



Department
for Work &
Pensions



Department
for Education



Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

Combined quantitative and qualitative findings

February 2017

Research Report No 938

A report of research carried out by the Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

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First published February 2017.

ISBN 978 1 911003 62 5

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Summary

This report presents evaluation findings from qualitative and quantitative research into trials that were designed to promote take up and test the demand for labour market interventions for older claimants. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) operated trials in four locations in 2015-16, to boost work experience and training opportunities for older benefit claimants. The trials were designed to help older claimants gain the experience and training they needed to re-skill, move back into work and overcome barriers, including those that are age-related. Jobcentre Plus staff referred claimants aged 45 plus to participate in one of the following programmes: sector-based work academy (sbwa) or work experience (WE). The sbwa consists of three elements: pre-employment training (mandatory for everyone who agreed to participate), a work-experience placement and a guaranteed interview for a job or support to help the participant through the application process.

Claimants who volunteered to take part in sbwa and WE responded well to the opportunity to trial working in job roles and sectors that were new to them. Participants appreciated the benefits of establishing a working routine and benefited from doing something to demonstrate their motivation and capabilities to host employers. However, only a minority of sbwa participants reported experiencing the follow-up work experience placement and guaranteed job interview components of the sbwa. This reduced the potential effectiveness of the programme.

There was evidence that both programmes helped participants to overcome age-related and other barriers to work. The majority of participants considered that they had become more job-ready as a result of taking part, and reported improved skills and qualifications as well as improved confidence. Reported benefits included being able to update and supplement CVs and broaden the scope of jobsearch. Participants experienced high levels of satisfaction with the programmes and the large majority would recommend sbwa and WE to other people in a similar situation.

There is evidence that both programmes are appropriate for older workers, but to maximise the potential benefits of the intervention it is important for them to be well-organised, structured and offer genuine exposure to sector-relevant training and work. Specific areas for improvement identified include:

- Improving pre-entry information.
- Delivering the full components of the sbwa offer, and not just the pre-employment training.
- Ensuring that the placements are well structured and include genuine work-related tasks to impart useful skills and experience.
- Ensuring that referrals are appropriate to participants' circumstances and tailored to the work they want to do.

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all of the people who gave their time to participate in this research. We would also like to thank Caroline Smith, Tim Willis, Julia Oliveira, Anthony Billingham and Leanne Dew at DWP for their advice throughout the research.

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List of abbreviations

BME	Black and minority ethnic
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
FE	Further Education
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
sbwa	sector-based work academy
UC	Universal Credit
WC	Work Coach
WE	Work experience

Executive summary

Between April 2015 and March 2016, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), backed by the Department for Education (formerly Department for Business, Innovation and Skills), trialled enhanced central funding for work experience (WE) and training programmes to test their suitability for benefit claimants aged 45 or older. Jobcentre Plus staff in participating districts could refer claimants to take part in one of the following:

- **Sector-based work academy (sbwa)** of up to six-weeks duration consisting of three elements: pre-employment training (mandatory for everyone who agreed to participate), a work-experience placement and a guaranteed interview for a job or support to help the participant through the application process. This was offered in two areas: Tyne and Wear and Birmingham and Solihull.
- **WE** programme offering participants a work placement generally lasting between two and eight weeks, for 25-30 hours per week. This was offered in West Yorkshire and the Black Country.

Before the trials were launched, Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches (WCs) could refer claimants of all ages to sbwa and WE. However, take-up among older claimants was low. These trials were designed to understand if take-up of the provisions could be increased with greater engagement from Jobcentre Plus staff.

This report is based on qualitative research with 60 trial participants and 19 host employers, and quantitative survey research with 125 sbwa and 386 WE participants, and 600 non-participants who are similar to participants. Research fieldwork took place between March and June 2016, after the trials were completed.

The aims of the research were to:

- Understand why claimants and employers chose to take part in the trials.
- Understand how host employers viewed the programmes.
- Assess whether the provision was suitable for older claimants.
- Understand any impacts of the provision for older claimants.
- Prepare the ground for an impact assessment, by providing descriptive analysis of a sample of participants and non-participant claimants.

Reasons why claimants and employers took part in the trials

The main reason why participants took part in either trial was because they thought it would help them to get a job (mentioned by 25 per cent of WE participants and 44 per cent of sbwa participants). WE participants tended to be further from the labour market than those doing the sbwa, with less recent work experience, and a higher proportion claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Therefore, obtaining more recent work experience (23 per cent), and doing something to get out of the house (21 per cent), were the next most common reasons for taking part. Sbwaw participants were motivated more by the prospect of improving their skills (37 per cent) and gaining work experience in sectors that are new to them (13 per cent).

Host employers reported taking part in the programmes to meet recruitment needs, to help people back into work for altruistic reasons, and because of a positive previous experience of recruiting through Jobcentre Plus.

Experiences of the WE programme

Two-thirds of WE participants, 66 per cent, reported that they had received clear information from Jobcentre Plus WCs about the WE placement prior to making their decision to participate. The large majority, 78 per cent, reported that the work placement was suitable, but almost a fifth, 18 per cent, did not think that it suited them.

Over half of participants, 54 per cent, reported that their work placements had lasted for at least four weeks, including 23 per cent who reported that the placements were longer at eight weeks or more. Retail placements were most common: 33 per cent of WE participants did their placement in a charity shop, and a further 12 per cent did their work placement in another type of shop.

Seventy-nine per cent of WE participants reported that they had successfully completed their placement, but the remainder, 21 per cent, said they left early. The most frequent reason for leaving early was due to an illness (cited by 34 per cent).

Over half of participants, 53 per cent, reported that they had the chance to learn new skills on their placement. Around three-quarters regarded the amount of support they received from their host employer (76 per cent) and Jobcentre Plus WCs (71 per cent) as 'about right'. Four-in-five participants agreed that they were treated like a valuable member of staff (79 per cent) and were satisfied with the quality of the placement overall (80 per cent). Most participants (68 per cent) reported that they had gained benefits from the placement, including increased confidence and self-belief (19 per cent), that it was a good experience overall (18 per cent), and that the experience had increased or helped them to retain their existing skills (18 per cent). One WE participant explained:

'It got me out of the house dressed in shirt and a tie, onto the bus and into work every day – got me into the discipline of getting up in the morning.'

(WE participant)

Among the minority who reported no benefits, 25 per cent, this was because their expectations had not been met or the placement was not well-structured or tailored to their needs. Overall, 79 per cent of WE participants felt positive about taking part in the programme, and 82 per cent would recommend it to someone else in their situation. Satisfaction levels are comparable to a previous DWP research operated with 18 to 24 year-old claimants.¹ This high degree of satisfaction, across age groups, indicates that the WE programme is appropriate for both younger and older claimants.

¹ This report includes comparisons with survey results from research with 18 to 24 year-old participants in WE and sbwa: Customers' Experiences of the Youth Contract, DWP Research Report No.865, 2014.

Experiences of the sbwa programme

All sbwa participants reported that they had received the training element of sbwa. Only 16 per cent reported a follow-up work experience placement and 42 per cent said that they had a guaranteed job interview. Overall, 13 per cent of sbwa participants had experienced all three elements – significantly lower than reported in the 18 to 24 research (40 per cent). The qualitative findings suggest that these figures may understate the actual proportion experiencing a placement; where work placements had been incorporated into workplace training, some older participants were unable to distinguish between the two components. However, there were also examples of some older participants being offered the training element only, while others reported being told that there would be a placement before they agreed to take part which did not happen. Participants expressed dissatisfaction when work placements did not occur.

Two-thirds of sbwa participants, 68 per cent, reported speaking with their Jobcentre Plus WC about what the programme would involve, before they decided to take part. Three-in-ten (29 per cent) did not; this indicates that not all participants believed that they had full information about the programme. Nevertheless, 81 per cent of participants said that the training offered to them was suitable.

The large majority of sbwa participants, 88 per cent, reported successfully completing the training. Forty-six per cent experienced courses lasting three weeks or longer, meaning a significant minority, 41 per cent, undertook training that was for one or two weeks. Two-thirds of sbwa participants, 67 per cent, did their training with a private training provider; a smaller proportion received training in the workplace or at a further education (FE) college (13 per cent each). Participants were enrolled on a variety of sector-based training courses; the most common were in customer service roles (23 per cent) followed by care work (20 per cent).

Seven in ten sbwa participants reported that the experience had enabled them to develop new skills. Two-thirds, 64 per cent, gained a formal qualification at the end of their course, such as Level 1 or Level 2 National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Most sbwa participants, 78 per cent, experienced a number of wider benefits from the training, in particular increased or refreshed skills (24 per cent) and greater confidence (19 per cent). A minority, 17 per cent, said the programme delivered no benefits for them. Inappropriate referral and failure to meet participants' needs and expectations were important contributing factors.

Participants were highly satisfied with the quality of the sbwa training, with satisfaction rates of 90 per cent. Four-in-five participants, 79 per cent, were positive about taking part in the sbwa – a similar satisfaction level to participants in the earlier survey of 18 to 24 year-olds. Ninety per cent of older participants would recommend the sbwa to someone else in their situation as illustrated by this participant:

'I would do the course again and encourage others to do it. It's the best thing the Jobcentre ever did for me.'

(sbwa participant)

Movements into employment and soft outcomes

The following analysis is descriptive and should not be used to infer employment impacts related to either trial. Further, separate impact analysis will be conducted by DWP to measure the net benefits of both programmes.

Forty per cent of sbwa participants reported being in paid work following the trial. Fewer WE participants reported being in paid work, 17 per cent, which reflects their greater distance from the job market. Reported employment outcomes for older participants were lower compared to the earlier survey of 18 to 24 year-olds (45 per cent of young sbwa participants and 36 per cent of WE participants were in work).

Participation in both programmes changed jobsearch activity. More WE participants mentioned the placement on job applications or CVs (80 per cent compared to 68 per cent of sbwa participants); while more sbwa participants reported that they had widened their jobsearch following participation in the trial (68 per cent compared to 56 per cent of WE participants). Sbwa has enabled participants to broaden their skills and gain experience of new job roles.

Both sbwa and WE participants were positive about the soft skills that they had developed through their placement or training. Around three-quarters of each group felt that their personal confidence had increased, and that they were now better able to demonstrate their skills and experience to potential employers.

Two-thirds of sbwa participants, 65 per cent, reported that they were more motivated to find work, including looking for work in a new sector they had not previously considered. A similar proportion, 68 per cent, had applied for a job in a sector new to them. Both sbwa (66 per cent) and WE participants (62 per cent) were confident that their placement or training had improved their chances of getting a paid job.

Conclusions

This research provides evidence that both programmes can help participants overcome age-related and other barriers to work, become more job-ready, improve confidence and wellbeing, and in some cases support claimants to move closer to the labour market or into work. Claimants who remained unemployed following the trials continued to see age as a barrier to employment. However, this finding was not substantiated by the research with host employers.

The importance of appropriate referrals and well-structured provision is clear, in particular in relation to the work experience component of both trials. Appropriate referrals and tailored provision is of particular importance for participants claiming ESA. Furthermore, the previous survey with 18 to 24 year-olds has highlighted that, for the sbwa to be most effective claimants should be exposed to all of the component elements.

These refinements aside, this research provides evidence that both programmes are suitable for older workers. The majority of participants interviewed reported that they had benefited from the provision, were satisfied with their experience and would recommend taking part to others in similar situations.

1 Background and methodology

1.1 About the trials

Between April 2015 and March 2016, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), with co-funding by the Department for Education (DfE) (the former Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)), trialled work experience and training opportunities for older benefit claimants.² Trials to test enhanced back to work support and reskilling opportunities for older claimants were announced in the Autumn Statement 2014.

The trials aimed to help older claimants gain the experience and training needed to re-skill, get back to work and overcome barriers to work, including those associated with their age. For the trials, Jobcentre Plus staff in four districts could refer claimants aged 45 plus to participate in one of the two following programmes:

- The **sector-based work academy (sbwa)** lasts up to six weeks and consists of three elements: pre-employment training, a work experience placement, and a guaranteed interview for a job or support to help the participant through the employer's application process. This was offered in two Jobcentre Plus Districts: Tyne and Wear and Birmingham and Solihull.
- The **work experience (WE)** programme offers participants a placement with an employer generally lasting between two and eight weeks for 25-30 hours a week. This was offered in two different Jobcentre Plus Districts: West Yorkshire and the Black Country.

Work Coaches (WCs) in each district were told that sbwa/WE opportunities were available to older claimants in their area; they then offered this opportunity to claimants on their caseload who they thought may benefit from the intervention. Jobcentre Plus offices may also have used leaflets or posters to promote WE/sbwa and claimants could approach their WC if they were interested.

The evaluation of the trials was based on previous research, from 2014, examining sbwa and WE for claimants aged 18 to 24 initially introduced as part of the Youth Contract. Comparisons have been drawn with this earlier research where relevant.³

² The Department for Education (formerly BIS) funded the pre-employment training element of the sector-based work academy (sbwa) using the Adult Skills Budget. They also funded the delivery of the sbwa, including Work Coach time, and project management and evaluation costs of the sbwa trial. This area is now overseen by the Department for Education.

³ Customers' Experiences of the Youth Contract, DWP Research Report No.865, 2014.

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Prior to this trial, sbwa and WE were available on a voluntary basis to claimants of all ages. Sbwa was introduced in August 2011 in England and January 2012 in Scotland.⁴ However, take-up among older claimants was known to be low for both sbwa and WE.⁵ The aim of these trials was to test whether take-up among claimants aged 45 plus could be encouraged and to prepare the groundwork for an impact assessment. Central funding was provided alongside a focused approach and increased engagement from Jobcentre Plus staff. The aim was to recruit 1,500 claimants to each element of the trial, in one year (April 2015 to March 2016).

The sbwa and WE trials were available to benefits claimants including those in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Universal Credit (UC), and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Participation in the trial was voluntary. However, once referred, claimants could be sanctioned for failing to attend the pre-employment training and guaranteed interview elements of sbwa.

For the sbwa, DWP's National Employer and Partnership Team negotiate with national employers to secure suitable job vacancies. Opportunities may also arise via a direct approach from local employers, colleges, training providers or local business partnerships. Claimants undertaking a placement continue to receive their benefit and are required to continue their jobsearch activities. Sbwa is available from day one of an individual's claim with referral to the scheme being at the discretion of the Jobcentre Plus Work Coach.

1.2 About the research

1.2.1 Aims of this research

Ipsos MORI was commissioned to conduct evaluative research consisting of qualitative research with participating claimants and host employers and a quantitative survey of sbwa and WE participants and non-participants.

The aims of the research were to:

- Understand why older claimants and employers chose to take part in the trials.
- Understand how employers who offered sbwa or WE placements viewed the programmes.
- Assess whether the provisions were suitable for older claimants.
- Understand any impacts of sbwa and WE provision for older claimants including soft outcomes.
- Prepare the ground for an impact assessment to be conducted by DWP at a later date, by providing descriptive analysis of a sample of participant and non-participant claimants.

⁴ The programme does not run in Wales where claimants have access to pre-employment training funded by the Welsh Government.

⁵ Between April 2014 and March 2015 50 plus WE and sbwa starts as a percentage of all starts were 4.7 per cent and 8.9 per cent respectively. For those aged 25-49 the proportion of WE and sbwa starts were 17 per cent and 35.1 per cent. Finally those aged 18-24 the proportion of starts were 78 per cent for WE and 55.9 per cent for sbwa.

1.2.2 The research design

Qualitative research was undertaken first. A total of 60 in-depth interviews were carried out with trial participants and 19 in-depth interviews were conducted with host employers. Quantitative research comprised a census survey of participants who started the trials between April 2015 and February 2016, and a sample of similar non-participants. Telephone survey interviews were conducted with 125 sbwa participants, 386 WE participants and 601 non-participants. The research fieldwork took place between March and June 2016 following completion of the trials. More details on the methodology are provided in Appendix A and B.

1.2.3 Interpreting the findings in this report

Only statistically significant findings from the survey have been reported.⁶ Quotations and case studies from the qualitative research have been included to provide rich, detailed accounts, as given by participants.

The non-participant sample comprised JSA claimants aged 45 plus who had not participated on WE, sbwas or the Work Programme. Non-participants were 'matched' to be similar to participants on age, gender, ethnicity, occupation, benefit history and region. Any unobserved differences between the participant and non-participant groups (such as their attitudes towards work) have not been taken into account in the matching. This means that differences in their outcomes, for example, cannot be attributed completely to participation in the trials. The non-participant group **does not** include ESA claimants which should also be taken into account when interpreting the results.

Finally, throughout the report the term participants is used to describe claimants who took part in the trials.

⁶ At the 95% confidence interval.

2 Profiles of trial participants and non-participants

This chapter summarises the main characteristics of the trial participants and non-participants interviewed as part of this research.⁷

Work experience (WE) participants were further from the labour market than sector-based work academy (sbwa) participants: many had been claiming benefits for longer; were more likely to report having a long-term health problem or disability; were more likely to be in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA); and a number reported having no qualifications.

Participants in the two trials were different on key demographics. There were slightly more men and black and minority ethnic (BME) claimants in the sbwa trial. Sbwa participants were also slightly younger than claimants who experienced WE. The gender make-up was even for WE, and there were slightly more participants aged 60 to 64 years.

Almost all sbwa participants were receiving Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA); just three per cent were receiving ESA or other benefits such as Income Support. Twenty-seven per cent of sbwa participants reported having a long-term physical or mental health condition lasting 12 months or longer. WE participants were substantially more likely than sbwa participants to be receiving ESA or other benefits (29 per cent), and to report having a long-term health condition (53 per cent).

Non-participants selected for the research were in receipt of JSA. Over two-in-five, 44 per cent, reported that they have long-term physical or mental health conditions. Non-participants were more similar to sbwa participants in these respects.

Sbwa trial participants were generally more qualified: 68 per cent had at least five or more GCSEs or equivalent, compared with 41 per cent of WE participants and 50 per cent of non-participants. WE participants were the least qualified of the three groups: a quarter had no qualifications.

WE participants reported that they had been out-of-work for longer durations than reported by sbwa participants. Two-thirds of WE participants, 64 per cent, had been out-of-work for two years or more.⁸ This is higher than non-participants, 46 per cent, and considerably higher than sbwa participants, 33 per cent.

⁷ Data have been weighted to be representative of trial participants and non-participants. See Appendix B for details on weighting and Appendix D for detailed profile data.

⁸ At the time of the survey or, if in-work at the time they started their current job.

3 Experiences of the WE trial

The work experience (WE) programme offered participants a placement with an employer, generally lasting between two and eight weeks for 25-30 hours a week. This was offered in two Jobcentre Plus Districts: West Yorkshire and the Black Country.

This chapter outlines WE participants' experiences of the trial and host employers' motivations for offering the placement. Research findings show that the main reason older claimants took part in the WE programme was to improve their employability. Host employers took part to fill a recruitment need, to help people back into work, or as a result of an existing relationship with Jobcentre Plus.

Most WE participants had received clear information from Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches (WCs) to inform their decision to participate and the placement was said to be suitable in the majority of cases. However, three-in-ten did not recall receiving prior information, and a fifth did not feel the placement they attended suited them.

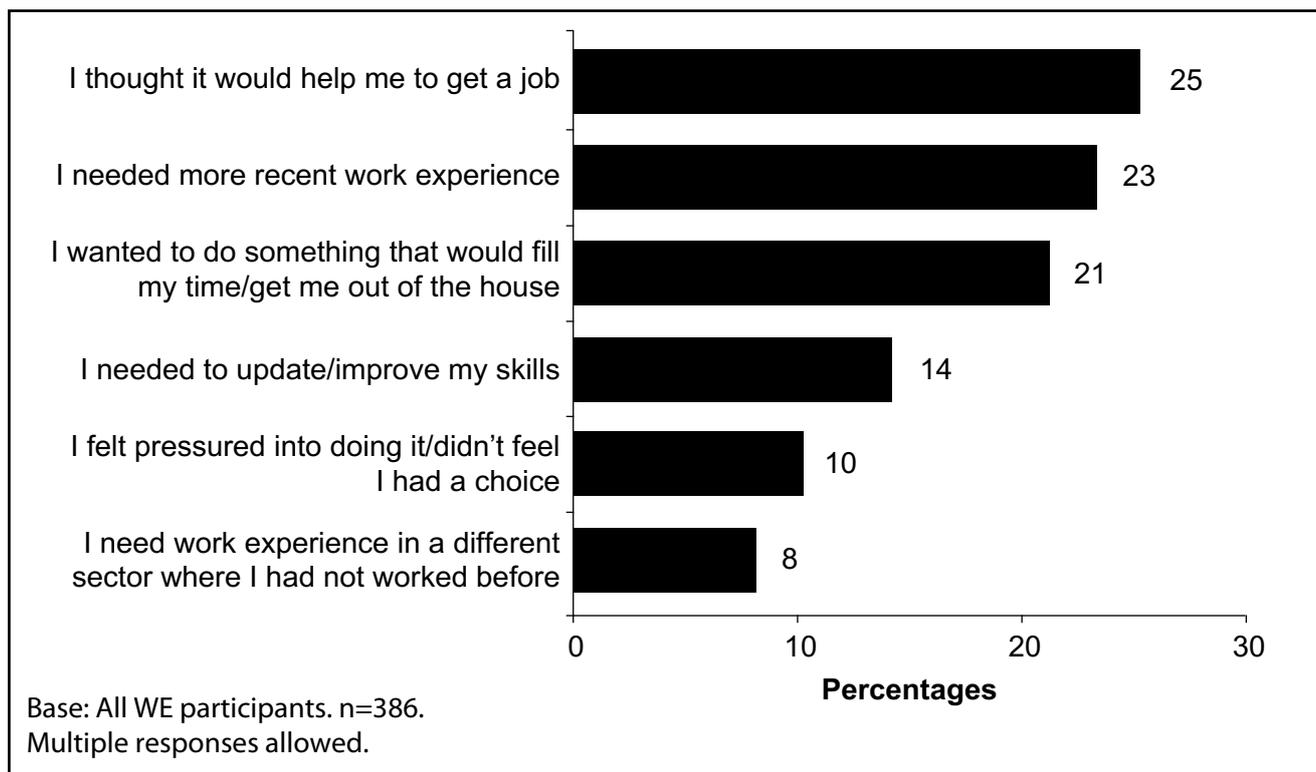
Completion rates were high: 79 per cent reported completing their placement, which is higher than for 18 to 24 years-old participants on WE. Satisfaction with the quality of the placement was also high and comparable to 18 to 24 year-olds. Older participants reported gaining a range of benefits from participation including greater self-confidence and increased or refreshed skills. Four-in-five participants would recommend the scheme to others in similar situations.

3.1 Reasons for taking part in the WE trial

The main reasons older claimants took part in the WE trial was to gain more recent work experience in order to enhance their attractiveness to potential employers. For those that were not quite work-ready and experienced greater barriers to work, the WE placement was seen as a positive 'first step' towards getting a job.

A quarter of WE participants interviewed reported taking part in order to help them get a job (Figure 3.1). Participants who were in work at the time of the survey were more likely to cite this as their motivation. Twenty-three per cent wanted more recent work experience and others wanted to try new sectors or to update and improve their skills.

Figure 3.1 Reasons for taking part in a WE placement (top six mentions)



A fifth of participants took part because they wanted to do something to occupy their time and ‘get them out of the house’. Participants who were not quite work-ready viewed the WE as the ‘first step’ towards the job market; enabling them to meet new people, build confidence and self-esteem, and re-establish familiarity with a working routine. Waking up early, getting to work on time and interacting with others in the workplace were reasons given as contributing towards confidence building. For those who had been out-of-work for a long time, experienced multiple barriers to work or were anxious, the WE placement was seen as a positive step towards improved employability. As one WE participant stated:

‘I thought that it would make me feel better about myself because I was going out to work. Give me self-worth.’

(WE participant)

Participation in the WE trial was entirely voluntary. However, one-in-ten participants believed they were required to take part once they were offered the opportunity, assuming their benefits would be stopped if they did not. This assumption was not based on any information provided by Jobcentre Plus staff, rather a supposition that this activity would be mandatory in line with other activities they had undertaken. Participants who had been out-of-work for over three years were more likely to report feeling compelled to take part (16 per cent).

In addition to referral via Jobcentre Plus, participants highlighted ‘self-referral’ as a route to move onto the trial. In these instances, participants typically approached their WC and asked to take part after seeing a promotional leaflet or hearing about the trial via a third party. In other cases, participants organised their own WE placement directly with an employer and the WC completed the relevant administration retrospectively.

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WE host employers outlined a number of reasons for taking part, including:

- **Meeting recruitment needs.** Both programmes could be seen as a method of recruiting staff.
- **Altruism.** Employers wanted to help people back into work because of personal experience of unemployment (either themselves or close family member), or because it was embedded into the ethos of the organisation. Charity and community organisations commonly offered placements.
- **Existing relationships with Jobcentre Plus.** Employers often had an existing relationship with Jobcentre Plus which they wanted to maintain. This was often coupled with positive previous experiences of recruiting staff through Jobcentre Plus.

3.2 Information about WE placements

The majority of WE participants, 66 per cent, reported receiving clear information from Jobcentre Plus WCs about the WE placement prior to making their decision to participate. Three-in-ten did not recall receiving any information from the WC prior to participating and it was clear receiving more detailed information would have been beneficial; in terms of determining suitability of the placement and managing expectations. Longer term unemployed participants, those out-of-work for three years or more, were less likely to report that they had spoken to a WC beforehand.

The large majority, 78 per cent, of WE participants reported that the placement was suitable for them. While this suggests that placements were suitable for the majority of older participants in terms of their work readiness and sector interests, one-in-five did not feel that they had attended a suitable placement. However, compared to participants aged 18 to 24, older participants were more satisfied that their placement suited them.

3.3 The nature of WE trial work placements

Work experience placements were offered by a range of different workplaces in terms of industry sector and workplace size (number of employees), though most placements were in small establishments and were more frequently in retail and administration roles. The types of placement available were similar to those reported in the research with 18 to 24 year-olds.⁹

The majority (78 per cent) of participants reported that their placements were in workplaces with between one and 24 employees. Nearly half of placements were in retail: 33 per cent of participants worked in a charity shop, and a further 12 per cent in another type of shop. Charity shop placements were more common for those who reported being unemployed at the time of interview (following participation in the programme). It was found that participants in these types of placements faced greater barriers to work, for example, many reported that they had no qualifications.

⁹ 45 per cent of 18 to 24 year-olds did their placements in a shop and 25 per cent in an office.

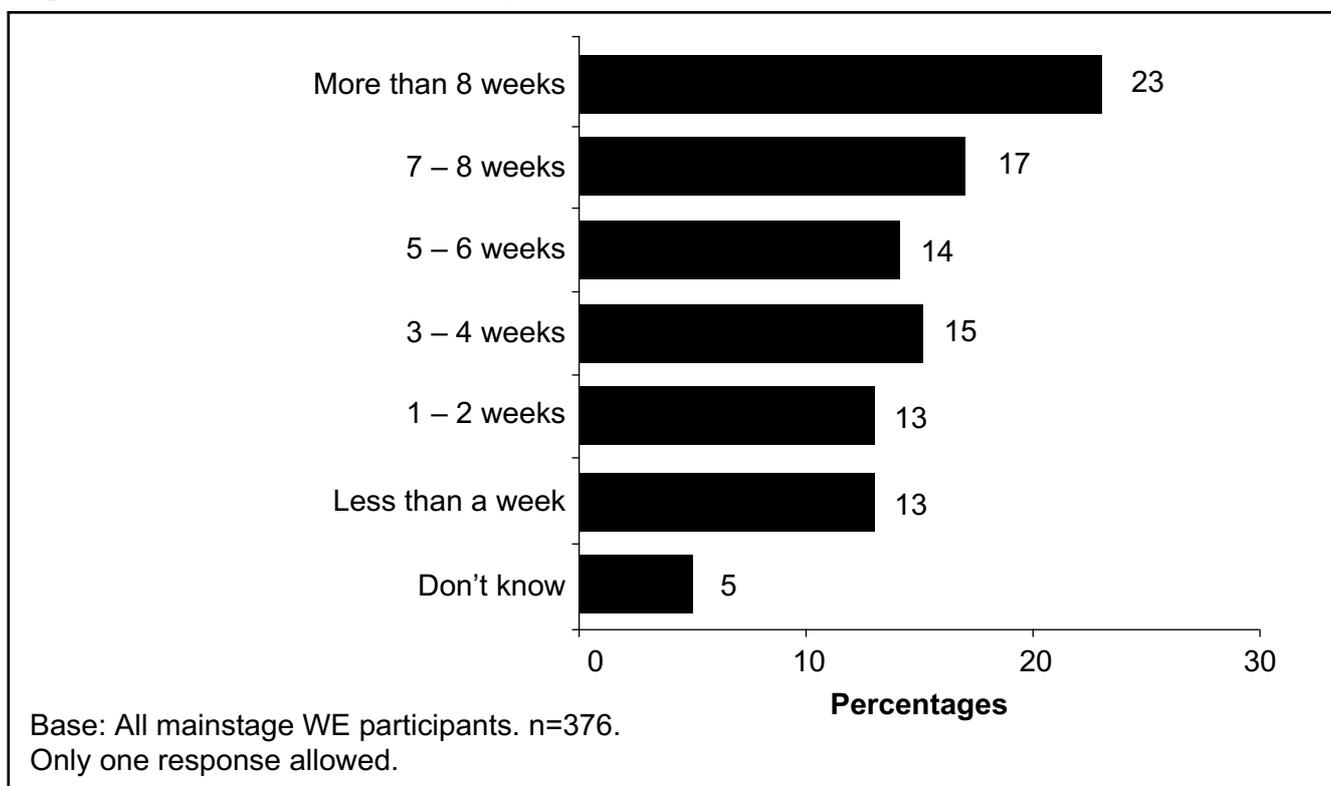
Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

Office based administrative roles were experienced by a quarter of WE participants. This was higher among ESA and other benefit claimants, 42 per cent compared to 14 per cent of JSA claimants. The higher prevalence of office-based placements among ESA claimants is likely to relate to the nature of the work, which may be more suitable than retail for those with a long-term physical disability or health condition. A small proportion of WE participants had a placement in a warehouse (five per cent) or in an outdoors role (four per cent).

WE participants were commonly performing customer service or shop assistant roles (11 per cent) which consisted of tasks, such as stock filling, packing, helping customers and working on the till; followed by administrative, office or clerical work (eight per cent); volunteering work (six per cent); and warehouse duties (five per cent).

Work placements are designed to be between two to eight weeks in duration. The majority of participants experienced a placement of this length (Figure 3.2). A small minority experienced placements of under one week in duration, and a quarter reported that placements had lasted for over eight weeks. There were examples of placements being extended and this was met with mixed reaction: including those who were very happy to be given the opportunity to continue and others who felt they should have been transitioned to a paid member of staff. Women were more likely to have completed a longer work placement than men (75 per cent had a placement lasting more than three weeks compared to 62 per cent of men).

Figure 3.2 Duration of the WE placement



3.4 Completion rates

The large majority of WE participants surveyed (79 per cent) reported that they had successfully completed their placement. Around a fifth (21 per cent) left the placement early, mainly for health-related reasons (cited by 34 per cent of early leavers). Others left early for personal reasons or because they did not think that the work experience was pitched at the right level for them (seven per cent each). Completion rates were higher compared with WE participants aged 18 to 24 (74 per cent).

There were examples of WE participants securing employment as a result of their placement, in roles such as shop work, hospitality and warehousing. Seven per cent of all WE who completed their placement reported being offered a paid job by the host employer – lower than reported by younger participants aged 18 to 24 (16 per cent). Among those who were offered a job (21 participants), 15 reported that they took up the job offer and 11 were still with the same employer. Some roles were described as part-time or zero-hours contracts and were not always thought to align with the health needs of participants – meaning in some cases the work was not seen as long-term or sustainable. There were also instances of job offers being turned down by participants as a result of health issues; this is demonstrated in Case Study 1.

The amount of support received from the host employer and from Jobcentre Plus WCs during the placement was seen as positive and helped to sustain completion and job outcomes. Around three-quarters, 76 per cent, of participants stated that they had received the right amount of support from their employer, and a similar proportion (71 per cent) felt the same about their WC.

Case study 1: WE participant in café work

Sarah last worked over ten years ago in a café. Despite looking for work, she had found it difficult to find suitable employment as a result of having severe arthritis. Sarah identified her age as a barrier to finding work believing that employers were ideally looking for younger employees as they were able to pay them a lower wage. As Sarah explained *'There never seems to be anything. They're not looking for people with experience. I've got the experience. I think it's my age that goes against me'*.

Sarah was asked by her Jobcentre Plus WC if she would be interested in volunteering at a local café part time in order to gain work experience and boost her CV. The idea was well received, as Sarah felt this would get her back into the habit of working, take her mind of her health issues and boost her self-esteem. *'I thought that it would make me feel better about myself because I was going out to work. Give me self-worth'*. The only concern Sarah had was her ability to manage the work given her arthritis which affected her back and legs.

Sarah worked for two weeks in a local café, working 5 days, 10am-2pm, performing general tasks; washing up and taking customer orders. The Jobcentre WC kept in touch throughout the placement and was supportive – providing clothes to wear for example.

Sarah generally enjoyed the work and described the staff and business owners as 'lovely'. They were also said to have been flexible and supported her to manage the role around her health issues. Despite the support, Sarah found certain tasks like bending down to load the dishwasher and standing for long periods of time difficult and painful due to her arthritis. At the end of the placement, Sarah was offered a job but did not accept it due to the pain experienced when completing tasks and concerns about her ability to sustain the job. Sarah also felt it would be unfair on the employer, as she was unable to fulfil all the tasks required. As she explained: *'They told me if I needed to sit down, I could sit down; if I needed to take a break, I could take a break. They were really nice. But I was in too much pain'*.

Ultimately, the experience boosted Sarah's self-esteem and she was now thinking about what work would be suitable in the future. Sarah would recommend the experience to others. *'I think these placements are good things for people, definitely. Because if you're not bothered about getting a job, but you go and start doing it, it makes you feel better about yourself.'*

3.5 Overall views of the WE placement

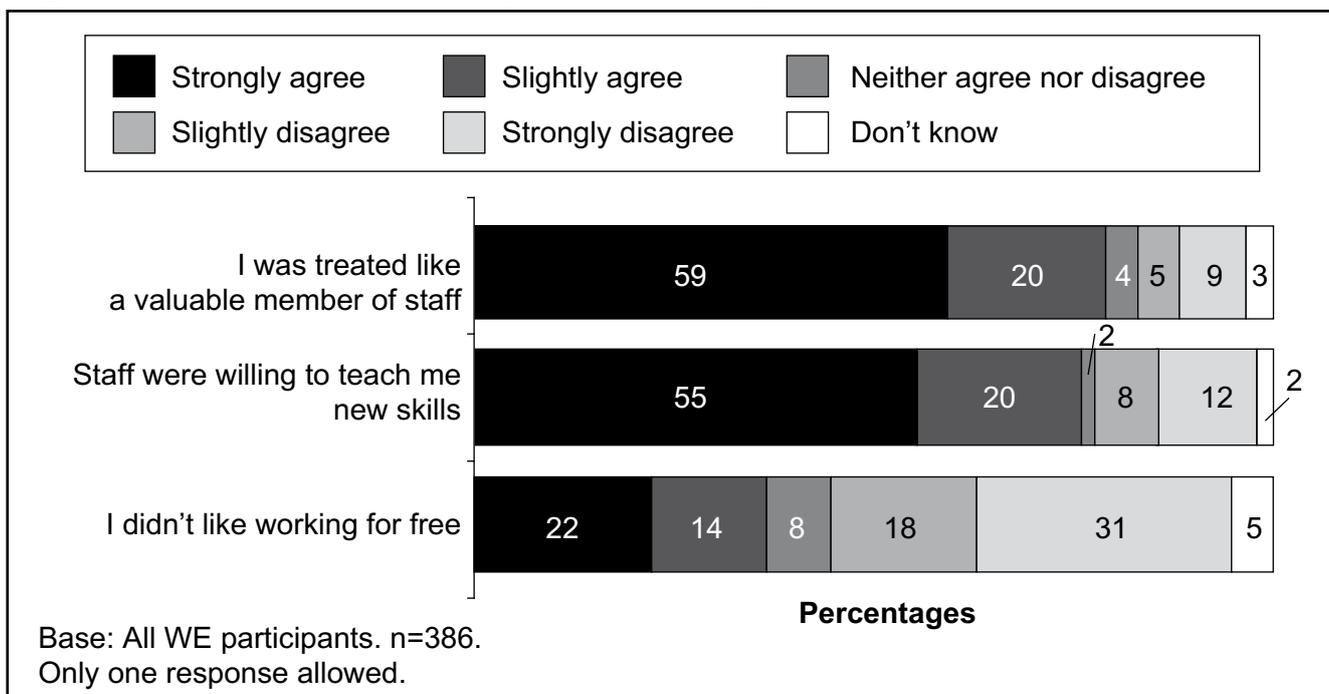
3.5.1 Satisfaction with the WE placement

Overall views of the placement

Participants were generally positive about their placement (Figure 3.3). The large majority agreed that they were treated like a valuable member of staff at their placement, and that staff were willing to teach them new skills. Findings are comparable to those reported by participants aged 18 to 24.

Half of participants disagreed that they do not like working for free. Over a third agreed with this statement. Women were more likely than men to agree that they did not like working for free (45 per cent compared with 27 per cent). This might be because women were more likely to have completed a longer work placement.

Figure 3.3 Satisfaction with aspects of the WE placement



Overall satisfaction with the quality of the placement

The large majority of WE participants, 80 per cent, stated that they were satisfied overall. The findings for older participants are in line with those reported in the research with those aged 18 to 24.

Satisfaction levels with WE were higher among the long-term unemployed, those out-of-work for between one and three years (87 per cent). This may be a result of the more general nature of the WE placements (compared to sbwa) which were seen to offer a positive 'stepping stone' towards employment for those with less recent work experience and more entrenched barriers to work, rather than developing more specific skills. Conversely, those who had been unemployed for a shorter duration were more likely to be dissatisfied (21 per cent compared to 13 per cent overall), though it should be noted that the majority were satisfied.

Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

The research found greater levels of satisfaction with the work experience where:

- **Participant expectations were managed at the outset and met.** Participants were more likely to view the programme favourably when their expectations matched the reality of the placement.
- **The placement was clearly structured and included ‘real’ tasks rather than work shadowing.** Placements were viewed more favourably when they had a clear structure and participants were given responsibility for undertaking genuine work-related tasks rather than shadowing alone, for example, employability skills such as operating a till, stock filing, or carrying out administrative tasks. Where these opportunities were supported by experienced staff and relevant on-the-job training could be given, participants found these experiences rewarding and felt like a valued member of the team which boosted their confidence.
- **Host employers were responsive and flexible to participants’ needs.** It was important for employers to be responsive to participants’ needs in terms of fitting working hours around other commitments or health issues, and for employers to have a genuine commitment to helping their staff.
- **It resulted in a positive outcome.** For example, by supporting the development of new skills, gaining confidence or securing employment.

In contrast, where host employers were seen as inflexible (for example, not allowing participants time-off to attend Jobcentre Plus interviews) and/or the placements were not perceived to be sufficiently tailored to employment interests or needs (such as long-term health conditions or disability) lower levels of satisfaction were expressed. Furthermore, the experience was also undermined where host employers were perceived to be using the programme as a quick and easy way to fill a resource gap, rather than genuinely investing in the worker.

3.5.2 Skills gained

Half of participants aged 45 plus (53 per cent) reported having the chance to learn at least some new skills, including 17 per cent who felt they had the opportunity to learn lots of new skills from participating in the trial.

However, nearly half of participants aged 45 plus (45 per cent) said they did not get the chance to learn new skills while on their placement – this finding was much higher than that reported by WE participants aged 18 to 24 in the previous research (25 per cent). This may be a reflection of age and experience differences rather than the absence of opportunity to learn new work-related skills. For instance, older participants, aged 55 and over, were more likely than those aged 45 to 54, to say that they did not get a chance to learn new skills. It may also be a reflection of the general nature of the activities described on the placements combined with the nature of WE participants themselves, who were further from the labour market and more likely to identify greater soft outcomes.

3.5.3 Benefits gained and potential improvements

Two-thirds of participants, 68 per cent, reported gaining a range of benefits from the WE trial (Figure 3.4). Increased confidence and self-belief, as well as good work experience and increased and updated skills stand out as key. These benefits were also reported by participants in the 18 to 24 survey.

Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

Participants with a long-term health condition were more likely than average to cite getting out of the house and meeting new people as a benefit of their placement (10 per cent compared to seven per cent overall). The importance of this activity in terms of connecting with other people and the structure it provided was highlighted in the qualitative research, as one participant explained:

'It got me out of the house dressed in shirt and a tie, onto the bus and into work every day – got me into the discipline of getting up in the morning.'

(WE participant)

A quarter of participants identified no benefits from the placement and this was consistent across the different subgroups. It is also twice as high as that reported by participants aged 18 to 24 (12 per cent). Negative assessment of placements tended to be expressed in cases where initial expectations had not been met or where the placement was thought to have been poorly organised, unstructured and lacking in genuinely engaging tasks or responsibility.

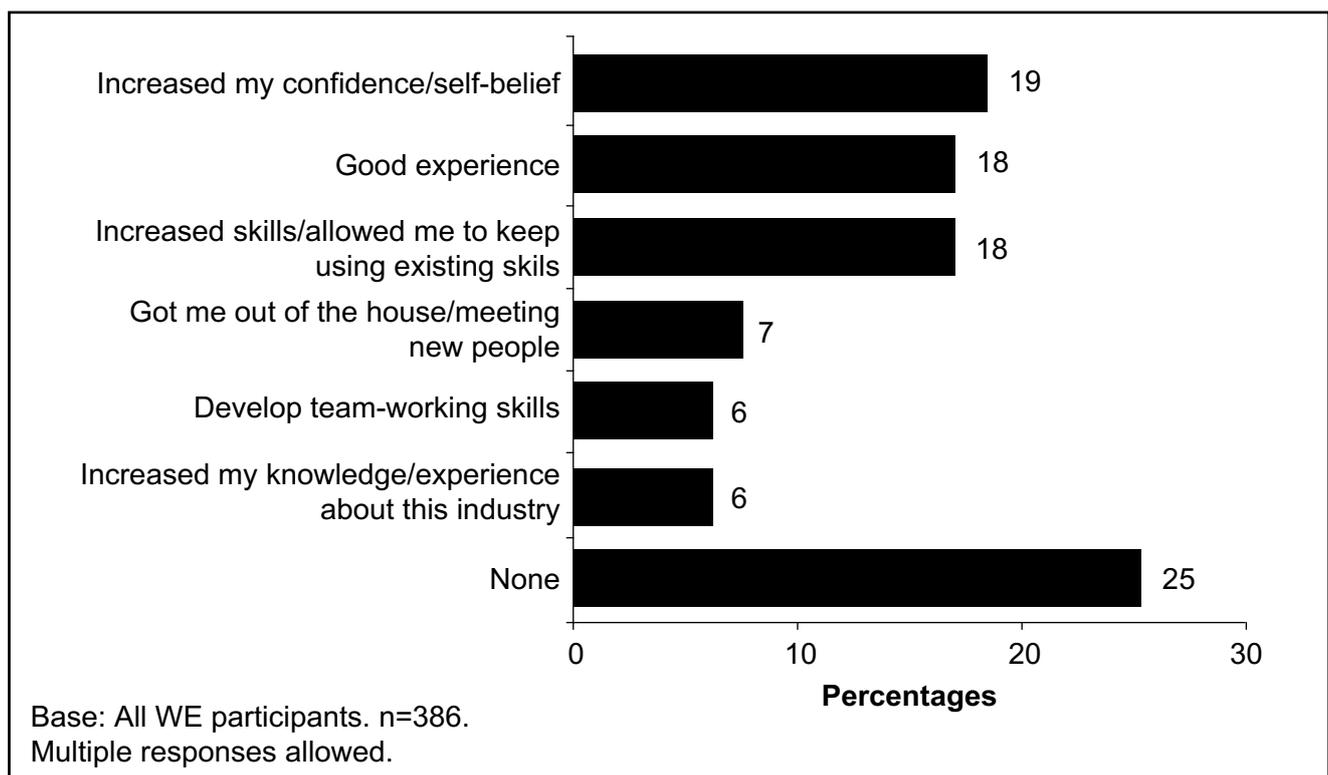
'They did not help me at all and it was not what I expected ... I expected work shadowing, then to discuss the role and then to do the role ... but in reality it was a lot of sitting around.'

(WE participant)

'I suppose, I would have liked to have got more involved, been given more responsibility rather than sit around and listen in the background.'

(WE participant)

Figure 3.4 Benefits gained from doing the WE placement



Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

In line with the high levels of satisfaction, 41 per cent of participants felt no improvements were needed. This was slightly higher than among 18 to 24s (36 per cent).

The improvement that participants most wanted was more support for finding a job at the end of the placement (11 per cent). This was especially the case by those with long-term health conditions (15 per cent cited this). There was also appetite for a longer placement, to get paid during the placement, and to get a full-time job out of it (each were mentioned by between three to four per cent).

3.5.4 Likelihood to recommend the WE trial

When asked to reflect on their WE trial, four-in-five participants (79 per cent) viewed the experience as a positive one. However, one-in-seven (14 per cent) expressed dissatisfaction. Older participants who reported that they had started work after the trial were the most positive about their placement (52 per cent felt very positive about it compared to 38 per cent overall). Overall, views were as positive as those expressed by younger participants aged 18 to 24, indicating that claimants of all ages are receptive to the initiative.

Consequently, advocacy for WE placements was high, suggesting that the programme is suitable for older workers: 82 per cent of participants would recommend it to someone else in their situation, as illustrated below:

'I think that people should go for it. Some people are frightened, but they should go for it!'

(WE participant)

4 Experiences of the sbwa trial

Sector-based work academies (sbwa) are available from day one of an individual's claim with referral to the scheme being at the discretion of the Jobcentre Plus Work Coach (WC). Sbwaw last for up to six weeks and consist of three elements: pre-employment training (mandatory for all who agree to participate), a work experience placement, and a guaranteed job interview or support to help the participant through the employer's application process. Department for Work and Pensions (DWP's) National Employer and Partnership Team negotiate with national employers to secure suitable job vacancies. Opportunities may also arise via a direct approach from local employers, colleges, training providers or local business partnerships. Those undertaking a placement continue to receive their benefits and are required to continue their jobsearch activities. The trial to boost take-up among claimants aged 45 plus was offered in two Jobcentre Plus Districts: Tyne and Wear and Birmingham and Solihull.

The research found that sbwa participants were more work-ready than work experience (WE) participants – having more recent work experience, higher qualification levels, and just three per cent were claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). This chapter provides analysis of participants' experiences of the trial and the perceived benefits of this.¹⁰

Beyond the training element which all participants received, just 16 per cent reported a follow-up work experience placement and 42 per cent said that they had a guaranteed job interview. In the earlier research, proportionately more participants aged 18 to 24 reported that they had experienced a placement (30 per cent); but less a guaranteed job interview (21 per cent).

Participants were enrolled in training courses in a range of job roles, mainly delivered by private training providers. The most common courses undertaken were in customer services and care work. Nine-in-ten of the participants interviewed said they completed the training and most stated that the training was suitable for them. Two-in-three gained a formal qualification and seven-in-ten said that they had learnt new skills.

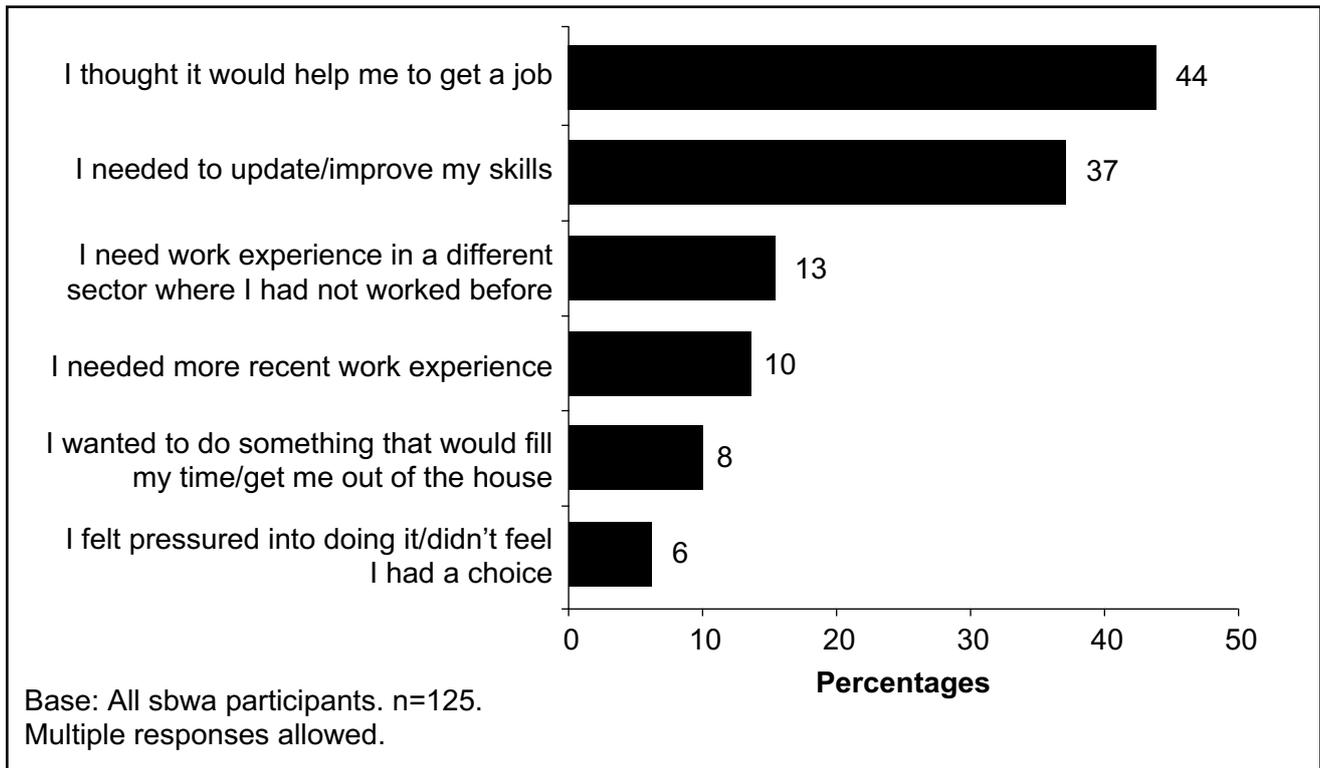
Satisfaction with the overall quality of the training was high, 90 per cent were satisfied. A similar proportion would recommend the sbwa to someone else in their situation.

4.1 Reasons for taking part in the sbwa trial

The main reasons given for taking part in the sbwa trial were to get a job or to update skills (Figure 4.1). There is a stronger focus on these motivations compared to WE participants, which reflects that sbwa participants often had more recent work experience and tended to be more work-ready (even where barriers existed). Notwithstanding, participants with a long-term health condition were more likely to say they took part to update their skills suggesting the sbwa trial was seen as a first step to getting work for some (in the same way as for ESA claimants on the WE trial).

¹⁰ Subgroup analysis is severely restricted due to the low number of participants interviews (n=125).

Figure 4.1 Reasons for taking up the offer of an sbwa



Other reasons given for taking part were:

- A desire to refresh or diversify skills and experience, for example, to update expired certificates or fork lift truck licences.
- To experience a new role or sector and test its suitability, in the case of those who were no longer able to do their former jobs, for example, due to a health condition.
- In order to get out of the house.

Host employers reported similar reasons for taking part in sbwa to employers in the WE trial: to meet a recruitment need, altruism and a positive previous experience of recruiting through Jobcentre Plus. Recruitment featured more prominently among sbwa host employers because participants were more work-ready than on the WE trial. There was also evidence of host employers using the placement to screen applicants for a job.

4.2 Information about the sbwa trial

The majority of sbwa participants, 60 per cent, recalled receiving clear information about the trial from the Jobcentre Plus WC prior to being referred. Around three-in-ten participants, 29 per cent, did not recall receiving any prior information. The quality of information was rated highly by older and younger recipients alike, but significantly fewer older participants recalled getting any information at all.

The guaranteed job interview was identified as a key reason for attracting participants to the trial. However, not all participants were aware of this component of the sbwa.

Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

The large majority of participants, 81 per cent, reported that the training was suitable for them. The overwhelming majority of young participants, aged 18 to 24, shared this view (92 per cent), indicating that the training component is suitable for participants of all ages.

4.3 The nature of the sbwa

The previous sbwa survey with 18 to 24 year-old claimants found that provision was most effective when participants were exposed to all three components – pre-employment training, a work experience placement, and a guaranteed job interview.

All sbwa participants reported that they had received the training element of sbwa. Only 16 per cent reported a follow-up work experience placement and 42 per cent said that they had a guaranteed job interview. Overall, 13 per cent of sbwa participants had experienced all three elements – significantly lower than reported in the 18 to 24 research (40 per cent). The qualitative findings suggest that these figures may understate the actual proportion experiencing a placement; where work placements had been incorporated into workplace training some older participants were unable to distinguish between the two components. However, there were also examples of some older participants being offered the training element only, while others reported being told that there would be a placement before they agreed to take part which did not happen. Participants expressed dissatisfaction when work placements did not occur.

In the earlier research, proportionately more participants aged 18 to 24 reported that they had experienced a placement (30 per cent); but less a guaranteed job interview (21 per cent). Across both trials the majority of participants did not receive these two elements. The importance of receiving work placements in order to consolidate the training received was highlighted (and said to be particularly important for older workers) and it was disappointing to participants when they did not receive this:

'I decided to go on (sbwa), because it offered this placement and guaranteed job interview at the end. Which I still haven't had, so it was a bit pointless really!'

(sbwa participant)

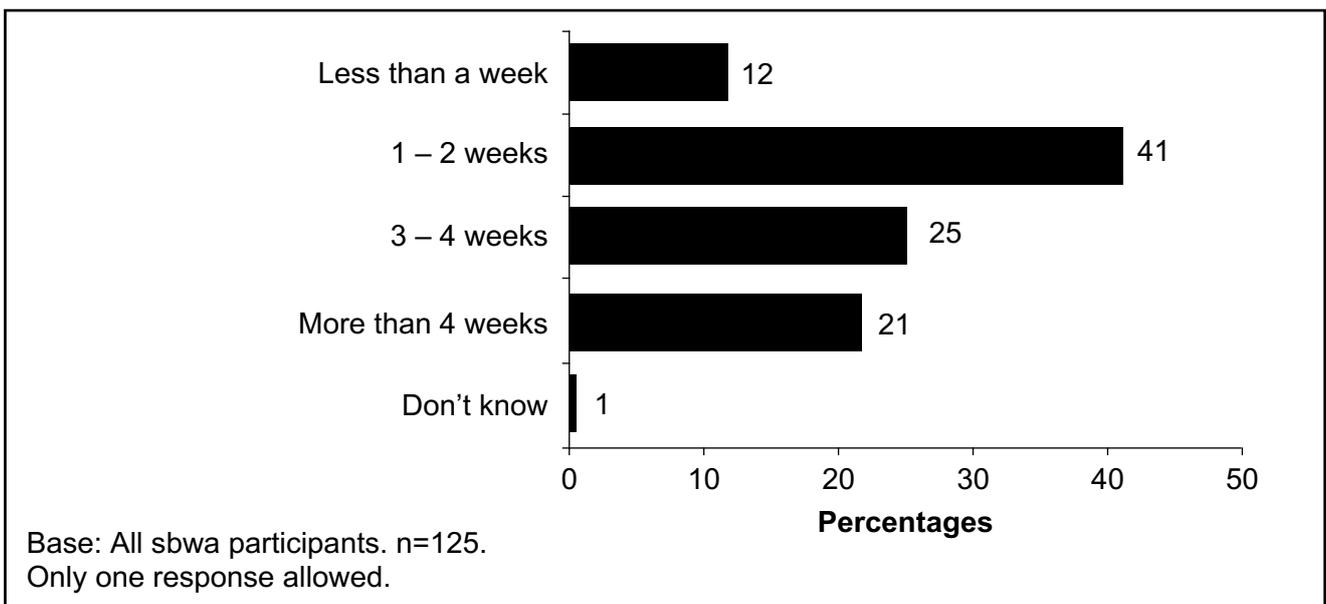
However, findings suggest that work placements can be incorporated into workplace training, for example, a food hygiene course followed by work in the training provider's canteen. This may have led to participants finding it hard to distinguish between the two components.

Participants placed great value on the guaranteed job interview as it was often the main reason given for taking part. As such, when it took place participants were very positive (even when/if they were unsuccessful) and were equally dissatisfied when it did not take place. Moreover, the process was criticised in cases where the interview took place, but no feedback was provided, as it gave the impression of being a 'tick box' exercise and could be demoralising. There were also instances of interviews taking place for positions unconnected to the training (an approach taken by some training providers to secure the guaranteed interview) and this was met with mixed response, as while participants valued the opportunity to take part in an interview, the lack of connection caused confusion amongst participants and meant employers were unfamiliar with the programme. For example, one participant who wanted a customer service role was given an interview for a telesales job.

4.3.1 The duration of the training

The vast majority of sbwa participants, 88 per cent, reported completing the pre-employment training element of the trial. This level is comparable to that reported by participants aged 18 to 24. Pre-employment training typically lasted between one to two weeks, though nearly half reported that it lasted longer than this (Figure 4.2). A fifth of participants said their training was more than four weeks in duration. More participants aged 18 to 24 reported doing training which lasted longer than four weeks (30 per cent).

Figure 4.2 Length of time attending work-related training

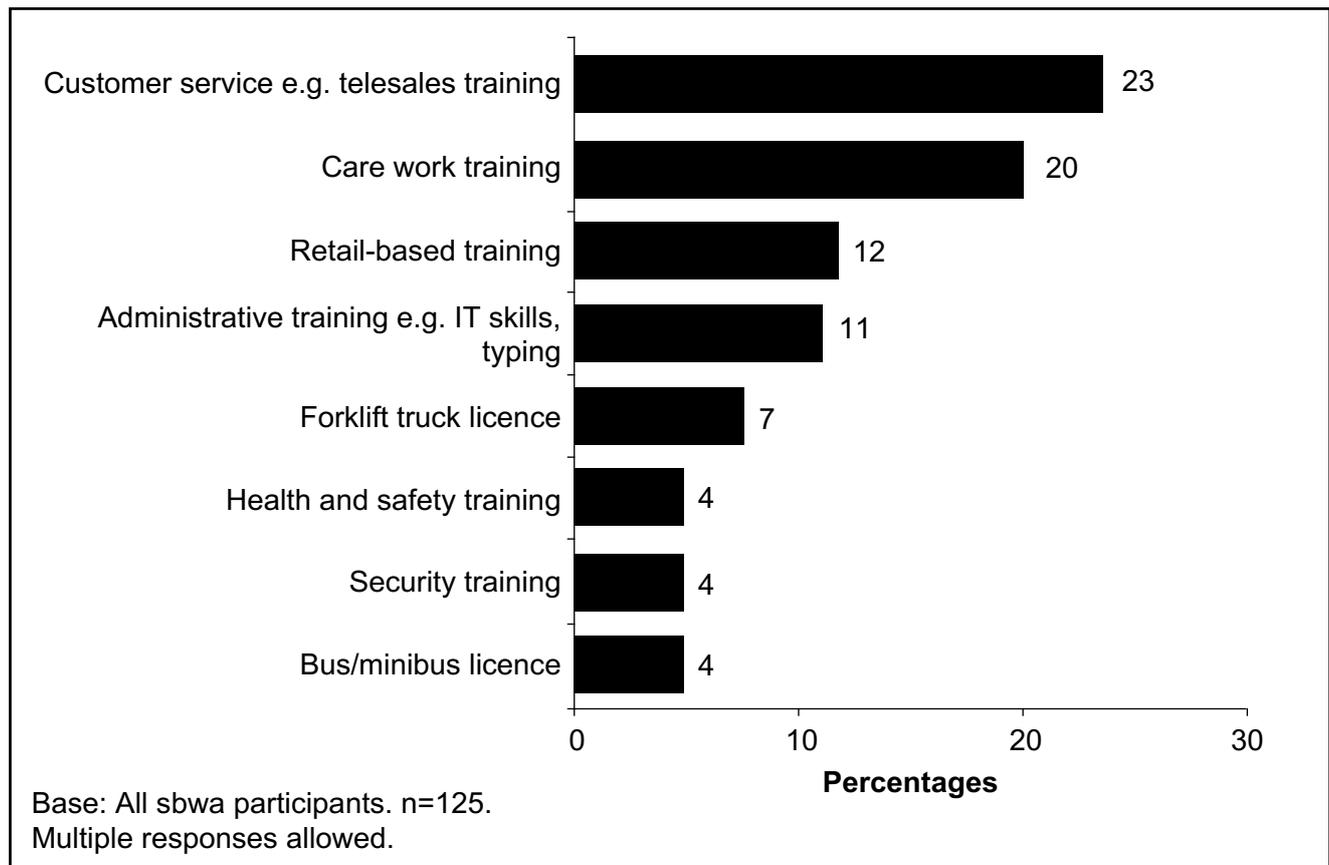


4.3.2 The types of training attended

Two-thirds of sbwa participants, 67 per cent, did the pre-employment training at a private training provider or agency, 13 per cent at an employer, and the same proportion at a further education (FE) college. Research indicates that slightly more 18 to 24 year-old participants received some training in the workplace.

Participants undertook training in a range of job roles, the most common were in customer service and care work (Figure 4.3). Smaller, but still substantial, proportions of participants did training in retail or administration. Other training was less common but more specific: for example, to achieve a particular licence to practise, such as fork lift truck, security, or bus/minibus license. The types of training course undertaken were similar to those reported by sbwa participants aged 18 to 24, with the exception of care work which was experienced by more older claimants.

Figure 4.3 Type of training undertaken



More men than women did training in social care. Conversely, all those who trained for a fork lift truck licence were women. These findings indicate that the sbwa is enabling participants to widen their jobsearch beyond traditional gender-specific roles.

Participants from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups were more likely than average to report doing training in retail or as a bus driver. All of those who did the bus driver training (four per cent) were in employment following the trial.

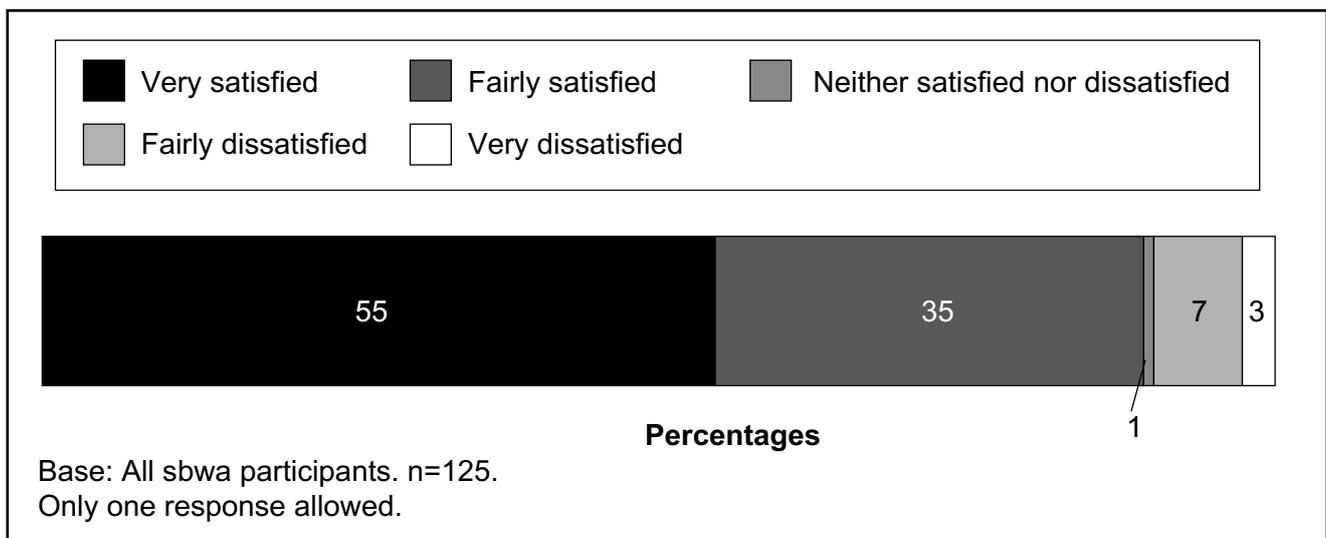
4.4 Overall views on the sbwa

4.4.1 Satisfaction with sbwa training

Satisfaction with the overall quality of the training was high, with 90 per cent satisfied. Amongst those who had moved into work following the trial, at the time of the survey this figure rose to 98 per cent (Figure 4.4). The satisfaction levels are comparable with the previous research with 18 to 24 year-olds.

One-in-ten participants were dissatisfied. It was higher among those who had not found work following the trial (15 per cent).

Figure 4.4 Satisfaction with the overall quality of the training



The research found similarities with WE participants' experiences in that greater levels of satisfaction were likely where:

- **What was delivered met initial expectations.** Participants who took part in the trial to experience the work placement and/or guaranteed job interview were dissatisfied when this did not happen. Responses were more positive where all three elements were identified.
- **The provision was appropriate and tailored.** Where provision was seen as tailored to job roles and sectors of interest and reflective of their needs, such as health issues, participants were more satisfied as they believed it would help them to find work.
- **The placement was clearly structured.** The quality of the experience was assessed according to how well-structured and organised the training was and how professionally it was run. This included views on the venue, how it was pitched and the length of the course.
- **Tutors were consistent, positive and proactive.** Tutors played a key role in providing support to participants. Some participants reported that their tutor was very proactive, notifying them about job vacancies and accompanying participants to give their CVs to prospective employers. Participants were dissatisfied when tutors were changed frequently or the course was rushed.
- **Classmates were motivated to learn.** It was seen as important that all those attending the course engage and are motivated to learn. Where this is not the case, it was said to have a disruptive and demotivating effect on the rest of the class (and was noted as an issue in cases where younger attendees had been mandated to attend and did not wish to be there). Having a mixed age class could be positive, with older participants valuing the life-skills and support they could offer to younger attendees, which in turn increased their own confidence.
- **The training was linked to clear outcomes.** Importantly, satisfaction levels were higher where participants could see it leading to a positive outcome, such as a qualification and/or job.

Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

Case study 2 demonstrates the importance of appropriate referrals and support for participants.

Case study 2: sbwa participant in security training

Jack has been working in temping roles in catering and decorating over the last five years. He identified a number of barriers to finding more permanent employment, including his age, depression and a lack of qualifications and IT skills. Jack felt he had “hit rock bottom” with his current situation. Ideally Jack wanted to coach children in sport, but had been unable to identify any opportunities.

Jack’s Jobcentre Plus WC offered him a two-week full-time security training course, which he was told had ‘*job opportunities connected to it*’. Jack was positive about the security training which he thought was very good, describing it as in-depth, interesting and fun. A broad mix of other people were on the course including those from a mix of ages – which Jack liked. Jack said he worked hard and was told he was doing well. However, on the last day all participants were asked to practice handling people off premises. On this occasion Jack felt unable to engage in the exercise due to his health (stress and depression), and said that the trainer had not reacted very well to this, suggesting there was no point Jack remaining on the course and, ultimately, Jack did not pass the course.

By failing the course, Jack felt he had missed an opportunity and had moved no closer to finding a job. Jack felt more could have been done to assess the suitability of the course before he was enrolled on it and thought the Jobcentre could have been more open to hearing about the reasons for failing the course.

As Jack explained: ‘*I was really disappointed – I’ve never studied so hard in my life ... The Jobcentre didn’t follow-up on it. Nobody backed me up*’.

4.4.2 Skills or qualifications gained through training

The majority of sbwa participants reported that they learnt new skills from the training: 23 per cent gained lots of new skills and 47 per cent developed some new skills. Participants with a long-term health condition were particularly positive that they had acquired lots of new skills from the training (36 per cent).

Three-in-ten participants reported that they had not gained any new skills – slightly higher than reported by participants, in the previous research, aged 18 to 24 (25 per cent). A similar pattern was observed in the WE trial. Again, this may be a reflection of age and experience differences rather than the absence of opportunity to learn new work-related skills.

Two-thirds of participants, 64 per cent, achieved a formal qualification which included driving licenses for fork lift trucks or buses and NVQ Levels 1 and 2 in customer service, food handling and health or social care.

4.4.3 Benefits gained and potential improvements

Sbwa participants reported a number of benefits from the sbwa training (Figure 4.5). Increased and/or updated skills were the main benefits, followed by greater confidence and self-belief. Others reported that the training was useful, that they got a job as a result, and that it expanded their knowledge about job roles that were new to them or that they had not previously considered:

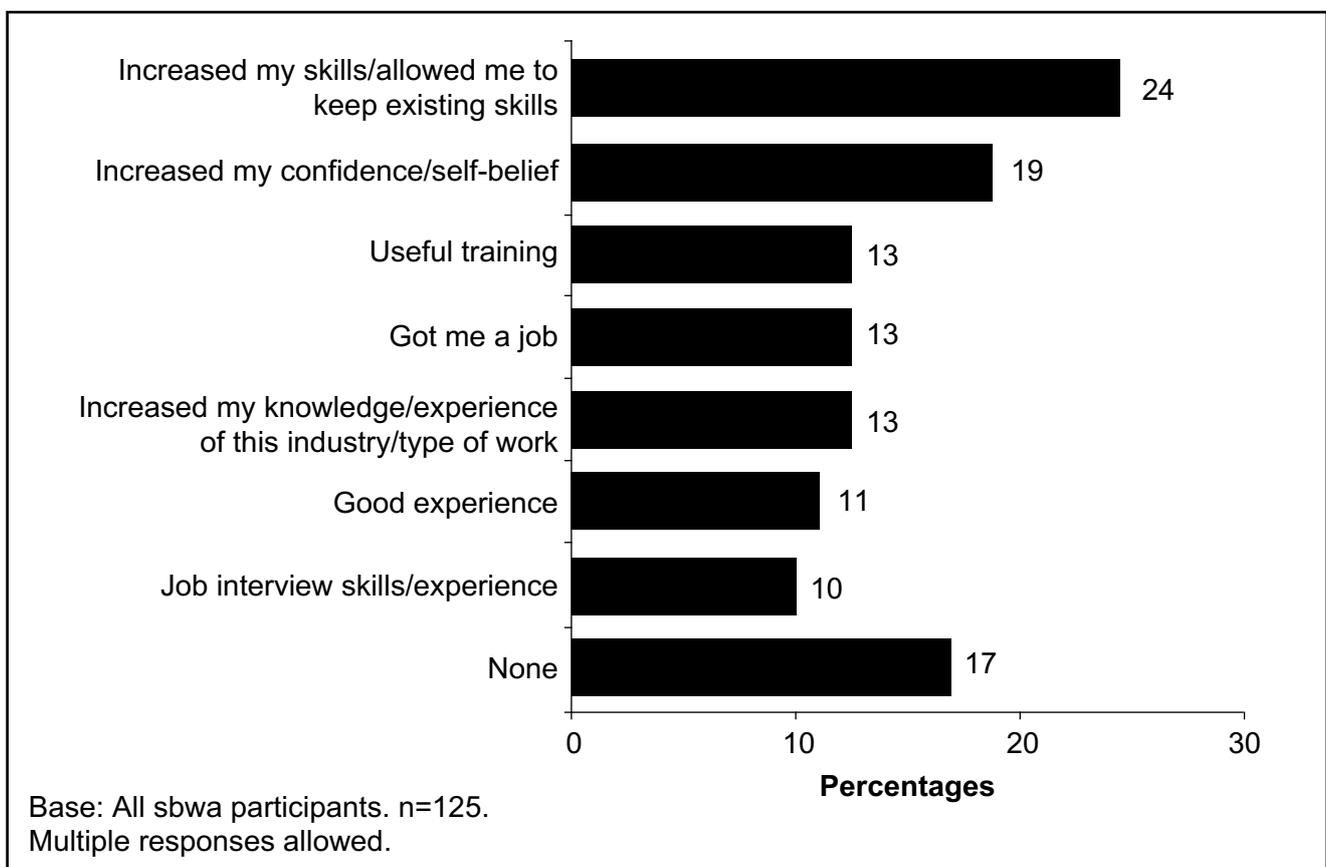
Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

'I realised I could do something else, I don't really need to stay in finance.'

(sbwa participant)

The types of benefits reported by participants is similar to the 18 to 24 sbwa research. The main difference is that twice as many participants aged 45 plus reported no benefits from taking part (17 per cent compared to nine per cent). A key contributing factor was inappropriate referral; some participants reported that they were referred to a programme that they were not qualified for, while others already held the qualifications or had attended the course previously. In these instances, both host employers and participants expressed dissatisfaction.

Figure 4.5 Benefits gained from the training



Men were more likely to report that they benefited by getting a job, while more women reported that they have maintained or increased their skills. Participants who were qualified to Level 2 or 3 were more likely to report that their confidence had increased.¹¹

¹¹ Level 2 is equivalent to GCSEs and Level 3 to A-levels.

Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

Participants who benefited from refreshed skills and qualifications reported being more work-ready and feeling more confident. Participants who experienced a placement in a sector that they had not previously considered reported that they had acquired new skills which made them more motivated to expand their jobsearch. The opportunity to experience new job roles to assess suitability was especially important to claimants who could no longer do their former jobs due to health issues. The benefit of trying a new sector was highlighted by one participant:

'It's a whole new way of life. I've learnt so much. I never thought I'd be able to learn to use a till. I couldn't text or use a computer before. I have a bankcard ... I've got so much more confidence.'

(sbwa participant)

Two-in-five participants, 38 per cent, reported that the sbwa programme required no further improvements. The remainder suggested that the training would benefit from more practical content (nine per cent), that there could be more support to find work following the trial, and better information for participants prior to the training (mentioned by four per cent each). These findings are consistent with 18 to 24 year-olds' experiences of sbwa.

4.4.4 Likelihood to recommend sbwa

When asked to reflect on their experience of the sbwa trial, 83 per cent of participants were positive. One-in-ten reported that it was a negative experience. These findings are comparable with the survey of 18 to 24 year-olds (87 per cent were positive).

Participants who were in-work following the trial and those with a long-term health condition were most likely to report that their experience was very positive. Reflecting the high levels of satisfaction with the programme, nine-in-ten participants would recommend the training to someone else in their situation, as this participant testifies:

'I would do the course again and encourage others to do it. It's the best thing the Jobcentre ever did for me.'

(sbwa participant)

Almost all participants who were in-work following the trial say they would recommend the sbwa to other people like them (96 per cent). This high level of advocacy indicates that many participants associate their job outcome with participation in the sbwa.

5 Jobcentre Plus support

This chapter explores the support older claimants received from Jobcentre Plus. It draws on the quantitative survey of sector-based work academies (sbwa) and work experience (WE) participants and non-participants. Please note that these three groups are different on a number of personal characteristics which may affect their experience of Jobcentre Plus.¹²

The majority of older claimants reported attending regular meetings, mostly fortnightly, with a Jobcentre Plus Work Coach (WC). Participants were generally more positive than non-participants about the advice and support they received from WCs. Providing support which was not tailored to claimants' health conditions or disability, age or preference of the types of work they want to do was the most common cause of dissatisfaction.

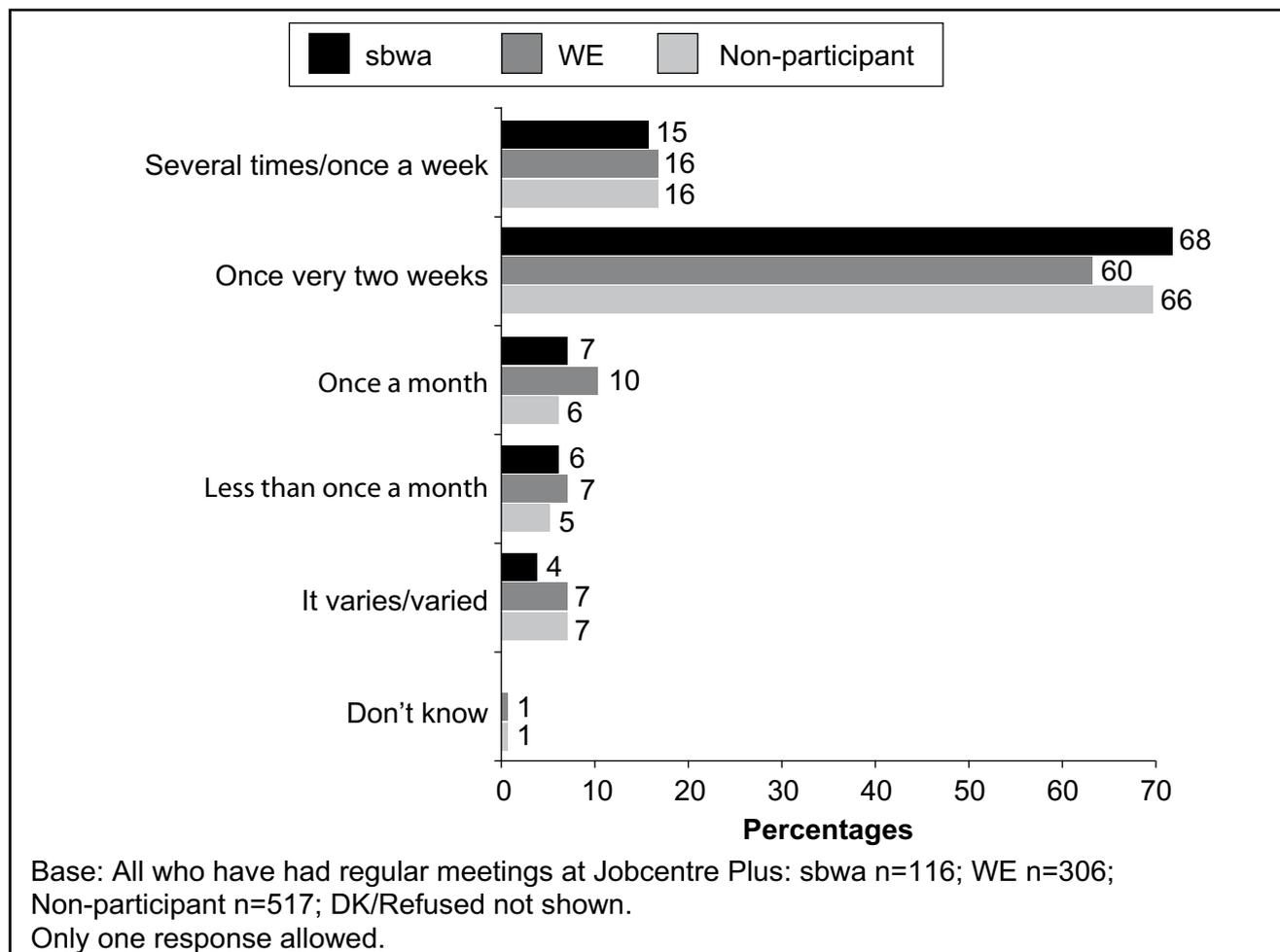
5.1 Meetings with Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches

The majority of older claimants from all three groups, 80 per cent or higher, reported having regular meetings with a WC. Slightly fewer WE participants reported attending regular meetings due to the fact that a significant proportion of WE participants were claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA); meaning they were not subjected to the same conditionality requirements as Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants.

Around two-thirds of claimants said they met with a WC fortnightly. One-in-six participants attended more regular meetings while a similar proportion met a WC once a month or less (Figure 5.1). Most older claimants, 74 per cent or higher, reported that the amount of time they spent with the WC was about right.

¹² Refer to Chapter 2 for information on their characteristics.

Figure 5.1 Frequency of meetings with a Jobcentre Plus Work Coach



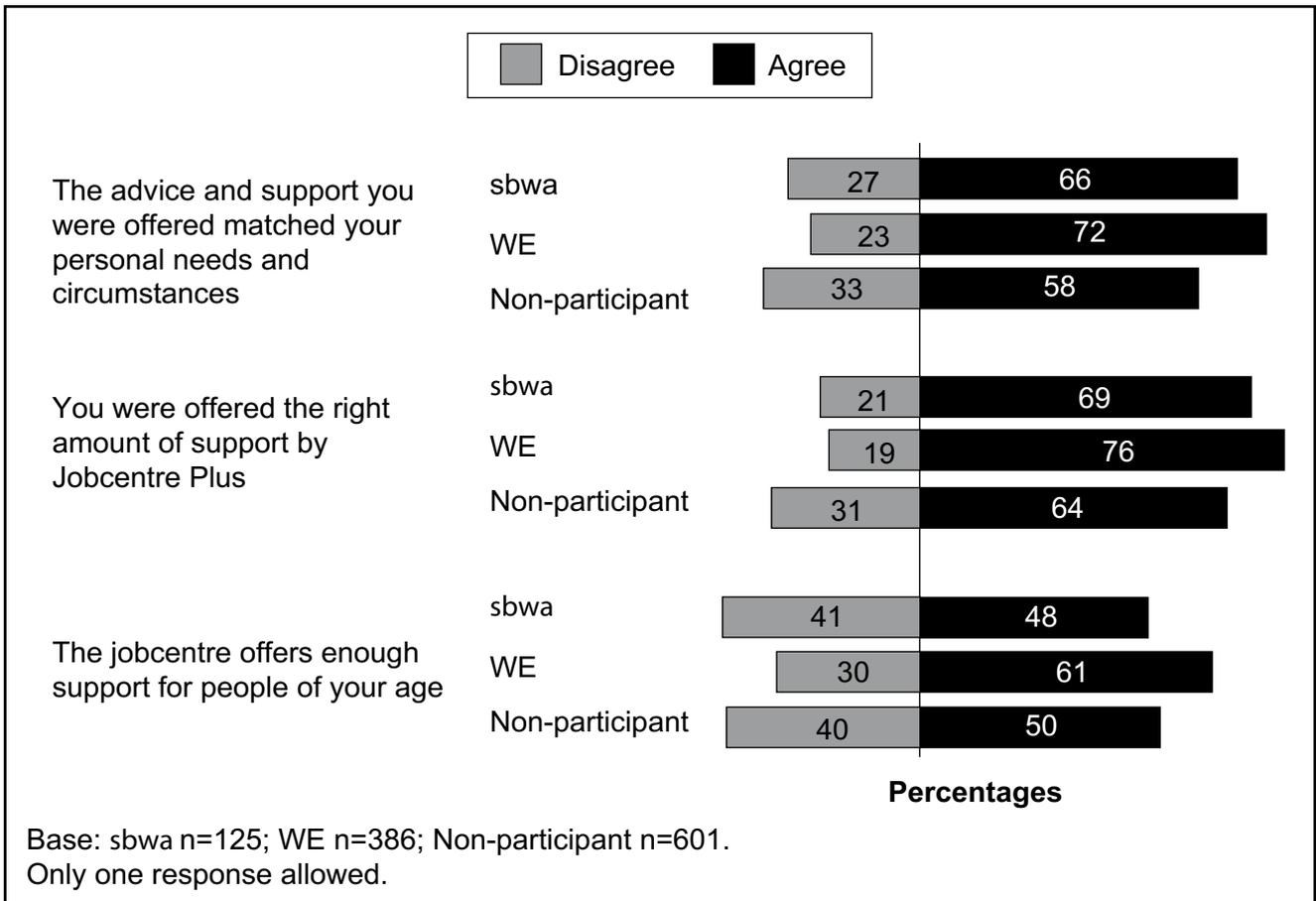
5.2 Views on Jobcentre Plus Work Coach support

The majority of older claimants reported positive views about the advice and support provided to them by Jobcentre Plus WC (Figure 5.2). WE and sbwa participants held more positive views than non-participants indicating a possible trial effect.

Older claimants were especially positive about the amount of support provided to them, and that it was tailored to their personal circumstances. However, WE participants who had a long-term health condition were less positive about both of these aspects. This indicates that the advice and support offered by WCs may not be fully meeting the needs of ESA claimants and those with more severe health conditions.

Claimants reported less positive views on Jobcentre Plus support for people their age. This was noted across all three groups of claimants but was more pronounced among sbwa participants and non-participants.

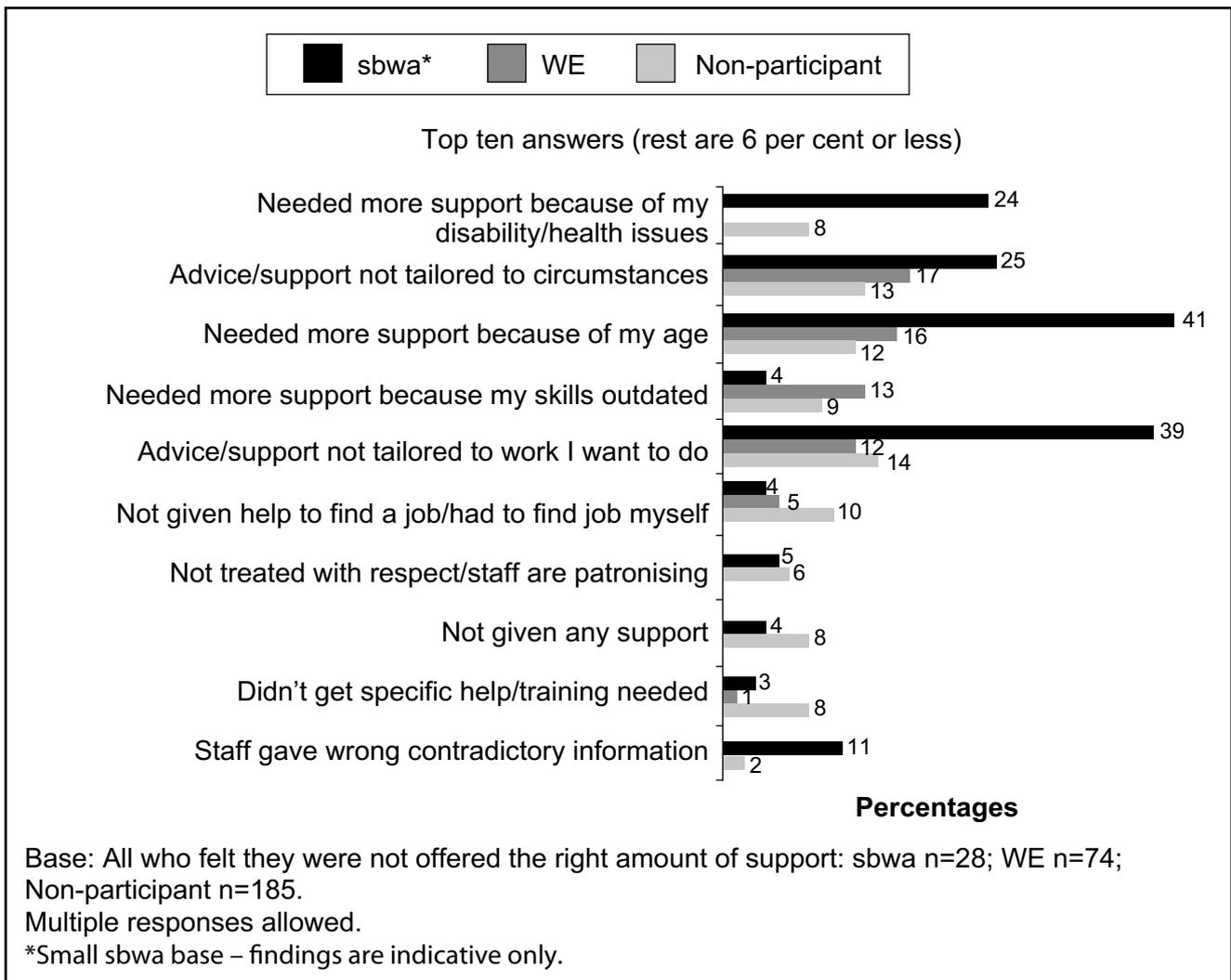
Figure 5.2 Participants' views on Jobcentre Plus advice and support received



Providing insufficient or non-personalised support were the main reason for claimants reporting dissatisfaction with WCs (Figure 5.3). Claimants reported that they needed more support than was received because of their disability or health condition, age and skills which were out-dated. Others were dissatisfied because the support they received from WCs was not tailored to their personal circumstances or the types of work they wanted to pursue.

Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

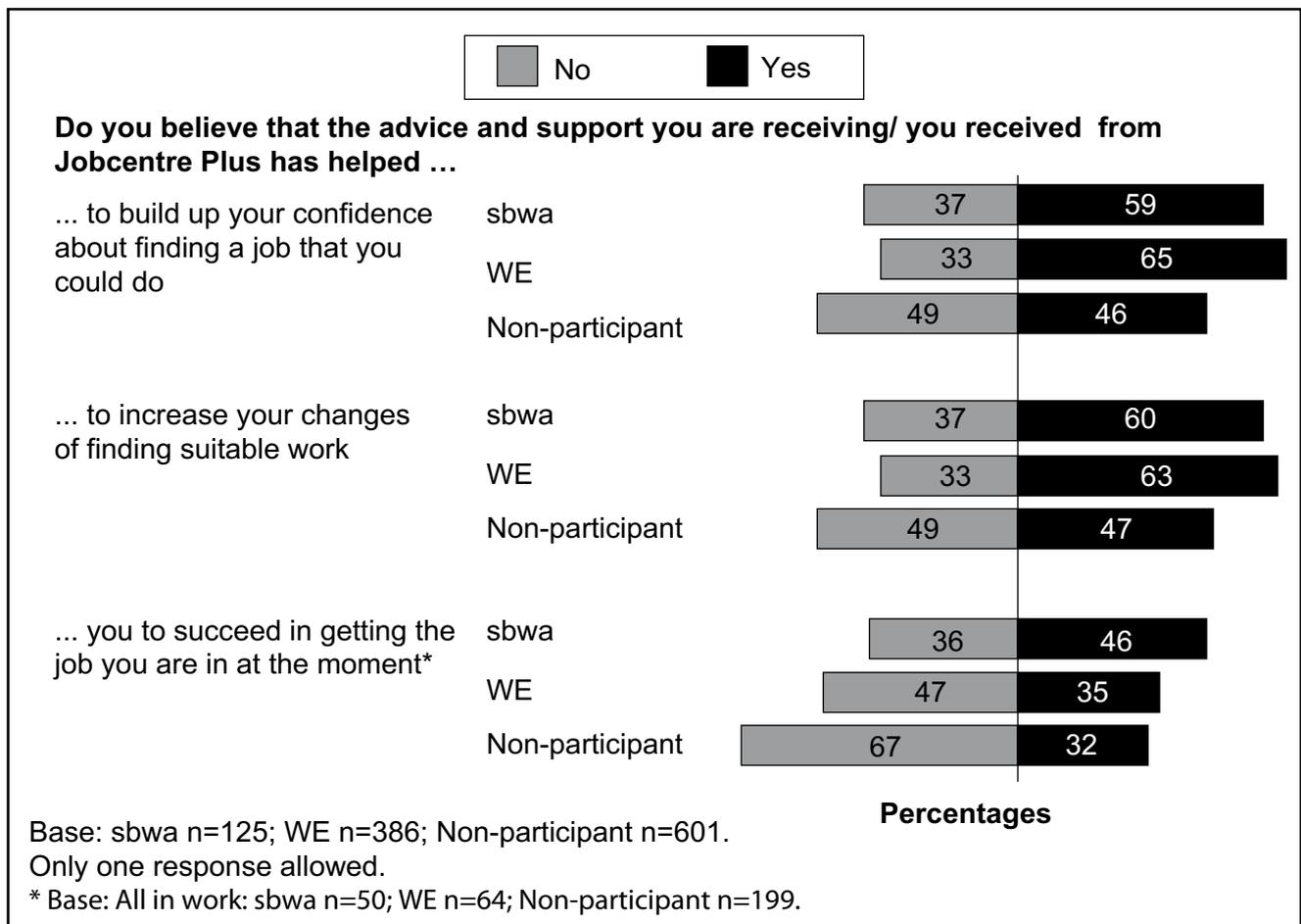
Figure 5.3 Reasons for dissatisfaction with Jobcentre Plus support



Claimants' views on the impact of the advice and support received from WCs were mixed. Participants held more positive views than non-participants indicating trial participants may have received more effective advice and support. The majority of sbwa and WE participants reported having greater confidence in getting a suitable job and increased chances of getting work, as the result of the advice and support they received from WCs (Figure 5.4). However, around a third of participants and as many as half of non-participants did not report these positive impacts. ESA claimants on the WE trial were especially likely to be in this group.

Forty-six per cent of sbwa participants who were in-work following the trial, reported that the advice and support they received from WCs helped them to get their job. Fewer WE participants and non-participants who were in work, around a third, reported a similar impact.

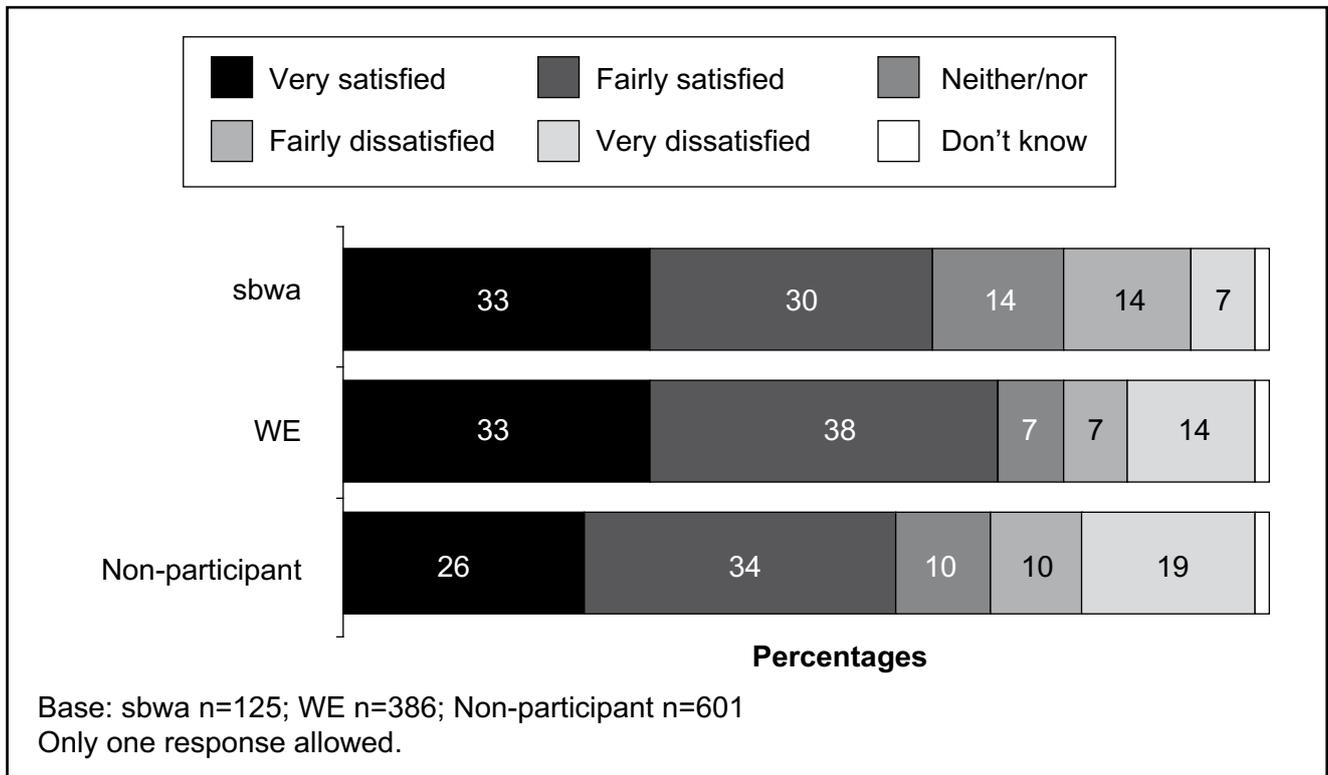
Figure 5.4 Participants' views on Jobcentre Plus advice and support



The majority of claimants reported being satisfied overall with the advice and support they received from Jobcentre Plus (Figure 5.5). More trial participants reported being satisfied than non-participants, which is consistent with how these two groups have rated the quality, adequacy and effectiveness of the advice and support they received. There is a significant minority of older claimants, especially non-participants, who reported being dissatisfied with the advice and support provided. Reported dissatisfaction was higher than average among claimants with a long-term health condition in the WE and non-participant groups.

Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

Figure 5.5 Overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus advice and support



6 Employment status

This chapter analyses claimants' jobsearch activities and job outcomes at the time of the survey (following the intervention for participants). It draws on the quantitative survey of sbwa and work experience (WE) participants and non-participants. These three groups differ on a number of personal characteristics which affect the barriers they can face in finding work.¹³ This means that **comparisons between the trial participants and non-participants on job outcomes are for descriptive purposes only and are not intended to imply quantitative impacts** of taking part in either the sbwa or the WE programme. A separate impact assessment of the net benefits of the initiative for older claimants is planned.

The descriptive analysis in this chapter does not take into account differences in the elapsed time between the end of the placement or training and the interview; participants who took part in the earlier stages of the trial had longer to find a job than others who completed the trial more recently.

Two-in-five sbwa participants were in paid work at the time of the interview – a similar level to non-participants. Fewer WE participants, 17 per cent, were in work which reflects their greater distance from the labour market. Employment outcomes were lower compared to 18 to 24 year-olds: 45 per cent of young sbwa participants and 36 per cent of young WE participants were in work at the time of their interview. Findings suggest that participation in the sbwa and WE trials have broadened the types of jobs older claimants would consider.

6.1 Movements into work

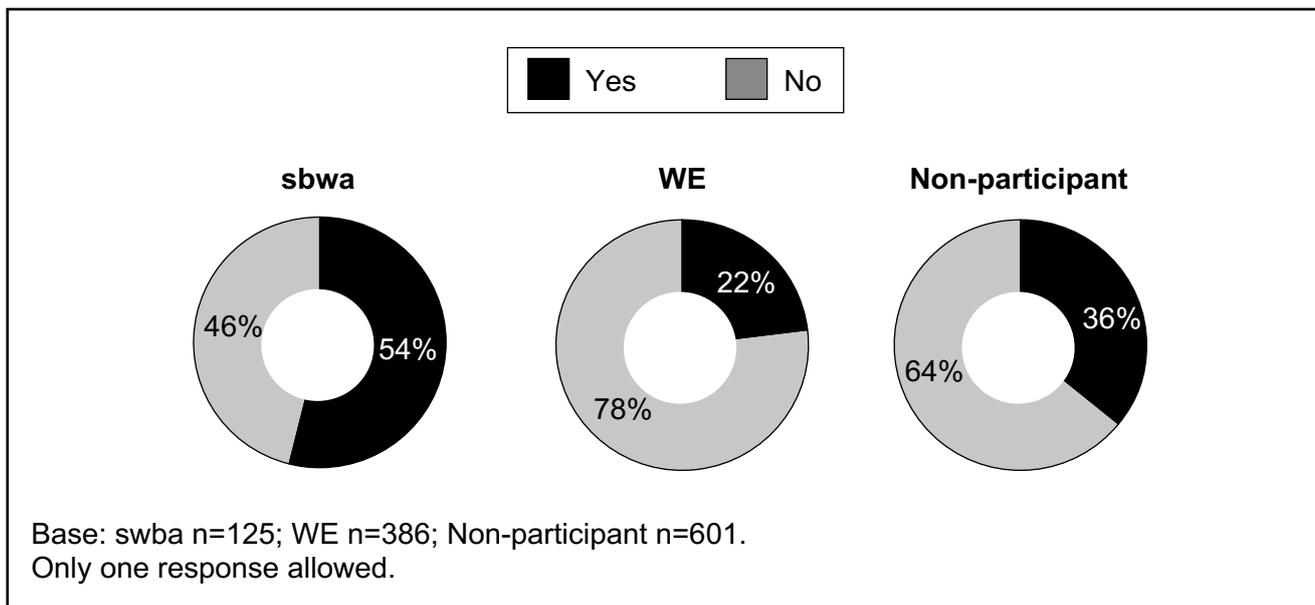
6.1.1 Job outcomes

There is considerable variation in reported job outcomes among sbwa and WE participants and non-participants. Reported job outcomes were highest among sbwa participants, who were more work-ready than WE participants. Over half of sbwa participants reported that they had been in paid work at some point following the trial; this is significantly higher than reported by both WE participants and non-participants (Figure 6.1). WE participants and non-participants aged 45 to 49 were more likely to report doing paid work than claimants aged 50 plus.¹⁴

¹³ Refer to Chapter 2 and Appendix D for information on their characteristics.

¹⁴ The base size for sbwa is too small for further analysis.

Figure 6.1 Participation in any paid work since training/placement/claim



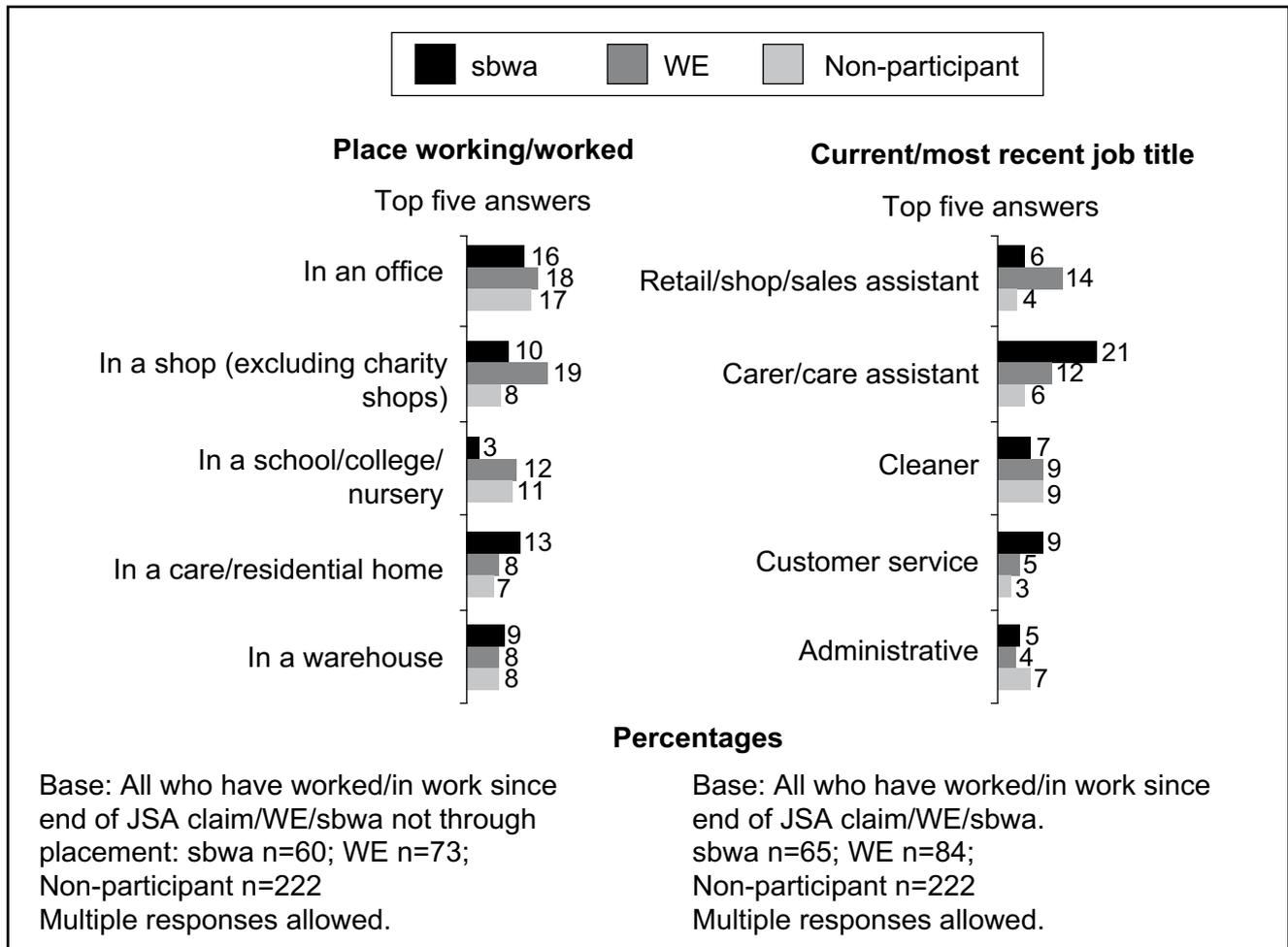
At the time of the survey interview, 40 per cent of sbwa participants reported being in paid work compared with 54 per cent at some point following the trial. Among WE participants and non-participants, the proportion who reported being in paid work was also lower by the time of the survey interview: 17 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively. It is not possible to conclude from this research whether the decline is due to the nature of the jobs that claimants were doing (i.e. temporary or fixed-term) or due to the jobs being curtailed for some other reasons. Measurements on sustainability of job outcomes following the trials will be a focus for the impact assessment. The lower job outcomes for WE participants reflects the additional barriers faced by this group; many reported that they been out-of-work for several years and who were disabled or had a long-term health condition.

Employment outcomes reported by older participants were lower than in the previous research with 18 to 24 year-olds: 45 per cent of young sbwa and 36 per cent of young WE participants were in work at the time they were surveyed, following the trial. Importantly, more young participants reported being offered a job by their host employer (10 per cent compared to five per cent of sbwa participants aged 45 plus, 15 per cent compared to four per cent of WE participants aged 45 plus). The relatively high proportion of charity shop placements within the WE programme for older workers is an explanatory factor for some of these differences.

6.1.2 Types of work undertaken

Claimants who were in paid work following the trial (or at the time of the survey interviews for non-participants) were commonly working in sales assistant, care assistant, cleaning, customer service or administrative roles (Figure 6.2). Many of these roles are similar to the job roles experienced by participants on their placements and/or pre-employment training (for sbwa participants). This indicates that participation in the trials may have helped participants – directly or indirectly – to secure work in these job sectors.

Figure 6.2 Current/most recent job following the trial



Two-thirds of claimants, across all three groups, reported that they had a permanent job. This was higher for men than women in the WE and non-participant groups.

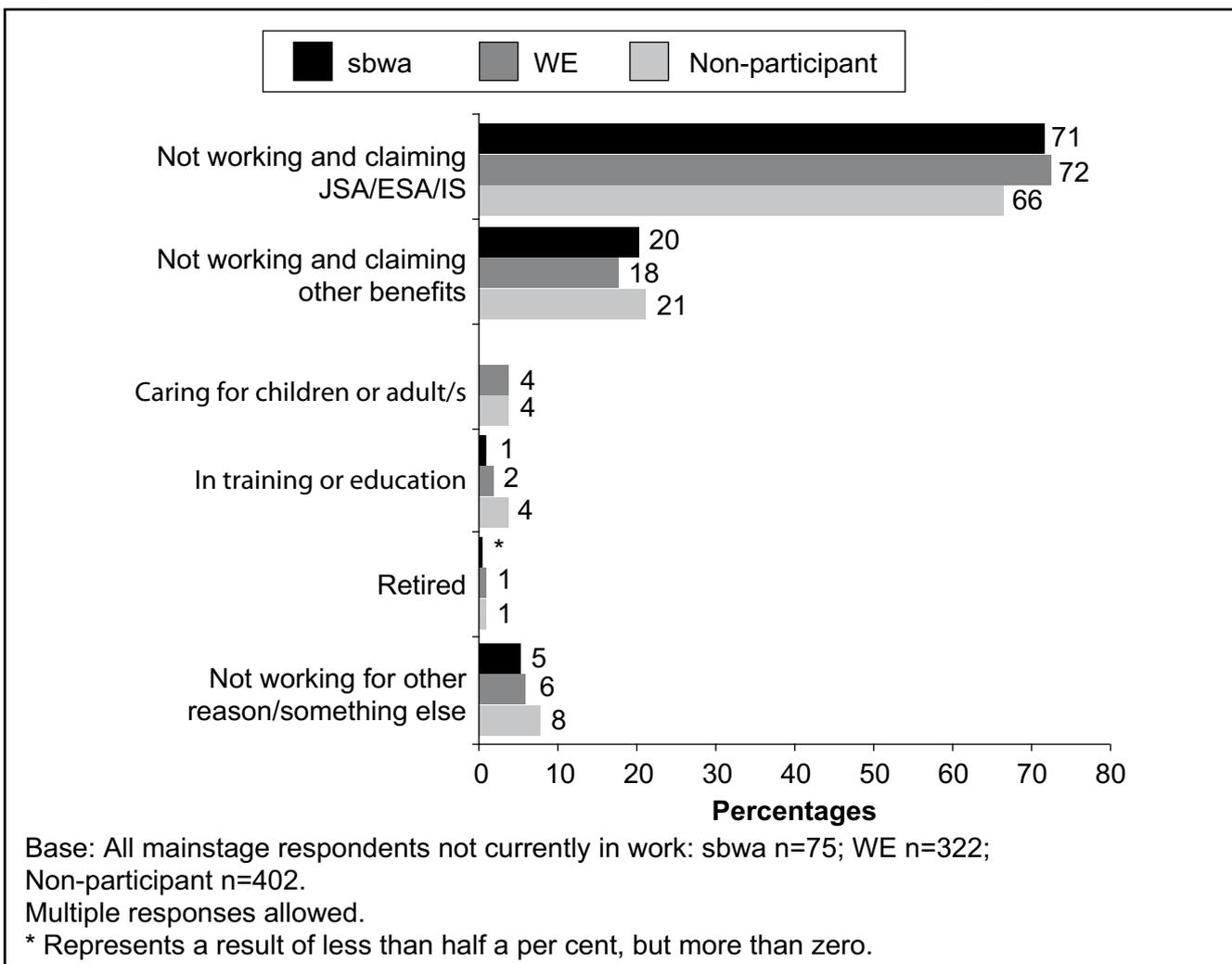
Full-time work, 35 hours or more per week, was most common. Around two-in-five participants reported working full-time and half of non-participants.

Part-time work, 16 hours or less, was next most common for WE participants and non-participants, reported by around a quarter each. The corresponding figure for sbwa participants was just five per cent; this group did slightly longer part-time hours: 33 per cent reported working between 16 and 24 hours per week.

6.2 Status of those not in work

The large majority of claimants who were not working at the time of the survey, around seven in ten, reported that they were claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Income Support (Figure 6.3). Around a fifth were claiming other benefits such as Pension Credit or disability-related benefits.

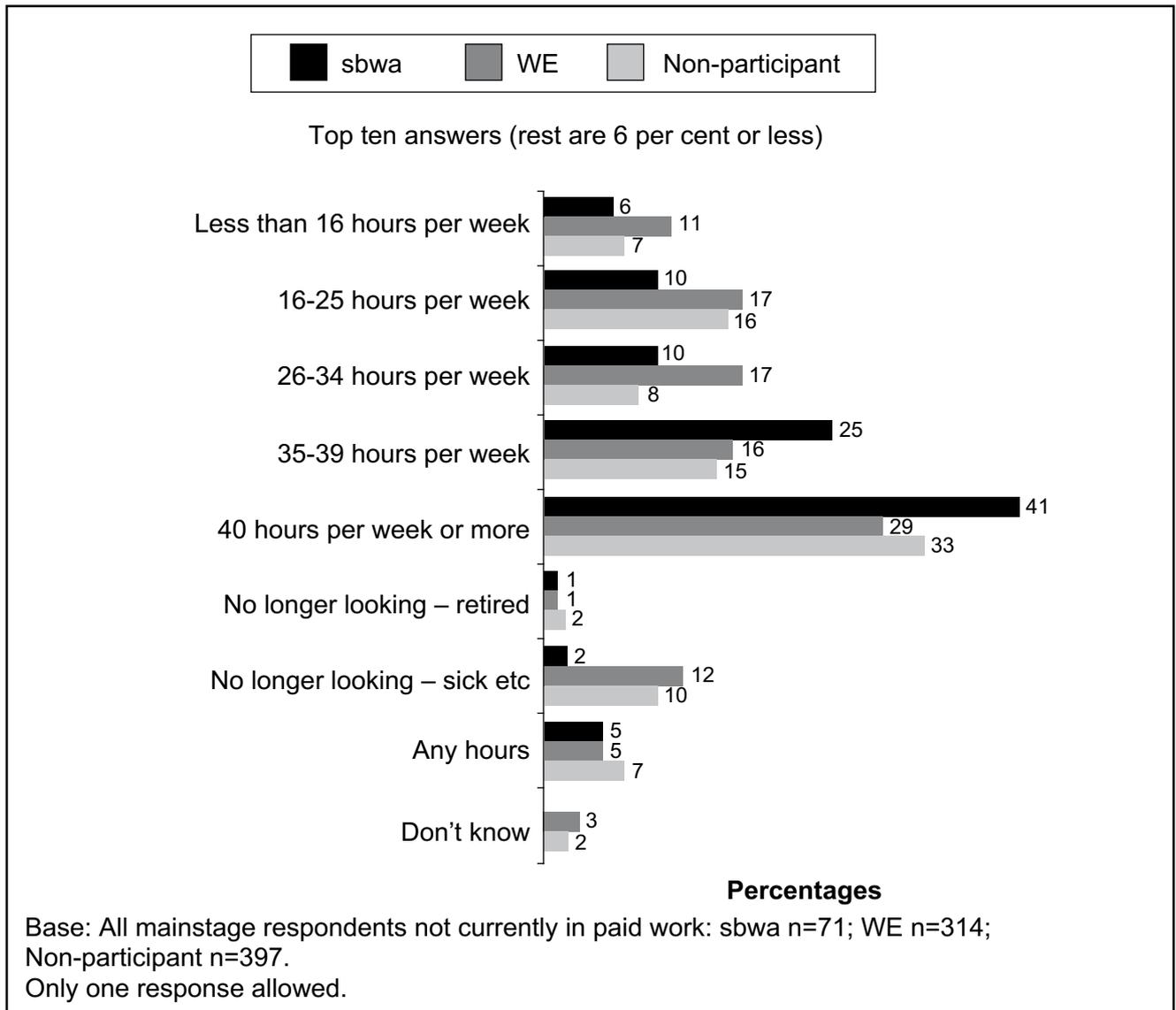
Figure 6.3 Main activity of claimants who were not in work following the trial



Most unemployed sbwa participants, 66 per cent, were looking for full-time work of 35 hours or more per week (Figure 6.4). This is much higher than reported by WE participants and non-participants – at around half in both groups. More women than men reported that they were looking for full-time work across all three groups.

Unemployed WE participants and non-participants were more likely to report that they were looking for part-time work, especially those aged 60 and over. This is consistent with the higher incidence of long-term health conditions reported by WE participants and non-participants. Around one-in-ten of WE participants and non-participants were no longer looking for work because of poor health.

Figure 6.4 Working hours sought claimants who were not in work



7 Attitudes to work and jobsearch

This section analyses trial participants' and non-participants' reported jobsearch behaviours, perceived barriers to finding work and attitudes towards work. It also explores participants' views on the impact of the trials on softer skills such as confidence.

The survey took place after the trials had finished so cannot measure the effect of participation on attitudes as there is no pre-programme baseline. However, comparison with non-participants indicates the extent to which participants' attitudes differ from other Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants.

The majority of older claimants reported that their skills were up-to-date, that they had the capacity to learn new skills or retrain and were able to use the internet to search and apply for jobs. Claimants reported experiencing a range of barriers to work; the most common barriers being poor health or disability, employers' reluctance to employ older workers and a lack of local jobs. Research with host employers did not support this view; many host employers identified benefits to recruiting older workers including valuable life experiences and skills.

The majority of work experience (WE) and sector-based work academies (sbwa) participants said they had widened their jobsearch following the trial. Around half of the participants who were working (not at their placement) attributed their success in securing work to their experience of being on the trial.

7.1 Attitudes to finding work

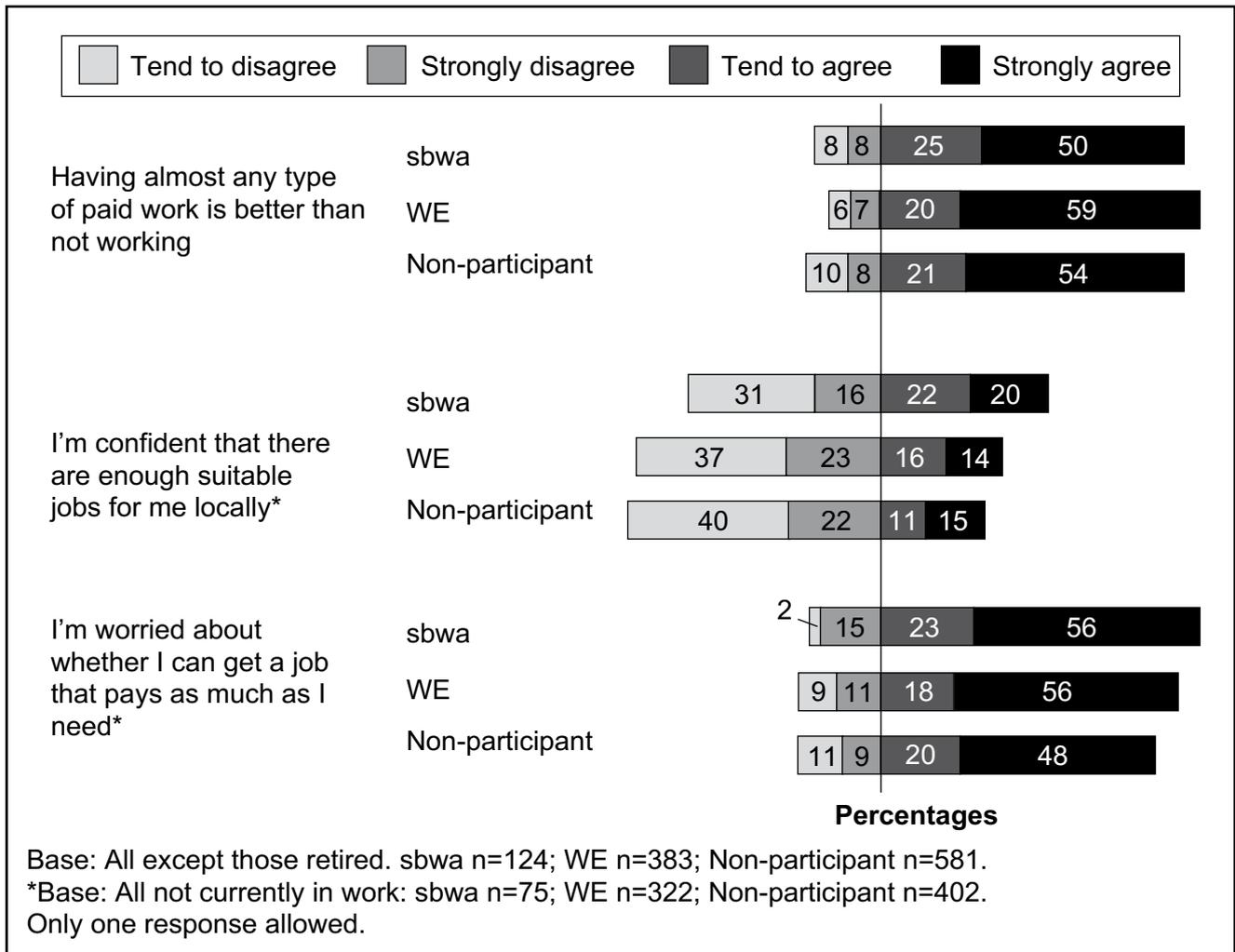
7.1.1 Attitudes to work and availability of jobs

The majority of older claimants interviewed expressed a commitment to work, which is consistent with research findings from the survey of 18 to 24 year-olds. Around three-quarters agreed that having almost any type of paid work was better than not working, with at least half strongly agreeing with this view (Figure 7.1). However, most also expressed concerns over whether they could get a job that paid enough and many were not confident that there were enough suitable local jobs.

WE participants and non-participants, in particular, expressed concerns that there were not enough suitable jobs locally, as did those who had not worked in the past three years. Claimants on the WE trial and non-participants were more likely to declare a long-term health condition or disability which placed limits on the types of jobs they could do.

In contrast, sbwa participants expressed greater confidence in the availability of suitable local jobs. Claimants in this group were more work-ready, with more recent work experience and higher qualifications, meaning they had a greater choice of jobs.

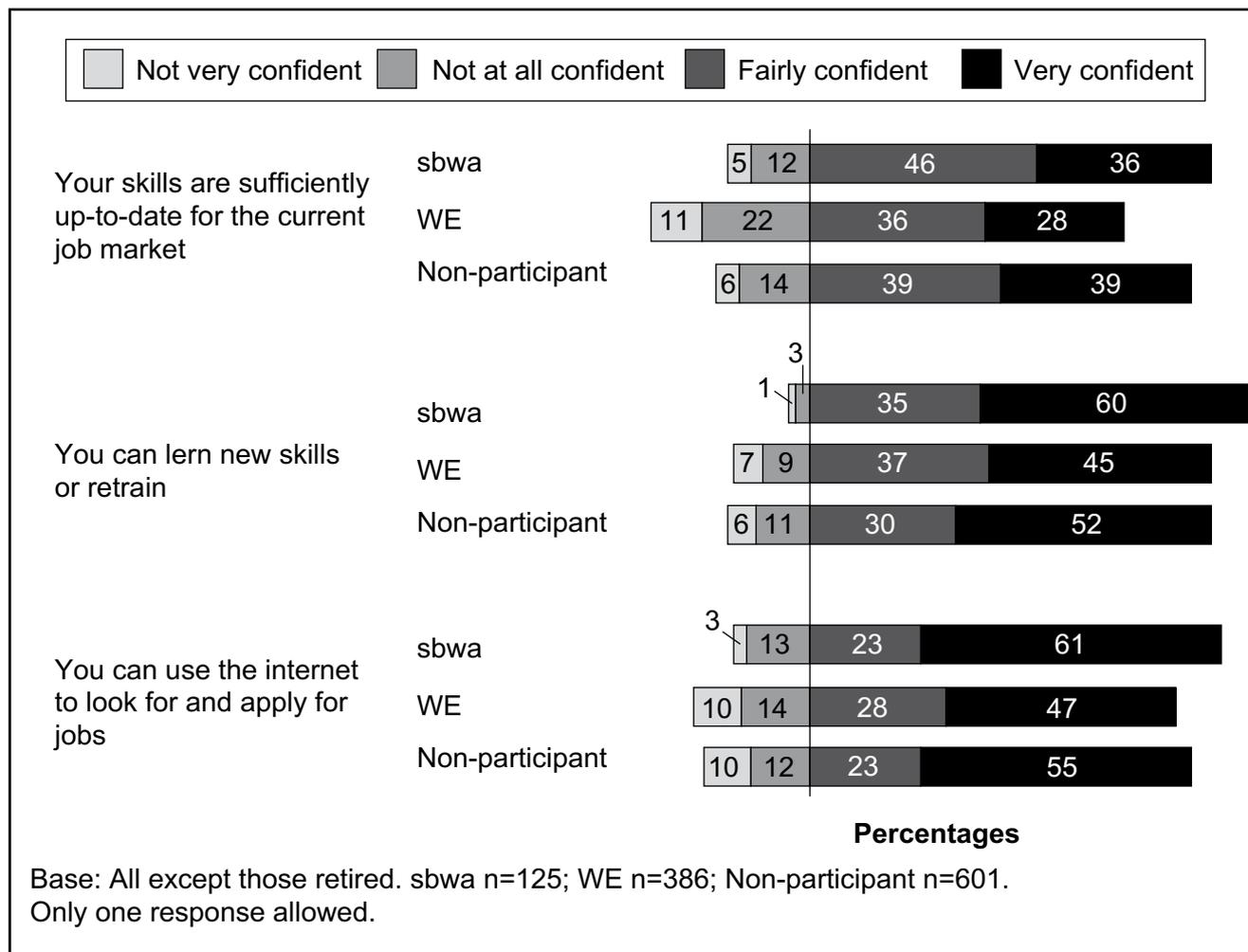
Figure 7.1 Attitudes to work



7.1.2 Confidence in skills

The majority of participants and non-participants expressed confidence that their skills were up-to-date, that they could learn new skills or retrain and use the Internet to search and apply for jobs (Figure 7.2). Again, WE participants were less likely than sbwa participants to express confidence, reflecting the greater barriers to work faced by this group. In contrast, sbwa participants were especially confident in their ability to learn new skills, which reflects their recent pre-employment training and work history.

Figure 7.2 Claimants’ assessment of their skills and abilities



Claimants with a long-term health condition and those with low qualifications expressed less confidence across all three aspects. This applies mainly to WE participants and non-participants; both groups had more claimants who were poorly qualified and/or with a long-term health condition.

Non-participants aged 60 and over also expressed less confidence on all three aspects than their younger peers. This pattern was not observed in the sbwa or WE participant groups, indicating that the programmes may have boosted the confidence of the oldest claimants.

7.2 Perceived barriers to finding work

The most commonly perceived barriers to work experienced by older claimants were: poor health or a disability; employers’ reluctance to take on people their age; and insufficient jobs for them locally (Figure 7.3). WE and sbwa participants (which included Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants) were more likely than non-participants to cite health-related barriers. Both participants and non-participants, especially those aged 60 and over, identified employers’ reluctance to recruit older workers as a central barrier. Employers were perceived to favour younger workers as they could pay them less and they could work for longer before retiring. The host employers interviewed often expressed an alternate view – identifying benefits to recruiting older employees due to the life experience and skills they brought to the workplace.

Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

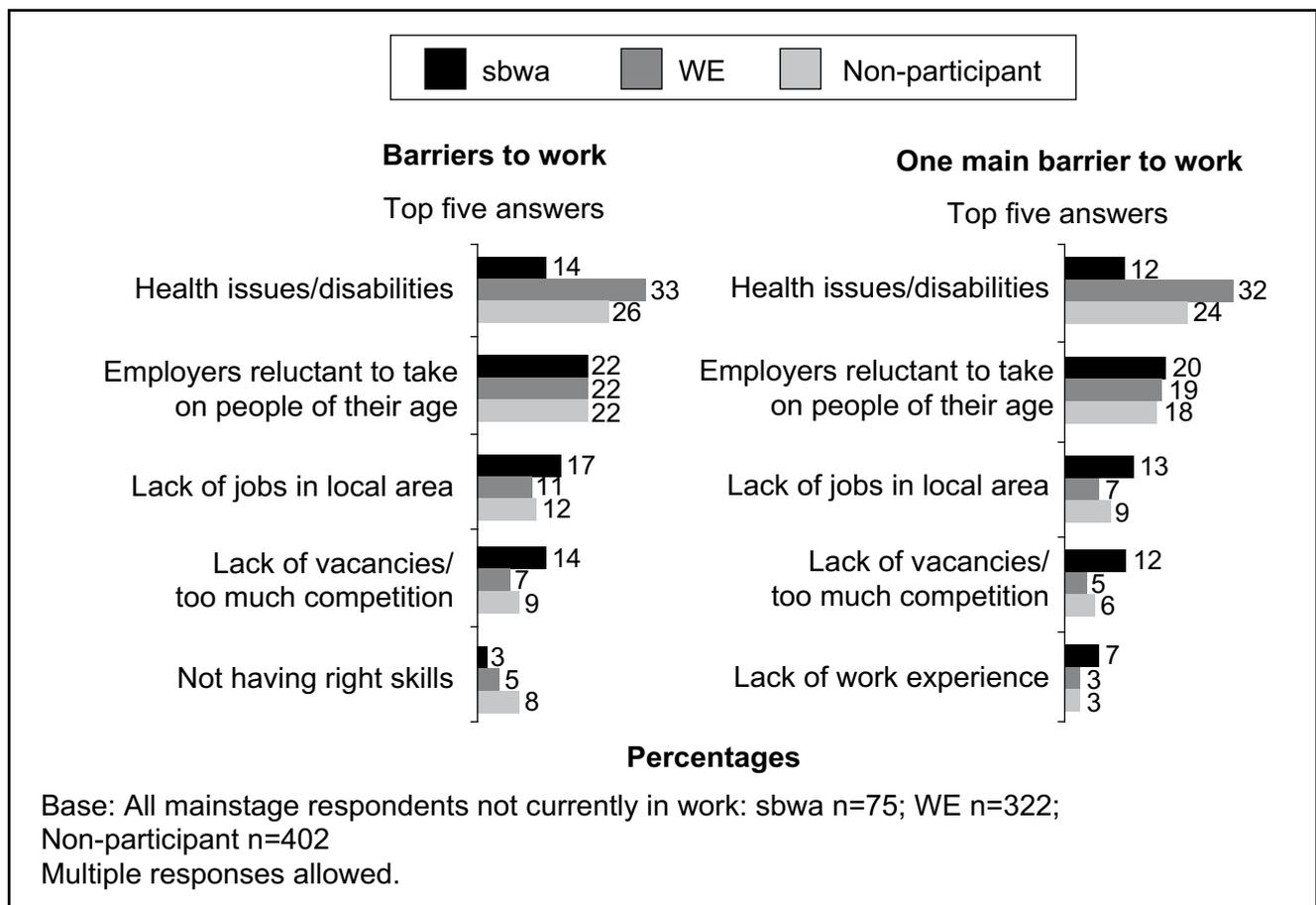
'Employers like people who are younger because you get more mileage out of them than somebody who's older.'

(sbwa participant)

'These people have worked and have for a long time and with that experience they prove to be absolutely phenomenal. Just the maturity there to kind of level it down, they are very kind of logical, they know what it is to work. They show the younger ones that are on placement that this is how we do things. I would never put some of these guys together in the outside world, but here they seem to balance each other out really well, the young ones maybe have got the legs to go on a little bit longer, the older ones are there to kind of keep it logical, work through.'

(WE host employer)

Figure 7.3 Perceived barriers to work among those currently unemployed



The range of barriers experienced by older claimants, were similar to those experienced by 18 to 24 year-old participants. However, more older claimants reported facing health-related barriers, while younger participants were more likely to identify lack of suitable skills and insufficient local jobs as barriers.

Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

Over half of older claimants only identified one barrier, leaving a significant minority of claimants reporting multiple barriers to work (Table 7.1). Non-participants were more likely than participants to cite multiple barriers. As there is no baseline on the barriers faced by participants prior to the trials, it is not possible to conclude whether this difference is due to participation in the trials. This will be explored in the impact assessment in 2017.

WE participants who were claiming ESA or other benefits were more likely to cite health issues as their only barrier, while JSA claimants (in both the WE and non-participant groups) were more likely to report experiencing multiple barriers. This highlights the importance of addressing health issues in employment interventions for ESA claimants.

Table 7.1 Number of barriers mentioned by claimants

	sbwa	WE	Non-participant
<i>Base (All not currently in work)</i>	75	322	402
One mention	59%	60%	54%
Two mentions	20%	21%	25%
Three or more mentions	7%	10%	13%

The qualitative research found that barriers ranged across a continuum, including those who were experiencing multiple, complex and longstanding barriers through to those who reported one main barrier and were more job ready. For example, in one instance a WE participant had previously suffered a violent attack which brought on mental health issues that they reported had contributed to criminal activity and ultimately a long period of unemployment; compared to an sbwa participant who had been unemployed for four months following a sustained period of employment and who cited their age alone as their main barrier to employment.

The barriers experienced affected participants' expectations of the trials, how they engaged with the trials and the outcomes of taking part. However, although in some cases barriers can be seen to hinder engagement in the trials (for example, health barriers), the trials should also be seen as a positive step in helping participants to re-engage with employment and gain valuable soft skills.

Age was identified as a key barrier by participants both directly, as a result of the perceived perceptions of employers (as previously stated) and indirectly, as a result of the interplay between age and other issues such as health. A range of barriers were noted which were said to link to age (or be more pronounced as a result of age), including:

- **Health and wellbeing.** This included physical health problems, like arthritis or back problems, and mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. While these problems were not always linked to age, participants reflected that certain conditions like arthritis were age-related.

- **Skills, qualifications and work experience.** The lack of appropriate skills or qualifications was an issue when it was not possible to return to a previous career, for example, as a result of health problems. A lack of computer based skills (for example typing speed) was noted as a barrier, particularly in certain sectors like administration. Host employers speculated that this might be partially explained by age and assumed participants who were older might have had less opportunity to develop computer skills compared to someone who was younger.
- **Personal circumstances.** A range of personal circumstances acted as barriers to employment, such as acting as a carer; having a criminal record; housing issues; and previous professional misconduct (which meant it was not possible to return to the same profession). These could result in long periods of unemployment.
- **External factors.** Barriers also happened to participants, for example redundancy programmes, which were sometimes linked to public sector cuts or the recession. Participants described a lack of appropriate work options as a barrier too. Zero-hours contracts, for example, were felt to be incompatible with family life and childcare responsibilities. As one participant explained:

'There's only so many jobs you can apply for, that match up to what you want.'

(WE participant)

7.3 Outcomes

This section provides descriptive information on observed outcomes and should not be used to infer impact of the programmes between participants and non-participants. A separate impact assessment is planned at a later date to make an assessment of the net benefits of the initiative for older claimants.

7.3.1 Jobsearch and chances of finding a job

The majority of participants undertook a range of activities to increase their chances of getting a job following their placement or training, including submitting job applications and widening jobsearch to include new job roles and industry sectors. Most participants reported that they had included their placement experience and training on job applications or CVs in order to enhance their appeal to prospective employers.

Among those in-work, but not directly through their placement, around half reported that engagement in the placement or training had helped them to secure a job. A WE participant explained:

'The job I've got now, I actually went to that firm and said, I am willing to work for eight weeks, job experience. That's how much I want this job. She said 'You sound very, very keen. We're going to offer you the job'. I wouldn't have got the job without that experience, that's what swung it for me.'

(WE participant)

Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

The majority of sbwa participants, 73 per cent, reported applying for paid work following the trial. Around two-thirds, 68 per cent, had applied for job roles that were new to them, reflecting that some sbwa participants had chosen to take part in the trial specifically to experience new job roles. WE participants were less likely to have undertaken either, though those that did still account for a majority. Instead, WE participants were more likely than sbwa to mention their placement on their applications or CV, reported by 80 per cent. This is because many WE participants did not have recent employment histories so their experience served to bridge this gap.

Table 7.2 Jobsearch and employment-related outcomes

	sbwa	WE
<i>Base: All</i>	125	386
Submitted job application for paid work since placement/training?		
Yes	73%	64%
No	18%	35%
Don't know	8%	1%
<i>Base: All who have submitted job applications since placement/course</i>	92	244
Mentioned experience of placement/training on application or CV?		
Yes	68%	80%
No	32%	19%
Don't know	-	1%
<i>Base: All</i>	125	386
Applied for different/types/sectors of jobs since placement/training?		
Yes	68%	56%
No	32%	43%
Don't know	-	1%
<i>Base: All in work, but not through placement</i>	45	53
Feel placement/training helped get current paid job? ¹⁵		
Yes	58%	44%
No	42%	56%
Don't know	-	-

¹⁵ Due to the small base sizes, the difference between sbwa and WE is not statistically significant.

Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

Around two-thirds of participants said the placement or training had improved their chances of getting a paid job either a little or a lot (Figure 7.4). A third stated that their chances had not improved at all. Findings are less positive than for 18 to 24 year-olds (80 per cent of young WE and 82 per cent of young sbwa participants reported at least some improvement).

Figure 7.4 Perceived impact of trials on chances of getting a paid job



Again, WE participants with a long-term health condition and older participants, aged 55 and over, were less likely to report any improvement in their prospect of getting paid work following the trial. However we know that for many, engagement on the trial was seen as a first step on the pathway to employment rather than enabling them to secure work. Positively, participants who needed to change the types of work they do because of their health reported finding the work experience especially useful for 'trying it on for size' – providing an opportunity to experience a new sector which brought renewed confidence to their jobsearch activity as illustrated by Case Study 3.

Case study 3: WE participant in office work

Tom was in his early fifties and had been unemployed since 2001 following a motorcycle accident which had left him unable to stand up for long periods. Tom had previously been employed in warehouse and factory work, but the mobility issues caused by the accident meant he was now unable to work in this sector. Office work seemed like the most suitable future career option, but Tom had no administrative experience and lacked IT skills. He was also unsure what working in an office would involve and this led to a lack of confidence.

When the Jobcentre Plus Work Coach mentioned the option of work experience, Tom thought it sounded interesting. He did not feel pressurised to take part; rather he thought it was a good opportunity to gain experience and wanted to be involved.

A placement was organised in an office for four weeks, but this was extended to eight weeks. Tom was very pleased the placement was extended and would have liked it to have continued further as he enjoyed the experience so much. Each day Tom was briefed and given a range of tasks including photocopying and laminating. He was rotated into different teams within the office and supported staff as required using his initiative to get involved wherever possible. Tom felt he had been made to feel welcomed, had been given genuine responsibility and had been able to develop the role as the placement progressed.

Importantly engagement in the placement had provided Tom with a clear structure to his day – building his confidence and wellbeing. As Tom explained: *'[It] gave me a purpose to get up, I loved it!'*

At the outset, Tom attended work dressed in his biker clothes but by the end of the placement, he was dressing more smartly as he felt this was more appropriate. He had also been given a small sum of money (by the Jobcentre) to buy new clothes, which meant he could also look presentable for future job interviews.

From being on the placement, Tom learnt new skills in administration and most importantly, gained insight into what working in an office would involve. He is now clear that he wants to pursue office work and can show recent experience on his CV. Tom explained: *'It gave me an insight into how they worked and secondly I gained the experience of photocopying and stuff.'*

7.3.2 Developing soft outcomes

Sbwa and WE participants were largely positive about the soft skills they had developed through their placement or training and cited an increase in overall confidence, greater motivation to look for work, improved feelings of wellbeing and self-worth and greater connectedness as a result of the interaction with others (tutors and participants). Participants identified the following experiences as key to the development of soft skills, including:

- Exposure to the work environment and re-engaging with employment.
- Exposure to new experiences, employers and jobs.
- Providing work routine and structure.
- Learning new skills and gaining qualifications.
- Using and reinvigorating existing skills and knowledge.
- New techniques to job searching.
- Distraction from health issues.
- Positive feedback from employers.
- Engaging and working with different people (including young people).
- Engaging in group work, presentations and supporting others.

Around three-quarters of participants reported that their personal confidence had increased, and that they were better able to demonstrate their skills and experience to potential employers (Figure 7.5). One WE participant explained:

'It's given me more confidence to do it. Now it's made me feel I could go in and do the job.'

(WE participant)

'Going out in the world again and doing something, I do think it boosts you up.'

(WE participant)

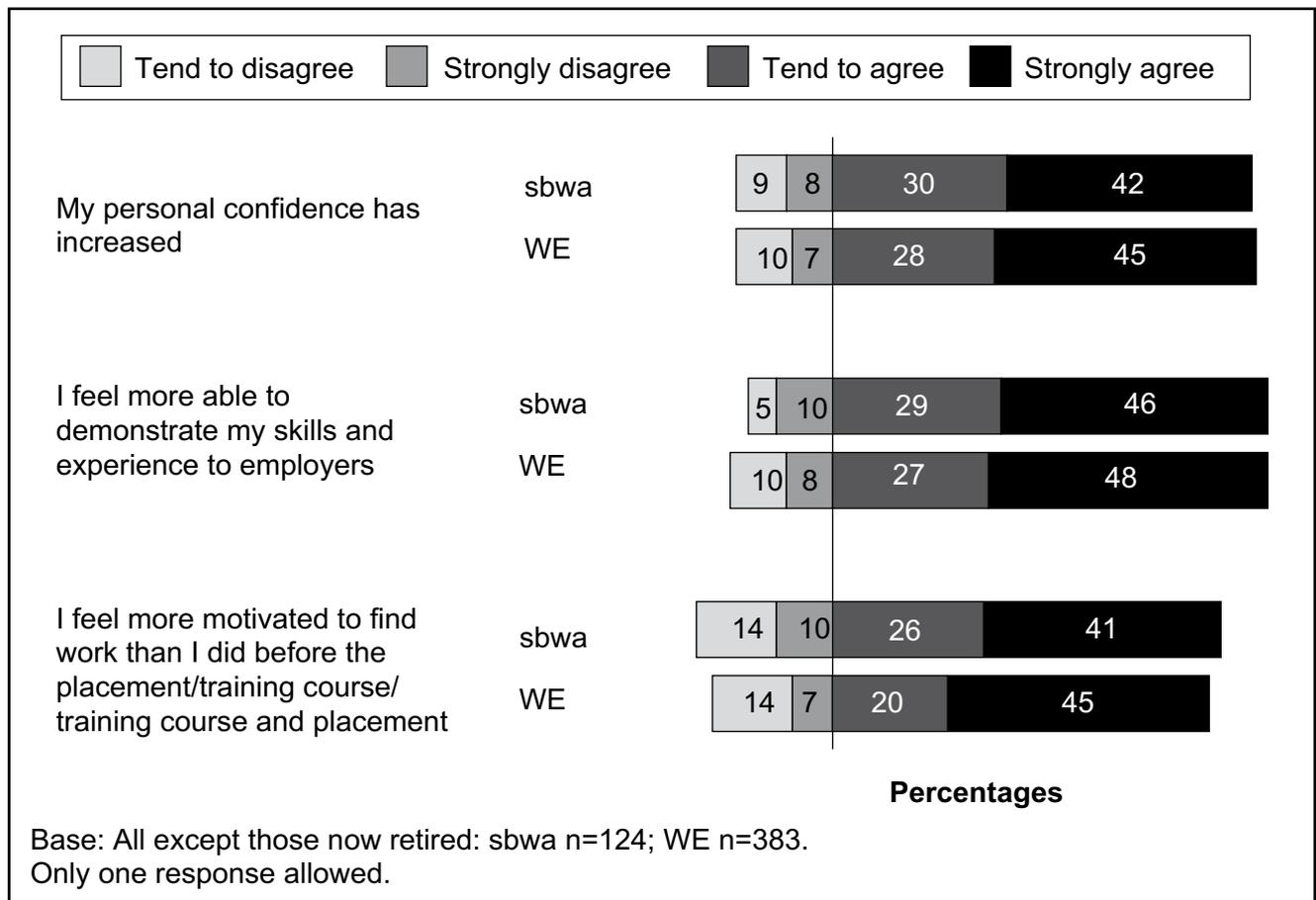
Two-thirds reported greater motivation to search for jobs. For some participants this also meant applying for jobs in sectors that they had not previously considered:

'I always said I don't like working with the public and now I am looking for jobs with the public.'

(WE participant)

Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

Figure 7.5 Impact on soft skills from placement/training



Reported increase in personal confidence was more evident in the sbwa group who were more work-ready and more qualified at the start. In contrast, WE participants with a long-term health condition were less likely to report gains in all three soft skills, indicating that many had further to travel to become work-ready. Despite this, it is clear that engagement in the WE placement offered a valuable first step.

8 Conclusions

Between April 2015 and March 2016, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), backed by the Department for Education (DfE), trialled enhanced central funding for two existing work experience (WE) and training programmes to test their suitability for benefit claimants aged 45 plus. Jobcentre Plus staff in participating Districts could refer claimants to take part in one of the following:

- The **sector-based work academy (sbwa)**. This lasts up to six weeks and consists of up to three elements: pre-employment training (mandatory for everyone who agreed to participate), a work-experience placement and a guaranteed interview for a job or support to help the participant through the employer's application process.
- The **work experience (WE)** programme offered participants a work placement generally lasting between two and eight weeks, for 25-30 hours per week.

Before the trials were launched, Jobcentre Plus Work Coach (WCs) could refer claimants of all ages to sbwa and WE. However, take-up among older claimants was low. The aim of these trials was to test whether take-up among claimants aged 45 plus could be encouraged and to prepare the groundwork for an impact assessment. Central funding was provided alongside a focused approach and increased engagement from Jobcentre Plus staff.

This research, based on qualitative and quantitative research with trial participants and host employers, aimed to:

- Understand why older claimants and employers chose to take part in the trials.
- Understand how host employers viewed the programmes.
- Assess whether the provision was appropriate for older claimants.
- Understand any impacts of sbwa and WE provision for older claimants.
- Prepare the ground for an impact assessment to be conducted in 2017, by providing descriptive analysis of a sample of participants and non-participant claimants.

8.1 Why participants and employers took part in the schemes

Participants' motivations for taking part in both programmes centred on getting a job, or at least moving closer towards that goal. The perception that the programmes would either lead directly to jobs or help make participants more employable was a key reason for taking part.

The opportunity to have a guaranteed job interview (a feature of the sbwa programme only) appealed to participants because it represented a chance to practice interview skills. However, participants were not always aware of this component, and those that were aware did not always receive it, resulting in dissatisfaction with the programme. Furthermore, a significant minority of participants on both programmes did not speak to their WC about what participating in the programmes would involve before they decided to take part, and therefore lacked full information about the programme resulting in a mismatch between their expectations and practice.

Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

Participants who were unable to return to their former jobs, for example, due to an injury or poor health, welcomed the opportunity to gain new experience and test new job roles and sectors for suitability. This was also an important factor for those who had been out-of-work for a long time such as long-term carers.

Where participants lacked confidence, taking part in the programmes was identified as an opportunity to overcome this barrier. Getting used to waking up early, getting into work on time and interacting with others were identified as vital to building confidence and a positive attitude to work; integral for subsequent employability. This was especially important for the participants who were furthest away from the labour market and for those with certain mental health problems, like anxiety.

8.2 Host employers' views of WE and sbwa

Host employers reported taking part in the programmes for these reasons:

- **To meet recruitment needs.** Older workers were viewed positively by employers in terms of the skills, experience and reliability they could offer.
- **Altruism.** Some host employers wanted to help people back into work, motivated by personal reasons or because of the ethos of the organisation and corporate social responsibility.
- **Positive previous experiences of recruiting through Jobcentre Plus.**

Successful placements were underpinned by employers who cared about participants and genuinely wanted to help them, rather than simply seeing the programmes as a means of filling resource gaps. From the employer perspective, genuine engagement of participants was identified as key to success. Host employers reported that they were very open to working with older participants and identified value in doing this; older participants had valuable life skills and experience and were a positive influence on younger members of staff.

However, inappropriate referrals could limit participant engagement, lead to non-completion and negatively impact on the experiences of other participants and host employers.

Productive working relationships between employers and Jobcentre Plus were important in overcoming these issues; open communication channels meant employers could provide feedback on the programme and influence future improvements.

8.3 Impacts of sbwa and WE provision for older workers

This research provides strong evidence that both programmes help participants overcome age-related barriers, develop improved confidence and wellbeing, and in some cases can aid claimants into work or move closer to employment. Instances where the programmes were perceived as less successful tended to be underpinned by a lack of suitability in referral or a lack of structure within the provision itself (in particular for the work experience which is a key component of the sbwa trial and the only component of the WE trial).

Tailored placements which met diverse needs could help move participants closer to the labour market by developing 'soft' outcomes such as increased confidence, motivation and wellbeing or by providing them with improved skills and qualifications to increase their confidence, job-readiness and employability. Appropriate referrals and tailoring were particularly important for participants who were claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). For example, when employers were flexible and demonstrated the ability to respond to participant needs, such as requiring breaks due to health problems, participants felt better able to overcome barriers to work (including health and age-related barriers). This was particularly important given the relatively high proportion of ESA claimants taking part in the WE trial.

It was important that the different components of the programmes were delivered as described and that participants understood what was involved to manage expectations. This applied in particular to the sbwa programme where many participants did not receive the supporting components (the work experience placement and guaranteed job interview), which are seen to provide greater opportunity to consolidate learning (by putting it into practice) and build confidence. In particular, the survey of 18 to 24 year-olds found that participants achieved better outcomes when all three elements of sbwa were experienced.

8.4 Are these schemes appropriate for older workers?

In conclusion, there is strong evidence that both programmes are appropriate for older workers, but that is important for them to be well-organised, structured and offer genuine exposure to sector-relevant training and work. Specific areas for improvement identified by this research include:

- Improving pre-entry information; ensuring that all participants are fully informed beforehand about what the programmes involve and their expectations managed at the outset.
- Delivering the full components of the sbwa offer, and not just the pre-employment training. Leveraging existing good relationships with employers that have previously filled vacancies through Jobcentre Plus should help widen the range of good quality placements.
- Ensuring that the placements are well structured and include genuine work-related tasks to impart useful skills and experience.
- Ensuring that referrals are appropriate to participants' circumstances (for example, a health condition) and tailored to the work they want to do.

The vast majority of participants on both schemes felt they gained valuable benefits from taking part; were satisfied with the quality of their placement or training course; and would recommend it to other unemployed people in their situation and age group. This conclusion is supported by comparison with the previous research among young people aged 18 to 24; the views and experiences of older workers were consistently positive and were for the most part in line with those of younger participants.

Appendix A

Qualitative methodology

This section provides more detail on the qualitative methodology.

The study comprised a total of **60 depth interviews with claimants** who took part in the sbwa and work experience (WE) trial for older claimants and **19 interviews with host employers**. Of the 60 depth interview with claimants, 40 took place face-to-face and 20 via telephone; interviews lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. For host employers all interviews were undertaken via telephone and lasted for 45 minutes. Interviews were conducted between February and April 2016 across the four trial areas, which included: Birmingham and Solihull and Tyne and Wear (sbwa) and the Black Country and West Yorkshire (work experience).

Claimants and host employers were recruited from samples provide by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP): a total of 600 claimant leads were provided. All claimants on the sample were sent a letter by Ipsos MORI outlining details of the study and offered the option to 'opt-out' of being contacted. The host employer sample included a list of employers who had offered placements to claimants aged 45 plus as part of the trial and had not opted out after being sent a letter by the local Jobcentre Plus office.

The claimant sample was designed primarily by type of scheme (sbwa and WE). Secondary quotas were set to include a broad mix of age, gender, current employment status, type of benefit (being claimed at the time of being referred to the scheme) and completion status. Participants were purposively selected using a screening questionnaire to achieve the agreed quotas. Please note: qualitative purposive samples aim to reflect the populations of interest, rather than to represent them statistically.

Tables A.1 and A.2 show the final sample breakdown.

A.1 Tool development

Claimant and employer interviews were guided by a topic guide (two guides were developed- one for claimant and one for host research). The topic guides were developed in discussion with DWP and were designed to reflect the aims and objectives of the study.

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Table A.1 Profile of participants in the qualitative research

Primary quotas		sbwa trial		WE trial	
		Area 1 10 face-to-face 5 telephone	Area 2 10 face-to-face 5 telephone	Area 3 10 face-to-face 5 telephone	Area 4 10 face-to-face 5 telephone
Secondary quotas					
Age	45-49	5	3	5	4
	50-54	5	5	4	5
	55+	5	7	6	6
Gender	Female	8	8	7	7
	Male	7	7	8	8
Current work status	Working	8	5	3	3
	Not working	7	10	12	12
Type of benefit	JSA		25		22
	ESA		5		8
Completed offer	Completed	12	11	11	12
	Not completed	3	4	4	3
Total			30		30

Table A.2 Profile of host employers in the qualitative research

Primary quotas		sbwa trial		WE trial	
		Area 1 10 face-to-face 5 telephone	Area 2 10 face-to-face 5 telephone	Area 3 10 face-to-face 5 telephone	Area 4 10 face-to-face 5 telephone
Secondary quotas					
Sector	Retail store	-	2	-	1
	Office	1	1	-	1
	Warehousing	-	-	1	-
	Catering and hospitality	-	1	1	-
	Health and social care	2	1	-	-
	Education sector	1	-	-	-
	Other	-	-	3	3
	Size	Micro	-	-	1
	Small	1	2	4	-
	Medium	2	-	-	-
	Large	1	3	-	1
Participants taken	Fewer than three	1	3	2	2
	Three or more	3	2	3	3
Total			9		10

A.2 Data management and analysis approach

Interviews were all recorded (with informed consent being gained from respondents) using encrypted digital recorders in line with data protection. Recordings were either transcribed verbatim or researchers wrote detailed notes, listening back to recordings to ensure no data was lost. The data generated from these interviews were systematically managed using the framework approach. This approach supports case and theme-based analysis. The analytical stage involved working through summaries, drawing out the range and diversity of experiences and views, identifying similarities and differences, and interrogating the data to explain emergent patterns and findings.

Our analytical approach is inductive, building upwards from the views of respondents while keeping the research objectives firmly in mind throughout. We work iteratively and collaboratively with our fieldwork team contributing to analytic outputs from the outset. We distinguish between two interrelated phases of analysis – data management and interpretation.

At the **data management** stage, we review, sort, label and synthesise the raw data; and at the **interpretation** stage we interrogate the data using a content analysis approach which allows us to map the data, drawing out key themes and patterns (including differences by sub-group).

Please note: qualitative research is used to map the range and diversity of different type of experiences rather than indicate the prevalence of any one particular experience; as such numerical language is not used and findings are not aimed to be statistically representative.

Appendix B

Quantitative methodology

This section sets out the design of the quantitative survey.

B.1 Questionnaire development

The questionnaire replicated many of the tried-and tested questions used in the previous research among 18 to 24 year-old participants to facilitate comparisons between the two age groups.¹⁶ The questionnaire was piloted with 30 claimants to test comprehension (10 interviews in each group: sbwa and work experience (WE) participants, and non-participants). The questionnaire worked well in the pilot and respondents were generally happy to take part. However, the interview lengths were longer than planned (the aim was 20 minutes for sbwa and WE participants and 10 minutes for non-participants). Subsequent cuts to the questionnaire were agreed with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

B.2 Sample design

The sample for all three groups was provided by DWP. The non-participant sample comprised Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants aged 45 plus who had not participated on WE, sbwas or the Work Programme. Non-participants were 'matched' by DWP, to be similar to participants on age, gender, ethnicity, occupation, benefit history and region. The non-participant sample was selected from JSA claimants only to maximise the comparison group for the impact assessment. It was anticipated that there would be insufficient numbers of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) participants of sbwa and WE to complete any impact assessment. A total of 3,993 sample leads were used for the survey: 317 sbwa participants, 1,268 WE participants and 2,408 non-participants.

The initial targets were 400 interviews each with sbwa and WE participants, and 600 interviews with non-participants. The target for sbwa was revised down to 200 due to lower than anticipated take-up of the provision. The target for WE was left unchanged because the shortfall in sample was much smaller than for sbwa.

Ipsos MORI sent advance letters to all samples giving them a two-week period in which they could opt-out of the research. In total, 241 opted-out (12 from sbwa, 85 from WE and 144 non-participants), and 3,752 leads were available to be called. Mainstage interviewing took place between 19 May and 29 June 2016.

B.3 Response rates

The survey achieved very high response rates across all three groups: 84% for sbwa; 76% for WE; and 68% for non-participants. A breakdown of the sample outcomes is presented in Table B.1.

¹⁶ Customers' Experiences of the Youth Contract, DWP Research Report No.865, 2014.

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Table B.1 Sample outcomes for the quantitative survey

	sbwa	WE	Non-participant
Total dialled sample	346	1,223	2,183
Bad numbers (wrong numbers, unusable numbers, etc)	51	225	293
(Total known usable numbers)	295	998	1,890
Engaged/no reply	113	336	667
Hard/soft appointments	0	8	46
Other dead leads	3	11	46
Ineligible (screened out)	24	123	285
Refused	30	134	245
Achieved interviews	125	386	601
Unadjusted response rate (achieved interviews/total sample)	36%	32%	28%
Eligibility rate (achieved interviews/sum of achieved + known ineligible)	84%	76%	68%
Adjusted response rate (achieved interviews/contacted and known eligible)	81%	73%	67%
Co-operation rate (achieved interviews/sum of achieved + refused)	81%	74%	71%

B.4 Weighting

The survey data was weighted by gender, age and claim start date for each group using population profiles provided by DWP. This approach is consistent with that used in the survey of sbwa and WE participants aged 18 to 24.

Table B.2 shows that the profile of achieved interviews was close to the population profile. The weighting corrected for mainly minor differences with minimal impact on the effective base sizes and statistical reliability: 118 for sbwa, 379 for WE and 583 for non-participants.

Sector-based work academies and work experience trials for older claimants

Table B.2 Weighted and unweighted profiles for the quantitative survey

	sbwa		WE		Non-participant	
	Weighted %	Un-weighted %	Weighted %	Un-weighted %	Weighted %	Un-weighted %
Gender						
Female	39	37	50	52	41	44
Male	61	63	50	48	59	56
Age						
45-49	39	38	34	32	32	28
50-54	30	30	31	30	33	32
55-59	24	25	24	26	24	26
60-64	7	8	11	12	11	14
Claim start date						
2013 and before	18	21	29	27	27	23
2014	19	13	27	32	17	17
2015	62	65	44	41	56	59
2016	*	2	*	*	0	*

Appendix C

Qualitative case studies

Case study 1 – employer sbwa: care agency
 • Illustrates why the host employer chose to take part.



“Older people may have cared for elderly parents or for children that are disabled so they already know what the work would involve”.

Case study 2 – claimant work experience: home furnishings retailer

- Illustrates a case where the claimant identified problems with the placement – particularly in relation to the intention of the employer.

Case study	Participant: home furnishings retailer WE		
Referral	Programme	Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychiatric nurse for 38 years & recently left the profession • Was interested in counselling or advocacy but struggled to find work • Was 'told' that she was going on a work experience course by Jobcentre adviser • Said that no information was provided on how long the course would last or what it would involve • Did not feel that she had a choice about attending • Barriers to work: Saw her age as a barrier, and felt that employers think older workers will quickly retire and so do not want to hire them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement at a large home furnishings retailer. A mix of ages • An 8 week placement, 9am-2pm. Tasks would be assigned on day by day basis. The participant complained about health and safety risks but did not feel listened to • Other participants were having to work 40 hour weeks without pay, which caused tension with paid staff. <p><i>"They were getting hundreds of hours work experience per week. The staff by this point hated us, because they'd all had their hours cut"</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were told on the last day to tidy up the store as participants were 'in competition' with other placement workers for a job • Encouraged to apply by letter, but nothing came of it • Did not gain any transferable skills as tasks were so disparate • Believed that Jobcentre were allowing the retailer to exploit people • Felt that JCP should monitor employers and participants' experiences. Claims that JCP said she could write to her MP if not happy with the programme 	

"[The retailer] had a constant stream of people ... and it's at their discretion. The Jobcentre couldn't tell me anything about what I was doing or how long I was going. You'd end up thinking, 'How would they staff this store if we weren't here?'"

Case study 3 – claimant sbwa: catering

- Illustrates an example of the importance placed on the three elements of sbwa.

Case study	Participant: catering sbwa		
Referral	Programme	Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployed for 5 years after working as a call centre operative • Was asked to take part in a programme • Chose sbwa and because of placement and guaranteed interview • Was originally told about all three elements • Barriers to work: felt that large gap on CV was a barrier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sbwa in Hospitality & Catering, which participant had prior experience in • Was provided with the pre-employment training – other elements never took place (although they did for some others on the course). No explanation was given of why this was • Participant felt training was done well and was fun. Was felt to be more suited to novices, but less relevant for participant who had prior experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the course content was already familiar, meeting new people felt to be the only real benefit • Jobcentre did not follow up about what happened on the course & the participant felt they should be more involved • Participant has now 'fallen back into' call centre work, as has previous experience. Doing 16 hours a week and would like to be full-time 	

"I decided to go on it, because it offered this placement and guaranteed job interview at the end – which I still haven't had, so it was a bit pointless really"

72 **Case study 4 – claimant sbwa: security**
 • Illustrates the importance of suitable referrals.

Case study Participant: security sbwa

Referral	Programme	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has been working over the past 5 years in various temping roles - catering and decorating • Was offered a two-week full-time security training course, which had 'job opportunities connected to it' • Barriers to work: no qualifications, is not computer literate, and does not feel employable at his age (48). Feels like has 'hit rock bottom' • Ideally would like to be coaching children in sports, but has not found any opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No tests or pre-interviews • Security training was good, very interesting; in-depth, and fun. A mix of ages • Worked hard and was told was doing well • On the last day participants were asked to practice handling people off premises. Participant didn't feel up to this due to poor health (has stress-related illness and depression) • Trainer asked 'What's the point of you being here?' and failed the participant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failed course, so no closer to job market • Felt someone should have checked eligibility and suitability before suggesting spending two weeks doing the course • Participant felt that the Jobcentre wasn't interested in hearing about reasons for failing the course

"I was really disappointed - I've never studied so hard in my life ... The Jobcentre didn't follow up on it. Nobody backed me up."

Case study 5 – claimant sbwa: coffee shop

- Illustrates a positive example of a customer securing employment as a result of the scheme. The importance of receiving practical experience to consolidate the training is also noted.

Case study	Participant: coffee shop chain sbwa		
Referral	Programme	Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked in hospitality for 39 years, making teas & coffee for council staff • Had been unemployed for 4 months before beginning sbwa • Jobcentre adviser suggested sbwa in customer service • Was willing to try this & chose to take part • Felt that the trial was explained well and had no additional info needs – also attended information session • Barriers to work: participant was finding it hard to find another job due to age (58) and lack of computer literacy (which also made job hunting much more difficult) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three weeks of customer service training, one month unpaid part-time work in a coffee shop chain, guaranteed interview • A mix of ages took part • The training focused on customer care, team work, communication, introduction to company • The course focused on filling in lots of paperwork – would have benefitted from more practical training for new skills to become embedded (<i>view important for older people</i>) • Found the work experience in coffee shop engaging – did not feel training supported work experience fully however 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was interviewed at the end of the training and was offered a job • Very positive about the new role, is learning new skills, and has a 'proper' income • Felt that without the course finding any job would have been a struggle • Seen as real success 	

"It's a whole new way of life. I've learnt so much, I never thought I'd be able to learn to use a till ... I've got so much more confidence."

Case study 6 – claimant work experience: Jobcentre

- Illustrates a positive example of a customer gaining valuable experience of working in a new sector (having been unable to continue in their previous sector due to health conditions)

Case study Participant: Jobcentre WE

Referral	Programme	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male in early 50s- unemployed since 2001 after biking accident • Identified health issues & age as a barrier to work – suffered with mobility issues following motorbike accident finding it hard to stand up for long periods • Previously employed in warehouse & factory work, but no longer capable given health issues • Office work seen as most suitable career option, but had no experience & lacked IT skills • Did not feel pressurised to take part in programme – thought it was a good opportunity to gain experience & wanted to be involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement was initially for 4 weeks at Jobcentre – but it was extended to 8 weeks. The participant was very pleased it was extended & wanted it to continue • Each day the participant would be briefed & given a range of tasks – including photocopying & laminating. They rotated into different teams & supported staff where they could using their initiative to get involved wherever possible. • Seen as a good mix of responsibility & secure setting • Thoroughly enjoyed placement – was sad when it ended. Staff made them feel welcome & useful 	<p>Outcomes for participant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided a clear structure to their day - building confidence & well-being <p><i>"Gave me a purpose to get up, I loved it"</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began by wearing biker clothes & by end of placement was dressing more smartly. Said Jobcentre had helped them to buy new clothes & now could look presentable at interviews • Learnt new skills in administration • Gained insight into what working in an office involves; is now clear they want to pursue office work & can show recent experience in their CV

"It gave me an insight into how they worked and secondly I gained the experience of photocopying and stuff"

Case study 7 – claimant work experience: café

- Illustrates a positive experience but where a job offer could not be taken due to health conditions.

Case study

Participant: café WE

 Referral	 Programme	 Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last worked over 10 years ago at a café. Has been unable to work due to severe arthritis • Offered a voluntary placement by the Jobcentre at a local café to boost CV • Barriers to work: Looking for work all the time, but difficult because of disabilities and age. Feels that employers are looking for young employees who they don't need to pay National Minimum Wage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two weeks at a local café, working 5 days, 10am-2pm • Jobcentre kept in touch throughout the placement and was supportive • Performing general tasks; washing up, taking customer orders • Generally enjoyed the work • Certain tasks like bending down to load the dishwasher were difficult and painful due to arthritis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was offered a job but didn't accept it due to the pain experienced when completing tasks • Asked Jobcentre if benefits would be stopped due to failing to complete the placement. Was told that this would not be the case, as participant had demonstrated willingness to try • Found the placement boosted self esteem, and was now thinking about what work would be suitable



They told me if I needed to sit down I could sit down; if I needed a break I could take a break. They were really nice. But I was in too much pain."

Appendix D

Profile of survey respondents

Table D.1 Gender, age and ethnicity

Characteristics	sbwa (%)	WE (%)	Non-participants (%)
<i>Base</i>	125	386	601
Male	61	50	59
Female	39	50	41
Age			
45-49 years	39	34	32
50-54 years	30	31	33
55-59 years	24	24	24
60-64 years	7	11	11
Ethnicity			
White	75	81	84
BME	25	18	14
Refused	1	1	2

Table D.2 Long-term health condition (self-reported) and benefits claimed

	sbwa (%)	WE (%)	Non-participants (%)
<i>Base</i>	125	386	601
Benefit claimed			
JSA	97	68	100
ESA	3	29	-
Other (Income Support)	-	2	-
Long-term physical or mental health condition reported			
Yes	27	53	44
No	69	45	53
Don't know	5	2	2

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Table D.3 Highest qualification held

	sbwa (%)	WE (%)	Non-participants (%)
<i>Base</i>	125	386	601
Level 4/5 (Degree level or above)	20	8	18
Level 3 (2+ A-levels or equivalent)	16	9	11
Level 2 (5+ GCSEs or equivalent)	32	24	21
Level 1/entry level (1-4 GCSEs or equivalent)	10	18	16
No qualifications	8	25	20
Other qualifications	5	6	6
Don't know	9	10	8

Table D.4 Length of time out-of-work¹⁷

	sbwa (%)	WE (%)	Non-participants (%)
<i>Base</i>	125	386	601
Less than 6 months	28	8	24
6 months to less than 1 year	17	11	15
1 year to less than 2 years	22	16	14
2 years to less than 5 years	15	27	19
5 years or more	18	37	27
Never worked	-	1	-
Refused	-	1	1

¹⁷ At the time of the survey or, if in-work at the time they started their current job.