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# *Further Investigation of a Disadvantaged Group on Pre-Vocational Training*

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*BMRB Social Research*

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## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Aims .....	2
<b>Summary of findings.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Part A: The Quantitative Survey of all PVT Participants.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1. Characteristics of PVT Participants .....</b>	<b>12</b>
1.1 Personal Characteristics.....	12
1.2 Labour Market and employment circumstances and experience .....	14
1.3 Time since last worked .....	15
1.4 Mobility .....	16
1.5 Self assessment.....	17
1.6 Self confidence .....	18
1.7 Previous experience of other programmes .....	19
1.8 Summary.....	20
<b>2. Experiences on PVT.....</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1 Joining PVT.....	21
2.1.1 Attitudes to PVT on entry .....	21
2.2 Customising PVT for individuals .....	22
2.2.1 Assessment of individual needs .....	23
2.2.2 Perception of individualisation .....	23
2.3 PVT activities .....	24
2.4 Qualifications achieved.....	25
2.5 Leaving PVT .....	27
2.5.1 Whether completed PVT as planned .....	27
2.6 Summary.....	28

<b>3. Experiences After PVT.....</b>	<b>30</b>
3.1 Participants destinations on exit.....	30
3.1.1 Immediate destination after leaving PVT .....	30
3.1.2 Getting a job .....	31
3.1.3 Training/ education.....	32
3.1.4 Inactivity .....	32
3.1.5 Unemployment.....	32
3.1.6 First Preference .....	33
3.2 Status at time of interview.....	34
3.2.1 Employment.....	35
3.2.2 Unemployed at time of survey .....	36
3.2.3 Inactivity .....	36
3.2.4 Education/ training .....	36
3.3 PVT and employment .....	36
3.3.1 Stability .....	37
3.4 Summary.....	38
<b>4. Perceptions of PVT Helpfulness .....</b>	<b>39</b>
4.1 PVT and employment .....	39
4.1.1 PVT and job search related activities .....	40
4.2 PVT and participants' perceived shortcomings .....	42
4.3 Current confidence.....	44
4.4 General perceptions of PVT.....	46
4.5 Summary.....	49
<b>Part B: The Qualitative Research with the “Discontented” .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>5. ‘Discontented’ with PVT – an introduction .....</b>	<b>52</b>
5.1 Background .....	52

5.2	Aims of the Qualitative Study .....	52
5.3	Research methods .....	53
5.4	The Sample.....	53
5.5	The Scope of Qualitative methods.....	56
5.6	Report Outline.....	56
<b>6.</b>	<b>A profile of ‘discontented’ PVT participants.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>A pen-portrait of ‘discontented’ PVT participants.....</b>	<b>62</b>
7.1	Schooling experiences.....	62
7.2	Training and qualifications prior to PVT .....	63
7.3	The perceived value of training courses .....	64
7.4	Experiences of employment .....	65
7.5	Barriers to employment.....	65
7.5.1	The local labour market .....	66
7.5.2	Employer attitudes .....	66
7.5.3	Health problems.....	67
7.5.4	Literacy difficulties.....	67
7.5.5	Confidence and self esteem .....	68
7.5.6	Low rates of pay .....	68
7.5.7	Caring responsibilities .....	69
7.5.8	Other factors acting as barriers to work .....	69
7.6	Overview.....	69
<b>8.</b>	<b>Experiences of Pre-Vocational Training .....</b>	<b>71</b>
8.1	The nature of the training courses .....	71
8.2	Referral to Pre-Vocational training .....	72
8.2.1	The referral process.....	72
8.2.2	The initial course interview.....	73

8.3	Course induction .....	74
8.4	Needs assessment and training plans.....	75
8.5	Course content .....	76
8.5.1	The ‘two-week induction, six month work experience’ students .....	76
8.5.2	The traditional PVT students .....	76
	Classroom based training .....	76
	Work placements and work experience.....	77
8.6	The perceived impact and outcomes of PVT .....	78
8.6.1	Leaving PVT.....	78
8.6.2	Positive outcomes of PVT.....	78
8.6.3	Negative outcomes of PVT.....	79
8.7	Overview.....	80
<b>9.</b>	<b>Perceptions and content and delivery of PVT .....</b>	<b>82</b>
9.1	Needs assessment and course tailoring.....	82
9.2	Course content .....	84
9.3	Course delivery .....	85
9.4	Course staffing .....	87
9.5	The pacing of learning and training .....	88
9.6	The facilities available.....	89
9.7	Overview.....	89
<b>10.</b>	<b>Meeting the needs of the discontented .....</b>	<b>91</b>
10.1	Why do some people appear not to benefit from PVT?.....	91
10.2	Meeting the needs of the discontented - ‘An ideal PVT programme’.....	92
10.2.1	Induction .....	93
10.2.2	Job counselling.....	93
10.2.3	Addressing the barriers .....	94

10.2.4	A tailored learning programme .....	94
10.2.5	Job skills programme .....	95
10.2.6	Work placement .....	95
10.2.7	Progress reviews .....	96
10.3	Exit interview .....	96
10.4	Follow-through.....	96
10.5	Overview.....	97
<b>APPENDIX 1 – CHAID analysis of discontented participants.....</b>		<b>99</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2 - The Quantitative survey .....</b>		<b>122</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3 – Qualitative study of discontented participants .....</b>		<b>147</b>
<b>APPENDIX 4: Analytical Method For Qualitative Research .....</b>		<b>152</b>

## Introduction

Certain groups amongst the long term unemployed are recognised as suffering from multiple disadvantages which have not only prevented them from participating effectively in the labour market, but have also acted as a barrier to participation in training schemes that may help them into employment. Such disadvantages may include personal and occupational skills, a lack of self-confidence or relevant work experience, or past experiences (such as mental illness or criminal activity) that may make them unattractive to employers.

To address the needs of these groups, Pre-Vocational Pilots (PVP) were launched in April 1996, at that time covering 57 TECs (out of 73) in England. PVP aimed primarily to get clients to a stage where they were ready to move on to mainstream adult occupational training (for example within Training for Work), by enabling them to overcome problems that had previously disadvantaged them. Pre-Vocational Training (PVT) became available in all TECs in England in 1997-8. Since the introduction of new Deal 18-24 in 1998, PVT was available only for clients aged 25 and over. Unlike PVP, PVT is designed to help participants address their underlying skill needs, with the aim of equipping them with the occupational skills in demand in their local area; the main focus was to get jobs, not to move on to further training.

Previous research, on PVP, undertaken in 1997 by the Institute for Employment Studies<sup>1</sup>, discovered that whilst most participants reported benefits of having attended this training ‘... a significant proportion (around 20%) of participants appeared not to be benefiting from the pre-vocational pilots’. Owing to their cynicism about the training and general despondency about their employment prospects, this group became known, for the purposes of the research, as the ‘discontented’. In 1999 BMRB were commissioned to repeat this study, but with an additional qualitative component, focusing on the “discontented” respondents.

Three questions in the questionnaire were used to identify ‘discontented’ respondents. These are outlined below, with the bold text indicating the responses that identified the ‘discontented’:

- *Thinking back on the time JUST BEFORE you went on PVT, I'd like to get an idea of how you felt about your chances of getting a job. Which of the following statements best describes how you felt about your chances?*

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<sup>1</sup> The Institute for Employment Studies (September 1998) Longer Term Outcomes of the Pre-Vocational Pilots, DfEE, Research Report RR78

*I could get a job fairly easily, but not the kind I wanted.*

*I'd had a bit of bad luck in finding a job but I knew I'd be able to get one in time.*

**I felt that I wasn't even in the running; I was coming nowhere near getting a job.**

- *I am going to read out some statements about pre-vocational training, and I'd like you to say for each one how much you agree with it:*

*PVT is no different from other schemes, it is just to keep you off the register for a while'*

**Agree strongly**

**Agree slightly**

*Disagree slightly*

*Disagree strongly*

- *Looking ahead, how confident do you feel about your employment prospects?*

*Very confident*

*Fairly confident*

**Not very confident**

**Not at all confident.**

## **Aims**

BMRB were asked to conduct some further, qualitative research into PVT participants. The aim of this research was to find out why some participants (i.e. the 'discontented') fail to benefit from PVT programmes, and seem discontented with PVT. Though this group formed only a minority of all PVT participants, the DfEE are committed to the provision of high-quality training for all trainees, and therefore required a special focus on the needs and circumstances of this "discontented" group. The consequence of focussing on the discontented minority is that the qualitative results may be more negative than they would be for contented people.

Within this overall aim, three specific objectives were defined:

- To explore the factors relating to resistance to help of a proportion of participants on Government programmes using a sample of participants of Pre-Vocational training.



- To draw conclusions on the effect this group of people had on the effectiveness of PVT and on the potential effects on other Government programmes; and
- To recommend actions on how policy or delivery might be amended to support this client group

The research was conducted in two stages. The first was an initial quantitative interview with those leaving PVT between September and December 1998, which used a questionnaire based closely on that used in 1997 (amendments made only where relevant). After the quantitative stage was the qualitative follow-up study, of those respondents who expressed discontentment with PVT (this included both those respondents defined as 'discontented' and some that shared certain attitudes with this group).

## Summary of findings

### Part A Summary: PVT participants in general – quantitative study

- In 1997 18% of respondents were identified as being “discontented” (see below for definition), and changes to training content were introduced as a consequence. The major objectives for the 1999 survey related to assessing incidence of discontentment and conducting further qualitative research targeted on this group. In 1999 only 12% were discontented. (This is a statistically significant fall)

#### Personal characteristics of PVT participants

- PVT participants tended to be male and white, although less so than in 1997. For almost a quarter, their ability to gain employment were assessed by the ES as having restrictions as a result of disability or illness (almost unchanged since 1997). A substantial minority had literacy/numeracy needs.
- Connection to the labour market through partners was quite limited: only a tenth (10%) of respondents had a partner in paid work, a quarter (25%) had a partner who was not in paid work and 65% did not have a partner. Over half of respondents (52%) did not have a close relative (not including partner) in employment. A minority of respondents had dependent children under the age of 18 (33%) and 12% were single parents.
- As in 1997, the majority of respondents were unemployed; claiming benefit after PVT (76%) or not claiming benefit (4%). 7% had been looking after home/family, 4% sick/disabled, 4% in education/training, 4% in employment. Just over two in five (41%) of those who had not had a job before PVT had been out of work for three or more years (47% in 1997), and 10% had never had a paid job (15% in 1997). Thus this group contains people for whom labour market experience is quite distant, although slightly less distant than in 1997.
- The most commonly perceived problem holding respondents back after PVT was a lack of qualifications. This was followed by low self confidence, poor interview skills, a lack of work experience, and a lack of understanding of the skills needed to do a job. These were also key problems in 1997. It is clear that PVT participants are aware that their distant, or non-existent, work experience makes them unattractive to potential employers. Not surprisingly, participants rated their chances of getting a job quite low: 48% ‘felt that I wasn’t even in the running; I was coming nowhere near getting a job’.

## **Experiences on PVT**

- As in 1997, the majority of respondents had gone on PVT either on the advice of the Jobcentre, or the training provider. Although respondents had mixed feelings on entry (split almost evenly between those thinking PVT was what they needed and those who didn't expect much), very few (5%) dismissed it outright as a 'waste of time'.
- Despite the fact that the majority of respondents (85%) had experienced some form of individual attention whilst on PVT, only around a third (35%) thought that PVT had been completely/mainly designed around their needs. 35% also thought that 'everyone did the same' and that PVT was 'not adapted to meet my needs at all'.
- Respondents had experienced a range of activities whilst on PVT: literacy/numeracy, English for speakers of other languages, computing, finding work, work experience, job relevant training. Only one, work with computers/IT, had been experienced by more than half of respondents, which may indicate some targeting of the training to those who need particular skills. In general, this training was seen as useful by those who had done it.
- A quarter of respondents had gained an NVQ whilst on PVT (5% more than in 1997), and one in ten units towards an NVQ. 13% of respondents had not achieved any qualifications, and 23% could not say (this category would include both those who could not remember what they did, and those who simply did not know whether what they did led to a qualification).
- Two thirds of respondents had completed PVT, and a third had left early, slightly higher than in 1997. There are both positive and negative messages from this: of those who left before completion, 29% (10% of all participants) did so because they had got a job, whilst 21% (7% of all participants) did so because they were unhappy with PVT.

## **Experiences after PVT**

- It is encouraging that almost a quarter of respondents (24%) had gone straight into a job after PVT. This was up from 7% in 1997, which is not surprising given the fact that PVT is now aimed at employment, not further training. 59% of respondents went straight into unemployment after PVT – although this seems quite high, it must be remembered that only 8% of respondents had been in work or training before PVT. Those most likely to go straight into employment from PVT were women, those out of work for less than 6 months before PVT, and those most confident about their employment prospects before PVT.

- Despite the fact that between seven and ten months had elapsed since respondents had left PVT, there had been remarkable stability in their experiences since leaving PVT. Over three quarters of respondents (78%) had done only one thing since leaving PVT, compared with 40% in 1997 (due to the fact that more respondents went on to training in 1997, which would not have lasted the length of time between finishing PVT and the interview). 59% of respondents were unemployed at the time of interview, and 22% in employment (21% in 1997). Again, women and those with a shorter unemployment spell before PVT were more likely to have a job at the time of interview.

### **Assessment of PVT helpfulness**

- In terms of the helpfulness of PVT, it would be fair to conclude that whilst PVT is seen as helpful, it was not seen as greatly so. Between a quarter and a third of respondents thought that PVT was 'very helpful' in getting a job, and for various job related activities such as improved CVs, motivation, providing job related training and clarifying what type of work the person wanted. There was very little change from 1997, respondents were slightly less likely to say that PVT had been 'no help', but any change has been marginal. Those in employment at the time of interview were more likely to give positive assessments in these respects.
- In terms of specific problems, PVT was most helpful in helping respondents overcome low self confidence. PVT was least successful in helping to overcome problems with disability and health. PVT was also relatively less successful in helping people to overcome their lack of qualifications. This is a major concern, as participants regard lack of qualifications as the most serious problem for respondents.
- Two thirds (64%) of respondents were very/fairly confident about their employment prospects after PVT (almost unchanged since 1997). Considering that 48% thought that they were not 'even in the running' before PVT, this is an encouraging outcome. Two thirds (66%) of respondents agreed at least a little that PVT had made them more self confident about getting and keeping a job, (almost unchanged since 1997).
- Almost half (49%) agreed at least a little that it had helped them sort out problems holding them back in the labour market (unchanged from 1997). However, almost half of respondents (48%) also agreed at least a little that 'PVT is no different from other schemes, it is just to keep you off the register for a while, lower than 1997. However, it is still the case that certain respondents, whilst believing that PVT had helped them in terms of self confidence, were also quite cynical about the motives behind the scheme.

## Part B Summary: The discontented: key findings of qualitative study

- Discontented PVT participants described quite negative experiences of compulsory education, having found school '*boring*' and '*too hard*', and recalled having left with either no qualifications or lower grade qualifications. The evidence suggests that many had not been engaged in the process of education and, thus, felt '*left behind*'.
- Experiences of further education were highly fragmented among the discontented group. There was evidence of widespread 'course-hopping', i.e. drifting from one course to another, unable to make any linkage between them. Participants found it difficult to see the value and relevance of previous courses. Courses were sometimes referred to as '*something to do*.' Whilst the majority mentioned that they value training, the reasons which they gave were interestingly 'mechanical' – more 'knee jerk' responses – and not articulated with any 'real' logic or thought.
- Discontented respondents described fragmented experiences of employment – predominantly unskilled and low paid jobs – interspersed by short and long periods of unemployment. The perceived reasons for their unemployment varied. An absence of desirable local jobs; negative employer attitudes towards the long-term unemployed; health problems, coupled with literacy/numeracy difficulties and low confidence were all described as factors which either reduce their chances or prevent them from successfully entering the labour market.
- Discontented respondents described having attended one of two types of PVT course – a six month course comprising an initial assessment of need followed by periods of training; and a two week training course followed by a six-month work placement. Only a small proportion of the participants described having attended the latter course, which is not the way DfEE expected PVT to be delivered in order to meet the particular needs of this client group. However, the evidence suggests that the respondents who described having attended the two-week assessment/6 month placement course were, appropriately, a PVT client group. It is not possible to say whether, or to what extent, attendance on the non-traditional course has affected feed back from these clients.
- They were generally referred to PVT courses by the Job Centre, either at the point of signing on for benefits, during a Restart interview, or when discussing an advertised job with frontline staff.

- Respondents appeared not to have been provided with much information about the PVT course by the Job Centre. Information that had been provided was exclusively verbal. At this stage respondents had almost no idea about the aims or content of the course. Following an initial interview with the training provider, respondents only had 'sketchy' expectations of the course which included, gaining qualifications; developing work and literacy skills, increasing confidence, and increasing one's employability.
- The discontented group generally had very low expectations of training, with many feeling that they were only taking part in PVT because they saw it as compulsory. Some recalled having been explicitly told that non-participation would result in their benefit payments being stopped. Others described feeling pressured by frontline staff to agree to attend.
- The discontented group found it difficult to identify whether they had had their individual learning needs assessed. Some described having completed a paper and pencil numeracy / literacy test, perceived as a needs assessment. Others described having had a 'chat' with the course provider prior to commencing the course. However, it was very clear that training providers did not feed back the results of their assessments in such a way that the participants would recognise that they had learning needs and that these would be addressed by the course.
- There appeared to be little evidence that the course had been tailored to individual needs. In most cases, they reported being 'fitted into' existing course formats, with little or no differentiation of need. The combination of poor assessment and lack of tailoring of courses meant that course could be perceived as too basic, too difficult or comprise content that was unexpected.
- Views about the content of PVT course were varied. Those who held clear career aspirations felt that the course had not sufficiently prepared them for work. Criticism centred on poor and irrelevant work experience placements, and overly general job search advice and support. Those with less clear job goals, primarily, could not see how the various training courses they were taking as a part of PVT would equip them for work. Given that many of the respondents wanted a job rather than training, it is perhaps not surprising that unless the training appeared to be highly work related, they would be critical of the training received.
- Comments about the delivery of the PVT course were mixed. Some described the trainers as having been interesting and engaging. However, on the whole such trainers appeared not to be the 'norm'. Trainers were described as having been frequently absent – either on annual leave or simply sitting in the canteen drinking coffee. Staff-

student contact was described as having been very low. Consequently, some found themselves having to ask more experienced students on the course how to do things. There was also evidence of participants having been left to their own devices to work on self-completion tasks, with little or no supervision by training staff.

- Respondents often spontaneously commented of the paucity of good training staff. Some felt that staff-student ratios had been too high (e.g. 1:20). Others described lessons as having been boring, and teachers as non-engaging and poorly qualified.
- Reflecting the overall comments about lack of tailoring and poor needs assessment, these discontented participants commented on the ‘pacing’ of their PVT course. Courses were either felt to have been too short (and difficult) for a person to complete the tasks that were required, or the pace of learning was too fast for them to benefit fully from their experience. Ideally, they wanted a course structure that was flexible to their needs, which would not be tied-down to a rigid completion date.
- Not all of the discontented participants completed their PVT course. Some of them left PVT to move into work (felt to have been a direct result of saying to an employer that they had been involved in training). In other cases, the move to work was felt by the participant to have been coincidental. Other reasons for leaving PVT prematurely included: recurring health problems; caring responsibilities; and the course closing down. It is noteworthy that TECs are required to find alternative provision when course closes prematurely.
- Three main outcomes, two of which were positive, were observed following the completion of a PVT course. These included part-time employment, further education, and unemployment. Other positive outcomes included an increase in confidence; acquiring new skills (e.g. IT, job search skills), gaining qualifications (NVQ 1-2), a sense of achievement, increased literacy skills, and getting used to routine work. It is, however, noteworthy that many of the positive outcomes were felt to be short lived. Those who fell back into unemployment upon leaving the PVT course felt that they gradually became de-skilled. In particular, respondents mentioned a decline in work-related confidence, job-search motivation and skills that they had acquired during their PVT course.
- What remains clear is that, despite benefiting from their experience of PVT, the discontented group remained fairly negative and critical of the course undertaken. The reasons for this were numerous and included negative experiences of previous training courses, a sense of ‘directionless’ – not having clearly defined training or job goals, and generally low expectations of PVT. Respondents appeared to enter the PVT course as ‘directionless’ and finished the course in much the same way. Little individual

attention, a standardised approach to training and lack of course tailoring and the almost complete absence of progress monitoring seemed to be the main reasons for this.



## **Part A: The Quantitative Survey of all PVT Participants**

**Part A looks at all participants interviewed, of whom only 12% were “discontented”**

## 1. Characteristics of PVT Participants

This chapter considers the background of the people participating in PVT; an important starting point for this report which seeks to examine the attitudes and experiences of those who have participated in the scheme. This chapter will encompass the personal characteristics of PVT participants, along with their labour market characteristics and experiences of work and unemployment, as well as subjective attitudes including self-confidence and assessments of their future prospects.

### 1.1 Personal Characteristics

This section gives an outline of the characteristics of the respondents interviewed in the survey. Comparisons will be made with the 1997 survey.

Table 1 Personal characteristics of PVT survey respondents

Base: All Respondents		
	1997	1999
<b>Age</b>		
20 and under	13	*
21-40	50	54
Over 40	37	44
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	68	64
Female	32	36
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	86	75
Other	14	20
No answer		5
<b>Disability</b>		
Yes	28	24
<b>Literacy/ numeracy needs?</b>		
Yes	-	38
<b>English not first language</b>		
Yes	-	10

As in 1997, PVT participants tended to be white males. Over half (54%) of those interviewed in 1999 were in this group. A slightly higher proportion were aged 21-40, with less than half being over 40. Almost a quarter (24%) had a disability or illness which restricted their ability; almost two in five (38%) were assessed as having literacy/numeracy needs; one in ten (10%) did not have English as a first language (1997 data not available).

Table 2 Further characteristics of PVT survey respondents

Base: All respondents		
	1997	1999
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	53	46
Married/ Living with partner	35	35
Widowed/ divorced/ separated	12	20
<b>Dependent Children</b>		
Yes	29	33
<b>Single parent</b>		
Yes	6	12
<b>Family Income</b>		
Partner in paid work	10	10
Partner not in paid work	24	24
No partner	66	65
<b>Family members in</b>		
Mother	-	6
Father	-	8
Brother	-	23
Sister	-	17
Son	-	7
Daughter	-	6
Other person in household	-	2
Don't know	-	3
None of these	-	52
<b>Housing status</b>		
Homeowner	15	20
Council/ Housing Association	43	56
Private rented	10	16
Live with parents	30	7
Other	2	1

The main differences in the profile of respondents between 1997 and 1999 arise because the younger age group, the 18-24s, are no longer participating in PVT. The effect of this

has been to reduce the number of single people, people with children, and people living with their parents.

Almost half (46%) of respondents in 1999 were single, slightly down from 1997 (although this is to be expected since PVT participants were aged over 25) and a third had dependent children under the age of 18 (up from 1997, possibly also the result of the exclusion of the younger age group). The proportion that were single parents has doubled, to 12% of respondents. More than half (56%) lived in council/housing association accommodation, one in five owned their own home and one in six (16%) rented privately. In 1997, almost a third (30%) of respondents lived with their parents; only 7% did so in 1999.

It is clear that for many respondents, there is no connection to the labour market through their family – more than half (52%) did not have a member of their immediate family in employment.

## 1.2 Labour Market and employment circumstances and experience

PVT aims to address skills needs that are holding participants back in the labour market, As such, it is important to understand participants' previous experiences of employment. All respondents were asked what they were doing immediately before they went on PVT:

Three quarters of respondents (76%) were unemployed and claiming related benefit before PVT; a further 4% said they had been unemployed but had not been claiming benefit.

One in eight had been economically inactive for other reasons: looking after home/ family (7%), sick/disabled (4%), in education/training (4%).

A handful of respondents (4%) said that they had been in employment before PVT.

Men were more likely than women to have been unemployed and claiming related benefit before PVT (84% compared with 62%), whilst women were more likely to be caring for home/family (17% compared with 1%).

Table 3 Labour market and employment circumstances immediately before PVT

Base: All respondents (475)

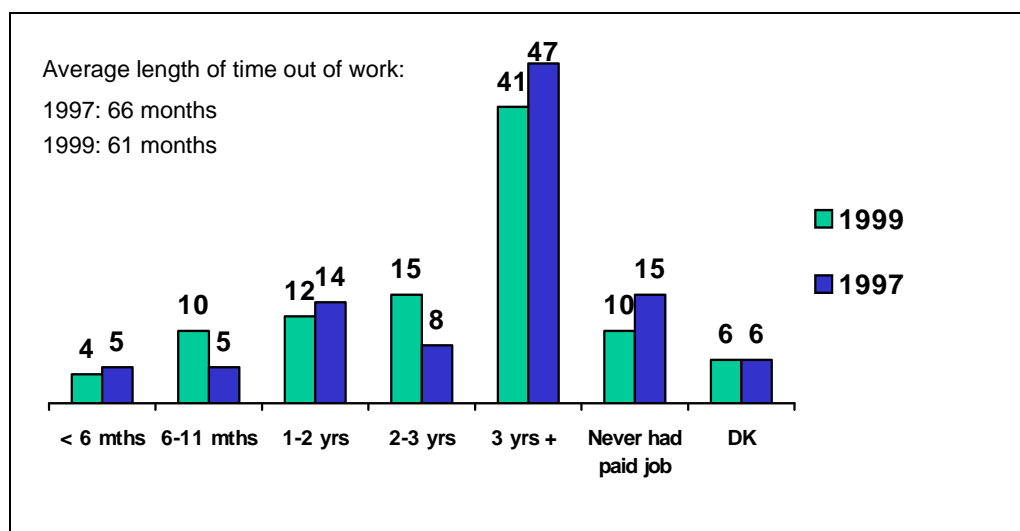
Status	%
Unemployed, on benefit	76
Unemployed, no benefit	4
Looking after home/ family	7
Sick/ ill/ disabled	4
Full time education	1
Government Training Scheme	3
In work	4

### 1.3 Time since last worked

All respondents who did not have a paid job immediately before PVT (96% of all respondents interviewed) were asked about their previous experiences of employment. First, respondents were asked how long it had been since they had last had a job before they joined PVT. As can be seen from the chart below, the majority of respondents had been out of work for at least two years, and one in ten had never had a paid job. The average length of time out of work was 61 months – over 5 years.

**Chart 1** Length of time out of work before joining PVT

Base: All respondents not working before PVT (496, 454)



There were no huge differences between the 1997 and 1999 survey in terms of the length of time the survey respondents had been out of work before PVT. If anything, the sample in 1999 had slightly more recent contact with the labour market (6% fewer had been out of work for 3 years or more, and 5% fewer had never had a paid job\*), but these differences are quite small.

It is important to note that when comparing self reported unemployment rates against the ES data supplied, the two measures do not match entirely. Not all respondents said that they were out of work immediately before PVT, although the ES data supplied said that they were. Those who said they were out of work, tended to report that they had been out of work for a longer period than their signing on data would suggest. For example, 41% of

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\* Statistically significant at 5% level.

respondents not working before PVT (which is equal to 39% of respondents overall) said they had been out of work for more than 3 years, whereas according to the ES data supplied, only 34% of respondents overall had been signing on for that length of time. This suggests that whilst certain PVT participants may only have been signing on for a few months, any sustained contact with the labour market may be more distant than that.

Those who had not worked in the past five years were not asked any further questions about previous employment. This was to filter out those respondents for whom a significant period of time had elapsed since their previous spell of employment, and who may not be able to recall sufficient detail to answer follow up questions.

Three quarters (76%) of those who had been in employment within the last 5 years were in full time work, 20% in part time. There was a clear split along gender lines: over four in five (85%) males had been in full time employment, compared with fewer three in five females (58%).\*\* Conversely, only one in nine men (11%) had been in part time employment compared with two in five women (40%).\*\* Almost two thirds of respondents (63%) had had a permanent job and a third (34%) a temporary/casual job. Again, there was a gender difference, with men more likely than women to have had permanent jobs (68% compared with 52%).\* There was also a difference according to age: 57% of the 21-40 year olds had been in permanent employment compared with 69% of those aged over 40

Whilst many of the participants on PVT may have personal needs which are preventing them from being in stable employment, those who had had a job within the last five years became unemployed as a result of redundancy (31%), or because a temporary job came to an end (23%). A further fifth (18%) left as a result of medical/health reasons.

## 1.4 Mobility

Possession of a driving licence and access to a vehicle is important because this increases the distance over which someone can travel to find work and the range of jobs that someone could potentially do. Only a third (34%) of the PVT participants interviewed currently held a driving licence – this was higher amongst men - and fewer than a quarter (23%) of respondents actually had use of a vehicle. These two findings demonstrate how potentially restricted PVT participants are to searching for work within a limited geographical area.

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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

\* Statistically significant at 5% level

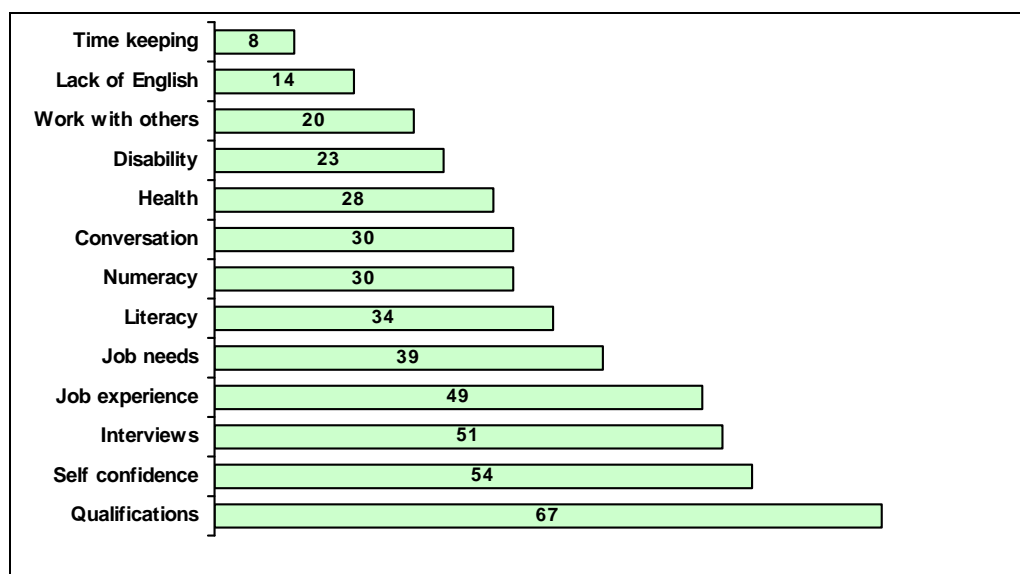
## 1.5 Self assessment

Participants' needs are assessed formally on entering PVT, to ensure that the training they receive is relevant to them. However, it is also useful to know what the participants themselves think; whether they have experienced problems relating to occupational and personal skills which have held them back in the past.

On the chart below are the respondents who were held back at least a little ('a lot', 'quite a bit', or 'only a little') by certain problems before PVT. 67% of respondents mentioned a lack of qualifications: also the most widely cited barrier in 1997, at 60% of respondents. Next was self confidence (54%), followed by interview skills (51%), relevant job experience (49%), and a lack of clear understanding of what a job involves (39%). At the other end of the scale English as a first language and time keeping problems affected 14% and 8% of respondents respectively, although English language problems were much higher amongst respondents who were not white (46%). The only significant difference between the discontented and not discontented respondents was for disability: this held back 40% of 'discontented' respondents before PVT, but 21% of the non discontented\*\*.

**Chart 2** Whether respondent held back by problems before PVT

Base: All respondents (475)



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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

In terms of the seriousness of the problems affecting the respondents, in general, the intensity of the problem corresponded closely to the incidence of the problem overall. For example, the problem that held the most respondents back ‘a great deal’ (lack of qualifications) was also the most widely cited problem overall.

## 1.6 Self confidence

As noted in the previous section, self-confidence was clearly a very important barrier for PVT participants. To explore this further, respondents were asked to pick one of three statements which best fitted their feelings about their job prospects:

*‘I could get a job fairly easily, but not the kind of job I wanted.’*

*‘I’d had a bit of bad luck in finding a job, but I knew I would get one in time.’*

*‘I felt that I wasn’t even in the running; I was coming nowhere near getting a job.’*

A handful of respondents said that they did not know, and 4% said that none of the statements applied. As can be seen on the table below, almost a half of respondents were extremely pessimistic about their job chances before PVT.

**Table 4** Perceived chances of getting a job before PVT

Base: All respondents (475)	
I could get a job fairly easily, but not the kind of job I wanted	20
I’d had a bit of bad luck in the past, but I know I’d get one in time	26
I felt that I wasn’t even in the running; I was coming nowhere near getting a job	48
Don’t know	1
None apply	4

The longer a respondent had been out of work before PVT, the more pessimistic they were about their job chances. For example, 37% of those who had been out of work for less than six months felt they were ‘not even in the running’, compared with 54% of those who had been out of work for 3 or more years<sup>\*\*</sup>. There did not appear to be a particularly strong relationship between age and confidence in job prospects before PVT: if anything, those aged over 40 were slightly less negative (45% said they were not even in the running for a job, compared with 50% of those aged 21-40). Women were more likely than men to say that they ‘could get a job fairly easily but not the kind of job I wanted’ (27% compared

<sup>\*\*</sup> Statistically significant at 1% level



with 16%\*\*), reflecting the possible differences between men and women in their experiences of economic inactivity, and the type of work available.

This question, along with two others, formed part of the definition used to identify those respondents who were ‘discontented’. To be identified as ‘discontented’ respondents had to select: ‘I felt that I wasn’t even in the running – I was coming nowhere near getting a job’.

## 1.7 Previous experience of other programmes

Since many of the participants on PVT had been out of work for a long period of time, it is likely that they would have had experience of other TEC interventions. The survey asked respondents about four programmes/interventions; whether they had attended them and how useful they found them. As in 1997, the perceived utility of the intervention/programme was recorded on a four point scale (very useful, of some use, not much use, no use at all) and these were given a value of 3,2,1,0 respectively. From this a satisfaction index could be calculated.

**Table 5 Experience of other interventions before PVT**

Base:	All			
	1997 (512)		1999 (475)	
	% Attending	Utility	% Attending	Utility
Training for work	18	1.92	22	2.08
Jobclub	27	1.75	31	1.92
Jobsearch Plus	16	2.04	22	1.98
One to One	22	1.61	35	1.90

Each of these interventions had been experienced by between one fifth and two fifths of respondents, the highest being One to One interviews, which 35% of respondents said they had attended. There has also been an increase in participation in these schemes since 1997. In terms of participants’ assessment of the utility of the schemes, there is less variation between schemes than in 1997, although there has been no significant increase for any of the schemes. Given that many respondents had been out of work for over three years, it is perhaps surprising that their experience of ES intervention is not more.

Discontented respondents were not significantly more or less likely to have taken part in any of these schemes than the sample as a whole (17% had taken part in Training for Work; 24% Jobsearch Plus; 31% Jobclub; 31% One to One interviews). Due to the small size of the ‘discontented’ sub-group, little would be revealed by examining how useful those ‘discontented’ respondents who had taken part in these activities found them.

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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

In addition to the four programmes/interventions mentioned above, 12% of respondents said that they had taken part in other programmes before PVT. These courses encompassed a wide range of subjects, including IT, literacy, gardening, decorating and job search courses.

## **1.8 Summary**

PVT participants tended to be male and white, although less so than in 1997. For almost a quarter, their ability to gain employment was assessed by the ES as being restricted as a result of disability or illness (almost unchanged since 1997). A substantial minority were assessed by the ES as having literacy/numeracy needs.

Connection to the labour market through partners was quite limited: only a tenth (10%) of respondents had a partner in paid work, a quarter (25%) had a partner who was not in paid work and 65% did not have a partner. Over half of respondents (52%) did not have a close relative (not including partner) in employment. A minority of respondents had dependent children under the age of 18 (33%) and 12% were single parents.

As in 1997, the majority of respondents were unemployed; claiming benefit after PVT (76%) or not claiming benefit (4%). 7% had been looking after home/family, 4% sick/disabled, 4% in education/training, 4% in employment. Just over two in five (41%) of those who had not had a job before PVT had been out of work for three or more years (47% in 1997), and 10% had never had a paid job (15% in 1997). Thus this group contains people for whom labour market experience is quite distant, although slightly less distant than in 1997.

The most commonly perceived problem holding respondents back after PVT was a lack of qualifications. This was followed by low self confidence, poor interview skills, a lack of work experience, and a lack of understanding of the skills needed to do a job. These were also key problems in 1997. It is clear that PVT participants are aware that their distant, or non-existent, work experience makes them unattractive to potential employers. Not surprisingly, participants rated their chances of getting a job quite low: 48% 'felt that I wasn't even in the running; I was coming nowhere near getting a job'.

## 2. Experiences on PVT

This chapter considers the experiences of participants on PVT: influences on their decision to join; expectations of the programme; activities taken part in during PVT; whether respondents completed the training.

### 2.1 Joining PVT

Respondents were asked about the influences on their decision to join PVT. They were asked whether any of the following influenced them: JobCentre staff, family/friends, local council (or similar organisations), training provider, advertisements.

**Table 6** Influences on decision to join PVT

Base: All respondents		
	1997 (512)	1999(475)
Job Centre staff	58	61
Family/ friends	17	20
Local council	5	4
Training provider	25	25
Adverts	26	27

The influences on joining PVT have remained largely unchanged since 1997, with JobCentre staff being the most important, with more than six in ten respondents saying this influenced them. Given the length of time many respondents had been out of work, and the likelihood that they will have had extensive contact with the ES, this finding is not particularly surprising.

#### 2.1.1 Attitudes to PVT on entry

Respondents were asked about their feelings of PVT when they joined the scheme. They were given a choice of the three statements below and asked to pick the one that best described how they felt:

*'PVT looked like just the kind of thing I needed'.*

*'Thought I'd give it a go but didn't expect much'.*

*'I thought it would be a waste of time'.*

The table over the page gives the answers given for this question, comparing it with the results from 1997.

**Table 7      Attitudes to PVT on entry**

Base: All respondents		
	<b>1997 (512)</b>	<b>1999 (475)</b>
Just the kind of thing I needed	47	49
Thought I'd give it a go, didn't expect much	45	44
I thought it would be a waste of time	8	5
Don't know		1

The majority of respondents were positive, to some extent, about PVT on entry, with only 5% thinking it would be a waste of time. As in 1997, there was little variation by sub groups, although in general those with longer periods of unemployment before PVT were less likely to think that PVT was what they needed. 65% of respondents in the South (not Greater London), thought PVT was ‘the kind of thing I needed’, compared with 39% of those in the North \*\*.

The ‘discontented’ group had lower expectations of PVT than the sample as a whole. They were much less likely to see PVT as ‘the kind of thing I needed’ (26% compared to 53%\*\*) and tended to have reservations about the scheme (64% said that ‘I thought I would give it a go but didn’t expect much’). However, only just under one in ten of the discontented (9%) dismissed PVT outright as a waste of time

## **2.2 Customising PVT for individuals**

The research in 1997 concluded that there was:

*‘...mixed evidence on the extent to which, and the success with which, PVP has addressed the diverse needs and expectations of the client group’<sup>2</sup>.*

Whilst there had been efforts at individualisation, many participants still thought PVP to be completely standardised. This could have an impact on client attachment to the programme, which is particularly important when considering the implications of the existence of a group of respondents who do not appear to be benefiting from PVT.

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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

<sup>2</sup> (p.94) Longer-Term Outcomes of Pre-Vocational Pilots, Atkinson & Kersley – IES/DfEE

### 2.2.1 Assessment of individual needs

Respondents were asked whether they had experienced a range of different individual treatments whilst they were on PVT. The results are shown below:

**Table 8** Individual attention whilst on PVT

Base: All respondents		
Action	1997 (512) % (Yes)	1999 (475) % (Yes)
Did anybody talk to you to find out what you wanted to get out of PVT?	67	75
Did anybody put together (or help you to put together) a plan setting out the sort of training you needed?	54	59
Did anybody spend time talking to you by yourself about your needs and how these might be met?	57	61
At least one of the above	80	85

Since 1997 the DfEE has sought to increase the amount of individual attention received by PVT participants, with a view to increasing the relevance of the training for individuals. These figures indicate success in these efforts, in particular for those who said that someone had talked to them to find out what they wanted to get from PVT (up from two thirds to three quarters). Overall, 85% of respondents had experienced at least one of these activities, compared with 80% in 1997.

‘Discontented’ respondents were less likely to have received these individual treatments than the sample as a whole: 64% said that someone had spoken to them about what they wanted to get out of the training, 43% said that someone had put together a training plan and 45% said that someone had discussed their needs with them. Overall, three quarters (74%) of ‘discontented’ respondents had had at least one of these individual treatments. It is important to note that this is based on what respondents recall, rather than what actually happened, and therefore it is possible that some respondents, nine months to a year after the event, may not recall these events, or recall them in the form described to them.

### 2.2.2 Perception of individualisation

Respondents were asked the extent to which they felt that PVT had provided them with training designed to meet their individual needs, shown on the table below.

In terms of individualisation, experience of PVT did not vary much between 1997 and 1999. In both years, 35% of respondents said that PVT was mainly/completely designed to meet their needs, just over a quarter said that it was only adapted a bit (28% for 1997; 27%

for 1999), and around a third (32% for 1997; 35% for 1999) said that it was completely standardised.

**Table 9** Whether PVT provided individualised training

Base: All respondents		
	1997 (512)	1999 (475)
	%	%
Completely designed to meet your needs	11	10
Mainly designed to meet your needs	24	25
Only adapted a bit to meet your needs	28	27
Everybody did the same, not adapted at all	32	35
Don't know	5	3
Not answered	1	-

There were few differences between sub groups, although 44% of respondents in Greater London thought that PVT was completely standardised, compared with 29% in The Midlands\*. Those defined as 'discontented' were particularly likely to view PVT as completely standardised. Half (50%) felt it wasn't adapted at all, almost two fifths (38%) that it was only adapted a bit, and only a tenth (10%) that it was mainly/completely designed around their needs. For this group, at least, greater individualisation may enhance attachment to the programme.

### 2.3 PVT activities

The survey explored which general training activities had been experienced by respondents whilst they were on PVT, and the extent to which they found these activities useful.

**Table 10** Whether took part in training activities on PVT

Base: All respondents		
	1997 (512)	1999 (475)
Help to improve reading, writing, number work	53	38
Help to improve use of English Language	33	23
Work with computers/ IT	45	54
Help in the best ways of finding work	49	49
Work experience, placements or 'tasters'	36	39
Training in skills needed for a particular job or type of work	-	40

(Table Reference)

\* Statistically significant at 5% level

It seems that since 1997, the training that PVT participants receive has changed. Fewer respondents had been trained in literacy/numeracy\*\* or English language\*\*, whilst more had worked with computers\*\*. There was little change in the proportion of respondents who had received help to find work, or had done work experience/placements.

‘Discontented’ respondents were less likely to say they had been given help finding work (31%, compared with 51%\*\* of those not in the discontented group) or training for a particular job type (22%, compared with 42% of those not in the discontented group).

Each respondent who had taken part in an activity was asked how useful they had found it. As with previous questions using a rating scale, the responses (very useful, of some use, not much use, no use at all) were converted into a ‘satisfaction index’, with the scores of 3,2,1 and 0 respectively. This can be seen in the table below.

**Table 11      Whether found training useful**

Base: All respondents	1997 (512)	1999
Help to improve reading, writing, number work	2.28 (271)	2.35 (179)
Help to improve use of English Language	2.32 (169)	2.40 (108)
Work with computers/ IT	2.24 (230)	2.27 (255)
Help in the best ways of finding work	2.22 (251)	2.32 (232)
Work experience, placements or ‘tasters’	2.31 (184)	2.22 (184)
Training in skills needed for a particular job or type of work	-	2.44 (189)

It is clear that, in general, the training was found to be useful, and that there was little variation between activities. Relatively, the most useful was training in work related skills, followed by work to improve use of English, but the variation is very small. There has been very little change since 1997, though satisfaction is a little higher for all types, except work experience/tasters.

## **2.4      Qualifications achieved**

There was potentially a wide range of qualifications that PVT participants could have studied towards, ranging from certificates relating to particular skills, and short courses, to NVQs. Respondents were asked about the qualifications they achieved whilst they were on PVT.

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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

**Table 12      Qualifications achieved on PVT**

Base: All respondents (475)	
	%
NVQ	25
Short course certificate	22
Wordpower	16
Numberpower	12
Units towards and NVQ	10
RSA National Skills Profile Certificate	7
City of Guilds Skillpower Certificate	7
LCCI Vocational Access Certificate	2
Computer qualification	1
Other	3
None/ left too soon/ not there long enough	13
Can't say	23
No answer	1

A quarter achieved an NVQ and one in ten achieved units towards an NVQ; in addition, just over one in five (22%) got a short course certificate, 16% Wordpower and 12% Numberpower. However, around one in eight (13%) had not achieved any qualifications, and almost a quarter (23%) could not say whether they had gained a qualification or not. Almost a quarter (23%) of respondents in The Midlands said they did not achieve any qualifications, compared with only 3% of those in the South (outside Greater London)\*\*.

In 1997, a fifth of respondents got an NVQ (20%), and over one in ten got units towards one (11%). It should be noted that the question was asked slightly differently in 1997, with NVQs asked about separately, rather than being part of a list of qualifications read out to the respondent.

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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level



## 2.5 Leaving PVT

### 2.5.1 Whether completed PVT as planned

Respondents were asked whether they had completed PVT as planned.

Table 13 Whether completed PVT

Base: All respondents		
	1997 (512)	1999 (475)
Completed	71	65
Left early	26	33
Not sure	2	2
Not answered	*	

Two thirds (65%) of respondents completed their training – slightly fewer than in 1997 (71%). There is some regional variation: more than four in five (84%) respondents in Greater London completed their training, compared with around two thirds of those in the rest of the South and The Midlands (63% and 67% respectively), and just over half of those in the North (51%)\*\*. Of those who did not complete PVT (156 respondents), almost three quarters (73%) decided themselves to leave PVT, with fewer than one in five (17%) saying that it was the training provider who decided that they should leave.

The table below shows the reasons given for non-completion of PVT. Over a quarter (29%) of respondents who left PVT early, did so because they got a job. 4% went on to other training/education and 5% said that they had got what they wanted out of it. However, one in five of those leaving early (21%) said that they were doing so because they were dissatisfied with PVT.

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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

**Table 14**      **Reasons for leaving PVT early**

All respondents leaving PVT before completing training (156)			
<b>Reason</b>		<b>1997</b>	<b>1999</b>
<b>Positive reasons</b>	Take up job/ become self employed	15	29
	Got what wanted out of it	4	5
	Take up place in training/ education	4	4
	To take up place in TfW	6	-
<b>Negative Reasons</b>	Dissatisfied/ unhappy with PVT	27	21
	Provider ended course	-	1
	Lack of funding	7	1
<b>Personal reasons</b>	Medical/ health reasons	-	19
	Family/ personal reasons	16	15
	Moving	-	1
	Going away	-	1
<b>Other reason</b>		9	5
<b>Don't know</b>		-	3
<b>No response</b>		19	3

## **2.6 Summary**

As in 1997, the majority of respondents had gone on PVT either on the advice of the Jobcentre, or the training provider. Although respondents had mixed feelings on entry (split almost evenly between those thinking PVT was what they needed and those who didn't expect much), very few (5%) dismissed it outright as a 'waste of time'.

Despite the fact that the majority of respondents (85%) had experienced some form of individual attention whilst on PVT, only around a third (35%) thought that PVT had been completely/mainly designed around their needs. 35% also thought that 'everyone did the same' and that PVT was 'not adapted to meet my needs at all'.

Respondents had experienced a range of activities whilst on PVT: literacy/numeracy, English, computing, finding work, work experience, job relevant training. Only one, work with computers/IT, had been experienced by more than half of respondents, which may indicate some targeting of the training to those who need particular skills. In general, this training was seen as useful by those who had done it.

A quarter of respondents had gained an NVQ whilst on PVT (5% more than in 1997), and one in ten units towards an NVQ. 13% of respondents had not achieved any qualifications, and 23% could not say (this category would include both those who could

not remember what they did, and those who simply did not know whether what they did led to a qualification).

Two thirds of respondents had completed PVT, and a third had left early, slightly higher than in 1997. There are both positive and negative messages from this: of those who left before completion, 29% did so because they had got a job, whilst 21% did so because they were unhappy with PVT.

### 3. Experiences After PVT

In 1997, PVP was seen as a preparatory stage which would equip participants with the skills necessary for them to benefit from TFW. Indeed, progress straight to a job was not an explicit aim of the programme. By 1999, the positioning of PVT in relation to TFW had changed, and the training is more focussed towards providing participants with the skills that are needed in the local job market. Therefore, we would expect there to be different outcomes for participants in 1997 in comparison with 1999. In addition, the economic climate has changed: unemployment has fallen and therefore we might expect different outcomes for PVT leavers in 1999.

The data here was collected in a series of questions covering all of the activities that respondents had done since PVT, right up until the time of the interview. This meant that we could not only examine the destinations that PVT leavers went to, but also whether there was a lot of movement between different activities, or more stability after PVT.

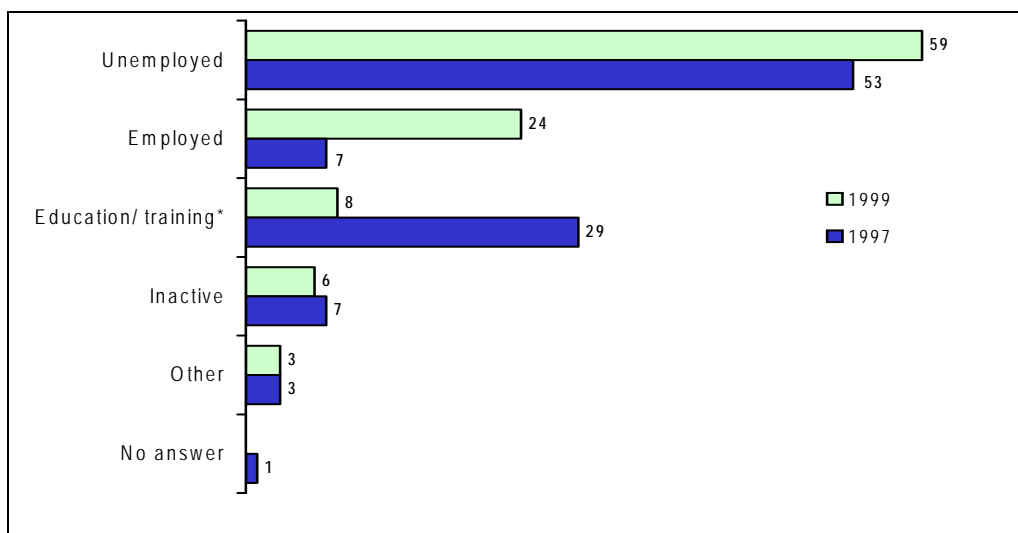
#### 3.1 Participants destinations on exit

##### 3.1.1 Immediate destination after leaving PVT

The chart below shows the immediate destination of PVT leavers in 1997 and 1999. When examining this chart it should be remembered that the link with TFW in 1997 meant that fewer leavers would be expected to enter employment, and more would go into further training.

Chart 3 Immediate destination of PVT leavers

Base: All respondents (512, 475)



### 3.1.2 Getting a job

One of the two clear differences between 1997 and 1999 is in the proportion of respondents going into employment. This finding is not surprising, given the more buoyant state of the labour market and the change in the aims of PVT, switched from preparing participants for other government programmes to equipping them with the skills needed in the local labour market. However, this progress into employment was not even for all groups of PVT participants. Certain sub groups had a greater likelihood of progressing immediately into employment:

- **Unemployment duration prior to PVT:** those with the shortest spell of unemployment prior to PVT were more likely to get a job immediately after PVT. (36% of those out of work for under 6 months compared with 15% of those out of work for 36+ months).<sup>\*\*</sup>
- **Confidence in employment prospects before PVT:** those who were most confident about their employment prospects before PVT were more likely to get a job immediately after PVT than the least confident. (29% of those thinking they could get a job fairly easily, even if it was not what they wanted, compared with 20% of those who thought they were not even in the running).
- **Whether PVT individualised:** immediate employment was more likely amongst those thinking that PVT was adapted to meet their needs. (28% compared with 17% of those thinking it was not adapted at all).<sup>\*</sup>
- **Sex:** women were more likely to get employment immediately after PVT than men (30% of women, compared with only 20% of men).<sup>\*</sup>
- **Region:** those in the South (outside Greater London) were most likely to get employment immediately after PVT (30%), followed by Greater London (25%), the North (22%) and the Midlands (21%),

**Discontentment:** 'Discontented' respondents were much *less* likely to go immediately into employment after PVT (7%), compared with 26% of non discontented respondents.<sup>\*\*</sup>

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<sup>\*\*</sup> Statistically significant at 1% level

<sup>\*</sup> Statistically significant at 5% level

### 3.1.3 Training/education

The second key difference between 1997 and 1999 was the fall in the proportion of respondents going on to training or education immediately after PVT. In 1997, a fifth of all respondents had gone straight on to TFW after PVT, whereas this was not an option in 1999 because PVT contained both pre and occupational training. In addition, the age profile of PVT participants in 1997 was younger; the fact that there are no under 25s could also explain the reduction in the number of respondents going on to training/education. Respondents in Greater London were more likely than those in other regions to go immediately to education/training (14%, compared with 5% of those in the North).\*

### 3.1.4 Inactivity

A small number of respondents left PVT for inactivity (6%). This figure was almost unchanged from 1997 (7%). Since the group is so small (only 28 respondents) it is difficult to analyse in great detail the common characteristics of these people, and there do not appear to be any striking differences between sub groups in this respect.

### 3.1.5 Unemployment

Almost three fifths of the sample (59%) became unemployed on leaving PVT. This is slightly higher than 1997, though not significantly so. The following factors were particularly associated with entering unemployment:

- **Sex:** men were more likely than women to enter unemployment immediately after PVT (63% compared with 52%).\*
- **Marital status:** those who are single (65%) are more likely to enter unemployment than those married (57%) or widowed/separated/divorced (51%), although the effect is less than that recorded in 1997.
- **Region:** respondents in the North (63%) were slightly more likely to go straight to unemployment than those in the Midlands (61%) and Greater London (57%), and much more likely to go straight to unemployment than those in the rest of the south (49%).\*
- **Previous unemployment duration:** the shorter the spell of unemployment before PVT, the less likely it is that someone will go straight to unemployment (however,

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\* Statistically significant at 5% level

likelihood of unemployment does not increase systematically with longer duration of unemployment).

**Discontentment:** Discontented respondents were more likely to go straight to unemployment (81%), compared with non discontented respondents.\*\*

### 3.1.6 First Preference

All respondents were asked whether their immediate destination after PVT was what they wanted to do. Just over a third (35%) said that it was what they wanted to do, 65% said that they did not do what they wanted to do, and 1% did not know. These figures are almost completely unchanged from 1997. For 'discontented' respondents, only 16% said that what they did first after PVT was what they wanted to do – this probably reflects the higher level of post-PVT unemployment amongst these respondents.

There was some variation in responses to this question depending on respondents' experiences after PVT. Three quarters (76%) of those in employment immediately after PVT (full, part time, self employed) said that this was what they wanted to do. However, this figure falls to just 10% of those who were unemployed and looking for work after PVT. The numbers who went to inactivity, or into education/training are quite small (fewer than 50), so it is more difficult to draw firm conclusions. Of the 40 respondents who immediately went to education/training, more than four in five (83%) said that this was what they wanted. The responses of those going on to inactivity (28 respondents in total) were more mixed, with 36% saying that this was what they wanted, although this possibly reflects the different needs of the people who make up this group.

Those who did not do what they wanted after PVT (164 respondents in total) were asked what they would rather have done. The majority of these respondents (74%) said that they wanted to start work or become self employed, with a further 10% saying that they wanted to get a better job. 11% said that they would like to have joined an education course or other training programme. Only a handful of respondents did not appear to want to work, or go on to training/education.

Thus work, or training that will allow respondents to get work, appears to be extremely important to PVT leavers. Of all those interviewed, 24% went straight into employment and 8% went straight into education/training immediately after PVT; 43% were unemployed but wanted to start work, and 5% were unemployed but wanted to go on to education or training.

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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

Those who were unable to get their first choice were asked why. The main reason, given by half of respondents, was that they could not get the right kind of job. A fifth (21%) simply said that the option was not available and just over one in ten (11%) cited personal or family reasons.

**Table 15      Reasons for not doing what wanted to do after PVT**

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Base: All respondents not doing what they wanted after PVT (308)

<b>REASON</b>	
Couldn't get right kind of job	50
Option wasn't available	21
Personal/ family reasons	11
No work available/ couldn't find work	5
Health/ sickness/ disability	4
Lack of experience/ training	3
Problems with spoken English/ language problems	3
Age	2
Too far away	2
Reading/ writing problems	1
Other	4
No answer	1
Don't know	3

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Only a small minority of respondents (33) who went into employment/education/training were not doing what they wanted to do. With such a small group it is difficult to make any firm comparisons between this group and those unemployed/inactive. However, the two main reasons for not being able to do what they wanted were the same: the inability to get the right kind of job, or the fact that the option was not available to them.

### **3.2      Status at time of interview**

The table over the page shows the status of respondents at the time of interview:

What is immediately noticeable is that, at the time of interview, 7-10 months after leaving PVT, the situation is very similar to that when they first left. It seems that there is a core who have been employed in the same job since leaving PVT (around 15% of all respondents in total), and then there is almost the same proportion again (14%) who have been in employment, but have experienced periods without employment as well.



**Table 16      Status at time of interview**

Base: All respondents (475)

Status

	Immediately after PVT	Current Status
Unemployed	59	59
Employed	24	22
Education/ training	8	8
Not seeking work	7	8
Something else	3	3

### 3.2.1 Employment

Just over a fifth (22%) of respondents were in employment at the time of the survey which is almost the same as immediately after PVT. It is also the same as the proportion in employment at the time of the survey in 1997. Earlier it was noted that when looking at employment status immediately after leaving PVT, there were differences between men and women, and according to different lengths of unemployment before PVT. These are even more pronounced for employment status at the time of interview.

16% of those who had been out of work for three years or more before PVT were in employment at the time of interview, compared with 34% of those who had been out of work for less than 6 months before PVT. \*\*

Only 16% of men were in employment at the time of interview, compared with 34% of women \*\*: twice as many women as men were in full time employment (18% compared with 9%) and almost three times as many women as men were in part time employment (16% compared with 6%).

Only 17% of those respondents in the North had a job at the time of interview, compared with 23% of those in the Midlands, 25% of those in the South and 31% of those in Greater London \*\*.

‘Discontented’ respondents were less likely to be in employment at the time of interview – only one in ten were working either full time or part time, and none were self employed.

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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

### 3.2.2 Unemployed at time of survey

Almost three in five respondents (59%) were unemployed and looking for work at the time of interview, the same proportion as immediately after leaving PVT, but higher than in 1997 (51%). Men were more likely to be unemployed than women (66% compared with 47%<sup>\*\*</sup>), and single people (68%) more than married (54%<sup>\*\*</sup>) or widowed/separated/divorced (49%<sup>\*\*</sup>). Fewer than half of those respondents who had been out of work for less than 6 months before PVT were unemployed at the time of interview (45%), compared with nearly two thirds (64%<sup>\*\*</sup>) of those who had been unemployed for 6 months or more before PVT. Sub-dividing '6 months or more' into distinct time periods did not reveal any significant differences. Respondents in the North and the Midlands (65%, 60%) were more likely to be out of work compared with those in the South or Greater London (51%, 54%). Over three quarters of 'discontented' respondents (78%) were unemployed and looking for work, compared with 57% of non discontented.<sup>\*\*</sup>

### 3.2.3 Inactivity

Only a small minority of respondents were not seeking work because they were sick, disabled, or looking after home or family at the time of interview (8%). As this group contains only 36 respondents, it is not advisable to undertake any analysis of sub groups within the 36.

### 3.2.4 Education/ training

8% of respondents were in education or training at the time of interview. As above, sub group analysis within this group of 37 respondents would not be advisable.

## 3.3 PVT and employment

Over a quarter of respondents (29%) had been in paid employment for at least a month since PVT. However, employment has not been evenly distributed amongst PVT leavers, and certain sub groups appear to have experienced more favourable employment outcomes:

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<sup>\*\*</sup> Statistically significant at 1% level

**Sex:** women were almost twice as likely as men to have had a paid job at all since PVT (40% compared with 23%). \*\*

**Confidence in getting a job:** those who were most confident in their abilities to get a job before PVT were more likely to have had a job after PVT than the least confident (40% compared with 24%). \*\*

**Unemployment duration before PVT:** the shorter the time out of work before PVT, the greater the likelihood of having a job at some point after PVT (although this was not totally systematic).

### 3.3.1 Stability

Unlike in 1997, respondents tended not to move in and out of different activities in the period between leaving PVT and the survey interview.

The majority of respondents (78%) had only done one activity since leaving PVT. Almost one in five (18%) had done two, and a handful had done three or more. Changes to the programme between the 1997 and 1999 surveys were such that comparison of destination information is not appropriate.

The majority of those doing only one activity since PVT were unemployed and looking for work. In total, 15% of the sample found employment immediately after leaving PVT and were still in that job at the time of interview, 5% had been in education or training continually throughout this period, and a further 5% had been inactive for some other reason, whilst 2% said that they had been doing 'something else' during the time since leaving PVT. Just over a half (51%) had been unemployed for the entire time since leaving PVT. The remaining respondents had done more than one activity since leaving the training.

The average length of time that respondents spent in employment (full time, part time, self employed) after PVT was 6.21 months. This compares with 7.44 months in unemployment. Looking at those who did gain employment, however, reveals that there are some variations between sub groups:

- **Age:** for those aged over 40 who found employment after PVT, the length of time in employment was longer than for those aged 21-40 (7 months compared with 5.64 months). \*\*

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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

- **Confidence before PVT:** those who were least confident about their employment prospects before PVT (thought that they ‘weren’t in the running’) were likely to have been in employment for longer after PVT than those who said they could get a job easily (average length of time in employment 6.51 and 5.88 months respectively).<sup>\*\*</sup>
- **Completed training:** those who completed PVT were in employment for longer afterwards than those who left early (6.61 months, compared with 5.63).<sup>\*\*</sup>

### 3.4 Summary

It is encouraging that almost a quarter of respondents (24%) had gone straight into a job after PVT. This was up from 7% in 1997, which is not surprising given the fact that PVT is now aimed at employment, not further training. 59% of respondents went straight into unemployment after PVT – although this seems quite high, it must be remembered that 76% of respondents had been unemployed and claiming benefit before PVT. Those most likely to go straight into employment from PVT were women, those out of work for less than 6 months before PVT, and those most confident about their employment prospects before PVT.

Despite the fact that between nine months and a year had elapsed since respondents had left PVT, there had been remarkable stability in their experiences since leaving PVT. Over three quarters of respondents (78%) had done only one thing since leaving PVT, compared with 40% in 1997 (due to the fact that more respondents went on to training in 1997, which would not have lasted the length of time between finishing PVT and the interview). 59% of respondents were unemployed at the time of interview, and 22% in employment (21% in 1997). Again, women and those with a shorter unemployment spell before PVT were likely to have a job at the time of interview.

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<sup>\*\*</sup> Statistically significant at 1% level

## 4. Perceptions of PVT Helpfulness

This chapter considers the extent to which participants actually thought that PVT had been useful to them. This is an important consideration because many of the participants on PVT have low self confidence which could potentially be boosted by participation in a training scheme which they feel has been relevant and useful to them.

### 4.1 PVT and employment

Respondents were asked how useful they had found PVT in terms of getting or looking for employment. The results are shown below:

Table 17 How helpful was PVT in getting/ trying to get a job?

Base: All respondents (512, 475)		
	1997 (512)	1999 (475)
Very helpful	24	27
Helped a bit	36	38
No help	32	34
Don't know	8	1
Mean score	0.92	0.93

It is clear that there has been very little change since 1997 in the overall measure. However, looking at different sub groups within this reveals more interesting data:

**Current employment status:** those respondents employed at the time of interview not surprisingly thought that it had been very helpful in getting a job (43%). This contrasted with only one in five (20%) of those currently unemployed.\*\*

**Sex:** women were more likely than men to say that PVT was helpful in getting a job: 72% of women thought that PVT had at least helped them a bit in getting a job, compared with 61% of men\*. Note that women were also more likely than men to have found work after PVT.

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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

\* Statistically significant at 5% level

**Self confidence:** PVT got a very positive rating by those who said that they had been held back a lot in the past by a lack of self confidence: 47% thought PVT 'very helpful' in getting a job, (compared to 18% who had not been held back at all by self confidence\*\*).

**Perceived individualisation of PVT:** of those who thought that PVT was completely/mainly adapted to meet their needs, 42% said that PVT was 'very helpful' in getting a job, (compared with 19% of those who thought PVT completely standardised)\*\*.

**The 'discontenteds':** were much more likely to dismiss PVT as being 'no help' in getting a job. 55% said that it was 'no help' and only one in ten (10%) said that it was 'very helpful'.

#### 4.1.1 PVT and job search related activities

Following from this general question, respondents were asked whether PVT had been helpful in a number of different ways related to looking for work and applying for jobs. One measure of PVT's success would be to find out the extent to which it was equipping participants with the skills needed to find work in the local labour market, now that employability had become an explicit aim of the scheme.

The table below shows the responses given in relation to these questions, along with the responses given in 1997.

**Table 18 How helpful was PVT ....?**

Base: All respondents (512, 475)										
	Motivating me to find work		Giving me an idea of the work I wanted		Improving my application forms		Showing me that if others could get a job so could I		Improving my value to employers	
	1997	1999	1997	1999	1997	1999	1997	1999	1997	1999
Very helpful	33	34	31	32	-	31	25	25	22	27
Helped a bit	31	38	26	35	-	32	28	35	28	35
No help	33	27	39	32	-	36	39	37	43	36
Don't know	2	1	4	1	-	1	8	3	7	2

There is great consistency across these activities, with 'very helpful' ratings ranging from a quarter (25%, saw how others got to a jobs), to a third of respondents (34%, motivation to find work). There is also a high degree of consistency with the 1997 findings in the 'very helpful' categories. There has been a slight shift in a positive direction since 1997 in the 'helped a bit' and 'no help at all' categories: an increase in the proportion of respondents

\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

saying that PVT ‘helped a bit’ for ‘motivation to find work’, ‘giving ideas of the kind of work wanted’ and ‘showing how others got jobs’. The most positive change is observed for the statement ‘improving value to employers through relevant skills’ with “very helpful” going up from 22% to 27%, and “helped a bit” up from 28% to 35%. However the overall picture is reflected in the fact that all mean scores show an increase, but none of these is statistically significant.

In terms of differences between the sub groups, the picture is very similar to that for the more general question ‘how useful was PVT in helping you to get a job’:

- **Sex:** men appeared to be slightly less positive than women about the motivational aspects of PVT:
- 29% of men, compared with 22% of women, said that PVT was ‘**no help**’ when asked whether it *‘Improved your motivation to look for work.’*
- 21% of men, compared with 32% of women said that PVT was ‘**very helpful**’ when asked whether it *‘Showed that if other people could find work, you could.’*\*\*
- **Status at time of interview:** those who were unemployed at the time of interview were less positive than those in employment about the effects of PVT:
- 29% of those currently unemployed, compared with 42% of those in work, said that PVT had been ‘**very helpful**’ in improving their motivation to look for work.
- 20% of the unemployed, compared with 31% of those in employment, thought that PVT was ‘**very helpful**’ in showing that if others could find work they could.
- 21% of the unemployed, compared with 41% of those in employment thought that PVT was ‘**very helpful**’ when asked whether it *‘Improved your value to employers through giving you the skills they wanted.’*\*\*
- **Self confidence:** those who felt that they had been held back by a lack of self confidence were likely to think PVT had been very helpful in all of the job related activities:
- 55% thought that PVT ‘**very helpful**’ in motivating them to find work.
- 50% believed that PVT was ‘**very helpful**’ when asked whether it *‘Gave you a clearer idea of the kind of work you wanted.’*

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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

- 53% said that PVT was **‘very helpful’** when asked whether it *‘Improved your application letters, application forms, CVs etc through improved reading and writing’*.
- 48% said that PVT was **‘very helpful’** in showing that if others had found work, they could.
- 43% thought PVT was **‘very helpful’** in improving their value to employers by giving them relevant skills.
- **Whether thought PVT mainly/completely designed to meet needs:** respondents who thought that PVT had been designed around their needs were more likely to think it very helpful in the following ways:
  - Improved motivation to look for work (47%).
  - A clearer idea of work (47%).
  - Improved applications through improved reading/writing (46%).
  - Showing that if others could find work, you could (42%).
  - Improved value to employers through relevant skills (41%).
- **Discontentment:** discontented respondents were particularly unlikely to be positive about PVT in relation to these job related activities:
  - 47% thought that PVT was **‘no help’** in motivating them to find work.
  - 48% thought that PVT was **‘no help’** in giving them a clearer idea of what work involved.
  - 52% said that PVT was **‘no help’** in improving their applications.
  - 60% said that PVT was **‘no help’** in showing how others had found work.
  - 72% said that PVT was **‘no help’** in improving their value to employers through relevant skills.

Overall, one in ten (10%) respondents thought that PVT had been ‘no help’ for any of the five job search related activities. This rose to 19% of all those who thought that PVT was not adapted at all to meet their needs, and to 22% of those respondents who were discontented.

## 4.2 PVT and participants’ perceived shortcomings

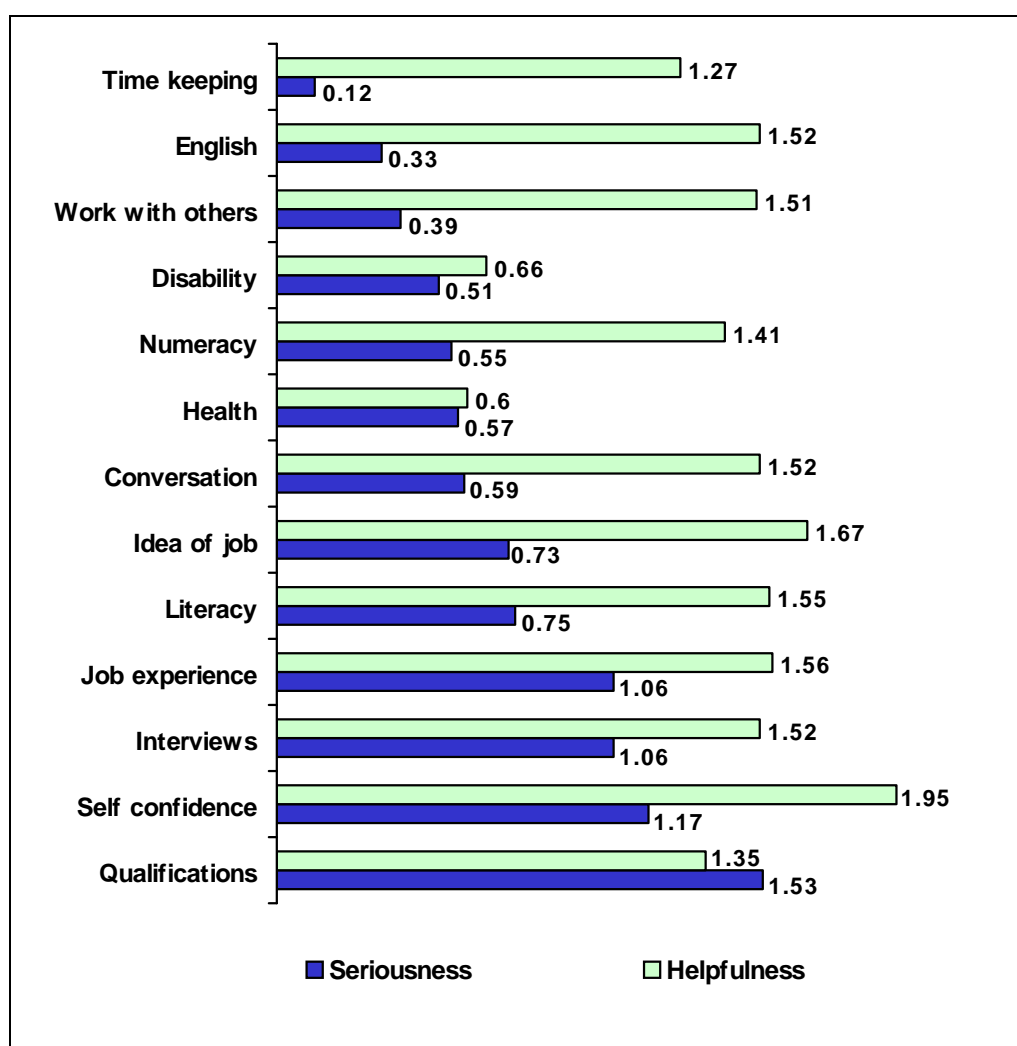
Earlier in this report, we discussed the shortcomings that PVT participants believed that they had. These ranged from language, literacy and numeracy problems, to lack of job related skills and experience, and a lack of qualifications. The chart over the page compares the seriousness of the problem (i.e. how far the respondents were held back) with the extent to which PVT helped those experiencing the problem to overcome it. In order to do this, a mean scoring system was used, as outlined below:



Seriousness of problem	Extent PVT helped	Score
Held back a lot	A great deal	3
Held back quite a bit	To some extent	2
Held back a little	A little	1
Not held back at all	Not at all	0

**Chart 4 Helpfulness of PVT against incidence of problem**

Base: All respondents (475)



It is clear that respondents believe PVT had some degree of success in helping respondents with their problems, although not greatly so. For eight out of the thirteen problems, PVT

was given a score of 1.5 or more (i.e. between helped ‘a little’ and ‘to some extent’), up from only 5 of the problems in 1997. PVT was seen as providing some help across the board: it was most successful in helping respondents with their self confidence (mean score of 1.95), the second most serious problem, but was also regarded as helpful by those respondents experiencing less serious problems (time keeping, English, working with others).

This index also points to areas where PVT is, relatively, regarded as not so helpful. A lack of qualifications was the most serious problem, but only the 10<sup>th</sup> when ranked in terms of the helpfulness of PVT. PVT also seemed to have problems helping those with a disability or health problem – whilst these were not common, their helpfulness scores were only 0.60 and 0.66 respectively. Broadly the overall profile of seriousness to helpfulness is the same as in 1997.

### 4.3 Current confidence

In previous sections we have seen that many respondents appear to have experienced increased self confidence following from their time on PVT. Respondents were asked how confident they were about their future employment prospects, 7-10 months after completing PVT.

**Table 19** How confident are you about your future employment prospects?

Base: All respondents (512, 475)		
	<b>1997 (512)</b>	<b>1999 (475)</b>
Very confident	24	21
Fairly confident	36	43
Not very confident	23	23
Not confident at all	15	11

Overall, almost two thirds (64%) of respondents were very or fairly confident about their job prospects after PVT, the majority being fairly, rather than very confident. This is almost unchanged from 1997 (60%). The proportion that are ‘fairly confident’ has increased since 1997, with a slight fall at the extremes (not confident at all, very confident).

Obviously, current working status has an effect on confidence in job prospects: 85% of those currently in employment were confident about their future job prospects, compared with 60% of those in unemployment<sup>\*\*</sup>. However it is still extremely positive that almost two thirds of those that were unemployed at the time of interview were confident in their

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<sup>\*\*</sup> Statistically significant at 1% level

job prospects, despite the fact that the majority of these would not have had a job at all in the 9-12 months since PVT. Age also appears to have some impact: those aged over 40 are less confident about their future job prospects, than those aged 21-40 (39% of 40+ are 'not confident' compared with 29% of 21-40 year olds).\*

We are also able to compare pre-PVT confidence with post-PVT confidence. As noted earlier in this report, almost half of all the respondents interviewed (48%) said that they felt that they weren't in the running for getting a job. This contrasts with the two thirds of respondents who now say that they are confident about their job prospects. We can cross analyse pre- and post-PVT confidence, to see where the changes in confidence levels have occurred.)

**Table 20 Confidence before and after PVT?**

Base: All respondents

	How felt about job chances before PVT					
	Confident pre-PVT		Moderate pre- PVT		Not confident pre PVT	
	1997	1999 (94)	1997	1999 (124)	1997	1999 (230)
Very confident	36	38	31	17	17	17
Fairly confident	45	44	43	49	28	39
Not very confident	11	13	19	26	31	27
Not confident at all	2	5	6	6	23	15

As in 1997, around four in five (82%) of those most confident before PVT, were very or fairly confident afterwards. This contrasts with only two thirds (66%) of those who thought that they had had 'bad luck', and fewer than three in five (56%) of those who thought they had no chance of getting a job before PVT. However, it is still a very positive outcome that more than half of those who were least confident about their job prospects before PVT are now confident (and that this is up from 45% in 1997).

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\* Statistically significant at 5% level

- 1 I could get a job fairly easily but not the kind of job that I wanted
- 2 I'd had a bit of bad luck in finding a job but I knew I'd be able to get one in time
- 3 I felt that I wasn't even in the running; I was coming nowhere near getting a job

One less positive outcome is for the respondents who could be described as having ‘moderate’ levels of confidence before PVT (had some back luck but could get a job in time). The proportion of these now saying they are very confident in their job prospects has almost halved since 1997, from 31% to 17%\*\*. Whilst there appears to have been a slight increase in those saying they are fairly confident (43% to 49%), overall confidence levels are still lower in this group than in 1997. It could be that since this group attributed their pre-PVT lack of confidence to ‘bad luck’, which suggests circumstances beyond their control, they may feel that these external circumstances remain unchanged. For example if they are sick, or a carer for someone else, these circumstances may remain unchanged despite being on PVT.

It is still difficult to establish the precise link between PVT and increased self confidence. Those respondents who were most positive about their job prospects before PVT were, not surprisingly, most confident afterwards. However, there appears to also have been a positive effect for those who felt that low confidence held them back ‘a lot’ before PVT. 72% of this group were now very or fairly confident about their job prospects compared with 62% of those for whom self confidence was not an issue. Of course, it could be that respondents for whom self confidence was not an issue thought that they were being held back by another problem. For example, someone who has long term health problems may not lack self confidence in their abilities, but could still think that their chances of getting a job after PVT are poor.

#### **4.4 General perceptions of PVT**

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with three statements about PVT:

- *PVT made me more self confident about getting and keeping a job*
- *PVT helped me to sort out some big problems that had been holding me back in the job market*
- *PVT is no different from other schemes, it is just to keep you off the register for a while*

The results, alongside those from 1997, are shown on the table over the page.

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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

**Table 21      General perceptions of PVT**

Base: All respondents (512, 475)		Strongly agree	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Strongly disagree	Non response
PVT made me more self confident about getting and keeping a job	1997	28	34	12	21	5
	1999	31	35	13	19	2
PVT helped me to sort out some big problems that had been holding me back in the job market	1997	18	26	14	38	4
	1999	20	29	15	34	2
PVT is no different from other schemes, it is just to keep you off the register for a while	1997	35	21	14	21	9
	1999	28	20	22	23	7

(Table Reference)

Respondents in 1999 appeared to be less cynical about the motives behind the scheme (proportion agreeing that ‘PVT is no different from other schemes, it is just to keep you off the register for a while’ fallen from 56% to 48%<sup>\*\*</sup>), although this still represents fairly high levels of cynicism about PVT.

Looking at the attitudinal differences between different sub groups on these measures reveals the same story as noted previously:

#### **Self confidence:**

PVT appears to have had a positive effect on self confidence for those who particularly lacked this before going on the training. 84% of respondents who were held back ‘a lot’ by a lack of self confidence before PVT agreed that the scheme had made them more self confident about getting and keeping a job. This contrasts with only 52% of those for whom self confidence was not a problem before PVT – this is still a very positive result considering this group did not even think that self confidence was a problem for them.<sup>\*\*</sup>

The difference is even more striking for the statement ‘PVT helped me to sort out some big problems that had held me back in the labour market’. Here, 71% of those previously held back a lot due to a lack of self confidence agreed that PVT had helped them, compared with only one in three (33%) of those for whom self confidence was not a problem.<sup>\*\*</sup>

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<sup>\*\*</sup> Statistically significant at 1% level

The respondents previously held back a lot by a lack of self confidence were considerably less likely to have cynical views about PVT. Only a third (33%) agreed that 'PVT is no different from other schemes, it is just to keep you off the register for a while', compared with 58% of those who had not been held back by their levels of self confidence before PVT.\*\*

### **Employment status at time of interview:**

Those respondents in employment at the time of the interview were a little more positive about PVT than those who were unemployed:

71% of those currently in employment agreed that PVT had made them more self confident about getting and keeping a job, compared with 65% of those who were unemployed. However, it is very positive that nearly two thirds of respondents who were currently out of work thought that PVT had had a positive effect on their employment prospects, even if most of these had not worked since leaving the training.

58% of those who were in employment agreed that PVT had helped them to sort out the problems that had been holding them back in the job market; only 45% of unemployed respondents thought so.\*

Those in employment were a little less cynical about PVT than those out of work (41% compared with 52% agreeing that 'PVT was no different from other schemes, it was just to keep you off the register for a while'). However, this still reveals a fairly high level of cynicism about the scheme from those that were in employment, despite the fact that almost three quarters of this groups had said that PVT had made them more confident about their job prospects.

### **Individualisation of PVT:**

Where respondents felt that PVT had been tailored to meet their needs, they were much more favourable in their assessment of the training. For each of the three statements, there was a 30% gap between respondents who thought that PVT has mainly/completely met their needs and those who thought it was completely standardised.

- 81% of those who thought PVT had met their needs agreed that PVT had made them more self confident about getting and keeping a job. This compared with only 51% of those who thought PVT to be completely standardised.\*\*

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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

\* Statistically significant at 5% level

- 68% of those who felt PVT to be designed to meet their needs thought that PVT had helped them to sort out problems holding them back in the labour market; only 38% of those who saw the training as completely standardised thought so. <sup>\*\*</sup>
- 30% of those who thought PVT had met their needs also thought that PVT was no different from other schemes and was just to keep people off the register. This compares with 61% of those thinking that PVT was totally standardised. <sup>\*\*</sup>
- **Whether discontented:** Unsurprisingly, the ‘discontented’ group were much more likely to express negative attitudes towards PVT than the respondents as a whole. Fewer than half (43%) of discontented respondents agreed that PVT had made them more self confident about getting and keeping a job (more than 69% of non discontented thought so <sup>\*\*</sup>), and only 3% agreed with this strongly. However, it is encouraging to note that a significant minority of this particularly difficult group thought that their self confidence had been enhanced by PVT. Around a fifth (22%) agreed that PVT had helped them to sort out problems that were holding them back in the labour market (compared with 52% of the non discontented <sup>\*\*</sup>), indicating that this group of respondents may have problems that have not been successfully reached by PVT.

All of the discontented group agreed that PVT was no different from other schemes and was just to keep you off the register for a while – this was a precondition for being in this group.

## 4.5 Summary

In terms of the helpfulness of PVT, it would be fair to conclude that whilst PVT is seen as helpful, it was not seen as greatly so. Between a quarter and a third of respondents thought that PVT was ‘very helpful’ in getting a job, and for various job related activities such as improved CVs, motivation, providing job related training and clarifying what type of work the person wanted. There was very little change from 1997, respondents were slightly less likely to say that PVT had been ‘no help’, but any change has been marginal. Those in employment at the time of interview were more likely to give positive assessments in these respects.

In terms of specific problems, PVT was most helpful in helping respondents overcome low self confidence. PVT was least successful in helping to overcome problems with disability

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<sup>\*\*</sup> Statistically significant at 1% level

and health. PVT was also relatively less successful in helping people to overcome their lack of qualifications. This is a major concern, as participants regard lack of qualifications as the most serious problem for respondents.

Two thirds (64%) of respondents were very/fairly confident about their employment prospects after PVT (almost unchanged since 1997). Considering that 48% thought that they were not 'even in the running' before PVT, this is an encouraging outcome. Two thirds (66%) of respondents agreed at least a little that PVT had made them more self confident about getting and keeping a job, (almost unchanged since 1997).

Almost half (49%) agreed at least a little that it had helped them sort out problems holding them back in the labour market (unchanged from 1997). However, almost half of respondents (48%) also agreed at least a little that 'PVT is no different from other schemes, it is just to keep you off the register for a while, lower than 1997. However, it is still the case that certain respondents, whilst believing that PVT had helped them in terms of self confidence, were also quite cynical about the motives behind the scheme.



## **Part B: The Qualitative Research with the “Discontented”**

Part B looks only at the minority (12%) of participants who were “discontented”

## 5. ‘Discontented’ with PVT – an introduction

### 5.1 Background

Previous research, undertaken in 1998 by the Institute for Employment Studies<sup>3</sup>, of pre-vocational pilots discovered that while most participants reported benefits of having attended pre-vocational training ‘... *a significant proportion (around 20%) of participants appeared not to be benefiting from the pre-vocational pilots.*’ This group of participants was said to be despondent about their employment prospects having attended the vocational training pilots, and cynical and discontented with the training.

The present study has also identified a group of respondents who are discontented in some way with their PVT experience. This group is now smaller, accounting for **12%** of the sample and reflecting **a decrease from 18% in 1997.**

The quantitative survey, undertaken by BMRB International, served to identify a sample of ‘discontented’ PVT participants. **The following chapters examine this ‘discontented’ minority of PVT participants. .**

### 5.2 Aims of the Qualitative Study

The aim of the qualitative research was to find out why some participants (i.e. the ‘discontented’) fail to benefit from PVT programmes, and seem discontented with PVT. Though this group form only a minority of PVT participants, the DfEE are committed to the provision of high-quality training for all trainees and were therefore particularly concerned to understand more about the needs and circumstances of this discontented group. Within this overall aim, three specific objectives were defined:

- To explore why some pre-vocational training participants do not benefit from their experience;
- To draw conclusions on the effect this group of people had on the effectiveness of PVT and on the potential effect on other Government programmes; and
- To recommend actions on how policy or delivery might be amended to support this client group.

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<sup>3</sup> The Institute for Employment Studies (September 1998) Longer Term Outcomes of the Pre-Vocational Pilots, DfEE, Research Report RR 78

It is noteworthy that the qualitative findings, which focus on the views and experiences of a minority of discontented PVT participants, are likely to be more negative than they would have been if the study had explored the experiences of more contented PVT participants. The qualitative findings should therefore be viewed in this context.

### 5.3 Research methods

The research with the ‘discontented’ group of PVT participants adopted a wholly qualitative methodology using face-to-face in-depth interviews. BMRB Qualitative researchers, trained in the techniques of non-directive interviewing, carried out all of the interviews. Each interview was guided by the researcher using a topic guide, or *aide memoir*, which allowed for questioning that was responsive to the issues arising. The topic guide was developed in conjunction with the DfEE.

In-depth interviews were selected as the preferred method because of their ‘power’ to elicit insights at the individual level, and thus allow an in-depth exploration of attitudes and experiences. Given the aim of the research, the chosen methodology can draw out attitudes and beliefs, and particularly barriers that are often hidden from other research techniques.

All of the interviews lasted between an hour and an hour and a half. They were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The verbatim transcripts were then analysed using an in-house analytical method, known as ‘*Matrix-Mapping*’. For a more detailed description of ‘Matrix-Mapping’, please see the methodological appendix at the end of the report.

### 5.4 The Sample

‘Discontented’ participants drawn from the survey sample were identified on the basis of their response to three attitudinal questions in the quantitative survey. Broadly, participants were targeted on the basis that they expressed the following attitudes:

- ◆ Not confident of getting a job before PVT;
- ◆ Not confident about employment prospects post-PVT; and
- ◆ A view that PVT is designed to keep people off the unemployment register.

The qualitative sample was consequently structured to reflect three attitudinal categories, which included ***discontented***, ***not confident*** about future job prospects; and ***cynical*** about PVT. Agreement with one or both of the first two statements (above) led to a categorisation of the PVT participant as ‘not confident’; agreement with the latter statement gave a categorisation as ‘cynical’ and agreement with all three statements yielded the ‘discontented’ sample. **Throughout the remaining chapters we use the term**

**‘discontented’ to refer to all three types** of respondent, categorised as above, as there were no discernible differences between them. Attributions to verbatim quotations, however, use the more specific respondent categories of ‘discontented’, ‘not confident’, and ‘cynical’.

The sample was also purposively selected to include a broad range of participants in terms of the following criteria:

- ◆ Age
- ◆ Gender
- ◆ Ethnicity
- ◆ Marital status
- ◆ Current employment status
- ◆ At least 6 months unemployment prior to PVT
- ◆ Presence of young dependants
- ◆ Geographical location

All of the participants had taken part in PVT between 6 months and 2 years prior to the study. Many of those who took part were unemployed at the time of the interview. The few that were working at the time of the interview were specifically recruited to the project in order to explore the range of factors which were involved in enabling them to move out of unemployment.

The qualitative research was conducted in four areas of England – the North, Midlands, London and the South East. The fieldwork was carried out in October 1999. The recruitment was co-ordinated by BMRB Qualitative’s in-house fieldwork managers and carried out by our team of specialist recruiters.

**Table 22      Sample Profile**

<b>Sample Characteristics</b>	<b>Number of depth interviews</b>
<b>Region</b>	
Midlands	10
Southern England	10
Northern England	10
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	20
Female	10
<b>Age</b>	
25-29	3
30-34	4
35-39	8
40-44	3
45-49	6
50-54	6
<b>Number of dependants<sup>1</sup></b>	
None	15
Pre-school age	4
At school (under 11)	5
At school (over 11)	10
<b>Marital status</b>	
Single	14
Married / Living together	12
Widowed / divorced	4
<b>Attitudes to PVT</b>	
Discontented	13
Cynical	13
Not confident	4
Unemployed 6+ months	30

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<sup>1</sup> This column identifies the total number of dependants linked to the study participants. Respondents sometimes had several dependants spanning across the age bands. The total number of dependants therefore exceeds the total sample size.

## **5.5 The Scope of Qualitative methods**

It is important to note that the methods employed in this research are qualitative in nature. This approach has been adopted to allow for individual views and experiences to be explored in detail. Qualitative methods neither seek, nor allow, data to be given on the numbers of people holding a particular view or having a particular set of experiences. The aim of qualitative research is to define and describe the range of emergent issues, and explore linkages, rather than to measure their extent.

## **5.6 Report Outline**

The following two chapters (5 and 6) describe the ‘discontented’ respondents drawing on the survey findings in chapter (5), and providing a qualitative ‘pen-portrait’ of the study participants in chapter (6). The remainder of the chapters draw on the qualitative material with chapter (7) exploring the experiences of respondents taking part in PVT. Chapter (8) continues the theme by critically considering perceptions of the PVT courses in terms of their content and delivery. Chapter (9) draws together the negative comments made by the study respondents within a framework of their suggestions for change and presents an ‘ideal’ model of PVT content and delivery, specifically tailored for this group of discontented PVT participants.

## 6. A profile of ‘discontented’ PVT participants

Although the proportion of discontented respondents had declined between the surveys there remains, nevertheless, a sizeable number of respondents for whom PVT appears to provide little benefit. Why is this? The following chapters seek to throw light on this issue, and begin by looking at differences between the ‘discontented’ and ‘non-discontented’ respondents using the survey data as the initial information source.

As noted previously, this group were (defined as) not confident about their job prospects before PVT, still not confident after PVT, and were cynical about PVT, thinking that it was like all other programmes and was just to keep you off the register for a while. **The discontented group comprised 12% of respondents – down from 18% in 1997.** \*\*

In addition to those respondents who were defined as discontented, there were a number who shared some, but not all of the attitudes of the discontented group. The table below shows how this is broken down. Each of the four groups – ‘discontented’; ‘two out of three discontented attitudes’; ‘one out of three discontented attitudes’, ‘do not hold any discontented attitudes’ - are mutually exclusive, and total to 100. These are shown in bold on the table. Two of the four groups contain sub groups: these are mutually exclusive from each other.

**Table 23      The discontented group and those sharing these attitudes**

Base: All respondents (475)	%
• <b>Discontented – hold all three discontented attitudes</b>	<b>12</b>
• <b>All holding only two out of three discontented attitudes</b>	<b>27</b>
• Not confident before PVT and think it’s just to keep you of the register	12
• Not confident after PVT and think it’s just to keep you off the register	7
• Not confident before and after PVT	8
• <b>All holding one out of three discontented attitudes</b>	<b>40</b>
• Not confident about job prospects before PVT	16
• Not confident about job prospects after PVT	7
• Think that PVT just to keep you off the register	17
• <b>Do not hold any discontented attitudes</b>	<b>21</b>

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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

Whilst a little over one in ten of the survey respondents has been identified as ‘discontented’, the majority of respondents in this survey held at least one of the attitudes that was used in the discontented definition. Indeed, only a fifth of respondents did not hold any of the ‘discontented’ attitudes.

The next table looks in more detail at the personal characteristics of the discontented group alone. They are compared with the group in 1997, and with the non-discontented. Note that those respondents not in the ‘discontented’ group have been referred to as ‘non discontented’ as we felt it might be misleading to call them ‘contented’. As the previous table has shown, there are a large number of respondents in the ‘non discontented’ group sharing some attitudes with the discontented group. It is possible for someone to be in the ‘non discontented’ group who fulfilled two ‘discontented’ criteria.

**Table 24**      **Characteristics of the discontented group**

Base: All respondents	1997		1999	
	(352) Non- discontented	(92) Discontented	(417) Non- discontented	(58) Discontented
<b>Age</b>				
20 and under	14	9	-	-
21-40	55	37	55	45
over 40	31	54	43	50
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	67	74	64	60
Female	33	26	36	40
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
White	86	93	75	78
Other	14	7	20	16
No answer			5	6
<b>Disability</b>				
Yes	23	26	23	26
<b>Signing on before PVT</b>				
<6 months	15	10	23	10
6-11 months	17	17	22	24
12-23 months	20	23	10	16
24-35 months	15	14	11	9
36+ months	33	36	33	38
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Single	54	50	47	40
Married/living with partner	33	37	35	34
Widowed/divorced/separated	13	13	19	26
<b>Dependent children</b>	30	26	34	29

It is clear that in most respects, the discontented group are not radically different to the ‘non-discontented’ group in terms of demographics and unemployment duration – the two



groups are certainly more similar than they were in 1997. The ‘non-discontented’ group were more likely to have been signing on for only 6 months before PVT (23% compared with 10%\*\* ), and were marginally less likely to have been out of work for over 3 years, but this difference was not very big (33% compared with 38%). The discontented respondents were slightly older than the non discontented group (50% of discontented over 40, compared with 43% of non discontented).

Interestingly, whilst there was little difference between the two groups in terms of those who voluntarily told the ES they had a disability or sickness, but in terms of the individuals’ assessments of disability/sickness, there was a difference: 21% of the discontented group said that they held been held back a lot by health problems, whereas only 10% of the ‘non-discontented’ group had been\*. Similarly, 22% of discontented had been held back a lot by disability, compared with 9% of ‘non-discontented’.\*

In conclusion, examining the two groups by their demographic background reveals little that could indicate why these respondents are particularly negative, not only about their employment prospects, but also about the PVT scheme itself. It is perhaps more revealing to examine what happened to the ‘discontented’ group while they were on PVT, and look at what happened to them after they finished the scheme. This has already been mentioned in previous chapters, but will be summarised below, including comparisons with the remaining respondents who are not discontented.

### **Experience of PVT**

- **Attitudes on entry:** whilst discontented respondents did not entirely dismiss PVT as a waste of time, it is clear that they did have some reservations about the scheme on entry. Two thirds (64%) were willing to ‘give it a go, but I didn’t expect much’, compared with a little over two in five (42%) of the ‘non-discontented’ group.\*
- **Individual attention:** whilst the majority (74%) of discontented respondents had received some form of individual attention whilst on PVT, they were less likely to have done so than ‘non-discontented’ respondents (86%).\*

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\*\* Statistically significant at 1% level

\* Statistically significant at 5% level

- **Perceptions of individualisation:** half (50%) of discontented respondents thought PVT was completely standardised, and that it was not adapted around individual needs at all, compared with only a third (33%) of those who were ‘non-discontented’.<sup>\*\*</sup>
- **Activities taken part in on PVT:** discontented respondents were less likely to say that PVT had given them help in finding work than ‘non-discontented’ respondents (31% to 51%<sup>\*\*</sup>), and were less likely to say that they had been given training for a particular type of job (22% to 42%<sup>\*\*</sup>).

#### **Destinations after PVT:**

- **Immediately after:** discontented respondents were much less likely to have gone straight into employment after PVT (only 7% did so). Over a quarter (26%) of ‘non-discontented’ respondents went immediately into employment<sup>\*\*</sup>.
- **At any time since PVT:** throughout the whole period between leaving PVT and the interview, only 12% of discontented respondents had been in employment. This contrasts with 32% of ‘non discontented’ respondents<sup>\*\*</sup>.

#### **Assessment of the helpfulness of PVT**

- Discontented respondents were less likely to say that PVT helped them. More than half (55%) said that PVT did not help them to get a job. Looking in more detail about job search related activities, three in five (60%) discontented respondents thought that PVT was no help in showing how others had found work, and almost three quarters (72%) thought that PVT was no help in improving their value to employers by giving them relevant skills. Almost half thought that PVT was no help in motivating them (47%) and 45% thought that the scheme did not help them to get a clearer idea of the kind of work they wanted.
- Discontented respondents were more likely to give a negative assessment of PVT than their ‘non discontented’ counterparts. Fewer than half of discontented respondents (43%) thought that PVT had made them more self confident in getting and keeping a job, and only around one in five (22%) said that it had helped them to sort out major problems holding them back in the labour market.

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<sup>\*\*</sup> Statistically significant at 1% level

It appears that discontented respondents did not differ vastly from ‘non-discontented’ ones in terms of their demographic characteristics, and that the majority of respondents who fall outside the discontented definition hold at least one of the attitudes that is used in the definition. However, there are elements in the experience of a significant proportion of these discontented people that lead them to be particularly despondent about their chances and negative about their experiences on PVT.

Discontented respondents do not enter PVT with particularly high expectations, although neither do they reject the training outright. However, their experiences of the scheme tend to lead them to conclude that it is completely standardised, not adapted to meet their needs at all, and they express particular dissatisfaction with PVT in relation to its efforts to help them find a job. The majority think that it has not helped them overcome the barriers to getting a job, and a significant minority think that it had not made them any more self confident in their ability to get a job. Their subsequent experiences in the job market have been unsuccessful (only 12% having a job since leaving PVT), and this could also affect their judgement about the effectiveness of PVT.

## 7. A pen-portrait of ‘discontented’ PVT participants

This chapter continues the description of the ‘discontented’ PVT participants and provides a background to the lives of those who were interviewed as part of the qualitative study. It explores their experiences of school, pre-PVT training, employment and unemployment, and provides an account of their views about training and barriers to employment.

Discussions with the PVT participants uncovered personal biographies which appeared to mirror the experiences described by respondents in a recent study carried out by BMRB Qualitative concerned with social exclusion.<sup>4</sup> Common themes included negative and fragmented experiences of school, literacy and numeracy difficulties, feelings of directionless and low confidence, health problems, employment with semi-skilled manual jobs, and extended periods of unemployment. Such parallels shed light upon the nature of the participants included in the qualitative follow-up sample, in terms of the experience of social and economic disadvantage and inequality.

The findings presented in this chapter are of no surprise and are widely documented in existing social policy research<sup>5</sup> and are, for that reason, mostly confirmatory. Nevertheless, this chapter provides an invaluable context to the participants’ experiences of PVT, discussed in detail later in the report.

### 7.1 Schooling experiences

Participants’ recollections of compulsory education were generally negative. Most had left secondary school between the age of 14 and 16 with no formal qualifications. Others described having been awarded between two to three CSE grades (often low grades); only one had attained seven O-levels. The evidence indicates that compulsory education failed to engage many of the participants. School was described as ‘*boring*’ and the level of work was felt to be ‘*too difficult*’. Few were able to look back on their experience of school as a positive or worthwhile encounter.

*I didn’t like school. It was just too academic. I just couldn’t wait to leave.’*

(Female, aged 39, Discontented, Northern England)

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<sup>4</sup> Stone, Cotton and Thomas (June 1999) ‘Mapping Troubled lives: young people not in education, employment or training’. Social Exclusion Unit.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas, Pettigrew, and Tovey, (March 1999) ‘Keeping in touch with the labour Market: a qualitative evaluation of the Back-to-Work-Bonus’. DSS; Stone, Hulusi, Tovey and Thomas (August 1999) ‘Evaluation of the New Deal for Partners of Unemployed People’ initiative. DSS; Thomas, A (1992) ‘The employment consequences of lone parenthood’. Employment Service

*'Struggling! It was funny really. I wasn't a quick learner. I wasn't quick to learn. It took me time. I didn't even do my GCSEs.'*

(Female, aged 50, Discontented, Midlands)

*'I always seemed to get put to one side 'cos I could never read [SO WERE YOU GIVEN ANY EXTRA HELP WHEN YOU WERE AT SCHOOL] very little, very little. I'm not being nasty to nobody. Maybe it could be my fault, but very little as far as I'm concerned.'*

(Female, aged 33, Discontented, Northern England)

Positive accounts of school were limited, and tended to centre on particular subjects - practical subjects such as woodwork and physical education were mentioned. There was an indication that some had simply been 'left behind' and, thus, provided with scope to misbehave, bully others or be bullied themselves, and play truant.

*'I was unruly I suppose. I didn't want to learn ...played truant, vandalised things, which I am not very proud of. I used to answer back and cheek [DID YOU GET ANYTHING OUT OF BEING AT SCHOOL?] I can't honestly say that I did.'*

(Male, aged 48, Not confident, Northern England)

There was evidence of long standing undiagnosed learning and physical difficulties which dated back to childhood. Some recalled having attended a 'special' or 'slow' school – schools which on their own account were geared towards pupils with physical and learning difficulties, such as epilepsy, asthma, and 'slow learners'.

*'I went to a slow school at writing and reading. I went there from about eleven. It's very slow there. They were slow at writing and reading. Every time the teacher had to turn the board over, I had to catch up, copy from someone else's book.'*

(Female, aged 32, Discontented, Northern England)

Others described fragmented experiences of schooling, brought on by moving home and school, consequently being exposed to different teaching and learning experiences. Parental separation and death were also described as having had a detrimental effect on their education.

## **7.2 Training and qualifications prior to PVT**

Participants had mixed experiences of training between leaving school and enrolling on PVT. For some, PVT represented their first experience of training. Comparably, others had attended up to 10, often completely unrelated, training courses interspersed by periods

of unemployment. 'Course hopping' was rife amongst the participants, with participants often failing to see any 'real' logic in their 'choice' of course.

Training courses ranged in length – from 3 to 12 months - and were felt to have been government-run. Typically, courses included I.T, construction, decoration, business administration, horticulture and photography. Some were said to have been certificated, enabling participants to obtain NVQ level one and City and Guilds qualifications. Others were unsure whether they had received a certificate.

### **7.3 The perceived value of training courses**

Reasons for enrolling on courses varied, but areas of commonality exist. Participants perceived there to be a range of reasons which included, to gain qualifications and increase levels of confidence.

*'I hadn't been in work for 20 years, and things have changed over 20 years. Things are different and these training courses give you that extra help. There are more modern things about now. So it gives you that bit more confidence to go back into a workplace.'*

(Female, aged 53, Cynical, Midlands)

Training was also said to increase one's employability, and show potential employers that they had been spending their time productively.

*'You can get some experience and get certificates, and you can show employers that you've done something and you haven't just sat on your backside for the last 6 months or 6 years.'*

(Male, aged 39 Cynical, Northern England)

*'It [training] is useful because if you haven't got any qualifications you're not going to get anywhere in life are you.'*

(Male, aged 39, Cynical, Northern England)

Others described training as a way of enabling them to enter a new area of employment. For some, injury and poor health had prevented them from continuing in their chosen manual occupation (i.e. labouring). A computing course was therefore perceived as a route into less physically strenuous office work. Others, however, admitted enrolling on courses to simply 'get them out of the house'. Training courses were widely perceived as '*something to do*', rather than as a means to an end.

It is worthwhile noting that, although the majority of participants agreed that they valued training and gave their reasons, the range of responses they gave were interestingly 'mechanical' - more 'knee-jerk' responses than logical or thought-out responses.

Participants found it difficult to see the value and relevance of previous courses, and admitted having attended courses simply '*for the sake of it*'. Those who had attended a 'string' of courses appeared not to make any linkage between the courses. 'Course hopping', i.e. drifting from one unrelated course to another, appeared as a symptom of the participants' aimlessness and lack of direction. Interestingly, participants' plans for the future, with regard to training, were equally haphazard. There was little evidence that participants had thought-out their training options in a realistic or logical manner.

There emerged, among the participants, an air of directionless reflected not only in their haphazard choice of training courses, but also in their very mixed employment patterns. Having become accustomed, albeit unwillingly, to life on a low income, many lacked specified job goals and appeared to be 'free-floating'.

*I've been unemployed quite a bit. I started at a building site, went down pit, sold wood, labouring. Eventually, I ended up on joinering. I've been on two business courses. Accountancy, and just about 12 different things. I wanted to go into selling guitars and music, things like that. I've worked on Lottery machines. Been on a couple of courses - Health and Safety ... food hygiene. Trying new things I suppose.'*

(Male, aged 50, Not confident, Northern England)

There was some indication that participants would need to be *enabled* to develop a sense of direction and motivation, and to establish realistic job-related goals.

## **7.4 Experiences of employment**

Participants had very mixed experiences of employment, ranging from those who had not worked since leaving school; those who had had between one and two jobs interspersed by periods of long term unemployment; and those who described highly unsettled patterns of employment, confined to short term jobs. Typically, jobs were semi-skilled and manual ranging from labouring, painting and decorating, catering, factory work and routine office work.

## **7.5 Barriers to employment**

Participants were requested to explore the perceived reasons for their current unemployment. Not surprisingly, the range of reasons described by participants echoed 'barriers' widely documented in social policy research findings<sup>6</sup>. Participants described a range of factors which they felt either reduced their chances or prevent them from entering

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<sup>6</sup> (op.cit)

paid employment. Some appeared more attitudinal in nature, based upon participants' subjective perceptions of employer attitudes and their own employability. Other reasons appeared more practical, referring to factors such as the local labour market, literacy and numeracy difficulties, and a lack of skills.

### 7.5.1 The local labour market

An absence of desirable local jobs - in terms of type and level of pay - left some having to look further afield to find employment. Being unable to drive, and the thought of having to rely upon a poor public transport system, was described as a reason to not consider jobs outside of the local area. Competition for local jobs left some feeling demoralised about their jobs prospects.

*'They are very, very difficult to find work, because every job you go for, you know, you see a job in the job centre and in the papers or even by word of mouth. You find that other people have heard about the job as well. So you are always battling with hundreds of people in the area to get the same jobs. Even part time jobs.'*

(Male, aged 38, Cynical, Northern England)

Travel to work distances that were felt to be viable were rarely more than a couple of miles or a thirty-minute journey. *'Why travel so far for so little money'* was a common retort.

### 7.5.2 Employer attitudes

Reference was also made to employers' attitudes towards the long-term unemployed. Employers were felt to hold negative stereotypes of people who have been long-term unemployed, and particularly the older long-term unemployed (i.e. those aged 40 years and above), and consequently seen to be less likely to employ such people.

*'She [neighbour] has applied for the same jobs as me and when they see her at 30 and me at 55, I don't stand a chance! They [employers] are looking at you on a sheet of paper. They think you are an old woman, over the hill, and at times you think that you are.'*

(Female, aged 54, Discontented, Northern England)

*'I think it's probably because I have been unemployed for so long, because they look and say "you've not worked for so long. Why haven't you?" it's a catch 22 I think.'*

(Female, aged 34, Cynical, Northern England)

The extent to which these attitudes and employment policies were actual or perceived is debatable.



### 7.5.3 Health problems

Many talked about long standing health problems - which ranged from bad-backs, asthma, arthritis, epilepsy, psoriasis, and heart failure – that were said to prevent them from engaging in paid employment. Previous periods of unemployment, or never having worked at all, were often attributed to long standing health problems. Drug and alcohol problems were also mentioned as reasons for being unemployed.

*'I can't work because of my fits. I have epilepsy. I can't work anymore. I started having them when I was 21, about 11 years back now. I was gutted when the doctor told me I couldn't work anymore'*

(Female, aged 32, Discontented, Northern England)

Echoing the survey findings in the previous chapter, it should be noted that many were not in receipt of Disability Allowance (i.e. DLA, DWA or IB) and had not received a conclusive formal diagnosis, but felt that health problems were an employment barrier. However, there was some evidence to suggest that a number of the health problems mentioned were 'suspect'. One participant described having gardened for a full week the previous week, but then went on to explain that a bad back prevented him from working. Similarly, another described having been diagnosed with acute epilepsy and for that reason felt unable to work. However, she also admitted having worked as a voluntary care worker for the elderly during the period after having been diagnosed. Participants also mentioned 'being under the doctors orders' as a reason for not working. However, it was not always clear how 'real' a reason this was for not working, and to what extent a physical ailment actually prevented participants from entering the labour market.

### 7.5.4 Literacy difficulties

Some had pronounced linguistic, literacy and numeracy difficulties, noticeable to the researcher at the interview stage, which participants felt would need to be addressed in order for them to successfully enter the labour market. Some dated back to childhood, especially amongst those who described having attended a 'special' or 'slow' school.

Those who had only recently arrived in the United Kingdom, from India and Pakistan, experienced great difficulty conversing in English. Others, who had resided in the United Kingdom since birth, admitted that they were unable to read English or spell, and felt this would need to be addressed in order for them to enter the labour market.

*'My English is not good enough to get a job in offices. Not enough education.'*

(Female, aged 48, Discontented, London)

### 7.5.5 Confidence and self esteem

Low confidence and low self-esteem appeared to be dominant barriers to employment. Long-term unemployment left some feeling de-skilled and demoralised, having been absent from the labour market for so long. Negative views held about the local labour market and potential employers simply demoralised participants' even further. Feelings of low self-worth and low confidence were subsequently widespread, particularly amongst women returners and older people.

*'I don't know – most of the people you get at an interview will say they'll write to you, but when they write to you they only say they're sorry. So most of the time you're wasting your time. I haven't worked for so long. I can't get any references.'*

(Male, aged 53, Discontented, London)

*'It was making me a bit mad because I couldn't get a job. Not very good. It took me back in my shell really.'*

(Female, aged 48, Cynical, Midlands)

*'One of my problems then and now, is lacking confidence in my own abilities. That is one thing that I lacked then and up to a point lack now.'*

(Female, aged 46, Cynical, South East)

*'There is always something in the back of my mind telling me, am I really good enough to go alone and do it [become self-employed]? I need a push in the right direction.'*

(Male, aged 25, Not confident, Northern England)

### 7.5.6 Low rates of pay

Long-term unemployment appeared to have manifested, among some, a degree of apathy and a lack of enthusiasm to enter paid employment. The type of work they were likely to 'end up in' was not felt to pay above benefit-level and, thus, felt not worthwhile. Motivation to work was consequently low.

*'The money was no good. It was offering me painting jobs for £40 a day. You pay tax and insurance out of that. It wasn't enough. That was the reason why I didn't take on any jobs, because the money weren't no good - £60 a day'*

(Male, aged 29, Cynical, London)

Family Credit (now Working Families Tax Credit) was either not recognised by those eligible to receive it, or though to be insufficient to meet their needs.

### **7.5.7 Caring responsibilities**

Some described having given up work in order to care for a young child, a poorly spouse or relative. The length of time spent away from the labour market due to caring responsibilities varied. Some described having to travel to India for several months to care for a dying parent. This sometimes resulted in them losing their job, and thus further fragmented their already disjointed employment history. Others described having given up work permanently in order to care for a sick spouse, and adopt the role of a full-time carer. However, there was little evidence of receipt of ICA.

### **7.5.8 Other factors acting as barriers to work**

A range of other factors were also described:

- Volatile domestic set-ups placed some participants under pressure not to go out to work;
- Being away from the home was felt to place their child ‘at risk’ of abuse from their spouse; and
- Having a criminal record was felt to disadvantage some in the labour market and reduce their chances of finding work.

## **7.6 Overview**

The depth interviews with the discontented PVT participants provided valuable insights into their experiences of school, training and employment, level of motivation and confidence to work. Discontented participants appeared to have become accustomed, albeit unwillingly, to life on a low income since childhood. Their earliest experiences of school were vividly negative and life after school seemed to be characterised by long periods of unemployment interspersed by periods of low-paid, short-term, employment. Some had attended training courses during this period, but on reflection found it difficult to see any ‘real’ value in this training. Furthermore, many struggled to see any logic in their past ‘choice’ of course, and described themselves as ‘drifting’ from one course to another, and from one job to another with no goal in mind.

Much of what has been discussed in this chapter is echoed in, and confirms, existing social policy research. However, the value of this chapter lies in its ability to provide the reader with a context upon which to truly understand and appreciate the participants’ experiences of PVT and why they fail to benefit from PVT.

While the survey data in the previous chapter indicated that there were no differences between the 'discontented' and 'non-discontented' samples in demographic terms, the question has to be asked as to why some people find PVT useful and others do not. While the answer lies partly in their experiences of PVT courses (discussed in the next two chapters), there are also other factors that come into play. This group of people not only had few work-related skills but also tended to lack motivation, had limited resourcefulness and were generally directionless.

## **8. Experiences of Pre-Vocational Training**

This chapter will describe experiences of Pre-Vocational Training from the perspective of the ‘discontented’ (includes ‘not confident’ and ‘cynical’) client group. The chapter begins by describing the nature of the PVT courses undertaken. Thereafter the chapter reflects the structure of PVT courses and covers the referral process, the induction period, assessment and training plans and the perceived impact of respondents’ experiences. Views about the content and nature of the PVT courses will be discussed in Chapter (9).

### **8.1 The nature of the training courses**

It is important to point out that very few of the respondents in the qualitative study were aware that the course they were attending was ‘pre-vocational’. They were rarely familiar with this term and did not recognise the association between the course they had taken and pre-vocational training.

In discussing their experiences of PVT a small number of the discontented respondents described a course structure that was different to the norm. PVT is generally structured as a six-month course comprising an initial assessment of need followed by periods of training and work experience. By contrast, some of the respondents described their PVT course as comprising two weeks of training followed by a six-month work placement - this is not PVT in the traditional sense, neither is it a course which the DfEE intended nor support. The non-traditional course therefore reflects a problem with policy implementation, rather than policy design. Of the total sample of 30 respondents, five experienced the two-week assessment, six-month work experience course.

Few had been told about the course structure and did not therefore recognise whether they had attended a ‘traditional’ PVT course or a six-month work experience course. Respondents were not able to provide any explanations as to why they attended one type of course over another. From their perspective, whether they undertook six months of work experience or six months which combined training and work placements was as a result of the initial two week induction and assessment period.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Two explanations are likely. First, training providers could have been recruiting from outside the client group and were recruiting people who were already job-ready. Second, it could be that the respondents were, appropriately, a PVT client group but were not being given the required combination of training and work experience to make progress. Striking parallels can be drawn between the participants who described the two week assessment, six month placement course, and those who recalled having attended a six month course, both demographically and in terms of their education and employment experiences and current level of ‘employability’. Key areas of commonality included a relatively ‘low’ level of educational attainment; low-paid and fragmented employment history; and a sense of directionless and low confidence. It is, therefore, likely

It is important to remember that the qualitative sample was deliberately selected to include only those respondents who were discontented, or disenchanted in some way, with their experiences of a PVT course. Clearly, the interviews addressed both the positives and negatives of their experiences but by definition they had much to say that was both negative and critical. We have tried to present as balanced a picture as possible. Inevitably, however, because of the sample selection criteria (discontented with PVT) their experiences were generally described in fairly negative terms.

## 8.2 Referral to Pre-Vocational training

### 8.2.1 The referral process

Reflecting the survey findings, participants in PVT were generally referred to courses by the Job Centre. Referrals tended to occur at one of three times: when signing on for benefit, during a Restart interview, or when discussing an advertised job with one of the frontline staff. Respondents rarely recalled the phrase ‘Pre-Vocational Training’ being used. In general the courses seem to have been described as *‘a course that will help you get a job’*.

With few exceptions, respondents felt that their participation in a PVT course was compulsory and that non-participation would lead to a loss of benefits:

*‘I chose to go on it, but if I didn’t they would have stopped my money. If they say you have got to go somewhere and you don’t, they stop your money for 26 weeks.’*

(Male, aged 38, Not confident, Northern England)

*‘[DID YOU WANT TO GO ON THE COURSE?] The job centre. If you don’t, then your benefit is cut. You must go! [DID YOU WANT TO GO?] No!’*

(Male, aged 28, Cynical, London)

Others recognised that PVT was not compulsory but felt ‘heavily advised’ to participate. This was often based on the assumption – and hearsay – that non-participation would result in a loss of benefit:

*‘They didn’t say I had to go, but they were hassling me so I thought I’d go.’*

(Male, aged 53, Discontented, London)

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that the respondents who described having attended the two week assessment, six month placement course, were, appropriately, a PVT client group. Analysis of the qualitative data suggests that they were not being given the required combination of training and work experience to make progress.

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Overall, apart from *'helping me to get a job'* few respondents understood either the reason for their referral to a PVT course or the likely benefits of undertaking such training. Mostly, these respondents wanted a job rather than training, but were prepared to undertake PVT for three main reasons: there was a view that PVT was compulsory or 'heavily recommended' by the Job Centre; a view that by undertaking PVT they would *'get the dole off my back'*; and a desire to do something other than sit at home. A genuine desire for training tended to be a minority reason and tends to reflect respondents' overall views about training, as discussed earlier in the report.

Some of the respondents had pro-actively sought training and had been advised to take a PVT course by the Job Centre. Few of these respondents felt they were job-ready. Their reasons for requesting training were: a desire to increase their work-related confidence; to avoid continued questioning by Job Centre staff about work; a view that in the absence of a job, training might be a useful alternative; and in a couple of cases a perception that training would equip them with the skills to set up their own business.<sup>8</sup>

Those who referred themselves to a PVT course tended to see participation in training as voluntary.

### **8.2.2 The initial course interview**

Having been referred to a PVT training course the following process tended to be fairly consistent. Following an initial discussion at the Job Centre an appointment was made for interview with the training provider. Respondents did not appear to be given very much information about the course at the Job Centre. Any information they did receive appeared to be verbal; none recalled being given any written materials such as a brochure or prospectus. At this stage, respondents had almost no idea about the aims or content of the course.

Following an initial interview with the training provider respondents generally had a set of expectations, although these tended to be very sketchy. Typically, respondents expected the courses to:

- Provide them with qualifications;
- Develop specific skills, particularly IT skills;

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<sup>8</sup> It is recognised that the goal of self-employment is not one of PVT's aims. Nevertheless, this was precisely the reason given by one respondent for their participation in PVT. However, such a goal did not appear to have been discussed with either the Job Centre or the training provider.

- Increase confidence;
- Increase literacy skills, or learn English; and
- To increase their chances of securing work.

Many, however, had no expectations of the course at all and simply felt that their participation was somehow *'just a good idea'*. Again, this reflects the overall lack of direction that was apparent amongst the sample of respondent.

Following the initial interview with the training provider, respondents usually started their course within a couple of weeks.

### **8.3 Course induction**

All of the participants in the qualitative stage had received an induction into the course, although it is useful to point out that few used such a term and the concept of 'induction' was not always recognised by others.

The induction period usually lasted one or two weeks and varied considerably according to the training provider. Some participants felt that the induction period lasted just a day and was essentially a 'familiarisation' session. Others described two week inductions which consisted of an interview with a trainer – usually described as a 'chat' or perhaps a 'discussion', a literacy and/or numeracy test and a variety of tasks to complete. Yet others described a two week 'team building' induction which included interviews with the trainers, literacy and/or numeracy tests as well as team building exercises. By way of example, one such exercise consisted of making paper mobiles which, on reflection, was considered a team-building exercise. The respondent who participated in this thought it was pointless. They were unable to see the benefit of such an exercise and could not recall being told why they were engaged in such an activity.

In addition to the initial interview with a trainer (some had interviews with more than one trainer), the following tended to be standard induction period components:

- Literacy and/or numeracy test;
- An outline of the course and/or qualifications to be achieved;
- Health and safety advice;
- Health and safety training (sometimes with a certificate); and
- The issue of a training plan.



## 8.4 Needs assessment and training plans

Overall, it was very difficult for participants in PVT to identify whether they had had their learning needs assessed. Partly this was due to not being informed that their learning needs would be assessed and partly this was a lack of recognition that the interviews with trainers were probably part of their overall needs assessment. The exception was the assessment of literacy and numeracy needs. This was a paper and pencil test and obvious to all the participants that it was a needs assessment.

There were mixed reactions to the literacy and numeracy test. For most, they were unexpected and as a consequence worried some of the less confident participants. Others were unsure why they had to take them and were a little insulted that they were being asked to do tasks that they felt were too simple for them.

From the research interviews it was very clear that training providers did not feed back the results of their assessments in such a way that the PVT participants recognised that they had learning needs and that these would be addressed by the course. Indeed, none of the respondents recalled being given any feedback about their learning needs. However, most recalled receiving a training / learning plan which may have been the format in which feedback was delivered, although this was not generally apparent to the respondents.

In terms of training / learning plans not all respondents recalled its receipt, although some additionally remembered being given some papers which they were told not to lose.

In some instances there had been discussion with a trainer about the content of a training plan, although in other instances there was evidence of the training plan being drawn up by the trainer alone.

Overall, the assessment of needs and the construction of training plans seemed to have passed by most of the participants, with few recognising the importance of such processes. This is reflected in the fact that few respondents recalled re-visiting their training plans; indeed, on questioning some could not identify the purpose of a training plan.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> With such limited recognition of assessment and training plans by respondents and in the absence of corroborative information from the training providers it is impossible to be more precise about any mechanisms for feeding back the results of needs assessments and how these might have been incorporated into training and learning plans.

## **8.5 Course content**

### **8.5.1 The ‘two-week induction, six month work experience’ students**

As discussed previously, a small number of respondents appeared to have moved to a form of work-based learning immediately after the induction period – which is not the way DfEE expected PVT to be delivered in order to meet the particular needs of this client group. The types of work they were involved in included construction, joinery, mechanical engineering and horticulture. They had no idea why their course had this type of structure.

Views about their destinations were mixed. Views were generally negative. The reasons were three-fold. First, they felt that they were being ‘exploited’ – doing a regular job for benefit-wages; second, the jobs were often menial and with no opportunity for progression; and third, there was almost no supervision or feedback on progress.

There were, however, a couple of positive exceptions. For example, one respondent took part in a recycling scheme. Swiftly he was promoted to supervisor level. This respondent was very positive because he felt his talents were being recognised and he was also given the opportunity to develop ‘supervisory skills’.

### **8.5.2 The traditional PVT students**

#### ***Classroom based training***

For most of the respondents, their course followed a two-week induction and six months of training and work placement format.

In considering the training and learning components first, respondents engaged in one or more of the following:

- Life skills training, which could include watching videos about job interviews and some practice interview sessions;
- Literacy and numeracy courses. These were usually undertaken at a different venue and by a different training provider. Some were half-day sessions once a week, others were twice-weekly sessions;
- Health and safety courses often but not always certificated. This was one of the most common courses undertaken. For those respondents who had taken part in a number of government-funded courses this could be the fourth or fifth time that they had received such training;

- Job-search training. Not all PVT participants recalled such training. Those who did indicated that it ranged from general talks about how to construct a curriculum vitae (CV) and discussion about the best way to find work through to practical sessions in CV construction and interview practice. Some described the job search facilities as just the same as JobClub, although not always with the same level of facilities. The absence of telephones and postage stamps were often highlighted;
- IT training often comprised a component of the PVT course. Not experienced, or required, by all respondents, the type of IT training available varied enormously. For some it appeared to be occasional use of a computer, for others it was intensive all-day computer practice. Mostly, people learned how to use word-processing software. Additionally, some used spreadsheets, databases and explored the Internet.

While it was difficult to determine with any accuracy the number of staff available for the learning-based portions of the courses, staff-student ratios seemed to vary between 1:3 and 1:20. Literacy teaching generally enjoyed smaller class sizes.

### ***Work placements and work experience***

Work placements were promised to all of the participants on PVT courses, although the type of placement was not always guaranteed. Work placements were not received by all the respondents, often to their considerable chagrin.

Work placements that were undertaken ranged from shelf stacking in a supermarket, through routine office work or retail experiences to manual labour on a building site. While many placements were for two weeks there were some experiences that lasted up to two months.

Views about the work placements that were undertaken were mixed. Positive experiences tended to occur when the placement was either related to the nature of the work that a person sought, or, where the respondent felt that they were continuing to develop their skills throughout the duration of the placement. This occurred in only some circumstances. So, for example, while one respondent had a very good experience working in a charity shop because they wanted retail experience, another was much less positive because they were kept 'behind the scenes' and were not allowed any customer contact. For some, the fact that the placement was totally unrelated to the nature of work they sought meant that they felt they gained little from the experience.

*'Yes, work experience but at Kwik Save. I was doing packing shelves, lifting up things for the freezer ...it was nothing to do with computers. If they're training to use computers then you should go and learn with computers when they send you to go and work in a supermarket. I worked there for 3 weeks working for nothing, you know – mopping up – everything in the store I was doing.'*

(Female, aged 50, Discontented, London)

Contact between the training provider and the work placement was variable. Some respondents recalled weekly dialogue between the two parties; others were not aware of any contact at all. Discussions rarely seemed to involve the placement student.

## **8.6 The perceived impact and outcomes of PVT**

### **8.6.1 Leaving PVT**

Not all of the participants completed their course. On the positive front some of the respondents left PVT to move into work. In some instances this was felt to be as a direct consequence of saying to an employer that they had been involved in training.

In other cases the move to work was felt to be coincidental and unrelated to their participation in PVT.

Participants left PVT for three additional reasons:

- Recurring health problems, particularly back problems;
- Caring responsibilities, usually an elderly relative;
- The course (and training provider) unexpectedly closed down. This is difficult to explain, given that TECs were required to find alternative, suitable provision for clients in such circumstances.

### **8.6.2 Positive outcomes of PVT**

Following completion of a PVT course, three primary outcomes were observed, of which two were positive. These were: part-time work, further education at an FE college and unemployment. Some of the respondents had been unemployed for over six months since the end of their PVT course and were either currently engaged in, or about to start on,

another government funded training course. It was often apparent that the most recent training course bore little relation in terms of content to the PVT course.<sup>10</sup>

Both employment and FE college destinations were considered to be as a direct result of participating in PVT.

A wide range of other positive outcomes were also identified by this discontented group of PVT participants. These were:

- **Increased confidence:** in one's own skills; in interacting with others and in overall employability;
- **Acquired new skills,** particularly IT skills, but also work-related skills, job-search skills and the ability to work with, and supervise, others;
- **Acquired qualifications,** with NVQs being particularly prized;
- **Updated and refreshed skills,** particularly IT skills;
- **A sense of achievement,** through successfully completing the course, gaining qualifications and succeeding in their work placement;
- **Increased literacy skills;**
- **Becoming less frightened of IT** through exposure to computers during the PVT course;
- **Getting used to the routine of work,** with some respondents particularly mentioning how difficult it had been to structure their time before attending a PVT course; and
- Having an opportunity to **make friends and socialise.**

### 8.6.3 Negative outcomes of PVT

Despite the range of positive outcomes that were evident, the discontented participants' views about PVT at the time of the interview were now largely negative. This was particularly so amongst those who had not moved into either work or further education and training. However, even those who had achieved a positive destination had many

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<sup>10</sup> It is notable that for some of the long-term unemployed who had participated in a number of government-funded courses there seemed to be a history of 'course hopping', with little linkage between each course. For example, one 24 year old man, who had never worked, had been on a succession of ten six month courses including joinery, construction, IT, administration, business skills and horticulture.

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critical comments to make about the training they had received through their PVT course. This is discussed in the next chapter.

Respondents who remained unemployed after completing their PVT course tended to be disappointed that most of their achievements were short-lived and that in the intervening period of unemployment their skills had declined. In particular, respondents mentioned a decline in work-related confidence, job search motivation and skills (particularly IT skills) that they may have acquired during their PVT course.

As a direct result of returning to unemployment there was some cynicism about the value of training, often reinforcing long-held views, a finding that corroborates the survey findings indicating that this group of respondents had low expectations of training. For some, this had convinced them that they would no longer participate in training again, particularly when their primary aim had been to find work. Although most PVT participants recognised that a job would not be guaranteed there was a sense that their participation in training would result in a job. The lack of work had sapped their confidence and motivation levels appeared fairly low.

As mentioned earlier, most PVT participants, irrespective of whether there was a positive destination, were critical of the training they had received through PVT, despite enjoying positive outcomes. These are the subject of the following chapter.

## **8.7 Overview**

Most of the discontented respondents were referred to PVT through the Jobcentre. For the most part respondents saw PVT courses as compulsory, with a loss of benefit occurring should they refuse. Their acceptance of a PVT course was often on the basis of little knowledge. Jobcentres were not felt to explain either the nature of the course or its benefits in any detail. Even after their initial interview with the training provider these respondents continued to have a poor understanding of the nature of the course and the likely benefits of their participation.

While respondents could recall taking part in an induction process – which varied from a day to two weeks – few knew whether their learning and training needs had been assessed. The exception was literacy and numeracy tests, which for most were unexpected, and in some cases worried respondents. Some found the easiness of the tests insulting. Feedback of the assessment results did not appear to happen in many cases; training and learning plans did not appear to be made available to all respondents. In some cases, PVT participants indicated that learning plans had been constructed by trainers without any consultation. There was little evidence of any re-visiting of training plans during the PVT course.

Respondents engaged in a mix of classroom-based training and work experience. Views about their experiences were mixed. The most positive experiences were from those people whose training and work-experience package was most closely related to their work-related aspirations. Contact between the training provider and the work placement was very variable; in some cases respondents were not aware of any contact.

The perceived impact of PVT was mixed. Some participants left PVT early and moved into work; in some cases PVT had been instrumental, in others it was coincidental. Others left early either due to recurring health problems, caring responsibilities, or because the course unexpectedly closed down.

Respondents indicated that PVT had directly led to a number of positive outcomes. These included: moving into full-time education, increased confidence and skills, the acquisition of a qualification, feeling less daunted by IT and the world of work, and having an opportunity to make new friends and socialise. However, even those who felt that PVT had been of benefit to them were, at the time of interview, largely critical of PVT. This was particularly so where they had left the PVT course and moved back into unemployment. While they recognised that PVT does not guarantee work, they felt that their achievements were short-lived and in the intervening time their skills had declined. A number were now very cynical about the value of training.

## 9. Perceptions and content and delivery of PVT

Few of the discontented respondents in the qualitative study were particularly positive about the content of PVT courses or the way in which it had been delivered. This chapter focuses on the discontented respondents' perceptions of the content and delivery of PVT, pointing out where they felt changes were required. Overall, six main facets of PVT were felt to be in need of attention: needs assessment and course tailoring; course content; course delivery; staffing; the pacing of courses; and the facilities available.

### 9.1 Needs assessment and course tailoring

As discussed in section earlier, there was little recognition of needs being assessed, with the exception of literacy and numeracy needs. Where assessment of needs was recognised as being undertaken it tended to be described as 'a chat' or 'box ticking'. Sometimes, assessment appeared to be of the form 'Oh, so you want to learn computers', with the respondent then finding that they were channelled towards an IT course which did not necessarily meet their work-related needs. Literacy and numeracy tests were often 'a shock' to people, about which some respondents had worried needlessly.

In connection with needs assessment, three issues arise:

- The role of, and procedures for, assessment should be fully explained to PVT participants;
- PVT participants should be fully involved in the assessment process; and
- There should be immediate feedback of the results of the assessment procedures.

Amongst this sample group there appeared to be little evidence of courses being tailored to their needs. In most cases respondents seemed to be 'fitted into' existing course formats, with little differentiation of need.

*'The teacher put us in a room and she said we'd be learning to do computering and database spreadsheets and everything. I thought they were putting me on a course, but it wasn't right for me really. I didn't have discussion about what was right for me. They just put you on the course.'*

(Female, aged 50, Discontented, South East England)

The combination of poor assessment procedures and a lack of tailoring of courses meant that courses could be too basic, too difficult, or comprise content that was unexpected. For example, a small number of people who felt they were nearly job-ready found themselves on life-skills training courses which they felt were inappropriate to them. There was also mention of job search activities having been far too simplistic and, thus, *'degrading'*.



*'I went a couple of times [to the Job Club], but I found it stupid and degrading. I couldn't believe it when a guy sat watching me to make sure I was reading the paper properly.'*

(Male, aged 35, Cynical, Northern England)

Others, who recognised that they needed considerable life-skills training, were asked to write letters or use the telephone for business purposes which were beyond their current skill level.

*'I think it was too hard, especially the letter writing. I hadn't written a letter for quite a while; how to put your address in one corner and dear madam or dear sir. So it was just too hard'*

(Female, aged 46, Discontented, Northern England)

Despite having completed a literacy test, some felt that their literacy needs had not been addressed.

*'I think spelling was one of the mistakes that I had done on the computer. I think maybe in [course provider's name], they should have come up and showed you how to spell on the computer, but they didn't. They never taught us how to spell words that we had never heard of before – to spell it right – not stand behind us and say, "you have done that right". They were always going too fast.'*

(Female, aged 32, Discontented, Northern England)

Health and Safety training courses seemed to be almost obligatory on most PVT courses. While most people recognised the value of such training, those respondents who had participated in a number of government-funded training courses over the years had already taken such courses before. This was felt to be further evidence of the lack of course tailoring.

Although PVT courses should provide opportunities for regular monitoring of, and feedback on, personal development, PVT participants were not generally aware of whether this was happening. The lack of referral to learning and training plans during the course suggests that regular monitoring was not occurring for most of this client group.

By way of context, it is important to recognise that some of the PVT participants interviewed found the tasks they had been set were too difficult or too boring for them to do. However, they did not generally complain, nor did they mention this to the trainers. Instead, some simply sat in the training providers' canteen and chatted and smoked. It is possible that the training providers saw this client group as 'difficult' and simply let them 'drift', with a consequence that regular assessment and monitoring fell by the wayside. It is equally possible that training providers were unaware that some of the PVT participants

had effectively ‘dropped out’ but remained on the premises. The respondents were not able to shed any light on this particular issue.

## 9.2 Course content

Views about the content of PVT courses were primarily linked to whether there was a match between the training elements, their work experience and a person’s ultimate job aspirations. Of the discontented sample of respondents only a small minority felt satisfied with the content of the course.

Few respondents had a clear career aspiration. Where they did, in many cases they felt that the PVT course had been inadequate in gearing them up for future work. Particular criticisms related to inappropriate, or irrelevant, work experiences as well as overly general job search advice and support. For example, one individual who specifically had a retail job in mind was placed on a computing course which, in their view, was wholly inappropriate.

For others, with no clear job goal, opinion about the course content was also mixed. Primarily, respondents could not see how the various training courses they were taking as a part of PVT would equip them for work.<sup>11</sup> Given that many of the respondents had ideally wanted a job rather than training it is perhaps not surprising that unless the training appeared to be highly work-related PVT participants would be critical of the training received.

*‘There were a few things you’d expect to do in primary, the juniors. I can’t see any employer thinking they’re going to be worth the paper they’re written on. I just thought it was a waste of time, because I wasn’t learning anything and the things I was doing I thought were pointless. I didn’t see the relevance.’*

(Female, aged 38, Cynical, Northern England)

However, there were also many other issues that were felt to reflect poor quality content. These are presented below:

- Training courses that were perceived to be **too basic**, with the relevance often not understood. For example, one young woman complained that as part of a business administration course she was asked to write an essay about ‘the sun and the moon’. *Just like being back at school*’ she complained. She was further annoyed by being asked to

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<sup>11</sup> It was often noticeable whilst undertaking the interviews that a number of respondents were unable to link the nature of the training they had received and any gains that occurred in terms of, for example, confidence, motivation or life skills. They were often unable to make the link themselves and it appeared that the training provider had not discussed such issues as part of the regular monitoring and feedback that is programmed to occur.

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complete a questionnaire about the types of clothing that a person should wear in a range of specific situations.

*'I did this sort of thing when I was at school ... I don't mean to be big-headed but I found the course [content] really insulting.'*

Female, aged 29, Discontented, Northern England)

- **Literacy classes were sometimes criticised for their content** as well as for their delivery. As more than one person who had taken literacy classes complained – *'...the books they gave us were for kids, like we was at primary school...I know I can't read but I'd have thought they could make it a bit more grown up.'*
- The **relevance of courses** was often very difficult for respondents to establish. For example, spending two weeks making mobiles as part of a team-building exercise was seen as both totally irrelevant and juvenile. No doubt the course had a purpose, but it appeared to be neither recognised nor understood by the PVT participants; neither did the purpose appear to be communicated by the trainer.
- Respondents who already had higher skill levels found that they were able to move through training materials much faster than others on the course. In more than one instance these respondents were told to repeat the training material which made the **training seem very repetitive**.
- There were **some complaints about the types of certificates** that people were receiving. For example, an 'Internet awareness' certificate was awarded by one training provider. When the respondent mentioned this at a job interview the reaction they received suggested that the certificate was worthless and of no relevance to employers. By contrast, courses that resulted in NVQs were highly regarded by the PVT participants.
- There was some indication that certificates awarded were not always received by the PVT participants.

Interestingly, virtually no one complained about the content of the course to the trainers nor the training managers; when asked during the interviews they often said that *'it's not something I thought of doing – I could have done couldn't I?'*

### 9.3 Course delivery

In general, respondents were offered a range of opportunities, including work placements and specific types of training. For a small number of PVT participants one of the main

irritations expressed was that promises were often not honoured. Work placements that were promised did not always materialise; computer training that was promised was not delivered and literacy classes remained un-arranged.

In considering the delivery of training courses, comments were very mixed. Some trainers were highly regarded, others not. The most positive comments were reserved for trainers who were interesting and engaging whilst attending to specific respondent's needs. According to this sample of PVT participants such trainers were not the norm.

Collectively, respondents felt that they received relatively little training from staff, with virtually no one-to-one training in evidence. While it was clear that some PVT participants spent more time than they needed in the training providers' canteen, it was also apparent that staff-student contact could be very low. In this respect there was considerable mention of staff being absent from the training room or 'hiding' in staff rooms and chatting with other members of staff.

*'There was one fella [member of staff] who had taken a holiday for a fortnight, and the teacher who was training us up went into the other class, and was mainly in the other class - which meant we had not much training at all done. Whenever the ones that was training took a holiday, I think maybe they should have asked someone from the office to help out, but they didn't.'*

(Female, aged 32, Discontented, Northern England)

*'I can't honestly say they really watched you. They just gave you a task and left you to get on with it. The two tutors that were there were more worried about sitting in their room and talking and drinking, letting you get on with it no matter what. If you struggled then you had to ask someone else.'*

(Male, aged 24, Not confident, Northern England)

Often because there was little trainer presence, the PVT participants would have to ask more experienced students on the course how to do things.

*'Friends, for a start. They helped you out if you got stuck. If he didn't know then someone else did. It was a nightmare. They [staff] were always going into the office to have a cup of tea or a chat, or going to have a smoke outside. It wasn't helpful at all.'*

(Female, aged 32, Discontented, Northern England)

There was also evidence of a number of self-completion tasks, some of which were felt by the respondents to be inappropriate. For example, one young man who had expressed a fear of computers was given the task of writing his CV direct to computer. He was given a copy of another person's CV to follow and left to complete the task with no trainer

support. He found that more help was available from other students on the course than the trainer; nevertheless he finished the course fearful of using computers.

A number of other issues were also raised in connection with the delivery of training:

- Very limited staff-student contact time;
- Trainers were not always understood by the students, with little recognition of students who had become confused;
- Mediocre presentations, described as '*boring*' and '*not engaging or lively*';
- Inattentive trainers;
- Lack of help offered by trainers; and
- Trainers who did not always seem to fully understand the subject they were teaching.

*'I found out that the man who was teaching us construction was a plumber and didn't know much about what he was training.'*

(Male, aged 24, Not confident, Midlands)

#### **9.4 Course staffing**

Respondents quite spontaneously commented on the paucity of good training staff and staff-student ratios which they felt to be inadequate. Ratios appeared to vary between 1:3 and 1:20 for similar types of teaching situation. Participants also commented on how they could be left alone all day without seeing a member of the training staff. While this was a common comment across the sample as a whole, it was particularly true for PVT participants who had experienced courses of the 'two week induction, six month work experience' form.

As discussed in the previous section, the delivery of training was felt to be seriously impaired by the quality of teaching. Lack of engagement, boring teaching styles and inaccessible teaching staff were all felt to reflect a lack of poor quality teaching staff. A small number of PVT participants also felt that some trainers '*simply couldn't teach*' whilst others '*didn't have the right experience to teach the course he was teaching*'. Often, the best teachers were felt to be more advanced students on the same course.

A small number of respondents also commented on what they saw as poor teaching practices. For example:

- A number of trainers were said to correct a students' work without providing any explanation. As a result they learned nothing from their experience;

*'As soon as a teacher came up they would say, "you have done it wrong", [they would] take over my chair and do it all right for me.'*

(Female, aged 32, Discontented, Northern England)

- One PVT participant, engaged in a 'two week induction, six month work experience' type of course revealed how students were encouraged to copy the work of others in order to pass the course.

## 9.5 The pacing of learning and training

Reflecting their overall comments about the often inadequate tailoring of the PVT courses to an individuals' specific needs, comments about the pace of learning were very mixed. In many instances these respondents found that the classroom-based components of their course were insufficient. Courses were either felt to be too short for a person to complete the tasks that were required, or, the pace of learning was too fast for them to benefit fully from their experience.

*'I was expecting to stay on because I didn't really learn much. You could say I was a slow learner, but wasn't getting no attention.'*

(Female, aged 50, Discontented, South East)

Ideally, PVT participants wanted a course structure that was flexible in that they could continue until they had met pre-determined levels of knowledge. This was not their experience.

*'I felt that if the course was 12 months rather than 5 months, that would be better, you know. For somebody like myself that had been out of touch with the work place for so long – I found it just a little bit too intense at the end.'*

(Male, aged 38, Cynical, Northern England)

Equally, there were some PVT participants who found that they were learning faster than they had expected. However, due to the rigidity of the course structure they found themselves repeating the task until the course came to an end.

Although few respondents complained about the pace of the course, where they did express concern they were usually rebuffed.

*'I think I did about two days on the DOS side of doing databases, and in my opinion it could have done with a lot more. A lot more on databases. I told an instructor. They just said that is how it is laid out.'*

(Male, aged 30, Discontented, Northern England)

## 9.6 The facilities available

Overall, the building and the learning environments were felt to be acceptable. Minority, negative, comments centred on the lack of, or inadequate, canteen facilities, and cramped classrooms.

Of much more concern was the perceived lack of facilities available. While by no means universal, there were vociferous comments about the lack of facilities provided by some training providers. Typical problems included:

- A paucity of computers on some business administration courses;
- The lack of a 'till' for a retail course; and
- The absence of a kitchen for a catering course.

*'Course is nothing if, like I'm qualified for an Indian Chef or cook, he [course provider] had no kitchen.'*

(Male, aged 50, Discontented, London)

There were also some comments about the inadequacy of some training providers' facilities for people with mobility problems.

A small number of PVT participants also felt that they experienced poor quality job search facilities. Typically, the absence of telephones, poor quality advice and being sent for jobs which had long since been taken, were typical of the range of comments made. By contrast, others commented on how well they had been catered for in terms of job search facilities – *'just like the Job Club'* commented one PVT participant.

Overall, however, the qualitative interviews reflected the survey findings – 47% of discontented respondents felt that PVT was no help in motivating them to find work; 45% felt they were no clearer about their work-related goals; and 60% felt that PVT had done nothing to demonstrate how others had been successful in finding work. The paucity of - and poor quality - job search advice underlies these findings.

## 9.7 Overview

The general perception amongst the discontented PVT participants was that their learning needs were not, or poorly, assessed with the consequences that training programmes were

not tailored to their individual needs. Monitoring of progress and feedback on personal development were often in absence.

The content of courses was severely criticised, particularly where individuals felt that their learning programme bore no resemblance to their job aspirations. In addition, literacy classes were criticised for being juvenile and certificates that were awarded, other than NVQs, were often felt to be worthless.

It was noticeable that many PVT participants found the tasks they were set either too boring or too difficult for them, yet they did not discuss this with either their tutor or the training manager, demonstrating considerable lack of resourcefulness.

Views about the delivery of courses were mixed. Some tutors were highly regarded, particularly those who were enthusiastic, interesting and engaging. However, many were felt to have little teaching ability, were unable to motivate participants, paced the delivery of learning materials poorly, and were often conspicuous by their absence.

While the training provider's buildings and learning environments were generally felt to be adequate, considerable criticism centred on the inadequacy of the facilities provided. A paucity of computers for business administration courses, the lack of a 'till' for a retail course and the absence of a kitchen for a catering course were typical. In addition, poor quality job search facilities, poor job search advice and being sent for jobs that had long since been taken compounded their negative views about PVT courses.



## **10. Meeting the needs of the discontented**

### **10.1 Why do some people appear not to benefit from PVT?**

The respondents taking part in the qualitative study are a select group having expressed disenchantment or discontent with their PVT experience. The quantitative survey findings indicate that, in demographic terms, this group is almost identical to those PVT participants who did not express discontent. Why then, do some people appear to benefit from PVT and others do not?

It is important to recognise that the benefits accrued from training range along a continuum. Even amongst this discontented group of respondents there was recognition of personal benefits. In a small number of cases this was employment or further education, in others it could be an increase in confidence or skills, the acquisition of qualifications, a sense of personal achievement or simply becoming used to the routine of 'getting up for work' each morning. Despite benefiting from their experience of PVT, this group of respondents remained fairly negative and critical of the course undertaken. The reasons for this were numerous. First, it is clear from both the survey findings and the qualitative interviews that these PVT participants generally had very low expectations of training, with many feeling that they were only taking part because they saw it as compulsory. Low expectations partly occurred as a result of previous negative experiences of training, partly due to never having experienced a 'culture of training' and partly having become accustomed to a lifestyle based on a benefits income.

Second, there were many aspects of the content and delivery of the PVT courses which meant that this group of people did not fully engage with the process. Reflected both in the survey and the qualitative findings, respondents appeared to enter the PVT course as 'directionless' and finished the course in much the same way. Little individual attention, a standardised approach to training and the almost complete absence of progress monitoring seemed to be the main reasons for this.

Third, there was a sense that many of this group of discontented respondents lacked resourcefulness, evidenced by the general lack of complaint to the training providers about their negative experiences.

Fourth, although in some cases inspired by the course to continue with further training or find work, their lack of success in both of these quickly returned respondents to much the same attitudinal state they were in prior to the PVT course. Less likely to find work after the PVT course – as evidenced in the survey – this group of PVT participants continued to be despondent about their future work-related prospects.

## **10.2 Meeting the needs of the discontented - 'An ideal PVT programme'**

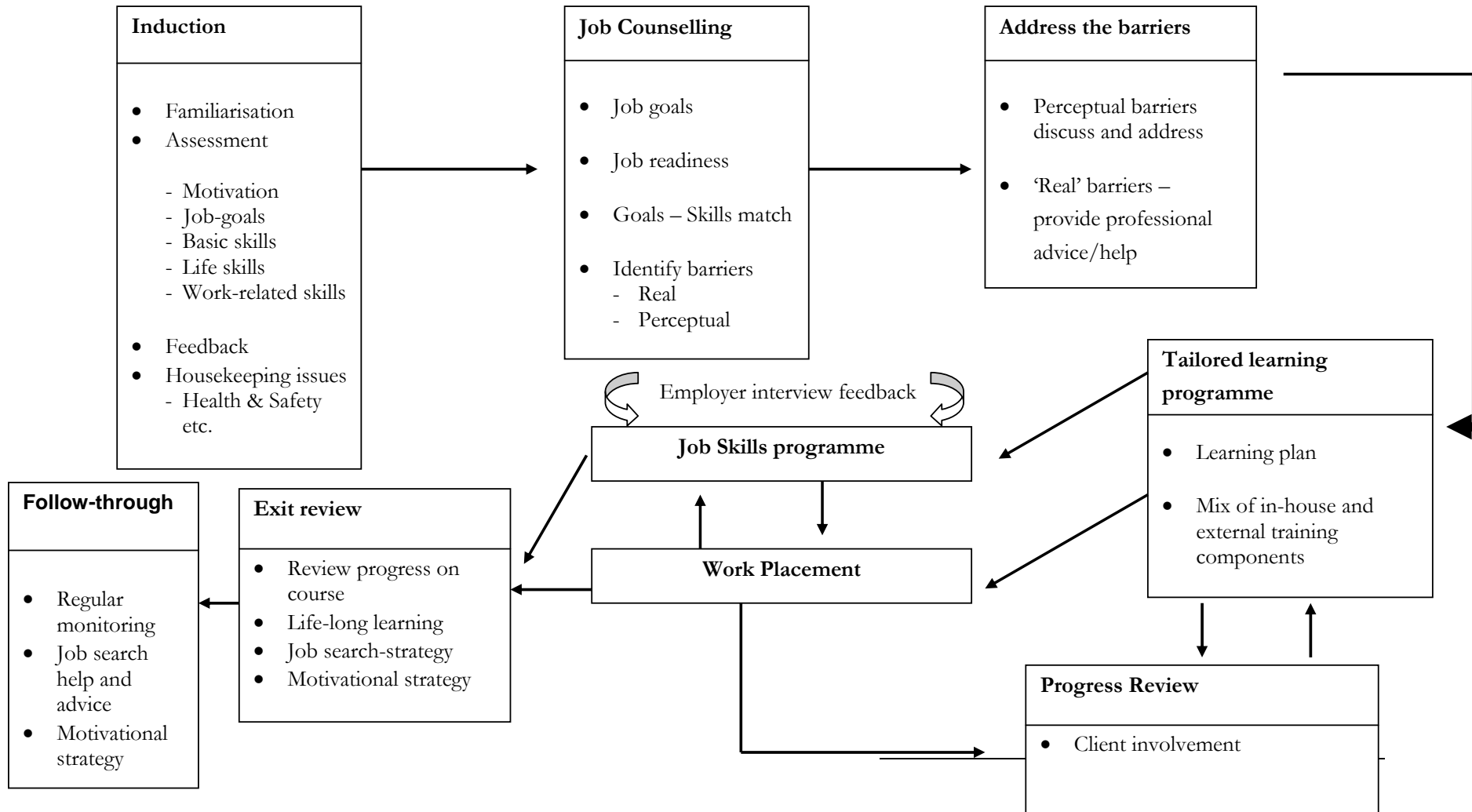
This section draws together the views of the study participants and presents a 'PVT process' which should engage this particular client group and provide both satisfaction with training as well as longer-term work-related benefits.

Although demographically similar to the 'non-discontented' PVT participants, the discontented respondents do seem to have the following characteristics:

- A sense of being directionless;
- Low motivation to change, or a style of motivation that is easily 'knocked back';
- Low work-related aspirations;
- Often disenchanted with previous training and/or a limited recognition of the value of training;
- Often a history of course-hopping, usually between unrelated courses;
- Difficulties with self-learning; and
- Limited resourcefulness and an inability to make training work to their advantage.

The flow diagram (Chart 1) describes the process, which would be required in order for the discontented group of PVT participants to benefit long-term from their training experience. Each component is discussed in more detail below.

Chart 5 An ideal learning experience for PVT participants





### 10.2.1 Induction

It was clear from the qualitative interviews that the induction process for this group of PVT participants did not always work as well as expected. For some there was the problem that they did not understand the process of induction, neither its purpose nor its practices. For others the induction and assessment process appeared to be very blurred.

The qualitative study suggests that the induction phase should comprise four components:

- **Familiarisation** – being shown around the facilities, introduced to trainers and trainees and looking at some of the work achieved by other PVT participants;
- **Assessment** – a full assessment process that is transparent and makes it clear to participants that their work-related needs are being assessed in order that a tailored learning programme can be devised. The assessment should include discussions about their reasons for participating in PVT, their motivation to find work, job-goals, basic skills (literacy and numeracy), life skills (e.g. personal presentation, conversational skills, use of telephone etc.) and the skills they need in order to undertake their chosen type of work.
- **Feedback** – on the assessments undertaken and on discussion of how these link with the PVT participants' expectations; and
- The coverage of '**housekeeping issues**' such as attendance times, health and safety issues, fire regulations, etc.

### 10.2.2 Job counselling

Armed with an initial insight into a person's job aspirations and the results of, and discussion about, the initial needs assessment, the focus moves to considering realistic and practical plans for a move into work. Issues to be discussed include:

- Job goals;
- Job-readiness; and
- A frank discussion concerning the match between job goals, job-readiness and the skills they require to succeed.

Inevitably, a series of barriers are likely to arise, ranging from issues of confidence to travel to work distances, and childcare to the financial viability of moving from benefits to work. Many of these barriers are 'real', others are perceptual, but nevertheless need to be addressed.

Job counselling through open discussion with trainers can enable PVT participants to consider how they should go forward, a process that respondents in the qualitative study often felt had been missed out or executed in a rushed and inappropriate fashion.

Many respondents felt that with sufficient help they could get over their directionless feelings and 'lock into' a specific job-related goal.

### **10.2.3 Addressing the barriers**

The induction, assessment and job counselling processes will have served a number of functions: helping the PVT participant to settle in; understand their areas of expertise and weakness; and help address how realistic their work-related goals are. The perceived difficulties or barriers need to be addressed.

Different barriers require different types of solutions. Some, such as issues of confidence, travel or the benefits versus work dilemma can be addressed and dispelled through discussion and practical case studies. Also thought to be of considerable benefit were talks or group discussions with 'successful' PVT participants. Successful 'role models' were thought to be of considerable value, both inspirational and practical.

Practical barriers, such as childcare issues or benefit information were felt to require tailored advice and guidance. A preference for professional advice delivered in-house was expressed. The qualitative evidence suggests that PVT participants need to be better informed by the Employment Service about in-work benefits.

### **10.2.4 A tailored learning programme**

One of the main criticisms of their PVT experience was the apparent lack of a tailored approach to learning and a sense of being 'shoe-horned' into an existing learning programme. Coupled with the absence, or inadequate use of, a learning plan the learning programme tended to fail this group of respondents.

From the participant's perspective a learning programme needs to be designed that fully takes into account the outputs of the assessment and job counselling processes. These should be combined into a mutually agreed learning plan, from which the learning programme then flows. Too often, in the qualitative study, there was inadequate linkage between skills assessment, learning plans and learning programmes.

Seven key requirements, overall, were identified:

- Individually focussed learning;
- Content that is relevant to job goals;

- Professional, well motivated, trainers;
- Constant trainer presence;
- Readily available help;
- Immediate feedback; and
- Flexible time-scales.

### **10.2.5 Job skills programme**

A major need, identified amongst the qualitative sample, were job search skills and facilities. The skills required ranged from CV design to interview practice and identifying potential jobs to feedback on employer interviews. The provision of each of these would need to be determined according to need.

Few respondents knew why they had not succeeded with job interviews, but felt that employer feedback would be extremely useful.

‘Real’ interview practice using role-plays and trainer critiques was required; videotaped examples were felt to be informative but no substitute for real practice.

The need for Job Club-style facilities was also identified with access to stationery, stamps and telephones felt to be essential.

### **10.2.6 Work placement**

Work placements were felt to be essential and a means of re-acquainting themselves with working practices within a somewhat sheltered environment. There was a considerable strength of feeling to indicate that work placements should be:

- Guaranteed;
- Relevant to a persons job aspirations;
- Provide genuine learning opportunities; and
- Regularly monitored

PVT participants would welcome feedback on their progress during work placements.

### 10.2.7 Progress reviews

Respondents were rarely aware of any monitoring of their progress, either whilst participating in the learning programme or work placement. Neither did they receive very much – if any – feedback on how they had developed.

For respondents to benefit fully from their PVT expertise it is essential that progress is regularly monitored. PVT participants should be actively involved in the review process and changes made to the learning plan where necessary. Respondents would welcome any feedback on their progress through the training, job search and job placement modules. Issues arising during job placements, for example, could necessitate changes in the overall learning plan and/or changes in job goals.

### 10.3 Exit interview

While a review process may have occurred when PVT participants finished their course, none of the respondents in the present study could recall such an event. Felt to be of particular importance for people who finished the course without having secured work or an educational placement, an exit review would be used to help the respondent consider what they would do next.

It was very apparent in the present study that while participants may have left their PVT training course feeling positive they did not necessarily have a ‘strategy’ or view about how they would maintain their positive outlook. The **exit review** should, therefore, review progress across the course and place this in a context of further learning (a life-long learning approach). The exit review would also help PVT participants think more clearly about how they would maintain their motivation to find work and the job search strategies they would use. Respondents would therefore leave the training course with a set of work-related goals.

### 10.4 Follow-through

The discontented PVT participants tend to lack motivation and drive and, by their own admission, are not particularly resourceful. As both the survey and the qualitative study indicated, those who did not speedily find work lost the motivation to do so very soon. They also felt that most of the skills they had gained were soon lost. A **follow-through** approach, by which a link is maintained with each PVT participant who does not immediately move on to a positive destination, would serve to keep respondents motivated and looking for work.

This approach requires that PVT participants are regularly monitored once they have left their course. Meetings between the trainer and the respondent would, ideally, discuss



activities to date and job search approaches. An appraisal of the person's motivation would be required and against this backdrop further job search advice and a 'motivational strategy' discussed.

## 10.5 Overview

Although 'discontented' with PVT, participants did acknowledge that they had benefited from their experience. Nevertheless, the PVT participants were less than satisfied with their courses. There were for four main reasons: low expectations prior to the course; poor quality course, in terms of assessment, content and delivery; a general lack of resourcefulness; and, because many had returned to unemployment after their PVT course, any benefits that had accrued had dwindled away.

Although the discontented PVT participants were demographically similar to those who were not discontented there were other factors that differentiated them. These were: a sense of being directionless and lack in resourcefulness; low work-related aspirations; low motivation to change work direction; disenchantment with previous training; a history of 'course-hopping'; and difficulties with self-learning.

Taking together these findings the qualitative research suggests the following 'ideal' training programme for this group of PVT participants:

- An **induction** process incorporates four components: familiarisation with the training provider's facilities; a full assessment of learning and training needs; feedback on the assessments; and coverage of housekeeping issues such as health and safety, fire regulations, etc;
- **Job counselling**, with the following issues being discussed: job goals, job-readiness and a frank discussion about the match between job goals, job-readiness and the skills they need to succeed;
- **Address the barriers** that are likely to have been raised during the job counselling process;
- A **tailored learning programme** which: is individually focussed; relevant to job goals; uses professional, well-motivated, trainers; provides constant trainer presence; offers readily available help; gives immediate feedback and offers flexible time-scales for completion of course content;
- A **job skills programme** providing high quality job search advice, CV design training, real interview practice and Job Club-style facilities;

- **Work placements** which are guaranteed for all those who require them and which are relevant to a person's job aspirations and are regularly monitored;
- Regular **progress reviews**;
- An **exit review** where a person's job search strategy is discussed and agreed; and
- **Follow-through**, whereby a link is maintained between the training provider and the PVT-leaver in order to maintain the person's level of motivation to find work.

## APPENDIX 1 – CHAID analysis of discontented participants

### CHAID Analysis

CHAID analysis was used in order to identify ways in which the discontented group differed significantly from those not discontented.

CHAID analysis provides a way of finding the key drivers of dependent variables. Unlike linear regression, which requires that the variables used are ordinal (e.g. a rating scale from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’ or an age or income scale), CHAID can be used with binary (‘yes/no’) variables and those involving non-scaled categories (such as geographical region). This means that a large amount of demographic, attitudinal, behavioural and experiential data can be used in the analysis, which not only can be used to predict responses to the dependent variable, but also are useful in segmenting respondents into groups according to their responses to the dependent variable.

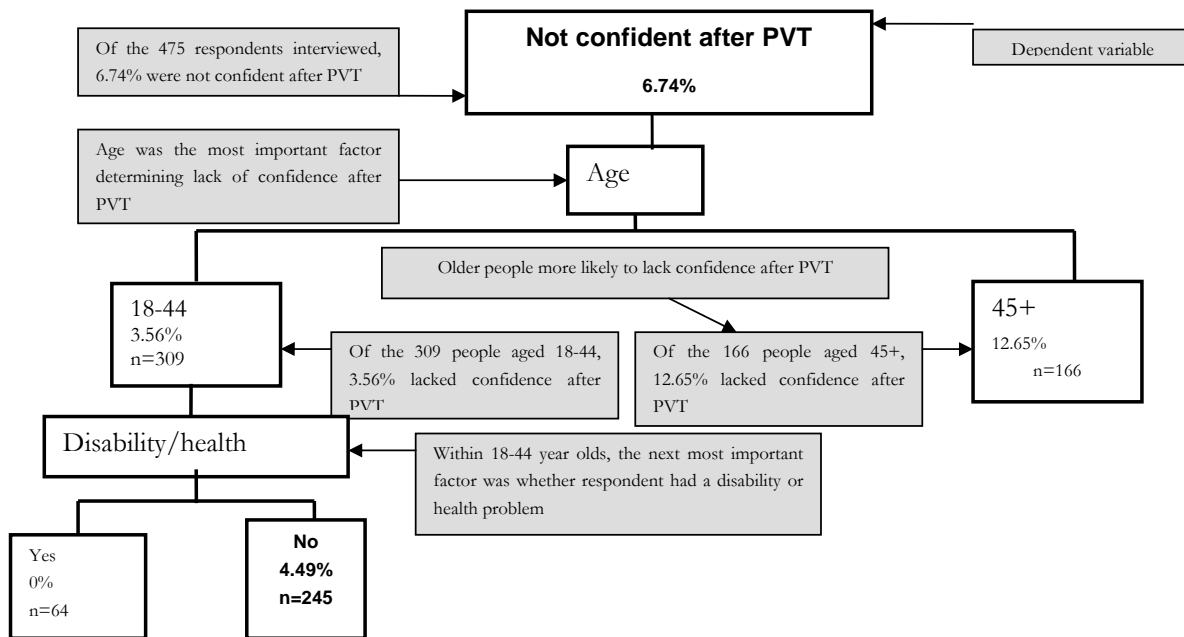
The CHAID analysis for the PVT project used ‘discontentment’, and the statements associated with it as the dependent variable. Respondents were defined as fully “discontented” if they met all of the following criteria or as partially “discontented” if they only met two of them:

- not confident about job prospects before PVT.
- not confident about job prospects after PVT.
- think that PVT is like other schemes and just to keep you off the register.

For the independent variables, we used the respondents’ personal characteristics (eg sex, age), situational factors (experiences before they went on PVT), PVT related variables (what they did whilst they were on PVT) and perception variables (what they thought of PVT, and their experiences following on from PVT). These are described in detail, below. CHAID ‘searches’ these independent variables to look for strong links with the dependent variable.

The output from the CHAID analysis takes the form of a ‘tree’ with the dependent variable at the top and the independent variable coming out as ‘branches’ from this, in order of importance.

The example diagram below, using a section of the output from analysis on lack of confidence in job prospects after PVT, illustrates how this works:



**Predictor (independent) variables used in PVT CHAID analysis**  
**BEFORE**

Whether took part in training

Jobcentre activities attended

Took part in other kind of programme

Whether unemployed before joining

Length of time since had job

Details of last job

Reasons for leaving last job

Factors influencing decision to go on PVT

**DURING**

Whether discussed programme

Whether developed training plan

Activities taken part in

Qualifications achieved

Whether completed training

**AFTER**

First thing done after PVT

Activity most recently doing

Whether did what wanted after PVT

What would have rather had done

Reasons for not doing what wanted

Ways in which PVT helped

Ways in which PVT helped overcome problems

## **DEMOGRAPHICS / PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Marital Status

Presence of children

Whether family members are in employment

Housing status

Currently holds driving licence

Owns / uses car, van or motorbike

Sex

Age

Ethnic group

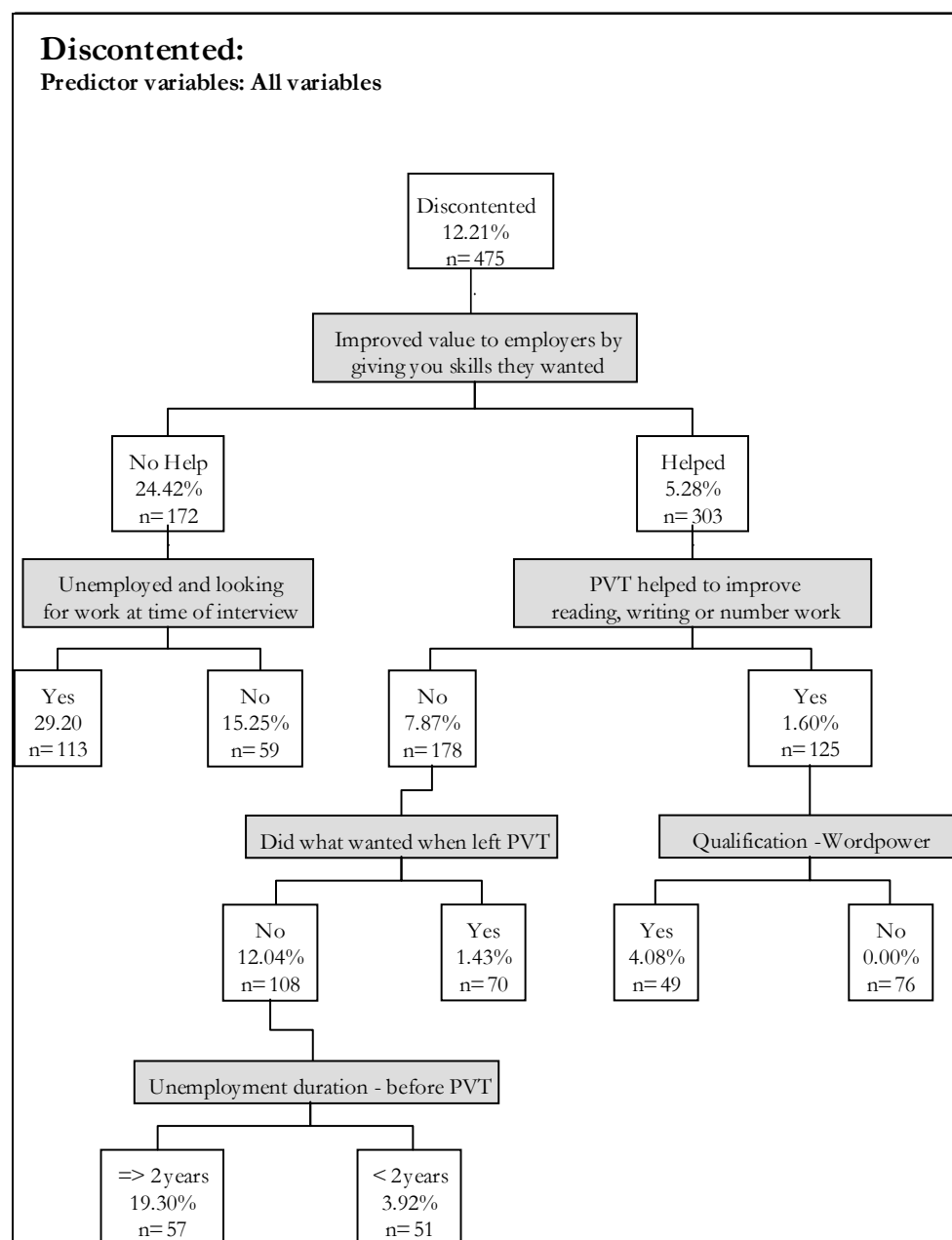
Duration of unemployment before

Disability or health problem

In the following CHAID trees the presence of these variables indicates a strong discriminatory influence in terms of the dependent variable. Absence from the tree indicates that no strong discriminatory influence has been identified.

## Discontentment: Analysed by all variables

First, in order to provide an overview, we examined propensity to be “discontented” by analysing all of the independent variables (above), looking for the strongest levels of discrimination.



### **Improving value to employers by giving you the skills they want.**

Clearly PVT aims to increase the attractiveness of trainees to employers. Among the 303 believing that PVT helped in this respect only 5% were discontented, compared to the average of 12%. Among the 172 viewing it as no help, 24% were discontented, rising to 29% among the 113 who were also unemployed and looking for work at the time of interview.

### **Help in literacy and numeracy.**

125 people believed both that PVT had improved their value to employers by giving them appropriate skills *and* that it had helped with literacy and numeracy. Only 2% of these people were discontented. In contrast to this, the 178 respondents holding the same view about acquiring skills but feeling they had not been helped with literacy and numeracy, were much more likely to be discontented, though still below the average, at 8%.

### **Whether respondent had done what they wanted after leaving PVT**

For this group of 178 respondents the next discriminator was found to be whether or not they had done what they wanted to do after leaving PVT. Among those who had done so only 1% were discontented, but (despite feeling they had acquired skills that employers valued), but 12% of the counterpart group were discontented, i.e. the overall average. In the case of those who had also been unemployed for more than 2 years before PVT the discontented proportion rose to 19%.

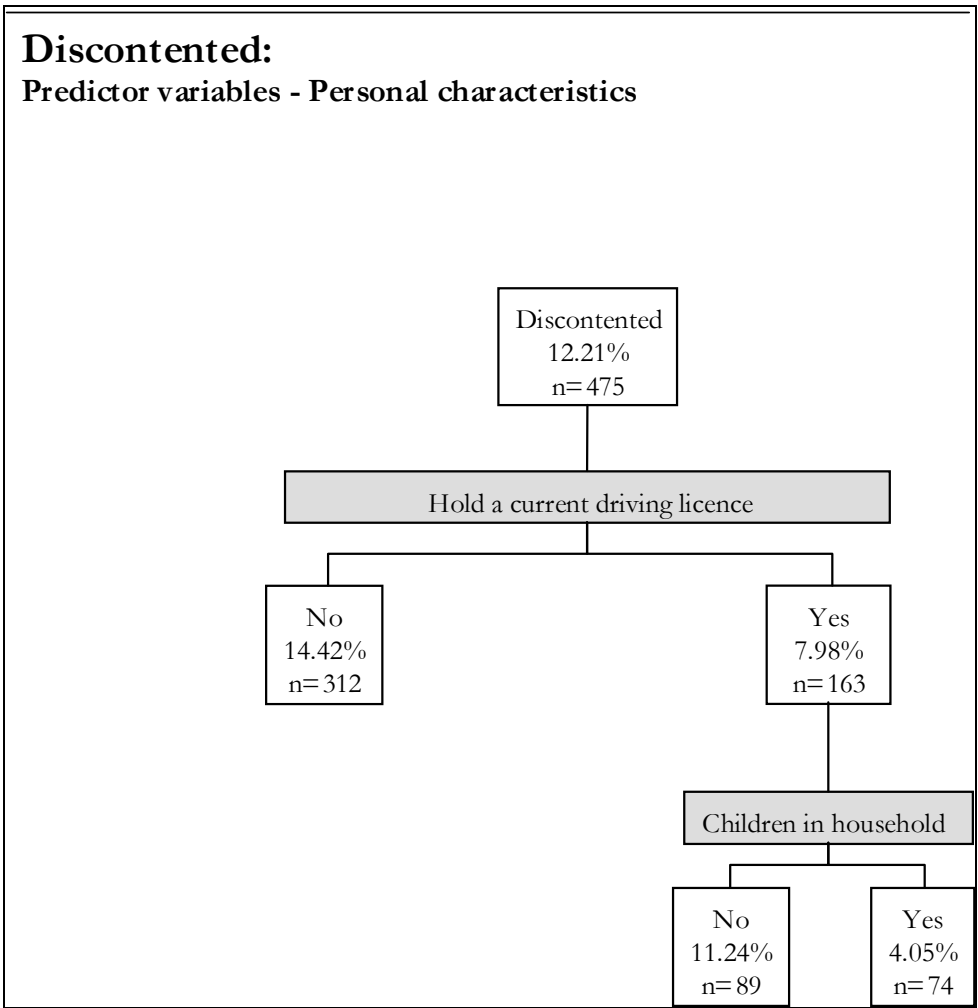
### **Conclusion**

Not surprisingly, those who left PVT feeling that it had not improved their value to employers (by attaining relevant skills) were much more likely to be discontented. In contrast those who did feel it had helped in this respect were very unlikely to be discontented. Within this latter group however, the positive effect of acquiring relevant skills was, to a great extent, negated if they did not go on to do what they wanted *and*, even more so, if they had had 2+ years of unemployment prior to PVT.



**Discontentment: personal characteristics**

We then examined discontentment in terms of personal characteristics, finding that only two factors were of significance.



**Holding a current driving licence**

Amongst those with a current licence (163) the proportion of discontented respondents was below average, at 8%. This compares to 14% amongst those without a licence.

### **Children in the household**

The analysis found that the presence of children in the household made a significant difference on propensity to be discontented, amongst those who had a current driving licence. At 11% for those without children the level of discontentment is almost at the overall average, despite having a driving licence, but only 4% amongst those with children in their household.

### **Conclusion**

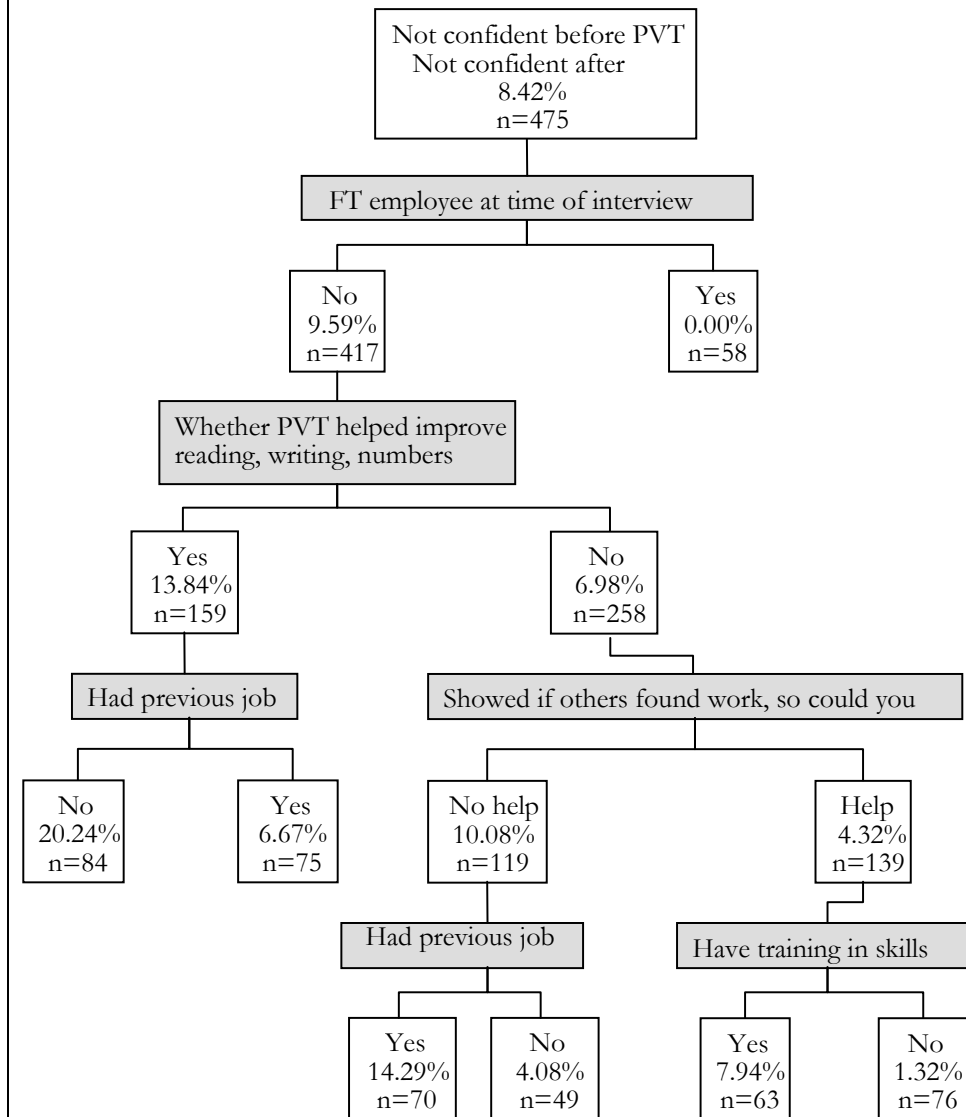
Compared to other variables, personal characteristics are not strong discriminators in terms of propensity to be discontented. Having said this, possession of a current driving licence is of some influence.

### **Partial discontentment: no confidence both pre & post PVT**

Having examined discontentment by all the specified variables, we then considered those who were “partially discontented”. By this we mean that two of the criteria of full discontentment are met, but not all three. (We do not include respondents meeting only one of the three discontentment criteria, as these people are clearly not as close to discontentment as those with two out of three). The first definition examined looked at those who were partially discontented in the sense that they both lacked confidence about their prospects before PVT, and lacked confidence afterwards. This analysis looked for discrimination across the whole range of independent variables. This group, fulfilling two of the “discontented” criteria but not all three, comprised 8% of the entire sample.

## Propensity to lack confidence before and after PVT:

Predictor variables: All variables



### Full-time employment at the time of the interview

None of the minority (58) of respondents who were full-time employed when interviewed reported lack of confidence about prospects both before and after PVT. This compares with 10% among those not full-time employed at this point.

### **Those helped with numeracy and literacy skills**

Within the majority who were not full-time employed when interviewed (417 of the 475 respondents), there is a significant difference in terms of whether PVT helped to improve their reading, writing or numeracy. The proportion of those reporting lack of confidence both before and after PVT was higher than average (14%) among the 159 saying that it had helped in this respect. This double lack of confidence (pre and post PVT) rises to 20% among those who were not full-time employed at the point of interview, *and* felt PVT had improved literacy & numeracy, *and* had not previously had a job.

### **Those not helped with numeracy and literacy skills**

7% of those without full-time employment at the time of the interview and reporting that PVT was no help in terms of literacy and numeracy, reported lack of confidence over before and after PVT. This group is more confident than those who felt they did receive such help, suggesting that they were less likely to have such needs. Interrogating this group further, we find that this double lack of confidence is more likely if they felt that PVT had not shown them that “if other people had found work, so could you”. Among respondents with this opinion 10% lacked pre and post confidence, and the figure rose to 14% among the 70 of them who had previously had a job.

### **Conclusion**

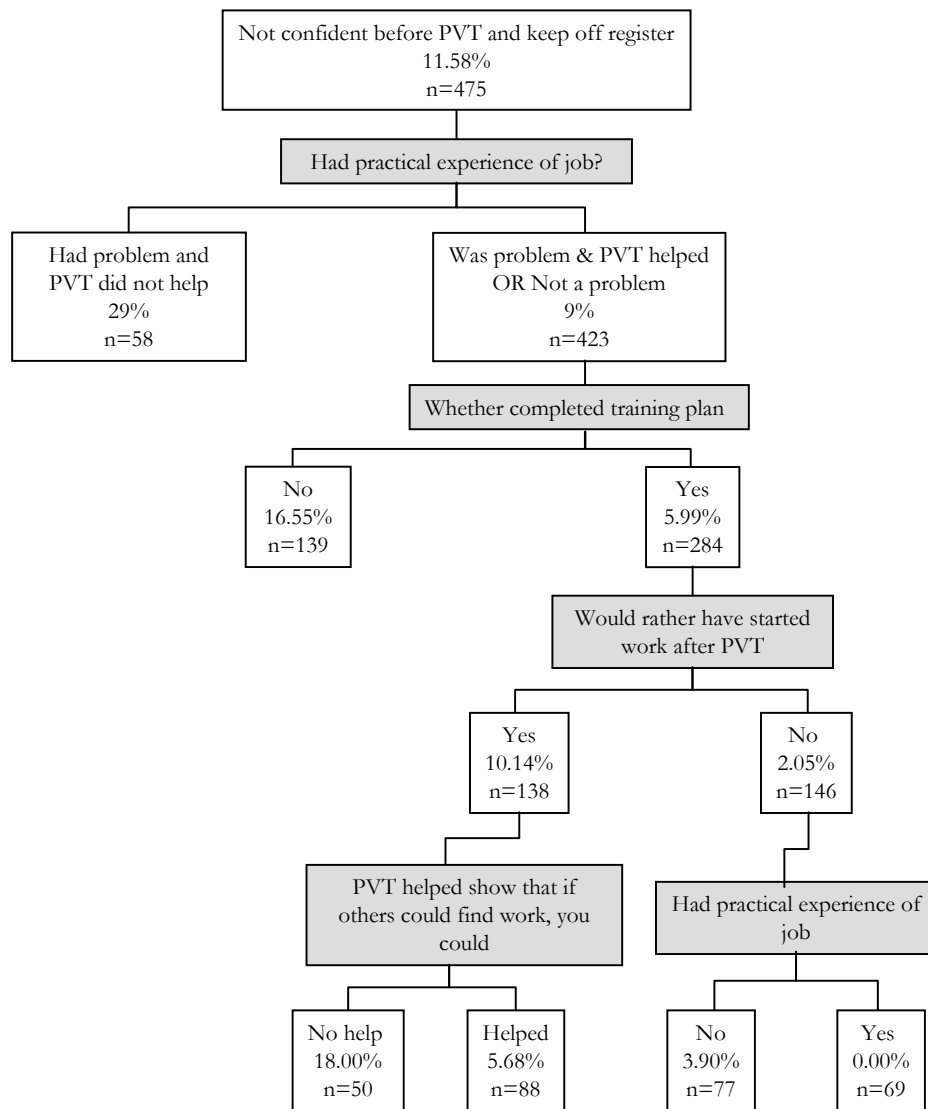
Lack of confidence about prospects both before and after PVT was non-existent amongst those in full-time employment at the time of interview, but very high among those whose literacy/numeracy skills had benefited from PVT, especially if they had not had a job previously.

**Partial discontentment: lacking confidence before PVT, and feeling that it was “just like other schemes... to keep people off the unemployment register**

The next “partially discontented” definition was based on another two of the three elements within the full definition, this time lack of confidence before PVT and the belief that it was no different from other schemes, just intended to keep people off the unemployment register. This group, which did not particularly lack confidence after PVT, comprised 12% of the total sample.

## Not confident before PVT and think its just to keep you off the register:

Predictor variables: All variables



### Lack of practical job experience

The great majority of respondents believed that they were held back by lack of job experience, prior to going on PVT (only 12% did not report this as a problem). Most of these people were helped by PVT, but the among the minority feeling that it did not help in this respect, 29% were “partially discontented” on this definition.

### **Whether completed training plan**

Among those saying either that PVT helped to overcome their lack of job experience, or that this was not originally a problem, the next most important factor was whether they actually completed the training plan. The above definition of partial discontentment applied to 17% of those not completing the plan, and this rose to 26% if they had not had a job in the five years prior to PVT. Among those who did complete the training plan, only 6% met this definition of partial discontentment.

### **Preferred option after PVT**

Among those saying either that PVT helped to overcome lack of job experience, or did not originally have this problem, we have seen that completion of the training plan is an important factor in reducing partial discontentment. However, even within this group partial discontentment rises to 10% among those who wanted to go straight into work after PVT but could not, and further to 18% if PVT failed to show them that “if others could find work, so could you”.

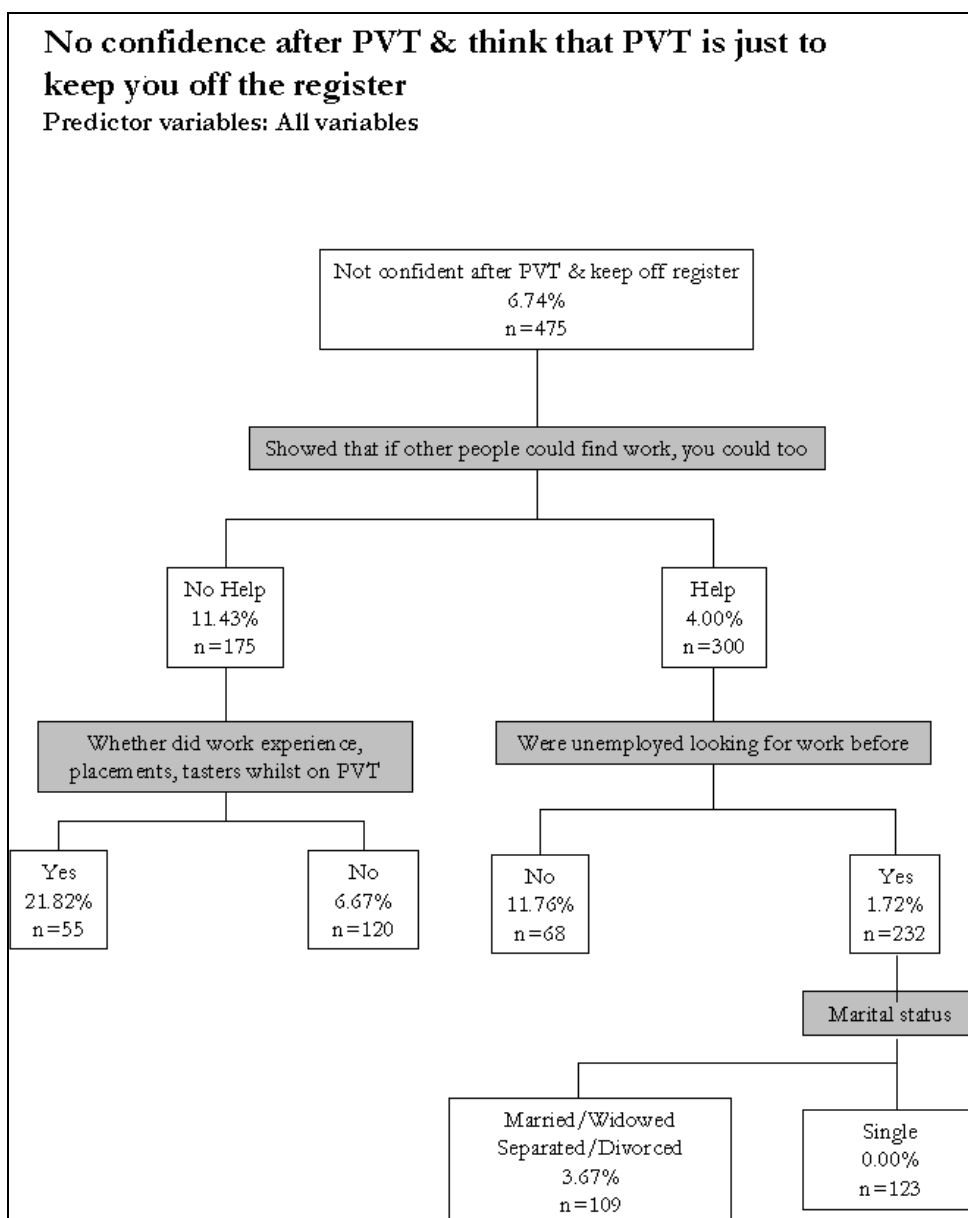
### **Conclusion**

This analysis shows that, where participants are concerned about their lack of job experience, and PVT fails to help them in this respect, negative attitudes towards PVT are much more likely. Even among those without this problem, or who feel PVT helped on this issue, partial discontentment can still be high if the training plan is not completed. Even if it is completed, failure to find work subsequently and a feeling that PVT did not show how this was possible, can still lead to relatively high levels of partial discontentment.



**Partial discontentment: lacking confidence after PVT, and feeling that it was “just like other schemes... to keep people off the unemployment register**

The next analysis used an alternative “partially discontented” definition as the dependent variable. This time that definition was lack of confidence in prospects after PVT, and agreement with the opinion that PVT was not different from other schemes but is just to keep people off the unemployment register. This was analysed against all of the listed independent variables. This group, again fulfilling two of the three criteria for discontentment, comprised 7% of the total sample.



### Being shown that “if other people could find work, so could you”

This factor proved to be the first level of discrimination identified in this analysis. Those who felt that PVT had helped them in this respect were much less likely to be classed as “partially discontented” (no confidence before PVT & just to keep people off the register) – only 4%, compared to 11% of those who did not feel this had been shown to them.

### **Whether did work experience / placement / taster on PVT**

Within the latter group the proportion of “partially discontented” (in this definition), respondents rose to 22% among those who had undertaken work experience/ placements/ tasters whilst on PVT, though it was only 7% among the same group if they had not undertaken this.

### **Unemployment prior to PVT**

For those who did accept that PVT had shown them “if other people could find work, so could you”, the next important influence was found to be whether or not they had been unemployed prior to PVT. Those who had been unemployed were far more likely to be “partially discontented” (by this definition), with a difference of 12% compared to 2%.

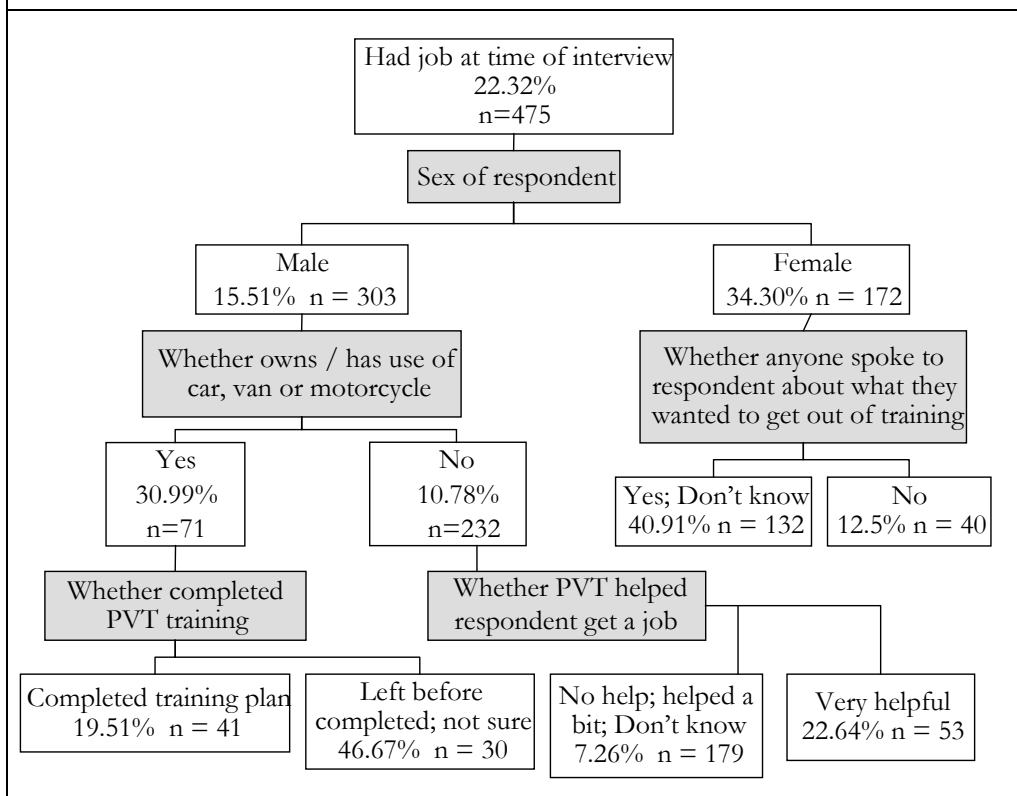
### **Conclusion**

On this definition, the highest levels of “partial discontentment” (22%) were found among those who did not believe that PVT had shown them that “if other people could find work, so could you” *and* had undertaken work experience/ placements/ tasters whilst on PVT. This latter aspect will be of particular concern.

### Likelihood of respondent to have had a job at the time of the interview

We also looked at what factors were associated with the likelihood of the respondent having a job at the time of the interview.

## Had job at time of interview



### **Sex of respondent**

22% of all those interviewed had a job at the time of the interview. The most important factor associated with this was their sex. 34% of females had a job at the time of the interview compared to only 16% of males.

### **Whether anybody spoke to respondents about what they wanted to get out of training**

For the female respondents, reporting that someone had spoken to them about what they wanted to get out of the training seems to have improved their chances of being in a job at the time of the interview. Amongst those women reporting such conversations 41% were in employment, compared to only 13% amongst those with no such recollection.

### **Whether the respondent owns / has use of a car , van or motorcycle**

As noted above, males were only half as likely as women to be employed at the time of the interview. For male respondents who had a job at the time of the interview a key influence was whether or not they had access to private transport. 31% who said they did have such access had a job at the time of the interview, compared to only 11% of those without access to private transport.

For the men who did have use of a car, the next determining factor was whether they had completed the course. Only 20% of males with private transport and completing the course had a job at the time of the interview compared to 47% of those who left the course before it was completed. It would seem likely that the reason for non-completion is related to having a job to go to.

In contrast, amongst the 232 males without access to private transport, the factor most associated with being employed at the time of the interview was their perception of PVT's helpfulness: 23% of those finding it very helpful were employed, against only 7% among those who rated it less positively.

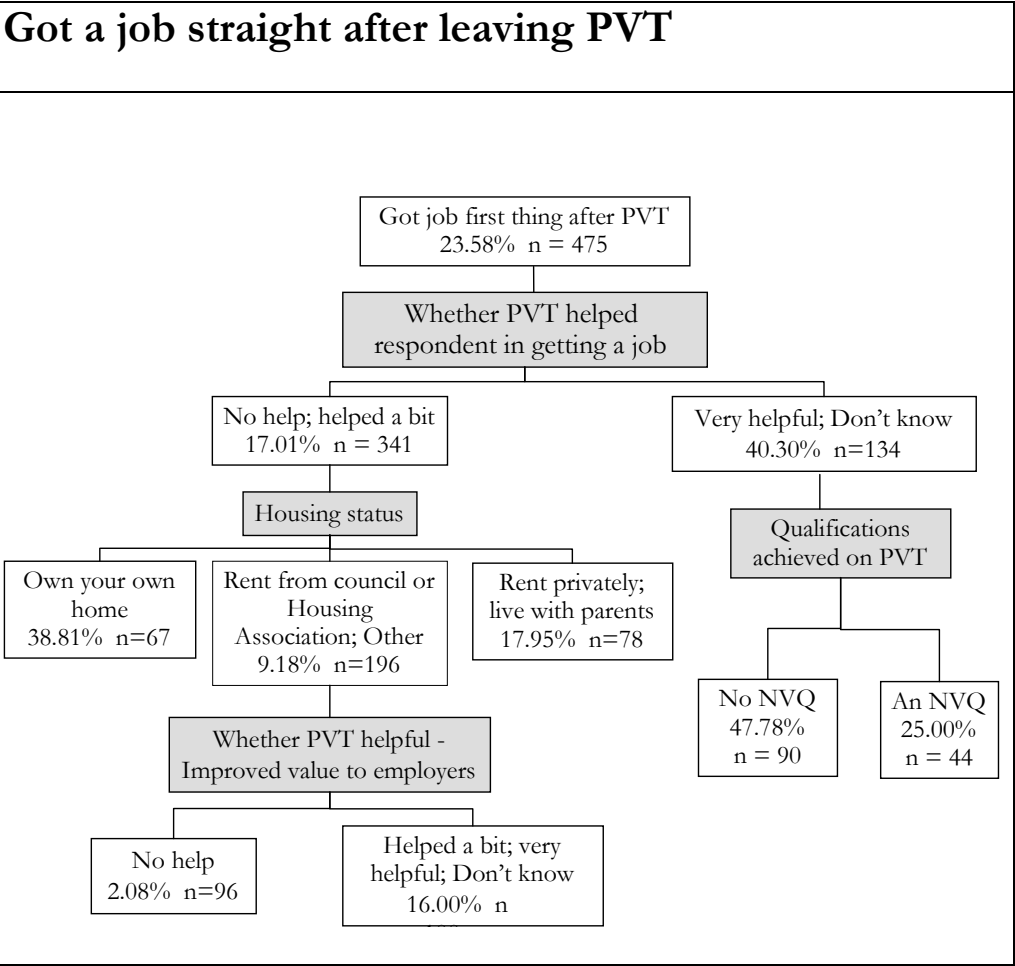
### **Conclusion**

Those who had a job at the time of the interview were much more likely to be female than male. Those women who felt they had been spoken to about what they wanted out of PVT were also more likely to have had a job at the time of the interview.

For the male respondents a different set of factors emerge. Having access to a car/van/motorbike is the major determining factor for the group, the next being whether they found PVT helpful or whether they completed PVT. The most successful males were those who had private transport and had left the course before completion – presumably, often to start employment.

**Likelihood of respondent to have got a job straight after leaving PVT**

The last thing we analysed were the determining factors for getting a job straight after leaving PVT. This revealed a somewhat different set of factors than those associated with employment at the time of the interview.



**Whether PVT helped respondent in getting a job**

The group that got a job straight after PVT comprises 24% of all those interviewed. 134 of them found PVT to be very helpful and 40% of these got a job as soon as they left PVT, whereas only 17% of the 341 respondents who thought PVT was no help or helped a bit went straight into a job after leaving PVT.

### **Found PVT helpful in getting a job**

For those who found PVT helpful and who got a job straight after PVT the next determining factor was the qualifications they had achieved on PVT. Interestingly, most of those regarding PVT as very helpful did not achieve an NVQ, and this group of “non-achievers” were more successful in getting a job: 48%, compared to only 25% among those achieving NVQ’s. It may be that those achieving this qualification were more likely to go on to further training (rather than employment), and that non-completion of the course is associated with both failure to achieve an NVQ and early departure to start work.

Among those who found PVT very helpful but did not achieve an NVQ, the most successful in going straight into employment (62%) were those who had had a previous job in the last five years and had left it for reasons other than “low pay”. (The main reasons were factors such as the previous job being a temporary one, being made redundant etc.). By contrast, among those without a job in the last five years, or with a job but leaving it because of low pay, only 33% went straight into work.

### **Did not find PVT helpful in getting a job**

For those who did not find PVT helpful in getting a job, housing status was the next factor determining if they got a job straight after PVT. Of those who owned their own home 39% went straight into a job after leaving PVT compared to only 9% of those who rented from the local authority or housing association and 18% of those who rent privately or live with parents. Those who own their own home are likely to be from less deprived backgrounds than the other two groups, whereas those who rent from the LA/ HA are probably from more deprived backgrounds.

Of the 196 people who felt PVT did not help/ helped only a bit in getting a job, and rented from the local authority/housing association, the next most important factor was their rating of PVT’s helpfulness in improving their value to employers. 100 respondents fitted these criteria and thought PVT had helped improve their value at least “a bit”. Among this group 16% went straight into work. However the among the 96 people with the first two criteria but believing PVT was no help in improving their value employers, only 2% were successful straight away.

### **Conclusion**

Among those feeling that PVT was very helpful in getting a job, 40% went straight into employment, compared to less than half this proportion among those rating PVT’s helpfulness lower. (Obviously, issues of “cause and effect” need considering here). For both groups the next levels of association are perhaps not factors one would have expected, at least at first glance.

For the group rating PVT as less than very helpful, housing tenure is important, possibly acting as a proxy measure for the level of social deprivation. Among those thinking PVT was very helpful we find that the most successful group comprises those not achieving an NVQ, and here we speculate that this may be because of early departure from the course to start employment, and that those achieving NVQ's may be more likely to go on to further training than those not achieving an NVQ.

### **Overall conclusions from the CHAID analysis**

Propensity to be wholly or partly discontented is most commonly and strongly influenced by a relatively narrow range of factors. These factors tend to stem from experiences and perceptions whilst on PVT, or after PVT, rather than pre-dating PVT. It is noticeable that some of these factors related to disappointment that PVT was not of more immediate, "practical" assistance in achieving the ultimate goal of employment. This suggests that many of the (wholly or partially) discontented were expecting too much from a training programme designed to address very basic skills needs, rather than to move them straight into employment. These influences were as follows:

- The perception that PVT did not improve their value to employers, by giving them relevant skills.
- The perception that PVT did not provide training for a specific type of employment.
- The fact that they had not achieved their preferred situation (usually a job) following PVT/ by the time of the interview.

As noted, PVT is primarily intended to help those with very basic skills needs move towards a position from which they can at least compete for jobs and vocational training. In this context it may be more concerning to note that the following factors were strong influences on discontentment for some groups:

- The perception that PVT did not help improve ability with application forms/ letters.
- The perception that PVT did not provide help in terms of how to find work.
- The perception that PVT did not show them "if others could find work, so could you".
- The fact that those experiencing work placement/ taster on PVT were more likely to be discontented.

In terms of job outcomes, influences differ between those going straight into employment, and those in a job at the time of the interview.



The group most likely to go straight into employment were those rating PVT as very helpful, though ironically among these people the more successful were those not achieving NVQ, perhaps because they started the job before completion. Across the whole sample those least likely to go straight into work were public sector housing tenants, perhaps indicating high levels of social deprivation.

The major discriminator in terms of having a job at the time of interview was gender, with women much more likely to be employed, especially if somebody had spoken to them about what they wanted from the course. For men, the availability of private transport emerged as an important factor.

## **APPENDIX 2 - The Quantitative survey**

### **Quantitative research methods**

This survey was designed to produce data comparable to that collected in the 1997 survey, and thus sought to replicate the design of the first survey. The sample was provided electronically by the DfEE, consisting of those who had left PVT 7-10 months prior to the fieldwork dates, 21<sup>st</sup> July-28<sup>th</sup> August. This meant that they left the scheme between October and December 1998.

In 1997 the scheme was only a pilot exercise, based on a limited number of TEC areas. By 1999 it had been rolled out across the country, with all areas included. Consequently the 1999 selection was based on post code districts, rather than TEC areas.

The sample provided by DfEE was sorted by post code district. A small number of districts contained so few potential respondents that they could not be used to form a realistic interviewer assignment. These districts were therefore ineligible for selection. From the remainder, 42 were randomly selected for fieldwork, using regional stratification to ensure adequate representation of different parts of the country.

Individuals in selected areas were then sent a letter informing them about the survey and the fact that an interviewer would be contacting them shortly. In this letter they were given assurances about the confidentiality of the survey. Nevertheless 29 respondents took the opportunity offered in the letter to “opt out” of the survey, and consequently they are regarded as “out of scope” in the response rate calculation.

Each interviewer was issued with 25 contacts. On contacting individual addresses interviewers had first to establish whether the contact was “in scope”, (named person still living there), or “deadwood”. In order to reduce the risk of bias, interviewers were instructed to contact respondents both at different times of the day, and on different days of the week. This was to minimise the chance of missing those respondents who had gained employment and were consequently difficult to contact at certain times of the day.

The questionnaire was very similar to that used in 1997, so did not need extensive piloting. However, to be sure of the questionnaire, particularly new questions, we conducted a short but intensive pilot in West London. This consisted of five interviewers each accompanied by a BMRB executive or a DfEE researcher.

The interviews were conducted using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). The use of written prompt material was eliminated due to the expectation that many respondents would have literacy problems. Completed interviews are returned to the BMRB head office electronically, via a modem link. Due to a temporary technical problem

with the down load 13 interviews were irretrievably lost, leading to an achieved number of 475, which is a response rate of 61%.

The deadwood level of 22% is high compared to most household or named sample surveys, reflecting the fact that the contact details provided were based on addresses given prior to starting PVT. This meant that details were generally about a year old, and in many cases older still.

**Table 25**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Named contacts issued	1,050	100
Contacts reported on	1038	99
‘Deadwood’ / “Out of Scope”	230	22
Insufficient address	9	
Not yet built	1	
Derelict / demolished	6	
Empty	33	
Business/industry only	-	
Moved	168	
Died	4	
Other deadwood	9	
Office refusal (opt-out)	29	3
Total addresses to call on (“in scope”)	779	74
No contact at address	215	28
Refusal	73	9
Other unsuccessful, including	29	4
Broken appointment	10	
Ill /in hospital	9	
Inadequate English	2	
No recollection of PVT	1	
Other unproductive	7	
Full interview completed*	488	63



---

**PVT - Pre-Vocational Training Questionnaire**  
**JN 1154 473**

---

Q1. PLEASE ENTER SERIAL NUMBER FROM CONTACT SHEET

(1508 - 1512)

Numeric Range \_\_\_\_\_

Permitted Range  
20000 TO 99999 (Numeric Range)

---

Q2. YOU HAVE ENTERED &qser& AS THE SERIAL NUMBER. IS THIS CORRECT

Yes	1	(1513)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

---

Q3. NOW ENTER THE CHECKSUM RELATING TO THE SERIAL NUMBER FROM THE CONTACT SHEET

(1514 - 1515)

Numeric Range \_\_\_\_\_

Permitted Range  
0 TO 99 (Numeric Range)

---

**Enter the date that respondents LEFT Pre Vocational Training (PVT) from front of CONTACT SHEET or C6 on the following screens**

---

Q4. PLEASE ENTER THE YEAR AND MONTH LEFT PVT FROM THE CONTACT SHEET

June 98	1	(1516)
July 98	2	
August 98	3	
September 98	4	
October 98	5	
November 98	6	
December 98	7	
January 99	8	
February 99	9	
March 99	0	(1517)
April 99	1	
May 99	2	
June 99	3	

---

**YOU HAVE NOW FINISHED ENTERING THE INFORMATION FROM THE CONTACT SHEET.**

**YOU WILL START THE FULL INTERVIEW AT THE NEXT QUESTION**

---

---

Q5. In the 12 months BEFORE you went on PVT, did you take part in TfW or Training for Work, which is also known as work-based training or learning for adults?

Yes	1	(1518)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

---

**IF Q5 = Yes**  
**THEN ASK: Q6**

---

Q6. How useful did you find it? Was it ...  
READ OUT

Very useful	1	(1519)
Of some use	2	
Not much use	3	
No use at all	4	
Can't say (DO NOT READ OUT)	5	

---

**And did you take part in any of these jobcentre activities, whether or not you finished them.**

---

Q7. ...

(IF NECESSARY: Did you take part in this?)

Yes	1	(1520)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

This question is repeated for the following:

**Jobsearch Plus** - a voluntary 3 day course from which you get several copies of your CV and a resource pack with advice, tips and examples of how to apply for jobs.

**Jobclub** - a voluntary local club open around 4 and a half days a week for unemployed people to search and apply for jobs, and to support each other. Free stamps, stationery, newspapers, provided.

**One to One interviews** – a series of up to six interviews that you must attend or risk losing your Jobseeker's Allowance. It comes after the Restart Interview and helps you to identify job goals.

A total of 3 iterations occupying columns (1520) to (1522)

---

**IF Q7 = Yes**  
**THEN ASK: Q8**

---

---

Q8. How useful did you find it?

Was it....?

IF NECESSARY REPEAT .....  
READ OUT

Very useful	1	(1523)
Of some use	2	
Not much use	3	
No use at all	4	
(DO NOT READ OUT) Can't say	5	

This question is repeated for the following:

**Jobsearch Plus** - a voluntary 3 day course from which you get several copies of your CV and a resource pack with advice, tips and examples of how to apply for jobs.

**Jobclub** - a voluntary local club open around 4 and a half days a week for unemployed people to search and apply for jobs, and to support each other. Free stamps, stationery, newspapers, provided.

**One to One interviews** – a series of up to six interviews that you must attend or risk losing your Jobseeker's Allowance. It comes after the Restart Interview and helps you to identify job goals.

A total of 3 iterations occupying columns (1523) to (1525)

---

Q9. Did you take part in any other kind of programme apart from these?

Yes	1	(1526)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

---

**IF Q9 = Yes**  
**THEN ASK: Q10**

---

Q10. Please say which one(s) WRITE IN

TYPE IN FULL DETAILS, INCLUDING PROVIDER AND CONTENT OF PROGRAMME

(1527 - 1530)

Don't Know	Y	(1527)
------------	---	--------

---

Q11. Can you tell me what you were doing just before you joined PVT. Were you ...  
READ OUT

Unemployed, looking for work, claiming benefit related to unemployment	1	(1531)
Unemployed, looking for work, not claiming benefit related to unemployment	2	
Looking after home/family, no paid work	3	
Sick, ill disabled, no paid work	4	
In full time education	5	
On a Government Training Programme	6	
In work (full or part time)	7	
Self employed	8	
Don't Know	Y	
Something else	0	

Other specify...  
1535)

(1532 -

---

**IF Q11 NOT WORKING**

(Unemployed, looking for work, claiming benefit related to unemployment OR Unemployed, looking for work, not claiming benefit related to unemployment OR Looking after home/family, no paid work OR Sick, ill disabled, no paid work OR In full time education OR On a Government Training Programme OR Something else OR Don't Know)

**THEN ASK: Q12**

---

Q12. Still thinking about the time just BEFORE you started on PVT, how long had it been since you had a job?

1 year or more	1	(1536)
One month to less than one year	2	
Less than one month	3	
Never had a paid job	4	
Don't Know	Y	

---

**IF Q12 = 1 year or more**

**THEN ASK: Q13, Q14**

---

Q13. ENTER NUMBER OF YEARS AT THIS SCREEN

MONTHS TO BE ENTERED AT NEXT SCREEN eg FOR 18 MONTHS, ENTER 1 YEAR  
HERE AND 6 MONTHS ON NEXT SCREEN

(1537 - 1538)

Numeric Range \_\_\_\_\_  
Don't  
Know

Y (1537)

Permitted Range  
1 TO 20 (Numeric Range)



---

Q14. ENTER NUMBER OF MONTHS OUT OF WORK

ENTER 0 FOR NONE

					(1539 - 1540)
	Numeric Range	_____			
	Don't				
	Know		Y		(1539)
Permitted Range					
0 TO 11 (Numeric Range)					

---

**IF Q12 = One month to less than one year**  
**THEN ASK: Q15**

---

Q15. ENTER NUMBER OF MONTHS

(ROUND UP OR DOWN TO NEAREST WHOLE MONTH E.G. IF 2 MONTHS 1 WEEK,  
ROUND DOWN TO 2 MONTHS, IF 2 MONTHS 3 WEEKS, ROUND UP TO 3 MONTHS)

					(1541 - 1542)
	Numeric Range	_____			
	Don't				
	Know		Y		(1541)
Permitted Range					
1 TO 11 (Numeric Range)					

---

**IF WORKING BEFORE PVT**

**(Q11=In work (full or part time) OR Q11 = Self employed OR Q13 = less than 6 years OR**  
**Q12 = One month to less than one year OR Q12 = Less than one month )**

**THEN ASK: Q16, Q17, Q18**

---

Q16. Thinking of the last job you had prior to going on PVT, was this job ...  
READ OUT

Full time (30+hrs/wk)	1	(1543)
Part time (under 30 hrs/wk)	2	
Don't Know	Y	

---

Q17. And was it ...  
READ OUT

Permanent	1	(1544)
Temporary/fixed term/casual	2	
Don't Know	Y	

---

Q18. Roughly, how much was your gross pay? (i.e. before any stoppages such as tax or national insurance)

You can tell me by the hour, week, month or however you know.

INTERVIEWER : COLLECT POUNDS AND PENCE E.G. ENTER '2 POUNDS' as 2.00  
TRY TO GET PAY PER HOUR RATHER THAN PAY FOR ANY OTHER PERIOD

(1545 - 1553)

Numeric Range \_\_\_\_\_

Don't

Know

Refused

Y

Z

(1545)

Permitted Range

0 TO 99999 (Numeric Range)

**IF NOT ( Q18 = Refused OR Q18 = Don't Know )  
THEN ASK: Q19**

Q19. What period does this cover?

CODE PERIOD COVERED BY THIS:

Per hour

Per week

Per month

Per year

Don't Know

Other

1

2

3

4

Y

0

(1554)

Other specify...  
1558)

(1555 -

Q20. How many hours did you work in a typical week?

CODE "Varies too much to say" BY TYPING IN "REF"

(1559 - 1561)

Numeric Range \_\_\_\_\_

Don't Know

Varies too much to say

Y

Z

(1559)

Permitted Range

0 TO 100 (Numeric Range)

Q21. How long did this job last?

INCLUDE LINKED JOBS WITH SAME EMPLOYER

1 year or more

One month to less than one year

Less than one month

Don't Know

1

2

3

Y

(1562)

**IF Q21 = 1 year or more  
THEN ASK: Q22, Q23**

Q22. ENTER YEARS ON THIS SCREEN eg IF 18 MONTHS, ENTER 1 HERE AND 6 ON THE NEXT SCREEN

(1563 - 1564)

Numeric Range \_\_\_\_\_

Don't

Know

Y

(1563)

Permitted Range  
1 TO 20 (Numeric Range)

Q23. ENTER NUMBER OF MONTHS HERE

(1565 - 1566)

Numeric Range \_\_\_\_\_

Don't

## Know

Y

(1565)

Permitted Range  
0 TO 11 (Numeric Range)

IF Q21 = One month to less than one year  
THEN ASK: Q24

Q24. ENTER NUMBER OF MONTHS  
(ROUND UP OR DOWN TO NEAREST WHOLE MONTH E.G. IF 2 MONTHS 1 WEEK, ROUND DOWN TO 2 MONTHS, IF 2 MONTHS 3 WEEKS, ROUND UP TO 3 MONTHS)

(1567 - 1568)

Numeric Range \_\_\_\_\_

Don't

Know

Y

(1567)

Permitted Range  
1 TO 11 (Numeric Range)

Q25. Why did you leave this job? PROMPT IF NECESSARY

Made redundant/laid off

1

(1569)

End of temporary job

1  
2

Medical/health reason (inc. ill health, disability, pregnancy)

2

Dismissed

4

Decide to leave/did not like job

5

Don't Know

Y

Refused

$$Z$$

Other

0

Other specify...  
- 1573)

(1570

---

Q26. Thinking back now to the time JUST BEFORE you went on PVT, I'd like to get an idea of how you felt about your chances of getting a job.

Which of the following statements best describes how you felt about your chances?

READ OUT AND CODE ONE ONLY (CODE NULL FOR NONE APPLY)

I could get a job fairly easily, but not the kind of job I wanted	1	(1574)
I'd had a bit of bad luck in finding a job, but I knew I'd be able to get one in time	2	
I felt that I wasn't even in the running - I was coming nowhere near getting a job	3	
Don't Know	Y	
None Apply	X	

---

**I'd like to find out more about why you decided to go on PVT. Could you please say, for each of the following factors, whether it influenced your decision at all?**

---

Q27. ...

IF NECESSARY: DID THIS INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION AT ALL?

Yes	1	(1575)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

This question is repeated for the following:

- Advice from Jobcentre staff,
- Advice from family/friends,
- Advice from local council or similar organisations,
- Advice from training provider,
- Saw adverts, leaflets and posters and decided to apply

A total of 5 iterations occupying columns (1575) to (1579)

---

Q28. How did you feel about PVT when you decided to enter it? Which of the following statements best describes how you felt about it?

READ OUT AND CODE ONE ONLY

PVT looked like just the kind of thing I needed	1	(1580)
Thought I'd give it a go, but I didn't expect much	2	
I thought it would be a waste of time	3	
Don't Know	Y	

---

**When you FIRST STARTED ON PVT did any of the following take place?**

---

---

Q29. Did anybody talk to you to find out what you wanted to get from the training?

IF NECESSARY: DID THIS TAKE PLACE WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED ON PVT?

Yes	1	(1608)
No	2	
Don't		
Know	Y	

---

**IF Q29 = Yes**  
**THEN ASK: Q30**

---

---

Q30. How useful was somebody talking to you to find out what you wanted to get from the training?

READ OUT IF NECESSARY: WAS IT VERY USEFUL, OF SOME USE, NOT MUCH USE  
OR NO USE AT ALL

Very useful	1	(1609)
Of some use	2	
Not much use	3	
No use at all	4	
Can't say (DO NOT READ OUT)	5	

---

Q31. Did they put together (or help you to put together) a plan setting out the sort of training or other help  
you needed?

IF NECESSARY: DID THIS TAKE PLACE WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED ON PVT?

Yes	1	(1610)
No	2	
Don't		
Know	Y	

---

Q32. Did anybody spend time talking to you by yourself about your needs and how these might be met.  
IF NECESSARY: DID THIS TAKE PLACE WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED ON PVT?

Yes	1	(1611)
No	2	
Don't		
Know	Y	

---

Q33. Looking back on your time on PVT, how far do you feel that it provided you with training designed  
around your personal needs? Would you say it was .... READ OUT ...

Completely designed to meet your needs	1	(1612)
Mainly designed around your needs	2	
Only adapted a bit to meet your needs	3	
Everybody did the same, not adapted at all to meet your needs	4	
Don't Know	Y	

---

When you were on PVT, did you take part in any of the following activities?

Q34.

Did you ...?

IF NECESSARY: "DID YOU DO THIS WHILE YOU WERE ON PVT?"

Yes	1	(1613)
No	2	
Don't		
Know	Y	

This question is repeated for the following:

- have help to improve reading, writing, or number work,
- have help to improve use of English language,
- work with computers/IT,
- have help in the best ways of finding work,
- do work experience or placements, work "tasters",
- have training in the skills needed for a particular kind of job, or particular kind of work.

A total of 6 iterations occupying columns (1613) to (1618)

**IF Q34 = Yes**  
**THEN ASK: Q35**

Q35. How useful did you find that?

IF NECESSARY: to ...

Was it...  
READ OUT

Very useful	1	(1619)
Of some use	2	
Not much use	3	
No use at all	4	
Can't say (DO NOT READ OUT)	5	

This question is repeated for the following loop values:

- have help to improve reading, writing, or number work,
- have help to improve use of English language,
- work with computers/IT,
- have help in the best ways of finding work,

- do work experience or placements, work "tasters",
- have training in the skills needed for a particular kind of job, or particular kind of work.

A total of 6 iterations occupying columns (1619) to (1624)

Q36. Which, if any, of the following qualifications did you get?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY. PROMPT IF NECESSARY.  
NOTE: ANSWER LIST GOES OVER TWO SCREENS

Wordpower	1	(1625)
Numberpower	2	
RSA National Skills Profile Certificate	3	
City and Guilds Skillpower Certificate	4	
LCCI Vocational Access Certificate	5	
an NVQ	6	
Units towards an NVQ	7	
GNVQ Units	8	
Short certificate course eg health & safety, first aid, basic food hygiene, CLAIT	9	
Can't say	0	(1626)
Other	0	(1625)

Other specify...

(1627 - 1630)

Q37. Did you complete your PVT Training plan, or did you leave before you had completed it?

Completed training plan	1	(1631)
Left before completed	2	
Not sure	3	

**IF Q37 = Left before completed**  
**THEN ASK: Q38, Q39**

Q38. Who decided you should leave before you had completed your training?

Respondent did	1	(1632)
Training provider did	2	
Both did	3	
Don't Know	Y	
Refused	Z	

Q39. Why did you leave PVT early?

to take up place on other training programme/educationn course	1	(1633)
to take up job or become self-employed	2	
felt that I had got what I wanted out of it	3	
dissatisfied/unhappy with PVT	4	
family/personal reasons	5	
medical/health reasons	6	

Don't Know	Y
Refused	Z
Other	0

Other specify...

(1634 - 1637)

I want to ask you about what you have been doing since you left PVT. Keeping things simple, just by thinking about the activities I'm going to read out and by concentrating on the main things you have done – that is the things that lasted for the best part of each month. When you first left PVT in &#x2013; which of these things describes what you did first?

#### Q40. READ OUT AND CODE ACTIVITY WHEN LEFT PVT/FINISHED PREVIOUS ACTIVITY

A full time employee (working 30 hours a week or more)	1	(1645)
A part time employee (working less than 30 hours a week)	2	
Self employed full time (working 30 hours a week or more)	3	
Self employed part time (working less than 30 hours a week)	4	
Unemployed and looking for work	5	
Not seeking work, for example looking after home and family, disabled or sick	6	
On a government or TEC programme	7	
In full or part - time education	8	
Doing something else	9	

#### IF Q40 = IN WORK

[A full time employee (working 30 hours a week or more) OR Q40 = A part time employee (working less than 30 hours a week) OR Q40 = Self employed full time (working 30 hours a week or more) OR Q40 = Self employed part time (working less than 30 hours a week) ]

THEN ASK: Q41, Q42

Q41. Was the job permanent or temporary/fixed term or casual?

Permanent	1	(1658)
Temporary/fixed term/casual	2	
Don't Know	Y	

Q42. Thinking of this work, how much was your gross pay? (i.e. before any stoppages such as tax and national insurance)

You can tell me by the hour, week, month or however you know.

INTERVIEWER: TRY TO GET PAY PER HOUR  
COLLECT POUNDS AND PENCE E.G. ENTER '2 POUNDS' as 2.00

(1671 - 1679)



	Numeric Range	_____	
	Don't		
	Know	Y	(1671)
	Refused	Z	

Permitted Range  
0 TO 99999 (Numeric Range)

---

**IF Q42 <> Don't Know AND Q42 <> Refused  
THEN ASK: Q43**

---

Q43. What period does this cover?

Per hour	1	(1844)
Per week	2	
Per month	3	
Per year	4	
Don't Know	Y	
Other	0	

Other specify...

(1857 - 1860)

---

Q44. How many hours did you work in that job in an average week?

(1936 - 1941)

	Numeric Range	_____	
	Don't		
	Know	Y	(1936)

Permitted Range  
1 TO 99 (Numeric Range)

---

**IF Q40 = NOT IN WORK**

**[Unemployed and looking for work OR Q40 = Not seeking work, for example looking after home and family, disabled or sick OR Q40 = On a government or TEC programme OR Q40 = In full or part - time education OR Q40 = Doing something else ]**

**THEN ASK: Q45**

---

Q45. Can I just check, while you were &since& did you do any paid work at all?

Yes	1	(2044)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

Q46. Can I just check, have you been continuously &since& since then? By that I mean you haven't done anything else in the meantime.

(INTERVIEWER: THIS MEANS THE SAME SPELL OF UNEMPLOYMENT OR SAME JOB)

Yes	1	(2057)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

---

**IF Q46 = No OR Q46 = Don't Know  
THEN ASK: Q47**

---

**When did you finish that?**

---

Q47. ENTER MONTH AND YEAR FINISHED ACTIVITY

IF NECESSARY: &since&

June 98	1	(2070)
July 98	2	
August 98	3	
September 98	4	
October 98	5	
November 98	6	
December 98	7	
January 99	8	
February 99	9	
March 99	0	(2071)
April 99	1	
May 99	2	
June 99	3	
Don't Know	Y	(2070)

---

**IF Q40 = IN WORK**

[A full time employee (working 30 hours a week or more) OR Q40 = A part time employee (working less than 30 hours a week) OR Q40 = Self employed full time (working 30 hours a week or more) OR Q40 = Self employed part time (working less than 30 hours a week) ]  
**THEN ASK: Q48**

---

Q48. Why did you leave that job?

Made redundant/laid off	1	(2124)
End of temporary job	2	
Medical reason (including pregnancy)	3	
Dismissed	4	
Decided to leave/did not like job	5	
Don't Know	Y	
Other reason	0	

Other specify...

(2137 - 2140)

**ASK Q40 – Q.48 UNTIL REACH ACTIVITY WHICH RESPONDENT STILL DOING, OR  
REACH JULY 1999**

**ASK ALL**

---

Q49. I'd now like to ask you a few more questions about what you did immediately after you left PVT. You said that your first activity was &DSINCE1&. Was this what you wanted to do?

Yes	1	(2216)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

---

**IF Q49 = No  
THEN ASK: Q50, Q51**

---

Q50. What would you rather have done? CODE DK FOR CAN'T REMEMBER

Start work (or become self employed)	1	(2217)
Get a better job	2	
Become unemployed, looking for work	3	
Not look for work (due to family, health, sickness etc.)	4	
Join education course or other training programme	5	
Can't remember	Y	
Something else	0	

Other specify...

(2218 - 2221)

---

---

Q51. Why didn't you do this?

DO NOT READ OUT CODE ALL THAT APPLY

Couldn't get right kind of job	1	(2222)
Didn't want to wait	2	
Option wasn't available	3	
Too far away	4	
Personal/family reasons	5	
Advice from Jobcentre/Training provider	6	
Don't Know	Y	
Other	0	

Other specify...

(2223 - 2226)

---

**IF Q51 = No - currently doing something else  
THEN ASK: Q52**

---

Q52. Generally speaking, do you think that going on PVT helped you in getting or trying to get a job?

READ OUT

No help	1	(2229)
Helped a bit	2	
Very helpful	3	
Don't Know	Y	

---

**Would you say that PVT was helpful in any of the following ways. Please tell me for each one whether it was no help, helped a bit or was very helpful.**

---

Q53. ...

IF NECESSARY READ OUT: Was it..

No help	1	(2230)
Helped a bit	2	
Very helpful	3	
Don't Know	Y	

This question is repeated for the following:

- Improved your motivation to look for work,
- Gave you a clearer idea of the kind of work you wanted,
- Improved your application letters, application forms, CVs etc through improved reading and writing,
- Showed you that if other people had found work, you could too,
- Improved your value to employers through giving you the skills they wanted

A total of 5 iterations occupying columns (2230) to (2234)

---

**Thinking about the time before you went on PVT. I'd now like to ask you about things that you feel might have held you back from getting suitable work before you started PVT. By that I mean it stopped you from doing the type of work you wanted.**

**I am going to read a list of statements. Some might apply to you, and others won't; but can you please say for each whether you think it has held you back or not.**

---

Q54. ...

How much did it hold you back before you went on PVT?  
READ OUT

IF DOES NOT APPLY, CODE NOT AT ALL

A lot	1	(2235)
Quite a bit	2	
Only a little	3	
Not at all	4	
Don't Know	Y	

This question is repeated for the following loop values:

- Your reading or writing,
- English was not your first language,
- Your ability to talk to and understand other people,
- Your ability to use numbers or maths,
- You had no clear idea of what a job involves or how to get trained to do it,
- You had no practical experience of the job

A total of 6 iterations occupying columns (2235) to (2240)

---

**IF Q54 = A lot OR Q54 = Quite a bit OR Q54 = Only a little  
THEN ASK: Q55**

---

Q55. How far do you feel that PVT helped you to overcome this problem. Did it help you a great deal, to some extent, a little or not at all?

A great deal	1	(2241)
To some extent	2	
A little	3	
Not at all	4	
Don't Know	Y	

This question is repeated for the following:

- Your reading or writing,
- English was not your first language,
- Your ability to talk to and understand other people,
- Your ability to use numbers or maths,
- You had no clear idea of what a job involves or how to get trained to do it,
- You had no practical experience of the job

A total of 6 iterations occupying columns (2241) to (2246)

And still thinking about any the kind of things that might have held you back before you went on PVT, would you say that any of these factors held you back?

---

Q56. ...

Did this hold you back a lot, quite a bit, a little or not at all before you went on PVT?

IF DOES NOT APPLY, CODE NOT AT ALL

A lot	1	(2247)
Quite a bit	2	
A little	3	
Not at all	4	
Don't Know	Y	

This question is repeated for the following:

- Lack of self confidence,
- Don't come over well in interviews,
- Difficulties in fitting in and working with others,
- Difficulty with time keeping and attendance,
- Lack of qualifications,
- Physical or other disability,
- Health problems (including those resulting from a disability)

A total of 7 iterations occupying columns (2247) to (2253)

---

IF Q56 = A lot OR Q56 = Quite a bit OR Q56 = A little  
THEN ASK: Q57

---

Q57. How far do you feel that PVT helped you to overcome these problems. Did it help you a great deal, to some extent, a little or not at all

A great deal	1	(2254)
To some extent	2	
A little	3	
Not at all	4	
Don't Know	Y	

This question is repeated for the following:

- Lack of self confidence,
- Don't come over well in interviews,
- Difficulties in fitting in and working with others,
- Difficulty with time keeping and attendance,
- Lack of qualifications,
- Physical or other disability,
- Health problems (including those resulting from a disability)

A total of 7 iterations occupying columns (2254) to (2260)

---

**I am going to read out some statements about pre-vocational training, and I'd like you to say for each one how much you agree with it. Please tell me if you strongly agree, agree a little, disagree a little or strongly disagree.**

---

Q58. ...

Do you ...	Strongly agree	1	(2261)
	Agree a little	2	
	Disagree a little	3	
	Strongly disagree	4	
	Don't Know	Y	

This question is repeated for the following loop values:

- PVT made me more self confident about getting and keeping a job,
- PVT helped me to sort out some big problems that had been holding me back in the job market,
- PVT is no different to all the other schemes, it is just to keep you off the register for a while

A total of 3 iterations occupying columns (2261) to (2263)

---

Q59. Looking ahead, how confident do you feel about your employment prospects? Are you...

Very confident	1	(2264)
Fairly confident	2	
Not very confident	3	
Not confident at all	4	
Don't Know	Y	

---

**IF Q55 = NOT IN WORK**

(Unemployed and looking for work OR Not seeking work, for example looking after home and family, disabled or sick OR On a government or TEC programme OR In full or part - time education )

**THEN ASK: Q60**

---

Q60. Some people have told us that they don't think they can find a job which would pay them as much as they are getting on benefit. However, other people have said that they think they would be better off.

If you got a job in this local area, how much better or worse off do you think you would be compared to how much you are receiving on benefit now or would be receiving if you were currently claiming benefit?

Would you be...

READ OUT

A lot worse off with a job	1	(2265)
A bit worse off with a job	2	
About the same	3	
A bit better off with a job	4	
A lot better off with a job	5	
Don't Know	Y	

---

**IF Q55 = IN WORK**

[A full time employee (working 30 hours a week or more) OR A part time employee (working less than 30 hours a week) OR Self employed full time (working 30 hours a week or more) OR Self employed part time (working less than 30 hours a week) ]

**THEN ASK: Q61**

---

Q61. You have told us that you currently have a paid job.

Some people have told us that they don't think they can find a job which would pay them as much as they are getting on benefit. However, other people have said that they think they would be better off.

Compared with what you would be receiving on benefit, how much better or worse off do you think you are now you are working?

Are you...

A lot worse off with a job	1	(2266)
A bit worse off with a job	2	
About the same	3	
A bit better off with a job	4	
A lot better off with a job	5	
Don't Know	Y	

---



---

Q62. Does your partner have a paid job at present?

Yes	1	(2268)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

---

**IF Q62 = Yes**  
**THEN ASK: Q63**

---

Q63. And is this job full time (30 hours or more a week) or part time?

Full time	1	(2269)
Part time	2	
Don't Know	Y	

---

Q64. Do you have any dependent children aged 18 or less?

Yes	1	(2270)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

---

Q65. Are any of the following people in your family currently working in a paid job. By family I mean your parents, brother or sister, son or daughter or anyone else who lives with you in your household?

CODE ALL THE APPLY

NOTE: THE FAMILY MEMBERS DO NOT NECESSARILY HAVE TO CURRENTLY LIVE IN THE SAME HOUSEHOLD AS THE RESPONDENT

Mother	1	(2271)
Father	2	
Brother	3	
Sister	4	
Son	5	
Daughter	6	
Other person in household	7	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

---

Q66. How would you describe your housing status? Do you...

READ OUT

Own your own home	1	(2272)
Rent from Council or Housing Association	2	
Rent privately	3	
Live with parents	4	
Don't Know	5	
Other	6	

---

Q67. Do you hold a current driving licence?

Yes	1	(2273)
-----	---	--------

---

No	2	
Don't Know	Y	
<hr/>		
Q68. Do you own or have the use of a car, van or motorbike?		
Yes	1	(2274)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	
<hr/>		
Q69. INTERVIEWER CODE SEX OF THE RESPONDENT		
Male	1	
Female	2	
<hr/>		
Q70. Could I just check what age you were last birthday?		
	Numeric Range	_____
	Don't	
	Know	Y
Permitted Range		
16 TO 99 (Numeric Range)		
<hr/>		

## APPENDIX 3 – Qualitative study of discontented participants

### Topic Guide

#### Pre-Vocational Training

##### AIMS OF THE STUDY

- To explore why some participants in pre-vocational training programmes are discontented with their experience, do not appear to benefit from the programmes and may perceive them in a negative manner.
- To consider how these programmes may be changed such that they may be more effective, particularly for disenchanted participants.

##### INTRODUCTION

- About BMRB International
- Background to the study; following on from a recent survey; explore in-depth views about, and experiences of, participating in PVT; funded by DfEE
- Confidentiality
- Tape recording

##### 1. BACKGROUND

- Household circumstances; age; partner; children
  - brief overview of household income
  - employment status of other household members; probe periods of unemployment
- Current employment status
  - If working - type of work; how long; how they found job (whether related to PVT?) whether job is what they want to be doing; preferences
  - If not working - activities since leaving PVT; explore periods of unemployment and employment since leaving PVT; reasons why
  - any undeclared work

- Brief overview of PVT experience
  - views about PVT prior to training
  - views about PVT since training
  - whether left PVT early; reasons

## **2. EMPLOYMENT / UNEMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

- Brief unemployment history prior to PVT
  - Explore periods of unemployment; perceptions of why unemployed for this long
- Perceptions of local labour market
  - are there jobs?
  - are they the jobs they would want; reasons
- Work-related aspirations
  - what job would they want; what type of employment conditions are they looking for; how realistic is this
  - what are they doing to find work; job search behaviour
  - what are the skills they would need to attain this; do they have these skills; how would they obtain these skills
  - would they be prepared to change their work aspirations; under what circumstances if willing to change aspirations, would training be useful; what would they need

## **3. PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

- Experiences of school
  - likes/dislikes
  - did they leave with qualifications
  - did they leave at the same time as their friends
  - what did they go on to do
- Experiences of training
  - distinguish different training programmes (government and other)
  - experiences of training; how many training programmes have they been on; when
  - reasons for participating in training
  - did they gain any qualifications
  - what did they get out of the training

- Perceived value of education and training (i.e. what do they think people get out of education and training)
  - do they value education and training
  - if education and training are valued, what is the value; where does this belief come from; can they point to any examples of the value
  - if education and training are not perceived to have value, why not; where does this come from, EXPLORE family, labour market reasons
  - how could education and training be made to be more useful for them
  - is training for them; what sort of people is training for
  - under what circumstances would they undertake training

#### **4. PRE-VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

- Referral process
  - how did they get to hear about PVT
  - how did they get on to PVT; what was the process
  - did they perceive PVT as voluntary or compulsory; reasons
- Starting on PVT
  - expectations of PVT
  - what happened when they started
  - assessment of needs
  - what did they think their needs were; were they identified
  - personal learning plans/individual training plans?
    - EXPLORE what learning plans were, and how negotiated.
- Experience of PVT
  - what did they do on a daily basis
  - likes and dislikes
  - how did PVT programme match up with individual training plan
  - what did they feel they were gaining whilst on PVT (skills, confidence, motivation)
  - how long were they on the programme; views about length of programme (too short, too long); what would be the most useful course length
- Experience of and views about:
  - work tasters

- work experience
- job search help
- ‘theoretical/knowledge learning
- practical skills learning
- help with basic skills
- using computers
  
- The learning context
  - where did they learn (teaching room, workplace, on the job, etc.); views about
  - views about appropriateness of learning context
  - how would they have preferred to learn
  
- Impact of PVT
  - any changes as a result of PVT in: confidence; motivation; better idea of what they want to do
  - do they feel they benefited in any way from PVT; in what way
  - which of their needs were met; which needs were not met; reasons for this
  - were they near to meeting needs as they left the course; which ones
  
- Overall views about PVT
  - did they feel part of PVT; reasons
    - how did others on the course feel about PVT (PROBE any feelings of disengagement and whether this was widespread amongst others); reasons why
  - perceived value of PVT
  - what made it useful
  - what made PVT less useful
  - how could PVT be changed to be of more value to them

## 5. POST PVT

- When did they leave PVT
- EXPLORE what they have been doing since leaving PVT
  - views about what they are doing now (unemployment, training, TFW, work)
- Perceived role of PVT in what they are doing now
- If left PVT early and unemployed since, why did they leave PVT
  - what would have made them stay on the programme

- what would training need to look like for it to be more useful for them (e.g. other types of training, support, advice, help, etc.)
- would the training need to offer a guarantee – what sort
- would they take training up under any circumstances – how would the training look
- what (additional) help, support, advice would they need to get a job

## **6. THE FUTURE**

- What are their work-related plans
  - what is the time-scale
  - how will they find and retain work; what would help them get a job
  - what part would / could training play in attaining their work-related goals
  - what would the training look like
  - how would it be delivered; over what time period
- Anything they wish to add about how they might find work and the role that training might play in this

## **THANK AND CLOSE THE INTERVIEW**

## APPENDIX 4: Analytical Method For Qualitative Research

The analysis of qualitative material is undertaken by experienced researchers from **BMRB Qualitative**. BMRB Qualitative is committed to a thorough analysis of the data and have a set of procedures to ensure a systematic and comprehensive approach to data analysis. Throughout the analytical procedures care is taken to ensure that the extraction and interpretation of findings are based on the raw data rather than on a researchers impressions.

Material collected through qualitative methods is invariably unstructured and unwieldy. Much of it is text based, consisting of verbatim transcriptions of interviews and discussions. Moreover, the internal content of the material is usually in detailed and micro form (for example, accounts of experiences, inarticulate explanations, etc.). The primary aim of any analytical method is to provide a means of exploring coherence and structure within a cumbersome data set whilst retaining a hold on the original accounts and observations from which it is derived.

Qualitative analysis is essentially about detection and exploration of the data. We ‘make sense’ of the data by looking for coherence and structure within the data.

Our analytical procedure works from verbatim transcripts and involves a systematic process of sifting, summarising and sorting the material according to key issues and themes. We use a set of content analysis techniques, known as **‘Matrix Mapping’**, to ensure an optimum synthesis of findings from the verbatim data.

**‘Matrix-Mapping’** begins with a **familiarisation stage** and would include a researcher’s review of the audio tapes and/or transcripts. Based on the coverage of the topic guide, the researchers’ experiences of conducting the fieldwork and their preliminary review of the data, a **thematic framework is constructed**. The analysis then proceeds by **summarising and synthesising the data** according to this thematic framework using a range of techniques such as cognitive mapping and data matrices. When all the data have been sifted according to the core themes the analyst begins to **map the data and identify features within the data**: defining concepts, mapping the range and nature of phenomenon, creating typologies, finding associations, and providing explanations.

The analyst reviews the summarised data; compares and contrasts the perceptions, accounts, or experiences; searches for patterns or connections within the data and seeks explanations internally within the data set. Piecing together the overall picture is not simply aggregating patterns, but it involves a process of weighing up the salience and dynamics of issues, and searching for structures within the data that have explanatory power, rather than simply seeking a multiplicity of evidence.