaken local courses that interested them far quicker if they had received such assistance. Box 2 provides an example.

Box 2: Case-study example: Training behaviour influenced by capability

One interviewee in her early 20s was making a joint JSA claim with her partner and recently completed a Level 1 course in Health and Social Care. She had self-referred to this course following a recommendation from a friend who had undertaken training at the same provider.

The respondent had a young daughter who had started first school in the previous academic year. She stated that the fact that her child was now in full-time education was an important enabler in her being able to give serious consideration to her future career plans and what training she may need to complete in order to achieve these goals. The mode and location of the Health and Social Care course was also a good fit with her childcare commitments: the course ran from 8:30 till 14:30 and was held in close proximity to where she lived. The respondent thereby had enough time to take and pick up her child from school, as well as attend the course.

The respondent wanted to undertake further training soon, and enhance her skills and knowledge as much as she could prior to finding employment. This was to ensure that she had the requisite skills to enter into and progress within her chosen vocation of care work. However, the claimant had a poor awareness and knowledge of the training opportunities available in her local area, and the ways in which she could find out about these courses.

Her only source of information about courses was through friends and family. This meant that the respondent heard about possible training opportunities in a sporadic fashion, sometimes without enough notice to apply and enrol. The claimant recounted one recent instance when they attempted to enrol on a counselling course:

“My friend mentioned it on Facebook and two of us rung up at once and there was only one place left and the other person got there just before me. So I missed out on this one and now I have to wait until April but if, if somehow I could have been told about this I could have been one of the first to apply.”

The respondent also felt that they were potentially missing out on other vocational programmes relevant to their interests as a result of this poor information flow.

The claimant believed that they could benefit from more assistance in this area, and would welcome such support from Jobcentre Plus. As her partner is the main claimant, she has limited interaction with Jobcentre Plus advisers. The respondent commented this arrangement did not make sense for the couple as she has a better educational background than her partner, and was actively looking for training opportunities to enhance future employability. As such, the couple felt that she would be more engaged with and would gain more from any Jobcentre Plus provision than the main claimant.

Despite a general lack of information, the respondent had acquired some knowledge of voluntary care opportunities, which she considered to be of equivalent value to training courses, through discussions with staff at the training provider that delivered the Level 1 Health and Social Care course. The claimant was in the process of applying for these voluntary vacancies at the time of the interview.

3.2.3 Supporting infrastructure

Jobcentre Plus staff were asked to detail the funding arrangements to help support claimants who have been referred/signposted to training. Across all four areas, interviewees stated that their advisory teams are able to draw from the Flexible Support Fund (FSF) in order to help fund the costs of claimants attending training. This typically involves paying for any associated travel expenses and more infrequently for the costs of childcare: two of the most prominent external barriers to claimants engaging in learning. The staff emphasised that FSF claims are assessed individually for each claimant and have to be personally approved by a senior manager. As a general rule, staff will look at the most cost-effective travel option or childcare facilities in the area, and will advise claimants of the support they are willing to fund.

Most interviewees expressed satisfaction with the funding arrangements that are currently in place: namely, the payment of any travel expenses they incur as a result of undertaking training. A few customers did find the process of reimbursing travel expenses by Jobcentre Plus difficult. In some cases customers had to pay the costs associated with travelling to training upfront, and subsequently present a receipt or travel ticket to their adviser so that these expenses could be reimbursed retrospectively. One claimant who had paid their travel expenses in this way stated that, at the time of the interview, they had been waiting for two weeks to have the bus fares they had incurred during their most recent training referral to be reimbursed by the Jobcentre. The interviewee was concerned that if these payments were not processed soon they would be unable to afford to continue to attend the training and may have their benefits sanctioned as a result. They felt it would have been preferable for Jobcentre Plus to

provide them with a weekly bus ticket in advance of their attendance at any training sessions.

3.3 Conclusions

Staff and providers suggested that there was generally a good coverage of training provision, although there were instances where the capabilities of claimants challenged it, with some claimants wanting courses at a more advanced level, and others feeling they would benefit from courses of longer duration to sufficiently develop their skills. Clearly there is a balance to be struck between being able to meet all claimants' training requirements, course availability, and funding availability.

Some claimants actively seek training opportunities, many of whom become voluntary learners, whereas others are more passive and their awareness of training opportunities is shaped by their interactions with advisers. There was seeming variation in claimant experience of adviser practice about developing their awareness of training opportunities and discussion of enrolment. Adviser approaches clearly influence claimant motivation to train (discussed further in Chapter 5), so ensuring that claimant-adviser interaction positively encourages training is important.

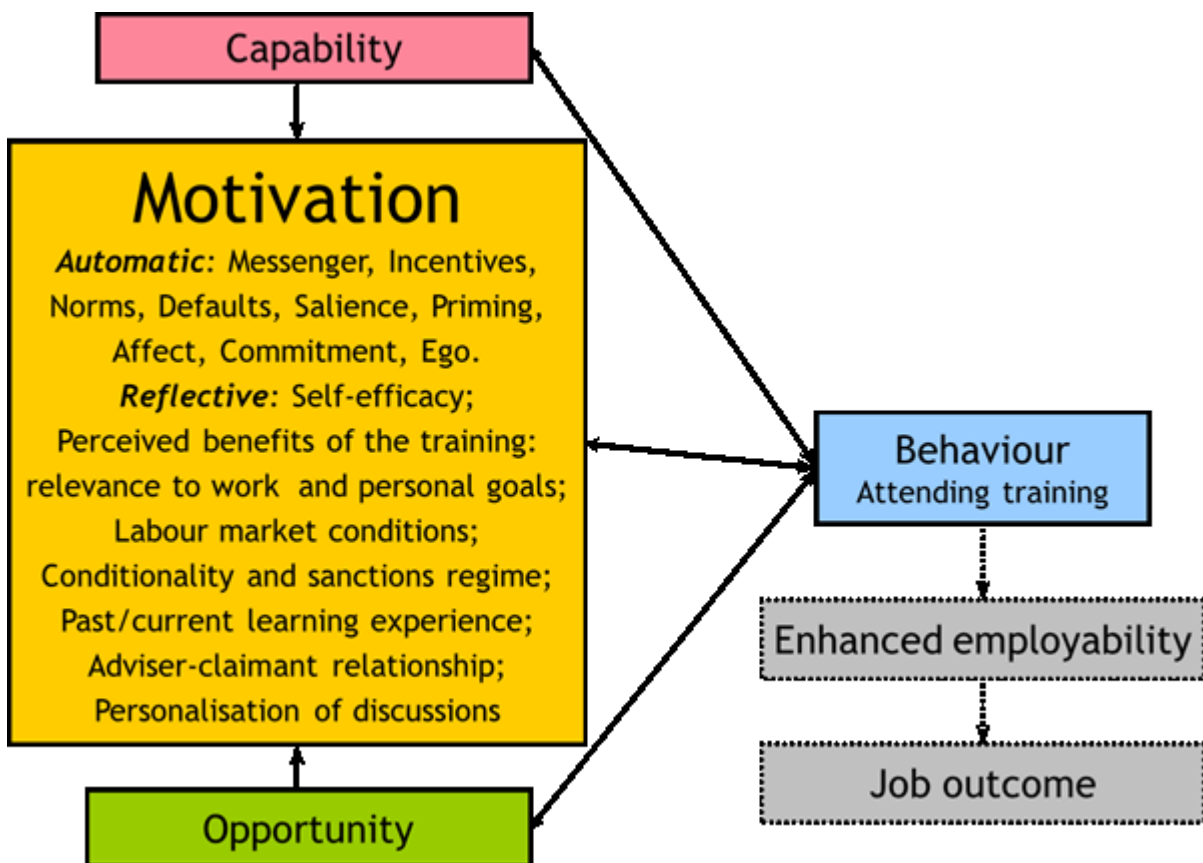
Generally, claimants would welcome more information about training opportunities as this would enable them, in discussion with their adviser, to consider and choose a training course they feel is appropriate to their needs. Some Jobcentre Plus areas use group information sessions and tasters to promote and raise awareness of the training offer to all claimants. Online platforms may also be a potential way to present claimants with the full range of training available. Increasing awareness of opportunities may also encourage training discussions between advisers and claimants. Some claimants felt they hadn't had the chance to discuss training with their adviser, so consistent approaches would facilitate this.

Providing advisers with information about claimants' experience of courses, for example, including whether they met their skills needs and were pitched at the right level, as well as presenting data about learner outcomes (i.e. entry into employment), could help advisers to promote courses to claimants and to make the most appropriate referrals.

4 Claimants' motivation to train

This chapter presents the motivation factors that influence claimants training behaviour (Figure 6). It draws on data from interviews with benefit claimants, Jobcentre Plus staff and training providers. Motivation is defined in the COM-B framework as the brain processes that energise and direct behaviour. It consists of reflective processes, involving evaluation and planning as well as automatic processes involving emotions and impulses. First, this chapter discusses automatic motivations. It then details claimants' reflective motivations for training, including claimants' self-efficacy and confidence that they could complete and succeed at a course and the effects of mandation. Lastly, the chapter covers other dimensions of reflective motivations, including the influence of learning experiences on future training motivations, and the likelihood of training in the future. Where there were differences by sample group these are noted.

Figure 6: Motivation factors affecting training behaviour



Source: IES, 2014, adapted from Michie, 2011

Key findings: Claimants' motivation to train

Most respondents displayed some confidence in their ability to learn. Some felt very capable of achieving in learning and had been successful learners in the past while others discussed a recently found confidence in their ability, having overcome past failures. Another group of respondents were fairly confident they could learn, but their self-belief depended on factors such as the subject, the level of support available and the course content. Some respondents discussed their strategies for developing confidence in their capability to succeed at learning, such as choosing a course with a short duration and at a level where they thought there was no risk of failure.

There was no difference between whether a claimant had been mandated or self-referred to training and the positive and negative factors that influenced their motivation to learn. The potential contribution of training to career and employment goals and motivations was generally more important than the potential contribution of training to personal goals and motivations.

Potential benefits of attending training included: the relevance of the course to personal goals and identified needs, self-improvement, long-term progression, increased confidence, as well as social aspects.

A number of claimants that reported having a positive work-skills assessment and interaction with their adviser about training opportunities stated that they were engaged in discussion that covered one or more of the following: their work goals, employment history, their skills gaps and individual support needs. These types of discussions increased buy-in and helped claimants to understand the potential value of training. Where claimants had been mandated to training without a discussion, they had little sense of choice or ownership, and often struggled to see the training's value. One group of Jobcentre Plus staff reported following a relatively prescribed and uniform process with regards to training mandation.⁶ Another group of staff approached training mandation with a degree of flexibility. This variation in implementation and approach to mandation highlights the potential variation in claimant experience of being mandated to training.

All respondent groups identified some positive aspects of mandation. Some said that mandation gave them an added impetus to their job searching. Others highlighted that a training mandation had helped them to make a positive change. However, a frequent theme from all claimant groups was that of anxiety and stress in connection with

⁶ It is DWP policy to ensure that claimants are mandated to training under requirements that are reasonable to their circumstances.

mandation to training. Activities that individuals had to do were inevitably connected to the thought of losing money if they did not do them.

The relevance of the course they were mandated to was a key issue for respondents. They expressed no concern at being mandated so long as the activity was relevant to their goals and job aims. One reason given by a few respondents for non-attendance at mandated training related to the perceived suitability of the training opportunity. Other reasons were because the claimant was participating in other training at the time their mandated provision became available, or because of a change in circumstances which meant that the training referral was no longer required. For example they started work, or found a work experience placement. Others described a significant change in their personal circumstances, such as having a baby, or being required to care for a relative.

Several claimants who were mandated to training were not aware of a mandate. There were other examples where a lack of communication or understanding seemed to have resulted in non-attendance at training.

Motivation to train in the future was affected by course experience. Where claimants felt the course was not appropriate this had a negative impact on their future motivation for training. A further influence on future motivation to train, of particular importance to claimants mandated to training, was the degree of personal control/choice and the fit with individual job goals and interests.

4.1 Automatic motivations to train

By definition, automatic motivations are unconscious, and therefore difficult to research, but we gathered claimants' recounted views about how they tend to react to training when doing so instinctively and coded examples of instinctive behaviour from their narratives. This section draws on the MINDSPACE framework to identify and analyse claimant views. This section includes qualitative findings on the components of MINDSPACE (messenger, incentives, norms, defaults, salience, priming, affect, commitment, and ego each noted in bold throughout this section). In addition we examined claimants' views on the potential effects of learning on their self-confidence. Further detail about each of the factors in MINDSPACE and how they affect behaviour is given in the Annex (Overview of MINDSPACE framework).

When finding out about courses and which direction to take, claimants' reported that their family and friends were the most salient information sources, or **messengers**. They were particularly important for voluntary trainers who went into more vocationally orientated training, such as plumbing. In contrast, for the majority of trainers who were mandated the source that got them thinking about a particular course was frequently their Jobcentre

Plus personal adviser. No one spoke about actively ignoring any advice given or disregarding advice from any sources.

Motivation towards training might also be explained by perception of **incentives and costs**. Sanctions are a type of incentive, and in some cases the threat of sanctions puts a shadow over an activity that was viewed as positive. Several respondents reported that friends refrained from asking for training because they were scared of mandation and potential sanctions if they found the training was not beneficial to them and they therefore stopped attending. The reference points that people used when assessing the value of the training seemed to affect their perception and these are automatic and largely unconscious. Those who saw training as getting a good deal often had prior experience in the field they were doing training in, and therefore received a skills refresher. They also had a good idea of the real financial cost of the course and that it would be quite expensive to them if they were not claiming benefits and therefore it made sense to them to make the most of this opportunity. In one isolated case, a respondent equated attending training to a job and concluded that it was an extremely low paid job. The group of people that tended to attach real monetary values to training included almost exclusively non-trainers, and they were more transactional in their views. Those who attended training, whether mandated or voluntarily, framed training as an investment to improve their skills, in order to make themselves more attractive to employers and improve their life chances in general. Some of them held multiple qualifications and gaining another one was part of formulating a back-up plan in case one did not work out. As a father of four children, who had a background in warehousing and security work put it:

“... even though it is something I wouldn't have thought of and you know, you look at it and you go, “Yeah, I can see where it is going to benefit me in the future”. So I knuckle down and do the course and think to myself, “Well, that's another notch on my CV”. More experience, more ticks in the box.”

(Barry, 25-49, Level 1, Mandated learner)

Social norms are cultural understandings or rules about behaviour. One indicator of social norms is the behaviour of others and as such people are influenced by this. Respondents generally viewed the influence of mandation on other people's behaviour as negative, because their use instilled a negative attitude towards training, even among people who were principally positively inclined towards training. There was therefore a norm understood that claimants may not want to attend mandated training. Many people complied with the '**default**' of what the adviser told them to do. They expressed that this was mainly because of the threat of sanctions even if they thought the offered training had little relevance to the work they were looking for. For example, as one mandated trainer recounted:

“Well, all she said was that I had to go or I wouldn’t get the money. So I had to go.”

(Sandra, 19-24, Level 1, Mandated learner)

The list of factors that people reported making a course **salient** to them was extensive. By far the most important factors were the relevance of the course to personal aims and needs. This meant in some cases that the content or the perceived value that the course would add was paramount, in other cases reward such as gaining a qualification and a certificate that would demonstrate the skills gained (rather than acquiring skills in the work place without gaining a validated qualification) were highly rated. Having qualifications was also seen as opening up different options and pathways rather than just being stuck with one career option and direction. One participant highlighted the social value of participating in courses, while another said that the ready availability and access to courses were the main decision criteria. People would not consider a course if they thought it was too basic for their skill level and thus did not add value, if they thought it was a non-essential skill for their targeted work, or if they felt that their skill level already met what was on offer and they would therefore take a place away from someone who really needed it.

From our data it is difficult to see the effect of **priming** (subconscious responses resulting from earlier influences) on training behaviour. It is possible that family expectations may have this type of influence. For example, compliance with expectations was shown in general decision making about training in some cases, for instance going to university after A-levels because *“that’s what you did”* (Shelley, 50+, Level 3 and above, Voluntary learner).

Looking at the influence of **affect**, many of the respondents, whether they had trained or not, whether they had voluntarily undertaken training or were mandated, reported positive experiences of past learning and related emotional association. They outlined the reasons why they had enjoyed learning and held positive attitudes towards learning across a multitude of dimensions. First and foremost was the aspect of acquiring new skills and qualifications that made them more employable, and in some cases broadened their horizon because they took courses that they might not initially have considered. There was also an element of curiosity attached to this, where people reported already having a skill but they believed that there was always something new to learn. An older respondent, who had been made redundant but thought his job search skills were actually quite good, said:

“I mean if you’re actively looking for work and they put you on a course with people who teach you how to look for work, it makes sense, you know. I’ll always learn something.”

(Kevin, 50+, Level 3 and above, Mandated learner)

Closely connected to this was the feeling of having achieved something that might have stretched an individual's capabilities. Achieving qualifications had vastly improved several claimants' self-confidence and feeling of self-worth.

Conversely, there were several examples from interviewees where early difficult experiences of learning shaped what they felt about learning. For example, a young mother who had temporarily lived in a homeless shelter after giving birth, had attempted to go back to school to finish her education and also enrolled in a college course, but found it too difficult to attend due to local transport arrangements and having to look after a young baby. She had since enrolled at a college course, but commented that she had substantially changed her attitude towards education and interacting with fellow students:

"I think having a child generally sort of takes a little while to adjust, that you're a bit different from everyone else. So it took a while. [...] I don't know whether it's being out of education for so long, I don't. When I used to go to school it used to be just literally to see my friends. But now I'm not really into that. I mean, I can be quite a shy person, so I'm there just to get on with my work now and do it because I realise in school it didn't get us very far, you know, messing around with friends, and I know how limited time is. So I get there and get on with it and listen and understand as much as I can."

(Elaine, 19-24, Level 1, Voluntary learner)

Others commented about the lack of support they received from their secondary school in the past to help them cope with conditions such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. While they excelled in more practical subjects, they felt their basic skills in English and Maths suffered because their schools did not offer sufficient support. This was closely connected to experiencing a lack of support from schools when being bullied which led some respondents to develop anxieties about attending educational settings. Individual respondents outlined their struggle with the delivery of educational content, which led some of them to skip school, despite showing some aptitude for the subjects.

Disruptions in the learning journeys due to parental separation were also reported to have a negative impact, where respondents had difficulty adjusting to the new environment and the advanced content of courses they were placed into. One individual reported having to repeat a course for that reason and experienced further setbacks because of lost documentation/certificates.

Whether people trained could be affected by some of the factors mentioned above. Most respondents had at some point attended training throughout a benefits claim, either recently or in the past, and the majority of them were positive and committed towards training and in most instances it would also have formed part of their written Claimant Commitment. Factors that increased their **commitment** to training were that they had chosen the course and thus wanted to participate. Enjoyment increased commitment and

in some cases, individuals tried to increase the hours they trained because they enjoyed it so much.

Ego sets out that people will act in ways that make them feel good about themselves.

There was no evidence of ego effects in the data, but confidence, or lack of it, was a determinant of training participation. Some of the respondents also spoke about how their own expectations and perceptions might impact on their commitment to learning. Having been out of education for a long time created some anxiety for individuals, because they were uncertain whether they would cope with course content or whether they would fit in with a particular learning environment, with potential negative repercussions for their confidence as they did not want to train in case they failed. For instance, some had expectations that everyone on a college course was young and just out of secondary education as opposed to being in their 30s and 40s. In most cases these fears were reduced when people settled into a learning environment and found support from tutors, as one learner explained:

“Nervous. Exactly how I felt when I went to like college and that, because obviously, you don’t know what they expect. Obviously, but when I went, I felt relaxed because it was other people in the same situation as me, that have got children and have been out of education for a while and all of that. So it was nice and the tutors made me feel relaxed as well. So that was even nicer.”

(Julie, 25-49, Level 2, Voluntary learner)

Many of the respondents saw training as an investment, an activity that allowed them to improve themselves, they perceived had a long-term benefit and potentially offered opportunities for progression not only in work but also in learning. The feeling of achieving something through gaining a certificate and the self-satisfaction of receiving good grades, added to their commitment to learning. One individual with severe dyslexia commented on how he viewed training courses as a means to overcome his difficulties and how he was determined that his dyslexia was not going to hold him back.

For lone parents, learning offered an opportunity for escape from the role of being a parent and to do something for themselves. For example, one lone mother, who had attended a college course part-time and was working part-time as a care assistant described her motivation and commitment to training as follows:

“They [Jobcentre Plus] said you don’t really have to do anything until she’s five. To be honest, the Jobcentre adviser said it’s great that you’re one of our ones that are really keen and want to do something. You don’t just want to sit on IS [Income Support] and not do anything. I couldn’t do nothing. It would drive me mad. I love [daughter] dearly, but that’s my time when I’m [me] and not mummy. It’s quite nice.”

(Sally, 19-24, Level 2, Voluntary learner)

4.2 Reflective motivations to train

The findings suggest there are several reflective motivations that affect training behaviour, including a claimant's perception of their ability to learn, evaluations of the benefits and costs of training linked to the likely contribution to achieving one's goals and their views and experience of the skills offer and mandation. This section discusses each in turn.

4.2.1 Claimants' perceptions of their ability to learn

Claimants had varying attitudes towards their capability to learn (see also section 2, Claimants' capability to train). There were no observed differences in respondents' perceptions of their capability to train between whether they had been mandated or had self-referred to training in the recent past.

Most respondents displayed some degree of confidence in their ability to learn. Some had been successful learners in the past, having positive learning experiences and achieving qualifications. Previous success tended to instil a belief in their capability to learn. For example, one respondent who achieved four O-levels at school, and had gone on to learn throughout her adult life displayed confidence in her capability as she said:

"The more qualifications you get the better... I think you can never stop learning, it doesn't matter how old you are... Training's been good to me in my life. I mean I've learnt so many things, got different certificates."

(Sue, 25-49, Level 2, Mandated learner)

Other respondents were fairly confident in their capability to learn, but not unequivocally. Their self-belief depended on factors such as the subject, the level of support available, the content of the course, and how it would be delivered. For example, one claimant felt they would be able to learn new skills relating to skilled trades, but felt "too old" to be able to learn computer skills. For example:

"I'm better if somebody shows me how to do something. I think I'm slightly dyslexic in if you give me a small pamphlet with lots of writing on it, I'll just freak. So, you know, I'm better if I'm in a learning environment where people are, where it's a hands-on thing where people are, can show you."

(Fiona, 50+, Level 2, Mandated learner)

There were several respondents whose perception of their capability to learn had changed over time. Many claimants discussed poor experiences at school and college, with common experiences including leaving courses early, not turning up for exams and

being truant. For example, one young claimant described regularly being absent from school, in part because of experiencing difficulties keep up with the pace of learning:

“I had difficulty with it... so at the time when I had a problem I just didn’t do it; I think I’d gloss over it and move onto something else.”

(Kirk, 25-49, Highest level of qualification not known, Mandated learner)

Some respondents discussed their strategies for developing confidence in their capability to succeed at learning following past failures. Choosing a course with a short duration and at a level and in a subject where they thought there was no risk of failing was an important first step and reintroduction to learning as one respondent explained:

“I wanted to pick something that I knew I couldn’t fail at so it was a short course in learning how to touch type.”

(Chris, 25-49, Level 2, Voluntary learner)

This respondent, similar to others that had taken short courses and succeeded, then continued to learn at a higher level and for a longer duration. A mandated trainer described how succeeding gave her confidence and self-belief in her ability to learn:

“Once I passed the first one I thought well okay I can actually do these... I’ll try something else see if I can do that.”

(Kirk, 25-49, Highest level of qualification not known, Mandated learner)

Other respondents remained doubtful about their capability to learn, questioning whether there would be the right support and whether their health would be good enough for them to succeed (see also sections 2.2, Physical capability, and 2.2.1, Health and disability). One recent learner who had self-referred to courses in order to improve his employment prospects in the IT sector had achieved a Level 2 qualification, but had since left his higher level qualification early. He said: *“I failed a couple of tests... I just couldn’t seem to take things in”*. This experience had jaded his belief in his ability to learn and he felt he had achieved his maximum capability for now.

4.2.2 The potential contribution of training to achieving goals

Claimants were asked about their motivations and reasons for training, and the extent to which they felt training and learning was likely to contribute to their career, employment and personal goals. The potential contribution of training to career and employment goals and motivations was generally reported to be more important than the potential contribution of training to personal goals and motivations.

Most interviewees, particularly trainers, discussed career and employment reasons for their motivation to undertake training. The main externally-focused reasons for undertaking training were:

- **To build a CV and advance employment prospects** (mostly discussed by mandatory and voluntary trainers and by some non-trainers). See Box 3 for a case study example of training to further employment prospects.

“It is a very competitive market so... when you’ve got 70 or 80 odd people applying for the same job I haven’t got anything now that shines above somebody else on paper which is why I’ve gone back into training really because I’ve got to pick up something that makes me different from somebody else.”

(Yvonne, 25-49, Level 3 or above, Voluntary learner)

- **To gain entry into or sustain employment in a specific occupation/industry** (second most discussed by both mandatory and voluntary trainers; not that relevant for non-trainers).

“It was a health care course. I was looking eventually to do midwifery and I’ve just started a job with the NHS on a maternity ward. It’s going in the right direction...the course is something I didn’t necessarily want to do but I had to do it.”

(Sally, 19-24, Level 2, Voluntary learner)

- **To gain qualifications and experience to widen potential employment/career routes** (particularly important to voluntary trainers).

“I wanted to try something different so I went into the hairdressing side... I wanted to get another qualification and to have something else to fall back.”

(Julie, 25-49, Level 2, Voluntary learner)

- **To help towards achieving future rewards and general career aspirations** (discussed by a minority of voluntary and mandatory trainers and non-trainers)

“I can see sort of like a year down the line, hopefully I’ll be working in a school and I can see like the end results and something is going to come out of it... it’s just progressing as much as I can.”

(Becca, 25-49, Level 2, Voluntary learner)

- **To meet a general employment skills gap or need** (discussed by a minority of mandatory trainers/non-trainers)

“I wanted a new CV and I thought they (Jobcentre Plus adviser) would just like help me build it and they were like oh well you’re gonna have to go to a course.”

(Louise, 19-24, Level 2, Voluntary non-learner)

- **To increase opportunities for self-employment** (only discussed by a minority of voluntary trainers)

“At least having my Level 4 I could potentially go self-employed, you I can do people’s accounts for them and being in the building trade most of my life I know a lot of self-employed builders.”

(Dean, 25-49, Highest level of qualification not known, Voluntary learner)

Personal motivations to undertake training were cited less frequently by respondents. The main personal motivations for undertaking training were:

- **To build confidence and self-esteem** (only discussed by mandated trainers and non-trainers, however was particularly important to these claimants)

“It’s going to make me a better person... I’m going to have that little bit of pride back... it gives you confidence how to be around other people, it gives you confidence how to deal with situations.”

(Adam, 25-49, Highest level of qualification not known, Mandated non-learner)

- **To develop skills and knowledge** (somewhat important to trainers, mandated and voluntary)

“I just wanted to be more proficient in computer skills/touch typing... and I thought well it’s something you know.”

(Chris, 25-49, Level 2, Voluntary learner)

- **To gain personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement** (somewhat important to some trainers, mandated and voluntary)

“I genuinely used to love getting up and learning stuff, relearning stuff that I haven’t learned in years. I enjoyed that thoroughly.”

(Kevin, 50+, Level 3 and above, Mandated learner)

Box 3: Case-study example: Training behaviour influenced by the potential contribution of training to employment goals

The interviewee had been employed as a machine operator/production worker since leaving secondary education (in the late 1980s) on a range of temporary and permanent contracts (with some short periods of unemployment) up until 2006 when he decided to change occupations. The interviewee decided to take up employment as a support worker in the social care sector because he saw a chance to do something different and was told by family that support work may lead to good long-term employment. However, in 2011 he decided to go back into the manufacturing industry, but discovered that the sector in his local area had changed dramatically from relatively stable, long-term employment to temporary, short-term employment via recruitment agencies.

He ended up doing temporary jobs until January 2013 when he was made redundant; he found work again in June that year but again was made redundant in November 2013. This period of uncertainty and temporary work was difficult for the interviewee psychologically, and so he was motivated to train to find employment in order to provide for himself and his family, and feel a sense of self-worth: *“I am determined... I will do any sort of training to get us back into work... the whole intentions of us actually doing these courses for to help us get a job to better myself and obviously better the chances of us getting work... I mean I’m a married man, I’ve got kids you know and I’m not the type of bloke where I like to sit about. I like to always do things. Anything put in front of us like a challenge I will try my best to do it.”*

The interviewee was also influenced to undertake training due to the potential contribution it would have to advance his employment goals. He had a very good relationship with his Jobcentre Plus adviser, who actively supported him in finding training opportunities that directly met his own employment goals, i.e. occupation-specific training within manufacturing/production sector. He had been mandated to attend these courses as part of the conditions for receiving JSA.

He had attended a number of courses that would give him certificates that he could show potential employers, such as forklift truck driving, health and safety, and the Client Contractor National Safety Group (CCNSG) passport card. He had gained tangible outputs, such as certificates, which was important to him as these helped to demonstrate his worth, value and personal qualities to employers: *“Not only am I getting these certificates to say I am competent [in a range of occupational skills/abilities], it’s all the help to get me get an employer to look at my letters and CV and see – oh right this lad has done a variation of different type of work.”* He intended to undertake future training if it advanced his prospects of gaining employment, particularly gaining secure and permanent work, yet he also found learning enjoyable regardless.

4.2.3 The skills offer and adviser-claimant relationships

Claimants were asked to describe their experiences of interacting with advisers about skills and training. This included details of their experience of the process for assessing work skills and any support they received or discussions they had with their advisers around potential training courses, and the process of being referred or signposted to programmes. The data suggest that there is some variation in the way in which advisers assess claimants' work-related skills and broach the topic of training with claimants.

It should be noted that some of these differences in practice may be due to the type of provision a claimant was referred/signposted to. For instance, for courses that may be of benefit to a large number of claimants, such as employability skills training, but which may be more difficult to 'sell' in terms of their immediate applicability or relevance to job-search, on occasions, advisers may expend less time in explaining the potential benefits of these courses to claimants and the reasoning behind the referral than they would for more bespoke vocational training opportunities.

A number of claimants who reported having a positive interaction with their adviser about training opportunities stated that their adviser engaged them in conversation assessing their work-skills which covered one or more of the following topics: their work goals, employment history, any skills gaps they had and their individual support needs. On the basis of this discussion, advisers would typically suggest potential training programmes that they judged may help in addressing these requirements. In presenting possible training opportunities in this way, claimants felt advisers were simply gauging their interest, and were not using the discussion to mandate them to training the claimant felt inappropriate. As one customer who had discussed completing a security training course with their adviser commented:

"She [adviser] mentioned about it [the training course] and asked would I be interested. She didn't actually say you had to take it. She said you've actually done security work before. She said would you be interested in going in for a SIA card because that will help you get back into security work if you want to do it because that's what you need now. And when she explained it, yes I was interested and that's why I did it."

(Jared, 25-49, Below Level 1, Mandated non-learner)

Using a two-way discussion-based approach, customers who had interactions with their adviser viewed the potential training opportunity as optional and felt that there would be no negative repercussions if they decided not to undertake it. However, all of the claimants who had a constructive, two-way dialogue about the training options available that may help to meet their work goals, interests and support needs decided to undertake training, demonstrating that claimants are likely to want to engage in learning if it affords them an opportunity for self-development.

In some instances the success of this approach was also based on the advisers' ability to 'sell' the potential benefits of training to claimants. As the quotation presented above demonstrates, the adviser informed the claimant that the security training course would help them to acquire an SIA card, which is a certification employers require of potential employees. The claimant was therefore able to see how the course was applicable and would help in their search for employment. In a few instances, however, interviewees commented that the way in which the course had been sold to them, for instance, in relation to the length of time it would take to complete the course, or how their special learning requirements would be addressed by learning provider staff, did not match their experience of the course.

In other cases claimants stated that they had initially brought up the prospect of training with their adviser and inquired whether any appropriate provision was available. In these instances customers had a clear idea of the particular vocation they wanted to enter into and had some knowledge of the qualifications or experience they would need to acquire employment in this area.

Where customers had been referred to undertake training and were not convinced that the course in question would contribute to their search for employment, claimants were more amenable to training if the adviser had explained the rationale behind the referral. As one claimant who had been mandated to training commented when describing their referral to an employability course:

"All the courses they put me on she [adviser] felt was relevant... to teach you how to apply for jobs which is fair enough, you know, so that's... I'd imagine that's just common sense for everyone to go on that course. Especially someone like me if you think about it logically, because I've never not worked for all my life. So maybe I needed that. So that was a good course. I personally didn't think I needed it but I could see the logic of it."

(Kevin, 50+, Level 3 and above, Mandated learner)

One of the most common instances in which customers reported having a negative experience when interacting with their adviser around skills and training was when they were referred without having been asked whether they were interested in the course or without having adequate explanation about how the programme was relevant to and would assist them in their job-search. For instance, as one claimant stated when describing the process by which their adviser had referred them to training:

"When I was at the desk with the woman, she just said I'm going to refer you to, I'm gonna put you on this course and that was it. Not what's available. I didn't get to see what courses they had available for me. It was just what they thought I would want to go on."

(Arron, 19-24, Level 1, Mandated non-learner)

Claimants were also reticent about learning when they felt their adviser lacked interest in their work goals. Interviewees generally felt unable to question a training referral as they were aware that attending could be a condition of receiving benefits and that they could face the risk of sanctions if they did not comply. Indeed, the lack of agency or choice that this group of claimants felt about their training decisions may have an adverse effect on the extent to which they subsequently engage in these courses, at least when they first attend training.

A similar but less commonly cited issue that claimants had regarding their experience of discussing training and skills issues with their adviser was a poor match between training that they were referred to and their chosen vocation. For instance, one interviewee who had previously worked in social care and wanted to re-enter the profession questioned the relevance of an IT training course that they had been referred to in providing them with the skills necessary to undertake care work. This example again highlights that in some cases advisers may not have adequately explained how particular courses are relevant to a claimant's job-search, such as applying for vacancies on-line, or how the skills they acquire may potentially be transferrable to their preferred line of work.

Interviewees that reported having a good relationship with advisers generally felt that their adviser:

- listened to them;
- understood where their vocational skills and interests lay;
- was able to suggest appropriate training courses.

As one customer commented when describing their relationship with their adviser and the conversations they had regarding training opportunities suited to the claimant's skill-set and work experience:

“My adviser then was a really, really nice guy and obviously he was trying to gauge where my sort of interests might lie, where my strengths might lie and I told him my job history and what I might be possibly interested in. And yes, he wasn't quite sure what to suggest so, yes, he saw this horticulture course and yes I've been a gardener before. I'm quite happy to work outside. I'm interested in ecology, nature and what not.”

(Chris, 25-49, Level 2, Voluntary learner)

Interviewees who had been assigned disability advisers appeared more likely to describe the relationship with their adviser in this way. There was a general feeling among this cohort that their advisers were very supportive and were accommodating of their health condition when suggesting potential training opportunities. This group of claimants also appeared to have greater trust in the information, advice and guidance they received from their advisers, and in few instances mentioned that their adviser had encouraged them to get in touch via phone or email outside of their regular appointments if they

needed any further support. Customers who received such assistance thereby felt heavily involved in the discussions they had with their adviser around skills and training, and tended to be positively disposed to any potential training opportunities that were suggested as a result of this conversation given that their individual support needs had been taken into account.

Interviewees who felt they had a poor relationship with their advisers said they did not receive any advice or personalised support either in relation to their job-search or training courses. Interviewees cited several different reasons why they believed their advisers had taken this approach with them. One of the most common perceptions of staff referenced by claimants which they believed helped to explain a perceived lack of engagement, was that advisers were more concerned with either 'signing on' or sanctioning benefit claimants, and were generally less interested in whether or not their customer base found (quality) work.

Another view held by a few interviewees was that staff only made referrals to training in order to hit their own internal targets or quotas for training activity. More specifically, claimants who expressed this view felt that advisers treated all claimant cases in a similar way and followed a predetermined referral process without considering the skills and capabilities of individuals, and whether the proposed training was appropriate. One interviewee who had been mandated to what they saw as an inappropriate course described their view of advisers in the following way:

"I think the Jobcentre have to send a certain amount of people on courses [...] and maybe one course will work for someone, or [...] another course will work for someone else, but they don't care about you individually."

(Sue, 25-49, Level 2, Mandated learner)

Finally, some claimants stated that they believed that the fortnightly appointments that they had with their adviser were too short in length and did not allow sufficient time to discuss potential training opportunities in any great depth. One customer who had been claiming out-of-work benefit for a prolonged period compared the more recent time restrictions on appointments with the longer discussions that they used to be able to have with their adviser:

"Before there was no time issue, you could just talk. She would go through a lot of things with you but now they can't do that they haven't got the time. And I don't think it's because they don't want to, it's because they can't... They haven't got the time to sit with you and say well I know this course, you know, which to be honest is how a lot of courses come about, someone just sitting next to somebody else who says "Ooh one of our clients has just gone on a course for care, I'll see if I can get you on it"."

(Kirsty, 50+, Level 1, Mandated learner)

4.2.4 Mandation

4.2.4.1 Why staff mandate claimants to training

Jobcentre Plus staff reported three main reasons why advisers mandated claimants to training. The main reason for training mandation was when a clear employment need or skills gap had been identified.

The second reason for training mandation was to address internal issues within Jobcentre Plus. For example, where there was a perceived issue with failure to attend rates at training, then mandation was used to alleviate the negative effect it had on course viability if there were insufficient learners. Mandating all claimants was also felt by some staff to create a clarity and efficiency of process. Mandating was thus a default option for a training referral in some offices.

Third, staff reported that they mandated claimants to training when they faced resistance or observed a lack of commitment to developing skills which staff believed would assist the claimant to find work. Mandation was more likely if the claimant had a history of failing to attend interviews or training.

4.2.4.2 Staff approaches to mandation to training

Some staff discussed the diversity of claimant circumstances and attitudes to training. Some claimants were felt to be initially resistant to training and therefore more difficult to engage. Family and peer group pressures, low societal expectations, and bad educational experiences could all combine to create anxieties, resistance and negativity towards not only training, but also to being mandated.

It was evident that staff had different philosophies and views towards the role of training in a benefits claim. Some staff described how they focused on the likely long-term impact of training in terms of progression and quality of work opportunities that would be available whereas others focused on the use of training as a quick route to enter employment. The approaches that Jobcentre Plus staff adopted for allocating and issuing mandatory training also varied according to the culture of the office. Two distinct approaches to training mandation emerged, while there were similarities in approach within offices, staff reported different approaches both within and between Jobcentre Plus districts.

One group of Jobcentre Plus staff and providers reported following a relatively prescribed and uniform process with regards to training mandation. These staff and tutors/trainers followed fairly set criteria and standardised procedures for most claimants, regardless of their individual circumstances. For example, at the point of mandation customers were made aware that attendance at training was mandatory and were informed about the potential repercussions if they did not attend. Written confirmation of the claimant's

understanding was sought, and a few days before training was due to start claimants met with their adviser again who ensured they knew where and when training was taking place, and checked their travel arrangements. Attendance was then verified with providers, and any non-attendees were recalled to Jobcentre Plus for an adviser meeting to discuss their lack of attendance. This approach tended to occur when there was a focus on training as a means to enter work more quickly and within localities where the majority of claimants were long-term unemployed, had basic skills needs or were repeat claimants (i.e. would sign-on/sign-off regularly). A couple of staff felt that when training was mandated a greater number of training outcomes were achieved than when attendance was voluntary.

Another group of Jobcentre Plus staff and providers approached training mandation with some degree of flexibility. They felt that claimants that were not already positively disposed to training would become more positively inclined with the right approach and support. Staff in this group described a greater degree of adviser and tutor discretion over processes which could be flexed and adapted according to the level of compliance shown by the claimant. For example, for compliant customers open to the prospect of taking a course, staff would not emphasise the mandatory element, although it would be mentioned. In contrast, for non-compliant customers that had a history of non-attendance or whom they assessed were reluctant to attend training, advisers would verbally tell claimants that they were being mandated to training. Claimants would then be issued with a jobseeker's direction setting out the conditionality element of their benefits payment, which the claimant would be required to sign. A flexible approach tended to occur when individual needs and barriers, and progression-focused learning were most central to adviser-claimant relationships. A couple of staff thought that mandation may be having a detrimental effect by casting learning in a negative light. Nevertheless, many interviewees viewed mandation as a positive tool when used appropriately and tactfully to gain broad compliance.

4.2.4.3 Staff views: Claimants' reaction to mandation

Staff expressed that claimants were generally compliant and committed to training, and consequently were unlikely to fail to attend. However, they acknowledged that some claimants responded with mixed emotions and others responded negatively towards mandation. Claimants' reactions to mandation were felt to be affected by whether the:

- **Expectations and obligations of claiming benefit had been clearly explained** to claimants who had an opportunity to discuss what conditionality required and to interpret and apply the rules to their situation, such as travel times, or childcare arrangements. For example, one member of staff stated "the advisers explain it very clearly what is required and the claimants expect to train as part of their claim – it gets explained at the very first interview. Customers tend to be ok with that". Setting out expectations and obligations was seen as an important first step when

mandating a claimant to training because it established rapport and trust, and reduced initial fears and resistance. It was also highlighted by several staff as being strengthened by the introduction of the Claimant Commitment which was viewed as a beneficial practice for setting out clear expectations and obligations.

- **Benefits and value of undertaking the training were clear**, particularly in terms of immediate rewards or employability advantage, such as being able to apply for jobs that claimants could not apply for before, or gaining occupational skills that would help them to enter an occupational area. One member of staff described this: “we explain to people what the benefits are and generally they're quite positive”. Where the benefits and value were not clear, for example if claimants perceived a mismatch between their expectations of a course or provider and the reality, then this could create negativity towards training as one training provider explained: “the reality of the course doesn't match what they were told by the JSA adviser. We sometimes find that JSA advisers perhaps say slightly different things to what we actually do”.
- **Claimant recognised that training, generally as well as the specific course, would help them enter the labour market.** One member of staff described how if claimants came up with the solution themselves this helped them to recognise that training would help them to enter the labour market. For example, “Most of them [claimants] agree to it because they're telling you what their barriers to employment are and so you reflect that back and say ‘well what do you think, if we could arrange for you to have that training or that experience to help you get through those barriers? And this would involve x, y and z. Does that sound good?”
- **Mandation made claimants automatically defensive and dismissive.** For example one member of staff stated that *“for some mandatory referrals, claimants’ knowledge that they will face sanctions if they don't attend is a barrier for some. Some customers don't like the idea of attending training if it is compulsory”*. Many of the staff interviewed described how some claimants were resistant, and were occasionally hard to engage. However, they felt that compliance with mandation to training tended to be better once a manager had discussed and explained the ‘choices’ the claimant had, i.e. that they had the freedom and right to choose not to attend, but they should be aware that that choice may affect their benefit entitlement.

Once claimants had been mandated to training, staff identified that a small group of claimants did not attend their initial meeting/session with the training provider or signed-off when a Skills Conditionality remit was about to be enforced. Jobcentre Plus staff would then try to re-engage with these individuals and re-refer them. Staff reported a number of reasons for failure to attend training: some claimants simply did not want to attend or made a choice not to, others faced barriers with travel, childcare and family circumstances that prevented them from attending or sustaining attendance.

4.2.4.4 Claimant reactions to mandation to training

Unsurprisingly, the experience of mandation varied among the different groups interviewed. Generally, all those who commented on mandation were aware that it existed, but they had not necessarily experienced mandation to training themselves. Among claimants who were mandated to training and had not attended, their awareness and understanding of related communications appeared to be a factor in their non-attendance (see section 4.3, Why claimants mandated to training did not train).

There was a fairly large group of participants, again across all types of trainers and non-trainers, who were aware of mandation to training but thought it was not really an issue. They tended to be quite motivated to improve their skills and to job search, and in most cases had no experience of sanctions. For this group, rule compliance and the relevance of the offer were dominating themes. Many commented that taking part in courses and mandation was part and parcel of being on benefits and therefore, if it was required to attend a course, that was what needed to be done. This rule compliance was however strongly influenced by the awareness that sanctions could be applied.

The relevance of the course they were mandated to was a big issue for respondents. They expressed no concern at being mandated so long as the activity was relevant to their goals and job aims. At the same time, they were very uneasy about the thought of being forced to do something that they did not perceive as useful and beneficial. Those who were positive towards training in the first place and said they would have attended the training course anyway also felt that there was no need to highlight that they had been mandated and to add pressure, as one respondent explained:

“No, it wouldn’t have had an influence, no, because I still would have gone. I think if someone puts that in writing you feel a bit like... because I’d already agreed that I was going [...] because they sent a letter, it’s just like... well, it wasn’t that nice. I don’t think they should do that.”

(Stacey, 25-49, Level 2, Voluntary non-learner)

Others equated a training course with work and therefore mandation was not really an issue. Searching for a job and doing everything to find a job was their work. Others appreciated that money was spent on them to improve their skills on courses that if they were in the work place would be quite expensive. Therefore, they did not see mandation as an issue because there was a benefit to them:

“I just think, if you’re out of work you’ve got to be trying to find work and if that involves increasing your skillset by going on training and someone’s gonna provide training for you for free which, let’s be honest, if you were working and you went to do an IT course, you’d be paying £300 to do an Excel course, or something like that. So for me, I just

thought, I'll get as much training as I can, you know, because it's beneficial for me and it's free. You're not doing anything else anyway."

(Bridget, 25-49, Highest level of qualification not known, Mandated non-learner)

4.2.4.5 Claimants' views: The influence of mandation on motivation to train

One of the most frequent themes across all claimant and training groups was that of worry, fear, anxiety and stress in connection with mandation. Activities that individuals had to do were inevitably connected to the thought of losing money if they did not do them.

Those who had no experience of sanctions were frequently worried that they were doing something wrong and therefore would be sanctioned when they could not afford to lose the money they had. Those who had been sanctioned sometimes expressed bewilderment because they did not understand why they had been sanctioned, which in some cases, seemed to be connected to claimants not understanding the full extent of their job search requirements.

Claimants frequently resigned themselves to a frustrated compliance with requirements, even if they thought a course was not relevant to them simply to avoid any potential to receive a sanction. A young female respondent, who claims jointly with her partner, commented:

"My partner is pressurised all the time and I try so hard to apply for jobs and courses. But sometimes that really just isn't good enough for them and you never know, when they're just going to sanction you and when they sanction, you literally have no other ways of income... I would just dread the day if that happens. Every time I go it's just such a panic wanting everything to go smoothly."

(Elaine, 19-24, Level 1, Voluntary learner)

A theme that came up several times was a perception of an excessive use of the threat of sanctions by providers to get people to comply. This was seen by some to undermine the credibility of the provider and cast doubts over the quality of the course delivery, while the most frequent concern was the negative impact this had on the motivation to learn and enjoy the learning on the part of the participants, as one respondent discussed:

"She said it every couple of minutes... if you mess about here, we'll phone up the Jobcentre and we'll stop your money. She was always claiming to phone the Jobcentre."

(Annie, 25-40, Highest level of qualification not known, Voluntary non-learner)

This was connected to mandation in general creating negative feelings about learning. Several believed that mandation actually decreased the value of the learning experience and the skills gained.

“I don’t know, it kind of belittles the course. I mean I wasn’t really looking forward to going on to start with, but having them say that to you, it kind of makes it even, it makes it like the only reason you are going is so that your money don’t get stopped. And in the end the courses were actually quite interesting. It kind of belittles them a little bit.”

(Neil, 19-24, Level 3 and above, Mandated learner)

A young female respondent spoke about how her attitude towards learning had changed with the increased threat of sanctions and reports of indiscriminate sanctioning by the Jobcentre:

“I mean, I can’t go in there [Jobcentre] and be happy about it, because I’m not. I try and be as happy as I can and... but last time I went in, he [adviser] was just like, we’re gonna get you this with [provider] and I was just like “whatever”. You know, that attitude and I mean, I’ve talked to my mum about it, I said, my attitude’s totally changed and it’s just not me and that’s through the Jobcentre. They’ve changed us, but that’s why I wouldn’t... I probably wouldn’t be able to trust them to put us on a course, another course, in case they stopped my money.”

(Louise, 19-24, Level 2, Voluntary non-learner)

4.2.4.6 Feedback from mandated claimants after training

Staff reported that they tended to receive positive feedback from mandated claimants after training. Whether positive or negative claimant feedback was received was found to depend on whether:

- The expectations and obligations of all parties (the claimant, the training provider, the Jobcentre Plus) were clear and had been met. Where expectations were not met, then this could create a negative reaction. For example, if the training also contained an element of employability skills, when the claimant was expecting a vocational focus.
- The claimant found the training was pitched at the right level, and was at the right pace.
- The claimant found the training was relevant to their training or employability needs.
- The claimant found the training had changed the claimant’s attitude where they were reluctant to attend. A few Jobcentre Plus staff and providers discussed how training could be a ‘wake-up call’ for some claimants who were initially reluctant or uncommitted to undertake training, but as they progressed through a course

became more engaged both with the course and with learning more generally. This process was felt to be facilitated by having high quality tutors that were experienced at working with and engaging this group of learners. Several staff highlighted the need to break down the (psychological) barriers before a claimant is ready, able and engaged to undertake training. For example, this training provider observed that *“many mandated claimants come with a lot of baggage that our tutors have to deal with in order to get them to attend and to keep engaged and that’s things going on in their lives and their previous history and poor past experiences of learning”*.

The training had been a mechanism to build and develop a positive relationship between the claimant and adviser, and where good working relationships between a training provider and the claimant were established.

All claimant groups identified some positive aspects of mandation on reflection, although these were generally expressed by individuals who had a positive attitude towards training and in most cases had not experienced sanctions. Some respondents spoke about mandation in terms of giving them an added impetus to their job searching. Others highlighted that training mandation had helped them to pull themselves out of rut and that the interaction in the course improved their mental health. For example:

“I was looking forward to doing it because I just, it’s something to do. Getting us out the house. It gave us, as I say, I suffer from depression as well, and it gave us that ‘I’ve got to do it’. Just to get us motivated again. I was getting myself into a right rut.”

(Sharon, 50+, Below Level 1, Voluntary non-learner)

There were also examples of other claimants, who initially started the course with a negative attitude because they had been mandated but during the course had quite a turn-around. One such example is described in Box 4. Claimants were generally not opposed to mandation if they could see the relevance of the course to their skills development and job searching goals. If they saw no relevance, they expressed disgruntlement over a waste of time and tax payer’s money.

Box 4: Case-study example: Training behaviour influenced by the potential contribution of training to employment goals

One interviewee left secondary school five years ago having completed her GCSEs. She tried a couple of college courses, but did not stay in education due to a lack of interest in the subjects offered, and a perceived lack of support from the college. The interviewee reflected that her attitude and behaviour in her late teens was not focused on attending college nor on learning, but since then her perspective has changed: *“I didn’t even turn up (to college) for the first day. I wasn’t proud of myself. I got into the line of clubbing,*

going out with friends, drinking, staying out late. That was me. When I was 18 I signed on... That's my life. I hate it."

After her initial benefit claim, she was put onto one or two training courses by the Job Centre and then referred onto the Work Programme. She reflected that these experiences were not overly positive and she felt that she needed more help and more of a 'push' (i.e. encouragement and incentive) to seek out opportunities and progress. When she was referred back to Jobcentre Plus after two years on the Work Programme she was subsequently mandated onto a training course for building confidence and work experience and she was at first very reluctant: *"When they [Work Programme Provider] said we're going back to the Jobcentre I was like, really? But they [Jobcentre Plus] didn't help me in the first place before I went onto the Work Programme? What makes them think they're going to help me now and I was really, when they said they were going to put me on a course I was like why? What am I going to gain out of it? I wasn't terribly happy I was going"*.

However, once she started the course her attitude and behaviour changed dramatically and as a result she was offered a Traineeship with the training provider: *"The first week flew by, the second I loved it. Enjoyed going and enjoyed being there... four weeks I was there for. They built up all my confidence. I was as high as a kite when I left there. They [training provider] gave me an opportunity to come back to do a Traineeship which I'm now doing."*

Mandation helped to give her the initial push necessary to do something outside of her comfort zone and to experience learning in a positive way. She reflects that mandation made her take action that she would not have taken: *"I'd probably do the same as what I was doing before. Just trying to get by, find what I can; not having any inclination to go forward at all...I'm glad they [Jobcentre Plus] put me on it because it helped a lot."*

In this sense mandation was a catalyst, but it was the holistic and supportive approach of the training provider coupled with an understanding of the psychological barriers (i.e. confidence and direction) that transformed the interviewee's attitudes and behaviour with regards to training: *"They helped us write plans...we set short term goals and a long term goal... they gave us all the options and helped us find our route, our way."*

4.2.5 The influence of the learning experience on motivation

This section explores claimant reflections on what made a positive learning experience that encouraged them to continue learning and things that hindered or impeded their motivation to continue with a specific course. There was no difference between whether a claimant had been mandated or self-referred to training and the positive and negative factors that influenced their motivation to learn. Those who commented on these issues

raised a rather consistent image of what was positively and negatively influencing their experience.

Claimants commented that the most positive influence on their learning was a sense of achievement they gained from completing a course, linked to ego and positive affect discussed earlier (see section 4.1, Automatic motivations to train). Some framed this with regards to receiving a certificate that would tangibly demonstrate their achievement and open up pathways to higher level courses. Others commented on broadening their skills set or successfully refreshing a skill they felt they already possessed and which would enable them to re-join the labour market in the near future. Closely connected to this was the feeling of increased confidence that completing a course successfully brought them, particularly among those that had initially felt they had struggled with the course content.

For some the social aspects of learning and the positive effects on their general mental well-being this had, was very important. A course enabled them to get out of the house, interact socially with others in a similar situation and reduce the isolation they felt through claiming benefits. An older male, JSA claimant described his feelings:

“The one thing about Jobseeker’s I find is, it’s very solitary, believe it or not. You become in a way, very solitary. The only time you feel that you’re part of anything is when you go on to courses and then you can talk to other people in your situation.”

(Kevin, 50+, Level 3 or above, Mandated learner)

Skills such as team work, leadership, negotiation and learning from each other were mentioned as outcomes of these social learning experiences.

Many of the respondents talked about how the fit of the course with their own aims as well as the quality of the content of the course was important and contributed to them successfully completing the course.

The providers interviewed stressed that tutors would always seek to engage in a dialogue with claimants about what training would best meet their needs irrespective of whether they have been mandated to training or have self-referred. One provider stated that tutors tended to ask claimants why they thought they had been referred to training, and highlight the potential benefits of attending the course. In doing so, it was hoped that the provider and claimant could jointly reach a decision about which course was appropriate, providing the customer with some ownership over the training experience. The same provider also stated that these initial meetings were useful in offsetting any fears or concerns that claimants had about the prospect of training: they provided tutors with a chance to personally introduce themselves and explain the support that would be available to learners.

The quality of the tutors also contributed to a large extent to claimants' positive experience of the courses they attended and their learning experience. Tutors who offered targeted support where needed, treated people as individuals and equally, as well as being able to engage participants were highly rated to have a positive impact.

Accessibility of the course was also an issue, especially for lone parents, where for instance the availability of childcare and suitable scheduling of the courses enabled them to attend a course and progress with their learning.

There was similar consistency with regards to the factors that impacted negatively on people's motivation to train and persist with a particular course offering. First and foremost, respondents mentioned the lack of support from course providers as demotivating. This included for instance, not responding to information requests, leaving participants alone with just instructions to follow or not offering sufficient support for those with learning disabilities. An older female participant, who felt she could only ask the tutor for help in an IT course, depending on the tutor's mood, commented:

"I want to say unsupportive, but they weren't unsupportive. They were just like, it was like distance learning in an enclosed space."

(Fiona, 50+, Level 2, Mandated learner)

Participants also found it had a negative impact on their motivation when the course was not pitched at the right level. Some felt overstretched and reported that because they could not keep up with the content or in tests, tutors completed tasks for them. Others felt that the course was set too low for the skill level they already had and thus they wasted time.

Connected to this were issues around specificity of the course and the quality of the course content. There were some cases where claimants said that they were made to take extensive employability courses, when their CVs and cover letters were up-to-date and all they needed was a CSCS card or SIA accreditation.

"It wasn't specific to what I needed at all. It was a means to an end. It would have been more beneficial and cost effective to put me on the CSCS card course, just based on my CSCS card without the course 'cos I can study for it at home on my laptop... This jumping through hoops for a week was kind of, in my circumstances, pointless."

(Peter, 25-49, Level 2, Mandated learner)

One respondent reported that doing the course was really good, however, it was only theoretical knowledge she had gained and employers in care-related professions wanted employees with experience. The lack of a work placement element reduced her enthusiasm for the course significantly. Another recounted the impact of a restructuring of

the course while it was running. The duration was cut from 12 to 6 weeks and changes of days to attend with participants not being informed, which in some cases led to sanctions for non-attendance.

In other cases, participants worked together with peers for interview training, but did not receive any tutor feedback on their performance and thus were left feeling unprepared for future interviews. Some of the older respondents mentioned that courses were too short and fast-paced so that they had difficulty fully comprehending the course content and internalising it, particularly in connection with IT courses. This was often combined with a lack of supported access to IT infrastructure upon completion where they could practice their skills, and have a contact point to ask questions if they got stuck (see also section 2.1.3, IT skills).

The size and make-up of the learner groups was both a cause for negative feelings towards learning, affecting motivation, but was also seen as an opportunity. While many appreciated that older and younger people could benefit from each other on courses, many, especially older people, felt anxious about entering learning environments where they thought that all other participants would be significantly younger. Overcrowding was mentioned as a source of dissatisfaction and was generally felt to be demotivating.

Financial aspects of course participation could also have a negative impact on motivation. In one case, a respondent described being confronted with a letter from a bailiff because there had been a mix-up of the paperwork between the college and Jobcentre Plus. She did not want to go back to the college because she felt that her teachers and the administration staff would think that she owed money. She did persist, but felt extremely stressed having to resolve the situation herself.

4.2.6 Likelihood of training in the near future

Where relevant, claimants were asked about whether the training they had undertaken had influenced whether they planned or would be likely to undertake training in the near future. The main reasons or rationales for planning to undertake future training for all groups of respondents were:

- **To meet/adapt to the demands of the labour market:**

“I’m more open-minded (to training) than ever. In today’s market it seems to be never-ending – you need to train constantly.”

(Ian, 25-49, Below Level 1, Voluntary non-learner)

- **A positive inclination towards training and being able to develop a variety of skills/experiences:**

“I think I will always be happy to learn new stuff. The world is a very fast changing place and there is always things that previously didn't interest you that you realise that it is actually worthwhile knowing. I see myself as always learning.”

(Chris, 25-49, Level 2, Voluntary learner)

A further reason given affecting motivation to train in the future that was particularly important to mandated respondents was the degree of personal control/choice and the fit with individual job goals and personal interests, i.e. wanting to do a course versus being mandated to it. For example:

“I think it's an amazing thing training, but if it's something that you're not wanting to do and it's not going to help you, it's not a good thing... it's the Jobcentre's fault for sending you on it... training is meant to be free for the individual to help the individual...so it's meant to be there to make you happy and help and teach you. It shouldn't be a bad thing the way they [Jobcentre Plus] portray it because... their biggest problem is that they just make everybody go on it whether it's good for them or not and they need to think about what that person wants to do.”

(Gary, 19-24, Level 1, Mandated learner)

Other aspects affecting the motivations for future training was the extent to which the training had a clear outcome that would help the individual to find work. Training that respondents believed would advance career prospects or help them progress through particular occupational routes was also an important influence on the value of training to future goals and motivation.

“The course I am doing you can do Level 3 and Level 4 [after completing current course] and I would like to do them... I would have to probably self-fund it. I am really enjoying doing it now so I think I might as well carry on and get a better qualification so I'm bettering myself [in terms of] what jobs are out there.”

(Jenny, 19-24, Level 3 and above, Voluntary learner)

In contrast, a few interviewees discussed how their experience of training had negatively impacted on their plans to take up future learning. Although no particular aspect came up as most important, four themes were discussed by these claimants as negatively affecting their future plans and attitudes towards training:

- **A poor quality learning experience:**

“It’s the quality of the courses. The ones I’ve been on have been pretty poor. They haven’t incentivised me to go on another really... They don’t know anything about what they’re offering.”

(Ian, 25-49, Below Level 1, Voluntary non-learner)

- **Reasons and value of training not clear or not explained:**

“As long as there’s some point to it. But as I say, it puts you off... they [Jobcentre Plus adviser] just say look there’s one [a training course] on the computer... They’ve got to look at it more thoroughly themselves so they can tell you exactly what the point of it is.”

(Carly, 50+, Level 2, Mandated learner)

- **Health conditions or family circumstances restricting future options.** These included examples of both poor mental and physical health, as well as caring commitments for children and other relatives:

“Maybe a few months down the line because I’ve got to go back and see my doctor and I need to get physio underway... Right now it’s just I’m not happy about myself the way I am.”

(Deb, 25-49, Level 2, Voluntary non-learner)

- **Unable to see the benefit of training** because of a focus on gaining a paid job as quickly as possible. For example:

“Training’s no good for me... I know how to [get a job]. I need a job, I don’t need training.”

(Jonathan, 25-49, Below Level 1, Voluntary non-learner)

4.3 Why claimants mandated to training did not train

In some cases, despite being mandated, claimants did not attend training. For some claimants non-attendance was because a change in their circumstances meant that the training referral was no longer required. For example they started work, or found a work experience placement. Other mandated trainees who did not attend described a significant change in their personal circumstances which had affected their ability to train, such as a deterioration or onset of a health condition, having a baby, or being required to care for a relative.

There was a group of claimants that the sample indicated had been mandated to training, but who were unaware of any training mandation, as these examples illustrate:

“It’s like in my eyes, it’s like they’ll do anything they can to not pay you... by putting you on those courses, but not letting you know you’re on them, and then write to you and that’s the only letter you get, when they’re after you wanting to know what... Uh why haven’t you turned up at a course, and we’ve suspended your money.”

(Jason, 25-49, Level 1, Mandated non-learner)

“I’ve always turned up for my appointments no matter what difficulty it was, I mean no matter how awkward it was, I’d always turn up.”

(Adam, 25-49, Highest level of qualification not known, Mandated non-learner)

There were two other examples where a lack of communication or understanding seemed to have resulted in non-attendance at training. One respondent described a recent experience where they travelled to attend a course, but when they arrived, they were told that the course did not exist. They were subsequently referred to sanction as a result. Another claimant said that he attended a training provider, but was told he was not funded when he arrived.

Two claimants that had been mandated to training courses, but not attended described that this was because they were participating in other training at the time their mandated provision became available, as one claimant explained:

“I went there, had an interview, while I was waiting for that he put me on another training just to basically get me doing something and then I got accepted on that. So I had to choose what to do but I called my adviser and said look, I’ve got two people I do training things, which ones do you want me to do? [...] So I went on that [training A] and obviously I didn’t do that [training B] because they were taking a bit too long.”

(David, 19-24, Level 2, Mandated non-learner)

Other reasons for non-attendance at mandated training related to the perceived suitability of the training opportunity. For example, one respondent decided that their mandated course was not relevant to their work goals, did not attend and was subsequently awaiting a sanction decision. One respondent had not attended the training they had been mandated to because she could not access it easily and because she had had negative feedback from friends who had attended the same course. She didn’t want to attend and face the possibility of sanctions, so after discussing this with her parents who said they would support her financially, decided to stop claiming benefits.

Some drivers of some mandated claimants not training are partly in the control of policymakers, providers and Jobcentre Plus staff. Drawing on the reasons why mandated claimants did not train as described above, advisers and providers could encourage training behaviour by:

- **More clearly and effectively communicating when a claimant has been mandated to train.** Some claimants whose records show they have been mandated to training demonstrated a lack of awareness and understanding that they had been required to train. The recent Oakley review of JSA sanctions (2014) made a series of suggestions for how communications could be improved, many of which apply to Skills Conditionality.
- **Ensuring the training opportunity is a good match to the claimant.** A few claimants did not attend mandated training as they did not perceive that it would benefit their job search.

4.4 Conclusions

Generally, respondents described themselves as motivated to train, particularly when they perceived a training opportunity to be a good match to their skills needs, work goals and interests. Claimants wanted to understand the purpose and potential benefits of a training referral or mandation, and this helped to make the option motivating. Discussions between claimants and advisers had a central role in developing understanding of training options, and illustrating the relevance of a specific training course to a claimant's needs and circumstances, particularly where a training referral was instigated by the adviser. The messages that claimants were most likely to find motivating included making a clear link between the training and their employment prospects, describing how the training might help them to progress in a new occupation, how it could widen their employment options, or to build their confidence, skills and knowledge. Claimants were motivated when they had the opportunity to discuss a range of training options with advisers, where they then felt they had made a choice from a number of options, rather than had an option pre-selected for them. Making an active choice helped to gain buy-in and appeared to reduce the need for mandation. This highlights the need for an effective two-way dialogue between claimants and advisers, which claimants felt consisted of their adviser listening to them, understanding their vocational skills and interests and being able to identify and suggest appropriate training courses to meet these needs, as well as their personal circumstances, and clearly explaining the potential benefits and where appropriate the reasons for mandation. Highlighting the level of financial investment in a claimant's training by making clear the cost of the course could also signal the value of training to claimants.

Past experience of learning shaped claimants' confidence in their ability and the type of learning opportunity they felt able to engage with. Short courses where claimants felt they could not fail boosted their confidence, and helped them to feel they could progress in learning. Advisers have a role in building claimants' confidence in their ability to learn, by helping them to take small steps towards their end employment or career goal, and providing information about the learning environment and the support available.

While some Jobcentre Plus staff appeared to use mandation flexibly when referring claimants to training, others appeared not to target the use of mandation to training. Mandation to training could cause stress and anxiety to claimants and in many cases appeared not to be necessary. In some instances it decreased claimants' perceptions that they could openly discuss training options with their adviser, as they did not trust that mandation would not be used to ensure they attended training, even though they were hoping to simply explore it as an option. Mandation could create motivation, but in general it was most effective when a claimant did not display any career, employment or personal motivation to train and was therefore a last resort to change behaviour. Staff and claimant views would suggest on balance that mandation to training is best used flexibly, as it can have a demotivating effect for some claimants.

5 Critical moments: when claimants are most receptive to training

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 have illustrated the ways in which the dimensions of capability, opportunity and motivation influence training as well as job search behaviour. This chapter draws together the aspects of each of these dimensions that have formed the critical moments when claimants have been most receptive to and/or likely to participate in training and maps them against the benefits claim process so that points at which each driver is most likely to occur can be seen. It concludes by discussing when mandation has been an insufficient motivator to participate in training.

Key findings: Critical moments

Not all claimants will need to train as part of their benefit claim. Some will have the capabilities to conduct effective job search and to move into work.

Critical moments which determine when a claimant is most likely to be receptive and willing to participate in training, can be driven by capability, opportunity or motivation. Some are created by changes in circumstances, such as a change in health which requires a change of occupation. These changes will only create training behaviour if other aspects, such as opportunity and motivation are also positive. Such changes in circumstance might present advisers with a way of introducing training into claimant-adviser meetings and starting a discussion about training opportunities.

Other triggers are driven by interactions between claimants, advisers and providers. Therefore, drawing on the triggers for training behaviour identified by claimants, advisers and providers could encourage and create training behaviour by helping claimants to think about their capabilities, creating awareness of training options, making opportunity for a two-way discussion about training, delivering positive and supportive training experiences and using mandation to training, where appropriate.

5.1 Triggers to train

The EAST framework cites the importance of making an intervention when an individual is likely to be most open and receptive to the message. Some influences on training behaviour can occur at any time throughout a benefits claim, whereas others are most likely to be linked to key points in a benefits claim. After a discussion of the triggers to train, these are mapped against an overview of a JSA claim process (Figure 7).

Capability provided a trigger to open up claimants to training in the following ways:

- **Change in health:** Where claimants were seeking a different type of work or career change due to a change in their health, several discussed retraining as means by which they might enter a different occupation.
- **Experienced but lack qualifications:** Where claimants had a long work history, and were very experienced, but lacked formal qualifications, some assessed that a qualification or certificate would strengthen their CV and demonstrate and accredit the skills they had acquired through work to potential employers.
- **Basic skills needs identified:** effective job search increasingly takes place online which requires claimants to have effective IT skills, underpinned by sufficient English skills. Where claimants felt unable to search and apply for jobs online or to write a CV, then this could trigger the need for training in order for them to comply with the terms of JSA.
- **Existing skills do not match the labour market/in declining industries:** Where claimants felt the local job opportunities in their sector had declined, or if they had been made redundant a number of times, this could lead to them considering a career change, and in some cases retraining. The first example is a voluntary learner who had worked in the airline sector and retrained to work in healthcare. The second example is a claimant with considerable work history in the manufacturing sector who had recently been mandated to a forklift driving training to increase his chances of finding work in the warehousing sector:

“I thought I can't keep going back to the airlines it's not going to happen. Keep being made redundant, being put back into the beginning position so I decided I'm going to do something completely different.”

(Sally, 19-24, Level 2, Voluntary learner)

“I still do like all my welding and engineering side of it now but I do that as a hobby more than anything else, it's a hobby now to us.”

(Daniel, 25-49, Level 2, Mandated learner)

Opportunity provided a trigger to increase claimants' training behaviour when:

- **Claimants were made aware of training opportunities:** Claimants heard about training opportunities either through their own research, most likely if they were self-referred learners, or through Jobcentre Plus advisers. Training providers also created awareness of (further) training opportunities by running awareness sessions for claimants and marketing opportunities, or by promoting additional courses to their existing learners.
- **The training opportunity was a good match to the claimant:** Training needed to be a good match to the claimant in several dimensions, including the location and

timing, the level (not too high and not too low), the support available, and that they perceived a real potential benefit to their chances of securing employment.

- **Training was certified:** The prospect of gaining a qualification, licence or certificating skills was motivating for claimants who sought to be able to demonstrate their skills and experience to employers on their CV.
- **There was a change in their personal circumstances:** Claimants with children reported key times at which they became more motivated to train, for example, when their youngest child was approaching primary school age.
- **Claimants had been unable to find work for a period of time:** Where claimants had been unable to find work for a period of time then they sometimes wanted to retrain and gain new qualifications through training in order to increase their employment prospects.

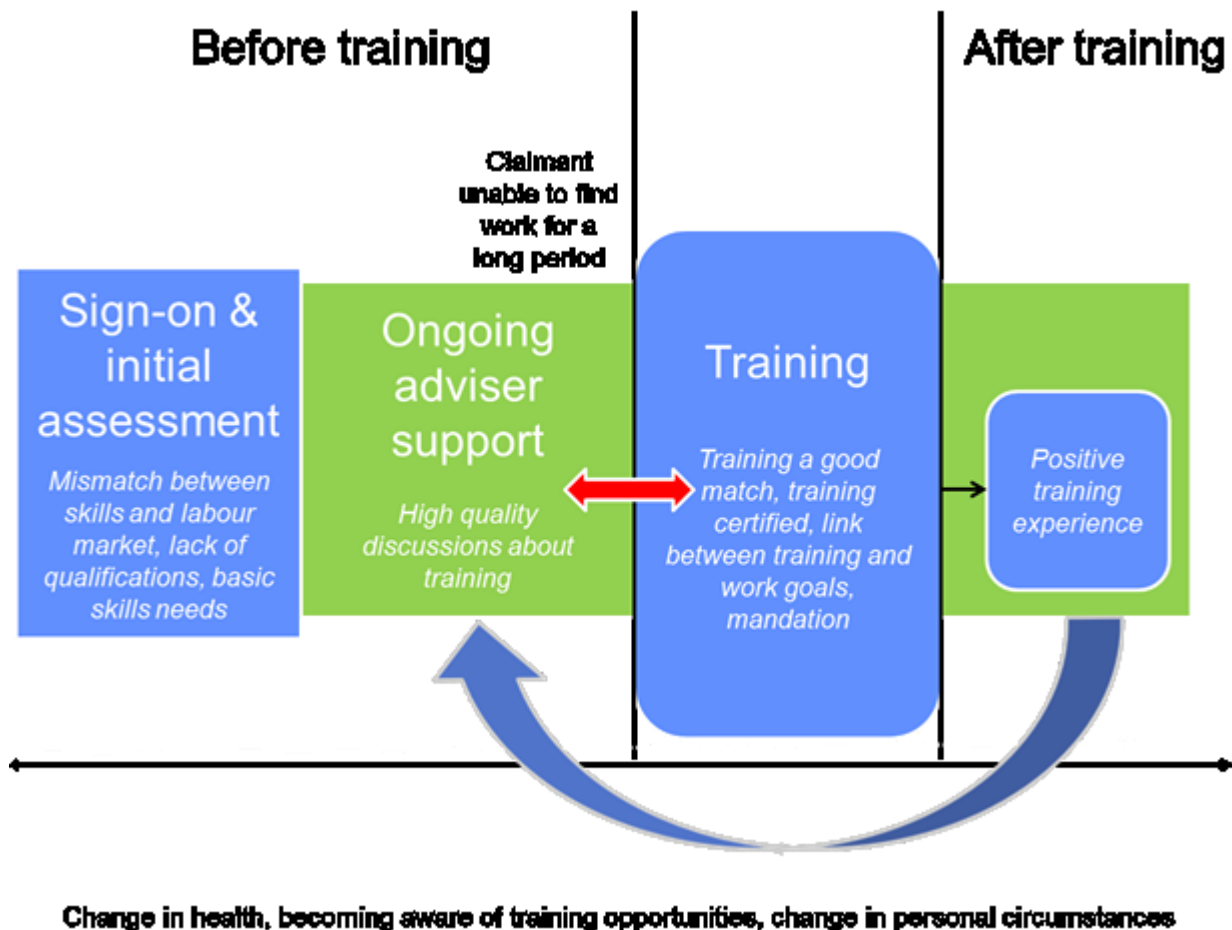
Motivation could be a trigger to change training behaviour when:

- **Claimants and advisers had a high quality discussion about training:** Claimants' experience of their discussions with advisers about training was very varied. Some reported they had not discussed training, others had had a two-way discussion, and others felt they had been presented with a training course that they were mandated to without further discussion. Generally claimants viewed that a two-way discussion, reviewing their previous skills, experience and qualifications, alongside their work goals and current circumstances was most effective at generating motivation for training.
- **There was a clear link between training and being able to work towards or achieve goals:** Demonstrating a link between a training opportunity and the claimant being able to work towards or achieve a career or employment goal was important to creating motivation. For example advancing the chances of finding work in a favoured occupation, to meet an identified skills need, or to increase opportunities for self-employment. Other claimants were most motivated by more personal factors, such as building confidence.
- **Claimants were mandated:** Most learners were motivated to attend training by other factors, but for a small group, a mandation to training was the impetus behind them participating in training. For some claimants that were mandated to attend training and who did not, it was because a mandation alone was not sufficiently motivating to change training behaviour. Mandating all claimants to training, regardless of their other motivations changed the nature of the transaction from one of willing participation to one that became a source of anxiety.
- **Claimants had a positive training experience:** successfully completing a short course or participating in a taster experience could create motivation and an appetite for further training.

Figure 7 maps the training triggers to the JSA customer journey, from the sign-on and initial assessment through training and after training. Some triggers can occur at any

time, such as a change in health, or a claimant becoming aware of training opportunities. Other triggers are linked to interaction between Jobcentre Plus and claimants during regular meetings, or to claimants' experience of training. The situation is dynamic, with positive training experiences influencing adviser-claimant discussions and the positive dimensions of training forming part of high quality adviser discussions (as denoted by the red arrow).

Figure 7: Factors creating motivation to train throughout the JSA customer journey



Source: IES, 2014

Not all claimants will need to train as part of their benefit claim. Some will have the capabilities to conduct effective job search and to move into work quite quickly. For those that do not, the triggers for training behaviour are multifaceted, interwoven and come from each dimension of the COM-B framework. These triggers or tipping points are highly individual and therefore any policy or delivery intervention needs to recognise claimants' varying capability, distance from the labour market, circumstances and motivations, both for undertaking training itself and variation in how training might help them to achieve their goals, for example, through enabling effective job search by developing IT skills, by taking a qualification to certify their existing skills, or by retraining for a different vocation

following the onset of a health condition. These changes will only create training behaviour if other aspects, such as opportunity and motivation are also positive.

Clearly identifying which claimants might benefit from training will rely on discussion between advisers and claimants and undertaking a skills assessment, but some of the examples of triggers for training identified above could provide advisers with indications that a claimant might benefit from and be receptive to training. These include changes to a health condition requiring a change of occupation, children starting school, being made redundant from a declining industry, or being experienced, but lacking formal qualifications. These changes of circumstances might present advisers with a way of introducing training into claimant-adviser meetings and starting a discussion about training opportunities.

5.2 Conclusions

A claimant's capability, the learning opportunity and both their automatic and reflective motivation can all influence whether or not they train, as illustrated in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. These dimensions all provide potential for policymakers, Jobcentre Plus staff and training providers to encourage claimants to participate in training, and also to engage claimants in training that will most effectively contribute to their job search. The timing of interventions is critical to their success, as outlined in the EAST framework, and this Chapter has summarised these moments. Figure 7 mapped these moments to the process of a JSA claim to identify when they are most likely to occur. Some triggers come from interaction between a claimant and Jobcentre Plus advisers; others are based on the match between training opportunities and their situation or experiences of training. Suggestions for how policymakers and others may capitalise on the critical moments and maximise the things that encourage training behaviour other than mandation are discussed further in Chapter 7.

6 Conclusions and implications

This research aimed to improve the understanding of how claimants experience the skills offer, what influences claimants' training behaviour and decision-making and the type of training they undertake. This chapter draws together the evidence presented throughout this report to answer the research questions and makes comparisons, where appropriate, between the four samples of claimants (voluntary trainers; mandated trainers; mandated non-trainers; voluntary non-trainers). Lastly, we present some implications of the findings for policymakers and delivery by training providers and Jobcentre Plus.

6.1 How is the skills offer experienced by claimants?

Before addressing how claimants experience the offer, it is important to note that not all claimants will need to train as part of their benefit claim because some will have the capabilities to conduct effective job search and to move into work quite quickly.

Claimants in the sample had a varying ability to conceptualise and discuss the skills they had gained through learning, volunteering and work and therefore to relate this to local employment vacancies and to identify any skills gaps. For claimants that do need skills support, staff in the four geographical areas where this research was conducted reported that there was a wide range of provision available, including employability and a range of vocational courses and indeed the claimants interviewed had attended a diverse range of provision.

Among the claimants in the sample, some had a good understanding and awareness of training options, either through previous interaction with the benefits system, discussions with advisers or training providers, or through their own research which was a particular source of information for voluntary trainers. Others had a limited understanding and felt there were no or few training options for benefit claimants; these claimants tended to be non-trainers. Jobcentre Plus advisers were frequently used as a source of information about training provision among claimants. Some claimants had proactively brought up the topic of training with their advisers, and others in the non-training sample said they had not discussed training with their advisers and nor had they sought these opportunities. Some of the non-trainers would have welcomed training opportunities. A claimant's ability to research prospective courses online could be limited by their lack of IT skills, which means that claimants who lack IT skills will be more dependent on Jobcentre Plus as a source of information about training.

Generally claimants were open and willing to train, particularly if they perceived that the training opportunity was a good fit with the skills and experience and would add value by helping them to work towards their employment goals.

There was variation in the way and in the length of time advisers spent discussing training with claimants as part of their regular meetings (if at all) and the extent to which claimants felt they had a choice or ownership of the training they were due to attend. Claimants who reported having a positive interaction with their adviser about the skills offer and training opportunities stated that their adviser engaged them in conversation that covered one or more of the following: their work goals, employment history, any skills gaps they had and their individual support needs. On the basis of this discussion, advisers would then suggest training programmes that they felt may help in addressing these requirements. In presenting possible training opportunities in this way, claimants felt advisers were simply gauging their interest, and were not trying to use the discussion to mandate them to training which the claimant felt was inappropriate. All of the claimants who described a constructive, two-way dialogue around training options decided to undertake training, demonstrating that customers are likely to want to engage in learning if it affords them an opportunity for self-development. One of the most common instances in which customers reported having a negative experience when interacting with their adviser around skills and training was when they were referred to training without having been asked whether they were interested in the course or without having what they deemed to be a sufficient explanation about how the programme was relevant to and would assist them in their job search.

While many claimants discussed the positive and supportive relationship they had with their Jobcentre Plus adviser, some felt there was a degree of mistrust particularly where they were mandated with training with little discussion of other options. Some wanted access to impartial careers information, advice and guidance to help when selecting courses. Several claimants appeared to have been supported by the **National Careers Service** with CV writing, but very few reported receiving careers advice or guidance and some respondents would have liked this support, particularly focusing on how to change careers. The National Careers Service is able to offer support of this kind to eligible adults.

All the interviewees were aware of conditionality in the benefits system. While in general they accepted it as a tool, when it applied to their own experiences of training their response was more mixed. For some claimants, being mandated to training intensified anxieties surrounding whether they would be able to achieve learning outcomes. When asked for their experience, Jobcentre Plus staff also indicated that mandation could change the terms of the training interaction and made some claimants automatically more defensive or dismissive of the training opportunity, undermining personal motivation. Interviewees generally felt unable to question a training referral as being appropriate to their needs or goals as they were aware that attending can be a condition of receiving benefits. Certainly, the lack of agency or choice that some claimants felt they had over training decisions may have an adverse effect on the extent to which they subsequently engage in these courses. Furthermore there was a group of claimants that

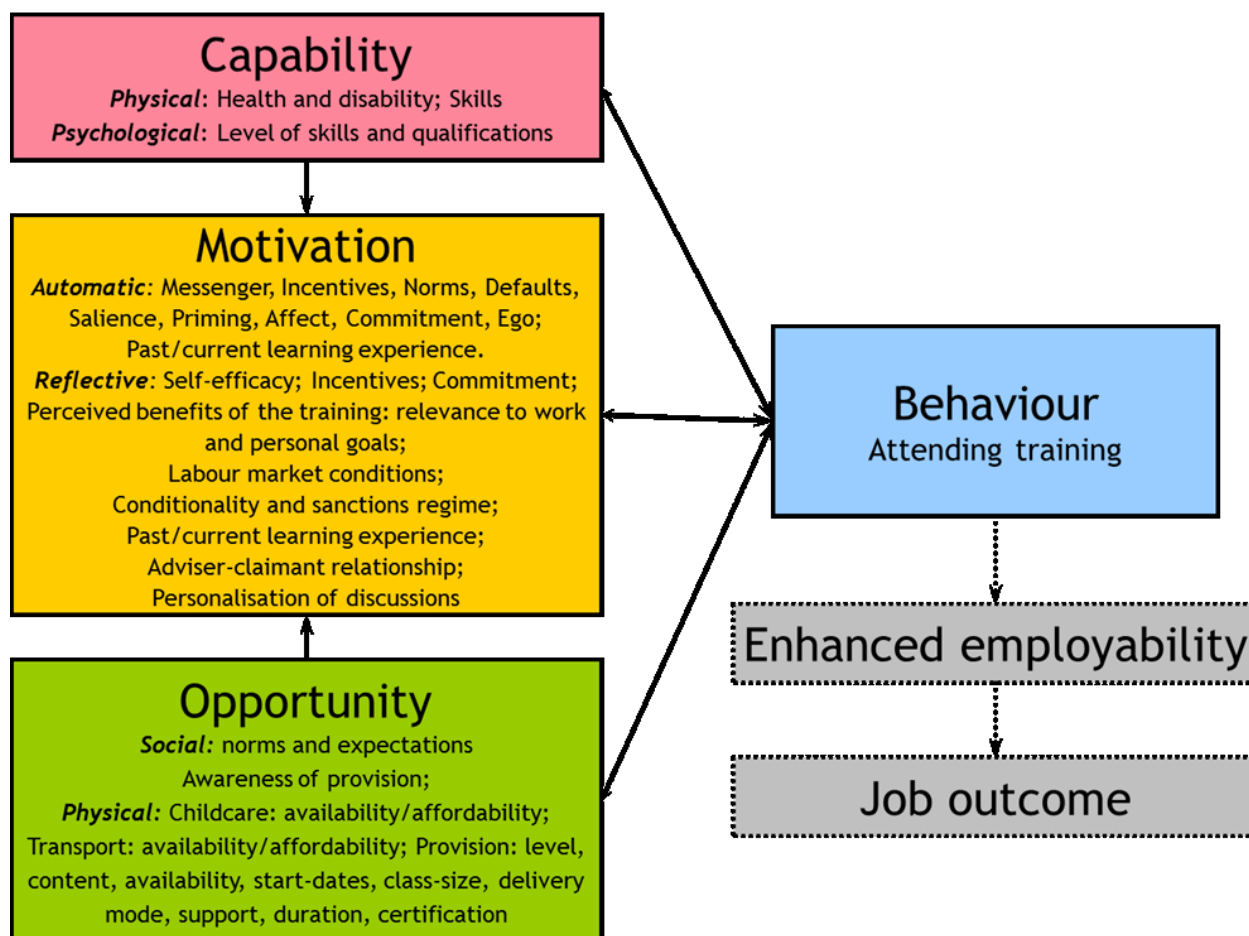
appeared in the sample to have been mandated to training, but who lacked awareness of this mandate, suggesting that communications surrounding Skills Conditionality could be clearer.

Whether or not claimants found the skills offer effective depended on their personal circumstances and needs and the match to local provision. Overall, the skills offer had met the needs of many claimants. Some had participated in short courses and others had taken longer vocational qualifications which they felt would further their employment opportunities and a few respondents had found employment. Other claimants, however, wanted greater access to training leading to recognised qualifications, training of longer duration or at a more advanced level, or training with a work experience component to build their experience alongside gaining qualifications. These demands need to be balanced against maximising the chance that learning will lead not only to skills gain, but to entry to employment. A number of claimants also expressed satisfaction with the supporting infrastructure in place that enabled them to attend training, such as the reimbursement of travel expenses.

6.2 What influences claimants' training behaviour and decision-making?

The influences on claimants' training behaviour - also found in the interviews with claimants, staff and providers conducted for this study - are summarised in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Factors affecting benefit claimants' training behaviour



Source: IES, 2014, adapted from Michie, 2011

All three dimensions of motivation, capability and opportunity were found to influence training behaviour and these were interlinked. Chapter 3 illustrated how capability influenced motivation, for example through the assessment of a claimant's skills against labour market conditions. Chapter 4 demonstrated how opportunity influences motivation, for example through the provision of training that met claimants' needs and expectations and would further their work goals. Understanding a claimant's capability was central to determining an appropriate training opportunity, and having an appropriate training opportunity was critical to increasing motivation.

The three dimensions affecting behaviour are multifaceted and different aspects of the same dimension may influence claimant decision-making either positively or negatively. For example, examining the dimension of opportunity, this could be positive if an adviser discussed training with a claimant, when the claimant perceived that the training opportunity was a relevant match to their employment goals, and was at an appropriate level. However, the opportunity may also contribute negatively towards motivation to train if while travel costs will be reimbursed, a claimant is reluctant to travel across the city to attend the provider.

Some elements of a dimension may override others in decision-making. In the example above, the claimant could either decide that the negative of a long journey is outweighed by the potential benefits of the opportunity to further their employment goals, or this negative could undermine the other positive factors and create a barrier, meaning they do not attend the training. Equally, the strength of some dimensions may override any perceived negative aspects of others.

Mandation is a dimension of motivation. Mandation may not produce training behaviour where other influences affect training more negatively than mandation acts as a force to create the behaviour. For example, a training mandation may be ineffective when a claimant lacks awareness of their mandation to training, or if a claimant perceives the training provision to be located too far away. Where other aspects that affect training behaviour are negative, for example if a claimant perceives that training will not contribute to achieving their employment goal, then mandation may force the behaviour, but the behaviour may not effectively produce the desired outcome (i.e. developing a claimant's employability). Where mandation is used, then for training to be a positive experience, an adviser should be sure that the opportunity is the right one and a good match to the individual, otherwise mandation to training can create a sense of disillusionment with training.

The balance between capability, opportunity and motivation that produces training behaviour is delicate and will depend on a claimant's individual circumstances. A change in the factors affecting one dimension can influence another, and ultimately change behaviour. For example, increasing a claimant's awareness and understanding of the content and support available in training opportunities, could increase confidence in their capability and in turn increase the likelihood they will train.

Matching a claimant's capability to training opportunities and generating motivation requires an in-depth understanding of the individual's skills, experiences and their work goals, as well as an understanding of the local labour market. This process takes time. Some claimants were sufficiently skilled and able to analyse this by themselves and self-refer to training. Others lacked an understanding of one or more of the dimensions above which prevented them from training. For example, some claimants were not very able to articulate their skills and therefore identify gaps, and some were unaware that there were training opportunities for benefit claimants. Claimant decision-making about training may therefore need to be supported by Jobcentre Plus advisers, or via the National Careers Service. Where claimants do need support with their training decision-making, for example to identify skills or to develop a CV, services could try to develop claimants' capacities to self-serve in the future and to give them the tools to be proactive.

6.3 What influences the type of training claimants undertake?

The nature of a training opportunity is one part of the element of opportunity that influences training behaviour (see Figure 8). The type of training that claimants undertake is influenced by the other aspects of the dimension of opportunity, as well as factors affecting motivation and capability.

Capability influenced the type of training undertaken. Where a claimant or adviser identifies a gap in a claimant's skills or qualifications then appropriate training can be used to meet this need, particularly where it will improve their employment opportunities or job search ability.

The dimension of opportunity affects the type of training claimants undertake. The type of training claimants in the sample took was influenced by whether they had self-referred or were mandated to training. This in turn was influenced by their awareness and understanding of provision. Mandated claimants were more likely to be undertaking employability courses, whereas self-referred learners were more likely to be undertaking vocational courses. Whether a claimant was proactive, finding and suggesting potential courses to their adviser, or whether they were more passive and reacted to any opportunities they were presented with also determined the type of training they participated in. Jobcentre Plus advisers were the gatekeepers to training opportunities for several claimants. The nature of the interaction between claimants and advisers also affected the type of training and the quality of these discussions seemed to affect the extent to which claimants felt the chosen training met their needs.

The dimension of motivation affected the type of training claimants undertake when their past or current experiences of learning affects their preferences for course delivery mode, or content. The likely benefits of training and a course's relevance to personal goals also determined training type.

6.4 Suggestions for intervention

The findings have illustrated the complexity of training behaviour and the factors that influence it as well as whether this behaviour effectively contributes to employment outcomes. For public spending on training for benefit claimants, to provide good value for money it should motivate claimants to participate and increase their employment outcomes. This section draws on the findings to suggest actions for policymakers, Jobcentre Plus and training providers that could a) increase the take-up of training among claimants who do not currently do so, and b) improve the effectiveness of training. Suggestions are structured using the COM-B framework which has been the behavioural insights framework used to structure this research. Table 1 maps the suggestions for intervention against the EAST framework for policy intervention to indicate to which

dimension the suggestions best relate. These implications should be read in addition to Chapter 6 which summarised the findings relating to key moments or triggers to train, times at which motivation for training appeared to be strongest. The EAST framework suggests that interventions should prompt people at times when they are likely to be most receptive and these points could be times at which the actions identified below would be most appropriate.

Table 1: Suggested interventions mapped to the EAST framework

EAST dimension	Suggested interventions
Easy to understand and to take up	Build English and Maths Skills, consider giving offer by default Evaluate the communications and reminders used to mandate claimants to training Make the training offer clear to all claimants Provide tasters Make sure instructions on how to attend are clear
Attractive (i.e.. attention-grabbing and appealing with regard to the combination of rewards and sanctions)	Provide tasters Fund courses with impact Personalise by clearly linking training to employment and personal goals Only mandate to training where appropriate Inform claimants about the financial cost and value of training
Social - harnessing the power of social networks, norms and mutual commitments	Use adviser-claimant interactions to build the capability and understanding of claimants Two-way dialogue
Timely - prompting people at times when they are most likely to be receptive	Make sure training is suggested and given at the times when claimants are likely to be most receptive, such as when their children are starting school, and when it would be most helpful (e.g. IT skills early for help in job searching, interview techniques at an appropriate time before having an interview). Figure 7 outlined key times when claimants are most likely to consider training.

Source: IES 2014, adapted from BIT (2014)

6.4.1 Strengthening claimants' capability

- **Build English and Maths skills:** Consider operating a default policy of giving all claimants the opportunity to build their English and Maths skills, implemented with a degree of adviser discretion based on a claimant's prior level of qualification. A few claimants in the study felt they needed to develop these skills, but had not

been offered opportunities to do so and were reluctant to ask for them (see section 2.1.2, English and Maths skills).

- **Build IT skills:** IT skills are required for claimants to conduct effective job search. Some of the claimants in this study felt they had few or no IT skills. Consider how best to support these claimants to develop basic IT skills and then provide on-going support in order for them to develop sufficient confidence and to embed what they have learned. Many do not have access to IT at home (see section 2.1.3, IT skills).
- **Help claimants to think about their capabilities and build capability and understanding:** Claimants' ability to think about and conceptualise their capability in terms of skills and skills gaps was varied and some will clearly need support and guidance to think about what they have to offer an employer in this way. Having an understanding of a claimant's skills and attributes, was both necessary for effective job search, but also for identification of appropriate training and seeing its value and potential contribution to achieving work goals. Consider how advisers can best work with claimants to understand their skills, experience and capabilities. How can claimants be encouraged to develop career management skills? For example, can CV support services, such as the National Careers Service who offers CV support as one of their services, help claimants to draft a CV themselves rather than (re)draft it for them? Services should encourage claimants to take ownership and develop skills for the future so, for example, they can refresh and update their CV themselves (see section 2.1.4, Job search skills).

6.4.2 Creating opportunities

- Evaluate the communications and reminders used to mandate claimants to training: some mandated claimants had not attended mandated training seemingly because they were not aware of their mandation (see section 4.3, Why claimants mandated to training did not train). The recent Oakley review of JSA sanctions (2014) made a series of suggestions for how communications could be improved, many of which apply to Skills Conditionality.
- Make the training offer clear to all claimants: Claimants have varying degrees of awareness and understanding of training opportunities (see section 3.1.2.2, Claimants' awareness of training opportunities). While some claimants were very proactive, others received their information about training as part of their benefit claim and hence adviser practice largely influenced their understanding. For most, Jobcentre Plus advisers are a key source of information. Consider how best to increase awareness among all claimants about available training and encourage them to ask questions and discuss training with their advisers. This could be a menu of options for example or creating and publicising online resources. There should be a clear, consistent offer. Increasing the awareness of all claimants about available training opportunities would help claimants:

1. who can self-serve most effectively to identify relevant training opportunities within the rules of claiming JSA;
2. who do not discuss training options with their adviser to have an increased awareness of the training opportunities available;
3. who are presented with a limited range of options to understand why some have been eliminated and others prioritised.
 - **Provide tasters:** Give claimants the opportunity to try different courses in order to test whether a course is relevant and to become familiar with an adult learning environment. This latter point is particularly important for claimants who may have had negative educational experiences in the past (see section 3.1.2, Information about training opportunities).
 - **Fund courses with most impact and most likely to meet claimants' needs:** Career and employment motivations for training were a significant motivating factor for many claimants who wanted there to be clear links between training and their work and employment goals (see section 4.2.2, The potential contribution of training to achieving goals). Some of the staff interviewed highlighted a need to monitor the progression of learners attending Skills Conditionality provision in order to inform future provision and referrals. Specifically, one member of staff stated that they would like more information on how many learners, after attending a particular course, entered into work or further learning and what qualifications they achieved. This would allow both Jobcentre Plus and provider staff to better assess the impact of courses and to determine whether further provision/support is needed in order to improve training outcomes. Provide Jobcentre Plus staff with information about claimant satisfaction with and the quality and effectiveness of provision in helping to secure job outcomes. These types of data would help inform future referrals and the brokering of provision.

6.4.3 Building claimants' motivation

- **Clearly make links between training and employment/personal goals:** Claimants had a range of motivations for training, but most commonly advancing their employment prospects was most important. Advisers should try to make clear links between the training being offered and the claimant's work or personal goals and ensure that the claimant understands the potential benefits, especially if they are not immediately clear to the claimant, for example, by explaining the need for IT skills in a variety of sectors.
- **Create sufficient opportunity for a two-way discussion** in order to promote claimant choice and ownership of training. Claimants say that their relationship with their adviser is central to how they experience back to work support. Claimants report being more motivated to train where they feel there has been a two-way discussion of training options and they have had some control and input into the

decision-making process (see section 4.2.3, The skills offer and adviser-claimant relationships). Advisers need sufficient time to be able to have in-depth discussions and to be sufficiently skilled. This discussion could include explaining the training content and available support to ensure a good match to the claimant's needs, demonstrating a link between a training opportunity and the claimant being able to work towards or achieve a career or employment goal, and referring to certified training opportunities.

- **Only mandate to training where it is necessary to change training behaviour rather than across the board:** The motivations for training are complex and personal. Claimants react to mandation to training differently. Some reported that it does not affect their planned behaviour and they continue to train. Others reported that it can create a sense of anxiety that overshadows their learning experience. Some Jobcentre Plus staff felt that mandation could change the nature of the interaction and made some claimants more defensive or dismissive of the training opportunity. Interviewees generally felt unable to question a training referral as they were aware that attending can be a condition of receiving benefits and that they could face the risk of sanctions if they do not comply (see section 4.2.4, Mandation). Indeed, the lack of agency or choice that some claimants felt they had over training decisions was reported by some training providers to have an adverse effect on the extent to which claimants engage in courses and providers reported ways in which they sought to re-engage mandated claimants in learning. Claimants reported being motivated by choice and a sense of ownership, so consideration could be given to wider use of adviser discretion to target mandation to training appropriately and sensitively.
- **Inform claimants about the financial cost and value of training:** Many claimants automatically viewed training as an investment in order to make them more attractive to employers (see section 4.1, Automatic motivations to train). Consider giving claimants details of the monetary value of any training they are referred to in order to increase their perception that it is an investment being made to strengthen their ability to gain employment.

7 Bibliography

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8 Annex

8.1 Detailed methodology

8.1.1 Qualitative research

The depth of understanding required in order to understand how the skills offer is experienced by claimants and how it influences their behaviours and decision-making with regards to training lends itself to a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research provides a detailed understanding of how and why decisions are made and supported and it provides depth of insight. It does not provide evidence about the incidence of these decisions and is not statistically representative.

The research method was qualitative, with claimants invited to recount their experiences of training and the skills offer whilst claiming benefits. By design therefore the methodology did not take into account the automatic or uncontrolled forms of mental processing outlined by the behavioural science literature that can affect work and learning decisions, as individuals are unaware of these effects, and therefore unable to report them in answer to research questions.

The personal nature of training experiences and decision-making processes lent itself to individual interviews and therefore the study is based on 60 individual semi-structured interviews with benefit claimants. In order to be able to compare and contrast behaviours, the interviews with claimants were split between into four groups. These groups reflected whether or not the claimant had participated in training, and whether or not their training behaviours were self-determined or they had been subject to conditionality as part of their benefit claim. Table 2 illustrates the four claimant groups by their mandate status and training participation. These groups are referred to using the terminology outlined in Table 2 throughout this report.

Table 2: Four sample groups: Training participation and mandate status

	Mandated	Not mandated
Participated	Mandated trainers: claimants participating in training whose participation is subject to conditionality	Voluntary trainers: Claimants who self-referred to and participated in training
Not participated	Mandated non-trainers: Mandated claimants who did not participate in training	Voluntary non-trainers: Claimants that have neither been mandated nor self-referred to training

These personal experiences are supported by data gathered from Jobcentre Plus staff and providers. Twenty interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff and providers were carried out.

The research team, in consultation with BIS and the DWP, chose four areas in which to concentrate the research. This enabled the research to cluster the face-to-face fieldwork. The four areas were chosen because together they included a spread of regions throughout England, included rural and urban geographies which could influence access to training, and importantly had varying proportions of JSA claimants receiving training (between 14 per cent and 6 per cent) which could indicate variations in adviser practice.

The four Jobcentre Plus districts selected were:

- Northumberland, Tyne and Wear
- Merseyside
- Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Rutland
- Surrey and Sussex

The research tools to use with claimants were designed drawing on the COM-B framework (outlined in section 1.3, Behavioural insights approaches). Two experienced researchers interviewed two respondents for the pilot, one of whom had been mandated to training and another who had self-referred. The topic guide was felt to work well and facilitate interviewees to discuss their experience of the skills offer and their behaviours and decision-making with regards to training. A copy of the final topic guide is contained in the Annex (Research tools: claimant topic guide).

The pilot interviews took place on 5th February 2014 and the main stage fieldwork was conducted between 18th February and 3rd July 2014.

8.1.2 Sampling and recruitment: claimants

The research is qualitative so will not be representative, but the sampling was designed to try to capture a range of experiences and individual characteristics to get a spread of 'stories' and circumstances across the sample as a whole. The sampling aimed to capture a spread of people with the following characteristics:

- Age (19-24; 25-49; 50+)
- Gender (Male; Female)
- Learning aim (Vocational courses; Employability courses; English, Maths, IT or ESOL provision).

In order to access respondents from each of the four training and mandation groups (Table 2) and to take into account the types of data available in BIS and DWP managed datasets it was necessary to select samples from three sources:

- **The Individualised Learner Record (ILR):** These data are held by the Skills Funding Agency and are a record of learners that have started learning. The dataset contains variables describing learners' benefit type and their course. It does not contain information about whether or not they were mandated to training.
- **The National Careers Service Client Records (NCSCR):** These data are held by the Skills Funding Agency and are a record of individuals that have received a service from a National Careers Service adviser. The dataset contains variables describing a client's benefit type.
- **The Labour Market System (LMS):** These data are held by the Department for Work and Pensions and are a record of individuals that are receiving benefit. The dataset contains variables describing a client's benefits type, and whether or not they have been mandated to training. The dataset does not contain information about the training to which claimants are referred.

8.1.3 Sample of mandated trainers and voluntary trainers

Mandated trainers and voluntary trainers were sampled from the ILR. A sample of 600 JSA or ESA (WRAG) claimants that had enrolled on training between August and October 2013 and who lived in the four fieldwork areas was drawn at random. There were 150 leads in each of the fieldwork areas. The sample was then checked to ensure that it included a balance of leads with the types of characteristics that the study sought to include and where necessary additional individuals were added to the sample.

An opt-out letter was posted to the individuals sampled explaining how they had been selected and the purpose of the research, giving them two weeks to notify the research team by telephone, by email or by returning a form in a freepost envelope if they did not want to be contacted further about the research. In total, 52 opt-outs were received and six letters were returned undelivered as the respondents were no longer known at the addresses. During recruitment, claimants were screened to check whether they had been mandated to training or self-referred, and whether their training was at a point in their claim where they were being supported by Jobcentre Plus or by the Work Programme. Claimants that were being supported by the Work Programme were screened out.

8.1.4 Sample of mandated non-trainers

Mandated non-trainers were sampled from the LMS. A sample of 400 JSA or ESA (WRAG) claimants who had not yet been referred to the Work Programme and were subject to Skills Conditionality between October and December 2013 but had not started training six weeks later were selected at random from a sample frame that consisted of all claimants subject to Skills Conditionality in this time period. There were 100 leads in the sample in each fieldwork area. The sample was de-duplicated with that drawn from the ILR and National Careers Service.

As for the ILR sample, an opt-out letter was posted to the individuals sampled. In total 34 opt-outs were received and 7 were returned undelivered. During recruitment, claimants were screened to check whether they had attended training.

Some individuals in the sample recalled being referred to training, but did not want to participate in the research. Their reasons for this largely reflected their reasons for not wanting to participate in training, but they shared these with the recruiter. The reasons potential respondents gave for not participating in training were:

- No awareness of training they were meant to attend (8);
- Finding work (7);
- Suddenly having a caring responsibility (3);
- Finding a work experience placement (2);
- A deterioration in health (2);
- Having a baby (1);
- Deciding training course wasn't right for them – this claimant was awaiting a sanction decision (1).

8.1.5 Sample of voluntary non-trainers

Voluntary non-trainers were sampled from the National Careers Service client records. The sample comprised 600 JSA or ESA (WRAG) claimants who had received a face-to-face service from a National Careers Service adviser between August and October 2013. There were 150 leads in the sample in each fieldwork area. The sample was de-duplicated with that drawn from the ILR.

As for the other samples, an opt-out letter was posted to the individuals sampled. In total 61 opt-outs were received and 10 were returned undelivered. During recruitment, claimants were screened to check whether they had undertaken any training during this time period.

8.1.6 Achieved interviews: claimants

The following tables describe the demographic characteristics of the achieved sample for the main stage research. The data in Table 4 reflects claimants' training and mandation status during the time period the sample was taken. In reality most claimants had times at which they had participated in training and times at which they had not, and times at which they had been mandated to attend training and times at which they had self-referred and sought training themselves.

Table 3: Achieved interviews by fieldwork area

	Total interviews
Northumberland, Tyne and Wear	15
Merseyside	15
Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Rutland	15
Surrey and Sussex	15

Table 4: Achieved interviews by sample group

	Total interviews
Mandated trainers	16
Mandated non-trainers	14
Voluntary trainers	14
Voluntary non-trainers	16

Table 5: Characteristics of interviewees

	Total interviews
Age	
19-24	16
25-49	28
50+	16
Gender	
Male	32
Female	28
Learning aim (where relevant)	
Vocational	9
English, Maths, IT, ESOL, other	9
Employability skills	13

8.1.7 Achieved interviews: Jobcentre Plus staff and training providers

Interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff and training providers were focused in local labour markets within four Jobcentre Plus districts. Respondents were asked about their job role about the local labour market and population they served. The research primarily involved Adviser Team Managers, but also included staff undertaking Business Development Manager and Partnership Manager roles. Respondents included Jobcentre Plus staff from:

- small and large Jobcentre Plus offices. Respondents' offices supported between 500 and 4,000 JSA claimants;

- local labour markets experiencing decline, and others experiencing growth;
- offices working with a large number of claimants cycling on and off benefits and those who worked with a high proportion of claimants who moved off benefits into stable employment;
- offices in rural areas with limited public transport infrastructure, and offices in city centres.

The providers interviewed for the research included FE Colleges who offered a full range of learning provision, and private training providers, including some that specialised in offering support to benefit claimants as part of the Work Programme and via Jobcentre Plus referrals, and those who offered courses for benefit claimants as well as other provision, such as apprenticeships.

8.1.8 Analysis approach

To analyse the results of the interviews, we used two methods in combination. First, data-driven content analysis involved convening the fieldwork team to discuss how the themes and patterns emerging from the research, as well as particularly illustrative quotes or cases, and how they fit with the findings from previous studies and the analytical model based on the COM-B framework and MINDSPACE (see section 8.1.8.1, Overview of MINDSPACE framework). Second, for the claimant interviews the project team undertook Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis using Atlas.ti software.

Data from the Jobcentre Centre Plus staff and providers was analysed using a process of ‘data extraction’ against a number of themes, where the main points and content from the interview were summarised, with any key quotes drawn out. These findings were then triangulated against claimants’ understanding and experience.

The third step in our analysis process was to map our findings against the COM-B framework and apply behavioural theory to claimants’ learning and training behaviour and decision-making, using the behaviour change model as a lens through which the data reported for the learning and skills context by benefits claimants can be examined. This involved identifying four ‘cases’ and applying behavioural change theory to their learning and training behaviour and decision-making in order to provide depth examples.

This stage of the analysis was informed by staff interviews to help the research team to identify the areas where claimants are influenced by (or could be influenced by) processes or interactions that are undertaken by government. The research team then identified priority areas for action based on behavioural insights for groups of claimants and developed a typology of claimants’ training behaviour.

8.1.8.1 Overview of MINDSPACE framework

The table and explanation below provide an explanation of the MINDSPACE framework which formed part of the behavioural insights analysis framework.

Table 6: MINDSPACE: a checklist of influences on behaviour when making policy

Influence	Description
Messenger	We are heavily influenced by who communicates information
Incentives	When responding to incentives, we are loss averse and strongly discount the future
Norms	We tend to do what those around us are already doing
Defaults	We 'go with the flow' of pre-set options
Salience	Our attention is drawn to what is novel and seems relevant to us
Priming	Our acts are often influenced by sub-conscious cues
Affect	Emotional associations can powerfully shape our actions
Commitments	We seek to be consistent with our public promises, and reciprocate acts
Ego	We act in ways that make us feel better about ourselves

Source: Dolan et al., 2010, p.8

Messenger: We are heavily influenced by who communicates information – **the messenger**. We are influenced by the perceived authority of the messenger; people are more likely to act on information if experts deliver it. It has also been shown that demographic and behavioural similarities between the expert and the recipient can improve the effectiveness of the intervention and that individuals can discard advice given by someone they dislike. Therefore someone who has developed a dislike of 'government' interventions may be less likely to listen to a message that they perceive to come from government (Dolan et al., 2010).

Incentives: When responding to **incentives** we dislike losses more than we like gains of an equivalent amount; we overweight small probabilities; we discount the future and live for today at the expense of tomorrow (hyperbolic discounting). This results in a discount rate which can vary between individuals (Darnton, 2008). The decision made by an individual will depend on how the available choices are presented (framing). Framing the decision in terms of losses instead of gains, or putting items in a different order, can influence the decision that is made (Darnton, 2008). Evidence also suggests that monetary compensation can devalue the intrinsic worth of an activity and that we tend to allocate money to discrete bundles to be used for specific purposes (Dolan et al., 2010).

Norms: Social **norms** are the behavioural expectations within a society or group and they can influence an individual's actions in both positive and negative ways. People often take their understanding of norms from the behaviour of others. Social networks can

therefore be used to bring about behaviour change that passes through groups and communities (Dolan et al., 2010).

Defaults: **Defaults** are the options that are pre-selected if an individual in a decision-making context does not make a choice. The evidence suggests that we often 'go with the flow' of pre-set options. When faced with a difficult decision or one involving too much choice, people may choose not to change their behaviour, or to go with the easiest option (inertia) (Darnton, 2008).

Saliency: Our behaviour is greatly influenced by what our attention is drawn to, and we are likely to be drawn to what seems novel or relevant to us: things that have saliency. We are more likely to be drawn to what we can understand and what confirms our existing views (confirmation bias) as we filter out much information as a coping strategy to deal with information overload (Dolan et al., 2010).

Priming: **Priming** shows that people's subsequent behaviour may be altered if they are first exposed to certain sights, words or sensations. However, this is the least well understood of the MINDSPACE effects (Dolan et al., 2010).

Affect: Emotional associations can powerfully shape our actions and therefore moods rather than deliberate decisions can influence judgements (**affect**) (Dolan et al., 2010).

Commitment: We seek to be consistent with our public promises, and reciprocity is particularly important to **commitment** (Dolan et al., 2010).

Ego: We act in ways that make us feel better about ourselves and appeal to our **ego**. When things go well we attribute it to ourselves and when they go badly we think it's the fault of other people. It has also been shown that the greater the expectation placed on people the better they perform (Dolan et al., 2010). People tend to be over-confident and optimistic and think bad things won't happen to them (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008). For example, entrepreneurs tend to think that it won't be their business that fails. When beliefs and behaviour are in conflict, it is often beliefs that are changed rather than behaviour. However, small and easy changes to behaviour can lead to subsequent changes in behaviour that may go largely unnoticed, challenging the common belief that we should seek to change attitudes in order to change behaviour.

8.1.8.2 Overview of the EAST framework

The 'EAST' framework, which stands for Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely argues that for policy interventions to be effective and successfully influence the behaviour of the target audiences, they need to be:

1. easy to understand and to take up (thus relying on simple messaging, breaking down of complex goals into simpler, easier steps, relying on people's tendency to take up

the 'default' or habitual option and reducing the 'hassle' related to take up or engagement);

2. attractive (i.e. attention-grabbing in presentation, but also appealing with regard to the structure and combination of rewards and sanctions);

3. social - harnessing the power of social networks, social norms and mutual commitments to reinforce or encourage a certain behaviour; and

4. timely, prompting people at times when they are most likely to be receptive and maximising immediate costs and benefits for the target audience as opposed to longer-term ones (BIT, 2014).

9 Research tools: claimant topic guide

A. Learning and work history

The purpose of this section is to establish the key points in the work and learning history of the respondent and to gather details about their past experience of learning and their attitudes towards it. The questions also seek to gather their assessment of their skills and any training needs.

Timeline

We would like to use this timeline to briefly discuss key events in your learning and work history – including any family or other circumstances that have affected the learning you have done.

Could we start with when you left school or college, and work up to your most recent benefits claim which we will then discuss in more detail.

We can mark work and learning activities and periods above the line; and key family, social and other life events below the line.

Respondent/interviewer to mark key points on the timeline

Probe for the following types of events to get a potted history:

- Qualifications gained and periods of learning (where the learning was undertaken and whether full/part-time). Probe for any in-work training.
- Employment/work (type of work undertaken; full/part-time etc.)
- Any periods out of work.
- Any prolonged periods of ill-health.
- Voluntary or community work.
- Caring commitments (children and/or other relatives).

Past experience of learning and learning decisions

- What has been your experience of learning?
 - What (if anything) have you liked about learning?
 - What (if anything) have you disliked about learning?
- Why did you decide (not) to go to college (at that time)?

Probe for all reasons.

- Were your friends going?
- What were the expectations of your parents? How did they support you (if at all)?
- How did the costs, travel or location influence your decision? (e.g. access to childcare, access to a car or public transport, etc.)
- Were you ever offered training at work?
- If yes, how did you feel about this? Did you take it up? Why/why not?
- Who would you say you have listened to in the past when making choices about learning?

Probe: friends, family, colleagues, employer, careers advisers etc.

Assessment of work-related skills prior to benefits claim

- Prior to your benefits claim, what could you have brought to a job?

Probe: general skills such as communication and management, level of experience, general attitudes and attributes (i.e. hard-working, time management/timeliness, motivation), specialist skills (i.e. craft/trade skills), qualifications.

- How would you rate your internet/computer skills?
- How would you rate your job search skills?

Probe: CV writing, completing application forms, interview techniques.

- How would you rate your English and Maths skills?
- Prior to your most recent benefits claim, were there any work-related skills you were looking to improve (or training/qualifications you were hoping to undertake)?
- Did you feel capable of learning new job knowledge and/or skills?
- Since starting your benefits claim have you spoken to a Jobcentre Plus adviser (or other adviser) about your skills?

Probe: whether they have had an independent skills assessment/skills screening.

B. Most recent benefits claim

This section gathers some background details about the respondent's job search and training plans at the start of their benefits claim and detail about the (self) referral to training (where relevant).

Initial claim

Job search

- When you started your most recent benefits claim, what type of work were you seeking? Why were you seeking this type of work?
- How did you plan to achieve this?

Probe for whether (re)training was part of this plan.

- How quickly did you think you would find work? Why?
- In your view, did you need to update your skills to get the job you wanted?
- How easy/difficult did you find writing your CV?
- How easy/difficult did you find it to make job applications? What was easy/difficult about it?

Probe: ICT and basic skills here as appropriate.

Training

- • What is your understanding of the training options available to people who claim benefits in your local area?

Probe for understanding of the types of courses available, where they are, how often they run, the costs etc.

- How did you hear about these courses?
- When you first claimed benefit, how did you feel towards training?
- What did you think would be the positives and negatives to training at that point in time?

Probe for the extent to which it would help them to achieve job goal.

- When you claimed benefit, were you made aware that you could be required to attend training (or risk losing your benefit)? How were you told about this? How did you feel about this?
- Have any of your friends or family recently started a course?

Probe for relevant details: level, where studied etc.

(Self-) referral to training

- At the start of your benefits claim, please could you describe your relationship with your Jobcentre Plus advisers? How did you feel towards them?
- Were you actively searching for training options at any point during your benefits claim?

Probe if relevant: where were you looking for information (i.e. National Careers Service, college, Jobcentre, friends)? What questions did you have? Did you know how to enrol?

- How were you trying to find out this information (in person, internet, phone)?
- Do you think that other people claiming benefit seek training opportunities?
- During your benefits claim, what (if any) training were you offered?

Probe: range of options available (level, content, location, length, certification, hours, attendance/distance learning).

- Who offered/suggested this training to you?

Probe: National Career Service, Jobcentre Plus, Local college or provider etc.

- Why do you think your adviser suggested this training to you?
- What did you think of the training you were offered?
- How relevant was it to you/your goals?
- How suitable was it to your circumstances?

Some people can be required to attend a course in order to receive benefits. If they do not attend this course then their benefits can be reduced or stopped.

- Were you required by Jobcentre Plus to undertake this training as a condition of receiving your benefits?
 - If yes, how did this make you feel?
- What degree of choice did you have in the type of training you were required to do?
- To what extent did you think this training was a good idea?
- How (if at all) did the benefits requirement affect your motivation to train?
- How (if at all) did the possibility of losing your benefit affect how you felt about doing the course? To what extent did you want to do it / did you 'buy-in' to the training?
 - If no, were you aware that you could be required by Jobcentre Plus to undertake training as a condition of receiving benefits?
- If you had been required by Jobcentre Plus to do your course how (if at all) would it have affected your motivation to train?
- How would this have made you feel?

- What type of training would you have liked to have been offered (if any)?

If different from that offered explore the reasons for this.

Ask those who were mandated and self-referred to training (i.e. not non-mandated, non-trainers).

- Could you tell me a little bit about the training you (were) enrolled on/referred to:
 - Duration
 - Location
 - Course title/subject
 - Whether accredited/led to a qualification
 - Provider type (FE, independent provider, Local Authority/other provider)
- What did you think about when deciding whether or not to start this course?

Probe factors relating to the training opportunity: time, location, cost, childcare availability/affordability, relevance to job opportunities, whether or not it led to a qualification etc.

- What role (if any) did your friends and family have in your decision to undertake training? Did they encourage or discourage you?
- How important was your Jobcentre Plus adviser in your decision to take up the training?
 - If relevant: how important was the mandate in your decision?
- What did you think you would gain from the training?

Probe in relation to future work opportunities, something for CV, qualifications gained, access to other (higher level) courses, and wider benefits (i.e. increased confidence, meeting people).

- How do you think employers view this course/qualification?
- How committed to attending the course would you say you were when you enrolled?
 - What affected your level of commitment?
 - Did you tell your friends and family about the course?

C. Experience of training

This section gathers data about respondents who did (not) attend the training and their reflections on the importance of mandation in the process.

- Did you attend the training? Why/why not?

If no:

- Do you think other people attend the training they are mandated to?
- What could have been different to make you more likely to attend the training?
- What happened as a result of you not attending the training?

If yes:

- Do you think other people attend the training they are mandated to?
 - Did you complete the course? Why/why not?
- Would you have attended/undertaken the training had you not been mandated?
- How beneficial has this course been to your job search? What (if anything) would have made it more useful?
- **What was the most important person that influenced you to do this course?**
 - What was it that made them so important to you?
 - Why did this make you want to do the course?
- What was the most important event or circumstance that influenced you to do this course?
 - What was it that made this so important to you?
 - Why did this make you want to do the course?

D. Reflections

This section asks respondents to reflect on their experiences and the likely influence on future learning behaviours.

- Have your views on the job options available to you changed since you first made your benefits claim?
- How do you feel about training/learning at the moment? Why?
- **How has your experience of mandation and/or sanction affected how you feel about training?**
- How likely are you to want to train/learn in the future?

- Looking back on your experience, is there anything you would have done differently in the choices you made about training/learning?
- Is there anything else you'd like to add about your experience of learning or your benefits claim?



Department
for Education

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Reference: DFE-RR723

ISBN: 978-1-78105-786-5

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

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