

Department for Work and Pensions

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Evaluation of Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM): Interim report

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A report of research carried out by Institute for Employment Studies on behalf of
the Department for Work and Pensions

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Abbreviations

BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CLAIT	Computer Literacy and Information Technology
CTB	Council Tax Benefit
CTC	Child Tax Credit
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EMO	Ethnic Minority Outreach
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
GP	General Practitioner
HB	Housing Benefit
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
IB	Incapacity Benefit
IES	Institute for Employment Studies
IS	Income Support
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
LA	Local authority
MI	Management Information

NARIC	National Recognition Information Centre for the UK
NEP	National Employment Panel
ONS	Office for National Statistics
POEM	Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities
PSI	Policy Studies Institute
UK	United Kingdom
WTC	Working Tax Credit

Summary

Introduction

The Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM) programme began in March 2007 and was initially funded for one year, although it was later extended to run for a second year. POEM was designed to support people of working age who were not in contact with Jobcentre Plus services and who were neither working nor claiming benefit. Support was to be targeted towards non-working partners in low-income families, from ethnic groups who faced particular barriers to employment and who were living in areas of high disadvantage and high ethnic minority population. Although POEM was directed towards all ethnic minority groups, the Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali communities were its target groups, with a particular focus on women from those communities, as they have some of the lowest rates of economic activity in the United Kingdom (UK).

The ultimate aim of the programme was to move clients into work. However, it was recognised that some clients would be a considerable distance from the labour market, and may not have obtained work by the end of the pilot year. POEM has been delivered by contracted providers in ten designated areas, six of which were in London, with the others in Birmingham, Bradford, Leicester and Manchester.

This report presents the findings from the first year of the evaluation. It began with a familiarisation stage, including interviews with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) staff who had formulated the POEM initiative, and an initial examination of the Management Information (MI). After this, the evaluation comprised three main strands:

- case study work with providers, and other stakeholders and partners involved in delivering POEM in each of the ten areas, conducted in two waves;
- 50 face-to-face interviews with POEM clients;
- analysis of POEM MI.

The providers

During the first year of POEM, delivery was by eight providers operating in the ten POEM areas, with three of the London areas being covered by one provider. Some providers were already familiar with the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, but working with the Somali community on POEM was a new departure. In the past, providers had usually worked with clients who were closer to the labour market than their typical POEM clients. Some were more used to delivering mandatory programmes which relied on Jobcentre Plus referrals than a voluntary programme such as POEM, which required more intensive outreach work in order to find and recruit suitable clients.

POEM was delivered to clients by adviser and outreach staff, but providers emphasised the importance of working in partnership with other organisations in the community in order to find clients who would be eligible for POEM, and to be able to refer them to appropriate provision at a later stage. Most providers had to extend their community networks in order to recruit sufficient numbers to the programme, and the extent to which they had needed to do this had adversely affected their start figures during the early months of POEM. Employer networks were also viewed as a key part of POEM, and most providers drew on existing contacts, as well as developing more through POEM.

Engaging and recruiting clients

There were a number of key engagement and recruitment strategies in play at most of the providers. Using a team of multilingual outreach workers, some of whom were from the same ethnic backgrounds as the target client groups, was seen to be vital in accessing potential clients and in gaining their trust.

Providers' outreach strategies included: knocking on doors in targeted wards; publicising the event at various community venues such as shopping centres, libraries, mosques and General Practitioner (GP) surgeries; holding stalls at community events such as family fun days and jobs fairs, and at festivals and events held by the target communities, and distributing marketing materials in community languages.

Strategic partnerships in the community were also considered crucial to successful client recruitment. For some providers, this became increasingly apparent during the first few months of delivery, when they realised they would need to increase their community networks in order to gain access to the clients who would be eligible for POEM. Once suitable community partners had been found, they were often able to refer suitable clients directly to providers and provide community venues where provider staff could do outreach work. The extent to which providers were able to locate, build and maintain suitable links in the community was one of the key factors which determined their success in delivering POEM.

During the pilot year, providers recruited a total of 4,882 clients to POEM. The largest group was black African clients, accounting for 30 per cent of recruits. Pakistani and Bangladeshi clients accounted for a further 17 and 15 per cent of the total respectively. Of the other ethnic groups recruited, Indian clients were the most prevalent, at ten per cent. Compared to the overall totals, greater proportions of black African clients were recruited by London providers (39 per cent of the London provider total), with the providers outside London recruiting more Pakistani clients (36 per cent).

Fifty-seven per cent of the clients were women, 43 per cent were men, and the gender balance remained fairly consistent across the London providers and those outside London. More male clients were recruited to POEM than had been anticipated; typically, these were young men who had recently settled in the UK on marital visas. Thirty-six per cent of clients were aged 25-34, 30 per cent were aged 18-24, and 26 per cent were aged 35-49. Clients recruited by providers outside London had a younger profile than those recruited by the London providers.

The levels of qualifications amongst clients joining POEM varied considerably, but there appeared to be a majority with few or no qualifications, or with qualifications from outside the UK. A few of the younger clients had degrees from the UK. Many clients had young children and childcare was cited as a major barrier to work. Family responsibilities tended to determine the types of jobs which female clients with children would consider, and also restricted the hours they were willing to work, and the distances they would travel. The fact that childcare could be provided through POEM presented a valuable opportunity to clients who would not otherwise have been able to access this kind of provision. However, many clients had access to some informal childcare through their extended families and some preferred not to use formal childcare.

Providers considered most of their clients to be a long way from the labour market when joining POEM. They faced a wide range of barriers to work, including: unfamiliarity with the UK labour market and where to access support and advice; lack of job search skills and interview techniques; lack of UK work experience; few or no UK qualifications; low levels of English language; low confidence and self-esteem; and social and cultural barriers, including some family resistance to women entering the labour market. POEM clients therefore took longer to be job-ready than clients on other programmes providers had run.

POEM support and activities

A wide variety of activities and support were on offer, although there was considerable variation between providers. Across all providers, the range of activities included:

- flexible, one-to-one support;
- pre-application preparation, including CV writing, job search advice, help completing application forms, interview skills training, help with overseas qualification recognition and confidence building activities;

- English language and basic skills assessments;
- work experience and self-employment advice;
- group sessions on, for example, interview techniques, confidence building, talks and training focused on entry to a specific industry and basic IT training.

Other professionals, such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and basic skills tutors, self-employment advisers and job coaches were used by some providers to provide further in-house assistance to clients. Clients were also referred to partners to access services beyond the remit of the providers. These included local training organisations and colleges, or providing childcare through arrangements with local Children's Centres.

When clients were initially signed up to POEM, the first step was usually for an adviser to meet with each client on a one-to-one basis and complete an Action Plan. This set out the client's starting point, including qualifications and previous work experience, their aspirations, barriers to work, and the actions which would be needed to overcome them. The Action Plan informed the activities undertaken on POEM and it was updated regularly as particular barriers were overcome.

The client journey

Overall, clients' experiences on POEM were diverse and varied, but there were common experiences across the client group, highlighting a number of key factors that commonly contributed to the speed and success of the client journey towards the labour market.

Previous work experience and language skills emerged as the most salient factors in determining the speed and likely success of the client journey towards employment. Culture, family and caring responsibilities were also important circumstantial factors affecting the client journey. Of these, the cultural preference amongst women to stay at home and look after the family and home, particularly when children were young, was perhaps the greatest constraint reported by clients and providers. It did not preclude work as an option, but it often limited the type and hours of work that women were willing to consider.

The design and delivery of POEM also impacted on the client journey. Aspects which were particularly important in helping to move clients forward included intensive, flexible, one-to-one support from providers, and the use of Action Plans to guide the journey, although not all providers used these in the same way.

The key turning points which were identified as being significant to clients in helping them move forward were:

- greater confidence – perhaps the most important turning point of all, this often stemmed from the one-to-one support from advisers and grew as clients completed various activities through POEM;

- broadened horizons – many clients reported that POEM had helped them to better understand their employment options and to formulate personal goals and long-term plans;
- intensive provider support – the one-to-one support provided through POEM appeared to be critical in building up the necessary trust and rapport with clients to fully understand their barriers to work;
- wider family support – the support of the wider family was, for some clients, vital in gaining entry to POEM, and in ‘making or breaking’ their journey;
- positive experience of training and job preparation – these were such encouraging experiences for a significant proportion of clients that they proved to be key turning points in the client journey.

Outcomes and impact

POEM achieved 80 per cent of targeted starts in the pilot year (4,884 starts compared to a target of 6,101). There was considerable variation in the extent to which providers were able to meet their recruitment or start targets on POEM, although most providers recruited the largest proportions of clients during the later months of the pilot year. Figures differed between the providers in and outside London. London providers achieved 78 per cent of their target starts (3,490 compared to a target of 4,463). Providers outside London did slightly better, achieving 85 per cent of their target (1,394 compared to a target of 1,638).

In total, there were 1,016 job entries achieved during the first year of POEM. This was 58 per cent of the target of 1,751. The London providers in particular fell far short of their targets, obtaining only 40 per cent of their target job entry numbers (525 of a profiled 1,296). However, their performance improved markedly over the course of the year; in the final month they returned 197 per cent of their targeted job entries for that month. The providers outside London exceeded their overall job entry targets (491 compared to 455, or 107 per cent) despite a slow start in the first two to three months.

The overall rate of job entry (job entries as a percentage of starts) across all providers was 20 per cent. There were considerable differences between the providers in and outside London; providers outside London performed more than twice as well as London providers on converting starts to job entries, at 35 per cent compared to 15 per cent.

Providers reported that POEM clients had entered a wide range of work. The majority of jobs obtained were fairly low-skilled, entry-level work, including retail, cleaning, catering and security work, and factory and warehouse work. Working with children, for example, in a nursery or as a lunchtime supervisor in a school, was popular amongst many of the female clients with children. Clients with limited English had a fairly narrow range of work available to them in the short-term, but some providers had considerable success in placing such clients with employers

from their own communities, and in providing work-focused ESOL classes to quickly improve employability. Some clients already had work experience and/or professional qualifications from overseas, and needed help with converting them and having them recognised by employers. A few clients had degrees from the UK but were struggling to find the kinds of work they were looking for. There were examples of such clients entering banking and accounting, and also of POEM clients being employed by their provider as outreach workers and advisers.

Turning to soft outcomes and distance travelled, there were four main areas of change identified:

- greater confidence and motivation;
- increased awareness of opportunities;
- job search, application and interview skills;
- improved English language skills.

There was often considerable overlap between these, as change in one area would help to bring about change in others.

The key turning points outlined earlier provide a framework for examining the softer ways in which POEM made an impact during its pilot year.

- Greater confidence – one of the most universal barriers, which was also one of the easiest to address through the programme.
- Broadened horizons – this manifested as moving clients closer to the labour market, encouraging re-engagement amongst women, preventing and addressing disengagement amongst men, effective signposting to other provisions, and providing advice on the full range of employment and self-employment options.
- Intensive provider support – which included a wide range of relevant and work-focused activities, the use of Action Plans, and matching clients with suitable jobs.
- Positive experience of training and job preparation – for example, shared cultural values of staff and clients, one-to-one support, and finding suitable opportunities for clients with limited English.
- Wider family support – this included working with clients' partners to persuade them of the benefits of POEM, and finding childcare and respite care.

Clients interviewed were very positive about the assistance POEM had given them. Some had obtained work or had done training through POEM, which they felt they would otherwise not have found, while others said that they felt much more confident and optimistic about their future work prospects than they had when they joined the programme. Few had any suggestions for ways in which the programme could be improved.

Impact on providers included their developing and strengthening partnerships and outreach strategies, and extending their range of provision by adding new activities in response to demand. Many providers had also made changes to their employer engagement strategies during the course of the pilot year. Most providers had recruited new staff to POEM, and this usually increased their capacity in terms of the community languages spoken and the range of ethnic backgrounds represented amongst their staff.

Overall, factors which contributed to success were: creative outreach strategies; making clients feel comfortable; a wide range of provision; employer networks and flexibility.

Interim conclusions

Despite a slow start, particularly for providers in London, the providers achieved 80 per cent of their targeted starts to the programme, which compares favourably to outcomes from many other labour market programmes. Starts improved markedly during the course of the year and, by the end, most providers had been close to, or meeting their starts targets for several months. It is hoped that these trends will continue in year two.

Performance on job entries was lower than for starts; providers achieved 58 per cent of their targeted job entries. Lower performance on job entry was attributed to few POEM clients being recruited in earlier months, together with large proportions of clients being further from the labour market than providers had generally anticipated.

Nonetheless, some providers were more successful than others in converting their starts to job entries, possibly through focusing intensive support on actively applying for jobs at an early stage in the POEM process, and before many barriers to work had been overcome. Other providers may be able to learn lessons from this during the second year of POEM.

The key changes made by providers during the year were to their client entry and exit strategies. Outreach and engagement methods changed for many providers, as many found that methods they had employed to bring in clients to other programmes did not work for the POEM client group. Links with employers were also increased and strengthened in order to provide suitable opportunities for POEM clients who matched their requirements.

Partnership working was vital in delivering the programme successfully. Outreach and engagement was the area of providers' work where this was the most critical and made the difference between providers' success and failure. Partnerships were also important in being able to provide the right employment-related opportunities for clients, and in enabling providers to deliver and signpost clients to a wide range of provision.

Tailored and one-to-one support was a key element of POEM, and drew all other aspects of provision into a coherent whole. A shared background and language between adviser and client was proved to be critical in securing the initial interest and trust of potential clients during engagement and recruitment activities and also, for many clients, in the early stages of POEM.

Many POEM clients found employment through POEM, however, by the end of the pilot year, most had not. In these cases, it is important to recognise the contribution that POEM has made in moving clients closer to the labour market. Amongst those who had not found work, POEM had helped some of the clients who were among the least well equipped to navigate the necessary systems to find opportunities in the absence of support. Confidence was a key soft outcome for these clients, as was an increased awareness of opportunities, improved job search and interview skills and, for many, improved English.

1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM) programme, the methodology used in the evaluation of the pilot year and an overview of the rest of the report.

1.1 Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities

POEM began in March 2007 and was initially funded for a pilot year, until the end of March 2008. It was designed to support people of working age who were not in contact with Jobcentre Plus services and who were neither working nor claiming benefit. Hence, it focused on outreach as the most effective way of engaging with this group. Support was to be targeted towards non-working partners of low-income families, from ethnic groups who faced particular barriers to employment and who were living in areas of high disadvantage and high ethnic minority population.

The programme has been operating in 430 wards within the cities of Birmingham, Bradford and Leeds, Leicester, London and Manchester. Support has been provided through ten providers, six of which were in London. It has been working in some of the same areas as the Ethnic Minority Outreach (EMO) programme, but is a smaller scale initiative which was originally conceived to be shorter in scale.

1.1.1 Eligibility

Although POEM is directed towards all ethnic minority groups, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali women constitute the programme's primary target groups as these groups have some of the lowest rates of economic activity in the UK, often face considerable disadvantage, have complex barriers to work, and are hence at risk of poverty and social exclusion. To be eligible, clients must:

- have recourse to public funds, and also the right to work;
- be a non-working partner, of working age;
- not be in full-time education;

- be a partner of someone in work and on a low income;
- not be in receipt of benefit in their own right or as part of a joint claim;
- not be in contact with Jobcentre Plus.

1.1.2 The aims of POEM

The ultimate aim of POEM has been to help clients move nearer to the labour market and into work. However, it was recognised that some of the target clients may be a considerable distance away from the labour market at their point of entry to the programme, and may not have got a job by the end of the pilot year. Hence, this programme has also been concerned with clients' 'journey' towards the labour market and the critical points towards work readiness that they encounter along the way. Where these key points in the journey are, the distance travelled by clients during their time with the programme, and the soft outcomes they achieve as a result of this programme have been, therefore, of great interest and importance at a policy level, alongside harder outcomes of employment. Understanding more about clients' journeys and their key critical points and stepping stones was one of the underlying aims of POEM. The programme is aiming, through the ten providers, to provide access to the following services:

- job search support;
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and key skills training where appropriate;
- soft skills training, for example, confidence building sessions;
- mentoring and help preparing for interviews;
- culturally sensitive childcare.

One element of the programme was to give each client an 'Action Plan' which would be reviewed with the provider at least monthly. At the start of the pilot year, it was anticipated that approximately 5,000 clients would join POEM during the first 12 months, of which about 1,000 would move into employment. It was expected that the length of time each client stayed on the provision would be dependent upon the particular circumstances and needs of that individual.

1.1.3 The future of POEM

Towards the end of the pilot year, funding was confirmed to deliver POEM for a second year and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) recontracted to the providers who delivered the POEM pilot in nine of the provider areas for a further 12 months. Delivery in the remaining area (in London) was contracted to a new provider. POEM will now run until March 2009.

1.2 Evaluation methodology

In July 2007, DWP commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to carry out an evaluation of POEM during its pilot year.

IES carried out an initial familiarisation stage, followed by a three-strand evaluation methodology which was mainly qualitative. The familiarisation stage included an initial examination of Management Information (MI) data to ensure that all necessary data were being collected to inform the evaluation as a whole and to inform the case study fieldwork; an examination of the background materials supplied by DWP, including the bids from the successful providers, and interviews with staff within DWP who had formulated the POEM initiative.

Following the familiarisation stage, the evaluation comprised the following three strands:

- case study work with providers and other stakeholders in each of the ten areas where POEM was operating, conducted in two waves;
- 50 interviews with POEM clients;
- analysis of POEM MI and other relevant labour market data sources.

(Copies of all main discussion guides used in the qualitative fieldwork can be found in the Appendices.)

1.2.1 Case study work with providers

POEM was operating in six cities, with ten providers, as follows:

- six providers in London (three of which were part of the same organisation);
- one provider in Manchester;
- one provider in Birmingham;
- one provider in Leicester;
- one provider in Bradford and Leeds.

The evaluation team carried out two waves of case study work in each of the ten areas where POEM was operating. The Wave 1 case study visits took place during September and October 2007, and the Wave 2 visits were conducted in February and March 2008. In both waves, project staff were assured of their anonymity, and anonymity at provider level in project reports to DWP.

Wave 1 case study fieldwork

The purpose of the Wave 1 fieldwork with providers was to familiarise the project team with the ways in which the POEM initiative was operating across the country. These visits consisted primarily of in-depth face-to-face interviews with POEM project managers at each provider. A number of other staff were also interviewed at some of the providers where they were available, including, for example, other

operational, strategic and site managers, and outreach, guidance and ESOL co-ordinators. All meetings and interviews were arranged by, or with the co-operation of, the providers.

The Wave 1 interviews explored:

- the background of each provider organisation – its aims, activities and previous work in this area, including any involvement in delivering other employment and welfare-to-work programmes such as the EMO programme, and how providers' previous track records had shaped their provision for POEM;
- local factors in each provider area, including the labour market characteristics of the area, population demographics and the potential POEM client base, other providers operating in the area, and any other local issues which influenced the ways in which providers were working to deliver the programme;
- start-up – providers' experiences of getting POEM up and running, including any difficulties or emerging concerns, and the steps they were taking to overcome these;
- the POEM clients – which groups each provider was targeting and working with, and details of the profiles of these clients, including their distance from the labour market on joining POEM;
- planned activities and delivery, including the outreach methods providers were using for engaging with the target groups, their use of Action Plans and their approach for moving clients closer to the labour market and into work;
- partners and networks that the providers were in contact with for POEM and how these relationships were contributing to the delivery of POEM;
- emerging client outcomes and next steps – what providers felt they had achieved so far and where they would be concentrating their efforts over the coming months.

The Wave 1 visits were also used to obtain some examples of Action Plans and to start the process of arranging interviews with clients. In addition, we also informed project managers that during the Wave 2 fieldwork we would need to interview as wide a range of POEM staff, partners, employing organisations and other relevant stakeholders as possible, and we asked them, in the following weeks, to consider who would be suitable for us to meet with when we visited again in Wave 2.

Wave 2 case study fieldwork

The Wave 2 fieldwork commenced four months after the Wave 1 visits. The purpose of Wave 2 was to explore how POEM had been running at each provider since the Wave 1 case study visits, at a time when the projects had been operating at full capacity for a number of months, but before they began to wind down in

the weeks leading to the end of the pilot in March 2008.¹ These visits were more extensive than the first; wherever possible, we re-interviewed those we spoke to during Wave 1, but at Wave 2 we also interviewed a range of other staff and stakeholders at each provider. As in Wave 1, all the staff and stakeholder meetings and interviews were arranged through the providers, after the evaluation team had explained the remit of the evaluation and the range of people we wished to include.

In total, the evaluation team interviewed or met with 45 individuals during the case study work with providers at Wave 2. All were either POEM provider staff, or they had worked closely with POEM staff and clients as partners regarding cross-referrals, or they had employed numbers of POEM clients. They included:

- POEM project and operations managers;
- POEM provider senior and strategic managers;
- POEM outreach workers and POEM advisers and employment coaches;
- POEM recruitment managers;
- ESOL trainers and other POEM tutors;
- community partners, including ethnic minority organisations and local community associations;
- employers, employer organisations and employment agencies;
- Sure Start and Children's Centre staff;
- the Wave 2 interviews with providers and other stakeholders covered a range of issues, including some which had been raised by providers during Wave 1, and through discussion with DWP over emerging patterns in the MI;
- progress since Wave 1 – any changes to engagement methods or delivery, why these were introduced, and the effect of these changes;
- engagement issues – whether there were any differences in the types of clients being recruited since Wave 1, the similarity or differences between POEM clients and other clients the provider had worked with in the past;
- recruitment difficulties – why providers were finding it more difficult than anticipated to recruit their target numbers of clients, including eligibility issues;

¹ The final decision on whether continuation funding would be available from DWP for a second year of POEM was not made until near the end of the pilot year. Hence, providers were not aware that they would probably be asked to continue to deliver POEM after March 2008 until near the end of the pilot year, and after most of the Wave 2 visits were carried out.

- the client journey – clients' starting points and barriers to work, how providers had been working with clients to overcome these constraints, and factors which influence clients' progression while on POEM;
- support and activities – more details on the activities and support offered through POEM;
- childcare issues and other caring responsibilities, and the extent to which these were a barrier to work for clients;
- job entries and other outcomes – including the kinds of work clients had been helped into, and any other outcomes achieved, such as training or soft outcomes;
- partners and employer networks – following on from the Wave 1 visits, any changes to partnerships and relationships with employers, and how these had impacted on POEM;
- reflections on delivering POEM in London and outside London, and on the POEM programme itself, including any ways in which providers thought POEM could be improved in the future.

1.2.2 Client interviews

The evaluation team undertook 50 face-to-face interviews with clients, which were arranged with the help of all ten providers. The aim was to interview approximately five clients at each, and in practice, between three and six clients were interviewed at each provider. The process of organising the client interviews was started during Wave 1 visits to providers, where the evaluation team explained what was needed and explored the best ways in which to set up interviews with a cross-section of POEM clients. It was decided that each provider should invite a range of their POEM clients to be interviewed by the evaluation team, explaining the purpose of the interview and that clients' anonymity would be protected. On this basis, partners selected a spread of clients of different ethnic backgrounds and ages, who were a range of distances from the labour market. As such, an opportunistic sample of clients was interviewed for the evaluation. However, in practice, this provided the team with a range of different clients and labour market experiences. All client interviews were carried out at provider premises. Interpreters were used to assist in nine of the client interviews, where clients' English language was particularly limited.

The topics covered in the interviews with clients were:

- background information, including ethnicity, migration history, and current family life;
- previous education, any qualifications and work experience;
- their starting point when they joined POEM, and whether they were already looking for work at this point;

- how they found out about POEM, and why they joined the programme;
- their main barriers to work, and whether POEM had been helping them to overcome these;
- the support and guidance they had received and any activities or training done as a result of POEM;
- clients' use of, and views about Action Plans;
- outcomes and impact of POEM on each client's journey towards the labour market, and their views of the programme as a whole;
- clients' future plans; and
- their views on how POEM services could be improved.

The interviewed clients

Table 1.1 shows some of the key characteristics of the clients who were interviewed by the evaluation team. While it is not claimed that they are representative of POEM clients as a whole, it is clear that there was a considerable spread in terms of ethnicity, gender, age, qualifications and migration background. There was no evidence that providers had been 'cherry-picking' the clients with whom they had had the most success to take part in the evaluation interviews, but rather that they had taken on board the evaluation team's requests to provide access to a good spread of clients with a wide range of backgrounds and experience. Forty-two of the 50 clients interviewed were still registered with POEM, although fewer than this number (37) were not working at all, as a small number of clients had obtained work but were still actively seeking different kinds of work, or work with more hours per week, and had stayed registered with POEM as a result.

Table 1.1 Characteristics of POEM clients interviewed for the evaluation

Characteristics	N	%
Gender		
Women	38	76
Men	12	24
Ethnicity		
Bangladeshi	5	10
Pakistani	17	34
Somali	7	14
Other ethnic group ¹	21	42
Age		
Teens	3	6
20s	18	36
30s	17	34
40s	6	12
50s	6	12
Migration background		
Born in the UK	13	26
Born outside the UK	37	74
Qualifications		
None	7	14
UK qualifications – below degree	17	34
UK qualifications – degree and above	3	6
Overseas qualifications	23	46
Labour market status		
Not employed	37	74
Employed	12	24
Self-employed	1	2
POEM status		
Left POEM	8	16
Still a POEM client	42	84
Total	50	100

Source: IES client interviews.

¹ 'Other' ethnic groups included Indian, other African, black Caribbean, other white (from France and Bulgaria) and clients from Nepal, Columbia and Afghanistan.

1.2.3 Analysis of MI and other relevant labour market data sources

MI

The POEM providers were required to return figures on their POEM client starts and job entries on a monthly basis. The evaluation team had access to these monthly data reports, which helped initially with the familiarisation process and informed the fieldwork with providers.

The MI detailed the numbers of starts and job entries against the profiled targets which were given to DWP by each provider before they were contracted to deliver POEM. It also contained breakdowns of POEM client starts and job entries by age, ethnicity, gender and disability. This data could be viewed across providers as a whole, by city, or by each provider area.

In this report, the MI data is provided in tables in Chapters 4 and 7. It has been aggregated to the level of 'Providers in London' and 'Providers outside London', and also shows the data for all ten providers as a whole.

Other relevant labour market data sources

In order to provide some comparable labour market context for each provider area, an analysis of several other sources of labour market information was carried out. The sources analysed were:²

- Census (2001);
- Office for National Statistics (ONS) annual population survey (April 2006 to March 2007);
- DWP benefit claimants – working-age client group (May 2007);
- ONS jobs density (2005).

These data sources were used to provide contextual information for each provider area on ethnic breakdown, economic activity by gender, benefits claimed, and jobs density. These analyses are presented in Chapter 2.

1.3 Overview of this report

The rest of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 presents the labour market and policy context of POEM, including the previous EMO programme, some background information on the three target communities for POEM, and an outline of the labour market characteristics in each of the ten districts where POEM has been operating.

² All sources are available at Nomis Web (www.nomisweb.co.uk).

- Chapter 3 looks at the POEM providers, the extent to which POEM was a new work area for them, their staffing arrangements and their partners and networks, particularly those which pre-existed POEM.
- Chapter 4 explores the strategies employed by providers to engage and recruit clients, including outreach strategies and the use of partnerships. It also presents the characteristics and starting points of clients who were recruited to POEM during its first year.
- Chapter 5 turns to the support and activities provided through POEM, both those delivered by the provider and those accessed through POEM, but provided elsewhere. It also looks at the use of Action Plans and examines the flexibility in the POEM programme.
- Chapter 6 explores the 'client journey', including the factors impacting on the speed and progress of the client's journey into, or towards work and key turning points along the way.
- Chapter 7 examines the outcomes of the first year of POEM, including hard outcome data from the MI on recruitment and job entries, as well as soft outcome data from the qualitative work with providers and clients.
- Chapter 8 outlines the impact of POEM by the end of the pilot year, drawing on the key messages from preceding chapters.
- Chapter 9 presents interim conclusions.

2 Labour market and policy context

This chapter provides some additional background to the policy context in which Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM) emerged, including information on:

- the Ethnic Minority Outreach (EMO) programme;
- the three communities which POEM was particularly designed to target;
- the demographics and labour market in each of the ten districts in which POEM operated during its pilot year.

This chapter draws on information from a variety of sources, including secondary data sets in the public domain, and qualitative work with providers at Wave 1.

2.1 Ethnic Minority Outreach

The EMO pilot started in April 2002. As part of New Deal Next Phase it was designed to be implemented through a range of projects located within communities and to work with Jobcentre Plus and other providers or agencies to respond to a diverse range of needs through local provisions. In summary, these were:

- outreach-based provision;
- employer-focused provision;
- positive-action training.

Fifty-two projects were funded to start providing in 2002. They also had a series of targets or outcomes to reach each year, which were used to measure their 'success'. These were relatively standardised in comparison to the diverse range of work being undertaken by local providers, and generally included indicators such as the numbers of clients entering paid employment, numbers of referrals onto accredited training and numbers of clients subsequently registered with Jobcentre Plus. EMO operated in Greater London, the West Midlands, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and the East Midlands.

The EMO pilot was evaluated by a team from the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) (Barnes *et al.*, 2005) and the evaluation covered the first two years of EMO operation. It involved quantitative Management Information (MI) analysis of data on participants and employers, and qualitative interviews with participants, providers and other stakeholders. Twenty EMO providers were sampled for the research.

The evaluation found that the programme had a major impact on increasing ethnic minorities' awareness of employment and labour market opportunities, especially amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi women. The language and outreach skills of EMO workers were crucial in reaching these groups. There was an increased use of Jobcentre Plus services, but not all EMO clients were willing to register with Jobcentre Plus. EMO helped people move closer to the labour market but those with multiple problems remained at a considerable disadvantage. Those who had employment outcomes tended to be those people with the shortest amounts of time out of work, while for those facing significant barriers, finding work often took a year or more. Issues common to most of the providers included capacity issues, implementation problems and issues around the administration and management of the pilot. Many of those were addressed during the first two years of EMO operation. Providers also found that working with those who were furthest from the labour market needed additional outcome measures to make this financially viable.

2.2 Design and implementation of Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities

POEM was introduced as a result of recommendations that were highlighted in the National Employment Panel's (NEP's) report *Enterprising People: Enterprising Places* (2005). POEM was funded through the Pre-Budget Report 2005. The aim of this project was to explore the support available for ethnic minorities who were disengaged from the labour market and unlikely to use mainstream Jobcentre Plus services. Its main focus was to attract Pakistani and Bangladeshi women partners in low-income households.

Prospective customers were to be resident in 430 selected wards within the six cities highlighted in the NEP report: London, Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford, Leeds and Leicester, all of which have high proportions of non-working ethnic minorities and high levels of deprivation.

The procurement exercise began in October 2006. The project became operational in February 2007 outside London and March 2007 in London and has been delivered by private and voluntary sector organisations with a proven track record in assisting this community.

A ministerial submission went to Caroline Flint on 30 November 2007 seeking approval for POEM provision to continue beyond March 2008 for a further 12 months. The Minister agreed to the extension of POEM and that it would be independent of the Flexible New Deal.

2.3 Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities' target communities

POEM was designed particularly to assist people from three ethnic groups:

- Bangladeshi;
- Pakistani;
- Somali.

These groups were chosen as the programme's primary target groups, as they have some of the lowest rates of economic activity in the United Kingdom (UK), particularly amongst women. They often face disadvantage, have complex barriers to work, and are hence, at risk of poverty and social exclusion. It was also conceived with the particular aim of providing female partners from these three communities with support to move them closer to the labour market and into work. However, it was available for both women and men, providing they had a working partner, had recourse to public funds and were themselves eligible for work. In order to encourage participation from the three target ethnic groups, providers were only able to actively market the POEM programme to people from those three communities. However, POEM was open to people from other ethnic groups who fit the rest of the eligibility criteria (see Section 1.1.1).

The sections below provide some background information about the Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali communities in the UK, using information sourced from Harris (2004) and Kyambi (2005).

2.3.1 Bangladeshis

Migration of Bangladeshis to Britain began in the 1960s and then accelerated into the 1970s. The majority of migrants were from the Sylhet district where, uniquely, farmers tended to be owner-cultivators rather than simply tenants. They were, therefore, in the strongest position amongst Bangladeshis to be able to raise the funds needed for overseas migration. These migrants varied considerably in terms of their wealth, skills and level of education. However, the main motivation for all was to take advantage of greater earning opportunities in Britain and send money back home for investment.

Initially, men tended to come to Britain alone, with their wives and children following once they were settled. For some, family reunion happened quickly, whereas others decided to wait some years. As a result of such reunions, Bangladeshi immigration peaked in the 1980s. Today there remains a slight predominance

of males in the British Bangladeshi population. The population's age profile is notably young, with over 90 per cent below the age of 45. The vast majority of Bangladeshis are Muslim. The employment rate is low, at 42.8 per cent for new immigrants and just 40 per cent for settled immigrants. The economic activity rate of Bangladeshi women is very low, at around 25 per cent and as such, they have the highest UK inactivity rate by ethnic group and gender. The economic activity rate of Bangladeshi men is much higher, at 70 per cent.³

There are often cultural expectations amongst both genders that a woman should look after her home and family rather than go out to work, at least while children are young, although for younger generations of women, this may now be less of an issue than it has been in the past. There is often some reluctance to use formal childcare, with women preferring to rely on their extended family for childcare assistance. Furthermore, Bangladeshis have a particularly high rate of illness, meaning that many women have additional caring responsibilities beyond looking after children. Poor English language skills and a lack of work experience (thus, often decreasing their confidence) are also significant barriers for many. While attitudes are changing rapidly in this community, cultural barriers to engagement still exist; some men prefer their wives not to work or learn English as it could give them a freedom they do not wish them to have.

2.3.2 Pakistanis

Pakistani migration to Britain largely took place slightly earlier than Bangladeshi migration, beginning in the late 1950s and peaking in 1961. This peak was due to the passing of a new immigration law which put an end to the previously free entry of British Commonwealth workers (although it still allowed family reunion). Like Bangladeshis, the chief motivation of Pakistanis in coming to Britain was to improve their economic prospects. It was also the case that men initially tended to come alone, with their families following once they had settled. However, Pakistani family reunion generally took place much earlier than that of Bangladeshis.

The age profile of the Pakistani population in Britain is young, with around 90 per cent aged under 45. The vast majority of Pakistanis are Muslim. Their employment rate is around 44 per cent. Turning specifically to Pakistani women, after Bangladeshi women, they have the next lowest economic activity rate by ethnic group and gender, at 31 per cent, while in contrast, the economic activity rate of Pakistani men is just over 70 per cent.⁴ Women tend not to work for the same reasons as Bangladeshi women: due to family responsibilities and cultural expectations.

³ Office for National Statistics (ONS), Annual Population Survey, January 2004 to December 2004, www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=462

⁴ ONS, Annual Population Survey, January 2004 to December 2004, www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=462

2.3.3 Somalis

The first wave of Somali migration to Britain took place in the mid-1800s. This consisted mainly of men arriving alone to work temporarily in dockyards or on British ships, with the intention of ultimately returning home. There was then a second wave, starting in the late 1950s, of men coming to fill the increasing number of jobs in British industry. In contrast to earlier migration, this was intended as permanent and they usually came with their wives and families. However, the 1970s recession left many Somalis unemployed and their situation has improved little since then.

The conflict and political and economic problems in Somalia in the late 1980s and 1990s led to a large third wave of migration to Britain. This wave consisted mainly of single women and children, their husbands either having been killed or staying on to fight. Since 2000, many Somalis with citizenship of the Netherlands or a Scandinavian country have migrated to the UK. The main reasons for this migration are to reunite with family members and friends from whom they were separated during the civil war and to avoid difficult situations of unemployment and discrimination in their country of asylum. Somalis who have obtained citizenship of a European Union (EU) country can move and work freely within the EU just as other EU citizens. They have settled in London but also a number of cities elsewhere, including Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and Sheffield.

The UK now hosts the largest Somali community outside Somalia. The number who arrived prior to 1990 is too small for analysis but, of those who have arrived since then, 60 per cent are female. Again, the age profile is young with just over 90 per cent aged under 45. Their employment rate is very low, at 12 per cent. It is important to note, however, that Somalis are far from being a homogenous group. Although they share a language and faith (Islam), their class, area of origin in Somalia, generation and age at time of arrival make it a very diverse community.

Educational attainment levels amongst Somalis are generally low. On arriving in England, many Somali youngsters have been deeply affected by their early experiences of war, cannot speak English and have no understanding of formal school culture. A very high proportion of the British Somali population have no qualifications (50 per cent). However, according to Harris (2004), even those with high level qualifications can usually find only low-skilled work, resulting in, for example, doctors working as minicab drivers in the UK. Such qualifications obtained in Somalia are not recognised in this country and courses to convert existing qualifications or to retrain using these, are seemingly insufficient. Somalis in general find themselves at a great disadvantage in Britain's competitive job market due to poor language skills, institutional racism and discrimination by employers, and unfamiliarity with interview techniques. Although some local initiatives have tried to address these problems, before POEM no central programme had been developed for doing so.

2.4 Labour market information by provider area

This section presents a background portrait of the ten POEM districts and the cities and areas in which they are situated. This will include in each case:

- percentage ethnic breakdowns, economic activity and unemployment figures broken down by gender⁵;
- percentage of working-age residents claiming benefits;
- jobs density (the number of filled jobs in an area divided by the number of people of working age resident in that area).

The tables compare the labour markets in the POEM pilot areas with the wider surrounding city or area and with England or Great Britain (depending on the format in which the data was available).

There is also a short narrative section outlining the local labour market, other labour market programmes which have previously been run in the area and any important local dynamics (based on information gained from the Wave 1 visits to providers). The information on ethnic grouping refers to broader groups than those POEM targets as more detailed ethnicity breakdowns were not readily available. Summary boxes are presented at the beginning of each provider's section outlining the key points to note for that area.

2.4.1 London providers

Central London

This area comprises the London Boroughs of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Camden and Islington. POEM clients reside in all four of these boroughs.

The proportions of Asian/Asian British residents in this area ranges from 4.9 to 10.4 per cent of the population. Although higher than the national average of 4.6 per cent, it is not as high as the London average of 12.1 per cent. More notable is the relatively high representation of black/black British residents. The jobs density is excellent but economic activity is slightly lower than average, particularly for females. The proportion claiming benefits varies widely across the area's four boroughs (see Tables 2.1 to 2.4).

⁵ Ranges are given where the data was available by borough. The range provides the highest and lowest figures found in the boroughs comprising the POEM pilot areas.

Table 2.1 Ethnic breakdown

	Central London (%)	London (%)	England (%)
White	73.0 – 78.6	71.2	90.9
Mixed	3.8 – 4.1	3.2	1.3
Asian or Asian British	4.9 – 10.4	12.1	4.6
Black or black British	7.0 – 11.9	10.9	2.3
Other	3.3 – 6.0	2.7	0.9

Source: Census (2001).

Table 2.2 Economic activity and unemployment, by gender

	Central London (%)	London (%)	Great Britain (%)
Males			
Economically active	71.8 – 78.9	81.9	83.3
Unemployed	6.2 – 8.8	7.4	5.7
Females			
Economically active	54.9 – 66.2	67.7	73.4
Unemployed	5.6 – 8.1	7.3	4.9

Note: Figures for economic activity are for those of working age (16 – 59/64). Figures for unemployment are for those aged 16 or over.

Source: ONS annual population survey (April 2006 to March 2007).

Table 2.3 Benefits claimed⁶

	Central London (%)	London (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total claimants	9.9 – 19.6	14.4	14.2

Note: Percentages are a proportion of resident working-age people.

Source: Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefit claimants – working-age client group (May 2007).

⁶ All benefits are included in the data in Table 2.3, and in all other tables on benefits throughout this chapter.

Table 2.4 Jobs density⁷

	Central London	London	Great Britain
Jobs density	1.09 – 3.63	0.94	0.84

Note: Jobs density is the ratio of total jobs to the working-age population. Total jobs includes employees, self-employed, Government-supported trainees and HM Forces.

Source: ONS jobs density (2005).

Compared to the other areas in which POEM has been operating, central London has a relatively transient population. Ethnic minority communities in this area include many recent immigrants to the UK who live in central London initially, before moving to settle in more established communities which are further away from the centre of London. As a result, many of the ethnic minority communities found here are smaller and less well established compared to the communities in other parts of London. Employability opportunities in central London include retail, customer service, catering, warehouse work and construction.

The provider in this area had been operating for over 15 years, with the vast majority of their work having been the delivery of Jobcentre Plus programmes. POEM was the first time this provider had done outreach work to engage clients. There is a substantial amount of other similar local provision in this area, including local council provision and Jobcentre Plus programmes, both of which the provider had links with.

City and East London

Wards in this area where POEM clients reside are located in the London Boroughs of Newham, Hackney and Tower Hamlets. The following analysis, therefore, looks specifically at these three boroughs.

The percentages of both Asian/Asian British and black/black British residents vary greatly across the three boroughs. However, at their highest they are considerably higher than both the national and London averages (37.0 per cent for Asian/Asian British compared with just 4.6 per nationally, and 24.7 per cent for black/black British residents compared with just 2.3 per cent nationally). Jobs density varies greatly across the three boroughs, yet economic activity is consistently below average with high unemployment. This is particularly true for women whose unemployment figures reach up to approximately four times the national average. The percentage of people claiming benefits is also consistently high (see Tables 2.5 to 2.8).

⁷ Jobs density is calculated by dividing the number of filled jobs in an area by the number of people of working-age resident in that area.

Table 2.5 Ethnic breakdown

	City and East London (%)	London (%)	England (%)
White	39.4–59.4	71.2	90.9
Mixed	2.0–4.2	3.2	1.3
Asian or Asian British	8.6–37.0	12.1	4.6
Black or black British	7.9–24.7	10.9	2.3
Other	3.0–3.2	2.7	0.9

Source: Census (2001).

Table 2.6 Economic activity and unemployment, by gender

	City and East London (%)	London (%)	Great Britain (%)
Males			
Economically active	74.7 – 78.8	81.9	83.3
Unemployed	9.9 – 13.4	7.4	5.7
Females			
Economically active	51.2 – 58.8	67.7	73.4
Unemployed	12.7 – 19.3	7.3	4.9

Note: Figures for economic activity are for those of working age (16 – 59/64). Figures for unemployment are for those aged 16 or over.

Source: ONS annual population survey (April 2006 to March 2007).

Table 2.7 Benefits claimed

	City and East London (%)	London (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total claimants	20.2 – 22.6	14.4	14.2

Note: Percentages are a proportion of resident working-age people.

Source: DWP benefit claimants – working-age client group (May 2007).

Table 2.8 Jobs density

	City and East London	London	Great Britain
Jobs density	0.51 – 1.36	0.94	0.84

Note: Jobs density is the ratio of total jobs to the working-age population. Total jobs includes employees, self-employed, Government-supported trainees and HM Forces.

Source: ONS jobs density (2005).

Within this area, Newham has a high concentration of Pakistanis and Tower Hamlets has a high concentration of Bangladeshis, whereas Hackney has mixed pockets of each. There is only a small Somali population and this is dispersed across all three boroughs. The area's labour market is dominated by the finance sector with Canary Wharf at its centre. However, the target labour market for the POEM client group is quite different. The majority of jobs are in retail, administration, cleaning, security services and childcare, although the latter tends to be oversubscribed.

The provider for POEM in this area was also involved in the earlier EMO programme. In addition to this, they have previously run a number of welfare-to-work initiatives, including voluntary programmes such as Working Neighbourhood Pilots.

The provider has forged links with a number of other organisations in the area which offer similar or complementary services to those from the same target ethnic groups and often referred POEM clients on to them for 'finishing' training to help them access jobs.

Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth

This area comprises the London Boroughs of Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth.

The percentage of Asian/Asian British residents in this area is slightly higher than the national average. However, it is only around half the London average. The percentage of black/black British residents is high, reaching nearly two and a half times the London average in one borough. The jobs density varies from poor to excellent. However, economic activity and unemployment reach, at best, only average levels. The proportion claiming benefits varies widely across the three boroughs (see Tables 2.9 to 2.12).

Table 2.9 Ethnic breakdown

	Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth (%)	London (%)	England (%)
White	62.0 – 78.0	71.2	90.9
Mixed	3.3 – 4.8	3.2	1.3
Asian or Asian British	4.6 – 6.9	12.1	4.6
Black or black British	9.6 – 25.8	10.9	2.3
Other	2.2 – 5.0	2.7	0.9

Source: Census (2001).

Table 2.10 Economic activity and unemployment, by gender

	Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth (%)	London (%)	Great Britain (%)
Males			
Economically active	79.6 – 83.4	81.9	83.3
Unemployed	7.3 – 9.2	7.4	5.7
Females			
Economically active	60.6 – 74.2	67.7	73.4
Unemployed	7.5 – 10.2	7.3	4.9

Note: Figures for economic activity are for those of working age (16 – 59/64). Figures for unemployment are for those aged 16 or over.

Source: ONS annual population survey (April 2006 to March 2007).

Table 2.11 Benefits claimed

	Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth (%)	London (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total claimants	10.4 – 17.2	14.4	14.2

Note: Percentages are a proportion of resident working-age people.

Source: DWP benefit claimants – working-age client group (May 2007).

Table 2.12 Jobs density

	Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth	London	Great Britain
Jobs density	0.62 – 1.09	0.94	0.84

Note: Jobs density is the ratio of total jobs to the working-age population. Total jobs includes employees, self-employed, Government-supported trainees and HM Forces.

Source: ONS jobs density (2005).

The London Borough of Wandsworth contains high numbers of Pakistani residents, while a mix of ethnic minority groups can be found in Lambeth, although the majority are Somali. Most clients from the borough of Southwark have been Bangladeshi. All of the three boroughs are currently undergoing extensive regeneration with significant inward investment. The area's labour market consists predominantly of public sector, banking and finance jobs.

The POEM provider in this area has had extensive involvement in welfare-to-work programmes in the past. They also delivered EMO, which they found challenging at first due to a lack of knowledge of the target community, but the experience helped them to run POEM. The provider had established strong relationships with community groups and local employers.

North and North East London

Wards in this area where POEM clients reside are located in the London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Enfield, Haringey, Redbridge and Waltham Forest. The following analysis, therefore, looks specifically at these six boroughs.

The percentage of Asian/Asian British residents in the North and North East London boroughs is consistently above the national average, although it varies a great deal. At its highest, it is over four times this figure and over twice the London average. The percentage of black/black British residents also varies but is consistently well above the national average and reaches up to nearly twice the London average. Although the jobs density is quite significantly below average, economic activity is only slightly so. Unemployment is particularly high for females in some areas. The proportion of residents claiming benefits varies greatly, from just below, to well above, the national average (see Tables 2.13 to 2.16).

Table 2.13 Ethnic breakdown

	North and North East London (%)	London (%)	England (%)
White	63.5 – 78.2	71.2	90.9
Mixed	2.4 – 4.6	3.2	2.3
Asian or Asian British	6.72 – 25.0	12.1	4.6
Black or black British	6.0 – 20.03	10.9	2.3
Other	1.5 – 4.6	2.7	0.9

Source: Census (2001).

Table 2.14 Economic activity and unemployment, by gender

	North and North East London (%)	London (%)	Great Britain (%)
Males			
Economically active	74.8 – 83.2	81.9	83.3
Unemployed	5.9 – 7.8	7.4	5.7
Females			
Economically active	64.1 – 70.5	67.7	73.4
Unemployed	4.8 – 10.8	7.3	4.9

Note: Figures for economic activity are for those of working age (16–59/64). Figures for unemployment are for those aged 16 or over.

Source: ONS annual population survey (April 2006 to March 2007).

Table 2.15 Benefits claimed

	North and North East London (%)	London (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total claimants	11.6 – 20.9	14.4	14.2

Note: Percentages are a proportion of resident working-age people.

Source: DWP benefit claimants – working-age client group (May 2007).

Table 2.16 Jobs density

	North and North East London	London	Great Britain
Jobs density	0.52 – 0.66	0.94	0.84

Note: Jobs density is the ratio of total jobs to the working-age population. Total jobs includes employees, self-employed, Government-supported trainees and HM Forces.

Source: ONS jobs density (2005).

The POEM provider in north and north east London previously ran EMO. Initially, they suspected that, through POEM, they would get many clients in Haringey and Waltham Forest as there are high numbers of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis living there, and that they would struggle to meet targets in Enfield, Barnet and Redbridge where there are far fewer. Surprisingly, however, the opposite has been true and Enfield has yielded the most clients. Of those in the target communities who are unemployed, 98 per cent are on benefits, leaving only a very small pool of potential clients. Most Jobcentre Plus vacancies in this area are in the fields of retail, catering and administration.

South and South East London

Wards in this area where POEM clients reside are located in the London Boroughs of Croydon, Lewisham, Bexley and Bromley. The following analysis, therefore, looks specifically at these four boroughs.

The percentage of Asian/Asian British residents varies across these boroughs. At its lowest it is below the national average (2.6 compared with 4.6) and at its highest it is just slightly below the London average (11.3 compared with 12.1). The percentage of black/black British residents varies even more, from just above the national average to over twice the London average (23.4 compared with 10.9). Jobs density overall is fairly poor, although economic activity is average (in some cases considerably higher) and the proportion of benefit claimants spans a few percentage points either side of the national average, never reaching the high levels seen in some of the other areas (see Tables 2.17 to 2.20).

Table 2.17 Ethnic breakdown

	South and South East London (%)	London (%)	England (%)
White	65.9 – 91.6	71.2	90.9
Mixed	1.3 – 4.2	3.2	1.3
Asian or Asian British	2.6 – 11.3	12.1	4.6
Black or black British	2.9 – 23.4	10.9	2.3
Other	1.05 – 2.7	2.7	0.9

Source: Census (2001).

Table 2.18 Economic activity and unemployment, by gender

	South and South East London (%)	London (%)	Great Britain (%)
Males			
Economically active	79.6 – 90.1	81.9	83.3
Unemployed	5.0 – 11.4	7.4	5.7
Females			
Economically active	71.3 – 76.9	67.7	73.4
Unemployed	4.6 – 9.9	7.3	4.9

Note: Figures for economic activity are for those of working age (16 – 59/64). Figures for unemployment are for those aged 16 or over.

Source: ONS annual population survey (April 2006 to March 2007).

Table 2.19 Benefits claimed

	South and South East London (%)	London (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total claimants	10.6 – 17.0	14.4	14.2

Note: Percentages are a proportion of resident working-age people.

Source: DWP benefit claimants – working-age client group (May 2007).

Table 2.20 Jobs density

	South and South East London	London	Great Britain
Jobs density	0.46 – 0.70	0.94	0.84

Note: Jobs density is the ratio of total jobs to the working-age population. Total jobs includes employees, self-employed, Government-supported trainees and HM Forces.

Source: ONS jobs density (2005).

The background for these boroughs is similar to that of the City and East London boroughs (see earlier in this section). The main difference is in the concentrations of the target groups. POEM clients in Lewisham are predominantly Somali, with far smaller numbers of Bangladeshis and Pakistanis. The bulk of Somalis here are recent immigrants; mainly wives joining their husbands, and many had not been in the UK long enough to be eligible for publicly-funded programmes including POEM. There are very few Somalis in the Croydon wards. The majority of clients here are Pakistani with smaller numbers of Bangladeshis.

The labour market dynamics are also very similar to those of the City and East London boroughs, particularly in terms of the sectors and types of jobs available to the target groups. Many of the employers with which the provider had developed links have been large, centrally-based organisations with multiple vacancies across London. The POEM provider in this area had also established strong links with community groups to help with recruitment and delivering activities.

West London

Wards in this area where POEM clients reside are located in the London Boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow and Hounslow. The following analysis, therefore, looks specifically at these five boroughs.

The percentage of Asian/Asian British residents in these boroughs ranges from around the national average to the highest of all areas studied (29.6 compared with a national average of 4.6 and London average of 12.1). The percentage of black/black British residents also varies widely, reaching a high of 19.9 (compared with a national average of 2.3 and London average of 10.9). Jobs density varies from fairly poor to excellent. Economic activity for males is strong, although for women it lies consistently below the national average (see Tables 2.21 to 2.24).

Table 2.21 Ethnic breakdown

	West London (%)	London (%)	England (%)
White	45.3 – 77.8	71.2	90.9
Mixed	2.8 – 3.8	3.2	1.3
Asian or Asian British	4.4 – 29.6	12.1	4.6
Black or black British	4.4 – 19.9	10.9	2.3
Other	2.6 – 4.3	2.7	0.9

Source: Census (2001).

Table 2.22 Economic activity and unemployment, by gender

	West London (%)	London (%)	Great Britain (%)
Males			
Economically active	81.5 – 86.9	81.9	83.3
Unemployed	5.6 – 11.7	7.4	5.7
Females			
Economically active	62.1 – 72.8	67.7	73.4
Unemployed	5.6 – 9.3	7.3	4.9

Note: Figures for economic activity are for those of working age (16 – 59/64). Figures for unemployment are for those aged 16 or over.

Source: ONS annual population survey (April 2006 to March 2007).

Table 2.23 Benefits claimed

	West London (%)	London (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total claimants	13.2 – 16.2	14.4	14.2

Note: Percentages are a proportion of resident working-age people.

Source: DWP benefit claimants – working-age client group (May 2007).

Table 2.24 Jobs density

	West London	London	Great Britain (%)
Jobs density	0.65 – 1.10	0.94	0.84

Note: Jobs density is the ratio of total jobs to the working-age population. Total jobs includes employees, self-employed, Government-supported trainees and HM Forces.

Source: ONS jobs density (2005).

Southall, which is located in the London Borough of Ealing, has historically had a strong Punjabi-speaking Sikh presence. However, it is now starting to develop a much more diverse population with growing numbers of Somalis, Pakistanis, Afghans and eastern Europeans. Employment opportunities here tend to be dominated by large multi-nationals. The London Borough of Hammersmith is also very diverse, both in terms of culture/ethnicity and contrasting areas of affluence and deprivation. It contains a significant number of deprived wards. There are some major Asian food production companies in this area which are of particular relevance to POEM clients. The two main employment sectors which POEM has targeted in this area have been the catering and food industries and the fashion industry.

2.4.2 Providers outside London

Birmingham

The percentage of Asian/Asian British residents in Birmingham is much higher than nationally (19.5 per cent compared with just 4.6 per cent). Other ethnic minority groups are also well represented. Although the jobs density is slightly higher than the national average, economic activity is notably lower. The proportion claiming benefits is nearly 50 per cent higher than both the national and regional figures (see Tables 2.25 to 2.28).

Table 2.25 Ethnic breakdown

	Birmingham (%)	England (%)
White	70.4	90.9
Mixed	2.9	1.3
Asian or Asian British	19.5	4.6
Black or black British	6.1	2.3
Other	1.1	0.9

Source: Census (2001).

Table 2.26 Economic activity and unemployment, by gender

	Birmingham (%)	West Midlands (%)	Great Britain (%)
Males			
Economically active	76.3	82.7	83.3
Unemployed	10.3	5.8	5.7
Females			
Economically active	61.0	71.5	73.4
Unemployed	8.3	5.0	4.9

Note: Figures for economic activity are for those of working age (16 – 59/64). Figures for unemployment are for those aged 16 or over.

Source: ONS annual population survey (April 2006 to March 2007).

Table 2.27 Benefits claimed

	Birmingham (%)	West Midlands (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total claimants	21.0	15.7	14.2

Note: Percentages are a proportion of resident working-age people.

Source: DWP benefit claimants – working-age client group (May 2007).

Table 2.28 Jobs density

	Birmingham	West Midlands	Great Britain
Jobs density	0.88	0.82	0.84

Note: Jobs density is the ratio of total jobs to the working-age population. Total jobs includes employees, self-employed, Government-supported trainees and HM Forces.

Source: ONS jobs density (2005).

Although they operate right across Birmingham, the POEM provider concentrates much of its efforts on six key deprived wards. The most notable of these is Aston which contains a high concentration of ethnic minorities, including around 20,000 Bangladeshi households (compared with around 60,000 in Tower Hamlets). There are also several areas with significant numbers of Indians and/or Somalis. Household incomes in these key deprived wards are very low (for example, in Aston incomes average around £12,000). The majority of residents are claiming Child Tax Credit (CTC), Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB), and Income Support (IS), Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Incapacity Benefit (IB), rather than Working Tax Credit (WTC). When people get jobs and their incomes rise, they tend to move out of these wards. However, regeneration initiatives are starting to encourage them to stay.

The POEM provider in this area has run many welfare-to-work programmes in the past, including Fair Cities and EMO. They have also been involved with City Strategy, and have strong links with regeneration initiatives, local employers and community stakeholders. They have been delivering POEM alongside a range of other welfare-to-work programmes.

Leeds and Bradford

The percentage of Asian/Asian British residents in Leeds is close to the national average. In Bradford, however, it is dramatically higher (19.0 per cent compared with 4.6 per cent nationally). Representation of other ethnic minorities is low to average. Jobs density, economic activity and unemployment all compare fairly favourably with both the region and Great Britain as a whole (see Tables 2.29 to 2.32).

Table 2.29 Ethnic breakdown

	Leeds and Bradford (%)	England (%)
White	80.0 – 91.8	90.9
Mixed	1.4	1.3
Asian or Asian British	4.5 – 19.0	4.6
Black or black British	1.0 – 1.4	2.3
Other	0.2 – 0.8	0.9

Source: Census (2001).

Table 2.30 Economic activity and unemployment, by gender

	Leeds and Bradford (%)	Yorkshire and The Humber (%)	Great Britain (%)
Males			
Economically active	78.8 – 84.6	82.9	83.3
Unemployed	4.9 – 7.4	6.1	5.7
Females			
Economically active	67.7 – 74.6	72.4	73.4
Unemployed	4.7 – 4.9	4.7	4.9

Note: Figures for economic activity are for those of working age (16 – 59/64). Figures for unemployment are for those aged 16 or over.

Source: ONS annual population survey (April 2006 to March 2007).

Table 2.31 Benefits claimed

	Leeds and Bradford (%)	Yorkshire and The Humber (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total claimants	13.1 – 16.9	14.9	14.2

Note: Percentages are a proportion of resident working-age people.

Source: DWP benefit claimants – working-age client group (May 2007).

Table 2.32 Jobs density

	Leeds and Bradford	Yorkshire and The Humber	Great Britain (%)
Jobs density	0.74 – 0.96	0.81	0.84

Note: Jobs density is the ratio of total jobs to the working-age population. Total jobs includes employees, self-employed, Government-supported trainees and HM Forces.

Source: ONS jobs density (2005).

Leeds overall is expanding in terms of economic growth. However, some pockets of deprivation remain, mainly on the city's outskirts. These include the wards particularly targeted by POEM. Bradford, in direct contrast, was previously a major centre for the manufacturing industry but is now in decline. Consequently, there are high levels of both social and economic deprivation. The main employment sectors in the region are hospitality and catering, customer service and other service industries, and construction. There are also many vacancies in tailoring, which are particularly relevant to the POEM client group.

There are several organisations in the area who provide similar services to POEM and target the same communities. Although these are potential competitors, there is a degree of cooperation and cross-referral. Many clients (including those not eligible for POEM) are referred onto training organisations such as ESOL providers and Further Education (FE) colleges, as appropriate.

Leicester

The percentage of Asian/Asian British residents in this area is very high (29.9 per cent compared with just 4.6 nationally). The representation of other ethnic minorities, however, is only slightly higher than average. Economic activity for males is only slightly below the national average, but for females it is substantially lower than in the east Midlands region and nationally. Unemployment figures for both genders are fairly high, despite the jobs density being strong. The proportion claiming benefits is high at 19.3 per cent compared with 14.2 nationally (see Tables 2.33 to 2.36).

Table 2.33 Ethnic breakdown

	Leicester City (%)	England (%)
White	63.9	90.9
Mixed	2.3	1.3
Asian or Asian British	29.9	4.6
Black or black British	3.1	2.3
Other	0.8	0.9

Source: Census (2001).

Table 2.34 Economic activity and unemployment, by gender

	Leicester City (%)	East Midlands (%)	Great Britain (%)
Males			
Economically active	81.9	84.2	83.3
Unemployed	8.3	5.4	5.7
Females			
Economically active	66.8	76.4	73.4
Unemployed	7.5	4.7	4.9

Note: Figures for economic activity are for those of working age (16 – 59/64). Figures for unemployment are for those aged 16 or over.

Source: ONS annual population survey (April 2006 to March 2007).

Table 2.35 Benefits claimed

	Leicester City (%)	East Midlands (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total claimants	19.3	13.2	14.2

Note: Percentages are a proportion of resident working-age people.

Source: DWP benefit claimants – working-age client group (May 2007).

Table 2.36 Jobs density

	Leicester City	East Midlands	Great Britain
Jobs density	0.95	0.80	0.84

Note: Jobs density is the ratio of total jobs to the working-age population. Total jobs includes employees, self-employed, Government-supported trainees and HM Forces.

Source: ONS jobs density (2005).

The predominant ethnic minority group in Leicester is Indian. There is also a high concentration of Somalis in the St Matthews area where deprivation persists, despite the fact that many Somalis have started their own businesses. However, there are much lower numbers of other ethnic groups and notably, with regard to POEM, lower numbers of Pakistanis. Growing employment sectors here are security, construction and food manufacturing. The POEM provider for the area previously delivered EMO.

Manchester

The percentage of black/black British residents in this area is fairly high (4.2 per cent compared with the national figure of 2.3 per cent). The representation of other ethnic minorities, however, is low. Despite an excellent jobs density, economic activity is considerably below average for both genders and unemployment is relatively high. The proportion claiming benefits is around 50 per cent higher than the national average (see Tables 2.37 to 2.40).

Table 2.37 Ethnic breakdown

	Greater Manchester (%)	England (%)
White	91.1	90.9
Mixed	0.8	1.3
Asian or Asian British	2.7	4.6
Black or black British	4.2	2.3
Other	0.8	0.9

Source: Census (2001).

Table 2.38 Economic activity and unemployment, by gender

	Manchester (%)	North West (%)	Great Britain (%)
Males			
Economically active	74.7	80.8	83.3
Unemployed	6.8	6.2	5.7
Females			
Economically active	64.9	72.2	73.4
Unemployed	5.5	4.5	4.9

Note: Figures for economic activity are for those of working age (16 – 59/64). Figures for unemployment are for those aged 16 or over.

Source: ONS annual population survey (April 2006 to March 2007).

Table 2.39 Benefits claimed

	Manchester (%)	North West (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total claimants	21.7	17.5	14.2

Note: Percentages are a proportion of resident working-age people.

Source: DWP benefit claimants – working-age client group (May 2007).

Table 2.40 Jobs density

	Manchester	North West	Great Britain
Jobs density	1.09	0.80	0.84

Note: Jobs density is the ratio of total jobs to the working-age population. Total jobs includes employees, self-employed, Government-supported trainees and HM Forces.

Source: ONS jobs density (2005).

The provider in this district had a wide geographical remit; hence, there were provider venues in four different areas of Greater Manchester – Oldham, Bolton, Rochdale and Longsight (in central Manchester). Although the provider used a standard brief to ensure consistency in approach across these areas, it was acknowledged that each area is different with its own distinct culture. Oldham has a very strong Asian presence and is dominated largely by Pakistani and, to a lesser extent, Indian groups. Bolton has large and well-established concentrations of Pakistanis and a newer, yet growing, Somali presence. Rochdale is similar to both these areas and has large concentrations of people from the Indian sub-continent, especially Pakistanis and Indians. Longsight differs somewhat from the other areas as its central location means it has a wider spread of different ethnic minority groups. The majority here, however, are Pakistani. There are small pockets of Bangladeshis across all four areas, but they can be difficult to target as they are intermingled with other south Asian groups.

The labour market in Greater Manchester is dominated by low-skilled jobs such as retail (local shops, cash and carry outlets, etc.), cleaning, childcare, hospitality (restaurants and take-aways), taxi driving, and clerical and administration work. These are also the jobs which tend to best suit the POEM clients' lifestyles. The POEM provider here was previously involved in delivering EMO, which was the first time that they had worked on a programme specifically aimed at ethnic minorities. All four provider centres were in areas where other welfare-to-work programmes are running. These included New Deal programmes, Better Futures, Supporting Pathways, Working Neighbourhood and the range of initiatives targeted at the newly and long-term unemployed and disabled as well as lone parents. There is also small-scale local authority (LA) provision.

This provider had no contractual arrangements with local community groups but had developed strong informal relationships with most of them. Indeed, POEM outreach work has been carried out at the premises of many of them and joint marketing and job fairs take place.

3 The providers

This chapter presents a profile of the Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM) provider organisations, drawing mainly on information from case study work with providers. In particular, it describes:

- their backgrounds and previous work in this area;
- the main services offered;
- the extent to which POEM represented a new departure for the providers;
- staffing arrangements for the programme;
- partnerships and networks established with community organisations and employers.

3.1 Background to Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities providers

During the first year of the project, there were eight POEM providers operating in the ten project areas, with one overall provider covering three of the London areas. (For the sake of simplicity and brevity, from hereon in, this report refers to ten providers, rather than eight, reflecting the fact that POEM was operating separately in ten discrete districts in England.) All POEM providers were private sector training organisations, with some also offering recruitment and consultancy services, although often these were entirely separate from POEM and other similar provision.

All the providers had a track record for delivering regeneration-focused work in deprived inner-city communities and supporting unemployed individuals back into work through a range of welfare-to-work programmes, including New Deal, Employment Zones, Action Teams for Jobs, Working Neighbourhood Pilots, Ethnic Minority Outreach (EMO) and Fair Cities. They usually had experience of dealing with a variety of disadvantaged groups, such as lone parents, over 50s, ex-offenders, people on Incapacity Benefit (IB) and ethnic minorities. Services typically offered to these client groups included:

- employability programmes offering job search skills, confidence building, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and basic skills, health and safety training;
- vocational and workplace training linked to specific occupational areas (for example, through Train to Gain funding);
- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG);
- work tasters and work placements;
- recruitment consultancy and job-brokering services.

Most of the providers already had an established presence within the geographical areas where POEM would be operating, were familiar with local labour market issues and, through previous programmes, had established links with local employers.

3.1.1 Extent to which POEM was a new work area

As required by the project specification, all the POEM providers had previous experience of working with ethnic minority communities, including the key target groups for the project. However, some providers had developed this provision over a number of years, while others had only engaged with this client group more recently, through programmes such as Fair Cities and EMO. In fact, the majority of providers had previously been involved in the delivery of EMO and many of them reported that they had drawn on this experience in developing their approach to POEM. Key lessons learnt from EMO had included:

- recruiting project staff from the same ethnic and linguistic backgrounds as the client groups;
- establishing project outreach bases within the target wards or setting up mobile units to travel around these neighbourhoods (in order to engage with potential clients reluctant to travel far from home);
- delivering project services in community venues such as community centres, faith centres, schools, etc.

Interviews with providers identified some key differences between POEM and previous programmes targeted at ethnic minority communities, and the challenges which these had posed in terms of meeting the project outcome targets (which most had failed to do, see Chapter 7). For example, some providers commented that they were already familiar with the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in their locality, but that working with the Somali community had been a new departure, which had required extending their networks or recruiting project workers from Somali backgrounds. Indeed, the Management Information (MI) shows that several of the providers recruited nearly twice as many black African clients during the last four months of the pilot than they did during the first nine months, and one provider recruited more than three times as many.

While providers already had experience of working with clients from a range of ethnic minorities per se, the clients they were to work with on POEM were in some ways different from those they had usually engaged with before. For example, the focus of POEM on clients who were not receiving benefits and who were disengaged from the labour market, meant developing a different approach to recruitment and delivery than they had adopted with their more usual client groups. In addition, the 'partner' element of the POEM programme (including that the client's partner should also be in work and not receiving benefits) meant that the pool of individuals from which they were to recruit was more restricted than had been the case on many of the programmes they had operated in the past. This restriction brought with it a range of additional issues, which not all providers had been fully anticipating. These included issues around accessing the potential client groups, and that some female clients would need the permission and blessing of their partners in order for them to sign up to POEM.

Some providers explained that they were more used to delivering mandatory programmes which relied on referrals from Jobcentre Plus. They had had little previous experience of operating voluntary programmes which usually required intensive outreach work and more active engagement with community partners and networks.

Several of the London providers referred to the relatively transient and dispersed nature of the ethnic minority and refugee populations in their districts, compared to those outside London. They thought that, as a result, there were fewer large, well-established communities to target, compared to other parts of the country:

'We haven't got nearly as many POEM starts as we were contracted to do and this is largely because [the geographical area] has a very transient population, so it seems to be that a lot of immigration goes into [the area] and then moves out into more established communities, which are further out.'

(London provider)

These London providers also reported that the dispersed and transient nature of the target communities in their POEM districts had meant that it had been difficult to build up momentum through word-of-mouth recruitment amongst these smaller, more widely-dispersed communities.

One provider, which did have previous experience of working with ethnic minority communities, was operating in a completely new geographical area for POEM, and had to invest a great deal of time and resources in the start-up phase in establishing new community networks and making themselves visible to the target groups. They felt that these circumstances had contributed to the slow speed of client recruitment in the early stages of the project. While they had anticipated the need to be engaged with community partners, it appears that many did not realise the extent to which this would be crucial in finding suitable clients for POEM, and in recruiting them to the programme. Some commented that it had not been as

important to work with partners in recruiting clients to other programmes they had delivered in the past.

3.2 Other organisations operating locally

Interviews with providers sought information about similar programmes operating locally and explored the extent to which POEM was being offered as a complementary service or was in competition with these other forms of provision. In the majority of project locations, there were various community organisations (for example, ethnic associations, faith groups, women's groups, youth projects, etc.), which were offering some similar services to POEM, such as advice and ESOL courses. However, where positive links had been established with community providers, POEM was generally proving to be complementary, rather than duplicating these other services, because of its stronger focus on flexible one-to-one support for clients.

During the first year, there was evidence of a significant degree of cooperation developing and strengthening between some of the POEM providers and other local services. There were also cross-referrals taking place; for example, where an individual did not meet the POEM eligibility criteria, effort was made to signpost them on to other appropriate provision. However, this appeared to be more effective at some providers than others, depending on the other programmes which they were running and the extent of the knowledge of, and links with, other providers in the area.

Providers (both those in and outside London) who reported a collaborative approach to working with community partners appeared to have made considerably better progress in year one than those still struggling to establish these links, or who perceived themselves as operating in a competitive market for engaging with a limited and hard-to-reach client group.

3.3 Staffing arrangements

POEM was delivered to clients by outreach and adviser staff. At some providers, these two roles were distinct, with some staff being responsible for engaging and recruiting clients to POEM, after which clients were passed on to work with advisers. One provider used the term 'employment coach' rather than adviser, to emphasise the employment-focused nature of the programme. At most providers, the roles were combined, to some extent, with staff combining outreach work with office-based work with clients. Many of the providers had recruited POEM staff who were from the same ethnic groups as some of their clients and spoke the same languages. Having POEM staff who reflected and understood the POEM target communities was regarded as a crucial strategy for engaging clients from those communities, although it appears that some providers may have been more aware of how important this would be at an earlier stage than others.

Multilingual project team which included ex-clients

One provider from outside London had a clear policy that their workforce should reflect the local community. The project team were multiethnic, so, if required, they were able to match workers to clients in terms of ethnic background. There were 26 languages spoken amongst the provider's staff, including Bengali, Urdu, Miripuri, Punjabi, Gujurati, Hindi and Somali.

In fact, a high proportion of their staff (on POEM and on other labour market-focused contracts which they also ran) had themselves come through one of those programmes in the past. This was seen to be extremely beneficial in terms of:

- fostering staff commitment to the organisation and its clients;
- reflecting and understanding the communities with which the provider worked;
- ensuring an empathy between staff and clients;
- providing current clients with successful role models for their own futures.

In some of the interviews, specific reference was made to recruiting additional project workers from Somali backgrounds, particularly where engaging with Somali clients was a new departure for the organisation.

The main outreach worker responsibilities were to publicise the project within the wards targeted by POEM, establish and maintain links and liaise with community partners, and attend community events, all of which would be done with the core aim of engaging with, and recruiting, eligible clients. At some providers, the functions of outreach worker and adviser were combined into a single role because of the specialised nature of the POEM client group. It was noted that, as a voluntary programme, the POEM model allowed more scope for project staff to work flexibly than on mandatory welfare-to-work programmes. Some providers also employed tutors to deliver in-house training, such as vocationally-focused ESOL and job search training.

Some providers placed an emphasis on offering training to POEM staff while working on the project, such as qualifications in recruitment practice or advice and guidance work. There were also a number of examples of POEM staff having been former clients of POEM or similar programmes in the past at that provider.

Staff training at a London provider

All the new staff (advisers and outreach workers) had a three-week induction. They had ongoing training throughout the year and were offered the chance to achieve NVQ Level 3 in Advice and Guidance, paid for by the company. The organisation hoped to retain the new staff in future, after POEM had ended; they had spent a lot of time ensuring they had employed the right people, from within the target communities, with the right skills and the right philosophy:

'You get the right people and train them properly and they make the project their own.'

(London provider)

In some cases, there had been changes made to staffing arrangements during the course of the year, in order to improve recruitment to the project or respond more effectively to client needs. Staffing changes reported in provider interviews included: recruitment of additional outreach workers; employment of a full-time job-broker; and creating new dedicated posts for community or employer engagement.

Creation of new staffing posts in response to client needs

Some way through the pilot year of POEM, one London provider had employed a recruitment manager to focus solely on getting people into work once they were job-ready. This role had been successful in increasing the focus on jobs within the project and in improving the number of job starts.

There had also been some staffing difficulties and challenges during the first year, for example, through staff leaving providers, although staff retention across the providers as a whole appeared to be good. Problems had certainly also arisen from the short-term nature of POEM (which was originally only funded for one year) and uncertainty about whether it would continue. For example, until the project continuation was confirmed, some providers spoke about their concerns that staff on short-term contracts might leave early to look for work elsewhere.

3.4 Partners and networks

3.4.1 Community partners and networks

Although there were very few partner organisations formally contracted to POEM, all the providers placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of building up and extending informal links and networks with community partners in the project locations, including women's groups, faith groups, refugee support groups, etc. A few providers already had extensive networks in place at the start of POEM,

including, crucially, links with organisations working on the ground in the target communities. While other providers already had substantial partnerships in place, they discovered during the early months of delivering POEM, that these were not the right links to help them to recruit POEM clients. In these cases, providers had to identify relevant community partners and build appropriate links with them, particularly with regard to accessing and recruiting potential POEM clients. The extent to which they had to do this had generally impacted on their start and job entry figures in the earlier months of POEM. Providers that needed to spend time changing and adding substantially to their partners and networks had fewer resources and reduced capacity to recruit and work with clients in the first few months of POEM (also see Section 4.2 on the use of partnerships in engaging and recruiting clients).

3.4.2 Employer engagement

Employer networks were also viewed as a key part of the POEM project and most providers were aiming to draw on existing links with employers to meet project targets in terms of job outcomes. Some providers had also used their employer networks creatively in other ways on POEM, including employer mock interviews as part of job search training, work placements and work trials and employer-led training courses (also see Chapter 5 on use of employer networks).

Employer engagement teams

A provider from outside London already had well-established employer engagement teams, which offered suitable, screened candidates to local employers. Through POEM, they aimed to engage with employers' corporate social responsibility agendas and persuade them of the benefits of employing a more diverse workforce.

3.5 Summary

During the first year of POEM, delivery was by eight providers operating in the ten POEM areas, with three of the London areas being covered by one provider. Some providers were already familiar with the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, but working with the Somali community on POEM was a new departure. In the past, providers had usually worked with clients who were closer to the labour market than their typical POEM clients. Some were more used to delivering mandatory programmes which relied on Jobcentre Plus referrals, than a voluntary programme such as POEM, which required more intensive outreach work in order to find and recruit suitable clients.

POEM was delivered to clients by adviser and outreach staff, but providers emphasised the importance of working in partnership with other organisations in the community, in order to find clients who would be eligible for POEM, and to be able to refer them to appropriate provision at a later stage. Most providers had

to extend their community networks in order to recruit sufficient numbers to the programme, and the extent to which they had needed to do this had adversely affected their start figures during the early months of POEM. Employer networks were also viewed as a key part of POEM, and most providers drew on existing contacts, as well as developing more through POEM.

4 Engaging and recruiting clients

This chapter outlines:

- the key engagement and recruitment strategies adopted by Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM) providers;
- a profile of the client population in terms of ethnicity, gender and age;
- other key client characteristics, such as previous education and employment, family circumstances, barriers to work and aspirations on joining POEM.

The chapter has drawn on a range of sources, including provider interviews, client interviews and POEM Management Information (MI) data. It concludes with a discussion of issues relating to client eligibility criteria, which were raised by most of the providers.

4.1 Recruitment strategies

4.1.1 Project staff reflecting the target communities

There was a consensus among providers that a key strategy for engaging with POEM clients was using a team of multilingual outreach workers from the same or similar backgrounds to the target communities. Some of the providers already had some suitable staff who they transferred to POEM, most recruited at least some new staff reflecting the target communities, specifically for POEM. It was generally felt that this approach had been critical in gaining access to some of the harder-to-reach clients, such as Asian women, or people who had arrived in the UK relatively recently, who were more likely to respond positively to someone from the same cultural background as themselves:

'They [the clients] see a lady who is also wearing a hijab knocking on their door and telling them... "There is another way, there is an alternative; there is a way you can get a job but you can still wear a hijab and we'll show you how"... there are a lot of people out there who want to work, but they don't know how and they didn't feel comfortable talking to people outside their community about the "how"...'

(London provider)

'You have to be an approachable kind of person and that's what we are to our clients and that's how we engage with them. And we've done our research and we know that in these streets there are so many people of this ethnic minority... I would feel comfortable going into an area with older Pakistani women whereas [another adviser] might go to the Bangladeshi community, or maybe we would go together and make them feel comfortable, because if we can speak their language then they won't see us as office people, they'll see us as their own type of people.'

(Adviser and outreach worker, provider outside London)

This approach had also been effective in recruiting Somali clients, as providers had generally had more previous experience of working with people from Pakistani or Bangladeshi backgrounds.

Recruiting a Somali member of staff to boost client numbers from that community

For one provider outside London, working with the Somali community had been a new development, and so starts had initially been slower for this group than for Pakistani and Bangladeshi clients. However, recruitment of Somali clients began to pick up after they appointed an adviser from a Somali background. The level of trust which existed immediately between this adviser and the Somali community as a result of their shared cultural background and often crucially, language, had proved invaluable to recruiting Somali clients to POEM.

Providers stressed the importance of using staff from similar backgrounds as the client groups for outreach and recruitment work. At this stage, it was often important that staff not only reflected potential clients in terms of ethnicity, but also gender; for example, female outreach workers were usually found to have the most success in engaging with potential female clients, particularly those from Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. A few providers had worked with clients' husbands to reassure them about the programme. Here, a shared cultural background was also extremely important in explaining the benefits of POEM to partners and families.

Interestingly, providers usually thought that matching clients to advisers in terms of ethnicity and gender was less important once they had joined POEM – in fact some providers said that they thought it was often beneficial for clients and advisers to work with people from other communities, as it avoided fostering dependencies, and increased everyone's knowledge and understanding. For clients with limited English, some matching was done in terms of languages spoken, but here too, it was pointed out by some providers that for clients with improving English, working with an adviser who did not speak their first language could be helpful practice in using English in work-related settings. Again, in terms of gender, it was necessary, in some cases, to have a female adviser working with a female client at the beginning, especially where their partner had concerns about their wife mixing with men outside the home. In such cases, a step-by-step approach would be taken, and every effort would be made to ensure that female clients and their partners were happy with the way POEM was working with them.

4.1.2 Outreach strategies

The outreach workers adopted a range of different strategies for recruiting clients to the programme. These included:

- publicising the project at various venues/locations within the target wards, such as shopping centres, supermarkets, libraries, schools, mosques, General Practitioner (GP) surgeries, etc;
- holding stalls at community-based events such as job fairs, family fun days;
- holding stalls, or simply having a presence at events, festivals and celebrations held by the target communities, such as Melas (south Asian festivals);
- distributing marketing materials which had been translated into various community languages;
- media coverage, for example, through community newspapers, or Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community radio stations;
- knocking on doors in the targeted wards;
- distributing promotional materials and 'freebies', including leaflets, mugs, key rings, etc., at events.

Mobile recruitment unit

One provider from outside London set up a mobile unit, which travelled around the target wards and was used for attendance at local community events. The van had on-board facilities for the display of marketing materials and there was space for project staff to register clients and offer Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) sessions. It was painted in bright colours to make it more eye-catching. People were beginning to recognise the van and often came up to ask for leaflets about POEM.

Increasing visibility and opportunities for engagement by wearing POEM-branded clothing

Outreach workers at a provider outside London had found that a combination of attending events and wearing visible, promotional clothing to mark them out from the crowds had proved very successful:

'At a Mela, you can approach families and hand out leaflets as well as have a stall. We wear red fleeces with POEM on with the slogan "Are you looking for work or training? Talk to me." You engage them in conversation and then hand out leaflets to explain the programme.'

In fact, this member of staff reported that she had sometimes been approached when she was not officially working, for example when she was shopping at a supermarket or on her way home from work, while still wearing the fleece jacket. When people came up to her and asked her what the slogan was about she took the opportunity to engage with them as potential POEM clients.

Key to all of these strategies was that outreach advisers were working at a grass-roots level, engaging with people in the heart of the target communities, and trying to establish and maintain a recognisable presence there. The methods staff used to initially engage with individuals were usually very informal, starting with a general friendly chat (not least to establish likely eligibility) before introducing the POEM programme as something which could be very helpful and enjoyable. The most successful approaches appeared to be where, if possible, interested potential clients were booked in there and then with an appointment to see an adviser in the next few days to start the POEM sign-up process, rather than leaving them with information and a telephone number and waiting for potential clients to get in contact again.

Client interviews provided evidence of the success of these outreach approaches, involving direct engagement of people within the target wards. Respondents described how they had heard first about POEM while they were out shopping, visiting their local library, attending a local community centre or event, or had just happened to pick up a leaflet:

'I was approached by one of their recruitment officers. I was in the library looking for work. They asked if I was interested in coming along to a training session. I said yes.'

(POEM client, black Caribbean woman in her 30s)

'There were these leaflets all around the community, which I have seen. Then I looked at it, then I seen myself – this could be a good thing to do.'

(POEM client, Somali man in his 20s)

Although recruitment could be slow in the initial stages, project staff often found that the time and energy invested early on could bring rewards later in terms of referrals:

'It has been fairly slow filtering through to people, but I am now starting to see the fruits of my labour, even from contacts I started building up way back in August. I had a few referrals yesterday from people I saw way back in the summer time...I know from outreach advisers in this job that promotion never gets lost. If we promote at some point it will always come through...'

(Outreach worker, London)

Recruitment as a result of word of mouth was reported to have happened more frequently as POEM became better known and more visible. As many of the target communities appeared to be close-knit, particularly outside London, encouraging clients to 'pass the word on' about POEM to others was a key strategy in the longer term, although it also happened as a matter of course. A significant number of clients who were interviewed had heard about POEM through a friend or member of the family, indicating the growing importance of word of mouth as a method of recruitment. People were particularly encouraged to participate when someone they knew had found employment through the programme:

'I was referred by a friend who was working through a POEM project and she got a job through it.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 20s)

4.2 Use of partnerships

Although the work of engaging with the target communities was mainly carried out directly by POEM staff, strategic partnerships with community organisations were also considered crucial to successful client recruitment. For some providers, this became increasingly apparent during the first few months of POEM when they realised they would need to increase their community networks in order to gain access to the clients who would be eligible for POEM.

Once a suitable selection of community partners had been established, POEM staff were able to hold outreach or IAG sessions at community locations or promote the project at community events for families, and at cultural events. Many partners working with clients from specific groups, for example women's resource groups or ethnic/cultural organisations, referred clients directly to POEM for employment-related support. Hence, with the right links in communities, POEM providers had a far wider reach into target communities than they would otherwise have had. Networks and partnerships which would provide access to the heart of target communities, providing venues, and a source of potential clients, therefore, proved vital to the successful operation of POEM during its pilot year. In fact, the extent to which providers were able to locate, build and maintain suitable links was one of the key factors in the success of POEM at each provider.

Such collaborations, as well as promoting POEM to potential clients, could also be advantageous to partner organisations. For example, they could benefit by being able to refer their clients to the POEM provider for support they were not able to offer. Providers running a range of programmes and services could sometimes give wider support to clients than POEM in isolation. Partner organisations could also benefit from being part of a wider network of organisations, through the links made with the provider.

Collaborative working with a community partner

One community partner was an organisation which had been set up to support the local Somali community on issues such as housing, benefits, language and criminal justice. When they came across people with employment or training needs, they would usually refer them to the POEM provider and had made about 20 referrals over the course of the year. The Somali community was relatively newly-established in the area and the links with POEM had provided some valuable support for individuals needing more specialised advice about employability, training and access to work.

This partnership had been essential in increasing the numbers of Somali clients at that provider, as they had not worked specifically with the Somali community before POEM.

Client interviews provided further illustrations of how effective these community networks and informal partnerships had been in raising awareness of the project. For example, one client had heard about POEM through a childcare course she was attending at a Sure Start centre:

'[I found out about POEM] through the Sure Start Children's Centre – I met [POEM] people there...they were invited to one of our classes... they were telling us about job prospects and what we could do with our qualifications...'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Another client had found out about the programme from an outreach worker when she attended a Mela:

'...one of these Mela we have at [...] Park – it's a community for our Eid...I met [a POEM outreach worker] there and she told me about the programme... she had a stall...then she explained, this is what POEM is about, come and join in. So I did.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 20s)

For many POEM providers, this approach, although time-consuming in the start-up phase, was beginning to pay off in terms of increased client referrals; raising the project profile with the key target groups; access to community-based venues and additional training opportunities for POEM clients.

Developing informal links with community organisations

A provider outside London had developed strong relationships with a number of organisations in the POEM target areas, including the local Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali associations, a refugee support group and community groups dealing with immigration. In one area, a Kashmiri association ran job fairs to which POEM staff were invited to network; in another area, there were joint cultural events organised with a family learning centre. These partnerships had helped with the recruitment of clients and to raise awareness of the programme.

There were also examples given in interviews of ways in which POEM providers could support capacity-building within the local voluntary and community sector.

Capacity-building activities with the local voluntary sector

A provider from outside London believed that partnership was the best way to work, particularly when trying to engage with harder to reach groups, and was committed to supporting the development of the local voluntary sector. They had been involved in tenders by a local Bangladeshi Women's Association and had helped them to capacity-build their services. They also offered rent-free space to various community groups including a credit union, debt advice service, an education charity and community café, all of which were mutually beneficial.

These arrangements, which involved an initial outlay of time and resources, as well as ongoing investment by the provider, had paid off and continued to do so as they had a range of different organisations across the city who were referring potential POEM clients to them. Clients on all their programmes could access the services and opportunities provided by the various partners.

As well as partnership-building with ethnic minority community groups, some providers also developed strong links with Sure Start and Children's Centres as a result of POEM.

Sure Start links

Another provider from outside London had strong links with Sure Start in the locality and was offered space in various centres to deliver POEM services. A two-way process had developed, whereby Sure Start referred clients to POEM, many of whom went on to become Sure Start volunteers, with the prospect of progressing into paid employment. POEM had achieved some job outcomes from this relationship.

4.2.1 Sub-contracting arrangements and informal partnerships

The majority of providers had no partner organisations formally contracted to POEM, having decided to deliver the project services through their own staff. Only three providers had decided to formally Sub-contract out some of their outreach and training provision to partner organisations, with the performance of partners formally monitored through service level agreements. However, in all three cases, these partnerships had run into difficulties and so these formal arrangements rarely seemed to have been successful, although providers were not entirely sure why. None of the three providers with formal partnership arrangements were planning to renew these contracts in the second year of the project.

One provider, for example, had sub-contracted their outreach to two other training providers, who had been chosen because of their track record in this type of work. Over the course of the year, neither partner had performed satisfactorily, only bringing in a small number of client starts to the project. Problems had also arisen over the way the service level agreements had been drawn up, on an outcome-based payment basis, which had had a negative impact on the relationship with partners (also see Section 7.1 for more detail on this unsuccessful arrangement with a Sub-contracted partner).

Perhaps surprisingly, the arrangements which were reported to be working well often appeared to have been made rather informally, relying on trust, cooperation and goodwill on both sides. It is interesting to note that, in all three cases where providers had formally Sub-contracted, they reported that their informal links with community organisations had been more effective in terms of client recruitment. Perhaps this was due, in part, to a lack of flexibility that formal arrangements may have introduced, or because the partnerships which seemed to work best were based on the goodwill and commitment of the staff involved on both sides, together with potential mutual benefits in working successfully together for the organisations and clients involved.

It was clear in a few cases that providers had been working with particular community partners for some time before POEM, and hence had had considerable time to establish the necessary trust and goodwill for such arrangements to be fruitful. However, there were also examples of such informal arrangements with community partners being forged during the pilot year of POEM, which by the end of the year were starting to prove quite productive.

4.3 Profile of the Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities clients: ethnicity, gender, age and disability

This section outlines some of the key characteristics of the project client group in terms of ethnicity, gender, age and disability, using the POEM MI. In Tables 4.1 to 4.4, figures are shown for London providers, providers outside London, and all providers.

4.3.1 Ethnicity

Table 4.1 Starts, by ethnicity

Ethnic group	London providers (6)		Providers outside London (4)		All providers (10)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Pakistani	333	9.5	505	36.2	838	17.2
Bangladeshi	522	15.0	230	16.4	752	15.4
Black African	1,372	39.3	130	9.3	1,502	30.8
Other white	314	9.0	79	5.7	393	8.0
Other ethnic groups	947	27.2	450	32.3	1,397	28.6
Total*	3,488	100	1,394	100	4,882	100

* Totals in Tables 4.1 to 4.4 do not match due to incomplete MI data.

Source: POEM MI, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), 2008.

Table 4.1 shows the ethnicity of all recruited POEM clients during the pilot year. Across the providers as a whole, the largest of the key target groups recruited was black African (30 per cent), although it is unclear from the figures how many of these were Somali. Pakistani and Bangladeshi clients engaged across all the provider areas between them accounted for a similar proportion overall (and 17 per cent and 15 per cent respectively). Individuals from other white backgrounds (non-UK or Irish) comprised eight per cent of the total clients. The remainder (28.6 per cent) came from a range of different ethnic backgrounds, with Indians forming a significant minority group at ten per cent of the total.

When comparing the client profiles of the London providers with those from outside London, a very different picture emerges. In London, the largest of the target groups was black African (39 per cent) with Bangladeshis forming 15 per cent and Pakistanis just over nine per cent of the total. Outside London, however, Pakistanis formed the largest client group (36 per cent) with Bangladeshis the second largest (16 per cent) and black Africans the smallest of the target groups (nine per cent). Slightly higher proportions of other white clients were recruited by providers in London at nine per cent, compared to just under six per cent by providers outside London.

These differences broadly match with the proportions of Asian and black African communities in England, with a higher proportion of black Africans living in London than is found elsewhere in England.

4.3.2 Gender

Table 4.2 Starts, by gender

Gender	London providers (6)		Providers outside London (4)		All providers (10)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Female	1,999	57.3	786	56.5	2,785	57.0
Male	1,489	42.7	604	43.5	2,093	42.9
Total*	3,488	100	1,390	100	4,878	100

* Totals in Tables 4.1 to 4.4 do not match due to incomplete MI data.

Source: POEM MI, DWP, 2008.

Table 4.2 shows the POEM clients by gender. A higher proportion of women than men were recruited across all the providers, at 57 per cent compared to 43 per cent. This gender balance remained fairly consistent across both London providers and those outside London.

Interviews with providers indicated that they had generally recruited more men to the project than they had expected. Typically, these were young men who had recently settled in the country on marital visas; they had very little English and were unfamiliar with the UK labour market. However, there were also examples of young United Kingdom (UK)-born Asian men who were disengaged from the labour market to some extent. Often they had a few qualifications from school, but needed assistance in tuning their aspirations to the opportunities which were available in the local economy, and support in presenting themselves effectively to employers.

4.3.3 Age

Table 4.3 Starts, by age

Age group	London providers (6)		Providers outside London (4)		All providers (10)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
17 and under	52	1.5	1	0.1	53	1.1
18–24	925	26.5	551	39.6	1,476	30.2
25–34	1,261	36.2	504	36.2	1,765	36.2
35–49	1,006	28.8	275	19.7	1,281	26.2
50 and over	244	7.0	62	4.5	306	6.3
Total*	3,488	100	1,393	100	4,881	100

* Totals in Tables 4.1 to 4.4 do not match due to incomplete MI data.

Source: POEM MI, DWP, 2008.

Table 4.3 shows the recruited POEM clients by age. The largest age group across all providers was 25–34 years (36 per cent), with 30 per cent of clients aged 18–24 and 26 per cent aged 35–49. This represents a fairly young age profile overall, with the majority of the client population (66 per cent) aged under 35.

The clients recruited by London providers showed a similar profile, with the 25–34 age group again forming the largest group (36 per cent); nearly 29 per cent of London clients were aged 35–49 and 26.5 per cent were 18–24 years old.

Clients recruited from outside London reflected a younger age profile, with the 18–24 age group as the largest at nearly 40 per cent of the total. Thirty-six per cent of clients were aged 25–34 and nearly 20 per cent were in the 35–49 age group. This meant that a significant majority of clients from outside London (just over 75 per cent) were aged under 35.

4.3.4 Disability

Table 4.4 Starts, by disability

Disability	London providers (6)		Providers outside London (4)		All providers (10)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	38	1.1	12	0.9	50	1.0
No	3,450	98.9	1,378	99.1	4,828	99.1
Total	3,488	100	1,390	100	4,878	100

* Totals in Tables 4.1 to 4.4 do not match due to incomplete MI data.

Source: POEM MI, DWP, 2008.

There was only a small number of clients recruited to the programme who had declared a disability. This figure was around one per cent for all providers, London providers and providers outside London (Table 4.4).

More tables from the MI on starts and job entries are presented in Chapter 7, which looks at outcomes.

4.4 Profile of the Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities clients: previous experience, starting points and barriers

Further information about the POEM clients was gathered from the qualitative case study work with providers and interviews with POEM clients. From these, a more detailed picture emerged of the client population in terms of their backgrounds and starting points on the project, their previous education and employment, qualifications, family circumstances, barriers to work, distance from the labour market, and future aspirations.

4.4.1 Educational background and qualifications

According to providers, levels of qualifications among the client group varied considerably, although there appeared to be a majority with either low or no qualifications, or qualifications from outside the UK (for example, in nursing, teaching, law or business studies). There were also some cases reported of clients (for example, from Somalia) who had arrived in the country with qualifications obtained from other European Union (EU) countries. A few of the younger clients had degrees from the UK.

It was generally felt among providers that low-qualified clients with little previous educational experience, either from the UK or elsewhere, were more likely to require support and to take longer to reach job-readiness. Those with overseas qualifications posed a different challenge, with one option being to seek recognition and equivalence of their qualifications through the National Recognition Information Centre for the UK (NARIC) service.⁸ However, a statement of educational equivalence might only represent a first step, and some clients in this situation could have unrealistic expectations of the types of work they could access without UK work experience. They might require support with topping up their qualifications and skills in order to access employment in the UK, for example through a conversion course. Some providers recognised that this approach would be preferable (and less time-consuming) than starting from scratch and re-qualifying completely. For some clients with overseas qualifications, a different approach was taken in the first instance: that of helping them into entry-level work, where they could build up their confidence and English language skills.

4.4.2 Family circumstances and childcare issues

Providers reported that many POEM clients had young children and, not surprisingly, caring for children was cited in interviews as a major barrier to accessing employment. The issue which arose most frequently in provider interviews was that family responsibilities tended to determine the types of jobs which female clients (usually the primary carers) would consider, and restricted the hours they were available for work and the distances they were prepared to travel (also see Section 6.1.2 on how clients' culture and family responsibilities affected their journey on POEM). This presented a challenge to providers, as it was not always easy to meet the level of demand for jobs with flexible working hours, located close to clients' homes.

The fact that childcare support could be funded through POEM presented a valuable opportunity for women clients with young children, many of whom might not otherwise have been able to access this type of provision. It was reported that many clients had not accessed childcare in the past, due to costs, or because they were unaware of what services were available. Other women, however, already

⁸ The national service for providing information and advice about vocational, academic and professional skills and qualifications from overseas.

had plentiful access to informal childcare arrangements through members of the family and did not need nursery placements through the project. Not all clients were willing to use formal childcare, preferring to look after their children themselves and with the assistance of their family. Indeed, some women did not want to have to use formal childcare, and wanted to avoid working during the hours their children were not at school, particularly when they were young, or if family members were not able to help. They attended POEM while their children were at school and were usually interested in work which was during school hours.

The need for culturally appropriate childcare also arose, and some clients were reluctant to leave their children with carers outside the immediate family or community. In addressing this, providers in some project areas were encouraging the use of childminders from the same cultural background as the clients.

Some female clients also had additional responsibilities to their extended family, for example, there were expectations that they would take time off from other commitments to visit family overseas or to look after sick family members. As one provider pointed out, these responsibilities could give rise to conflict with employer expectations and standard 'compassionate leave' policies in the workplace.

4.4.3 Starting points and barriers to employment

Distance from the labour market

The majority of POEM clients were considered by providers to be a long distance from the labour market, and likely to take longer to reach 'job-readiness' than clients on other programmes, as they tended to face a wider range of barriers. These included:

- unfamiliarity with the UK labour market and lack of appropriate job search skills; not knowing how to sell themselves to an employer;
- lack of UK work experience; having been out of the labour market for many years (for example, to look after family); or never having worked in the UK at all;
- lack of qualifications or non-UK qualifications; difficulty in gaining recognition of overseas qualifications;
- social isolation; lack of awareness of services available for IAG or support into work;
- low levels of English language;
- lack of confidence and self-esteem; low awareness of transferable skills;
- childcare responsibilities and lack of access to appropriate, affordable childcare;
- social and cultural barriers, for example, family resistance to women entering the labour market or restrictions on the kinds of jobs they could do;
- unrealistic expectations about the types of jobs they were likely to access.

Assessing job-readiness

One London provider graded clients on how close they were thought to be to the labour market when they started on the programme. Out of a caseload of 30, five might be considered to be fairly job-ready; the rest would need more substantial help and tended to stay within the programme for a longer time.⁹ The key characteristics of those furthest from the labour market included:

- fairly recently arrived in the country;
- lack of familiarity with the culture;
- poor English language skills;
- social isolation, often having spent most of their time in the home environment.

POEM clients considered to be closer to the labour market tended to have a very different profile. For example, they were likely to:

- have been born and educated in the UK;
- be fluent in English or speak English as their first language;
- have some UK qualifications and/or previous work experience.

Clients closer to the labour market

In one London area, a significant proportion of the clients were young Somali people who had been through the British education system and had GCSE level, or in some cases, A level qualifications. Given their age and qualification profile, lack of facility in English was not a problem for them. The majority of this client group were not very far from the labour market. The most significant barriers they faced were lack of work experience, lack of motivation and poor job search skills, including a mismatch between their job and salary aspirations and the kinds of work they were likely to obtain at that point.

A positive attitude and motivation were thought to be critical in determining clients' initial starting point, distance from the labour market and their likelihood of progressing into employment. As one provider commented:

'I honestly feel that if you have that [determination], no matter what the barriers you have, you will make it. Because they will find a way...if they are determined and committed and willing to put the effort in, then it's just a matter of time...'

(Provider outside London)

⁹ The MI shows that London providers were converting 1 in 6.6 starts into jobs, while the providers outside London converted 1 in 4.4 starts into jobs.

From the interviews with clients, the main barriers identified in client interviews were:

- limited English;
- the need to develop job search skills;
- interview techniques;
- a lack of UK work experience.

Some of the clients interviewed had overseas qualifications and experience but were having difficulty getting these recognised or felt they did not have sufficient understanding of the UK labour market:

'I tried for a job then I realised for eight months without any helping agent I can't do. I don't know if it's cultural thing. Some agency has to give me the right direction. Especially from an [Asian] background, different cultural people. They grow up here that's a different issue.'

(POEM client)

'Most of the jobs I'm looking for are asking for NVQ1. I have experience, some from France, some from here, but they need that NVQ. I was looking to work in the NHS but it wasn't possible because they say you don't have experience.'

(POEM client)

Other clients had been educated in the UK but might have been out of work for a number of years and needed to update their skills:

'I've been to high school here and over the years, after I got married, I was working from home. My English level had gone down, especially written. Spelling I have a lot of problems...I did work in an office last year. Told I needed to do an English course, GCSE, which I passed, but I still had problems with grammar and spelling.'

(POEM client, Indian woman in her 30s)

Ethnic background

Some providers had noted different barriers within the client groups according to ethnic background. For example, social and cultural barriers were associated more with women from Bangladeshi or Pakistani backgrounds, in terms of the central role they played within the family and because they often needed the approval of partners and family members before they could consider entering the labour market or joining POEM. This tended to make clients from these communities harder to access than others and a lot of work had to go into building up trust:

'With these clients, motivation is a big issue and also trust is a big issue... you talk to them and they say: "Don't take my name please, I will take your leaflet, I will speak to my husband and if he ok's it I will contact you"...if the people who are central to their life don't believe in the project then they don't reply.'

(London provider)

In some areas, clients had come from well-established Pakistani or Bangladeshi communities but had been out of the labour market for a long time, either because they had been bringing up children and/or because of changes in the employment sectors they had previously worked in.

Somali clients, on the other hand, were more likely to be recent arrivals in the country and the main barriers they faced were poor English language skills and lack of familiarity with the UK labour market. However, some providers noted that Somali women generally appeared to face fewer cultural barriers and to have a more 'progressive' outlook towards finding work than those from Pakistani or Bangladeshi backgrounds.

Overall, though, providers preferred to avoid making generalisations about different ethnic groups and emphasised the importance of addressing client barriers at the individual level.

The importance of understanding the target communities, but also of looking at the individuals within them

Staff at a provider outside London stressed the importance of understanding the more subtle differences which existed between the cultures of the three target groups, and thought that this was one of the reasons they had been successful on POEM, compared to many other providers.

They had found it was important to take into account the different customs and preferences of Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, particularly initially when engaging clients. For example, when running an engagement event where food was provided, they would provide chapattis for Pakistanis, but rice and fish would be more suitable for Bangladeshis. If running a dressmaking session, then they would make saris if it was a Bangladeshi session, but traditional suits for Pakistanis, who would generally be more likely than Bangladeshis to make their own clothes. If staff were to attend a Mela, then it would be important to look at whether it was a Pakistani or Bangladeshi Mela, as a high proportion of Bangladeshis would not attend a Pakistani Mela (and vice versa). An adviser and outreach worker commented:

'I think the reason why our POEM project is successful compared to others, as I've heard bits and bobs, is that we do take into account the cultural barriers that these ethnic minorities face, which are different for Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Somalis.'

Continued

However, they had found that once they had engaged people onto POEM, it was important to look at people as individuals:

'There are some similarities in barriers between and across all groups, but in general, each individual has their own barriers, for example, spent convictions, or only wanting self-employment, or they perceive discrimination amongst employers...mental health can also be a key issue, and it's very hidden in some cultures...'

(Strategic manager, provider outside London)

Language issues

Low levels of English language was identified by all providers as a key labour market barrier among their POEM clients, and it was often pointed out that the language skills required for successful job entry would, in many cases, take a long time to develop. On the other hand, some providers were also keen to make the point that language skills need not always be a barrier and should always be considered within the context of the individual's job aspirations. For example, some women were looking for self-employment within their own communities (for example, as caterers for weddings and other events) and this would not require them to be fluent in English. Other types of employment varied in the level of language skills needed:

'If they are going to be...a salesman, then they need a high level of English. But if they are going to be a cleaner somewhere, then all they need is to be able to understand basic instructions to be able to do their job. They need to be able to understand health and safety and things that make them safe in the workplace. But beyond that they don't need to have good English.'

(Provider outside London)

Employer attitudes

There was some evidence from interviews that discrimination and negative employer attitudes could be a barrier faced by POEM clients when trying to find work, although this was not identified as a major barrier across the project as a whole. For example, providers reported instances of Islamophobia and negative perceptions of people from particular ethnic/cultural backgrounds; or employer reluctance to accept overseas qualifications, even when their UK equivalence had been recognised. Providers generally felt it was important to work with employers to dispel negative attitudes and stereotypes, and raise awareness of the benefits of having a more diverse workforce. However, in certain cases, they would avoid working with employers who were discriminatory towards POEM clients or were known to have a poor track record in equality practices.

Problems arising from discrimination or perceived discrimination by employers also arose during client interviews:

'I really want a job. I have a problem with nerves and I get discriminated against because of my headscarf. I have found it hard to get a job.'

(POEM client, Indian woman in her late teens)

'My aim, a part-time job, five hours a day, I don't mind that. Just to get a job. I have no luck at all. I applied for so many jobs, everywhere, no job at all. Is it because of my age? Is it because of my colour or something? I don't know.'

(POEM client, Pakistani man in his 50s)

4.4.4 Aspirations on joining POEM

According to providers, clients expressed a range of reasons for participating in the programme, including:

- the offer of dedicated support with job search, including CV preparation and interview techniques;
- the opportunity for free employability and skills training, such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and IT skills; many clients were attracted to the project by the offer of vocationally-related ESOL, for example, where language skills were linked to food hygiene, health and safety or more specific occupational areas;
- payment of travel and childcare costs;
- the desire to improve their skills in order to help their children with their school work and become more involved in their children's schools, for example, through attending parents' evening, etc.

Similar reasons for participation in the programme were mentioned in client interviews, particularly improving English and job search skills, and building up confidence:

'I wasn't hoping anything, because of my past experience from other agencies. But then they called me for an interview, to get to know me a bit better and go through my CV, which they were quite impressed by. They couldn't understand why I couldn't get jobs and I told them it was confidence. I had lost confidence.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 20s)

According to providers, a key incentive for POEM clients to enter the labour market was financial, especially as they were not in receipt of benefits. Many clients had expressed the need to find work in order to supplement the family income and contribute to household finances. Many clients were attracted to the programme because of its emphasis on job outcomes and supporting people into employment:

'I hope through POEM they give me references and the qualifications especially in English to go straight into employment...not unskilled jobs but skilled jobs...'

(POEM client, Columbian man in his 30s)

'This is the first time people were asking what do you want to do, part-time job? So it's good for me.'

(POEM client, Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

Some clients with overseas qualifications and work experience wanted to make use of these in the UK:

'I was seeing the poster there, talking about the jobs and training and so I ask about jobs. I was saying I have this much education and this much qualification but no experience from England...I need a job that is related to my position, not a labourer or things like that.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 30s)

Because of the family and domestic responsibilities of many women on the programme (as discussed in Section 4.4.2), there was a strong preference for finding work with flexible hours, which was close to their home. Many of those interviewed had been out of the labour market for a number of years bringing up their children, and some had never worked at all. They were attracted to POEM because their children were now in school or had grown up and the women were ready for the challenge of finding work:

'My husband thinks it's OK. He's happy for me to work. Now at the moment if I stay at home I feel so lonely. My little one goes to school so I don't have anyone. That's why I'm looking for part-time.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 30s)

4.5 Eligibility issues

Generally, providers reported that they had tried to adhere to the POEM criteria as far as possible, and had experienced little difficulty accessing people from the three main ethnic groups who were interested in joining POEM and who they thought might be eligible. However, a number of other issues relating to client eligibility had arisen for many providers in the early stages of the programme, and during the course of the year.

The 'partner' aspect of the programme was one area which providers and interviewed clients questioned, both in terms of its appropriateness, and the practicalities of establishing whether individuals had a partner, and what officially 'counted' as a partner, for example, when clients were married but their partner was overseas or when clients were married but separated.

The other areas where the application of eligibility criteria in terms of partner status had been found to be problematic by providers included, for example, when a potential client had a partner who was out of work or in full-time study, lived separately from the potential client and outside a targeted ward, or came from a different ethnic background from the key target groups.

Qualitative work with providers and clients for the evaluation revealed that eligibility in terms of partner status was being applied rather more loosely in some project areas than others. For example, amongst the 50 clients interviewed, at least seven had no partner, and there were several more cases where partner status was unclear. One provider pointed out that whether or not a client had a partner could be difficult to determine and they were reluctant to become too intrusive in their questioning; if the client said they had a partner, they usually took them at their word.

One provider reported that they had not been able to work with white clients on POEM, as these were rejected by Jobcentre Plus when they returned their recruitment figures for approval and sign off. They felt strongly that while it was good that POEM was directed towards three particular ethnic groups, the programme should not exclude anyone on the basis of ethnicity, including white people.

The general understanding among providers (which may be different to that of DWP) was that, while a degree of flexibility could be permitted around such issues as ward residency or ethnic background, other criteria were non-negotiable. Hence people on benefits or with no recourse to public funds could definitely not be included within the programme. As a result of this, most providers reported having had to turn away large numbers of potential clients who they felt would otherwise have benefited from the programme. In fact, one provider estimated that, on the basis of this, they had to turn away up to nine out of ten people who were interested in POEM.

In some cases, providers were able to accommodate these non-eligible applicants on other programmes which they also ran, or refer them on to provision elsewhere. However, for many clients ineligible for POEM it appeared that there were no other options available, and concern was expressed about the potentially negative impact of disappointing so many people, particularly in terms of the provider's credibility among local BME communities.

The 'no recourse to public funds' issue was a particular cause of frustration among some providers, since they felt that this requirement had the effect of excluding some of the most vulnerable and 'hardest-to-reach' members of local BME communities, especially women.

Clients with no recourse to public funds

One London provider pointed out that many individuals fell into this category if they arrived in the UK as a partner, and would usually be unable to access public funds for two years. The provider believed this was creating a situation of potential marginalisation for partners, who might become used to staying at home, lose confidence and become demotivated. In their view, it would be better to allow this group to access public funds on arrival in the country so that they could learn English, improve their skills, etc., making them more likely to be ready for work at the end of the two-year period.

4.6 Summary

There were a number of key engagement and recruitment strategies in play at most of the providers. Using a team of multilingual outreach workers, some of whom were from the same ethnic backgrounds as the target client groups, was seen to be vital in accessing potential clients and in gaining their trust.

Providers' outreach strategies included: knocking on doors in targeted wards; publicising the event at various community venues such as shopping centres, libraries, mosques and GP surgeries; holding stalls at community events such as family fun days and jobs fairs, and at festivals and events held by the target communities; and distributing marketing materials in community languages.

Strategic partnerships in the community were also considered crucial to successful client recruitment. For some providers, this became increasingly apparent during the first few months of delivery, when they realised they would need to increase their community networks in order to gain access to the clients who would be eligible for POEM. Once suitable community partners had been found, they were often able to refer suitable clients directly to providers and provide community venues where provider staff could do outreach work. The extent to which providers were able to locate, build and maintain suitable links in the community was one of the key factors which determined their success in delivering POEM.

During the pilot year, providers recruited a total of 4,882 clients to POEM. The largest group was black African clients, accounting for 30 per cent of recruits. Pakistani and Bangladeshi clients accounted for a further 17 and 15 per cent of the total respectively. Of the other ethnic groups recruited, Indian clients were the most prevalent, at ten per cent. Compared to the overall totals, greater proportions of black African clients were recruited by London providers (39 per cent of the London provider total), with the providers outside London recruiting more Pakistani clients (36 per cent).

Fifty-seven per cent of the clients were women, 43 per cent were men, and the gender balance remained fairly consistent across the London providers and those outside London. More male clients were recruited to POEM than had been anticipated; typically these were young men who had recently settled in the UK on

marital visas. Thirty-six per cent of clients were aged 25–34, 30 per cent were aged 18–24, and 26 per cent were aged 35–49. Clients recruited by the providers outside London had a younger profile than those recruited by the London providers.

The levels of qualifications amongst clients joining POEM varied considerably, but there appeared to be a majority with few or no qualifications, or with qualifications from outside the UK. A few of the younger clients had degrees from the UK. Many clients had young children and childcare was cited as a major barrier to work. Family responsibilities tended to determine the types of jobs which female clients with children would consider, and also restrict the hours they were willing to work, and the distances they would travel. The fact that childcare could be provided through POEM presented a valuable opportunity to clients who would not otherwise have been able to access this kind of provision. However, many clients had access to some informal childcare through their extended families, and some preferred not to use formal childcare.

Providers considered most of their clients to be a long way from the labour market when joining POEM. They faced a wide range of barriers to work, including: unfamiliarity with the UK labour market and where to access support and advice; lack of job search skills and interview techniques; lack of UK work experience; few or no UK qualifications; low levels of English language; low confidence and self-esteem; and social and cultural barriers, including some family resistance to women entering the labour market. POEM clients therefore took longer to be job-ready than clients on other programmes providers had run.

5 Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities support and activities

This chapter examines the:

- support and activities on offer through Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM);
- ways in which these activities were selected for individual POEM clients;
- flexibility of the programme and how the activities on offer have changed during the life of POEM;
- views of clients and staff on the activities on offer.

This chapter uses data from the case study work with providers, partners and stakeholders, and the interviews with POEM clients.

5.1 Support and activities offered at/by the provider

This section looks at the support and activities on offer from the provider staff, at their own premises.

5.1.1 Range of activities offered across all ten providers

A wide variety of activities and support were available from the providers, including application and job preparation, English language and skills training, group work, sessions delivered by other professionals, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, and aftercare for clients who had left POEM to go into employment.

Flexible, intensive one-to-one support

A key aspect of POEM, which was highly valued by clients and praised by POEM project managers and other staff, was the flexible yet intensive one-to-one support which was given to clients by their POEM advisers. It was also seen to be an important way in which POEM differed from other programmes being delivered in, or close to, the POEM districts, which usually had a more standard approach. At most of the providers, many of the activities (outlined below) were delivered on a one-to-one basis, and it appeared to be this intensive and customised aspect of provision which drew all of the other activities together into a coherent programme from the point of view of clients and providers alike. Clients' visits to the provider to meet with advisers were often in the form of pre-arranged appointments. However, as they became more familiar with the provider and staff there, drop-ins were also reported to be common. (The way in which activities were delivered through intensive one-to-one support and by other methods is detailed in Section 5.1.3.)

Pre-application preparation

Many of the activities related to preparing a customer to start applying for jobs, and included:

- updating CVs, including translation of CVs that were in other languages;
- advice on how to carry out job searches, particularly on the internet, as well as practical assistance;
- support on completing applications forms;
- interview skills training and carrying out mock interviews;
- providing references or helping clients obtain references;
- telephone skills training;
- training on the expectations of employers, self-presentation and professionalism;
- help with overseas qualification recognition from National Recognition Information Centre for the UK (NARIC) including, in some cases, paying NARIC conversion fees;
- confidence building, sometimes in specific confidence building sessions but often as an intrinsic part of all other activities with clients.

English language and basic skills assessments

There were activities to assess clients' needs for ESOL and basic skills training:

- assessment of English language ability;
- assessment of basic skills, sometimes using computer assessment packages.

Application support and interview preparation

When a client was in a position to start applying for jobs, activities included:

- making clients aware of vacancies and job opportunities, including arranging interviews with employer contacts, and arranging group taster and training sessions with employer contacts for POEM clients, followed by guaranteed interviews for those who completed the training;
- one-to-one support when applying for a job, including filling out applications, writing covering letters for CVs or preparing for interviews.

Work experience and self-employment advice

Some clients needed help to gain work experience, or advice on self-employment options:

- setting up work placements or volunteering opportunities;
- advice on self-employment, including for example, HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) workshops.

Group sessions

Group sessions were also fairly common on a variety of topics:

- interview techniques and mock interviews;
- job search skills;
- talks/training for working in a specific industry or profession, for example security;
- confidence building and motivation;
- basic IT training.

Use of other professionals

Some providers had employed or made arrangements with other professionals to deliver further help to clients on provider's premises. These included:

- employing an ESOL tutor to deliver work-focused ESOL training to clients on site. In some cases, other training such as interview skills, was embedded in the ESOL course;
- self-employment advisers;
- recruitment managers or job coaches to build relationships with employers and provide vacancies for the job-ready.

Financial assistance

There was financial help available to clients at some of the providers, for example, for travel fares, interview clothing, childcare costs or providing a carer. There were

also a few examples of providers giving financial assistance to buy equipment to help clients start their own business, for example, one provider had bought a sewing machine for a client who wanted to set up a business in a workshop making traditional Somali clothes.

Follow-up and aftercare

Advisers also reported having 'aftercare' contact with clients once they were in work or training, usually by telephone. Some of the interviewed clients who had obtained work said that their adviser had stayed in touch with them to see how they were progressing in their job. Others were still in contact with their advisers as they were hoping to get different work in the future.

There were a small number of clients interviewed who returned to the POEM provider when the job they had obtained through POEM did not work out for them, for example, because they hoped to find full-time rather than part-time work, or because once they had a few months' experience, they wanted to try to obtain more challenging work.

5.1.2 Range of activities at each provider

Section 5.1.1 covers all of the activities that were on offer across all of the providers. However, it is important to note that there was considerable variety in the range of activities on offer at each provider.

A few of the providers offered a very wide range of activities, covering almost all of those listed previously. Most offered a selection of these activities. In one case only, a very limited range of activities seemed to be on offer, mainly focusing on ESOL training.

All but one of the providers ran most of their activities on a one-to-one basis, but one provider carried out the initial assessment on a one-to-one basis, with the majority of the rest of their provision being delivered in groups. However, even at this provider, clients could make an appointment to see their adviser if they needed help of a specific nature. Nonetheless, it is notable that some of the clients interviewed at this provider said that, while they had found these group sessions useful, they would also like the opportunity for more individual sessions, as there were sometimes clients with very mixed abilities in the groups.

5.1.3 How activities were delivered

Appointments and drop-ins

Providers and clients alike reported a combination of appointments and drop-in visits to the provider. Again, this appeared to be fairly client-led, and was partly determined by the activities the client was doing at that time. At the beginning of clients' relationships with their advisers – when clients' Action Plans were being completed (see Section 5.3 and Chapter 6 for more on Action Plans), the initial activities were being decided, and the client and adviser were getting to know one

another – visits were often more formal. Once these early parts of the process were completed and clients felt more confident, there was more reason for them to drop in, for example, to ask for help with an application form or use the internet for job search. There were some differences between providers with some working more strictly to an appointment system and some preferring a more informal drop-in system, but in most cases a combination of the two approaches was used.

The duration of meetings was also varied, but again tended to be longer at the start of the process (anywhere between 30 minutes and two hours) and became more informal and shorter later in the process.

Frequency

The frequency with which clients visited their provider varied, but overall this appeared to be quite flexible and demand-led. Visits were often more frequent at the start of the relationship between the client and adviser, and became less frequent as the clients went through the POEM process. A few clients reported visiting the POEM premises daily, some two or three times a week, while others visited less often – on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

Location

Contact between the client and provider happened largely at the provider offices and most clients, once established on the programme, did not seem to find this a problem. In general, the providers had clearly made considerable efforts to make their premises welcoming so that clients would not feel intimidated. There were examples of clients who had at first found the prospect of going to the provider rather daunting but they usually felt more relaxed after a couple of visits, once they had become used to locating the premises and had got to know some of the staff there. Some providers did have meetings with clients in community venues but this was not the norm and was most often used in the early stages whilst a particular client was getting used to taking part in the provision. Although the vast majority of contact was face-to-face, there was some telephone contact, for example to talk about a vacancy an adviser had identified or to see how a client was progressing with a course or work placement. A small number of customers had had e-mail contact with an adviser but this was unusual.

POEM advisers

For the most part, clients had a named adviser assigned to them, but this was fairly informal, and they had often had contact with other advisers, particularly if they had called in without an appointment. Scheduled appointments tended to be with their nominated adviser. Providers had tried to create offices that would seem welcoming to visitors and most were open plan, which meant that clients were often familiar with many of the staff working at the provider.

The POEM adviser role clearly required some creativity and a wide variety of skills, as many clients required high levels of support, particularly in the early stages of the process. It was vital that advisers were able to build trust and rapport in the

early stages of the relationship when clients were often nervous and vulnerable. For this reason, many providers had recruited staff from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, including those which reflected the target groups for POEM, which providers had found helped to obtain trust and provided clients with positive role models. Providers who had had early success in recruiting clients usually had at least a few advisers already in place who were from the target communities. The knowledge, commitment and enthusiasm of many of the provider staff interviewed for the evaluation was striking, as were the ways they had found to work with, and support, diverse range of clients with multiple barriers.

The importance of adviser/client shared background and shared experiences

One adviser, who was from a Somali background, thought this shared background between adviser and client was an invaluable tool for working with POEM clients. He himself had come to the UK as a refugee and when clients were feeling negative, or could not see how taking one small step could eventually lead them to their ideal job, he would use his own story to encourage them.

5.2 Support and activities offered elsewhere

This section turns to look at activities undertaken by clients as a result of POEM, but delivered elsewhere. In these cases, clients were usually either signposted to partner organisations or local education and training providers.

Most of the clients interviewed had only taken part in activities within the provider organisation. However, from the case study visits to providers, there was evidence of a wide range of other external activities and services being used and referred to through POEM. Some providers had been almost completely self-reliant in delivering POEM support and activities, but others had made use of a variety of partners and other local services. Those who were most effective in meeting the needs of clients were those with a good range of provider-supplied provision, a good network of partners locally and knowledge of other local provision, giving them a broad range of provision to choose from, which they could tailor to suit each client's requirements.

5.2.1 The use of partners to deliver provision

Although the majority of POEM activities were delivered at providers' premises by POEM staff or by other staff at the provider, some activities were delivered through partner organisations elsewhere in the local community. Staff felt this was an important part of the POEM project, as there were often mutual benefits for POEM and the community groups, as well as POEM clients who benefited from a much wider range of options as a result of cross-referrals and signposting.

Skills and vocational training

Partners largely provided skills and vocational training courses such as basic food hygiene, ESOL, childcare, customer service, food safety and sewing. These were often in locations which were already familiar to the clients in the heart of local communities. Providers highlighted how important vocational courses were in matching clients' abilities to the opportunities which existed for them in the short- to medium-term in their locality. This often involved fostering a shift in clients' immediate aspirations:

'What we have done is finding out what we need to do differently in order to up-skill people into the jobs that exist, versus jobs that are aspirations later on.'

(London provider)

Provision of other services, including childcare

Some providers had linked in with other organisations in the community who could provide clients with services beyond the remit or resources of the provider. Childcare was a fairly common example of using partners in this way, with some providers having links with local Children's Centres for this purpose. As well as enabling clients to access childcare, these relationships also occasionally resulted in referrals of new clients onto POEM.

The following two examples show how some providers used partners to provide services and to enable clients to undertake training at the same time.

A Children's Centre partner provided childcare and courses in parenting and childminding

One provider developed a mutually beneficial arrangement with a Children's Centre. The Children's Centre referred people who used its childcare services to POEM, and POEM clients were able to access childcare whilst they were attending POEM provision. The Children's Centre also ran parenting courses and provided training to become a registered childminder, both of which were available to POEM clients.

Support for carers provided through a partner organisation

One POEM provider had links with a local organisation who could provide an assessment for POEM clients who were carers, in order to help them obtain social funding for respite care. This gave them a much-needed break from their usual caring responsibilities, and freed up time to take part in POEM activities at the provider or elsewhere.

Use of employer networks

Some POEM providers had established strong links with employers in the local area. These often proved fruitful in a number of ways, including:

- employers giving mock interviews to POEM clients;
- bespoke industry-specific training for clients;
- group interviews for POEM clients;
- work trials, placements and work experience with the chance of permanent employment.

Employer networks (along with engagement strategies), were the key areas where many POEM providers made changes to their strategies and provision during the course of the year. Some providers found that their existing networks with employers were not as well suited to some of their POEM clients' work preferences as they had anticipated. They had to forge links with new employers in their localities in order to find suitable vacancies for women with children who wanted to work part-time, usually during school hours, and close to their homes. Providers with close employer networks who were able to provide clients with work experience placements thought that this was an effective way to help clients who were fairly close to the labour market, into work.

Work trials leading to job opportunities, through strong local employer networks

A London provider had developed a successful model of work placements through links with local employers whereby the client would have work-focused training, tailored to a specific employer and then go on a work trial with the employer. The employer gave the client a permanent job if they proved themselves capable during the work trial.

This was an effective way to persuade local employers to give someone new a chance, to change their perception of this client group and the arrangement also allowed the employer and the individual to feel secure that they could see if they suited each other, with no risk. In some cases, a work trial was used in lieu of a formal interview, which worked well when a client was particularly inexperienced or nervous about attending interviews. There were also examples of employers offering a guaranteed interview to any POEM client who had reached their minimum training requirements, as it was thought that by completing the training the client had proved their commitment to the employer.

5.2.2 Signposting elsewhere

POEM clients were also taking part in a range of activities provided externally, which their advisers had identified for them, or helped them to find out about and apply for. These activities often centred around local Further Education (FE) colleges and adult education providers in the community.

Several of the POEM clients interviewed were completing ESOL courses at local colleges. Other college courses being taken by POEM clients included Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT), health and social care NVQ, basic food hygiene, beauty therapy, childcare, basic skills, security and construction courses.

'When I came here, when I decided I'll do the course, I need to do the course, they [POEM staff] said they will find out for me, which college and then they phoned the college and they said yes, I've got a course. Then they sent me the stuff in my address and then the admissions, they gave me contact with them and sent me the admission form and the admission date so I went there that day. Otherwise I don't know where I have to go, which college and how I can find this and that.'

(POEM client, Bangladeshi woman in her 40s)

Other services which clients had been referred to elsewhere included:

- NARIC, to get overseas qualifications recognised in the UK;
- debt counselling;
- housing support;
- counselling;
- legal advice.

5.3 Action Plans and initial activities

When clients initially signed up to the POEM programme, the process that advisers went through with them was usually taken at quite a slow pace, although this varied from provider to provider. Clients were often nervous, not used to accessing services and in need of a lot of reassurance. As a result, many providers reported that it often took a few meetings before the best way to support a client emerged. Therefore, the initial meeting was usually about establishing eligibility (although often not in too formal a manner at the first contact) and building trust and rapport.

5.3.1 Action Plans

After the initial or introductory one-to-one meetings between clients and advisers, advisers spent the next few appointments gathering more detail regarding each client's background, experience and barriers to work. Some providers said that it was only at this point, in the second or third session, that the Action Plan was

started. A few providers, whilst still highlighting the need not to rush clients who were apprehensive, completed these initial stages for some clients faster and did begin the Action Plan in the first session. If appropriate, there was some use of skills assessment tools, particularly to gain an idea of the level of English ability, before the Action Planning began.

The background information that was collected was used to complete an Action Plan for each client, which remained on the provider's computer system. Some providers had produced their own modified version of the Action Plan template from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), but they were similar in content to the original. One provider had the same fields on the Action Plan but had made it more detailed. Two providers were using an Individual Learning Plan that they were already using prior to POEM when delivering other provision. Hence, the exact contents of the Action Plans varied from provider to provider, but they generally included sections on:

- contact details;
- previous education, training and qualifications;
- details of any work experience;
- short-term and longer-term goals and employment aspirations;
- personal circumstances which may affect work options;
- barriers to work, and objectives or actions to overcome them, including target dates;
- development needs, including skills training and qualifications.

Action Plans were completed by POEM advisers, but with input and agreement from the client. It was a live document, which was modified and updated by the adviser over time to record client progress, for example, on the completion of actions which had been identified to overcome barriers to work. Clients interviewed were aware of the Action Plans to varying extents, so it appeared that they were given more emphasis by some providers than others. Some clients were scarcely aware of them, while others had been given their own copies which they said they referred to when completing job application forms, etc. Clients for whom Action Plans had played a more central role in their POEM experience had usually found the Action Plan quite useful in documenting their starting point and demonstrating their progress. They also felt that they had been given enough ownership over Action Plan contents, and agreed with the barriers and actions which had been identified.

'When I signed up she says to me, right first of all she asked me my aspirations and what sort of job had I been looking for. She was talking to me for about half an hour, just asking questions. Then she says "now I'm going to make you an Action Plan and this is how we're going to take these steps. How do you feel you should do this, or do this", and then that was my Action Plan. Going through everything step by step.'

(POEM client, Pakistani man in his late teens)

5.3.2 Initial activities

Once the Action Plan had been completed for a client, it informed the initial set of activities undertaken through POEM. These appeared to be fairly standard, as they were reported by most of the clients who were interviewed. They commonly included:

- creating an up-to-date CV;
- job search skills;
- interview techniques.

Most clients were in need of these activities and they were an effective way to start the ball rolling and begin to build clients' confidence. Then each of the other barriers identified in the early session and in the Action Plan were addressed one by one.

'I came in, she went through everything, all the stuff I didn't do. My CV needed updating; I didn't know how to set it out or anything. She helped me with that. We did an Action Plan together. What were my barriers? Interview techniques. I'd never had an interview before. I was really scared. She gave me that. Confidence building. From the moment she met me she could tell I lacked confidence. It was because it was a new area for me as well. She seemed like a really nice person. I got on with her straight away, we clicked...[We went through] my personal details, then my goals and aspirations. When I came in she asked me what area I'd like to go into. Have I got any preferences, and I listed a few things.'

(POEM client, Indian woman in her 20s)

5.4 Flexibility

This section looks at the flexibility of POEM, in terms of delivering activities, and whether the activities provided have changed over the course of the pilot year.

5.4.1 The flexibility and responsiveness of POEM

The core POEM activities on offer were fairly standard across the providers, and a lot of clients had taken part in similar activities. However, there were quite a range of more specialist activities on offer at some of the providers, and at these providers, in particular where a client had specific needs, advisers tried their best to meet them.

Overall, POEM support and activities appeared to be demand-led. Providers had found that they needed to be particularly flexible in terms of how and when the support and activities were delivered. In fact, this sometimes seemed to be just as important as the range of activities on offer. Clients often had personal commitments that meant they had to change appointments at short notice (or sometimes without notice). As a result, POEM staff had found that they needed to be flexible enough to see clients when they dropped in without an appointment,

for example, for help with an application form or preparing for a job interview. Often this did not take advisers a lot of time, but this extra investment could make the difference between a client feeling motivated and able to apply for a job or not. The clients seemed to have both really appreciated and benefited from the relaxed approach most providers had adopted to accommodate clients in this way:

'I can walk in here on any day and say "Look I need a favour, I've got this CV and I need to adjust it, I need to send off for this application form or can I bring the application form in here?", and sit down with any of the advisers, because all of them are quite friendly. They'll go "Yeah, come here and we'll show you how to fill this part out". They'll give you that little push. With the jobcentre, there's no one there. If you're going to go to someone for advice they say "Oh we're busy" or "We're doing this stuff". There's no-one there to actually say to you "Yeah, I can give you five minutes".'

(POEM client, Pakistani man in his late teens)

Advisers too were very keen on the flexibility in the POEM project as they felt it allowed them to respond to clients individually, and help meet their needs. They particularly liked the way POEM was flexible enough for them to be able to provide in-depth support to clients who required it. The fact that advisers were often from the communities with which they were working meant that, if necessary, provision could be delivered in languages other than English. However, providers found they had to strike the right balance between being flexible to the needs of clients, but also preparing them for employment, including for example, improving time-keeping skills.

5.4.2 Changes in activities

The range of activities on offer had been fairly constant throughout the POEM programme, although some providers were able to add to their provision and capacity as the pilot year progressed, in response to client demand.

Most particularly, increasing links with partners which had been forged or strengthened during the pilot year had meant that more provision from community-based organisations had become available over this time. There had also been a movement towards delivering more activities in groups within some providers as the number of POEM starts increased. This was seen to be more cost-effective and also better for clients as it improved their social skills, gave them confidence and was an opportunity to make friends.

Initial contact with POEM clients was always on a one-to-one basis, but activities and training sessions such as job search skills and interview techniques were more commonly done in groups as the pilot year progressed. Another change was in the use of employer-led training (as discussed earlier in this chapter). Its highly focused nature was found to lead to more job outcomes for clients than training without a specific employer or job in mind. One London provider had also increased the amount of accredited training they offered in-house, as opposed to sending clients to outside training providers.

There were very few major changes made to the activities provided for POEM clients over the course of the year. Most providers had found that while they needed to make changes to their outreach, engagement and recruitment strategies in order to be able to source and recruit potential clients in sufficient numbers, and some also had to forge links with new employers to provide their existing POEM clients with job opportunities that matched their preferences, changes to their activities were largely unnecessary, as clients were generally happy with the support they had been receiving on POEM.

Where changes were made, these were generally to add to the provision, rather than to substitute a new activity for one which was not working. In fact, the evaluation found little evidence from providers or clients that the activities provided were not well received by clients. Hence, changes were, in the main, made when the provider had the capacity, or had built up suitable links with partners, to expand provision of their activities in response to demand, for example, providing bespoke ESOL classes at the provider, rather than sending clients to a local college.

As mentioned earlier, there was a move in many providers towards providing activities in groups. For the most part this was well received by clients; however, where virtually all activities were provided in groups, clients sometimes said they would have preferred to have the option of more one-to-one activities as well.

5.5 Feedback on the range of activities

Both clients and staff seemed broadly happy with the activities and support on offer through POEM, and were satisfied that the balance of activities was appropriate.

5.5.1 ESOL

ESOL support was felt by both provider staff and clients to be hugely beneficial. Many clients had some level of ESOL requirement when they first visited the provider and this was often seen to be a significant barrier to employment. Those providers who had employed an ESOL tutor to give ESOL classes on their premises felt that it had been very successful. Work-focused ESOL provision was seen to have been particularly beneficial in moving clients towards the labour market relatively quickly, and in increasing clients' confidence.

5.5.2 Interview techniques

Employability training was in high demand from clients and was seen to be vital by staff to move clients towards the labour market. This was particularly so for interview skills training as many clients had found the thought of attending interviews very off-putting when considering work. Some had never had a formal interview before and so the support and guidance before job interviews and mock interview sessions were invaluable. Others had had interviews but had never been successful in obtaining work. In these cases, training was important to highlight where clients could improve their chances in the future.

'I never had an interview and I was really scared. So that was really good. It helped me to get into the atmosphere to find out exactly the possible questions and how to build up on that. I thought that was really good.'

(POEM client)

Clients reported that they had found the interviews that providers had arranged for them with employers extremely useful. Some had applied for many jobs and never had an interview and so they felt the provider had allowed them to have a chance to prove themselves to an employer. Group interview sessions with local employers were also useful and helped to eliminate some of the nervousness of attending a one-to-one interview.

5.5.3 Employability training and other activities

Other activities that were seen as particularly helpful were support with filling in application forms, job search using the internet at the provider, learning IT skills and, critically, the general support and confidence which clients gained from taking part in POEM.

5.5.4 POEM staff

Clients interviewed gave very positive feedback on POEM staff, who they had found to be understanding, helpful, supportive and flexible in their approach. Clients usually said they would like 'more of the same' rather than anything additional or different than the provision they had already received through POEM. For example, many clients said they needed more ESOL training and/or more help with identifying and applying for jobs.

5.5.5 Overseas qualifications

One issue to note is that, although clients sometimes had qualifications from overseas, they had not usually had them converted to be recognised in the UK using NARIC. There were some clients who had received help with this but it did not seem to be standard practice for someone with overseas qualifications when entering POEM, although providers were aware of NARIC. One of the providers reported that they had helped clients to have their overseas qualifications recognised through NARIC, and that they had, on occasion, helped with the costs of this, which could be prohibitively expensive for some clients (for example, it could cost several hundred pounds to convert some qualifications). Given that a high proportion of the clients interviewed for this evaluation had qualifications from overseas, it is likely that this is an issue for many POEM clients and it may be worth focusing more effort on overseas qualification conversion and recognition.

5.6 Summary

A wide variety of activities and support were on offer, although there was considerable variation between providers. Across all providers, the range of activities included:

- flexible, one-to-one support;
- pre-application preparation, including CV writing, job search advice, help completing application forms, interview skills training, help with overseas qualification recognition and confidence building activities;
- English language and basic skills assessments;
- work experience and self-employment advice;
- group sessions on, for example, interview techniques, confidence building, talks and training focused on entry to a specific industry, and basic IT training.

Other professionals, such as ESOL and basic skills tutors, self-employment advisers and job coaches were used by some providers to provide further in-house assistance to clients. Clients were also referred to partners to access services beyond the remit of the providers. These included local training organisations and colleges, or providing childcare through arrangements with local Children's Centres.

When clients were initially signed up to POEM, the first step was usually for an adviser to meet with each client on a one-to-one basis and complete an Action Plan. This set out the client's starting point, including qualifications and previous work experience, their aspirations, barriers to work, and the actions which would be needed to overcome them. The Action Plan informed the activities undertaken on POEM, and it was updated regularly as particular barriers were overcome.

6 The client journey

This chapter examines the client journey towards the labour market (hereafter referred to as simply 'the client journey'). Exploring the client journey is particularly important on Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM) because the target groups' socio-economic characteristics mean that many are quite some distance from the labour market (see Chapter 2). The programme was designed with this in mind, and it also acknowledged that some clients would not enter the labour market during the pilot year. The intention of POEM for these clients was to move them closer to the labour market. The client journey towards employment, therefore, and the factors which make the journey a successful one, are critical to assessing the outcomes and impact of the POEM programme to date.

This chapter looks at:

- the factors affecting the speed and progress of the client journey;
- key turning points in the client journey.

It draws largely on interviews with POEM clients, but also on the case study work with providers and other stakeholders where relevant.

6.1 Factors affecting the speed and progress of the client journey

While overall, some clients' experiences on the POEM programme to date can be described as diverse and varied in nature, there were common experiences across the client group which indicated that a number of factors often contributed to the success or speed of a client's journey towards the labour market.

These factors can be divided into those which centre on the:

- employability of the client;
- circumstances of the client;
- design and delivery of the POEM programme.

These are discussed in turn below, with the caveat that they do not represent a definitive list, but only those factors which have been identified at the interim stage of the POEM evaluation. This section focuses on those factors which both negatively and positively impacted on the speed and progress of the client journey.

6.1.1 The employability of the client

The employability characteristics of POEM clients heavily determined the starting points of the client journey and frequently necessitated more intensive help than might be required from jobseekers on more mainstream employment programmes.

Previous work experience and language skills emerged as the two most salient factors in determining the speed and likely success of the client journey towards employment, and more details on these are given below. These factors are also outlined as barriers to work in Chapter 4, while language skills (and improvements as a result of POEM) are also covered in Chapter 7. Hence, these factors are only discussed here in terms of how they impact upon the client's journey towards employment.

It is worth highlighting that while clients' employability characteristics may have resulted in a slower start to their journey, this was not always indicative of the continuing pace of progress. Indeed, there is evidence that, for many clients, it was precisely this opportunity to progress themselves from a very basic level of skills and employability that kept them motivated and focused to move forward on their journey. This, along with the right support, helped many clients build a sense of momentum (this is discussed further in Section 6.2.5).

Previous work experience

The employability characteristics of POEM clients are discussed in Chapter 4, and from this it is clear that many were a considerable distance from the labour market. There is evidence that many clients had limited or no previous work experience and this constrained not only their choice of work, but also their knowledge of job search techniques and job preparation, and their confidence levels.

'Approximately 50 per cent of clients have limited or no work experience. They need a lot of support.'

(London provider)

A client with a UK degree lacked work experience, and was receiving support from a London-based provider

A client, who was born in Columbia and came to England in 1988 when he was 16 to live with his family and to get a better education, is now married with four children. His wife works full-time. He arrived in England with no formal qualifications, but had since gained a degree in English and Communications from a London University, but had been unable to find permanent work since completing this:

'My frustration is that the jobs require you to have previous experience, which is difficult to get. If no one gives you the opportunity to gain the experience, how can you get the job?'

He was now attending group sessions at a POEM provider and whilst he still hoped to obtain the additional skills and experience he would need to get a job related to his degree, he was now considering applying for a wider range of jobs. The client thought POEM was 'a great scheme' for people like him who were not working, but really wanted to contribute. He said he was not made to feel 'unemployed' as he had been in the past at the jobcentre.

Language skills

There is evidence to suggest that a considerable number of people on the POEM programme had low levels of English language skills. While this may be unsurprising given the target characteristics of POEM clients, it was significant in defining the starting points for many clients in their path towards employment. This was evidenced from providers and the clients interviewed, many of whom considered English language skills as a necessary first step before considering employment.

Many providers noted that those who progressed at a slower pace on POEM were those who had low levels of English language skills. However, it was not just low levels of English language skills, per se, that slowed the progress of the client journey. With the majority of clients, low levels of English language skills were often linked to lower levels of confidence and these together presented many with additional difficulties in job search and job preparation activities.

It was notable that for a number of female clients interviewed, English language and confidence issues were also accompanied by constraints around culture and family responsibilities. However, the clients did not see these constraints as permanent (examples of this are provided in Section 6.1.2).

6.1.2 The circumstances of the client

There were also a number of personal and circumstantial barriers that characterised many of the POEM clients, and which impacted on the progress of their journey. For example, in some cases the clients were not able or willing to commit to the travel-to-work distance posed by the location of the job on offer. The main circumstantial constraints are described overleaf.

Cultural, family and caring responsibilities

Cultural, family and caring responsibilities often impacted significantly upon the progress of the client journey. These issues were touched upon in Section 6.1.1 and are also discussed in Chapter 4, but it is worth noting here that for many female POEM clients, their cultural, family and caring responsibilities did not necessarily prevent them from considering employment, but merely constrained the circumstances in which they would be able and willing to work.

- Perhaps the greatest constraint reported by providers and clients alike was the cultural preference among many of their female clients to stay at home and care for their children and/or in a minority of cases, care for elderly or sick relatives. It is important to note that this did not necessarily preclude the option of work, but it did constrain the choice of work that these women were able to consider (ie close to their home and with flexible hours). This was reflected in the fact that teaching assistant vacancies or childminding were popular preferences among many POEM clients because of the opportunity for women to work locally, during school hours and often in close proximity to their children.
- It is also important to note that many of these circumstantial constraints were not a fixed phenomena, but were very likely to change over time. Many women on the POEM programme were taking up advice, job search and training with a view to gaining employment in the future, once their responsibilities lessened or their circumstances changed.

'I want to learn English. After my kids are grown up, then I will go for a job.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 30s)

Hence, there were some clients who had joined POEM as they wanted to learn English now, although they knew that their responsibilities at home would not realistically allow them to look for work for some time. However, they saw learning English as an investment in the future and something which would give them more options when their family responsibilities lessened. These women were often looking forward to a time when they would be able to work, spend time away from the home and feel more independent.

Improving English skills now as an investment for the future

A female POEM client at a London provider arrived in the United Kingdom (UK) from Pakistan 15 years ago after getting married. Since then she had been looking after the home and her three children. She was now in her 30s and her youngest child had just started school when she joined POEM. The client felt her main barriers to employment were childcare responsibilities and a lack of English language. In fact, she spoke reasonably good English during the interview, but it was clear that her confidence was lacking in this area. She also suffered from arthritis but did not feel it was serious enough to prevent her from working in the future.

Continued

She saw a leaflet for POEM, and her main motivation to join was to improve her English and to feel more independent. She now attends level 3 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and IT classes. There have been some job search activities but these were of less relevance to her at that time than the classes she was taking. She wanted to concentrate on her English, but did hope to get work in the future. She said her husband hoped that she would work for him, but the client thought that it would be better for her to work for a different employer:

'I just want to learn English and after I have learnt maybe I would like a job. Maybe in my husband's office or a shop, I want an easy job in a shop like [supermarket chain]. My husband said I should work for him and I said I can't because you will always be the boss at home and at the office. I have a little girl so when she is grown up I can.'

- There was little evidence from the evaluation research that female POEM clients' partners were preventing them from working once they had joined the POEM programme. However, a few providers reported that such cultural barriers did exist, and that to try and overcome them they sometimes had to work with clients' husbands initially, as well as with the client, in order for them to allow their wives to join POEM and attend regular appointments (also see Chapter 4). However, the preference and/or ability of female POEM clients to enter work was also determined, at least in part, more by circumstances within the home, or a self-imposed preference to be the primary carer within the household. For those on the POEM programme, it was evident that wider family support acted as an important motivator in boosting progress, with some clients reporting that the support of their partners and children played a critical role in sustaining their progress (see Section 6.2.4).
- In some cases, cultural and religious circumstances slowed the progress of POEM clients, with some providers observing absence on training courses at the time of religious festivals, holidays or cultural events.

6.1.3 The design and delivery of POEM

Aside from the employability and circumstantial characteristics of clients, the design and delivery of the POEM programme, and how it responded to some of the aforementioned constraints, also impacted upon the likely speed and progress of the client journey. This is particularly relevant to the level of support on offer by POEM providers, much of which aimed to provide additional support to meet the needs of the POEM client group. The support and activities provided, and the success of these are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 and in Chapter 7. What is briefly outlined here, therefore, are those aspects of support which clients identified as being particularly influential on their journey.

Intensive support from providers

The majority of the clients thought that the provider support they had received while on the POEM programme had helped them in a number of different ways. Where one-to-one support was available, it had been helpful to clients in building personal relationships with their advisers, to whom they could then return if they had a problem on the programme (and also, sometimes, with regard to other issues which affected their participation and progress). Importantly, many clients noted that this kind of intensive support was vital in helping them with job searches and job preparation, with a few clients favourably comparing their experience on the POEM programme to their previous experiences in Jobcentre Plus offices, which they had found far less helpful. More broadly, and importantly, virtually all clients interviewed had found it far easier to move towards the labour market with the assistance of POEM than they had when trying to negotiate this journey without it:

'Looking for jobs would be much harder on my own.'

(POEM client, woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo, in her 40s)

'They helped me with intercommunication skills and how to conduct interviews. Also, on how to be self-employed and how to go about it. They are supporting and advising me on that as well.'

(POEM client, Somali woman in her 20s)

It was also evident that this kind of intensive support to clients was also invaluable in maintaining clients' motivation and confidence to stay on the programme and to keep looking for employment, as the following two quotes illustrate.

'I say to her, "This [supermarket chain] job is all the way in April. What am I supposed to do in the meantime?" She said, "In the meantime, we'll still apply for other jobs and you can still go out there and do a job for two months. If you don't like it, you can move on to [the supermarket job]. If you do like it, you can stay there". So, they don't give up. They're quite good actually.'

(POEM client, Pakistani man in his late teens)

'She rang me and said, "There's a job. Can you come into the office?" So, I came in and she went through it with me. I spoke to the employer and they gave me a date to come in and see them. In the meantime, I panicked again. She said, "Do you want to go through the interview techniques again?" I was like, "Brilliant." So we went through it again for this job.'

(POEM client, Indian woman in her 20s)

A small number of clients reported that they had received post-employment support from providers. Where such support had been available, clients said it helped them through transitional phases between different jobs. In some of these cases, advisers proactively informed clients that support was available even after

they started work. In the rest of the cases, it would seem that clients had the strong impression that they could return to the POEM advisers should any problems arise in their jobs, or should they find themselves out of employment again. (It was noted in Chapter 1 that a number of interviewed clients in employment were still in regular contact with their POEM provider for support of this type.)

POEM support helped a client progress quickly into part-time work, and later into a full-time work of a higher level

A POEM adviser helped a client to update her CV, find and apply for jobs and improve her interview techniques, and the client quickly obtained work in a call centre:

'After spending so much time looking for a job, within two weeks I had an interview and that made me really glad. It showed me POEM helped me a lot.'

After a few months in the role, she started looking for a more challenging job with better pay. She went back to her POEM adviser, who then told her of a job vacancy for an outreach worker on the POEM programme. She applied for this job and was successful. At the time of interview, the client was three weeks into her job, and was really enjoying it.

'I've got my confidence. And the fact it's my first ever full-time job. I've never been a full-time employee before. That was really good. Pretty major change. I was only ever used to studying and working part-time, but now I've got the ability to work and do different things.'

(POEM client, Indian woman in her 20s)

Use of Action Plans

Overall, it is evident that the use of Action Plans were beneficial to the client journey, although it appeared that they were not used in a uniform way across the providers (also see Chapter 5 on the use and content of Action Plans).

It would seem that the consistency with which the Action Plans were used has varied between providers. In addition, some providers used the Action Plans in a fairly uniform way for all POEM clients, while others varied their use according to the level of support and guidance particular clients needed. However, it is important to note here that many clients interviewed reported some instrumental benefits of the Action Plans to their journey. They thought that Action Plans:

- **helped them to focus** through establishing targets and identifying the steps that needed to be taken in order to achieve these;
- facilitated an **'audit of skills'** by prompting them, along with their advisors, to identify their strengths, weaknesses and barriers to employment;
- made it easier to **track their progress**, milestones and achievements. Having a

visual record of this also **increased clients' confidence**;

- helped **maintain their motivation and focus** by tracking progress 'at a glance' against their employment goals;
- where clients were given copies of their Action Plans, they found them a **useful tool to help them make job applications**.

It is clear that a key benefit to the clients of the Action Plans was in facilitating their discussions with their advisor about employment goals and how they were going to achieve them. For example, some clients stressed the reinforcing value of putting their aims and goals down on paper, rather than just talking about them. Other clients, who had difficulty envisaging the 'how' of getting themselves in work, emphasised how helpful the plans were in breaking down their journey into more manageable steps and stages. Most clients interviewed could not think of ways in which the Action Plans could be improved:

'To be honest with you, there's not much wrong with the Action Plan. It's something to work against.'

(POEM client, Pakistani man in his late teens)

For the minority of clients who said they had not found the plans helpful, it would appear that they either already had clear ideas about what they wanted to do, or were closer to the labour market than most of the others.

'I have education and skills and experience. [The Action Plan] was not useful for me. It is just a record of my work. It is not of any benefit.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 40s)

Many providers also noted that the Action Plans were a useful tool for facilitating their discussions with clients, without being overly bureaucratic. They reported that Action Plans had helped them in encouraging clients to set employment goals, identify the barriers they faced in obtaining these goals and identifying what needed to be done in order to achieve these goals.

6.2 Key turning points

As well as factors that influenced the speed and success of the client journey, there were some identifiable 'turning points' as well. These were points along the journey, significant developments, or specific interventions which clients felt had made the biggest difference in helping them move towards and achieve their goals.

The key turning points which emerged from the case study work with providers and the interviews with clients are:

- greater confidence;
- broadened horizons;

- intensive provider support;
- wider family support;
- positive experience of training and job preparation.

These are discussed in turn below.

6.2.1 Greater confidence

Perhaps the most notable turning point for many POEM clients was an increased level of confidence as a result of being on the POEM programme. A large proportion of clients reported that the POEM programme had had a positive impact on their levels of confidence, and that this had made a huge difference to the way in which they approached their employment and personal goals.

'You go to some places and they look at you and they go, "These people have no jobs or skills", but it's not like that here. They make you feel so confident. My confidence has gone so high coming to this place.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 30s)

Confidence-building on the POEM programme often stemmed from early one-to-one sessions with advisers or trainers, and grew as they pursued other activities as a result of the programme. Many clients reported that advisers had made them realise that they had more skills or experience than they had initially thought (Action Plans were often useful in this way, see Section 6.1.3). Others gained confidence after successfully completing a training course, or having gone through mock interviews. Indeed, clients could often pin-point the activity or intervention which boosted their confidence, but the significance of particular activities varied according to the particular needs of the individual.

It is perhaps unsurprising that gaining greater confidence should emerge as a key turning point for many clients given that low levels of confidence were noted as a common characteristic of this client group in Chapter 4. POEM providers noted that low levels of confidence stemmed mostly from high levels of support needs, a lack of previous work experience, and language difficulties.

Nonetheless, the impact of greater confidence on the subsequent client journey should not be underestimated. Increased confidence not only motivated clients to continue with the programme, but also enabled them to think about other, longer-term possibilities that they might not have considered before, whether it be plans to study, plans to open their own business, or simply to gain their first job and/or progress to better paid work in the longer-term. This is discussed in more detail below, but it suffices to say here that confidence clearly emerged as an important springboard from which clients were able to realise their potential, consider their employment goals, and take the necessary 'next steps' to fulfil these goals.

6.2.2 Broadened horizons

Many clients reported that POEM had helped them broaden their horizons in terms of employment options, personal goals and long-term plans. For most of these clients, the POEM advisers had introduced them to more employment options, or had helped them think about their future plans.

'It has shown me that you can do a job. You're not a housewife. You don't have to stay in the house. You can do something for your enjoyment.'

(POEM client, Bangladeshi woman in her 40s)

'They sent me to another agency who gave me a job. I would never have had this idea and so I would never have gone. So, it's all down to them.'

(POEM client, Somali man in his 20s)

Often, the impact of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) was crucially facilitated by the personal relationship and trust that had built up between adviser and client. It would seem that the use of Action Plans at these early stages was particularly helpful in guiding some of these early discussions around employment goals and potential options (discussed in Section 6.1.3).

Many providers also noted the difference to their clients' subsequent journeys, once they had been helped to realise their potential. This could often be a long, arduous task and providers did not always succeed. However, where successful, providers were able to clearly see the benefits to the client journey – not necessarily in terms of immediate job outcomes, but in terms of a client's level of self-belief, confidence and motivation.

'We met her on the streets of [district]. We registered her and we have just done a mock interview with her today. The first couple of times, she had to bring her mum, but suddenly you can see their confidence. Their perception changes. When you see people blossom in front of your eyes, it makes it worthwhile.'

(London provider)

There were also instances of working with clients to broaden their horizons to include more realistic short-term employment aspirations, as some clients had unrealistically high expectations of the kinds of work, and the levels of pay, that they would be able to obtain (this is covered further in the next section, and also in Chapter 7 which looks at outcomes).

6.2.3 Intensive provider support

Section 6.1.3 has already detailed how intensive adviser support facilitated the progress of some clients' journeys towards employment. However, there is evidence to suggest that intensive provider support often went further than this to constitute an important turning point for many clients.

This was evident primarily through the personalised, one-to-one support that was made available by POEM providers. The ways in which this support was provided, and the extent to which it differed between providers is discussed in Chapter 5, but there is evidence that where it was effective, this kind of intensive, one-on-one support, where trust and understanding could be built up between adviser and client, was critical for many clients in view of their often considerable distance from the labour market. Importantly, most clients had never had access to such in-depth, personally-tailored support before, and discovering it existed for them became a crucial milestone on their journey. Sometimes this had even become apparent to them immediately on joining POEM, after their first one-to-one session with an adviser.

'Straight away. I knew this was going to help me. At our first meeting we had the Action Plan done. He [the adviser] is quite hard-working. I've already got results from working with him.'

(POEM client, Indian woman in her late teens)

As discussed previously, this level of support not only helped build trust and a personal relationship between adviser and client in many cases, but also helped build clients' confidence and self-belief. A key outcome from this kind of one-to-one support was that it helped many clients focus on their employment goals.

'My adviser made me realise what I want to do.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 20s)

The intensive level of support which was widely available on POEM also helped advisers manage some clients' expectations about employment goals and outcomes. Many providers saw this as a very necessary task, if clients were not to become quickly disheartened or demotivated by setbacks in their job search.

'We try to say to them, "Set your ambitions high, but be realistic at the same time".'

(London provider)

A few clients had family difficulties or health problems, and this was their first opportunity to have work-focused support from an organisation which was able to treat them as an individual, and support them, whatever their circumstances.

'If I have a problem about anything, I can talk with [my adviser], just like my family. So, I think they're good.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 30s)

For other clients, intensive support proved an important turning point because it enabled advisers effectively to identify the barriers clients faced and then work to resolve these. Arguably, some barriers were harder and more resource-intensive to address than others; for example, finding enough local and flexible employment opportunities for women who had caring responsibilities at home, or providing childminding facilities for women to participate in the POEM programme. However,

other barriers were more easily removed by practical action on the part of the provider to ensure that provision took into account the client's circumstances, such as travel expenses or distance needed to travel in order to access training.

'They give you a bus pass to go to the interviews, as well as the clothes you wear to the interview. I had nothing. Even today, he was asking me "Have you got a bus pass?" I've told people about them. They are really good.'

(POEM client, Pakistani man in his late teens)

6.2.4 Wider family support

Arguably, positive family support is beneficial for any jobseeker. However, given the target characteristics and demographic profile of many of the POEM client group, the support of the wider family was often critical in 'making or breaking' a client journey. This was particularly the case for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, some of whom were reluctant to proceed with the programme without the support of their partners, who needed to be convinced of the wider benefits to the family if they were to proceed. Some providers clearly found this a difficult barrier to address, as it extended beyond the individual client and into the realm of the wider family support network.

'You cannot force them to talk to you. If the people who are central to their life don't believe in the project, then they don't reply.'

(London provider)

However, a few providers had already identified this problem and begun to make some progress on this front, tailoring their outreach to try and overcome this barrier, through working with partners and families at the beginning of the client journey.

'We have learnt that we have to sell the programme to the whole community and highlight the benefits to the whole family.'

(London provider)

When support from the family was available, it appeared to make a great deal of difference to clients because it meant that support from the POEM programme was maintained, or even further bolstered, when the client went home.

'He [my husband] thinks it's great I'm doing this. He's always asking "When's your next appointment?" So he's keen, he wants me to work, he wants me out of the house as well. He says "You've got more confidence now". And the kids can see the changes.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 30s)

6.2.5 Positive experience of training and job preparation

For a significant number of clients, the training sessions and/or the job preparation support they had received was such a positive and encouraging experience that it proved to be a key turning point in their journey. It was evident that effective

help with job preparation and job search techniques was greatly valued by clients, who felt that it had helped them know what to expect, prepare effectively for job interviews and CV preparation, and given them confidence to proceed with job applications.

'The biggest thing has been actually preparing me for the interview and knowing what to expect from that. Before, you had the rush of the interview, an adrenaline rush and your heart beating fast, but now it's like, "Oh, it's an interview, no problem".'

(POEM client, Pakistani man in his late teens)

'Before I joined POEM, I didn't know what to say or write for an interview.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Perhaps one of the biggest benefits clients took away from such help was the fact that these were transferable skills which they could deploy independently, either in another job search scenario, or at home.

'My children are happy that their mother is learning English and improving her skills. They're more happy that she is learning on the computer.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 20s)

A number of clients had experienced critical turning points when they successfully completed a course, or training programme, or had a positive work experience. The sense of achievement, particularly if these were new experiences for clients, often made a significant impact on their subsequent journey, as they provided the clients with tangible evidence of the considerable distance travelled on the POEM programme from their 'starting points'. This was the case for a number of clients, many of whom had never previously had access to help with job search, job preparation or training.

'When I finished the course, I thought, "You can do it! You have the ability".'

(POEM client, black Caribbean woman in her 30s)

Even when some clients had not experienced job outcomes from POEM, the process of applying and preparing for the world of work had brought a sense of momentum to their journey which motivated them to persist with other job applications.

'I'm not giving up hope. I'm not going to say, "I've been here a year now and it's not benefiting me". It is benefiting me. The more I apply for a job, the more I write, the more I speak on the phone, the more it benefits me.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 30s)

6.3 Summary

Overall, clients' experiences on POEM were diverse and varied, but there were common experiences across the client group, highlighting a number of key factors that commonly contributed to the speed and success of the client journey towards the labour market.

Previous work experience, and language skills emerged as the most salient factors in determining the speed and likely success of the client journey towards employment. Culture, family and caring responsibilities were also important circumstantial factors affecting the client journey. Of these, the cultural preference amongst women to stay at home and look after the family and home, particularly when children were young, was perhaps the greatest constraint reported by clients and providers. It did not preclude work as an option, but it often limited the type and hours of work that women were willing to consider.

The design and delivery of POEM also impacted on the client journey. Aspects which were particularly important in helping to move clients forward included intensive, flexible, one-to-one support from providers, and the use of Action Plans to guide the journey, although not all providers used these in the same way.

The key turning points which were identified as being significant to clients in helping them move forward were:

- greater confidence – perhaps the most important turning point of all, this often stemmed from the one-to-one support from advisers and grew as clients completed various activities through POEM;
- broadened horizons – many clients reported that POEM had helped them to better understand their employment options and to formulate personal goals and long-term plans;
- intensive provider support – the one-to-one support provided through POEM appeared to be critical in building up the necessary trust and rapport with clients to fully understand their barriers to work;
- wider family support – the support of the wider family was, for some clients, vital in gaining entry to POEM and in 'making or breaking' their journey;
- positive experience of training and job preparation – these were such encouraging experiences for a significant proportion of clients that they proved to be key turning points in the client journey.

7 Outcomes

This chapter examines the outcomes from the first or pilot year of Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM), which, at the time of writing, was running as a two-year programme after confirmation of funding for a second year was obtained in early 2008. It looks at:

- providers' success in engaging and recruiting POEM clients, drawing on the Management Information (MI) which providers returned to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on a monthly basis;
- employment outcomes, using the MI and qualitative data from work with providers and clients, and 'other' outcomes (as detailed on the MI returns of some providers);
- soft outcomes and distance travelled, using qualitative data from the interviews with clients and the case study work with providers.

7.1 Engagement and recruitment

This section examines the outcomes of POEM in terms of the providers' success in engaging and recruiting POEM clients, and the impact which POEM providers made, compared to their targets. It draws on the MI which providers returned to DWP on a monthly basis.

Each of the providers had given DWP target numbers of clients they would sign up to POEM during the 12-month pilot (profiled starts) and target numbers of clients they would help into work (profiled job entries) over the same period. They also returned to DWP, on a monthly basis, MI detailing the actual numbers of starts and job entries.

There was considerable variation in the target numbers providers estimated they would be able to engage with and sign up to POEM in the first year. For example, the lowest number of profiled starts achieved in the first year was 84 (by a London provider) while the highest number of profiled starts was 1,200 (by a provider outside London). More usually, providers gave start targets of between 400 and 800 over the course of the 12-month pilot.

Figure 7.1 shows the actual numbers of starts against the providers' profiled starts (or targets) achieved by all providers. Figures 7.2 and 7.3 show this data for the London providers and the providers outside London respectively. (Full data, including the numbers used to generate these charts, are given in Appendix D.)

- The total number of starts to POEM in the pilot year was 4,884, which is short of the profiled target of 6,101 starts during this time. Across all ten providers, POEM recruited 80 per cent of its target numbers of clients during the pilot year.
- Across the London providers, there were 3,490 actual starts, compared to a target of 4,463, (78 per cent of the target). For the providers outside London, there were 1,394 actual starts, compared to a target of 1,638 (85 per cent of the target).

Looking at all providers (Figure 7.1), it is clear that while profiled starts were spread fairly evenly across all 12 months, in reality, larger proportions of clients were recruited to POEM during the later months of the pilot year. The London providers (Figure 7.2), in particular, had very low proportions of their total starts in the early months, with almost half of their starts having been achieved during the last four months of the year. This reflected their reports during case study visits that set-up time for some had been particularly lengthy, but that the early investments in new staff, premises and networking in the communities began to pay off later in the year. For the providers based outside London (Figure 7.3), the starts were spread more evenly across the year, and it appeared from the case study visits that at least some of these providers were already familiar with many of the issues they would encounter with this client group, and had relevant links and partnerships in the community which pre-dated POEM, that they were able to make good use of during the earlier months.

There was also a great deal of variation in the extent to which providers had been able to meet their targeted starts on POEM. Only one provider (a London provider) exceeded their start targets, but only just; they had signed 770 clients onto POEM by the end of March 2008, against a profiled target of 767 starts. However, it is worth noting that this provider fell far short against their job start targets, which were 133 at the end of the year, compared to a profiled target of 325.

Figure 7.1 Starts and profiled starts, by month – all providers (10)

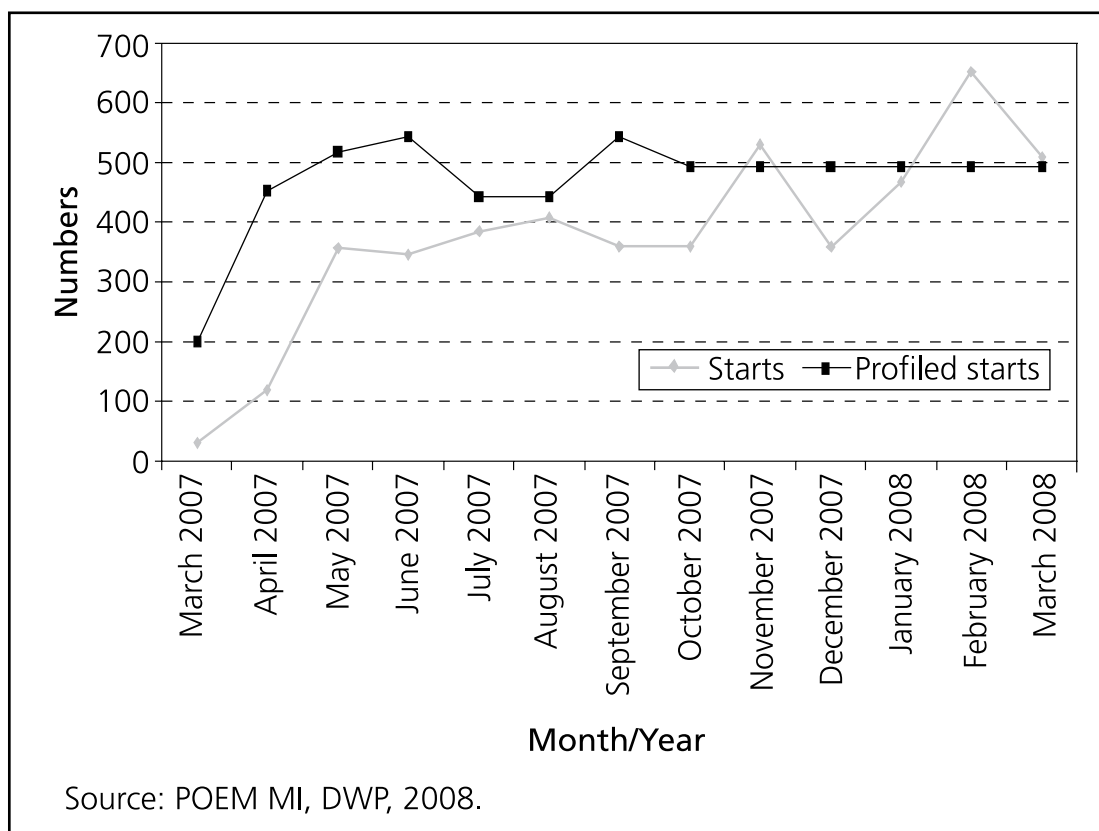


Figure 7.2 Starts and profiled starts, by month – London providers (6)

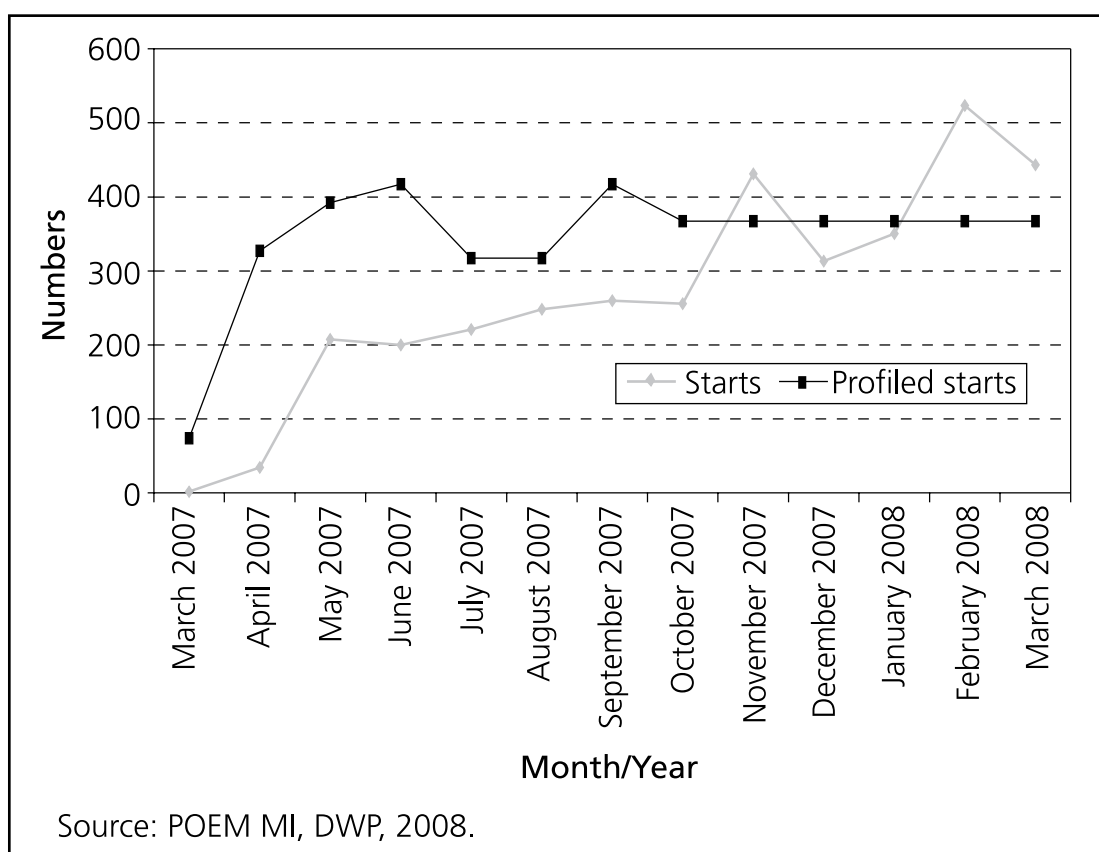


Figure 7.3 Starts and profiled starts, by month – providers outside London (4)

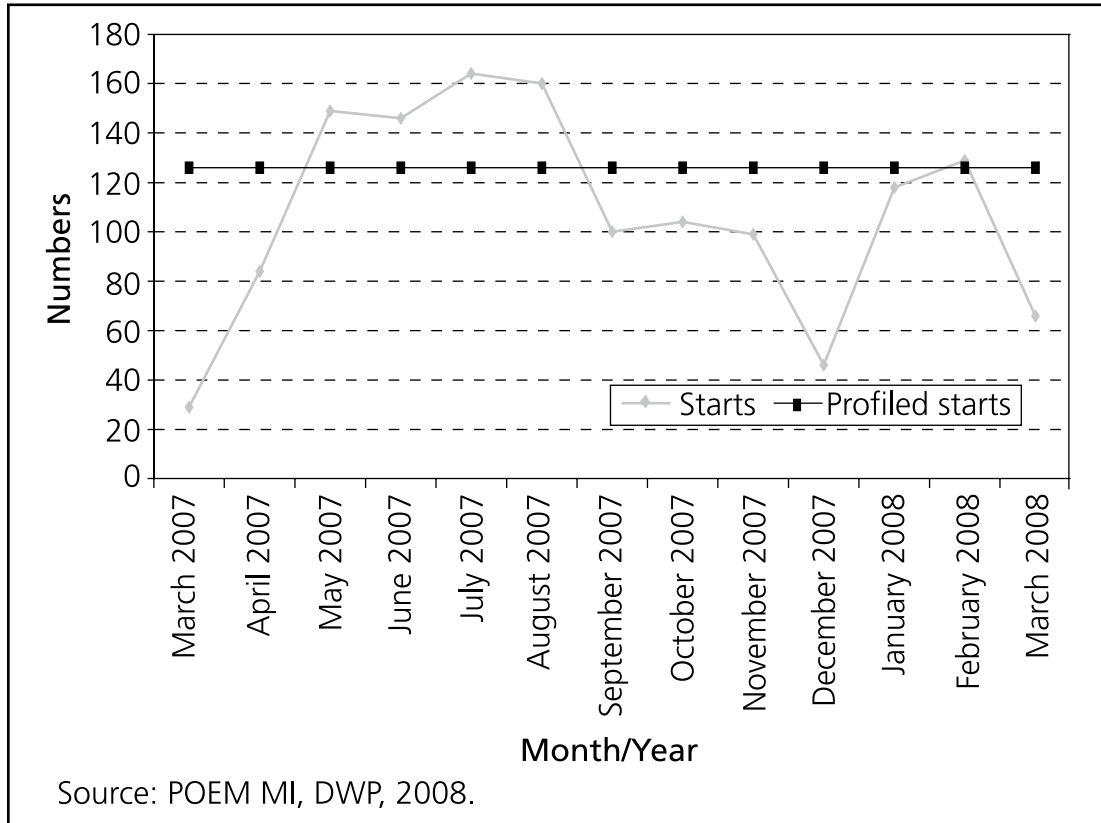


Figure 7.4 Cumulative actual and profiled starts – London providers (6)

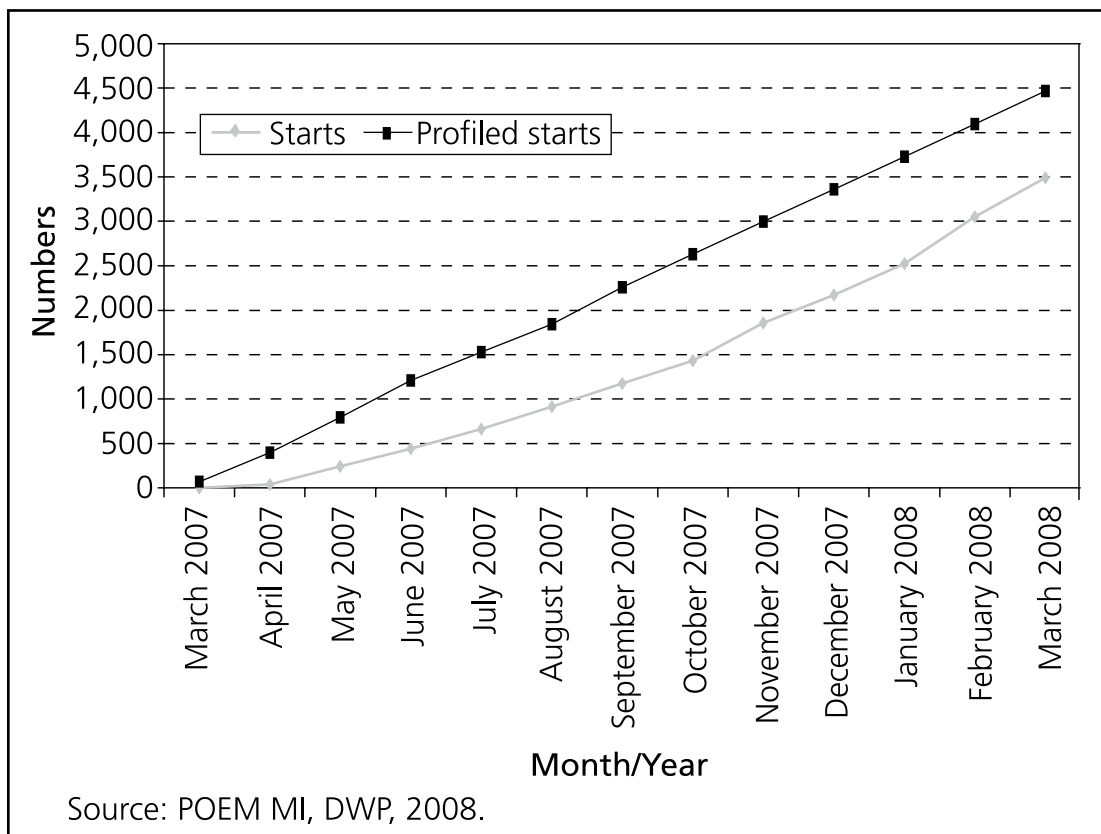
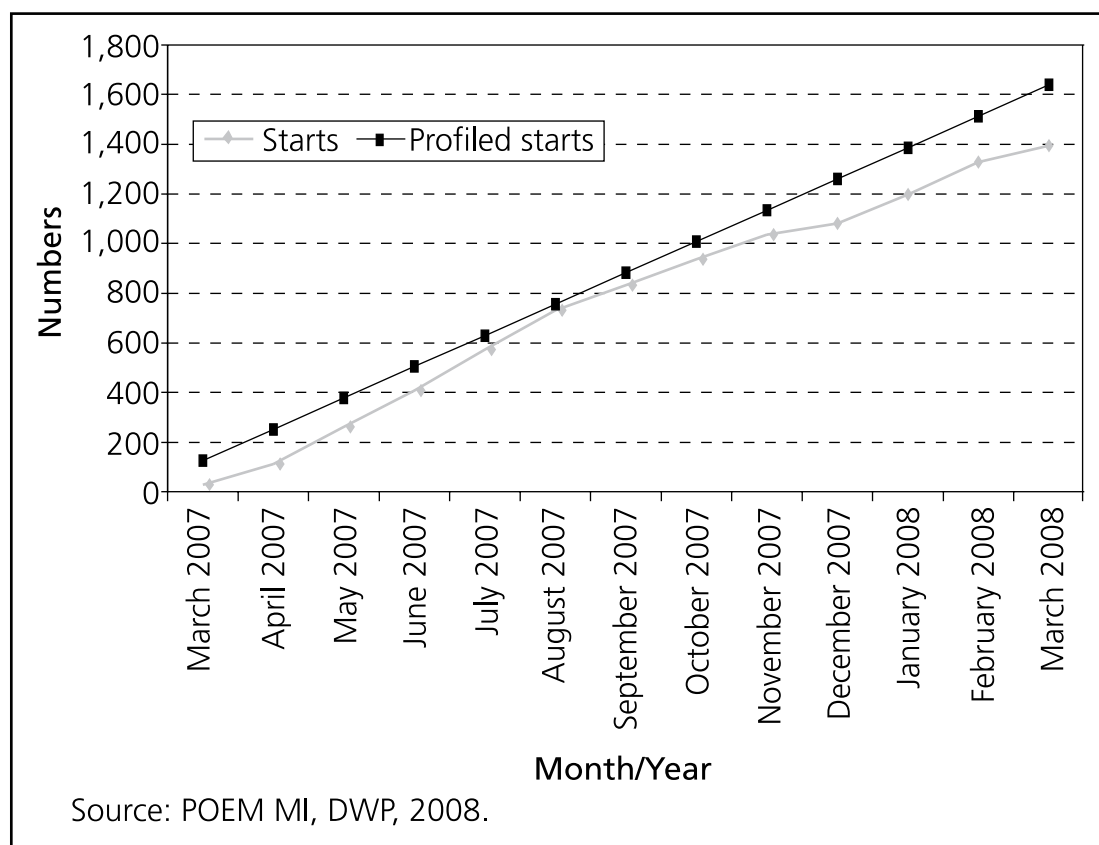


Figure 7.5 Cumulative actual and profiled starts – providers outside London (4)



7.1.1 Cumulative starts

The cumulative starts, compared to profiled starts over the first year of POEM, are shown in Figures 7.4 and 7.5 for London providers and providers outside London respectively. They show that the slow start in recruiting clients to POEM during the first few months meant that while progress was good during the later months, the overall targets for the year were not reached, although the shortfall was greatest amongst the London providers.

7.1.2 Starts as a percentage of profiled starts

Table 7.1 shows the starts to POEM as a percentage of the profiled targets, by month, to provide a snapshot of how well providers in and outside London were performing on a month to month basis against the targets they had set. Over the first year, the ten providers had between them managed to engage with and recruit 80 per cent of their target starts, with the providers outside London performing marginally better than the London providers (85 per cent compared to 78 per cent).

Looking month by month, and between the providers in and outside London, the story is similar to that shown in Figure 7.2 and Figure 7.3. The London providers, in particular, struggled to reach anywhere near their targets in the first two-thirds of

the year, but generally exceeded their monthly targets thereafter. Viewed against this rocky start, their performance in later months is encouraging for the second year of POEM. The providers outside London also did not meet their early start targets; however, by the end of the third month (May 2007) they began to exceed them. While in later months their starts were falling short of their target starts, when viewed together with the data from the provider visits, this seems to reflect that having engaged substantial numbers of clients in the preceding months, in later months, providers pulled more of their resources towards working with existing clients rather than recruiting new ones. It should also be borne in mind that providers spent most of the first year working on the assumption that POEM would end in March 2008, only learning near the end of the pilot year that the contract would be renewed (in most cases) for a second year. Hence in the latter months, providers both in and outside London may have been winding down their engagement activities in the light of this.

Table 7.1 Starts as a percentage of profiled starts, by month

	London providers (6) %	Providers outside London (4) %	All providers (10) %
03/07	2.7	23.0	15.5
04/07	10.7	66.7	26.3
05/07	53.1	118.3	68.9
06/07	48.0	115.9	63.7
07/07	69.7	130.2	86.9
08/07	78.2	127.0	92.1
09/07	62.4	79.4	66.3
10/07	69.8	82.5	73.0
11/07	117.4	78.6	107.5
12/07	85.3	36.5	72.8
01/08	95.4	93.7	94.9
02/08	142.5	102.4	132.3
03/08	120.7	52.4	103.2
Total	78.2	85.1	80.1

Source: POEM MI, DWP, 2008.

One London provider was not recontracted to deliver in the second year as a result of under-performance

The provider with the most notable under-performance on starts was a London-based provider, which achieved only 84 starts against a target of 420. Disappointingly, according to the MI, none of these clients entered work during the first 12 months of POEM (although the provider reported having obtained two job outcomes). This provider was not recontracted to deliver POEM during its second year. Recontracting to a new provider was underway at the time of writing.

This provider reflected on the reasons why they had been so unsuccessful in meeting both their recruitment and employment targets. They were thought to be a combination of not anticipating the difficulty in reaching people who would be eligible for POEM by more standard methods of engagement, and not having had the number and quality of relevant community links in place prior to, and at the start of, the contract.

'A realisation that DWP need to have is that for this to work you've got to have organisations which really, really have their feet very firmly planted in an area. To be frank, we have not been operating in London long enough to have the links that we needed to have.'

(Operations manager)

The Sub-contracting arrangements that they had put in place with two partner organisations to try and overcome this were viewed as having been *'wholly, wholly unsuccessful'*. In addition, the provider acknowledged that the profiled targets they had set for themselves were, in hindsight, unrealistic. The operations manager said that they probably would not bid for POEM again on the basis of their difficulties during the pilot year and the lessons they had learned as a result, but if they were to, they would keep their targets down:

'To be honest, I think we just plucked the numbers out of the air.'

Engagement and recruitment, including more data from the MI on starts by gender, ethnicity and age, and data from the qualitative work with providers and clients on the methods used, is covered in Chapter 4.

7.2 Employment

This section presents the hard outcome data for the first year of POEM, based on both the MI and the qualitative work with providers and clients. It looks first at employment outcomes, then 'other' outcomes (given by some providers in their MI returns), before moving to look at the soft outcomes and distance travelled by clients during the first year of POEM.

7.2.1 Evidence from the MI

Job entries as a percentage of profiled job entries

Table 7.2 shows the POEM job entries as a percentage of the profiled targets, by month. The general trend of job entries across all providers was that few were achieved during the first months of the year, with increased success from autumn 2007 onwards aside from a drop over the December and January period. The providers outside London generally had job entry success a few months earlier than the London providers. The targets which had been set were slightly lower at the beginning of the year, but given the providers' experiences of setting up POEM, perhaps they were not entirely realistic, ie low enough to offset the time which it took providers to make sufficient in-roads into the relevant communities to first recruit clients, and then, given that many clients were not close to the labour market, have time to help them into work.

Table 7.2 Job entries as a percentage of profiled job entries, by month

	London providers (6) %	Providers outside London (4) %	All providers (10) %
03/07	0	0	0.0
04/07	2.3	37.1	12.2
05/07	2.3	77.1	23.6
06/07	4.2	120.0	30.7
07/07	2.3	140.0	31.9
08/07	7.8	148.6	38.0
09/07	35.9	171.4	70.3
10/07	36.9	100.0	52.9
11/07	65.0	188.6	96.4
12/07	42.7	88.6	54.3
01/08	45.6	88.6	56.5
02/08	65.0	142.9	84.8
03/08	197.1	100.0	172.5
Total	40.5	107.9	58.0

Source: POEM MI, DWP, 2008.

Figure 7.6 Job entries and profiled job entries, by month – all providers (10)

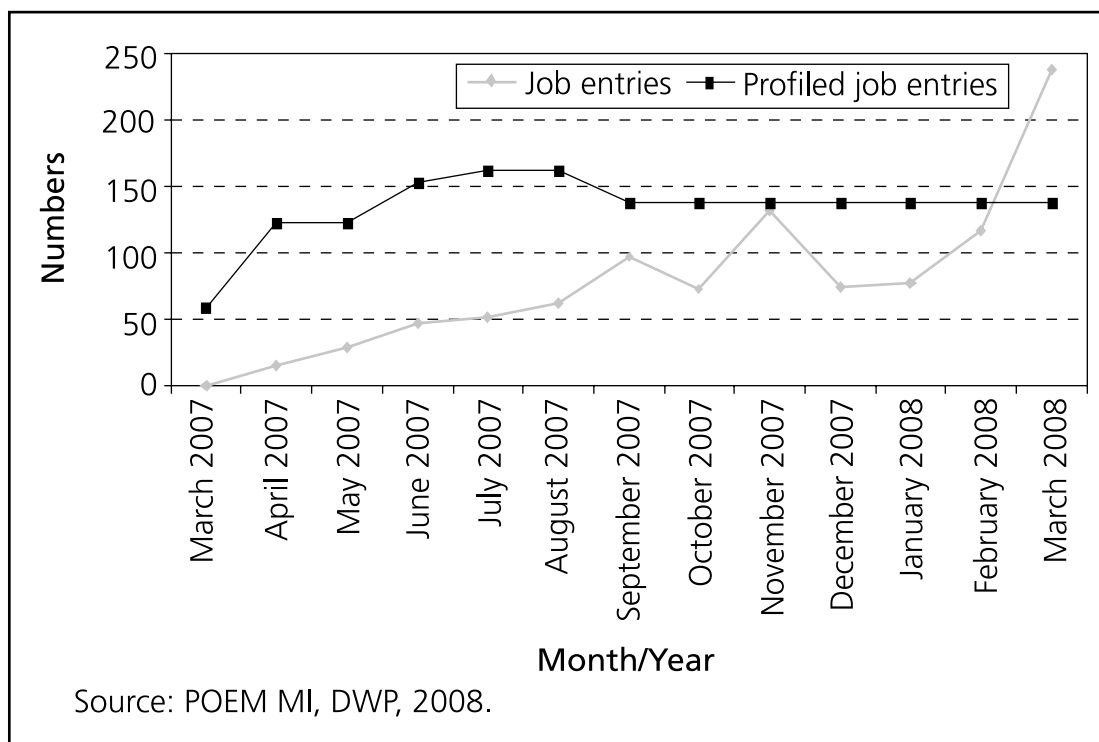


Figure 7.7 Job entries and profiled job entries, by month – London providers (6)

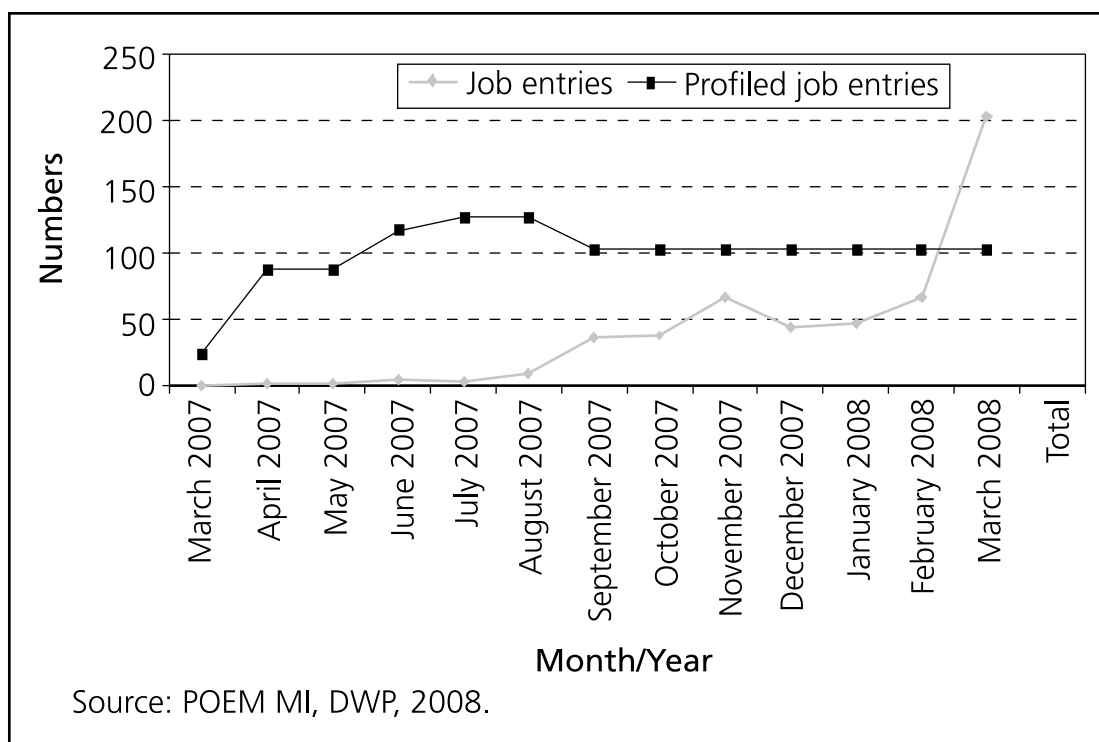


Figure 7.8 Job entries and profiled job entries, by month – providers outside London (4)

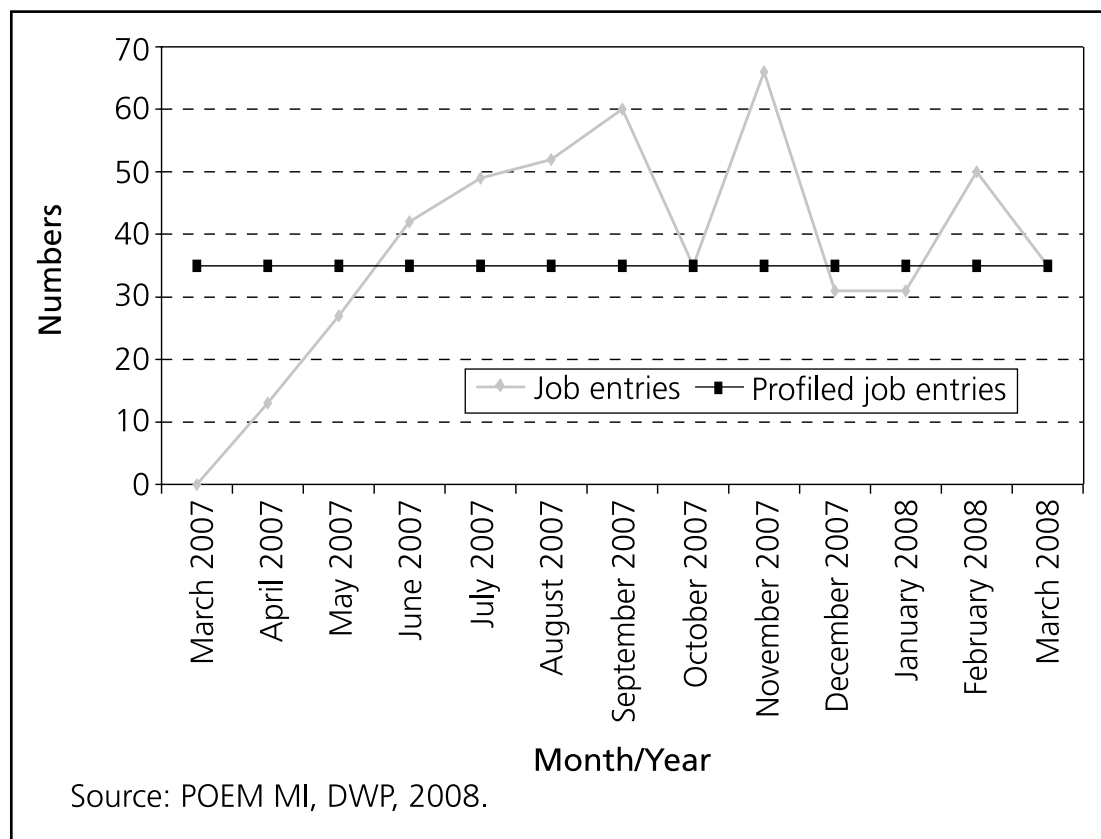


Figure 7.6 provides data on actual job entries as a percentage of job entry profiled targets, across all ten providers. Figures are provided for the London providers, and the providers outside London, in Figure 7.7 and Figure 7.8 (data used in these tables can be found in Appendix D).

Across all providers, the job entries numbered 1,016, against a target of 1,751. This was far short of the target; in fact, overall, only 58 per cent of the profiled target job entries were achieved.

The London providers fell very short of their target, obtaining less than half (40 per cent) of their target (525 of a profiled 1,296). However, the London providers had a very successful final month in the first year, when they returned 197 per cent of their targeted job entries for that month.¹⁰

Interestingly, the providers outside London exceeded their overall job entry targets (491 compared to 455, or 107 per cent) despite a slow start in the first two to three months.

¹⁰ The relatively high job entry figures in the final month may have been as a result of a time lag in receiving verified data from an organisation which was the overall provider in three of the London POEM districts.

It is also worth noting that the six London providers had between them anticipated 1,296 job entries in the pilot year; an average of 216 per provider, while the four providers outside London had anticipated 455 job entries; an average of 114 each. It was unclear what providers had based these targets on, but perhaps had they realised the long set-up time of POEM, which would for most take up several months of the pilot year, some would have lowered their targets, particularly during the earlier part of the year.

Cumulative job entries

The cumulative job entries compared to profiled job entries over the first year of POEM are shown in Figure 7.9 and Figure 7.10 for London providers and providers outside London respectively. The London providers had a particularly slow start when their actual figures are set against their job entry targets, and job entries did not pick up until the last few months of the first year. They achieved less than half of the total profiled target overall. Providers outside London were far more successful against their job entry targets, and after a slightly slow start, actual jobs almost matched profiled jobs during September and October 2007, after which actual jobs fell slightly behind profile for the remainder of the first year.

Figure 7.9 Cumulative job entries and profiled job entries – London providers (6)

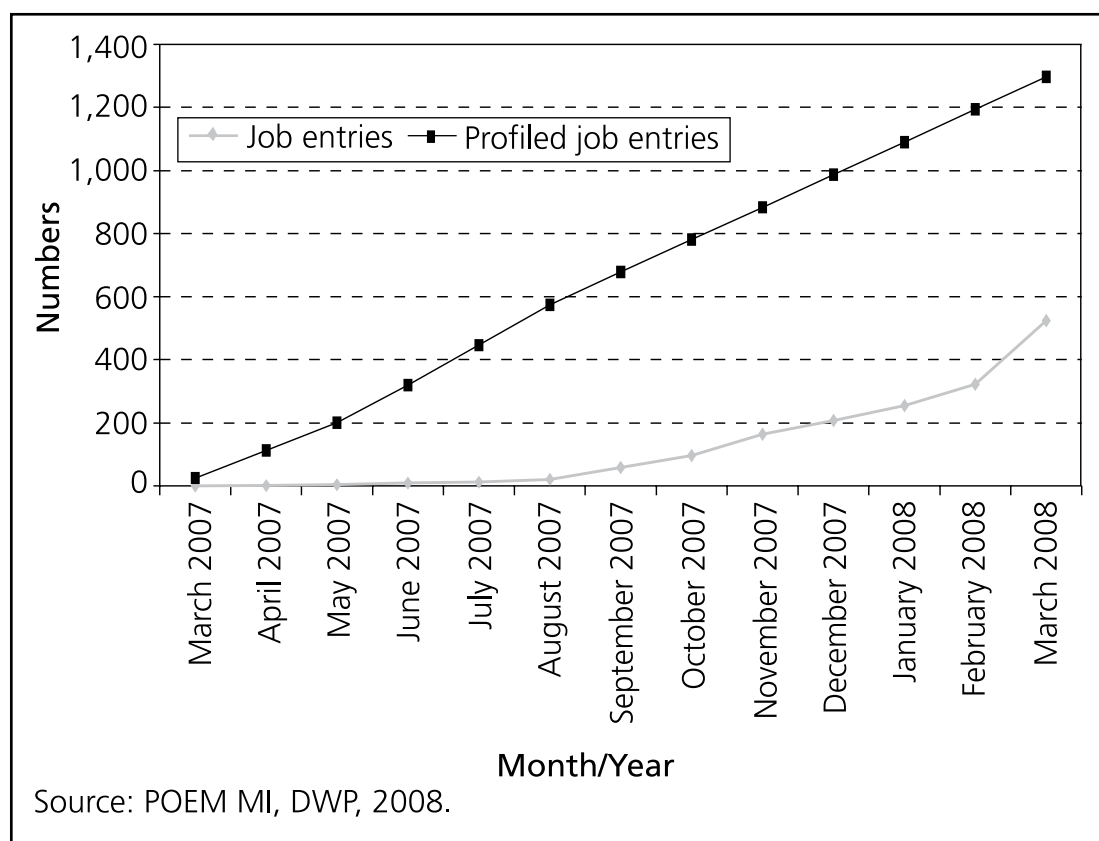


Figure 7.10 Cumulative job entries and profiled job entries – providers outside London (4)

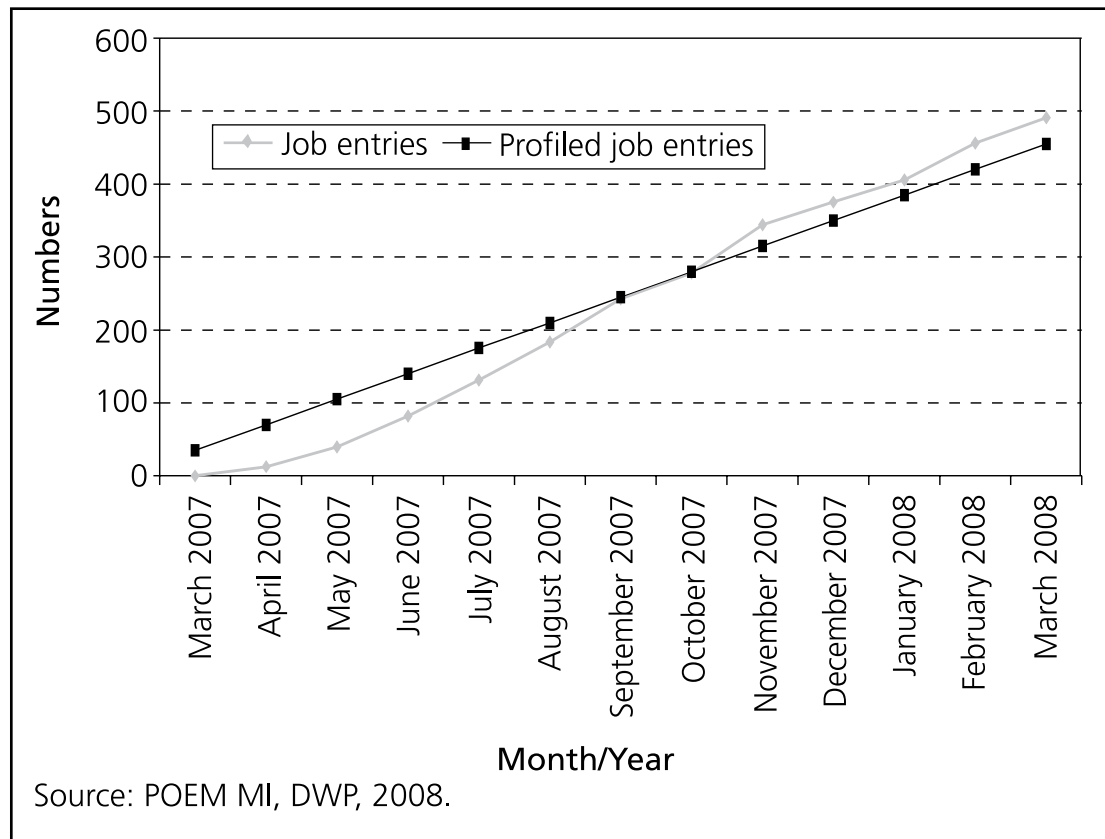
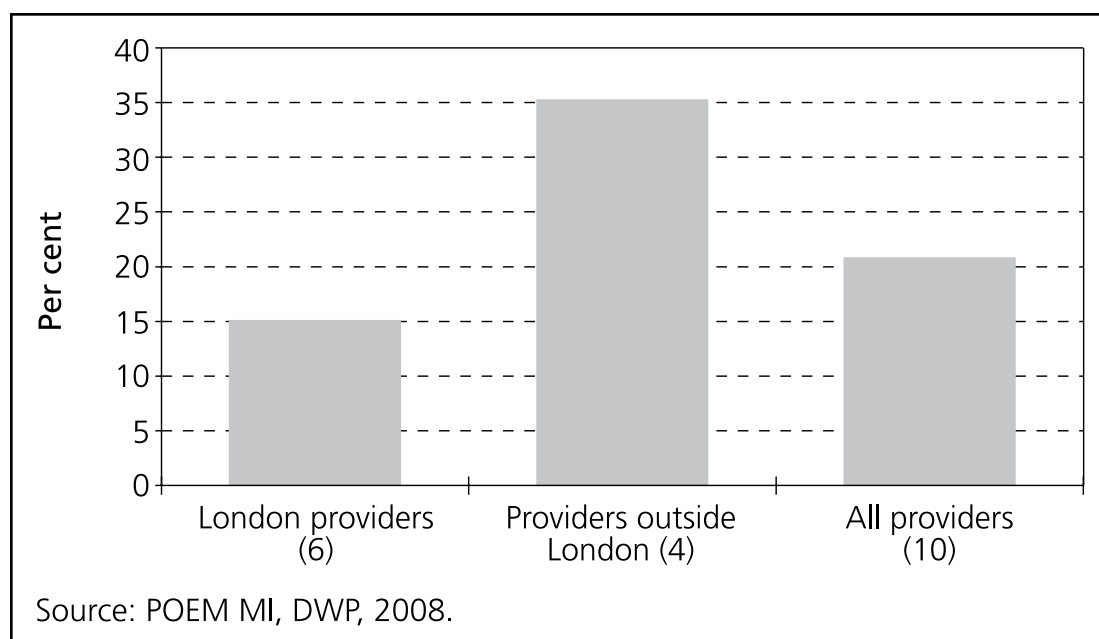


Figure 7.11 shows the job entries achieved, as a percentage of starts, for all providers, and for providers in and outside London. The overall rate of job entry across ten providers was 20 per cent. However, the figure shows clearly that the providers outside London performed more than twice as well as London providers in terms of converting starts to job entries, at 35 per cent compared to 15 per cent.

Figure 7.11 Job entries as a percentage of starts on POEM

The MI figures on recruitment to POEM by ethnicity, gender, age and disability were presented in Chapter 4. A different picture by ethnicity emerged between the providers in and outside London, with the former recruiting larger proportions of black African clients than they did from the other two target groups, and the latter recruiting larger proportions of Pakistani and Bangladeshi clients than black African clients, reflecting the higher concentrations of Asians in the cities where POEM was operating outside London, and the higher concentrations of black African residents in London (see Section 2.4).

Table 7.3 shows the starts, job entries, and job entries as a percentage of starts, by ethnicity. Across providers as a whole, the highest levels of job entries in terms of absolute numbers were black Africans (it is unclear how many of these were Somali), with 363 of these clients entering work during the pilot year. This accounted for 24 per cent of all black African clients on POEM. A slightly higher proportion (26 per cent) of Pakistani clients entered work, with lower proportions of Bangladeshi clients entering work (18.1 per cent). Interestingly, other white clients and clients from other ethnic groups had lower job entry rates overall (at 16 and 17 per cent respectively) suggesting that POEM clients outside the three target ethnic groups were, as a whole, at least as far from the labour market as black African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi clients, and that providers were not recruiting clients from other ethnic groups in order to boost their job entry figures.

Table 7.3 Starts and job entries, by ethnicity

Ethnicity	London providers (6)		Providers outside London (4)		All providers (10)	
	Starts	Job entries as % of starts	Starts	Job entries as % of starts	Starts	Job entries as % of starts
Pakistani	333	32	505	186	838	218
Bangladeshi	522	53	230	83	752	136
Black African	1,372	314	130	49	1,502	363
Other white	314	34	79	28	393	62
Other ethnic groups	90	12	1,307	224	1,397	236
Total	3,488	525	1,394	490	4,882	1,015
						20.8

Source: POEM MI, DWP, 2008.

In London, it was notable that providers had had more success in helping black African clients into work than they had with all other groups, while the providers outside London had similar success rates in terms of job entry for all three target groups and also for other white clients. The overall job entry rate was just over 20 per cent of POEM starts.

MI on starts by gender was presented in Chapter 4, which showed that a slightly higher proportion of women than men had been recruited to POEM (57 per cent and 43 per cent respectively) and this remained consistent when looking separately at the providers in and outside London.

Table 7.4 shows starts and job entries as a percentage of starts, by gender. The highest proportions of job entry outcomes were obtained by male POEM clients outside London (42 per cent of starts), while the lowest levels of job entries were found amongst female clients in London (11 per cent of starts). Job entry by female clients outside London was relatively high at 30 per cent, while the job entry rate of male clients in London was in line with the overall rate of just over 20 per cent.

MI on starts by age was detailed in Chapter 4, which showed that just over one third of POEM clients were aged 25–34 years, with slightly smaller proportions in the 18–24 and 35–49 age brackets. Clients outside London had, in general, a younger age profile than those in London.

Table 7.5 shows the starts and job entries as a percentage of starts by age. Across providers as a whole there was little variation by age in terms of job entry rates. The highest rate was 24.1 per cent for the age group 18–24, the lowest was 17 per cent, for those aged 50 and over. Job entry rates for the London providers also showed little variation by age, although all the rates were lower. There was more variation by age found in the job entry outcomes of the providers outside London, where the highest job entry rates were for clients aged 18–24 (41 per cent) and the lowest were found amongst the oldest client age group, 50 and over (24.2 per cent). From the interviews with clients, older clients were often further from the labour market, especially if they had no United Kingdom (UK) work experience or had not worked for many years, had health problems, or still had childcare and family responsibilities. Some older clients had English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) needs, and thought that it would take them some time to be ready for work.

Table 7.4 Starts and job entries, by gender

Gender	London providers (6)			Providers outside London (4)			All providers (10)		
	Starts	Job entries	Job entries as % of starts	Starts	Job entries	Job entries as % of starts	Starts	Job entries	Job entries as % of starts
Female	1,999	220	11.0	786	236	30.0	2,785	456	16.4
Male	1,489	305	20.5	604	254	42.1	2,093	559	26.7
Total	3,488	525	15.1	1,390	490	35.3	4,878	1,015	20.8

Source: POEM MI, DWP, 2008.

Table 7.5 Starts and job entries, by age

Age	London providers (6)			Providers outside London (4)			All providers (10)		
	Starts	Job entries	Job entries as % of starts	Starts	Job entries	Job entries as % of starts	Starts	Job entries	Job entries as % of starts
17 and under	52	9	17.3	1	1	100.0	53	10	18.9
18-24	925	130	14.1	551	226	41.0	1,476	356	24.1
25-34	1,261	189	15.0	504	166	32.9	1,765	355	20.1
35-49	1,006	160	15.9	275	83	30.2	1,281	243	19.0
50 and over	244	37	15.2	62	15	24.2	306	52	17.0
Total	3,488	525	15.1	1,390	490	35.3	4,881	1,016	20.8

Source: POEM MI, DWP.

7.2.2 Evidence from the qualitative work with providers and clients

Providers reported a wide range of work that they had helped clients into; however, there were some common themes in the types of work that many of their clients had obtained. The majority of job outcomes were reported to be fairly low-skilled, entry-level work, including retail, cleaning, office and administration work, catering, security work, factory and warehouse work. Jobs which involved working with children, in schools and nurseries, for example, lunchtime supervisors and nursery assistants, were popular amongst many of the female clients (particularly clients of Asian origin who had families of their own), as they already felt confident working with children, the jobs were often near their homes, and the hours allowed them to balance working with looking after their own families. One of the providers had developed links with the local authority's (LAs) Early Years Childcare service to encourage more women to become childminders as there was a shortage of childminders from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds. Another provider had developed close links with an agency supplying nursery nurses and classroom assistants, and had placed a number of suitably qualified clients into work through this informal partnership. One of the providers commented that working in childcare was also popular amongst some female clients as it was viewed as a suitable job by their husbands, and also allowed them to help their community:

'A lot of Bangladeshi women want to work in schools or within an educational environment because they feel that first, their husbands will allow them to do that because they are not the type of jobs that people in their community would look down on; but, second, they are also giving something back to their community.'

(Project manager, London provider)

Helping a Bangladeshi client who was close to the labour market

A Bangladeshi woman in her 20s who had joined POEM at one of the providers outside London had been successful in finding work within two months of joining the programme. She was 20, of Bangladeshi origin and had been born in the UK. She was married with a seven-month old baby, and her husband was training part-time to be a chef. She had been working in retail before she became pregnant, but after having her baby she wanted to find work with children, and also needed a part-time rather than a full-time job to fit in with caring for her own child. She heard about POEM from a friend and through the programme she had found work as a support worker for disabled children being transported between home and school or day centres. She was very pleased with the support she had obtained through POEM, particularly the assistance she had with jobsearch techniques and the individual support she had from her POEM adviser. Of the hours she worked and how they helped her to juggle working with her family she said:

Continued

'[My working hours] are nine to five but in the middle you get three hours break. I drop the kids off at nine then I come home and go back at two thirty and then come back home. So I can be with my child in the middle. It's good for me.'

Interviewer: *'What about childcare the rest of the time?'*

'My husband does that. When he goes to work it will be my mum. I need the money and the job. It's really good.'

Helping a Pakistani client who was further from the labour market

A Pakistani woman in her 30s had arrived in the UK four years ago. She had been a teacher in Pakistan, and hoped to find teaching or office work in the UK but had found it impossible to find any work at all. English was her second language but she was fairly proficient. She had been looking for work for three years, and was very despondent by the time she heard about POEM through an ESOL class. The provider quickly found her some part-time cleaning work, but she wanted to work more hours, so the provider then helped her to find a full-time cleaning job at a fast food outlet.

'I started my work three months earlier and I am very happy...my status, it is due to [the provider], I recommend many people to go there for help because they are very nice.'

The client wanted a better job in the future but her immediate priority was to keep any job as she wanted to bring her children to the UK. She thought that the POEM provider was her best hope of this:

'It's my opinion that if [the provider] is not involved then I can't find job because I totally depend on them.'

Helping a Somali client who was further from the labour market

A Somali man in his 40s had come to the UK from Somalia three years ago. Through joining POEM at a London provider, he had been able to find part-time work in a supermarket. Ideally he wanted to work full-time, possibly in security, but he took the part-time job as he needed to earn some money. He didn't think he would have found any work without POEM as, although he had done several vocational courses since arriving in the UK, he had no UK work experience and did not have the right connections to gain entry to the job market. He said the provider had helped with this:

'You have to have contacts. They were making the good connections... Sometimes if you go to the warehouse or office [to ask for work] they ask if you have had any experience? "No. Sorry. One hundred people have applied".'

Activities which appeared to foster the most job outcomes involved a combination of CV preparation, assisted job search, interview training and mock interviews, together with good employer links. Most of the providers had arranged some of these for their POEM clients. However, clients' distance from the labour market was often still a determining factor in how long it took for clients to obtain work and providing support on a one-to-one basis was also important in building trust between advisers and clients.

Working with employers

The providers had mixed views on the extent to which employers and employer discrimination had proved barriers to POEM clients' job entry. Some providers reported that they had come across different forms of discrimination among employers, including a lack of awareness and knowledge about different ethnic minority cultures, as well as age and sex discrimination. Providers usually tried initially to persuade employers to try working in a different way and to give some of their clients a try. However, several of the providers said that they have refused to work with some employers who did not want to change their views, and where providers considered their work practices to be discriminatory against POEM clients. In contrast, one provider had found that some employers were looking to address under-representation of particular groups and were likely to look more favourably at recruiting POEM clients as a result. They had found that public sector and large private sector organisations are more likely to offer places under those circumstances.

One provider pointed out that an important role for POEM has been raising employer awareness of cultural issues, for example, where the demands of the workplace are in conflict with a client's cultural values. This has included issues around wearing traditional dress versus a work uniform, handling alcohol (in retail and hospitality jobs) and the availability of prayer rooms. Project workers reported that they had negotiated between the employer and client in order to manage the expectations of both parties and to try and avoid problems later on. They had learned that they often had to draw out very detailed information from employers about the work environment and the requirements of the job role to ensure the post would be suitable in practice for that particular client.

Several providers had developed strong links with particular employers, or routes into employment, while others had a more case-by-case approach. One provider already had strong links with local employers before they won the POEM contract, and they had anticipated being able to draw on their existing employer links and networks for POEM. This has happened to some extent, but they also had to extend their existing networks and work with new employers in order to meet the demands of the client group. This had included 'cold calling' employers, and they had some success with this approach. Other providers had been able to work strategically with opportunities in the local area and tap into employment opportunities, as in the following example.

Tapping into local regeneration and employment opportunities

A provider outside London reported having a number of POEM clients who had applied for work at a new supermarket. Through POEM, they had attended customised pre-employment training which was provided through a local regeneration partnership which included the supermarket chain, the LA and a local football club. The partnership had provided training to 350 clients on welfare-to-work programmes through this provider, including a substantial number of POEM clients, some of whom hoped they would be employed as a result.

Another provider had a detailed employment strategy which included structured and more ad hoc methods.

A multi-stranded strategy for finding suitable work for clients

One of the London providers had developed three ways of finding suitable work for clients:

- Account-managed vacancies with large employers, such as retail chains and large hospitality organisations. These are vacancies for the wide range of this provider's corporate job brokerage activities.
- Local recruitment managers who concentrated on jobs in local areas.
- Personal advisers who concentrated on the jobs that clients are specifically looking for.

This provider delivered a range of programmes in addition to POEM, as well as working as a more mainstream recruitment agency. Hence, they were able to capitalise on the economies of scale that resulted from having several business strands, and from running several programmes at once. The account-managed jobs were not necessarily ring-fenced for POEM clients, but it had been a successful way of placing POEM clients with employers who wanted to attract employees from ethnic minority groups. Local recruitment managers had also developed links with particular employers at a more local level, and finally, personal advisers would help clients using dedicated job searches tailored to each client's particular requirements.

Overcoming language barriers

For clients with limited English, jobs such as cleaning and factory work were seen to be achievable in the short to medium term, although there tended to be fewer vacancies for factory work. Retail jobs tended to be easier to get, but clients usually needed to be able to communicate to a certain level in English to be suitable for these. There were some exceptions to this though; several providers had helped clients into retail work for employers from their own communities, for

example, working in a sari shop, restaurant or community centre, where it was more important for the employee to be able to communicate with customers and visitors in community languages rather than English. These providers had had considerable success in placing clients with employers from their own communities, where low levels of English were often not viewed as a barrier. To help clients with limited English towards, and into, work, a number of the providers had given POEM clients work-focused ESOL classes and workshops, which concentrated on basic language around work-related areas, including health and safety. They had found that these courses had quite a good rate of success in terms of job starts.

'If you are looking at employment, then we have to talk about the language for work, because we can't, in the period of the programme, teach someone who has been in England for 20 years how to speak English fluently. We will never be able to do that. What we can do is put them on an ESOL course that is linked to, say, retail or food, that teaches them about health and safety.'

(Project manager, London provider)

While the majority of POEM clients were entering fairly low-skilled work, not all POEM clients were looking for entry-level jobs. Some already had experience and degree-level or professional qualifications from overseas, but needed help to find suitable work in the UK and help with converting qualifications. Other POEM clients had been born and educated in the UK up to, and including, degree level, but had been struggling to find the kind of work they were looking for. Others had come across POEM at a time when they were just ready to enter the labour market, and the programme had helped them to find suitable work. Examples of the work these types of clients, who were already fairly close to the labour market, entered included jobs in banking and accounting, as a health and safety co-ordinator, and as an assistant photographer. Several providers mentioned that POEM clients had gone on to become POEM outreach workers and advisers for their provider. There were also a few examples where a client's technical skills proved to be more important than current English language abilities, as the example below illustrates:

'One of the success stories I had was placing a gentleman from a Somali background, who didn't speak very good English but had very good technical skills, in [a retail chain specialising in computers and IT equipment]. He is getting paid very good money and developing his skills in IT. It was the career path he wanted to go through and that was very nice and fulfilling. That is what we want: to place people in long-term sustainable employment.'

(Recruitment manager, London provider)

Barriers to job entries

A number of providers mentioned that some POEM clients placed certain restrictions on the kinds of work they would do. One of the most commonly mentioned restrictions was that some POEM clients wanted to take work which was close to their home. This was particularly an issue for people who relied on

public transport to travel to their jobs, or for clients who had young children and did not want to be working too far away from them. Being able to work part-time and having flexibility around hours worked was also important for some clients; female clients with young children were especially keen on jobs that fitted in with their other responsibilities. Working in a school so that they could be free during school holidays was a commonly cited goal, others wanted to work in the evening when a partner could be at home to take care of children. One of the London providers commented that, for most of their POEM clients, the type of job they would take did not appear to be determined by issues about pay, but mainly by flexibility, particularly around being able to work close to home:

'It is more flexibility than pay. It doesn't matter if we say to somebody, "Look, I have a job for you in the City, working in the canteen of a prestigious place that is paying £16k; versus that job in the local school canteen, paying £10k, but you can work between this hour and that hour." They will take that lower paid job than the higher paid one. They are looking at the working conditions and the environment. They have turned down the higher paid job for that school job which is just around the corner from them. POEM is about working conditions as opposed to pay. It is local, they've got flexibility, and that is the attractiveness for them.'

(Project manager, London provider)

This provider had also found that the preference of some groups (Bangladeshi women in particular) to work locally had made it more difficult for them to get more people into work. They had found this to be more of a problem in some postcode areas than others, and felt it was one of the challenges for them in delivering POEM; to persuade people that it would be possible for them to work some distance from the local area. For example, they would sometimes have to persuade clients to consider work to which they had to catch two buses rather than one, or persuade clients to apply for work in an area of the city which was not familiar to them. Some clients with children hoped to find work very close to their homes or their children's schools, so that they could reach them quickly if there was a problem.

A further issue which was mentioned by a number of providers was that some clients had unrealistic expectations in terms of the kinds of work, and the level of earnings that they would be likely to obtain, given the opportunities in the local area and their own levels of experience, skills and qualifications. Some providers had done work with clients to try to change their expectations and aspirations, at least in the short-term, persuading them that they would need to get some experience in a job first, but in time they would be able to progress to better paid work of a higher level. Other providers had found this a more difficult barrier to break down, and said that it was one of the reasons their job entry rates had been low compared to the numbers of starts on the programme.

'It's about being realistic. Even though they are further away from the labour market, some of them and the distance to travel may not be a lot. If you choose the right things, the distance may not be as far as you think it may be.'

(Provider outside London)

Some keys to job entry success – the view from a provider outside London

One of the providers outside London had exceeded their job entry targets. Two of the employment coaches (advisers) said that the key to getting clients into work was *'putting a really good CV together for each client'*. They also made a lot of applications for each client, and started to make these applications at a relatively early stage in the client journey, as they had found that this was a good way to increase clients' confidence and motivation. In addition, where a lack of experience was proving a barrier, they provided voluntary opportunities at the provider organisation, for example, on reception or in the on-site café. When working with POEM clients, they had encountered some issues around attractiveness of work, levels of pay and working conditions, but had found one of the biggest issues to be that people do not want to, or are not able to, travel far to work. They viewed a mismatch between aspirations and realistic opportunities as a barrier to be overcome; in this situation they would work with clients to try to identify aspirations which were more suitable in the light of their circumstances and experience.

Once they had helped a client into work, they did regular follow-ups to both the client and the employer to see if any support was needed, although there were no reports of any significant requirements. They also used this contact with the employer to build up links for the future. They reported that job starts are the best outcome for them and their clients:

'Clients who we help into work can't thank us enough.'

They also thought that helping clients into work was also a good way to get new clients, as previous clients would often recommend POEM to family and friends on the back of their job entry success.

It was notable that the provider in the example above had needed to spend less time than most on set-up and capacity-building activities at the start of the POEM pilot year, as they had considerable experience in working with people who were quite similar to POEM clients. In contrast, most of the providers had found it harder than expected to help clients into work, and this was usually attributed to the fact that the clients were different from their previous or usual clients; many had multiple barriers, and this was often the first time they had participated in any active labour market intervention programme. A number of the providers said that their job entries were also lower than they had anticipated as a result of a slower start than they had hoped for, while they recruited and trained staff,

located suitable venues and made or strengthened partnership arrangements. This had meant that for the first few months of POEM they had few starts and few, if any, job entries. However, in the latter months of the first year they had started to see the results of their earlier investment work. This situation was particularly the case where providers were working with this client group for the first time, or where they were working in a new geographical area and effectively had to start from scratch. For providers with a longer established track record of working with similar client groups, the time lost to set up activities was far less critical. This is borne out in the MI at individual provider level; several of the providers who were already fairly well placed in the relevant communities were reaching their recruitment targets by the end of three months, although it took most several months longer to catch up with their original profiles.

A few providers mentioned that when they first learned of POEM they understood the key aim of the programme to be the client journey; moving clients towards the labour market even if they were not job-ready by the end of the pilot year. However, during the course of the first year the focus had seemingly changed, with DWP and Jobcentre Plus becoming increasingly concerned about job entry figures (at least in part because of the under-achievement against targets during the earlier part of the year). This may have meant that providers were not as job-focused as they might have been when working with clients during the first few months of the pilot.

Self-employment

A number of the providers had helped clients into self-employment. This was often in the form of part-time working on a self-employed basis to provide additional income for the family alongside a partner's income from full-time work. Self-employment outcomes usually built on the existing skills and interests of POEM clients, finding ways to turn these into a way of earning income that providers and clients were able to capitalise on. The flexibility of POEM was thought to be key in being able to provide self-employment outcomes for clients, as it enabled them, for example, to buy clients the necessary equipment to set up their small businesses, provide financial help with setting up premises, and pay for any necessary business skills training.

Helping clients into self-employment – a provider's view

One of the providers outside London gave a number of examples of clients who they had helped to set up in self-employment. These included clients who set up small businesses as curtain makers, samosa makers and providing mobile repairs. One POEM client, a woman who had worked in a factory whilst raising her children, later did an adult education course in cake decorating. Through POEM she put a business plan together and they linked her with an Asian wedding planner so she became a supplier of wedding cakes.

The provider highlighted that helping clients in this way also helped to legitimise the informal economy. To assist with this they ran regular HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) workshops for clients from POEM and other programmes also running at the same provider who were interested in exploring self-employment options. This provider praised the POEM programme as its flexibility meant that they could think 'outside the box':

'We can try things out and see what works for people.'

They also felt that their systems assisted this process as they had endeavoured to keep the numbers of forms they had to fill out to a minimum.

Helping a client to improve her English and start her own business

A female client aged 24 had come to the UK from India one year ago. She is married and her husband works full-time. She was qualified to graduate level in India, where she had worked as a teacher. She had hoped to have her qualifications recognised in the UK, but has not pursued this due to the cost. She had joined POEM at a provider outside London and, with the help of the programme, had started her own beauty business. She had also done some ESOL classes. She now worked from home for just a few hours a week, but hoped to expand in the future. She was still attending appointments at the provider as she needed more support to run her business and she also hoped to do more ESOL classes. As well as helping her to start her own business, she said that POEM had made her feel much more confident.

A client who was some distance from the labour market – fostering self-employment as an aspiration

A woman in her 20s from Somalia had arrived in the UK two years ago after she married a man in the UK. Her English was quite limited and the interview was conducted with the help of an interpreter. She heard about POEM when outreach workers came to a Somali community centre in another part of the city (outside London). Her POEM adviser was not a Somali speaker so they tried to do their appointments in English to help improve the client's language skills, but there was always someone on hand to interpret if necessary. Through POEM, the client had been attending an ESOL class at a local college and thought that her English had improved greatly. Her adviser helped her to look for cleaning work, but she really hoped to become self-employed, making clothes (traditional Somali dress). POEM had funded a bus pass for her so that she could look for suitable premises. She wanted to work for herself in order to 'be my own boss', and also:

'To benefit myself, this country and my people.'

She felt that POEM had helped her greatly, particularly in navigating the new and unfamiliar systems and ways of doing things in this country. She felt that the provider had done everything they could have done to help her and couldn't think how the service could be improved.

'I hope that I succeed with my ambitions. To work, to have work. To set up my own business.'

Interviewer: *'Do you think you will need support after March [2008, the end of the POEM pilot year] to help you?'*

'Yes I will need further support.'

Interviewer: *'So in a couple of years time, where do you hope to be?'*

'To have lots of success and help. My business is priority now in taking off, but also that my language is perfect.'

7.3 'Other' outcomes

Seven of the ten provider districts returned some 'other' outcomes alongside their job entries in their MI returns to DWP. Numbers of clients with 'other' outcomes ranged from ten at one provider to 124 at another. During the second wave of visits to providers, the research team established that some providers were counting accredited training and education courses as 'other' outcomes. According to the providers, these 'other' outcomes were largely ESOL courses, but there were also some other vocational training courses such as food hygiene which were being counted by some providers as 'other' outcomes.

The extent to which these 'other' outcomes had been collected on a systematic basis at each provider was not clear. Two of the three providers which had not provided any data on 'other' outcomes had performed well in terms of job entry outcomes, having both exceeded their job entry targets (263 against a profiled 221 and 118 against a profiled 104). These providers were both based outside London. During evaluation visits, they both reported that they had provided training for clients, or had sent clients to training courses elsewhere, as and when appropriate. Clearly, providers were not viewing this outcome in the same way, as some gave figures on this, and others did not. Hence, the MI data on 'other' outcomes is not a true reflection of the numbers or proportions of clients who underwent training as a result of POEM. The third provider giving no 'other' outcomes was based in London and had performed badly against job entry targets.

7.4 Soft outcomes and distance travelled

Aside from getting clients into jobs, providers reported a number of softer outcomes which applied both to clients who had found work, and also to clients who were still some distance from the labour market. These soft outcomes provided evidence that many of the clients who had not entered work as a result of POEM in its pilot year had travelled some distance towards the labour market, as a direct result of POEM (also see Chapter 6 on the client journey).

From the interviews with clients, and case study work with providers, there were four main areas of change identified, which were indicators of soft outcomes and distance travelled by clients:

- greater confidence and motivation;
- increased awareness of opportunities;
- job search, application and interview skills;
- improved English language skills.

All of these were felt to be important measures of distance travelled, although there was often considerable overlap between them, as progress against one measure would also bring about change against others. For clients who were furthest from the labour market, progress on all four indicators had usually contributed to their distance travelled. Clients who joined POEM when they were closer to the labour market had more often evidenced particular progress on two or three of the indicators, for example, there were many UK-born clients for whom English language skills were not an issue, but they lacked confidence and needed intensive support in identifying suitable vacancies and in interview skills. For many clients, there was evidence against most or all of these four indicators that they had taken important steps towards entering the labour market. These soft outcome indicators are explored in turn below.

There is considerable overlap between these four areas, and the key turning points identified in Chapter 6 (which were greater confidence, broadened horizons, intensive provider support, a positive experience of training and job preparation, and wider family support).

7.4.1 Greater confidence and motivation

As was seen in Chapter 6, greater confidence was identified as a key turning point in the client journey. However, it also emerged as one of the most important soft outcomes and indicators of distance travelled on POEM.

There were mixed views from providers on the extent to which POEM clients were motivated when they joined POEM. Some reported that motivation was a big issue for clients. Others had found that, as POEM was a voluntary programme, POEM clients were generally more motivated to attend appointments and work to overcome barriers to work than clients on mandatory programmes such as New Deal.

However, confidence was one of the most widely reported barriers to work for clients when they joined POEM. Given the range and number of barriers which some POEM clients faced, many providers found confidence to be among the easiest to address. Several of the providers had tackled this barrier by giving clients a sense of direction and some aspirations, and then working with them to convince clients that they had transferable skills which employers would want. Providers had found that clients' confidence and motivation tended to increase as a matter of course when they had regular contact with advisers through one-to-one and group sessions. Confidence and motivation also tended to increase when progress was made against any of the other three soft outcome measures.

The impact of POEM on clients' confidence was clear from the interviews with clients (most of whom had not yet obtained work), with many clients with varied backgrounds and histories reporting that they felt much more confident as a direct result of POEM:

'Before I joined this I was very scared, I can't go there and speak, I can't speak, I was shy. People [here] encouraged me.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 40s)

'I feel confident. I went to college. I feel different. I'm a student now. [It] makes me confident now.'

(POEM client, Bangladeshi woman in her 40s)

'It's made a lot of difference because it's given me motivation, confidence, and now instead of waiting for my kids to come home and telling them to put the computer on, I can do it myself. I can apply online as well if I see a job, I just have to look at my CV and if I get an application form in the post, I just have to take my CV out and fill it in. Before my daughter was filling it in for me.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'It's helped me quite far. My confidence, wanting to look for work, it's driven me more to do that...'

(POEM client, black Caribbean woman in her 30s)

Increasing confidence through providing practical assistance with applying for jobs

Advisers at one of the providers outside London reported how they motivated people initially by explaining the benefits of working, including having greater financial freedom:

'We can't dangle money in front of them, but we do talk about what they might be able to do with the extra money they would earn if they had work, eg car, holiday, bigger house, better standard of living, etc. And until then we can help them with whatever they need, we can pay for interview suits, help to pay for travel costs.'

After this they usually met with clients once a week and started submitting application forms and interviews relatively quickly, as they had found that even getting to an interview was a big confidence boost for clients, and made them feel a part of the labour market. Putting together a CV was seen to be key in this process, and once clients had an up-to-date CV, advisers did not wait for other barriers to be overcome before they started to help clients to apply for work.

'The CV is important as it puts down all the skills and experience people have, in one place – they've never seen it put down properly on paper before in a way that sells their skills and they start believing in themselves.'

They had also found a lack of skill in interview techniques to be a common barrier which undermined clients' confidence and motivation. Giving them training in this in the form of one-to-one training or group workshops, had been successful in increasing clients' confidence and motivation, moving them closer to the labour market:

'You have to keep clients motivated to keep coming. Being able to invest that money in people shows them that you believe in them, that makes a lot of difference, it keeps them motivated.'

Across all the providers there has been some drop-out from the programme and this was attributed, in part, to the low motivation of some clients. Other reasons for drop-out from the programme were additional responsibilities, including caring for children and relatives, and that people were simply not used to having to attend something regularly.

One of the providers had worked creatively to try to increase the motivation and attendance of their clients by telephoning them on the morning of their appointment to check that they would still be attending. They had found that some clients would say they did not have enough money for the bus fare to the provider's premises. In such cases, advisers said that if the client was able to attend their appointment, they would pay for their all-day bus ticket. In this way, they worked to build up the trust and motivation of their clients over time. Not all providers had taken this approach, as there were occasional reports from clients interviewed that they were not able to visit the provider as often as they might as they could not afford the travel fares.

The time it took to help someone into work varied greatly, depending on clients' starting points, but confidence was felt by the providers to be one of the biggest barriers, and hence, one of the most important measures of distance travelled. For example, one provider said of the time it took to help clients into work:

'A lot depends on the clients, how willing and motivated and how confident they are. Some just need a little push, a bit of support and someone to believe in them. Others might need a lot of hard work. So someone might take four weeks and someone else might take six months, so it all depends. And it also depends on the opportunities available, for example, we have a new [supermarket chain] opening, so things like that help.'

(Adviser, provider outside London)

7.4.2 Increased awareness of opportunities

Another soft outcome, or measure of distance travelled, included an increased awareness of the realistic work opportunities which were available to them at that point in time, given their previous experience. This has obvious parallels with the key turning point 'broadened horizons' which was identified in Chapter 6 as particularly important for clients in terms of realising their employment options, setting personal goals and formulating long-term plans. In terms of soft outcomes and distance travelled, an increased awareness of opportunities was identified with particular reference to matching clients to jobs, and also in helping clients more recently arrived in the UK to be more generally aware of opportunities and services available in their area.

Some providers reported working to change clients' aspirations by suggesting alternative career avenues which might be easier to gain entry to, with reference to the kinds of jobs available in the local area. This sometimes included working with local employers to capitalise on any large-scale recruitment drives when businesses expanded or new businesses opened in the area. Other clients had attended courses that had been identified with the help of their POEM provider, which they thought they would have been unlikely to have known about otherwise. This had sometimes helped clients to firm up their future plans:

'It makes me realise what I want to do. If there have been courses I can join they will let me know.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Some clients spoke of how joining POEM had helped them to leave their home and mix with others, as this female client, who had attended ESOL training as a result of POEM, explained:

'Socialising has been very good. Some ladies stop in the home. They sit and cry. We come in centres like [the provider]. We learn something and have socialising as well. It's brilliant.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 30s)

For some clients, particularly those who had arrived in the UK more recently, the barriers to be overcome had not only included where and how to find work, but how to access opportunities, support and advice more generally. Examples included Somali clients who had often been in the UK for a relatively short time, and who often lived in communities which were less well established than those of the other target groups.

Working with 'hardest-to-reach' clients for the first time

One provider outside London had found that a key lesson for their organisation as a result of providing POEM was an increased realisation that there are 'harder-to-reach' groups of people within local communities who have never accessed benefits, or services from Jobcentre Plus or elsewhere, and are generally unaware of what they are entitled to. Through the POEM project, they had developed some useful strategies for reaching these groups and were beginning to address some of their barriers to employment and training, which included helping them to access appropriate opportunities. They had found POEM clients to be very different from their 'usual' clients, and those they had worked with on previous projects, including Ethnic Minority Outreach (EMO).

A partner organisation's view of how POEM has helped clients from overseas find their way in an unfamiliar country

A Somali woman who had arrived in the UK six years ago and now worked at one of the providers' partner organisations, a Somali community organisation, drew on her own experience of settling in the UK and also the experiences of the people she worked with:

'Life is hard here and you need guidance.'

They tended to work with people on the more basic issues such as housing and criminal justice, and did not have the capacity to support people regarding training and employment. But since the POEM provider made links with them about half way through the pilot year, they had been able to refer people who needed support around employment straight to POEM. As a result, she felt that their clients had been able to get the help they needed, whether this was training, financial advice, or help finding a job. The most difficult thing for people she worked with from the Somali community, was around making the right links, where to look for work, how to apply, and where to go to get help on a wide range of other issues. She thought that POEM had been especially helpful in providing people with guidance on how to access the support they needed and opportunities they were looking for.

'The difference is that before we were just dealing with the problems, now we are able to get some benefits [for our community]. It's made a tremendous difference, especially with the youth. We're very grateful.'

7.4.3 Job search, application and interview skills

In Chapter 6, intensive provider support, and a positive experience of training and job preparation were found to be important turning points in the client journey. The resulting improved job search and interview skills that clients obtained through POEM were also found to be an important soft outcome from the programme.

Most of the providers had run some form of employability training, often in the form of workshops and group sessions. Some providers had provided intensive interview technique training, for example, being filmed during a mock interview so that later, with help from the trainer, clients could see where they were going wrong. In addition to this, clients worked with their advisers on a one-to-one basis during their regular meeting sessions and after the initial appointments, where Action Plans were filled out, sessions usually included some form of tailored job search. Some providers also used this provision as a way to boost their clients' confidence and motivation (see Section 7.4.1) and clients themselves had reported that they had become more confident through this practical and job-focused provision.

'Before I joined POEM I didn't know what to say or write for an interview. Since I've been on the POEM project I've got more interviews and my application has been past the first test. I just lack experience and that's when I don't get the job.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'It's the first time I understand interview techniques here [in this country].'

(POEM client, Indian man in his 20s)

'If you need help they give you the support you need. I would recommend it to anyone who needs help with a CV. I upgraded my CV with [the adviser] and it looks more presentable and professional.'

(POEM client, Bangladeshi man in his 20s)

'Getting the job and my confidence and feeling I have somewhere to go and I made new friends. The jobcentre wasn't really helping and it was frustrating and I didn't know where I was going wrong when I applied for jobs. They were able to help me with what I should do.'

(POEM client, Pakistani man in his 20s)

One of the clients commented on the long-term value of the support and training they had had from POEM on interview techniques:

'I think that's been the biggest thing for me actually, preparing me for an interview, knowing what to expect. And that's a quality I've picked up for life really. Not just for a couple of months.'

(POEM client, Pakistani man in his late teens)

7.4.4 Improved English

Many of the POEM clients were speakers of other languages and from the reports from providers, and from the interviews with clients, it was clear that significant proportions of POEM clients had little or fairly limited English. Depending on the particular client, and the provision at their provider and in the local area, some clients were placed on short-term work-focused ESOL, while other clients had been helped onto more comprehensive ESOL courses, for example, those provided by local colleges. While many of these clients had yet to find work, their contact with, and support from, the providers, and their improving English skills, had increased their confidence, their future aspirations, and for some, their health and well-being too.

'I asked her for improve my English. In India we are taught English but no experience to speak. I have lack confidence. Here everybody helps me. Now I feel confidence I am going to open my own small type of beauty agency.'

(POEM client, Indian woman in her 20s)

Improved English and hope for the future

An Indian woman in her 50s had come from India to the UK seven months earlier. She had done very little work in India, and none since arriving in the UK. She started ESOL classes at her London-based provider, as she felt that she needed to improve her English before she would be able to get a job. She said that she felt completely lost before she started coming to the provider, but now she was more hopeful.

Improved English language, well-being and confidence

A Bangladeshi woman in her 40s had been living in the UK for 20 years, but had spent most of this time raising her family. She had some ESOL classes when she had first arrived in the UK but stopped after having her first child, and she had never felt comfortable speaking English. The interview was conducted with the help of a Bengali interpreter, although her English was actually quite proficient and the interpreter was needed only for a few of the more complex questions. It appeared that, with regard to her English language skills, confidence was at least as big a barrier as ability.

When her children were growing up she helped her husband in his restaurant and also had to look after her extended family as well as her own children. Now her children are a little older and her in-laws had moved out she felt she had time to work, although this would still need to fit around her children, the youngest of whom was seven. Nonetheless, she was very keen to work during their school hours and this was the main reason why she joined POEM. The provider (outside London) had identified some suitable courses for her in childcare and IT, as well as an English language course, and had been helping her to apply for jobs as a lunchtime supervisor in local schools. She said she had made friends at college, and her husband was supportive as he was glad she wasn't depressed, as she has been in the past. Her children were also pleased to see her learning and they enjoyed helping her on the computer at home. She said that she felt much more confident as a result of having joined POEM.

7.5 Summary

POEM achieved 80 per cent of targeted starts in the pilot year (4,884 starts compared to a target of 6,101). There was considerable variation in the extent to which providers were able to meet their recruitment or start targets on POEM, although most providers recruited the largest proportions of clients during the later months of the pilot year. Figures differed between the providers in and outside London. London providers achieved 78 per cent of their target starts (3,490 compared to a target of 4,463). Providers outside London did slightly better, achieving 85 per cent of their target (1,394 compared to a target of 1,638).

In total, there were 1,016 job entries achieved during the first year of POEM. This was 58 per cent of the target of 1,751. The London providers in particular fell far short of their targets, obtaining only 40 per cent of their target job entry numbers (525 of a profiled 1,296). However, their performance improved markedly over the course of the year; in the final month they returned 197 per cent of their targeted job entries for that month. The providers outside London exceeded their overall job entry targets (491 compared to 455, or 107 per cent) despite a slow start in the first two to three months.

The overall rate of job entry (job entries as a percentage of starts) across all providers was 20 per cent. There were considerable differences between the providers in and outside London; providers outside London performed more than twice as well as London providers on converting starts to job entries, at 35 per cent compared to 15 per cent.

Providers reported that POEM clients had entered a wide range of work. The majority of jobs obtained were fairly low-skilled, entry-level work, including retail, cleaning, catering and security work, and factory and warehouse work. Working with children, for example, in a nursery or as a lunchtime supervisor in a school, was popular amongst many of the female clients with children. Clients with limited English had a fairly narrow range of work available to them in the short-term, but some providers had considerable success in placing such clients with employers from their own communities, and in providing work-focused ESOL classes to improve employability quickly. Some clients already had work experience and/or professional qualifications from overseas and needed help with converting them and having them recognised by employers. A few clients had degrees from the UK but were struggling to find the kinds of work they were looking for. There were examples of such clients entering banking and accounting, and also of POEM clients being employed by their provider as outreach workers and advisers.

Turning to soft outcomes and distance travelled, there were four main areas of change identified:

- greater confidence and motivation;
- increased awareness of opportunities;
- job search, application and interview skills;
- improved English language skills.

There was often considerable overlap between these, as change in one area would help to bring about change in others.

8 Impact

This chapter summarises the key messages from the previous chapters on the impact of Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM) during its pilot year. It outlines the ways in which POEM has made an impact at client, provider and partner level, and also the factors which contribute to, or constrain success.

It looks, in turn, at:

- impact against the overall targets;
- impact on clients, including the factors which contributed to, or constrained success;
- impact on providers, including the factors which contributed to, or constrained, success;
- impact on other stakeholders.

8.1 Impact against the overall targets

This section highlights some of the key messages from the Management Information (MI) presented in Chapter 7 on outcomes and looks at the extent to which POEM met its hard outcome targets for the first year. During the pilot year of POEM, both the total starts achieved and the job entries were short of the profiled targets which providers had given to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Most providers made good progress against targets during the second half of the year. However, recruitment to the programme was much lower during the first few months, particularly in London, and few providers were able to redress the resulting shortfall (particularly on starts) during the later months.

8.1.1 Starts

The key points from the earlier chapters on starts, job entries, ethnicity and gender are summarised below:

- POEM achieved 80 per cent of targeted starts in the pilot year (4,884 starts compared to a target of 6,101).
- Figures differed between the providers in and outside London. London providers achieved 78 per cent of their target starts (3,490 compared to a target of 4,463). Providers outside London did slightly better, achieving 85 per cent of their target (1,394 compared to a target of 1,638).
- A different picture on starts by ethnicity also emerged between the providers in and outside London, with the former recruiting larger proportions of black African clients (39 per cent of their total recruits) with Bangladeshis and Pakistanis accounting for smaller proportions (15 and nine per cent respectively).
- Outside London, Pakistanis formed the largest client group (36 per cent) with Bangladeshis the second largest (16 per cent) and black Africans the smallest of the target groups (nine per cent).
- A slightly higher proportion of women than men had been recruited to POEM (57 per cent and 43 per cent respectively). There was little difference between the providers in London and the providers outside London in terms of starts by gender.

8.1.2 Job entries

The headline findings from the MI data on job entries (presented in Chapter 7) are summarised below:

- In total, there were 1,016 job entries achieved during the first year of POEM. This was 58 per cent of the target of 1,751.
- The London providers, in particular, fell far short of their target, obtaining only 40 per cent of their target job entry numbers (525 of a profiled 1,296). However, their performance improved markedly over the course of the year; in the final month they returned 197 per cent of their targeted job entries for that month.
- The providers outside London exceeded their overall job entry targets (491 compared to 455, or 107 per cent) despite a slow start in the first two to three months.
- The overall rate of job entry (job entries as a percentage of starts) across ten providers, was 20 per cent. There were considerable differences between the providers in and outside London; providers outside London performed more than twice as well as London providers on converting starts to job entries, at 35 per cent compared to 15 per cent.

- Across providers as a whole, the highest levels of job entries in terms of absolute numbers were black Africans with 363 (24 per cent) of these clients entering work during the pilot year.
- A slightly higher proportion (26 per cent) of Pakistani clients entered work, with lower proportions of Bangladeshi clients entering work (18 per cent).
- Other white clients and clients from other ethnic groups had lower job entry rates overall (at 16 and 17 per cent respectively).
- The highest proportions of job entry outcomes were obtained by male POEM clients outside London (42 per cent of starts), while the lowest levels of job entries were found amongst female clients in London (11 per cent of starts).
- Job entry by female clients outside London was relatively high at 30 per cent, while the job entry rate of male clients in London was in line with the overall rate of just over 20 per cent.

8.2 Impact on clients

8.2.1 Clients' starting points

There was an extremely wide range of starting points and journey speeds on POEM, from people with no qualifications to those with Masters degrees, and from those who had arrived in the United Kingdom (UK) relatively recently, to those who had been born and brought up in the UK. Some clients had very little English and language was an issue for most who had not been born in the UK. It was a largely young client group, particularly in the cities outside London, but POEM worked with people of a wide range of ages, including women who had been out of the labour market for many years.

Many clients were a long distance from the labour market when they joined POEM. As a result, they were likely to take longer to be work-ready than those on many other State-funded programmes, as they had a range of overlapping barriers. Most clients had some of these barriers, and some clients had most or all of them:

- unfamiliarity with the UK labour market, and for some, UK culture and systems in general;
- lack of job search skills;
- not knowing how to sell themselves to an employer;
- lack of UK work experience;
- lack of qualifications, or UK-recognised qualifications;
- limited English language;
- lack of confidence and motivation;
- unrealistic aspirations;

- social isolation;
- childcare and caring responsibilities (for some women);
- cultural resistance to their working (for some women);
- restrictions on types of work and hours worked.

Of these, the most commonly cited barriers which appeared to be key to address were lack of job search skills, interview techniques, low levels of English, and lack of UK work experience.

POEM providers had worked in a number of ways to overcome these barriers, although some providers had more scope in what they were able to offer to clients than others. Nonetheless, most providers' activities had common or core elements which constituted the significant part of their POEM provision.

8.2.2 How did POEM have an impact?

This section looks at the 'softer' ways in which POEM made an impact during the pilot year, using the key turning points identified in Chapter 6 as a framework. These were:

- greater confidence;
- broadened horizons;
- intensive provider support;
- positive experience of training and job preparation;
- wider family support.

Each of these are dealt with in turn. The section also considers other impacts, and clients' views on the extent to which POEM had helped them.

Greater confidence

Perhaps one of the most universal barriers amongst POEM clients, a lack of confidence was a barrier which most providers found relatively easy to address through the various aspects of POEM provision. POEM appears to have been particularly successful in raising the confidence, motivation and, in some cases, aspirations of a wide range of clients.

Broadened horizons

Moving clients closer to the labour market

Several of the providers had commented that POEM was particularly helpful for clients who were further from the labour market as it was flexible enough to take into account broader cultural issues right from the start. However, it also enabled them to look at the individual barriers of clients, recognising that there would be a great variety of experience among individuals from within each target group.

POEM achieved job outcomes for some clients but many still had some way to go (by the time of the client interviews and Wave 2 work with providers). POEM had most usually helped people into entry-level jobs, but in a few cases clients with skills, qualifications or experience had found more specialised work. Some clients were still on the programme and looking for work, others were on the programme with a view to start looking for work in earnest some time in the future, when their English had improved further and their family responsibilities were fewer.

Encouraging re-engagement amongst women

Amongst women, POEM had worked with, amongst others, slightly older Pakistani and Bangladeshi women (usually in their 30s and 40s) who had been out of the labour market for many years while they brought up their children. Many had never worked in the UK. For these women, work was often a long-term goal, with learning English their main priority. They also wanted to be able to help their children with their homework and to take a more active role in their children's schools. POEM had improved their confidence greatly; it had provided ways for them to learn English, they had made friends with others in similar situations and, for some, it had increased their health and well-being (several clients interviewed mentioned having had depression in the recent past). Some of these women were getting ready, by learning English, so that when their children were a little older, they could then look for work. In the meantime, they were very pleased to be on POEM and generally said their whole families had been very supportive when they saw how much benefit they were getting from the programme. This included, crucially, being happier and more confident.

For women with children who were in a position to look for work, in some cases POEM assisted them with training or job preparation to find work with children, in childcare roles or at local schools. This was in direct response to demand for work of this nature from women on POEM.

Assisting women with children to prepare for the labour market in future years by learning English, taking vocational courses and engaging with services was a policy implication in the report on Pakistani and Bangladeshi women's attitudes to work and family (Aston *et al.*, 2007). Another policy implication from this study was to find ways to help women to work in childcare professions, meeting many women's preferences for work in those areas, and for culturally appropriate childcare.

Preventing and addressing disengagement amongst men

POEM had worked with a higher proportion of men than had been anticipated by DWP or providers. Qualitative work found that POEM was being used by young men who had recently arrived in the UK after marriage. Their contact with POEM was preventing them from becoming disengaged and unemployed in the long term. However, POEM was also being used by young men born in the UK, who were also clearly in need of tailored support to prevent long-term disengagement, disillusionment or grey economy working. POEM also performed an important

function for clients whose expectations of the kinds of work they could hope to get, given their current skills and experience, were unrealistic. Providers managed their expectations and helped them to change their aspirations in the short term and work towards their longer-term goals.

Conversion and recognition of overseas qualifications

Some providers had helped clients to have their non-UK qualification recognised through National Recognition Information Centre for the UK (NARIC). Although a small number had assisted with the process and the fees to do this and also helped arrange necessary work experience as well, not all providers had concentrated efforts here.

Given that many POEM clients had qualifications from overseas, this may be an area that some providers could consider focusing on more in year two of POEM.

Effective signposting to other provision

Through POEM, clients were able to access a wide range of additional activities, courses and services which they would otherwise not have known about, or would have found it very difficult to identify. Clients from the Somali community, in particular, often had a lack of awareness of opportunities and services and needed more general guidance about the way systems operated in the UK, and how to work within them.

Self-employment options

The fact that self-employment was fostered as an aim, where appropriate, was a big benefit of the flexibility of POEM, for providers and clients. The opportunity to turn interests and existing skills into ways of earning an income was good for individuals, the community and the local economy. Indeed, this was an example of where it was not always necessary for clients to be very proficient in English before they entered the labour market.

Intensive provider support

A wide range of relevant and work-focused activities at providers

There was a wide range of work-focused provision on offer at many of the providers and some core offers which were common across most or all providers, including support with CVs and application forms, interview techniques and access to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Some clients had work experience placements or mock interviews with employers. There were group sessions on many topics and follow-up and, in some cases, aftercare was also available for clients who had obtained work.

It was clear that a one-stop shop for work-focused support in an environment where clients felt comfortable, and often really enjoyed visiting, was very beneficial for them. It increased their skills and, even more critically, raised their confidence and motivation, which made them attend regularly.

Action Plans

The Action Plans were used in different ways by the providers, but in general they had a number of benefits for clients:

- they helped advisers and clients get to know each other when filling them out, and build trust and a rapport;
- they enabled client and adviser to agree barriers to work and steps to overcome them;
- they documented clients' starting points, their skills and experience;
- they documented clients' progress, distance travelled and soft outcomes;
- they helped clients to see how far they had come, which in turn raised their confidence and self-esteem;
- they helped some clients to apply for jobs and fill out application forms.

Matching clients with jobs

Providers on POEM were able to take into account the preferences of their clients and try and match them with suitable jobs, or worked with clients to change their aspirations towards opportunities which existed in the local labour market. In some cases, this involved working with employers to negotiate work experience, guaranteed interviews or other suitable opportunities. Providers were also able to take into account clients' cultural preferences around work, sometimes working with employers to find suitable solutions.

Positive experience of training and job preparation

Shared cultural values of staff and clients

Clients had clearly found working with staff who were from their own communities, and who shared many of their cultural values, helpful. They did not need to explain the reasons behind their preferences and decisions to someone who did not already have some understanding of them. Clients interviewed generally saw POEM staff as people they could trust, in part due to a shared cultural understanding. POEM staff also spoke a range of community languages between them and this was critical for clients with limited English. However, it also implied a shared background to clients whose English language was more fluent and fostered, in some cases, almost instant trust.

Nonetheless, there was also some mixing of staff and clients in terms of ethnicity and gender after engagement and initial activities had been completed. This had additional benefits in terms of broadening awareness and understanding on both sides, as well as avoiding creating dependencies where clients could work only with staff from their own communities on a longer-term basis.

There were also reports that POEM staff had used their own experiences to motivate and encourage their clients. In this way, POEM staff could provide positive role models for their clients.

One-to-one support

Clients interviewed praised the availability of one-to-one support very highly. Most had never had the opportunity of such intensive and tailored support before, from staff who were understanding of their circumstances. Though many had not accessed State-funded support before, those who had accessed Jobcentre Plus services compared POEM to those very favourably, particularly in terms of the friendliness of staff, and the fact that clients were able to drop in for a few minutes of help or advice, whenever they needed it. The programme was also more tailored to individuals than much of the other provision on offer in the past, which had a more standard approach to all clients.

As well as taking account of cultural requirements, POEM was able to work with clients to overcome individual barriers, including low confidence and a history of depression. Several women interviewed who had suffered from both in the past said how much POEM had helped them to move forward.

The flexible one-to-one support drew all the other activities provided through POEM into a coherent programme from the point of view of clients and advisers alike. It was highly valued by clients and by staff who found the capacity to work with clients individually very rewarding.

Finding work opportunities for clients with limited English

One important finding of the evaluation was the assertion of providers that it was not necessary for all clients to have high levels of English language before they found work. Some were able to work for employers in their own communities, where it was more important to speak community languages. Others were able to find entry-level jobs such as cleaning, while others were encouraged towards self-employment.

Wider family support

Working with clients' partners

Some providers had worked with husbands (usually of Pakistani and Bangladeshi clients) to reassure them and explain the benefits of being on POEM for their wives and their family, for example, being able to help children with their schoolwork and earning more money for the family. Staff worked with partners to get their support for their wives to join POEM and in doing so they were reducing fear, breaking down cultural barriers, increasing understanding and opening up opportunities for individuals and communities. Again, (female) staff sometimes used themselves as examples of people who had been through a programme like POEM and/or were working, but who maintained their strong connection to their culture and community.

Finding childcare and respite care

Providers had usually been able to signpost clients to, or sometimes directly provide, childcare for clients' children while they attended POEM. One provider had formed links with a care organisation to provide assistance for clients with caring responsibilities.

Other providers may wish to look at providing similar opportunities for clients during the second year of POEM.

Other impacts

A bridge between communities and State-funded provision

POEM and provider staff were acting as an important bridge between State-funded provision and target communities. It was far easier for apprehensive and/or disengaged people to talk with POEM staff who were of a similar background than for them to approach staff in Jobcentre Plus. POEM provided opportunities for people from Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali communities, in particular, to access well-funded provision which was aspiration-focused, pragmatic and flexible.

Intensive outreach reaching untapped sources of future clients

Several providers had 'door-knocked' as part of their engagement efforts, doing outreach work in the heart of target communities. Through this, they spoke with women who they would otherwise have been unlikely to have reached. Even though many of these women did not sign up to POEM at that time, they were made aware that such provision existed, and in this way seeds for the future were planted for them and their families and friends. Some advisers commented that their outreach work had yielded clients months later. Word of mouth in the target communities was seen to be an effective way of advertising POEM and so this kind of outreach, while resource intensive and often low on immediate returns, would seem to be important in revealing untapped seams of potential future clients for POEM.

8.2.3 Clients' views

This section looks at the extent to which clients interviewed thought that POEM had helped them. It also considers what they thought would have happened had they not been on the POEM programme, and looks at any suggestions they may have had for improving POEM for others in the future.

How had POEM helped them?

Many of the clients were very pleased with and grateful for the support they had through POEM, whether they had never been accessed support before, or whether they had tried other places in the past but somehow found they did not quite get the help they needed.

'It has made a big difference to me because I've been here for about five months and applied for more than 30 jobs, easy. They've done my CV and helped me apply for jobs. I'm going to benefit from it. See sometimes I feel like if I do get a job, I'm going to get [my adviser] some flowers or chocolates just because she's been so nice to me and actually helped me.'

(POEM client, Pakistani man in his late teens)

'They helped me as well with the intercommunication skills. On how to conduct interviews and all of that, but also to be self-employed. How to go about it. They are supporting me on that as well.'

'I understand now what people are saying. It [my English] has quite improved...One of my targets or my hopes was to get a job. And I did get a lot of opportunities to get a job but it wasn't meant for me I think. I have had a couple of interviews...They [the provider] helped me a lot, they help me to view jobs and I am still waiting to hear from a couple of them.'

(POEM client, Somali woman in her 20s)

'It's helped me quite far. My confidence, wanting to look for work, it's driven me to do that.'

(POEM client, black Caribbean woman in her 30s)

'Yes, I've improved, definitely improved because I got this job you know, this job and also kitchen assistant and then I also get time I improve my English, I talk my daughter and now maybe I get different job.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 40s)

Few if any of the interviewed clients with work thought they would have found their jobs without the help of POEM.

What would have happened without POEM?

Most clients interviewed said that POEM had helped them greatly. Whether they had found work through POEM or not, they felt that they were closer to their goals than they had been, and that they probably would not have made much if any progress without POEM, as the following quotes from clients illustrate:

'I'd still be sitting at home getting depressed.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'I don't know. Probably still looking for a job. I'm a bit lazy as well, I postpone things...'

(POEM client, Indian woman in her 20s)

'I think I would be roaming the streets still.'

(POEM client, Somali man in his 20s)

'It would be harder, yes, looking on my own.'

(POEM client, woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo)

'I would be looking by myself. It would have taken me longer.'

(POEM client, black Caribbean woman in her 30s)

'I would have been running around at the jobcentre.'

(POEM client, woman from Zambia in her 50s)

'I would still be looking and staying at home.'

(POEM client, Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Only a very small minority of interviewed clients said that POEM had not made much difference to them.

Clients' suggestions for improving POEM in the future

Illuminatingly, few of the interviewed clients had any suggestions for the ways in which POEM could be improved. They were generally very pleased with the support they had received, and those still on the programme simply hoped for more of the same over a longer time period than the pilot year.

A small number of clients said that they would like more individual sessions, where these were not readily available.

Factors contributing to, or constraining success

For clients, the factor which appeared to have been most critical for success on POEM was confidence. All other necessary steps which contributed to success (listed earlier in this section) were more likely to occur once clients' confidence had been raised.

The factors at client level which generally constrained their progress were, in general, the barriers mentioned at the start of this section (Section 8.2.1). One-to-one support from skilled advisers was often able to make significant headway in addressing some or all of these. However, there were a few additional constraints which included:

- a preference to work close to home, especially amongst women with children;
- a preference to work during school hours, also amongst women with children;
- cultural expectations that women would look after the family and home rather than work.

Through the providers, POEM was working to a greater or lesser extent to address and accommodate these factors.

8.3 Impact on providers

8.3.1 Has POEM changed the nature of their provision?

In year one of POEM, providers were able to try out engagement and recruitment methods and POEM-related activities, and find out what worked best for the POEM target groups. They had learned a number of lessons along the way – the newer this area of work was for them, particularly in terms of the barriers of this client group, the more they had to learn during the course of the year to get up to speed on recruitment and to provide the right opportunities for POEM clients. Like the clients, there was some distance travelled by the providers during the course of the POEM pilot year, although some had further to travel than others.

Outreach and engagement

Regarding outreach, most providers had, during the course of the year, developed partnerships (see below) and successful strategies to reach the clients they needed to find from the target groups. By the time of the Wave 2 case study work, they had more knowledge of where and how to do outreach work, and where and how to publicise POEM than they had at Wave 1. They had also seen how powerful word of mouth was as a recruitment tool, leading them to believe that it was important to maintain the programme for longer than one year to collect the returns on this, and to avoid disillusioning clients and communities whose expectations had been raised by the existence of POEM.

A number of providers said that their recruitments to POEM had been disappointing in the first few months, and some for longer than this. Most said that this had turned around towards the end of the year. They had learned the importance of concentrating on outreach, rather than expecting clients to find them (as they had for many programmes they had run in the past). They had also learned the importance of building up trust in the target communities and that building up the necessary links and understanding could take time.

It will be interesting to see whether outreach and engagement strategies change during the course of the second year or whether providers have now found models which work for them on a medium to long-term basis.

Activities

Some providers had added to the activities they delivered as a result of POEM and the needs of the clients they had recruited, others made only small tweaks to the provision they already had through other programmes they delivered. Providers reported that the activities they delivered had been well received, and there were few reports of having to change activities because they were not working for clients. Most providers increased the range of provision in response to client demand as the year progressed, often with the assistance of partners.

There was also a general move towards providing some activities in groups, as the year went on. This brought economies of scale for providers, which meant they could put resources into other areas of POEM provision and work intensively with the clients who needed it most. Group sessions also gave clients opportunities to provide each other with mutual support, make friends and build their confidence.

Providers had also commonly moved towards providing one-to-one provision on a drop-in basis as well as by appointment, as they had found that flexibility of this nature was very important for this client group.

POEM staff

Providers had generally recruited some or all new staff to their POEM team. This had usually increased their capacity in terms of community languages and had increased the range of their staff as a whole, with regard to ethnicity. Some providers had created new posts during the life of POEM in response to specific needs, for example, a recruitment manager to strengthen employer links, or outreach workers with particular skills and remits. A number of providers had recruited Somali staff to assist their work with that community.

Some providers had a strong commitment to employing ex-clients and reflecting the communities they worked with, and a number of providers stressed that they developed all of their staff's skills and experience, giving them greater expertise and confidence in their work with clients. The enthusiasm for POEM amongst virtually all staff interviewed was striking and the creativity which many had used to work effectively with a wide range of clients was also notable.

8.3.2 Has POEM changed their partnership arrangements and community links?

According to providers, partnership working was one of the keys to running POEM successfully, although some had realised this earlier than others. The evaluation found a significant degree of new partnerships and the strengthening of existing partnership arrangements at POEM providers. Partnerships with organisations in the target communities and with employers in the local area were vital for the successful operation of POEM, particularly around POEM starts and job entries.

Community partners

There was generally more engagement, recruitment and provision through community and other partners as the year progressed. This was important in outreach and engagement work, with providers relying on successful partnerships in the community to feed through potential clients to them. This was one of the keys to recruiting sufficient numbers of clients; even one or two successful community partnerships could make the difference between a provider meeting or almost meeting monthly recruitment targets, or falling far short of them. By the end of the year, most providers said they had formed community partnerships

which were bringing in the numbers of clients they had hoped for. For some, it took many months to locate and forge such arrangements; however, these bode well for the second year of POEM.

Providers had also been able to make links with other organisations to find opportunities for their clients that they did not have the capacity to provide. These included childcare places, respite care, courses and financial advice. During the course of the year, the range of provision available through each provider had generally increased through cross-referrals, signposting and shared services.

Signposting, especially of non-eligible clients to other relevant services, appeared to have been more effective at some providers than others. It is important to be able to signpost clients who cannot access POEM to provision elsewhere, to prevent sections of the target communities becoming disillusioned with the provider and with funded programmes like POEM more generally.

Perhaps surprisingly, partnerships appeared to have been most successful in the absence of formal arrangements. They relied on the goodwill, commitment and enthusiasm of the staff working on both sides, and their dedication to helping others in their communities.

Employers

Many POEM providers made changes to their employer engagement strategies during the course of the pilot year. Most providers tried to increase the numbers of employers in their networks, but some had also had to change the focus of the kinds of employer they developed links with. Some providers found that their existing employer networks were not as well suited to some of their POEM clients' work preferences as they had anticipated. For example, they had to forge links with new employers in their localities in order to find suitable vacancies for women with children who wanted to work part-time, usually during school hours, and close to their homes.

Providers' feedback on POEM

Providers generally praised the POEM programme, particularly as it provided more scope for working flexibly and meeting the individual needs of each client, than many of the previous programmes which they had run.

However, they questioned some of the eligibility criteria, which had made it particularly difficult for some to recruit clients (see Section 8.3.3).

The seemingly short-term nature of POEM (as it was originally funded for one year) was criticised by all providers. They had found the short length of the programme to be unhelpful, particularly as there was quite a long set-up time for some providers. In most cases, set-up time took longer than anticipated, shaving valuable months off the time left in the programme to produce hard outcomes for DWP.

Given this, it is expected that the second year of POEM will yield a far higher proportion of time spent recruiting and working with clients, and far less time on setting up and maintaining the necessary links and strategies to do this.

Differences between the performance of providers in and outside London

Few providers had any concrete answers for why the London providers had, in general, fared worse than the providers outside London in terms of starts and job entries. However, the following suggestions were given:

- Some districts in London had a more dispersed and transient population. This made it harder to locate suitable clients, and harder to capitalise on snowballing through word of mouth.
- There may have been more competition from other provision in some of the London districts.
- These limiting aspects, if they existed, were certainly compounded in some cases by providers' relative lack of experience in working in a way which required intensive outreach, and working with the hardest to reach, who had multiple barriers to work. A lack of relevant community partners was also a factor – some providers found that they needed to forge entirely new partnership arrangements to be able to reach and work with POEM clients.

8.3.3 Factors contributing to, or constraining, success

This section looks at the factors which appeared to assist or prevent providers from delivering POEM effectively.

The factors which **contributed to success** have been grouped into five key areas: creative outreach strategies; making clients feel comfortable; a wide range of provision; employer networks; and flexibility. These are outlined in turn below.

Creative outreach strategies

- Partnership working with a range of stakeholders – this was important for most aspects of POEM including outreach, delivery of activities, signposting and employment opportunities.
- A range of venues and locations for outreach work and engagement activities. After this, most clients were happy to travel to the main provider's premises.

Making clients feel comfortable

- Welcoming offices and staff who reflected the communities of clients and spoke community languages.
- A good understanding of cultural preferences and issues but treating all clients as individuals.
- Regular appointments with a nominated adviser, in order to build trust and understanding, but the facility to drop in for assistance on an ad hoc basis.

A wide range of provision

- A good range of core POEM services and effective signposting and support to help clients access services and opportunities elsewhere.
- Working with clients to prepare them for jobs at an early stage in the process. This was key in boosting confidence and bringing quick results.
- Changing some clients' aspirations to match the opportunities available, whilst keeping their longer-term goals as something to work towards.
- Providing work-focused ESOL.

Employer networks

- Employers were used to assist clients with focused training opportunities and mock interviews. Some providers negotiated guaranteed interviews for POEM clients after training.
- Making links with employers who could provide the kinds of work that many POEM clients wanted to do; matching the needs of clients to the needs of employers.

Flexibility factors

- Flexibility to respond creatively to a wide range of circumstances and requirements.
- Recognising that limited English language need not be the biggest barrier to work.
- Flexibility around when activities were available for clients.

Factors which **constrained success** were generally the opposite of those above, but there were a few additional ones:

- POEM running as a one-year programme. Providers all agreed that for a programme like POEM to maximise its success, it would need to run for several years.
- Having to turn large numbers of people from particular communities away due to eligibility issues, which, in turn, created some negativity and potential lack of credibility in the community for providers.
- Difficulties in determining whether clients were eligible, for example, around partner status.

Eligibility

Eligibility was an issue raised by many providers. They questioned the current eligibility criteria and hoped that POEM could have a wider remit in the future. Some appreciated the spirit within which the eligibility criteria had been devised, but thought that the downside of this was having to turn people away who needed

the kind of help that POEM could provide, which left clients very disappointed when they discovered they were ineligible. Unfortunately, the fact that word of mouth can be such a powerful tool for recruiting from POEM's target communities could be a disadvantage here. It is preferable to do all possible to foster positive messages about POEM and its providers than more negative ones.

The POEM pilot was conceived to target particular sections of the ethnic minority population, particularly non-working female partners. However, providers thought that POEM criteria could be more flexible, to include people who do not have a partner (for example, widows or young single people) and/or to include people whose partners were on benefits. The issue of no recourse to public funds for those who had arrived in the UK recently was also seen to be a problem by most of the providers. A few of the providers were able to refer clients who they later discovered were not eligible for POEM onto other programmes which they provided, or signpost them to other providers who may be able to help them.

It seems crucial that goodwill created through the hard work of providers in these communities should not be lost or undermined as a result of eligibility criteria. Providers should be supported to refer ineligible clients onto other appropriate provision in their local area, whether this is provided by them, or their partners or competitors.

8.3.4 What DWP could do to assist providers

A DWP-organised forum for providers to meet and share experiences, ideas and good practice was mentioned by a number of providers as being potentially very helpful. A few of the well-established and better performing providers offered to host the event, or lead sessions, if that would be helpful.

8.4 Impact on other stakeholders

POEM providers had worked with a variety of other stakeholders, including community partners and employers. POEM also signposted clients to colleges and training providers.

These arrangements worked best when they were mutually beneficial. Formal arrangements were less successful than more informal ones – possibly arrangements which are too formal are unsuitable for a flexible programme such as POEM. The most successful arrangements had been where POEM providers had been able to tap into community organisations in a way which would provide them with clients and services, but also provide some benefit to the other organisation too. Sometimes this was simply through providing the stakeholders' clients with additional services and opportunities they did not have the capacity or expertise to provide, but this was valued very highly by the partner organisations. In other cases, providers gave other stakeholders additional benefits, for example, a venue to hold drop-in sessions at their premises, or assistance with funding bids. In the cases of training providers, arrangements were less close, but providers supplied

them with a steady stream of clients for childcare places, or students for their courses.

Some providers already had such arrangements in place at the start of POEM, but all had made new links with community partners and employers during the course of the year, increasing community cooperation and stakeholder participation in POEM.

POEM was also able to provide input to community and celebratory days, including jobs fairs and Melas. This helped to raise the profile of the event and of POEM at the same time.

8.4.1 Employers

There had been increasing networking and cooperation with employers during the first year of POEM (as highlighted earlier in this chapter). This was seen as a chance to provide interviews and work experience for clients, but also to break down discrimination and stereotypes amongst employers. Some providers mentioned working with individual employers in their locality to do this, others had worked with local public sector organisations and large private sector companies who wished to increase the diversity of their workforces, engaging with their corporate social responsibility programmes.

8.5 Summary

- POEM achieved 80 per cent of targeted starts in the pilot year (4,884 starts compared to a target of 6,101). London providers achieved 78 per cent of their target starts (3,490 compared to a target of 4,463) Providers outside London did slightly better, achieving 85 per cent of their target (1,394 compared to a target of 1,638).
- There were 1,016 job entries achieved during the first year of POEM, or 58 per cent of the target of 1,751. The London providers, in particular, fell far short of their targets, obtaining only 40 per cent of their target job entry numbers (525 of a profiled 1,296). However, their performance improved markedly over the course of the year.
- The overall rate of job entry (job entries as a percentage of starts) across all providers was 20 per cent. There were considerable differences between the providers in and outside London; providers outside London performed more than twice as well as London providers on converting starts to job entries, at 35 per cent compared to 15 per cent.

The key turning points outlined in Chapter 6 provide a framework for examining the softer ways in which POEM made an impact during its pilot year:

- Greater confidence – one of the most universal barriers, which was also one of the easiest to address through the programme.

- Broadened horizons – this manifested as moving clients closer to the labour market, encouraging re-engagement amongst women, preventing and addressing disengagement amongst men, effective signposting to other provision and providing advice on the full range of employment and self-employment options.
- Intensive provider support – which included a wide range of relevant and work-focused activities, the use of Action Plans and matching clients with suitable jobs.
- Positive experience of training and job preparation – for example, shared cultural values of staff and clients, one-to-one support and finding suitable opportunities for clients with limited English.
- Wider family support – this included working with clients' partners to persuade them of the benefits of POEM and finding childcare and respite care.
- Clients interviewed were very positive about the assistance POEM had given them. Some had obtained work or had done training through POEM which they felt they would otherwise not have found, while others said that they felt much more confident and optimistic about their future work prospects than they had when they joined the programme. Few had any suggestions for ways in which the programme could be improved.
- Impact on providers included their developing and strengthening partnerships and outreach strategies, and extending their range of provision by adding new activities in response to demand. Many providers had also made changes to their employer engagement strategies during the course of the pilot year. Most providers had recruited new staff to POEM, and this usually increased their capacity in terms of the community languages spoken and the range of ethnic backgrounds represented amongst their staff.
- Overall, factors which contributed to success were: creative outreach strategies; making clients feel comfortable; a wide range of provision; employer networks; and flexibility.

9 Interim conclusions

The evaluation of Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM) was, for much of the first year, running as a one-year evaluation of a one-year pilot programme. However, early in 2008, funding was confirmed for both a second year of POEM and a second year of the evaluation of the programme.

Nonetheless, the majority of the first year of evaluation was conducted with a view to producing a final report at its end, and although there will now be a further evaluation report at the end of the second year of POEM, the evaluation team thought it worthwhile to produce an interim report on the first year of substantial length and detail, in order to fully document the successes of POEM during its first year and to highlight the areas of the programme where success proved more difficult to achieve and the ways in which these difficulties were overcome as the year progressed. This was done with a view to these findings being useful to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and also to POEM providers during the second year of the programme.

This chapter presents the emerging interim conclusions at the end of the first year of POEM.

9.1 Progress against targets

Despite a slow start, particularly for providers in London, the ten POEM providers between them achieved 80 per cent of their targeted starts to the programme, which compares favourably to outcomes from many other labour market programmes. In addition, the headline figures on starts hide progress which improved markedly during the course of the year. By the end of the first year, most providers had been close to, or meeting their starts targets for several months, and it is to be hoped that this level of performance will continue in year two.

Lower performance on hard outcomes was attributed, in the case of starts, to largely unexpected difficulties in accessing clients from the relevant communities who met the eligibility criteria for the programme, and providers having to spend time finding appropriate ways to tap further into target communities than they had before, usually with the assistance of relevant community partners. It was

anticipated that in the second year these set-up and capacity building activities, which had taken up considerable proportions of the first year, would continue to be fruitful in bringing new clients to POEM.

Performance regarding job entries was lower than for starts; between them the ten providers achieved 58 per cent of their targeted job entries. Lower performance on job entry was attributed to few POEM clients being recruited in earlier months, together with large proportions of clients being further from the labour market than providers had generally anticipated, given the clients they had worked with on their previous programmes. Given this, providers may, based on their previous experience of delivering labour market programmes, have set themselves job entry targets which were rather too high. The clients they worked with tended to require more one-to-one support, had less experience of work, and lower levels of English language than had been the case for clients on their previous programmes, but it was only when they had recruited clients and begun to work with them that these differences became fully apparent. Nonetheless, it seems that some providers were more successful in converting their starts to job entries, possibly through focusing intensive support on actively applying for jobs at an early stage in the POEM process, and before many barriers to work had been overcome. Other providers may be able to learn lessons from this during the second year of POEM.

In addition, while the absolute numbers of starts and job entries were short of the targets, recruitment and job entry patterns by ethnicity suggests that providers had performed well in terms of reaching many of those for whom POEM was designed, and helping some of those into work during the first year. The qualitative interviews revealed that there were indeed clients of the exact nature that DWP had anticipated; Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, often in their 30s and 40s, who had been out of the labour market for some time, or indeed had never worked in the United Kingdom (UK), while they looked after their children. However, it was clear that a wider range of clients, who also fitted the POEM eligibility criteria, were also benefiting from the provision. These included men who had arrived in the UK relatively recently after marriage and needed assistance to improve their English and find work to contribute to their family income. There were also examples of young British born men who were becoming increasingly disengaged from the formal economy prior to joining POEM. Hence, there were larger proportions of men on POEM than had originally been anticipated by both DWP and many providers.

9.2 Capacity building for the future

Most providers spent the first few months after they had been contracted to deliver POEM capacity building to enable them to deliver the programme. This included recruiting and training POEM staff and locating venues. They also spent the first few months trying to access suitable clients through advertising and outreach, and they found that this was more difficult, complex and time consuming than they had expected. In particular, providers without a well-established network of

relevant community partners who would be able to assist providers in recruiting clients had to spend considerable time forging relationships with suitable partners who could provide a supply of eligible clients.

The key changes made by providers during the year were to their client entry and exit strategies. Outreach and engagement methods changed for many providers, as many found that methods they had employed to bring in clients to other programmes did not work for the POEM client group. Links with employers were also increased and strengthened in order to provide suitable opportunities for POEM clients which matched their requirements. However, once clients had been signed up to POEM, there were few changes to other activities during the course of the pilot year. There were additions to the range of activities available through most providers, and these were usually with the assistance of partners in the community, local training providers and employers.

9.3 Importance of partnerships

Partnership working was, according to most providers by the time of the Wave 2 case study work (in January to March 2008), one of the keys to delivering the programme successfully. Outreach and engagement was the area of providers' work where partnerships were the most critical; as without suitable community partnerships in place, they generally failed to recruit sufficient numbers of clients on a month-on-month basis. In fact, good partnerships for the purposes of outreach made the difference between providers' success and failure, as demonstrated by the poor performance against entry targets in the first half of the year for many providers, who were usually those with the fewest relevant community partnerships in place.

However, partnerships were also important in being able to provide the right employment-related opportunities for clients once they had received a certain amount of provision through POEM. For example, employer links had been found to be valuable in providing work placements for clients, or bespoke training with guaranteed interviews at the end. Some providers had employer input to their mock interviews, while others had built links with employers in the locality in order to be able to source appropriate vacancies for their clients.

Partnerships for the purposes of providing activities to clients on POEM were also useful in enabling providers to deliver and signpost clients to a wide range of provision, including courses at local colleges. However, they appeared to be less critical than the partnerships that assisted with bringing clients on to POEM, and those that helped clients into work.

9.4 Flexibility and a one-to-one service

Tailored and one-to-one support was a key element of POEM, and drew all other aspects of provision into a coherent whole. Flexibility around the exact package of support which was put together by a nominated adviser for each client was also an important aspect of POEM and was valued highly by clients who felt that they were getting the support they needed, rather than a one-size-fits-all programme which would suit their circumstances less well. It was also praised by provider staff, who had found being able to respond to individuals' requirements in order to overcome their barriers to work extremely rewarding and a refreshing change from other programmes they had delivered in the past.

Flexibility around being able to provide one-to-one support on an ad hoc or drop-in basis was also seen to be very important by clients; they liked the fact that they did not necessarily have to wait for their next formal appointment with their adviser to go to the provider and get assistance with, for example, an application form. This element of the programme, which most providers had accommodated, also seemed to be key in keeping clients motivated and focused on POEM and its eventual aims of helping clients into work.

Some flexibility around when activities such as courses or group employability sessions were provided was also seen to be important, as was providing extra prompts for some clients who were not always guaranteed to turn up for their POEM appointments. However, some providers also said that this had to be balanced with the need to demonstrate the importance of being reliable and on time for appointments, as would be expected by an employer.

Flexibility on the kinds of employment outcomes that providers sought on behalf of their clients was also important. Firstly, POEM providers demonstrated some capacity to find appropriate job opportunities for some of their clients with local employers, particularly when clients had restrictions around hours worked, or distance from home. This matching of jobs to employers also extended to recognising that it was not always necessary for clients to be proficient in English before they were able to enter the labour market. More creative solutions, such as providing work-focused English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), finding employment opportunities in situations where it was more important to speak community languages than English, and fostering self-employment aspirations, were the ways in which providers had sometimes been able to circumnavigate the need for clients' English to be greatly improved before they could find work.

9.5 Culturally sensitive provision

While many providers were already aware of the importance of POEM staff reflecting the target communities of clients at the start of the delivery contract, all providers became increasingly aware of this as the year went on. While many providers already had multiethnic and multilingual staff, many recruited more at the start of POEM, and during the course of the year, as 'gaps' in their staff

capacity became apparent as a result of the clients they were able to recruit and work with. This led to several providers recruiting additional staff part-way into POEM; the recruitment of Somali advisers at several providers in order to assist their work with that community being an example of this.

A shared background and shared language was proved to be critical in securing the initial interest and trust of potential clients during engagement and recruitment activities and also, for many clients, in the early stages of the work with their advisers. As substantial proportions of clients had limited English, it was crucial to be able to speak relevant community languages in order to be able to engage with them in the first place.

A shared cultural background or a close appreciation of the ethnic background of clients was also vital in delivering a tailored service at a venue where clients felt comfortable visiting fairly frequently. For clients, knowing that their adviser, or other staff on the team, were from the same community, on occasion, fostered trust and, in other cases, made the initial stages of relationship building between adviser and client much easier as clients soon realised that they did not need to explain the reasons behind some of their decisions around, for example, hours of work or types of work which they were prepared to consider. In other cases, a shared cultural background was important in winning the support of partners and families, as advisers from the same community could explain the programme and the potential benefits to the client and their family, being aware of the cultural barriers which were likely to exist.

Finally, a shared cultural background of advisers and clients could be useful in enabling POEM staff to act as role models for their clients. Some did this explicitly, using their own experiences and journeys towards and into the labour market to motivate their clients. However, it is likely that this was also operating at a more subtle level, with advisers inspiring their clients without necessarily needing to explicitly use their own stories.

However, there was also evidence from some providers that some mixing of clients and adviser by ethnicity (and gender) could be desirable for many clients, after the initial recruitment stage, in order to prevent an over-dependency on working with staff from the same cultural background. This also increased awareness and understanding across POEM staff teams.

9.6 The importance of raising confidence

As was seen in Chapter 7 on the client journey, greater confidence was identified as the most notable turning point in clients' journeys towards the labour market. Lack of confidence was also perhaps the most widely identified and significant barrier, although it was also found to be one of the easiest to address. In fact, confidence was raised as a matter of course when clients attended appointments with their advisers, worked through an Action Plan and looked at ways to overcome their barriers to work.

Action Plans themselves were seen by some clients and some providers as being important confidence builders as they placed all relevant information about a client down on paper in one place. Before having gone through the Action Plan process, many clients had never seen a record of their achievements and skills to date. Building a CV had similar effects. In fact, all training and job preparation activities, whether done on a one-to-one basis or in groups with other clients, were important in increasing clients' confidence. Making job applications relatively early in the POEM process was also a good way to boost clients' confidence as was getting through to an interview, even if they did not get the job, as it proved to clients that employers could be seriously interested in them.

However, for some women who had been looking after the family and home for many years, POEM also increased their confidence as it allowed them some time for themselves, away from their homes, where they could meet others in similar situations to themselves and work to improve their future chances, for example, through improving their English or doing ICT courses. This improved their chances of being work-ready at a time when their family responsibilities lessened and, in the meantime, helped them to play a more productive part in their family and community by, for example, helping their children with their homework or getting more involved with their children's schools.

9.7 Distance travelled

Although substantial numbers of POEM clients had found employment, it, nevertheless, remains the case that most had not; or at least had not done so by the end of the pilot year. In these cases, it is important to recognise the contribution that POEM has made in moving clients closer to the labour market. Amongst those who had not found work, POEM had helped some of the clients who were among the least well equipped to navigate the necessary systems to find opportunities in the absence of support. Regardless of the work status of the clients interviewed, virtually all said that POEM had helped them to progress far further than if they had not been on the programme. Confidence was a key soft outcome as was an increased awareness of opportunities, improved job search and interview skills and, for many, improved English.

In fact, it is likely that the benefits of POEM may be far wider than moving clients further on their journey into work. Given the range of soft outcomes achieved, POEM and future national programmes of a similar nature would seem to have an important part to play in promoting social integration, both in assisting clients to access opportunities which are available to them, and by bringing wider benefits to families and communities.

Providers as well as clients had generally travelled some distance during the first year in which they provided POEM. Providers had varying degrees of experience in working with clients who were similar to those on POEM, despite many having delivered Ethnic Minority Outreach (EMO), and most of the providers had to make

changes to their outreach strategies in the earlier months of POEM, as well as their employer networks.

It will be interesting to see whether the models of engagement and provision remain fairly constant during the second year of POEM, or whether any further changes will be necessary in order to keep supplying the numbers of starts and job entries that it is hoped can be achieved through the programme.

9.8 Summary

- Despite a slow start, the providers achieved 80 per cent of their targeted starts to the programme, which compares favourably to outcomes from many other labour market programmes. Starts improved markedly during the course of the year and, by the end, most providers had been close to, or meeting their starts targets for several months.
- Performance on job entries was lower than for starts; providers achieved 58 per cent of their targeted job entries. Lower performance on job entry was attributed to few POEM clients being recruited in earlier months, together with large proportions of clients being further from the labour market than providers had generally anticipated.
- Some providers were more successful than others in converting their starts to job entries, possibly through focusing intensive support on actively applying for jobs at an early stage in the POEM process and before many barriers to work had been overcome.
- The key changes made by providers during the year were to their client entry and exit strategies. Outreach and engagement methods changed for many providers, as many found that methods they had employed to bring in clients to other programmes did not work for the POEM client group. Links with employers were also increased and strengthened in order to provide suitable opportunities for POEM clients who matched their requirements.
- Partnership working was vital in delivering the programme successfully. Outreach and engagement was the area of providers' work where this was the most critical, and made the difference between providers' success and failure.
- Tailored and one-to-one support was a key element of POEM, and drew all other aspects of provision into a coherent whole. A shared background and language between adviser and client was proved to be crucial in securing client trust.
- Most POEM clients had not found employment by the end of the first year, so it is important to recognise the contribution that POEM has made in moving clients closer to the labour market. POEM had helped many clients who had previously had little or no support. Confidence was a key soft outcome for these clients, as was an increased awareness of opportunities, improved job search and interview skills and, for many, improved English.

Appendix A

POEM Wave 1 provider discussion guide

Introduction

The evaluation of POEM has been commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and is being carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES), an independent research organisation.

This is the first wave of interviews with providers, we will be visiting them once more (in the winter) when the POEM initiative has been running for longer. We will also be interviewing clients, and any other key people or organisations that are identified through the first wave of provider interviews, and finally we will be doing some analysis of the Management Information (MI).

Assure them of confidentiality – we will not be naming providers, other organisations they mention, clients or any other individuals we speak with as part of the research.

A report based on the evaluation findings will go to DWP and once they have published it we will send out summaries to everyone who took part in the evaluation – the full report should also be available on the DWP website.

Any questions for us before we start?

Background

- Could you briefly talk me through the background of your organisation – its aims, activities and previous work in this area?
- Has any aspect of your work and provision changed as a result of POEM?
- Has your organisation been previously involved in Ethnic Minority Outreach (EMO) or any other ethnic minority employment programmes? *[Briefly explore which ones and what they did, if not already covered above]* How has this previous work influenced your provision of POEM?
- What is your job title, role and involvement with POEM?
[Probe extent and type of experience/background in ethnic minority employment issues, EMO, etc.]
- How would you describe the aims and objectives of your provision?
- Which wards do you cover and who from the target client groups have you recruited so far?

Local factors

- Talk me through some of the characteristics of the area that you operate in? Labour market dynamics, sectors, population demographics, other programmes operating locally, etc.
- What are the key issues in your area – especially with regard to delivering POEM?
- Which other organisations are working in this area to deliver similar or complementary services? What contact do you have with them? *[Explore the extent of co-operation or competition between POEM and other providers – are they competing for the same customers? Or are they referring customers between services as appropriate?]*

Start-up

- How has the experience of getting POEM up and running been so far?
[Probe any difficulties, concerns.]
- What has been the most time-consuming activity and did you anticipate this?
- What have your start-up costs been like and what have they gone on? (recruitment, IT, advertising, premises, etc.)

The clients

- Who are your key target groups for POEM in this area?
- Could you talk me through your clients' profiles? Are they women, men, what is their ethnicity? How old are they, do they have children, etc.
- What languages do they speak? *[We need to know this to arrange and undertake the interviews with clients.]*
- What qualifications (if any) do clients have when they first meet with you? *[No quals, British quals, non-British quals, what levels?]* Is there any support available to help clients' non-British qualifications be recognised or converted?
- In terms of their distance from the labour market, what are POEM clients' starting points when you meet them, what are their key barriers and issues?
- What are the key differences between clients from different ethnic backgrounds?
- How far do you anticipate that you will be able to help clients, through POEM, to progress in their journey towards the labour market?
- How do you deal with clients who are a long way from the labour market? Are they too far from the labour market to be job ready within the lifespan of POEM? What proportion of your clients are of this type? Who are these clients? *[Age, gender, ethnicity, etc]*

[Probe for any issues of working with these types of clients – and bear in mind that providers get 70 per cent of funding for engaging a client, and 30 per cent when they get a job – hence, working with clients furthest from the labour market may not have the best financial returns for providers. Are they going for the easier to help clients – for quick and easy wins?]

Planned activities and delivery

- How do you engage with POEM clients?
[Probe in what ways the provision is tailored to the target group.]
- Whereabouts do you recruit from and why? *[Local groups, community faith groups, Sure Start, Fair Cities, GP surgeries, etc.]*
[Probe how strong their links with Sure Start are as these are strongly encouraged in the original provider spec.]
- How is outreach currently conducted? What is the rationale behind this?
- Who do you work with in your outreach work? (Community workers, trusted intermediaries, community organisations, interpreters, etc.) Or do they mainly use other staff in their organisation?
- How far does this draw on the lessons and experience of EMO, if at all?

- Is engaging with the POEM target group proving to be easier or harder than expected? Why?

[Probe how they're planning to overcome any early problems.]

- What proportion of your clients are you hoping to get from the POEM key target groups?
- Could you talk me through the range of planned activities and how you plan to deliver these? (Job search support, help to find appropriate childcare, ESOL provision, skills and mentoring, etc.)
- Do you work with other agencies and organisations to deliver POEM? Which ones and in what ways? (eg for referrals, support, partnership working, training, etc.)
- How do you currently use the Action Plans? Have you found them helpful so far? In what ways?
- Do you plan to have any contact with clients after they have left POEM provision? How?

Partners and networks

- Discuss any other partners and networks involved in POEM not covered above.
- If they work with partners, how do they determine the quality of partners and referral agents and the services they provide?
- What role do employers have? Has their involvement been helpful? If so, in what ways?
- How do you use your employer networks? What are your employer engagement strategies?

[Probe whether they use these flexibly to place people with particular needs, such as those with children or those who can only work in female-only environments.]

- Do you have any contact with Fair Cities *[if applicable – Brent, Birmingham and Bradford only]*? For what? (to co-ordinate activities, client referrals etc.)
- Do you have any contact with Jobcentre Plus? Explore if so – especially referrals.

Emerging outcomes

- What aspects of POEM do you find are currently working well and why? What isn't working as well as you might have hoped?
- What are your achievements and successes so far?

- What are the outcomes for POEM clients so far?
- What are the potential outcomes for clients?
[In addition to hard outcomes of jobs and training, probe for softer outcomes eg increased confidence and motivation, increased ability to network, integrate, improved social cohesion, etc. Any potential benefits in terms of reducing child poverty?]
- What do provider organisations feel they will gain as a result of being involved in POEM?

Looking ahead

- What are your aims for now until the end of the year?
- Do you foresee any problems on the horizon that might set back those plans?
- Is there anything else that you would like to mention that you think might be useful to our work going forward?
- Finally, do you have any feedback for DWP on how the POEM pilot could be improved?

The evaluation and next steps

Client interviews

- Explain we will be interviewing 50 clients later this year (and paying clients £20 each for taking part).
- Discuss best way to access clients for interview, eg opt-in letter sent by providers for IES to follow-up, or projects to arrange for clients to attend interviews,

Action Plans

- Explain that DWP are keen to include the use of and effectiveness of Action Plans in the evaluation.
- Can we have some examples of Action Plans (anonymous if necessary)?
- Explore the possibility of using clients' Action Plans in the interviews with clients – how could this be arranged?

Wave 2 interviews

- Explain that we will contact them in a few months to arrange a Wave 2 visit with them.
- Are there any other people they think we should also talk to as part of Wave 2? Establish additional people to talk to in Wave 2 (eg any other people working for the provider? Any key partners? Anyone key from Jobcentre Plus?)

MI data

- Discuss access to any useful MI information they might have (although we should be getting a set including data from all providers from DWP).
- Also check whether there are any POEM reports they have produced so far that we could have copies of.

Appendix B

POEM Wave 2 provider discussion guide

Introduction

Thank you for meeting with us again and for your help in arranging the recent interviews with Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM) clients.

As you know, an evaluation of POEM has been commissioned by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and this is one of our second wave of visits specifically to talk to providers about the delivery of the programme.

As before, we can assure you of confidentiality in that we won't be naming individual providers or individuals, or any other organisations mentioned, in the report to DWP.

We will be finalising the report to DWP in May, and once the report is in the public domain (ie published or on the DWP website) we will send out summaries to everyone who helped us with the work.

Any questions for us before we start?

Progress since Wave 1

We visited you in September/October 2007 to find out about your organisation and POEM activities up to that point. This is the second visit to find out what has happened since then.

- Can you tell us generally about how POEM has been going since we saw you last?
- Have there been any major changes to the delivery of POEM:

eg in terms of premises, key staff, engagement methods used, activities, anything else?

- Explore the changes, why they were made and what the effects have been
- Have there been any other alterations or tweaks to the way you've been delivering POEM and working with clients, partners and employers?

Explore these, why they were made and what the effects have been.

Recruiting clients

Refer to what they said last time, and use the latest MI to get a picture of the provider's recruitment performance to inform this discussion.

- Have there been any differences in the types of clients you've been recruiting to POEM since our last visit, or has the range of clients been similar? (If different, explore how, and why they think this is. Was it a deliberate decision?)
- How similar to your other or usual clients are POEM target clients? (eg in terms of ethnicity, distance from the LM, etc.) What are the similarities? What are the differences?
- Have you started to better target locations for reaching people to advertise the service?
- How have you gone about advertising POEM?
- What (if any) have been the difficulties in recruiting clients to POEM? Has it become easier or more difficult over the course of the year? Explore why.
- Has it been (or continued to be) difficult to recruit any of the three target groups? Which and why? Has this changed over the life of the pilot? How?
- What steps did you take to overcome these recruitment difficulties or to redress the balance of clients?
- Which of these recruitment difficulties have you found very hard to overcome, and why?
- Recruitment of non-target clients – how and why has this come about?

eg White clients – check the MI to see if/how many white clients they have recruited to POEM. If applicable:

- DWP are interested in the white clients who have been on POEM. Who are they? How did they find out about POEM? Distance from the LM?

For those falling short of their target numbers of starts:

- Why has it been harder than you had expected to recruit the numbers of clients you'd anticipated?
- Thinking about eligibility for the programme:
 - In practice, what criteria do you look for to see whether clients are eligible for POEM?
 - How do you check that clients meet these criteria?
 - How strict are you? Is there some leeway for clients who meet most but not quite all the POEM eligibility criteria?
- Once clients have been recruited, how do you decide to allocate resources between clients? Does this affect decisions about service(s) people receive?

The client journey

- What are the incentives or encouraging factors which prompt partners to enter (or think about entering) the labour market?
- What are the constraints or barriers that typically prevent them from doing so?
- Thinking about these constraints, which ones are relatively easy/inexpensive to address? Which take longer/are more costly?
- Where do people start (in terms of their distance from the labour market) when they enter POEM?
- How far have you been able to help these different types of clients? (It may be easiest for providers to demonstrate this by referring to examples of clients of different starting distances from the LM.)
- Regardless of starting points, once they are engaged with POEM, do some clients take longer in their journey towards the labour market than others?
- What kinds of factors influence this? eg what are the characteristics of clients whose progress (from their starting point, wherever that may be) is quick, and what are the characteristics of clients whose journeys are much slower?

Thinking about clients who are different distances away from the labour market:

- Are there any key constraints/barriers which, once addressed, make the subsequent journey towards the labour market easier, helping clients to:
 - fully engage with POEM
 - become more confident or motivated to find work (either in the short- or longer-term)
 - enter work?
- How have you addressed these key constraints?

- What is the impact of clients having limited English language skills? To what extent is it crucial to address this in order to move clients closer to the labour market?
- Are there other barriers that are equally/more critical to address to help clients progress? What are they? How are they addressed?

POEM support and activities

Refer to the notes from the previous visit to inform this discussion

- Any changes to the range of activities?
- New additions or things not offered anymore? How and why did these changes come about?
- What has been the impact of any changes to activities?
- Any other points about the range of activities offered

eg what have they learned about tailoring activities to POEM clients during the course of the pilot year? Are they tailoring activities to the three target ethnic groups?

Childcare issues

- What proportion (roughly) of your clients are primary carers for children, and have childcare issues/requirements?
- What are the barriers to your clients accessing childcare?
eg availability of childcare places, availability of culturally sensitive childcare, cost, reluctance to use formal non-family childcare, wider family resistance?
- How have these barriers been overcome?
- How is childcare provided for clients?
 - Does this vary as a result of the activities they are doing?
 - Is there a different childcare solution when clients need an hour or two of childcare, from when they need whole days at a time?

Other caring responsibilities

- Have you come across clients with other caring responsibilities that have been a barrier to considering and seeking work?
- How have you overcome this barrier?

Job starts

- What kinds of work have you helped your clients into? (Get some examples of the client journey and job outcome)
- What have been the difficulties in helping clients into work? eg:
 - issues around their motivation, circumstances, aspirations
 - issues around their employability, skills, education, language, etc.
 - issues around constraints (childcare, etc.)
 - issues around job availability, attractiveness, pay, conditions, travel, hours, etc.
 - employer-centred issues (selection criteria/process, use of agencies)
 - settling in, retention issues.

(Refer to the MI for this provider on job entries)

- Has it been harder than you had anticipated to help clients into work?
If yes, why do you think this has been the case?

'Other' outcomes

Refer to the MI – Some of the providers have quite large numbers of 'other' outcomes in their MI returns – (in one or two cases the numbers of other outcomes are much higher than job starts). So where applicable, ask providers:

- Can you tell us about the 'other' outcomes that you've achieved for POEM clients? What were these outcomes? eg
 - ESOL
 - other education or training courses
 - work experience/voluntary work
 - something else?

Try to get a sense of what providers termed as 'other' outcomes, and if there are several types of 'other' outcomes, get an idea of the proportions going into each.

Partners

Refer to the notes from the first visit

- Talk us through any changes since our last visit to your partnership working as part of POEM.
- Have you started to work with any new partners since we visited you in the autumn? Why? How did these new arrangements come about?
- Have you stopped working with any partners? Why and what has been the impact of this?
- Or has the emphasis of working with particular partners changed, with some having become more key and others less critical in POEM delivery? Why?
- Explore how and why these partner dynamics have changed. What have been the benefits of outcomes of these changes?
- If no changes to partnership working, explore why.
 - Was it because they had everything they required in place?
 - Or have they found it difficult to make new and seemingly useful partnerships?

Working with employers

Refer to visit note from Wave 1

- How have you been working with employers and employer groups as part of POEM?
- Has this changed or progressed since our last visit?
- How is this work with employers benefiting your POEM clients?
- What have you learned about what employers want from your clients as a result?
- Have you come across any employer discrimination, or employers who are reluctant to engage with certain clients?

For the London providers

We know from the MI returns that, overall, the London providers have been finding it more difficult than providers in other cities, to meet the starts and job entry targets on POEM.

- Why do you think there has been a difference between providers working in London and those working in other cities? eg:
 - local or community factors?
 - characteristics of potential clients?
 - the London labour market eg job-related factors (kind of jobs, kind of employers, skills needed, pay, etc)?
 - location/geographical factors – including distances to the provider/potential places of work?

Reflections on POEM

- How do you feel that delivering POEM has gone, compared with your hopes and expectations (and the targets that you set out in your bid to DWP)?
- If you were to bid for POEM again, would you do anything differently, and why?
- If you were to deliver POEM again, would you do anything differently, and why?

Refer to the sections of the discussion guide covered to prompt where they feel they would make changes, with the benefit of hindsight.

About DWP

DWP are very interested to get feedback from providers about POEM on a number of levels.

- Do you have any general feedback for DWP about POEM?
- How do you think the POEM programme itself could be improved? (eg in terms of its scope, eligibility, targets, funding, etc)
- Do you think the way in which DWP have managed the provider contract could be improved? How and why?
- What has DWP done on POEM that works? What would you want to see again?

Any other points?

Thanks and close

Appendix C

POEM client discussion guide

Introduction

NB Clients may not know that they are on Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM) – so in the introduction and throughout the interview, we may need to refer to the provider name or local venue as well as/instead of 'POEM'.

Institute for Employment Studies (IES) have been commissioned by the government's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to carry out an evaluation of POEM. IES is an independent research organisation and we are not part of the government or your POEM provider.

We are interested in finding out about your experiences of POEM and if you have found it helpful. We are interviewing 50 POEM clients in total. We are also talking to the ten POEM providers and other partners and organisations involved in delivering POEM.

The interview should take no more than an hour and is confidential. We will write up research with clients in an anonymous way, and no individuals will be named in our report. If there are any questions you would prefer not to answer please tell us.

We would like to record the interview, is that OK? We are giving all clients who help us with this work £20 as a thank you for taking part (at the end of the interview).

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background

First of all we would like to find out some background information about you.

Ethnicity/Migration

- What ethnic group would you describe yourself as belonging to?
- Were you born in the UK?
- If no, when did you first become resident in the UK? What is your country of origin? What made you decide to come to the UK?
- What languages do you speak?
- If more than one, which language(s) do you feel most comfortable using? (At home? When dealing with people outside your community/when looking for work/outside home?)

Education and training

Before you joined POEM:

- Can you give me details of any education or training you have completed? Collect details of where and when education or training was completed including any formal qualifications.
- Compulsory schooling (and any qualifications gained) in the UK?
- Post-16 education (and any qualifications gained) in the UK?
- Education (and any qualifications gained) outside the UK?
- Have any language problems ever caused you difficulty in completing education or training? Or in finding work? Explore.
- For those with overseas qualifications, have they ever had any difficulty getting these qualifications recognised in the UK?
- Had you considered re-entering education or training prior to POEM? Had you been looking into any education or training opportunities prior to joining POEM?
- Are you in education or training at the moment? (We will ask for more details of this later)

Employment

Before you joined POEM:

Had you ever been in paid-employment? Or been self-employed? If yes:

- What kind of jobs had you done? Talk us through your employment history up until you joined POEM. *Get details on jobs done, sectors worked in, how long jobs lasted etc.*

- Were they in the UK or another country?
- When were you last in paid employment? Why did this job end?
- Had you considered getting a job/or becoming self-employed before you became involved with POEM? Had you been looking for work prior to joining POEM? Any contact with Jobcentre plus? Or had you been doing any education or training before joining POEM?
- Are you in employment at the moment? (We will ask for more details on this later)

Health

- Do you have any health problems or disabilities?
- If yes, would they/do they affect your ability to look for work or do a job? Or your ability to attend training courses, etc? Or to get to see POEM advisers? Explore.
- Does anyone else you live with have a health problem or disability? How does this affect them, and you?

Joining POEM

How did you first find out about POEM? eg word of mouth, Sure Start, Skills Coaching, School, GP surgery, community venues?

Were you approached by someone from POEM/the local provider?

- **If yes:** By who? Where was this? How did you feel about being approached?
- **If no:** How did you first get involved?

Why did you decide to take part in POEM? What did you hope to achieve?

Did you decide to take part straight away or did you think about it? Did you discuss your decision with anyone else?

Had you ever had any contact with Jobcentre Plus or any schemes to help you with education, training or work prior to joining POEM? What were your experiences of this?

Starting point when joining POEM

When did you 'sign up' to the POEM programme? (ie when did they have their first meeting with a POEM adviser when they started work on their Action Plan?)

Confirm details from background so we have a clear picture of the starting point of the client upon joining POEM:

Can I confirm that when you joined POEM in (month/year) you were
(confirm their circumstances at that point)

And at that point, what did you feel were your main barriers to work or education/training?

Use prompts if necessary:

- hadn't thought about work/training prior to POEM
- did not know how to go about getting a job/no local networks
- did not want to work or enter training prior to POEM
- didn't need to work financially
- family and/or carer responsibilities
- language barriers
- skill/education barriers
- lack of accessible/affordable/culturally sensitive childcare
- lack of job search skills
- lack of jobs in/knowledge about the local labour market
- lack of access to work that is culturally acceptable and/or provides flexible working patterns
- discriminatory or perceived discriminatory barriers
- family or cultural resistance
- age
- confidence/lack of experience (including lack of experience of UK job market).

Activities

The POEM provider

Where do you meet with your POEM provider? At their main offices or somewhere else? Why?

Where is the place you meet/the POEM office in relation to your home? Is it easy to get to? Is it in your local community or further afield?

How do you rate the facilities at the provider office?

Staff

How have you found the POEM staff? And the other provider staff you've come into contact with?

Do you/did you feel they understood your needs and abilities?

Activities

- Talk me through what you have done through POEM so far, eg:
- How often have you met with a POEM adviser?
- Have you seen the same adviser throughout?
- What did you do in these sessions?
- Were they appointments, or drop-ins?
- What **activities** have you taken part in as part of the POEM?
- Discuss the activities they have done through POEM, and explore how useful they found each.
- Some examples of possible POEM activities to use as prompts:
 - job search support (interview skills, CVs) and mentoring
 - job placements/work experience. When, where?
 - support in becoming self-employed. What, where?
 - help in arranging childcare
 - education and/or training. *Prompt: key skills, ESOL, accredited training.* How many hours per week? Will it lead to a formal qualification?
 - job brokerage
 - getting overseas qualifications recognised
 - IT training/using computers and/or the internet
 - something else?
- Where did you do these activities? eg at the provider? Partner organisations? Community/outreach venues? Local college?
- Has the balance of activities been right? Is there anything you felt you needed more of or less of?
- Which activity was the most useful for you? Which was the least useful? Why?
- Have you had any contact with Jobcentre Plus as part of POEM? How useful and helpful did you find Jobcentre Plus?

Action Plans

If you have the client's Action Plan to use during the interview:

As you know, I have a copy/copies of your Action Plan(s) that you completed with your POEM provider.

Can you talk me through the Action Plan and what is in each section?

How has it changed since you started the POEM programme? How often is it/was it updated? Was this enough? Too often?

Did you feel that you had enough control over what was being put in the Action Plan?

How helpful do you find having an Action Plan? Why? eg has it helped you to focus on goals? Or see how far you have come?

Was it off-putting in any way? How?

How could the Action Plan (and the way the provider used it) be improved?

For those who have finished POEM:

Do you still use or refer to your Action Plan? How useful has your Action Plan been since you finished POEM?

If you do not have the client's Action Plan to use during the interview:

Have you been/were you completing an Action Plan with your POEM provider?

- If no, has an Action Plan been mentioned to you? Explore.
- If yes:
 - What does/did your Action Plan contain? Prompt: Personal details, previous experience in education and employment, job goals, personal attributes and skills, agreed actions.
 - How has it changed since you started the POEM programme? How often is it/was it updated? Was this enough? Too often?
 - Did you feel that you had enough control over what was being put in the Action Plan?
 - How helpful do you find having an Action Plan? Why? eg has it helped you to focus on goals? Or see how far you have come?
 - Was it off-putting in any way? How?
 - How could the Action Plan (and the way the provider used it) be improved?

For those who have finished the process:

Do you still use or refer to your Action Plan? How useful has your Action Plan been since you finished POEM?

Impact of POEM on the client 'journey'

Where we have clients' Action Plans, these can be used to help facilitate this section.

- Are you still on the POEM programme, ie in regular contact with your POEM provider?
- Confirm how long they have been/were involved with POEM

Those who are still involved with POEM

- What activities are you currently doing (through POEM)?
- And so far, what difference has POEM made to you? eg have there been any changes to:
 - your motivation and confidence
 - your desire to work
 - your understanding of the system/the labour market
 - your job search skills
 - your likelihood of gaining work (explore when they think they might be able to enter work)
 - your skills/language skills
 - your family life
 - your social life
 - your qualifications/skills or your desire to gain qualifications/skills
 - anything else?
- Thinking about what you wanted to achieve through POEM when you joined (refer to what they said on this earlier) how well have your hopes been met?
- Thinking about where you were when you first got involved with POEM, how far do you feel POEM has helped you progress towards your goals/what you'd like to be doing?
- Have your circumstances/what you are doing changed at all since you joined POEM? Explore.
- What would say has been the main impact or the biggest change as a result of taking part in POEM, so far?
- What would have happened if you hadn't been involved in POEM? What do you think you would you be doing now? How much progress would you have made without POEM?
- Thinking about your time on the POEM programme so far, what do you think was the biggest 'turning point' for you?

- For example, when they realised that they would get the support they needed, or they started to feel more positive/motivated/confident, or started to work towards a particular goal?
- Explore why they feel this was a turning point – what were the factors that made it so important/effective for them?

Those who are no longer involved with POEM

- Why aren't you involved with the POEM programme now?
 - Did they finish because they entered employment or training? Get details.
 - Did they leave POEM for another reason? Explore
- Have you had any contact with the POEM provider since you completed or left? Explore.
- Are you doing any kind of work, training or study now?
- If yes:
 - What is your current activity? Hours? Location?
 - Was this as a result of taking part in POEM? How did POEM help you achieve this?
 - Do you think you would be doing this if you had not been involved in POEM?

If no:

Explore their circumstances, and what they are doing now:

- *For those who started employment/education and subsequently left, explore what happened. Did they get the job/start the course as a result of taking part in POEM? Why did the job/course end? Will they be returning to the POEM provider?*
- *For those who left POEM but did not enter education or employment, explore why. Was it because the programme was not suiting them (get reasons), or because of other external factors?*
- Thinking back over your time with POEM, what difference did it make to you? eg were there any changes to:
 - your motivation and confidence
 - your desire to work
 - your understanding of the system/the labour market
 - your job search skills
 - your likelihood of gaining work (explore when they think they might be able to enter work)
 - your skills/language skills

- your family life
- your social life
- your qualifications/skills or your desire to gain qualifications/skills
- anything else?
- Thinking about what you wanted to achieve through POEM when you joined (refer to what they said on this earlier) how well have your hopes been met?
- Thinking about where you were when you first got involved with POEM, how far do you feel POEM helped you progress towards your goals/what you'd like to be doing?
- What would say was the main impact or the biggest change as a result of taking part in POEM?
- What would have happened if you hadn't been involved in POEM? What do you think you would be doing now? How much progress would you have made without POEM?
- Thinking about your time on the POEM programme, what do you think was the biggest 'turning point' for you?
 - For example, when they realised that they would get the support they needed, or they started to feel more positive/motivated/confident, or started to work towards a particular goal?
 - Explore why they feel this was a turning point – what were the factors that made it so important/effective for them?

Ask All

Overall, what do you think of POEM and the service that it offers?

Overall, what do you think of the service you have had from this provider?

How well did POEM/the provider meet your needs? Was there anything missing?

For those who have experienced other schemes in the past, how was POEM different? Did they feel POEM was better/worse suited to them? Why?

Have you built up any new links, or taken part in any other provision as a result of taking part in POEM? eg now visit Jobcentre plus, attend a community group.

How do your family feel about you being involved with POEM?

Have you recommended POEM to anyone you know? Why and what did you tell them?

Do you have any suggestions for how to improve POEM in the future? Explore their suggestions and reasons.

Future plans

For those still involved with POEM

What is planned for you over the next few weeks and months as part of POEM?

How do you hope these will help you?

What do you hope to doing by the time POEM ends? (The proposed end of the POEM pilot programme is March 2008)

Will you need further support after this to help you reach the goals set on your Action Plan? Where will you go for this support?

What are your long-term goals around work (and education/training)?

For those in work

What are your plans for the future? Do you want to stay in your current job? Change jobs? Study or train?

How do you hope that POEM will help you achieve your future plans? Will you access other support?

For those in education

What are your plans for when you complete your course? Will you take a further course? Will you look for work? Seek further help from POEM?

How do you hope that POEM will help you achieve your future plans? Will you access other support?

For those not in work or education

What are your plans for the future? Do you hope to find work? Complete a course?

For those who would like to work, what kind of work would you consider? What support would you need to achieve this?

How do you hope that POEM help you achieve your future plans? Will you access other support?

Family life

Before we finish I just need to collect a bit of background information on you and your family

- How old are you? (Ask for an age range, eg under 20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, etc, if they would prefer not to say their age)
- Who lives in your household?

- Do you have any children who live with you? If yes, How many? How old are they? Who has main caring responsibility for them?
- Do you have caring responsibilities for any adults (family or friends)?
- Can I confirm that you live with a partner/spouse?
- If yes, is their partner currently working? Details of the job they are doing.
- Does anyone in your household claim any benefits? Which ones?

Closing the interview

Are there any other points you would like to make?

- Give incentive and get signed receipt signed.

Thanks and close.

Appendix D

Data used in the figures in Chapter 7 on outcomes

Data for Figures 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3

Table D.1 Number of starts and profiled starts

Month	London providers (6)		Providers outside London (4)		All providers (10)	
	Starts	Profiled starts	Starts	Profiled starts	Starts	Profiled starts
03/07	2	74	29	126	31	200
04/07	35	327	84	126	119	453
05/07	208	392	149	126	357	518
06/07	200	417	146	126	346	543
07/07	221	317	164	126	385	443
08/07	248	317	160	126	408	443
09/07	260	417	100	126	360	543
10/07	256	367	104	126	360	493
11/07	431	367	99	126	530	493
12/07	313	367	46	126	359	493
01/08	350	367	118	126	468	493
02/08	523	367	129	126	652	493
03/08	443	367	66	126	509	493
Total	3,490	4,463	1,394	1,638	4,884	6,101

Data for Figures 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6

Table D.2 Number of job entries and profiled job entries

Month	London providers (6)		Providers outside London (4)		All providers (10)	
	Job entries	Profiled job entries	Job entries	Profiled job entries	Job entries	Profiled job entries
03/07	0	25	0	35	0	60
04/07	2	88	13	35	15	123
05/07	2	88	27	35	29	123
06/07	5	118	42	35	47	153
07/07	3	128	49	35	52	163
08/07	10	128	52	35	62	163
09/07	37	103	60	35	97	138
10/07	38	103	35	35	73	138
11/07	67	103	66	35	133	138
12/07	44	103	31	35	75	138
01/08	47	103	31	35	78	138
02/08	67	103	50	35	117	138
03/08	203	103	35	35	238	138
Total	525	1,296	491	455	1,016	1,751

Source: POEM MI, DWP.

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