Implementation Evaluation of No One Left Behind & the Young Person's Guarantee

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Implementation Evaluation of No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee

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Introduction

Ipsos were appointed by the Scottish Government to undertake an implementation evaluation of the development and early delivery of No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee. The evaluation explored how effectively No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee had been implemented, the experiences of service providers and service users, and lessons from early delivery.

This summary presents key findings from the evaluation, which took place between May and December 2022.

Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was taken to the implementation evaluation, drawing on quantitative and qualitative research with local employability stakeholders, staff and and service users. The aim was to incorporate as broad a range of views and perspectives as possible to address the evaluation questions.

The term 'staff' is used throughout this report to refer to those involved in delivering employability services. This includes management (local authority employability leads and others involved in the design and management of employability programmes in local areas) and frontline staff (key workers, employability support workers and others who work directly with service users; work / careers coaches; employer engagement leads; training providers).

Key findings: Progress in implementation

- There was mixed feedback from local stakeholders on how well No One Left Behind had been implemented locally, although most perceived this positively.

- No One Left Behind was said to have facilitated better partnership working between employability stakeholders at the local level, including bringing greater focus and purpose to existing partnerships structures.

- Whilst there was some variation between areas in the extent to which No One Left Behind was considered to represent a 'new' approach, most local stakeholders agreed that it had contributed to further development and enhancement of services.

- Some local stakeholders thought more could be done to engage and support people who were furthest from the labour market, including those with protected characteristics.

- Most stakeholders thought the Young Person's Guarantee had been implemented well locally and was an appropriate response to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on young people's progression in learning and work.

- There was variation between areas in the balance of services delivered in-house relative to externally commissioned, although most were working with a wide range of third sector, private sector and education providers.

- Local authorities were also working with a wide range of local employers, and the Employer Recruitment Incentive had created new opportunities to expand their work with employers.

- The monitoring and reporting requirements for No One Left Behind (which includes activity delivered through the Guarantee) were considered very time consuming by local authorities who had to gather and collate data from across the range of partners and employers they were working with.

- The Guarantee funding not being accessible until November 2020, and the No One Left Behind being annual funding cycle, created distinct challenges for implementation and delivery for both.

Key findings: Employability staff experiences

No One Left Behind

- General awareness of No One Left Behind was high amongst staff delivering employability services.

- Most employability staff agreed that the services they delivered aligned with No One Left Behind principles, even when they were not fully aware of the details of the strategy and its aims.

- Most staff who responded to the survey agreed that No One Left Behind had made at least some positive difference to service delivery in their area, although one in every four did not know if it had.

- Employability staff identified some examples of positive changes resulting from No One Left Behind included: greater local decision-making; increased partnership working; development of new services; less duplication of service delivery; and increased communication between the local authority and service providers.

- Feedback from employability staff suggest scope for further improvement in partnership working at the local level and ensuring that employability services are easy for people to navigate.

- Of those staff who thought that No One Left Behind had made a positive difference, most thought that No One Left Behind had enabled more people to be supported and had made employability services easier for people to navigate.

- Key barriers identified by employability staff to implementation of No One Left Behind related to administrative burden and resourcing challenges, including frontline workers feeling under time pressure or under-staffed.

- Employability staff expressed some frustration at the current funding processes and timescales, which were limiting their ability to plan longer term and creating pressure to allocate available local funding at pace.

Young Person's Guarantee

- Awareness of the Young Person's Guarantee was higher amongst service providers than No One Left Behind and it was found to have been embedded within the wider landscape of employment support services in most areas.

- Most employability staff thought the Guarantee had made a positive difference to the way services were being delivered to young people in their area and that it was the right response to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on young people's progression.

- Examples of positive changes identified by employability staff from the Guarantee included: more employer engagement, the creation of additional training opportunities, more flexible, person-centred support and improved partnership working at the local level.

- Employer Recruitment Incentives were found to have been generally well received by employers, although some employability staff were less convinced of the need for these in the current climate where many employers are struggling to recruit.

Key findings: Service user experiences

- The most common referral routes into employment support services are the Job Centre (for those aged 25 and over) and careers advisers (for those aged under 25).

- Most service users were looking for support to help find a job, but many were also looking for other types of support including to build confidence or access careers advice, training, apprenticeships, work experience or support to remain in work.

- Service users accessed a wide range of services, with support for CV development, one-to-one support from a key worker, and job search support being the most common.

- Most service users said they found it easy to access employment support **services** with the most common reason being that staff were friendly, approachable, supportive and encouraging.

- The small number of people who found services difficult to access referenced the services not been well advertised or well-known, and challenges faced in making contact, including phones not being answered, being kept on hold or people not getting back to them.

- Service users were experiencing a wide range of challenges and barriers to progression at first engagement with the service, with low confidence / self-esteem and mental health and wellbeing issues being the most common.

- Service users reported high levels of satisfaction with the support they received due to the holistic, tailored and person-centred nature of support and how open, supportive and encouraging the staff delivering the services were.

- Most service users agreed that the support received was delivered by knowledgeable staff, communications were simple and clear, was tailored to their needs, their existing experience and current situation was recognised, and were easy to access and engage with.

- Key themes amongst those who were dissatisfied with the service related to the time taken to access particular types of support and a lack of responsiveness, with some thinking that services seemed understaffed.

- Around half of service users had been asked by the employment support service to provide feedback on the services they received, and around half said they knew how to complain if they were unhappy with the support received.

Recommendations

The evaluation identified some potential areas for improvement in relation to ongoing implementation of No One Left Behind and the implementation of future programmes and these are set out below (discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 'Conclusions and Recommendations').

Targeted awareness raising

Recommendation 1: Increase knowledge and understanding amongst service providers of No One Left Behind principles and supporting tools.

Recommendation 2: Increase promotion and awareness of the services on offer to potential and current service users, particularly those who may be facing barriers to engagement.

Making best use of data and evidence

Recommendation 3: Increase effectiveness of data use to better tailor service provision, particularly for services aimed at those facing additional barriers to employment.

Recommendation 4: Provide additional support and resources for data collection and reporting processes associated with No One Left Behind.

Recommendation 5: Increase opportunities for service users to provide feedback on their experiences.

Learning from Young Person's Guarantee

Recommendation 6: Use learning from the Young Persons' Guarantee to inform future employment support for young people.

Mental health provision and support

Recommendation 7: Improve access to mental health support for service users.

Confirmation of available funding

Recommendation 8: Communicate funding for future time-limited interventions as early and widely as possible.

Recommendation 9: Provide more certainty as early as possible on likely future funding to enable longer term planning**.**

1. Introduction

The Scottish Government commissioned Ipsos to undertake an implementation evaluation of the development and early delivery of No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee. The study assessed progress and learning to date, identifying enablers and barriers to implementation. The findings will inform continuous improvement of Scottish Government commitments outlined in the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) and the Fairer and More Equal Society Programme, which aims to tackle poverty and eradicate barriers to labour market participation. This report presents the findings of the implementation evaluation, which took place between May and December 2022.

1.1   Background and context

Employability in Scotland

Following discussions with stakeholders and service users, the Scottish Government published *No One Left Behind: Review of Employability Services* in December 2018. It recognised that a critical aspect of inclusive growth was ensuring that as many people as possible have the opportunity to access and sustain fair work. The review concluded that significant system reform was required to drive delivery of more effective and joined-up employability support across Scotland, and ultimately better employment outcomes for service users. It detailed a new partnership approach to employability services in Scotland based on more effective integration and alignment of support and services, and adherence to a set of values and core principles.

An agreement was signed in 2018 between Scottish Ministers and COSLA, on behalf of Scottish Local Government, to confirm that the new approach would be delivered in partnership[1]. Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs) are in place within each of the 32 local authority areas in Scotland to facilitate collaborative planning and delivery of local employability support through public, third and private sector providers.

The overall aim of No One Left Behind is to provide a flexible, user-centred employability system aimed at helping people to find, stay and progress in sustainable work. To deliver this, the Scottish Government and local government will work more collaboratively with third and private sectors to identify local needs and make informed, evidence-based decisions, flexing these to meet emerging labour market demands. These partnerships will also help to align with other services to ensure a holistic, inclusive and universal approach to employment support in Scotland.

The objectives and key principles of No One Left Behind relate to:

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1 Scottish_and_local_government_partnership_working_agreement_for_employability.pdf (employabilityinscotland.com)

- An employability system that tackles inequalities in Scotland's labour market, creating a more responsive, joined up and aligned employability system that helps people of all ages, who face the greatest barriers to progress towards, into and to sustain work.

- Dignity and respect; fairness and equality; continuous improvement; and embedding lived experience.

- Collaboration across Government and wider partners and stakeholders to address barriers to employment, and support people into work by ensuring the employability offer in Scotland is person-centred, flexible and responsive to the needs of individuals and employers.

- Creating the conditions for funding and service delivery integration and alignment, joining up with health, housing, justice and other policy areas, to provide clearer pathways to sustainable employment.

- Driving collective leadership across the system by engaging with strategic partners in the public, private and third sectors to develop a platform for development of future employability services in Scotland – with individuals at the centre.

The No One Left Behind Delivery Plan was published in November 2020[2]. It restated the Government's ambitions to deliver on No One Left Behind, whilst acknowledging that the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19 had impacted on the pace of progress to date.

Young Person's Guarantee

The Young Person's Guarantee (Guarantee) was introduced in November 2020 in direct response to the economic and labour market challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. It aimed to mitigate the potentially damaging effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's transitions from education to employment. There was also recognition from the outset that not all young people experience the labour market equally and that groups who are experiencing barriers fare even worse during times of recession. The ambition of the Guarantee was that *"every person aged between 16 and 24 in Scotland has the opportunity, depending on their circumstances, to study; take up an apprenticeship, job or work experience; or participate in formal volunteering."*

A total of £175m was invested through the Guarantee over a two-year period. This was distributed directly to agencies and organisations delivering support to young people. The proportion of the funding that was invested in local authorities (via Local Employability Partnerships) was delivered within the framework of the No One Left Behind approach and included in the scope of the implementation evaluation. In 2020, the Guarantee represented £30m investment made through LEPs to deliver employability support for young people. This increased to £45m in 2021 when the scope of the Guarantee was broadened to incorporate training,

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2 https://www.gov.scot/publications/no-one-left-behind-delivery-plan/ Scottish Government No One Left Behind Delivery Plan

Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERI)[3] and mental health interventions for young people.

1.2 Wider policy and operational context

No One Left Behind has a key role to play in supporting implementation of Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET), which sets out key priorities for Scotland's economy and actions required to maximise opportunities over the next decade to achieve the vision of a wellbeing economy. It also has a crucial role in supporting the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26, which includes a commitment to increasing investment in employment services aimed at supporting parents to enter and progress in sustainable and fair work.

There are a wide range of employability programmes supported by the Scottish Government which come under the banner of the No One Left Behind approach. These include: Our Future Now, which works with charities across Scotland to support young people into education, employment and training; Discovering Your Potential, which provides flexible and intensive support for young care leavers; and the Parental Employability Support Fund, which provides support to parents both in and out of work to increase their income from paid employment.

1.3 Evaluation aims and objectives

The aim of the implementation evaluation was to assess progress and learning to date from the development and early delivery of No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee. It considered the extent to which the aims and objectives of No One Left Behind and the Guarantee were on track to be achieved, and any adjustments that might need to be made in future phases to enable this. The evaluation aimed to address three overarching questions:

1. How effectively have No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee been implemented?

2. What has been the experience of service providers and service users?

3. What are the lessons learned for Scottish Government, LEPs and wider stakeholders from early design and delivery?

The findings are intended to inform continuous improvement of employability policy. This is crucial to simplifying the system for service users and supporting a continued shift towards user engagement, integrated service delivery and shared measurement in achieving the transformation required to maximise the impact of investment in employability and deliver better outcomes. The findings will also form a baseline against which future progress in implementation can be assessed and that any future evaluation of employability support in Scotland can build upon.

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3 Financial contributions paid to employers towards the costs of recruiting an unemployed young person.

1.4   Structure of document

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** provides an overview of the methodology used for the evaluation.
- **Chapter 3** presents key findings on the implementation of No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee.
- **Chapter 4** details stakeholder experiences of implementation of No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee.
- **Chapter 5** presents feedback from service users on the employability support received.
- **Chapter 6** presents summary conclusions and recommendations.

2. Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was taken to the implementation evaluation of No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee, drawing on quantitative and qualitative research with local employability stakeholders, staff within employability service providers and service users. The aim was to incorporate as broad a range of views and perspectives as possible to address the evaluation questions. An overview of the data collected to inform the evaluation is provided in Figure 2.1 and further details are provided in the sections that follow.

A **Research Advisory Group (RAG)** was set up by the Scottish Government to oversee and guide the design and delivery of the evaluation. The RAG was made up of representatives from across Scottish Government policy and social research teams as well as local government. The RAG inputted to each stage of the evaluation including inception, scoping and design, development of research tools and analysis and reporting of interim and final findings.

Figure 2.1: Overview of data collection

Stakeholders and staff

20
Interviews with local employability stakeholders

172
Responses to an online survey of employability staff

6
Focus groups with employability staff

Service users

713
Responses to a national survey of service users

43
Interviews with service users

12
Online diaries with service users

The remainder of this chapter details each stage of data collection before discussing the approach to analysis and synthesis of the findings and methodological limitations.

2.1 Data collection within five local authority areas

Stakeholder interviews

The first stage of fieldwork involved semi-structured interviews with **20 local employability stakeholders** within five local authority areas. The areas were selected to ensure a mix by geography (island, rural, medium / large urban), size and stage of implementation of No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee. The selection was informed by feedback from local and national stakeholders consulted during the scoping stage of the evaluation[4]. It was agreed with the RAG that the five areas selected would not be identified in the reporting of the findings to protect the anonymity of those who participated and to facilitate open and honest reflections on their experiences.

The interviews were conducted in August and September 2022. They incorporated 14 individual interviews, one paired interview and one focus group involving four participants.

The RAG shared contact details for the employability leads within each of the five selected areas who were contacted by Ipsos to participate in an interview. Employability leads were asked to identify up to five additional local stakeholders involved in the design, delivery, management and / or coordination of employability services within their area. They were asked to identify a range of public, private and third sector partners, as well as local employers. Subsequent interviews were conducted with:

- Local authority management staff involved in the implementation of No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee (12)
- Third sector delivery partners (4)
- Employers using ERIs and offering work placements (4)

Interviews were conducted virtually on Microsoft Teams except for the mini group, which was conducted in person. Each interview lasted around 60 minutes. The discussion guide was designed by Ipsos, in consultation with the RAG (see Annex A). An audio recording of each discussion was transcribed for use in analysis.

Survey of staff within employability service providers

The second stage of fieldwork involved an online survey of staff within employability service providers within the five selected case study areas. The survey was developed by Ipsos, in consultation with the RAG (see Annex B). It was designed to take 10-15 minutes to complete. The survey launched on 21 September 2022 and closed on 17 October 2022.

The survey was aimed at staff who were involved in direct delivery of employability services. It was distributed by local authorities on behalf of Ipsos. The five local

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4 Stakeholders were asked to share their views on which areas they perceived to be more / less advanced in terms of implementation of NOLB / YPG and the reasons for this, which was used to inform an assessment of stage of implementation.

authorities were each provided with a unique link to send out to staff in their area as well as an accompanying information sheet, privacy notice and covering email. A total of **172 responses were received**, which included frontline staff, managers, work / careers coaches, training providers and employer engagement leads (Table 2.1). It is not known how many staff work in employabiltiy service providers within each of the five case study areas. As a result, it is not possible to assess how representative the findings are of all employability staff.

Table 2.1: Employability staff survey responses

Job role	Number of responses	% of total
Frontline staff	105	61%
Management staff	36	21%
Work / careers coach	19	11%
Training provider	7	4%
Employer engagement lead	3	2%
Other	2	1%
Total	172	100

It is worth noting that, whilst the survey was clearly framed to be about services delivered through No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee, we cannot know for sure if staff responded in relation to other services they were delivering.

Focus groups with staff

Employability provider staff who completed the online survey were asked if they would be willing to be recontacted to participate in additional research to inform the evaluation. All those who provided consent were contacted by Ipsos and invited to take part in an online group discussion. A total of **six online focus groups** were held with employability staff in November 2022, with a combined total of 16 participants. This included representatives from local authorities, public agencies and third sector organisations.

The focus groups were conducted on Microsoft Teams by the Ipsos evaluation team. The timing varied from 60 to 90 minutes depending on the number of participants. The discussion guide was designed by Ipsos, in consultation with the RAG (see Annex B). An audio recording of each discussion was transcribed for use in analysis. The discussions built on the online survey responses by covering views on progress implementing No One Left Behind and the Guarantee, the extent to which services aligned with the values and core principles of No One Left Behind,

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and the extent to which there has been a notable change in how services are designed and delivered locally due to No One Left Behind and the Guarantee.

2.2 Data collection at national level

National online survey

An online survey was distributed to employability service users across Scotland. The survey was developed by Ipsos, in consultation with the RAG (see Annex B). It was designed and tested to take no more than 10 minutes to complete to minimise burden and maximise responses. The survey launched on 12 October 2022 and closed on 25 November 2022.

It is worth noting that a nation-wide telephone survey of users was the original methodological approach for this research. However, it was discovered that the relevant permissions, informing service users that their contact details could be shared to an independent third-party contractor for evaluation purposes, were not referenced in some Local Authorities' Privacy Information Notices.

To compensate, a range of alternative options were explored and, in consultation with the RAG, it was agreed that the most proportionate approach to reaching the highest numbers of service users would be for the survey to be distributed via email by local authorities. Contact details for the Ipsos team were included in the covering email for the survey for anyone who was having difficulties accessing or completing this.

When compared to a telephone survey, a key limitation of the online survey approach was ceding control to local authorities to issue the survey to service users on behalf of Ipsos. To address this, Ipsos ran two information sessions for local authorities on 10th and 12th October 2022 to explain the purpose of the survey, the process for distributing this and to answer any questions they had. A recording of the session was shared with those who were unable to attend. Ipsos tracked completion rates by local authority and followed up by email and telephone with the employability leads in those areas where there were no completions to offer additional support and to encourage participation.

All 32 local authorities were provided with a unique link to the survey for distributing to their service users along with a covering email and text for issuing reminders. The survey was aimed at all people who had accessed employability services in their area since 2019. A total of **713 responses** were received to the survey, with the majority of Scottish local authority areas[5] being represented. A full breakdown of the profile of survey respondents is provided in Table 2.2. It included representation from service users who were over and under the age of 25, with limiting health conditions or disabilities, from minority ethnic backgrounds, who were care experienced, single parents and those with criminal convictions.

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5 It is not possible to say exactly how many local authorities participated in the survey as the unique links appear to have been shared between a small number of local areas. However, we would estimate that between 6-10 local authorities did not participate.

Table 2.2: Profile of service user survey respondents

Profile	Number	%
Age		
16-24	217	38
25+	433	61
Prefer not to say	9	1
Gender		
Man	352	49
Woman	338	47
Non-binary	12	2
Prefer not to say	11	2
Limiting health condition or disability		
Yes	236	33
No	448	63
Prefer not to say	29	4
Ethnicity		
Ethnic minority	69	10
Not from an ethnic minority	628	88
Prefer not to say	16	2

Table 2.2: Profile of service user survey respondents [continued]

Profile	Number	%
Care experienced		
Yes	107	15
No	533	75
Don't know	46	6
Prefer not to say	27	4
Single parent		
Yes	107	15
No	585	82
Don't know	7	1
Prefer not to say	14	2
Conviction		
Yes	49	7
No	636	89
Don't know	9	1
Prefer not to say	19	3
Total	713	100%

The survey explored service users' initial engagement with the service including how they found out about it, what they were hoping to get out of it, the types of support accessed and how easy or difficult they found it to access services.   The survey also gathered feedback on levels of satisfaction with the support received and views on what could be done to further improve employment support services in their area.

Whilst the survey was clearly framed to be about services delivered through No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee, we cannot know for sure if they were responding in relation to other services.

Interviews with service users

Service users who completed the online survey and provided consent to be recontacted were invited by Ipsos to take part in a follow-up interview. **A total of 43 interviews with service users from 19 local authorities**[6] were conducted by Ipsos between November and December 2022. Whilst no fixed quotas were set, the aim was to recruit participants with a range of characteristics (see Table 2.3 for a full breakdown of the profile of participants).

Table 2.3: Profile of service users who participated in an interview

Profile	Number	% of total
Age		
16-24	15	35
25+	28	65
Gender		
Man	20	47
Woman	23	53
Limiting health condition or disability		
Yes	15	35
No	28	65
Ethnicity		
Ethnic minority	6	14
Not from an ethnic minority	37	86

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[6] Including two of the five local authorities that participated in the data collection activities described in Section 2.2

Table 2.3: Profile of service users who participated in an interview [continued]

Profile	Number	% of total
Care experienced		
Yes	11	26
No	31	72
Prefer not to say	1	2
Single parent		
Yes	10	23
No	33	77
Conviction		
Yes	3	7
No	38	88
Don't know	2	5
Total:	**43**	**100**

Interviews lasted 20-30 minutes and participants received £30 as a voucher or bank transfer as a thank you for their time. The discussion guide was designed by Ipsos, in consultation with the RAG (see Annex A). An audio recording of the discussions and researcher notes were taken for use in analysis. The discussion built on the themes covered in the online survey to explore in more detail service users' experiences of accessing the support, engagement and recruitment to the service, types of support accessed and the difference this had made / was expected to make to them.

Online diaries with service users

The final stage of fieldwork involved **online diaries with 12 employability service users** from ten local authorities. These were conducted using AppLife, an online

app-based research tool proprietary to Ipsos. AppLife allows participants to contribute to research in a flexible way by providing text, picture, video or audio responses to questions and tasks set by the research team.

Service users who participated in an interview were asked if they would be willing to be recontacted to participate for these diaries. All those who provided consent were invited to take part, but not all decided to do so.

Over a two-week period, participants were set eight tasks. These were made available to participants on set days but could be completed at any time during the remaining fieldwork period. Each task was voluntary. An Ipsos moderator reviewed responses daily and prompted for more detail where appropriate. The schedule of tasks was designed by Ipsos, in consultation with the RAG (see Annex C). Participants received a £50 as a voucher or bank transfer as a thank you for their time.

A detailed breakdown of the profile of AppLife participants is provided in the table in Annex C. It included representation from service users who: were under the age of 25; had a limiting health condition or disability; were from an ethnic minority background; were care experienced; were a single parent; or had a conviction.

In terms of engagement, there were 118 distinct responses received from the 12 participants who took part in the online diaries, by: text (78 entries), audio (7 entries), photo (32 entries) and video (1 entry). Responses covered service users' daily experiences of employability support services and barriers or challenges they have experienced on their employability journey. The text entries were combined with the qualitative data gathered through the interviews with service users and analysed against the same framework (described in more detail in Section 2.3 below). The audio and video data was transcribed and also combined with the other qualitative data for analysis. The pictures were used as prompts for further discussion between moderators and service users.

2.3   Analysis and synthesis

The quantitative data collected through the online surveys of employability staff and service users was analysed based on results tables produced by the Ipsos data processing team. The tables were designed to include:

- **Crossbreaks with key variables of interest** – enabling comparison of responses by different subgroups of interest, such as type of support accessed (careers advice, volunteering, support for CV / interview skills) and demographic profile (age, gender, protected characteristics). This included significance testing of differences between subgroups on key variables such as overall satisfaction with the service. Only subgroup findings that are statistically significant are reported.

- **Net responses** – such as combining 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' or 'Satisfied' and 'Very Satisfied' to gauge overall levels of agreement / satisfaction.

- **Summary tables** – for example showing net agreement with a series of statements within the same table for ease of comparison (followed by individual tables with more detailed breakdowns).

Analysis of the qualitative data collected through the interviews with staff and service users and online diaries with service users was based on a systematic thematic approach. It involved the following stages:

- **Initial interviewer observations** – whereby researchers took notes immediately after each interview or focus group outlining their initial impressions or key points.

- **Analysis meetings** – during and after fieldwork to identify (emerging) themes and issues under each research question.

- **Systematic summarising** – of the key findings from each interview into a 'thematic framework matrix' in Excel, developed from the research questions and analysis meetings.

- **Systematic analysis of the data** – to identify the range of views and experiences, including similarities and differences in views and experiences between different sub-groups (such as by different equalities characteristics).

Where findings are based on qualitative data, the report avoids the use of quantifying language (including terms such as 'most' or 'a few') as far as possible, since the purpose of qualitative data is to identify the range of views and experiences on an issue, rather than to estimate prevalence.

2.4 Methodological limitations

The combination of survey findings and qualitative research allows us to comment on how widespread particular views or experiences are likely to be (based on the survey data), and to provide a more in-depth account of the potential reasons for particular views or experiences (drawing on the qualitative research). However, as with any evaluation, there are limitations to the methodology that should be kept in mind when interpreting the findings.

First, fieldwork with stakeholders and staff was conducted in five local authority areas. While these areas were chosen to ensure a mix in terms of geography, location, size and stage of implementation, it is likely that staff in other local authorities have different experiences of the implementation of No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee. Furthermore, while Ipsos provided local authorities with information on how to distribute the survey to frontline staff in their area, we cannot be sure that the survey reached all intended recipients.

Second, the original intention had been for Ipsos to conduct a telephone survey of service users for reasons already covered in Section 2.2. The shift to an online survey distributed to service users via local authorities represented a less robust approach as the evaluation team were not in control of who the survey was sent to or when reminders were issued. Whilst mitigations were put in place, including information sessions for local authorities and follow up calls and emails to those

who did not response, not all local authorities took part and we cannot be sure that the survey reached all intended recipients for those who did take part. Moreover, we cannot be sure that respondents did not receive employability support that was not funded through No One Left Behind / the Young Person's Guarantee.

It should also be noted that there are relatively small numbers of service users with protected characteristics represented in the survey and so findings for these groups should be interpreted with caution.

Third, in terms of the qualitative fieldwork, participants were self-selecting which may have biased the sample towards those who have stronger views (positive or negative) on their experiences of delivering or accessing employment support services.

3. Progress in implementation

Key Findings

- There was mixed feedback from local stakeholders on how well No One Left Behind had been implemented locally, although most perceived this positively.

- No One Left Behind was said to have facilitated better partnership working between employability stakeholders at the local level, including bringing greater focus and purpose to existing partnerships structures.

- Whilst there was some variation between areas in the extent to which No One Left Behind was considered to represent a 'new' approach, most local stakeholders agreed that it had contributed to further development and enhancement of services.

- Some local stakeholders thought more could be done to engage and support people who were furthest from the labour market, including those with protected characteristics.

- Most stakeholders thought the Young Person's Guarantee had been implemented well locally and was an appropriate response to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on young people's progression in learning and work.

- The main challenge identified by local stakeholders in relation to implementation of the Guarantee was the short timescales for the distribution of the funding due to annual funding not being confirmed until part-way through the financial year.

- There was variation between local authorities in the balance of services delivered in-house relative to externally commissioned, although most were working with a wide range of third sector, private sector and education providers.

- Local authorities were also working with a wide range of local employers, and the Employer Recruitment Incentive had created new opportunities to expand their work with employers.

- The monitoring and reporting requirements for No One Left Behind (which includes activity delivered through the Young Person's Guarantee) were considered very time consuming by local authorities who had to gather and collate data from across the range of partners and employers they were working with.

3.1   Introduction

This chapter reports on local stakeholder perceptions of the implementation and early delivery of No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee. It begins with stakeholders' perceptions of progress made in implementation covering early set up, progress towards key aims and objectives[7], enablers and barriers to implementation and monitoring and reporting. The is followed by an overview of employment service delivery and how this has changed since the introduction of No One Left Behind. The findings presented draw on evidence from interviews with stakeholders in five local authority areas, including local authority staff, third sector staff and employers. It also draws on evidence from the survey of frontline staff.

3.2   Progress in implementation

Early set up

Awareness and involvement of local stakeholders with the early set up of No One Left Behind typically depended on how long they had been working in employability services. Interview discussions with local stakeholders around early set up focussed on communication, partnership working, and administration. There were variations in reported experiences depending on local authority area and job role.

In terms of early communication, there was a lot of dialogue between local authorities, third sector organisations, employers and other local partners. One third sector stakeholder thought that initial communication and engagement from local authorities about No One Left Behind had been positive. However, they also noted that there was still more to do to achieve the strategy's aims (discussed in more detail later in this chapter).

> "I think there was definitely some good engagement before the roll-out of it to get involvement from third sector, and feedback on what it should look like…I think there was that whole delay between what they said, what they did and when the cash actually landed. I'm sure when they evaluate the outcomes and the statistics for that period, they'll see that there's probably not a lot been actually achieved…"
>
> (Third sector stakeholder)

Local authorities had different starting points when it came to partnership working. Some local authorities used existing partnerships to involve stakeholders in early implementation while others described having to work on building relationships. For example, one local authority worked to ensure their existing LEP had more of a strategic focus while another smaller local authority did not have this structure in place prior to No One Left Behind and had been working to develop relationships with organisations where there had previously been 'competition' for resources. It should also be noted that this local authority questioned whether the LEP model

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7 See Section 1.1 for discussion of the key aims and objectives of No One Left Behind and Young Person's Guarantee.

was the best for them as given the size of the local authority there were relatively few staff involved in employability.

> "Whereas before it was a really useful talking shop, in that people came together and they shared a bit of information and what they were doing…I obviously brought a more strategic viewpoint to the LEP and made sure that people who were around the table were decision makers…"

> (Local authority stakeholder)

> "We've never had a LEP, it's only just getting into now that are systemic problems in [local authority] for partnership working, because again previously we had competition with [a public sector organisation] whereas now we're having to work alongside them...that's a bit of a tricky relationship to hold and to manage."

> (Local authority stakeholder)

There was evidence of local authorities and partners working together to resolve implementation issues. For example, one third sector delivery partner described how initially only the basic pension contribution rate was covered for employees recruited through the ERI, whereas they were committed to paying a pension rate. The local authority was able to come up with a solution so that the employer did not incur a cost.

Progress in implementation

There was mixed feedback on how well No One Left Behind had been implemented locally, although most local employability staff perceived this positively. More than half (59%) of those delivering employment services thought No One Left Behind had been implemented fairly or very well in their local area (Figure 3.1). However, more than one in five (22%) thought it had been implemented not very well or not at all well. A fifth (19%) of those who responded to the survey said they didn't know how well No One Left Behind had been implemented in their area.

This aligned with feedback from local stakeholders who participated in interviews and focus groups who thought that, whilst some progress had been made in implementation, there was more to do to ensure that the key aims and objectives of No One Left Behind were being met. Others commented that it was still too early to say how well it was working and what difference it had made.

Figure 3.1: How well do you think No One Left Behind has been implemented in your area?

Very well	11%
Fairly well	48%
Not very well	15%
Not at all well	7%
Don't know	19%
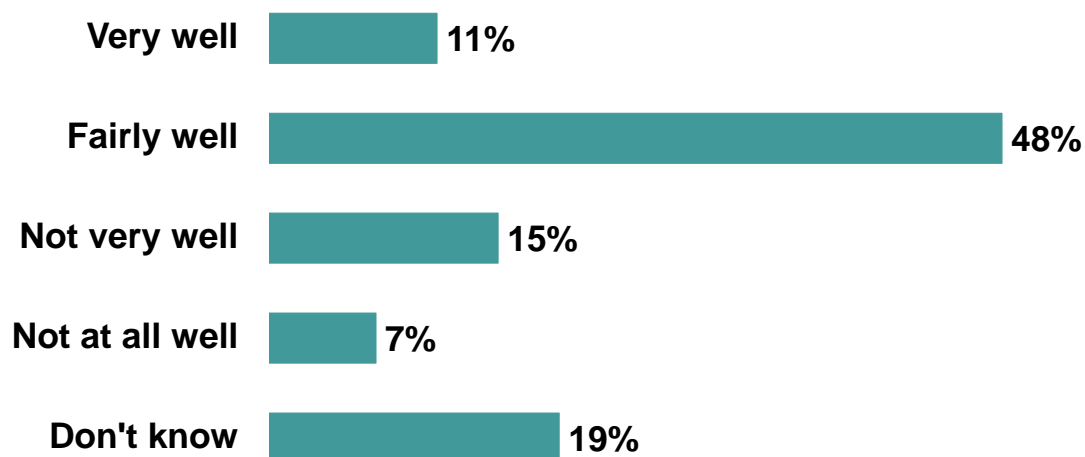
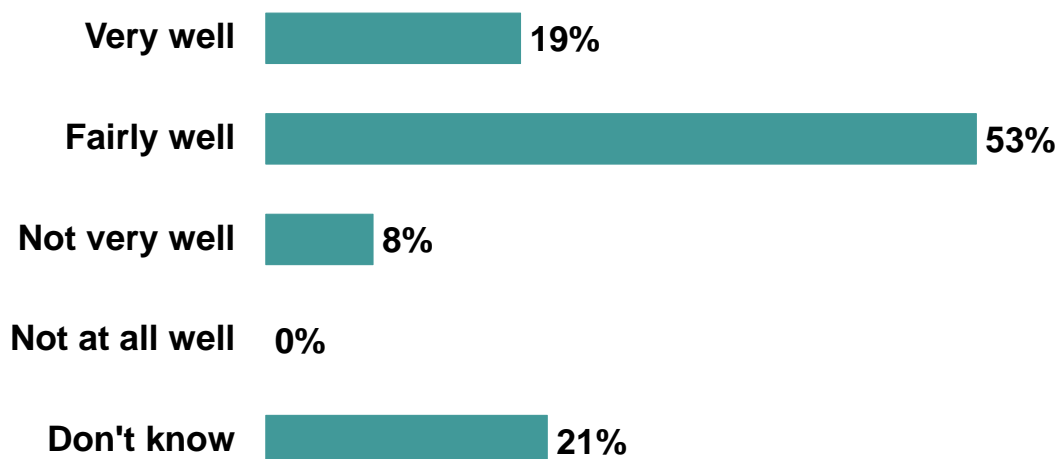Source: Ipsos survey of frontline staff
Base: 172

Some local stakeholders thought more could be done to engage and support those furthest from the labour market. One local authority representative reflected that, while the unemployme nt rate and claimant rate in their area was "very low", there was more work to do to reach groups that were less engaged with employability services. Related to this, when working with the hardest to reach groups, one local authority stakeholder reflected that it would take time to overcome the multiple barriers some individuals face when it comes to employability.

"We know we still need to do more there because we still have gaps in terms of if we look at the more deprived areas, as I mentioned to you earlier, there's a disability employment gap that every area will have, I'm sure. But I think there's been huge progress in the numbers coming down. But, as I say, that now leaves us with a challenge around going to the less traditional groups that maybe haven't engaged so much in the past."

(Local authority stakeholder)

Most stakeholders thought that the Young Person's Guarantee had been implemented well locally. Almost three quarters (72%) of those who completed the staff survey thought the Guarantee had been implemented fairly or very well in their area and less than one in ten (8%) thought it had not been implemented well (Figure 3.2). This aligned with feedback from interviews and focus groups with local stakeholders and staff, where the consensus was that implementation of the Guarantee had gone well.

Figure 3.2: How well do you think the Young Person's Guarantee has been implemented in your area?

Response	Percentage
Very well	19%
Fairly well	53%
Not very well	8%
Not at all well	0%
Don't know	21%

Source: Ipsos survey of frontline staff
Base: 172

The main challenge raised in relation to implementation of the Guarantee was the short timescales for the distribution of the funding. Local authorities would have welcomed earlier confirmation of how much funding would be made available through the Guarantee and greater flexibility on when this could be used.

> "It's been a bit frustrating that the Scottish Government have taken so long to actually get the cash out and then they want it spent tomorrow, and they're not letting it be carried over. So you get 6 months' funding to implement a brand new service, to recruit, to implement, to get in place, achieve outcomes."
>
> (Local authority stakeholder)

Monitoring and reporting

The general consensus was that monitoring and reporting of No One Left Behind and Young Person's Guarantee was very time consuming for local authorities. Certain aspects were described as frustrating such as standardising information provided by partners, which required a lot of engagement, communication and support given that partners all had different existing processes and systems for collecting and recording data on service users. Data collection and reporting were described by one third sector stakeholder as the area which needs most improvement going forward One local authority also mentioned the level of paperwork that was required from employers to process ERI payments. These challenges are discussed further in Chapter 4 in relation to the administrative burden associated with delivering employability services.

> "We have access to their [local authority] database to record all the information for the client records. I would say that that's probably the area that's needing

more work done on it, but again, it's probably been harder, until the service was up and running, for them to see what it looked like, and what they were going to have to put in…"

<div align="right">(Third Sector stakeholder)</div>

"From a remuneration point of view, for the ERIs with employers, that was really challenging because we were getting pay checks coming in left, right, and centre, trying to get these processed, verified, audited, to then get them onto a finance system, to get them remunerated."

<div align="right">(Local authority stakeholder)</div>

There were some positive comments in relation to monitoring and reporting. One local authority described how they are now tracking things they had not done before, such as the number of service users who have a cognitive impairment. The insights from this are being used to inform and support continuous improvement in service delivery.

Third sector staff and employers generally had fewer comments on this element of the process. There were some employers who do their own internal monitoring and reporting alongside No One Left Behind and Young Person's Guarantee requirements and this did not seem to be a problem for them. Service delivery

Contracting of services

There was wide variation between local authorities in the balance of services delivered in-house relative to externally commissioned. In most cases, the key worker element was delivered internally by the local authority whilst some other types of provision were outsourced. In one area, 90% of provision was sourced from third sector providers. By contrast, another local authority delivered everything internally and only outsourced very niche or specialist support as and when needed. Another described how they had previously aimed to deliver as much as possible in-house, but this had changed because of No One Left Behind and the additional funding that was made available through this.

"[September 2021] we commissioned early and where normally we would put £500,000 out as a max, we put £1.6 million out. That was with the support of No One Left Behind and the additional funding there. More than half of that goes to the third sector but we also have, and we really value, a lot of the private sector companies that are in the area as well because they're very good also."

<div align="right">(Local authority representative)</div>

Local authorities were working with a wide range of third sector, private sector and education providers. In most cases, No One Left Behind provision had built on existing well-established partnerships within local areas rather than resulting in new structures or partnerships. There was a general preference for

sourcing local providers where possible as the consensus was that they were better placed to understand the needs and opportunities available within the area.

> "We've had a Local Employability Partnership in [our area] for years. It has representation from children's services, criminal justice, health, and they will then all link in with a range of other community partnerships."

> (Local authority representative)

> "Partnership was aways there but has been 'finessed'. It's been an opportunity to build on what we've already got."

> (Local authority representative)

Employer Recruitment Incentives

Local authorities were working with a wide range of employers locally. One had previously recruited around 60 local employers to offer work experience placements through the DWP Kickstart programme (which closed in January 2023). They have been able to keep working with those employers due to the ERI they can offer through Young Person's Guarantee. Another discussed how a lot of local employers, particularly those in the hospitality industry, were facing recruitment challenges which was creating an incentive for them to engage with employment services.

However, some did question whether the ERI was appropriate in the current tight labour market and suggested it was raising an expectation amongst employers that they should be funded to offer young people employment opportunities. This suggests that some local authorities were distributing ERIs based on employer expectations rather than user need.

> "[Kickstart and ERIs] have created a hunger for employers to be given free money. An ERI should be used for those who can't get work otherwise. But the Scottish and UK governments have shot themselves in the foot and made our job a damn sight harder because they just said, 'Here's lots of money – take people into employment."

> (Local authority representative)

Changes due to No One Left Behind

There was some variation between areas in the extent to which No One Left Behind was considered to represent a new approach, although most local stakeholders agreed that it had contributed to further development and enhancement of services. Most areas had existing well established systems, processes and partnerships in place for delivering employability services that broadly aligned with the key principles of No One Left Behind.

However, the consensus was that No One Left Behind had created an opportunity to tailor provision more closely to local needs and to focus more on partnership

delivery at the local level. The change was generally considered to be incremental rather than transformational, which was partly attributed to local services having to change and adapt in response to the pandemic which diverted resources and attention away from No One Left Behind implementation.

> "It's very much changed. I feel as if it's got much more focused on the local area. So before, you would have had national pots of funding and you could still apply but you were very much guided by a national set of guidance. Yes, there are some things that will be the same across everywhere but being able to tailor the funding and support that's required into the localities that you're working in is making a big difference."

> (Third sector representative)

> "I think it creates the opportunity for a new approach to employability. I'm not sure it has come at a time or in a way that has enabled us to radically change what is happening. Obviously, anything during COVID has just been hit by the reality of how difficult that's become."

> (Third sector representative)

Changes due to Young Person's Guarantee

Young Person's Guarantee was considered to have addressed a gap arising from the closure of the DWP Kickstart programme. Several local stakeholders referenced this.

> "Kickstart's now finished. And Young Person's Guarantee is probably what Kickstart should have been in terms of giving much more flexibility to do what you wanted to do."

> *(Local authority representative)*

Most local stakeholders agreed that the Guarantee was an appropriate approach to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on young people. The consensus was that it had helped ensure that appropriate provision and resources were in place to stop young people dropping out due to being isolated or unable to access opportunities.

> "I think the fundamental principle there, of a Young Person's Guarantee that says, no matter who you are, wherever you are in Scotland, you have the right to be in work, or an alternative to work, that suits you, I think that's really powerful."

> (Third sector representative)

However, others were less convinced and expressed frustrated that the funding had come to them very late which created pressure to spend it. They also queried why it was being treated separately to No One Left Behind rather than integrated within

one overall funding pot, particularly given that one of the key aims of No One Left Behind is to facilitate better integration of employment support services.

> "I'm not convinced. The monies that have come in have been really helpful, and we've been able to spend some of it, but a lot of it came in very late which didn't help. And why is it not just classed as No One Left Behind? Why has it got a different name? We've got other funding streams under No One Left Behind."

<div align="right">(Local authority representative)</div>

Promotion of services

Local authorities were working through local partners to promote No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee. Most had well established referral pathways in place with local partners who would promote the services they were offering to key target groups they were working with. Some were also using their website and social media channels to promote the service.

However, local stakeholders typically did not use the terminology of 'No One Left Behind' and 'Young Person's Guarantee' as the consensus was that it was too jargony and didn't mean anything to potential service users.

> "So, what we're trying to do here is we use our Facebook page. It's the best tool that we have ever used, and I cannot believe that we only started it three or four years because it is an absolute gold mine for us."

<div align="right">(Local authority representative)</div>

> "We don't use terms YPG or NOLB when talking to clients. "We just say, 'Yes, come on in next Thursday and we'll get you a careers review.' They don't even know it's a different. They don't care. It's a service. But what they do value, I think, is having that single point of contact through the key worker."

<div align="right">(Local authority representative)</div>

4. Experiences of stakeholders and staff

Key Findings

No One Left Behind

- General awareness of No One Left Behind was high amongst staff delivering employability services.

- Most staff agreed that the services they delivered aligned with No One Left Behind principles, even when they were not fully aware of the details of the strategy and its aims.

- Most employability staff who responded to the survey agreed that No One Left Behind had made at least some positive difference to service delivery in their area, although one in every four did not know if it had.

- Staff identified some examples of positive changes resulting from No One Left Behind included: greater local decision-making; increased partnership working; development of new services; less duplication of service delivery; and increased communication between the local authority and service providers.

- Feedback from employability staff suggests scope for further improvement in partnership working at the local level and ensuring that employability services are easy for people to navigate.

- Of those staff who thought that No One Left Behind had made a positive difference, most thought that No One Left Behind had enabled more people to be supported and had made employability services easier for people to navigate.

- Key barriers identified by staff to implementation of No One Left Behind related to administrative burden and resourcing challenges, including frontline workers feeling under time pressure or under-staffed.

- Employability staff expressed some frustration at the current funding processes and timescales, which were limiting their ability to plan longer term and creating pressure to allocate available local funding at pace.

Young Person's Guarantee

- Awareness of the Young Person's Guarantee was higher amongst employability staff than No One Left Behind and it was found to have been embedded within the wider landscape of employment support services in most areas.

- Most employability staff thought the Guarantee had made a positive difference to the way employability services were being delivered to young people in their area and that it was the right response to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on young people's progression.

- Examples of positive changes identified by staff from the Guarantee included: more employer engagement, the creation of additional training opportunities, more flexible, person-centred support and improved partnership working at the local level.

- Employer Recruitment Incentives were found to have been generally well received by employers, although some stakeholders were less convinced of the need for these in the current climate where many employers are struggling to recruit.

4.1   Introduction

This chapter reports on provider experiences of the early delivery of No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee based on findings from interviews with local stakeholders and the survey and focus groups with employability staff. It begins with staff experiences of No One Left Behind covering awareness of the strategy and perceptions of the difference it has made. This is followed by discussion of staff experiences of the Young Person's Guarantee, also covering levels of awareness and views on the difference this has made to services. The final section reports on employability staff views on the difference No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee has made to engagement with service users.

Throughout this chapter, the term "staff" is used as a catch-all to refer to:

- Management: local authority employability leads and others involved in the design and management of employability programmes in local areas

- Frontline staff: key workers, employability support workers and others who work directly with service users

- Work / Careers coaches

- Employer engagement leads

- Training providers.

Where findings relate to a specific group, such as 'management', these are highlighted in the text.

4.2   Experience of No One Left Behind

Awareness of No One Left Behind

General awareness of No One Left Behind was found to be high amongst staff who participated in the survey, although many said they were not fully aware of the details of the strategy and its aims. Around half of those surveyed were fully aware of the details of the No One Left Behind strategy and its aims and a similar proportion were aware of it but not in detail (Figure 4.1). A relatively low proportion (3%) were not aware of No One Left Behind.

Figure 4.1: How aware are you of the No One Left Behind strategy and its aims?

Category	Percentage
Fully aware of No One Left Behind	47%
Aware of No One Left Behind but not in detail	49%
Not aware of No One Left Behind	3%
Don't know	1%
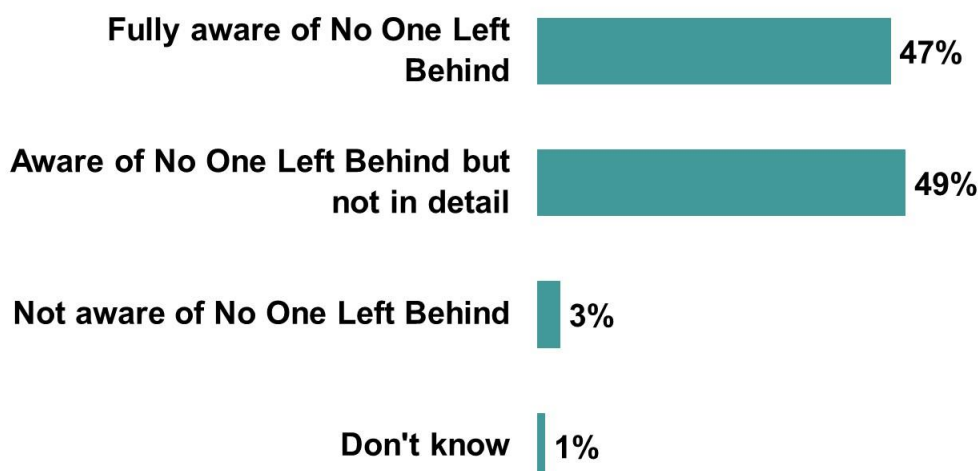
Source: Ipsos survey of employability staff
Base: 172

Awareness was highest amongst staff who were in **management roles**, with two-thirds (66%) saying they were fully aware of the strategy and its aims compared to 47% across all respondents. **Third sector staff** were significantly more likely to say they were not aware of No One Left Behind, although this was still a low percentage (7% relative to 3% across all).

Most of the employability staff who participated in focus group discussions had heard of No One Left Behind, and had some general awareness of this, but again most were not able to fully articulate the details of this. That said, when asked about their understanding of No One Left Behind, **staff frequently referenced features that were in line with the key aims and objectives of strategy** such as: improving outcomes; equity; partnership working; targeting support at those who need it most; supporting successful transitions into work; providing access to wider support (such as wellbeing); and taking a person-centred approach.

> "I do find it a little bit of confusing, some of the terminology and what sits within what. But my understanding of it as an overarching strategy is it's about supporting people who have barriers to employment to overcome those barriers…But I couldn't tell you the key objectives."

> (Focus group participant)

There were mixed experiences amongst employability staff as to how detailed communication about the strategic aims and objectives of No One Left Behind had been. Whilst some had received a lot of communication about this and attended various meetings where this was discussed in detail, others were given more operational level detail focussed on contract delivery requirements. There

was limited awareness amongst focus group participants of the No One Left Behind Customer Charter and Service Standards.

"[Staff member] kind of coordinates everything and keeps us in line…now we've got the local employability partnership, there's been a lot of meetings and a lot of communication over that and the differences and the aims and the strategies and such. So, certainly of late there's been quite a lot of communication over No One Left Behind…"

<div align="right">(Focus group participant)</div>

"I mean, there's been communications but it's not been in massive detail. It's more around, 'Here's the programme we're releasing, and here is what the eligibility will be, and here's what we're wanting to do with it,' But not in depth, contract level background detail."

<div align="right">(Focus group participant)</div>

In terms of other local stakeholders, third sector delivery partners emphasised equity, local decision-making, person-centred approach and targeting the most vulnerable as key features of No One Left Behind. Employers were generally not aware of the detail of the strategy.

Changes due to No One Left Behind

Most employability staff thought that No One Left Behind had made at least some positive difference to service delivery in their area. More than half (58%) thought that No One Left Behind had made a positive difference, with one in every three (33%) saying it had made a 'fair amount' of positive difference. Around one in every ten said it had either made no difference (8%) or had made a negative difference (8%). These findings further suggest a general lack of awareness of the detail of the strategy amongst staff delivering employability services, with one quarter (25%) saying they didn't know if it had made a difference in their area (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: How much of a difference has No One Left Behind made to the way employability services are delivered in your local authority area?

Great deal - positive	10%
Fair amount - positive	33%
Just a little - positive	15%
Made no difference	8%
Just a little - negative	5%
Fair amount - negative	1%
Great deal - negative	2%
Don't know	25%

58% positive

8% negative
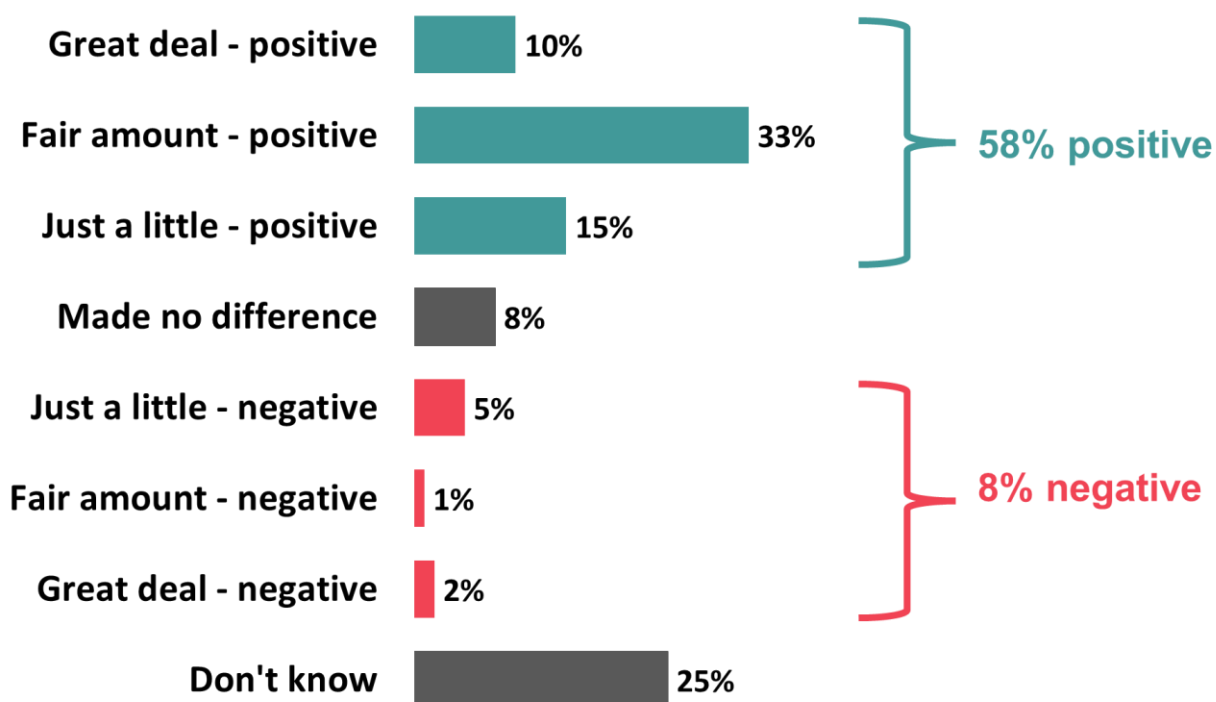
Source: Ipsos survey of employability staff

Base: 172

Local authority staff who completed the survey were significantly more likely to say the strategy had made a positive difference (76% compared to 58% across all respondents). In terms of job role, **management staff** who completed to the survey were significantly more likely to say it had made a negative difference (26% relative to 8% across all).

The qualitative interviews and focus groups with employability staff explored the ways in which No One Left Behind was perceived to have made a difference to service delivery in their local authority area. Examples provided of positive changes introduced because of the strategy included: greater local decision-making; increased partnership working; development of new services; less duplication of service delivery (because the local authority had more oversight of how funding was allocated); increased communication between the local authority and service providers; and easier for employers to take on staff. In addition to benefits already observed from these positive changes, staff also discussed how they would act as building blocks for future improvements to service delivery.

The extent of difference made by No One Left Behind varied between local authority areas depending on how well developed their existing local employability partnerships and infrastructure were. Some local stakeholders felt that change as a result of No One Left Behind had been **less noticeable in their area** as in others because they had already been delivering services in line with the strategy.

"I see [progress towards aims of No One Left Behind] more in other areas than my own because I think we already had a single service. I think the difference nationally is that lots of areas never really evaluated what they needed to do next. I see lots of areas now having to align with the frameworks that are there, and to answer questions that point out where their gaps are, and what they need to do. We always did that."

(Local authority stakeholder)

Most employability staff agreed that the services they delivered aligned with the No One Left Behind principles. Almost all of those who responded to the survey agreed that the services they delivered were based on dignity and respect; focused on finding solutions for people; person-centred; and flexible (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: To what extent do you agree that the employability services you deliver are…?

Based on dignity and respect	97%
Focused on finding solutions for people	97%
Person-centred	96%
Flexible	92%
Delivered in partnership	83%

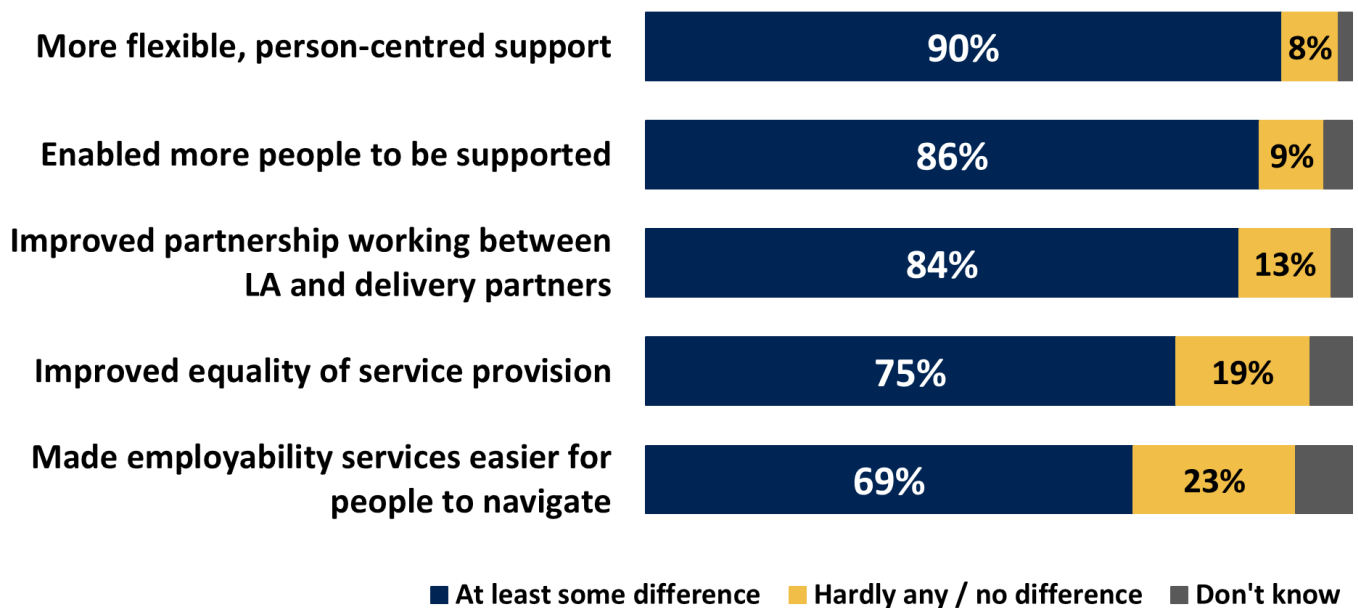Source: Ipsos survey of employability staff

Base: 172
Responses could be provided on a 5pt scale ranging from Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree

A lower proportion (83%) agreed that their services were delivered in partnership, suggesting that there is potentially some scope for improvement on this measure. Looking more closely at this issue, local authority staff who completed the survey were significantly more likely than third sector staff to agree that **services were delivered in partnership** (91% compared to 77%).

Staff thought that No One Left Behind had made a positive difference to most of the key principles that underpin the approach. Of those who felt the strategy had made a positive difference overall, most thought it had made at least some difference to enabling more flexible, person-centred support (90%); more people to be supported (86%); and improved partnership working (84%). The majority also

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thought that No One Left Behind had made a positive difference to improving equality of service provision and making employability services easier for people to navigate, although the proportions were lower at 75% and 69% respectively. One in five (19%) thought that No One Left Behind had made hardly any or no difference to improved equality of service provision and around one quarter (23%) thought it had made no difference to making employability services easier for people to navigate (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4: To what extent has No One Left Behind made a positive difference to the following aspects of employability services in your local authority area?

Source: Ipsos survey of employability staff
Base: 96 respondents who think No One Left Behind has made a positive difference
Responses could be provided on a 4pt scale ranging from To a great extent, To some extent, Hardly at all or Not at all

These findings align with feedback from interviews and group discussions with stakeholders and delivery staff, who described ways in which their services aligned with No One Left Behind principles, even when they were not fully aware of aims and objectives of the strategy. The following quote illustrates perceived changes in service delivery relating to partnership working and ensuring person-centred and solutions-focussed services.

> "I think we very much worked on our own and I think the providers all worked on their own. I think now, with the introduction of No One Left Behind, we work a lot more closely with each other…it's about the individual and not about, 'Well, that's your programme and we need to give you 12 people to fill it whether they're suitable or not.'...it's, 'What does this individual need?' And we're actually having those discussions…"

Barriers to service delivery

Employability staff highlighted administrative burden and resourcing constraints as key barriers to delivery. The majority (71%) of those who responded to the survey thought there was too much administration associated with their employability services and that this was acting as a barrier to delivery. Most (61%) also felt under time pressure and half (50%) said they were under-staffed. A relatively low proportion (22%) through their services were lacking strategic vision (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: To what extent do you agree that these are barriers to the employability services you deliver…? (% agree)
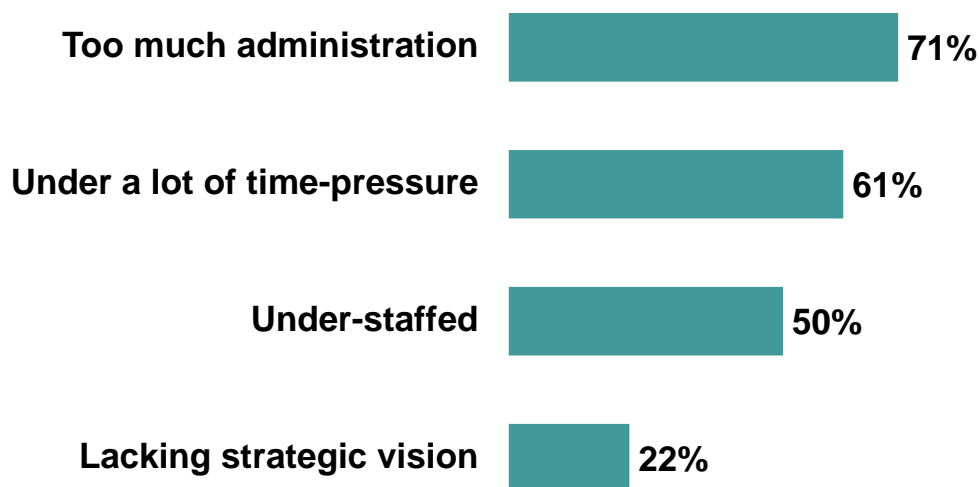
Too much administration — 71%
Under a lot of time-pressure — 61%
Under-staffed — 50%
Lacking strategic vision — 22%

Source: Ipsos survey of employability staff
Base: 172
Responses could be provided on a 5pt scale ranging from Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree or Strongly disagree

Qualitative feedback from stakeholders and employability staff also highlighted the **administration burden associated with service delivery** as being a key challenge, specifically the requirements on local authorities around monitoring and reporting to the Scottish Government. The consensus was that the administration associated with service delivery was time consuming. One local authority stakeholder described how the time they spent collating and organising data could justify recruitment of a full-time staff member. Another noted that whilst the Scottish Government had been receptive to feedback on streamlining requirements, there were frustrations with how often changes were made to monitoring requirements and the time it takes to implement these.

"[delivery partners] have to put in all of the clients that they're working with and then we run the reports at the end of every quarter. But it still takes a good two

weeks' worth of work just to go through the entire spreadsheet and address any gaps or chase things up. It is very time consuming."

A further administrative challenge highlighted by delivery staff related to **the volume of data that needs to be collected from service users to register for the service**. This has been further exacerbated by the fact that local authorities are still managing services delivered under remaining European Union, which have different (and more demanding) requirements to No One Left Behind in relation to the data that needs to be collected from service users at registration. Further administrative challenges relating to registration of service users included: challenges getting ID documents for some young people, such as a bill or bank statement, and a concern that the number of questions asked can be intrusive and deter people from accessing services. There was no suggestion that these were 'new' challenges resulting from the introduction of No One Left Behind, rather they were general challenges faced in the delivery of employability services. One local authority has taken a two-step approach to collecting monitoring information to help build trust with clients.

"We're actually going to move to a different process. We'll still capture all the information that Scottish Government are looking for, but speaking to my key workers, a lot of them are like, 'I'm not filling that out, because that'll just put people off. I only want to help with a CV.' So we're just going down the route of a simple registration form, and then as the clients build up the relationship with their key workers, they'll collect the rest of the information and update as they go."

Local authorities and employabiltiy staff expressed **some frustration at the current annual funding processes and timescales**, which were limiting their ability to plan longer term and creating pressure to allocate funding at pace. In one smaller local authority, this was linked to staffing challenges where delivering at pace was *"a huge burden on the department and on individual members of staff".* Longer term funding would also be appreciated by some stakeholders to provide certainty over future service delivery.

"If they really are wanting to give autonomy in locally-based services, then you need time to plan. I feel as if a lot of the funding has come in and has just gone out too quickly, 'Get it spent,' rather than really being able to commit to say, 'Right, what do we really want to fund long term to make a difference in this area?'"

Stakeholders and staff also mentioned wider barriers to service delivery including: the impact of the pandemic (on ability to deliver services, and on clients); a tight

labour market meaning that those presenting for support are typically those furthest away from the labour market or facing entrenched barriers; and adapting to changes in the level of funding received.

There were mixed levels of awareness and levels of engagement with the **Shared Measurement Framework**[8] for No One Left Behind. Whilst it was found to be embedded in the work of some local authorities, in others it was viewed as time consuming to administer and introduced too quickly. Larger local authorities with more resource and capacity were typically engaging with this more, whilst smaller areas were finding it more challenging to fully embed.

> "I think the shared measurement framework is a lot of work for a small local authority. I could put an entire member of staff just continually reviewing how we're doing against this, but I don't have the time to do that. I think it's a great concept and a great idea, but it's too much, too late and should have been planned…"

(Local authority stakeholder)

> "Well, that's pretty much at the heart of everything that we're doing and some of us are involved in different working groups around No One Left Behind and a couple of us have been involved in the data and reporting group and it's worked well. We're always saying, 'Right, if you want that bit of data you need to tell us how or you need to work out how it works for answering the questions in the shared measurement framework.'"

(Local authority stakeholder)

4.3 Experience of the Young Person's Guarantee

Awareness of the Young Person's Guarantee

General awareness of the Young Person's Guarantee was higher than No One Left Behind. More than half (55%) of staff responding to the survey were fully aware of the Guarantee and a further third (35%) were aware of it but not in detail (Figure 4.6).

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8 https://www.employabilityinscotland.com/media/pgujxbke/for-publication-shared-measurement-framework-updated-december-2022.pdf

Figure 4.6: How aware are you of the Young Person's Guarantee and its aims?

Fully aware of YPG — 55%

Aware of YPG but not in detail — 35%

Not aware of YPG — 7%

Don't know — 2%
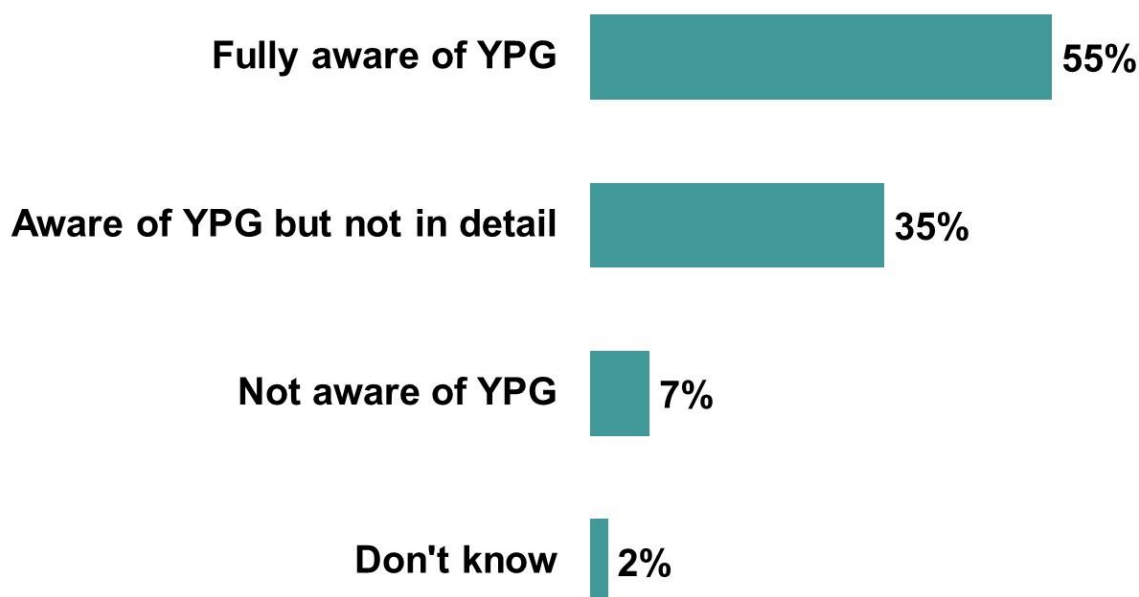
Source: Ipsos survey of employability staff
Base: 172

Management staff were significantly more likely to say they were fully aware of the Guarantee (80% relative to 55% across all respondents), while **third sector** staff were significantly more likely to say they were not aware of this (12% relative to 7% overall).

In most areas, the Guarantee was found to have been **embedded within the wider landscape of employment support services**. However, there was some variation between local authority areas in the extent to which the Guarantee was viewed as separate to No One Left Behind or part of the same overall offer. In some areas, the two were very closely aligned, whilst in others they were treated separately.

> "I don't think we can differentiate between No One Left Behind and YPG here. The same organisations are being funded through both. We've got key workers in place through YPG as well, so it's very much the same working together for every client, really."
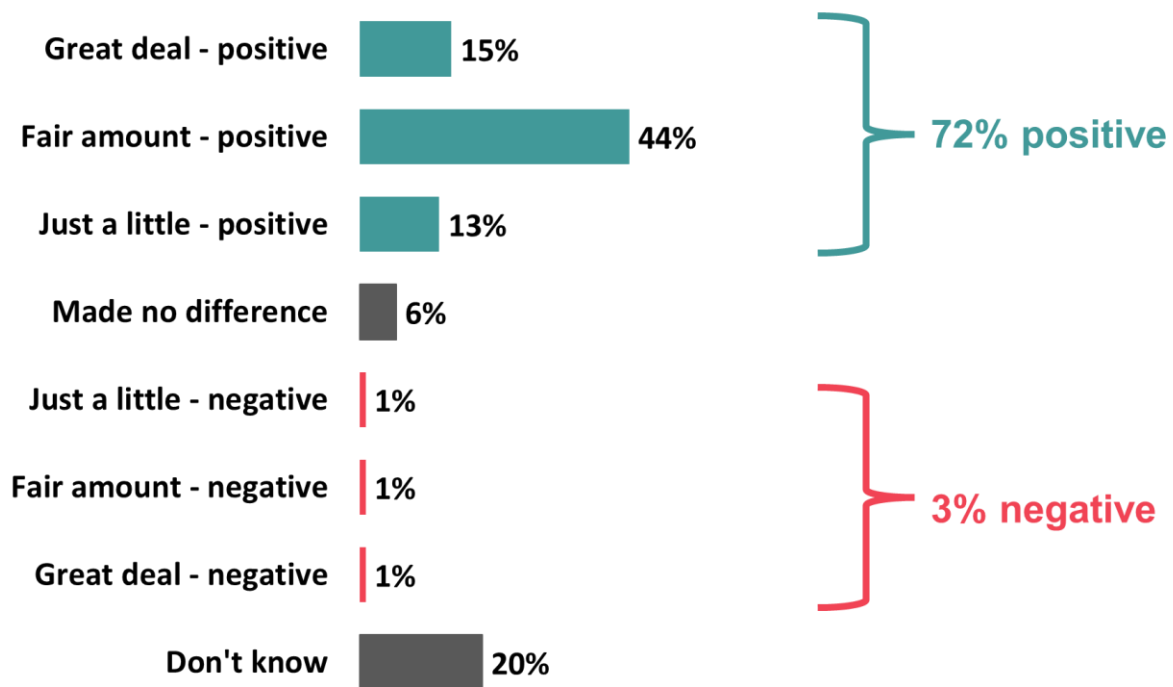>
> (Local authority stakeholder)

> "To be honest they don't really sit together, although they've been operating in tandem to the Scottish government, they came from two different funding directorates. We were able to use No One Left Behind to support Young Person Guarantee delivery, but not the other way around if that makes sense."
>
> (Local authority stakeholder)

Changes due to the Young Person's Guarantee

Most employability staff thought the Guarantee had made a positive difference to the way services were being delivered to young people in their area. The majority (72%) of those who responded to the survey thought it had made a positive difference and just 6% thought it had either made no difference or a negative difference. However, as with No One Left Behind, there was a lack of awareness amongst some frontline staff with a fifth (20%) saying they didn't know if it had made a difference (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7: How much of a difference has the Young Person's Guarantee made to the way employability services are delivered to young people in your local authority area?

Great deal - positive 15%
Fair amount - positive 44%
Just a little - positive 13%
} 72% positive
Made no difference 6%
Just a little - negative 1%
Fair amount - negative 1%
} 3% negative
Great deal - negative 1%
Don't know 20%

Source: Ipsos survey of employability staff
Base: 156 respondents who were aware of Young Person's Guarantee

Local authority staff were significantly more likely to say Young Person's Guarantee had made a positive difference to the way services are delivered (81% relative to 72% across all).

Of those staff who thought the Guarantee had made a positive difference overall, most thought it had made a positive difference across **a range of factors relating to the aims and objectives of the Guarantee**. Most thought it had enabled more employer engagement, the creation of additional training opportunities, more flexible, person-centred support and improved partnership working at the local level. Most (76%) also thought it had enabled more use of ERIs, although 15% did not know if it had made a difference to this suggesting variation in awareness and use of ERIs across respondents.

Whilst the majority also thought the Guarantee had made a positive difference to making employability services easier for young people to navigate and the creation of additional apprenticeship opportunities, more than a fifth (23% and 21% respectively) thought the Guarantee had made hardly any or no difference to these things (Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8: To what extent has the Young Person's Guarantee made a positive difference to the following aspects of employability services for young people in your area?

Aspect	At least some difference	Hardly any / no difference	Don't know
Enabled more employer engagement	84%	10%	6%
Creation of additional training opportunities	82%	12%	6%
More flexible, person-centred support	82%	13%	4%
Improved partnership working between local authority and delivery partners	78%	15%	7%
Enabled more use of Employer Recruitment Incentives	76%	9%	15%
Made employability services easier for young people to navigate	71%	23%	6%
Creation of additional apprenticeship opportunities	70%	21%	9%

■ At least some difference   ■ Hardly any / no difference   ■ Don't know

Source: Ipsos survey of employability staff
Base: 112 respondents who think Young Person's Guarantee has made a positive difference
Responses could be provided on a 4pt scale ranging from To a great extent, To some extent, Hardly at all or Not at all

Local authority staff were most likely to say that the Guarantee had made a difference to improved partnership working (87% relative to 78% overall) and more flexible, person-centred support (91% relative to 82% overall). **Frontline** staff were most likely to say that the Guarantee had made a difference to enabling more employer engagement, improving partnership working and more flexible, person-centred support.

These findings were in line with feedback from interviews and focus groups with stakeholders and staff, which highlighted a range of positive changes to local employment support available to young people due to the Guarantee. This included increased partnership working, greater flexibility, more resources for employers to support young people, increased incentives for employers to take on young people and opportunities to deliver new services. For example, one local authority was now

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funding a **counselling service** as part of their employability support for young people which they would have been unable to do so before. Another was offering ERI for the first time, which was creating new opportunities for young people in their area.

One local authority representative described the Guarantee as a "catalyst" for partnership working and problem solving in their area.

> "I think it's been a catalyst and it's given us that real, sharp focus. It's brought partners in and everyone has been a bit more willing to share and say, 'Well, look, I've got X amount coming in from such and such, so if we were to put these together, we could then do X, Y and Z.' And that's where it's working really well in that respect."

> (Local authority stakeholder)

Feedback on Employer Recruitment Incentives

Local authorities can use some of the funding made available through the Young Person's Guarantee to offer **ERIs**, which are financial contributions paid to employers towards the costs of recruiting an unemployed young person. Employers were found to be very welcoming of ERIs, highlighting the benefits of having additional resources to support young people and giving them confidence to take on a young person in the first place, knowing that part of their wages would be paid.

> "That's a funded post which enables us to free up some money for the mentoring and support of that young person. So without that then, no, we couldn't do it. Or we couldn't do it as well."

> (Employer)

> "It has made a difference because we're a community interest company. We were concerned, you know, is this viable? So with there being a certain amount for wages, I mean, that definitely helped us."

> (Employer)

However, some local stakeholders were less positive about the value and benefit of ERIs, particularly in the current labour market where many employers are struggling to fill vacancies. One local authority was only using them for young people with complex disabilities and support needs who would otherwise struggle to find employment and not offering it to other eligible groups. Another commented that they were unnecessary for most young people who would be able to find work and that they have created an unhelpful expectation amongst some employers that they should be paid to hire young people.

Suggestions for improvement

Employability staff who participated in focus groups shared their views on how they thought services delivered under Young Person's Guarantee could be further

developed or improved. The feedback on potential improvements from staff related to:

- More work to raise awareness of the Guarantee amongst employers.
- Using some of the funding to top up young people's earnings to the level of the National Living Wage.
- Provide a travel allowance for those living in rural areas.
- Extend the timescale for support so it is enough to gain qualifications or to provide further support where this is required.
- Greater integration the Young Person's Guarantee with wider services so that similar support is available to young people once they turn 25.
- Better support mechanisms in place for young people who are not kept on by their employer.

Response to the pandemic

Most staff agreed that the Guarantee was the right response to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on young people's progression in learning and work. Almost two thirds (62%) agreed with this, of which 22% strongly agreed. Relatively few disagreed that it was the right response, although one in three (30%) either did not have an opinion (neither agreed nor disagreed) or didn't know (Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9: To what extent do you agree that the Young Person's Guarantee was the right response to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on young people's progression in learning and work?
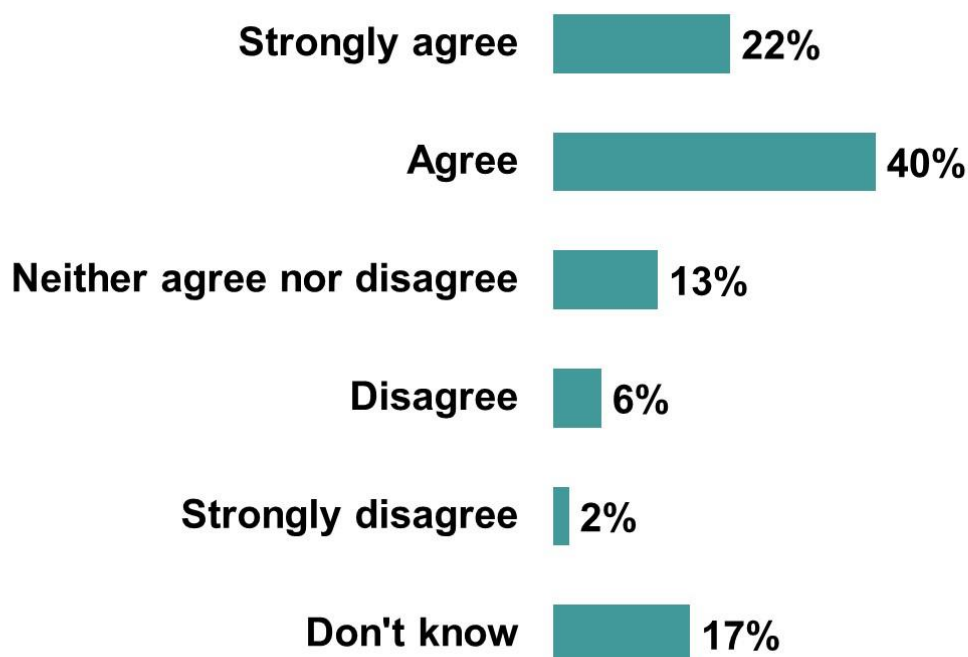
Source: Ipsos survey of employability staff
Base: 156 respondents who are aware of Young Person's Guarantee

Responses could be provided on a 5pt scale ranging from Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree or Strongly disagree

Local authority staff and frontline staff were significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree (79% and 69%) that the strategy was the right response to the pandemic, compared to 62% overall.

These findings are in line with the feedback from the interviews and focus groups with stakeholders and staff, who thought that the Guarantee was the right response in principle. However, there were suggestions for how implementation could have been improved at the outset and moving forward. These included timelier and streamlined communications about funding, making funding available earlier and offering young people greater autonomy and choice.

> "The YPG funding came far too late. The links in the early stages weren't great. You had different comms people working on YPG as you did on No One Left Behind. I think there's got to be a much more integrated team at the Scottish Government."
>
> (Local authority stakeholder)

> "I think the fundamental principle there of a Young Person's Guarantee that says, no matter who you are, wherever you are in Scotland, you have the right to be in work, or an alternative to work, that suits you. I think that's really powerful. I think there is a little bit for me still which is taking that a step further, which is that people should have the right to choose which of those things they'll be in, and we haven't quite done that."
>
> (Third Sector Stakeholder)

There was also a view that, whilst additional support for young people was needed and welcome, there were also a lot of people in older age groups who had been negatively impacted by the pandemic and could have benefited from access to additional resources and support.

> "I think it has helped, but I also think the amount of money that was given to young people compared to the amount of money that was set aside for the older was quite substantial, and I think it wasn't just the young people that could have done with the extra money. I think it was the older people as well."
>
> (Local authority stakeholder)

4.4 Engagement with service users

Most employability staff felt that No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee had **made employability services easier for people to navigate and enabled more people to be supported** (Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10: Frontline staff views on accessibility of employability services

86%
Thought No One Left Behind had enabled more people to be supported

69%
Thought No One Left Behind had made employability services easier for people to navigate

71%
Thought Young Persons' Guarantee has made employability services easier for young people to navigate
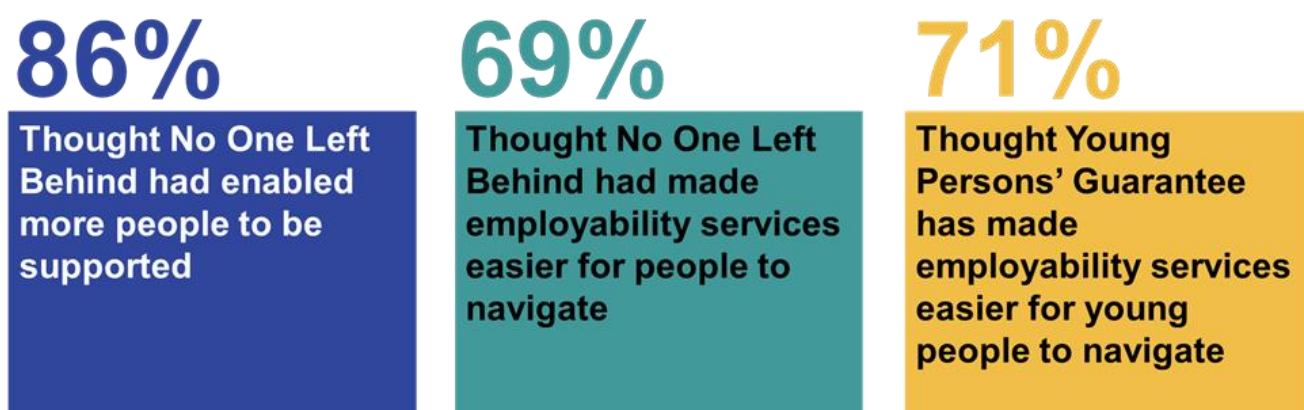
Base: 96 respondents who think No One Left Behind has made a positive difference; 112 respondents who think Young Person's Guarantee has made a positive difference
Source: Ipsos survey of employability staff

Third sector staff were significantly more likely to say that they thought No One Left Behind had made at least some difference to enabling more people to be supported (95% compared to 86% overall). **Third sector** and **management** staff were significantly more likely to say that No One Left Behind had made at least some difference in making services easier to navigate (82% and 76%, compared to 69% overall). **Frontline** staff were significantly more likely to say that the Young Person's Guarantee had made a difference in making services easier for young people to navigate (88% compared to 71% overall).

Staff described various ways in which local employment services had been **made more accessible to certain groups facing particular barriers**. For example, one local authority provided IT equipment to individuals living in areas with poor connectivity and driving lessons for people who did not have access to public transport – both funded through Young Person's Guarantee. Another local authority was paying for hotel accommodation to enable service users to attend courses. They welcomed the increased flexibility offered through No One Left Behind and the Guarantee to use funding to address specific barriers faced.

Lack of confidence was widely referenced as a common barrier to engaging with employment services, particularly for young people. Staff have noticed an increase in the prevalence of mental health issues amongst service users since the pandemic, with more people struggling with anxiety which is affecting their confidence when it comes to employability.

> "The one that I'm really conscious of, is the ongoing impact of COVID, on the young people coming through who haven't got opportunities when they've finished school. Almost every young person on my caseload at the moment, it's actually hard getting them even onto an employability programme, taking that next step, because they talk about how changed they are as a result of being isolated…"

The consensus amongst staff was that **more could be done to understand and reach people who are not engaging with employability services**. Groups mentioned as more difficult to reach or engage include: people dealing with addictions, working parents, young people after they leave school, long-term unemployed, young carers and care leavers. One local authority staff member described how they are trying to understand the extent to which employability services should be delivered at scale or in a more specialised way to reach those who need support most.

"What's the balance between scale and specialism? Should we be redressing that balance and doing less at scale and more intensive work? Albeit you won't reach as many people, but you'll reach the people that have been left behind by these national bigger programmes. It's the bigger picture of things, so I think that's where we'd like to be able to understand and use No One Left Behind as the mechanism for that."

(Local authority stakeholder)

Stakeholders and staff who participated in interviews and focus groups shared their thoughts on how employment services could be further developed to improve **accessibility of services** in their area. Suggestions included better promotion of services (including in community venues) and better referral pathways between employability services and other services, such as mental health support. Other suggestions included offering more ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) provision, employing frontline staff with lived experience and having a greater focus on establishing meaningful relationships with service users. The key role of the third sector in reaching people who could potentially benefit from employment support was highlighted.

"Many third-sector employability providers don't just do employability, they do youth work, they run community centres, they have other ways to reach people who would benefit from it."

(Third Sector stakeholder)

5. Experiences of service users

Key Findings

- The most common referral routes into employment services are the Job Centre (for those aged 25+) and careers advisers (for those under 25).

- Most service users were looking for support to help find a job, but many were also looking for other types of support including to build confidence or access careers advice, training, apprenticeships, work experience or support to remain in work.

- Service users accessed a wide range of services, with support for CV development, one-to-one support from a key worker and job search support being the most common.

- Most service users found it easy to access employment support services. The most common reasons given for service users finding services easy to access were that staff were friendly, approachable, supportive and encouraging.

- The small number of people who found services difficult to access referenced the services not been well advertised or well-known and challenges faced in making contact, including phones not being answered, being kept on hold or people not getting back to them.

- Service users were experiencing a wide range of challenges and barriers to progression at first engagement with the service, with low confidence / self-esteem and mental health and wellbeing issues being the most common.

- Service users reported high levels of satisfaction with the support they received due to the holistic, tailored and person-centred nature of this and how open, supportive and encouraging the staff were.

- Most service users agreed that the support received was delivered by knowledgeable staff, made communications simple and clear, was tailored to their needs, recognised their existing experience and current situation and were easy to access and engage with

- Key themes amongst those who were dissatisfied with the service related to the time taken to access particular types of support and a lack of responsiveness, with some thinking that services seemed understaffed (in line with feedback from some providers).

- Around half of service users had been asked by the employment support service to provide feedback on the services they received, and around half said they knew how to complain if they were unhappy with the support received.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the experiences of services users who have accessed employability support in Scotland since 2019. It begins with an overview of service users' engagement with employment support services, followed by feedback on their experiences of this, including the extent to which it met their needs. The chapter then presents self-reported outcomes for service users from the support received and their views on potential recommendations for future services. The findings draw on evidence from the online survey, depth interviews and online diaries with service users. The survey results are presented for those under the age of 25 (who would have received support through the Young Person's Guarantee) and those over the age of 25 who would have received support under the wider banner of No One Left Behind.
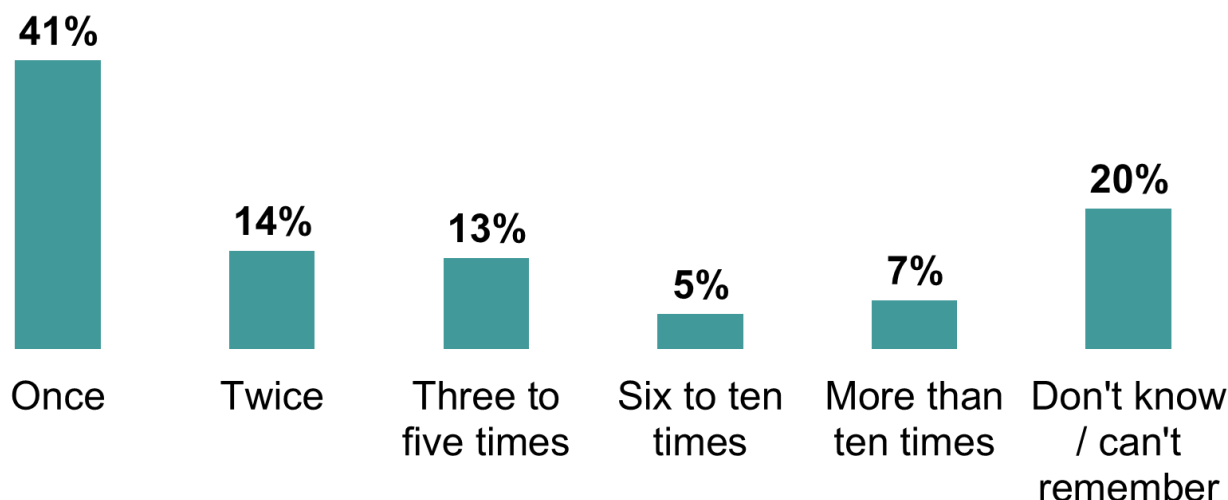
5.2 Engagement with employment support services

Timing and volume of engagements with services

Most of the service users who participated in the evaluation had accessed employment support services in the preceding two years. Of those who completed the online survey, more than half (58%) had accessed employment support services in 2022 and over a quarter (28%) had accessed services in 2021. A lower share of respondents had accessed services in 2020 and 2019 (13% and 8% respectively).

Employment support services in Scotland work with a lot of repeat service users. Two fifths (41%) of service users who responded to the survey had accessed employment services once. A similar proportion (39%) had accessed services on more than one separate occasion, with 12% having accessed services more than five times. A fifth (20%) couldn't remember how many times they had accessed services (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: How many times have you accessed employability services?

Once: 41%
Twice: 14%
Three to five times: 13%
Six to ten times: 5%
More than ten times: 7%
Don't know / can't remember: 20%

Source: Ipsos survey of service users
Base: All (713)
Respondents were asked to answer this question in relation to the number of different occasions they had accessed employment support rather than the number of individual contacts they had with the service.

First engagement with services

The most common referral routes into employment support services are the Job Centre (for those aged 25 and over) and careers advisers (for those aged under 25). Overall, a third of service users (33%) had heard about employment support services through the Job Centre and one in every seven had heard about the services from friends or family (14%) or a careers advisor (14%). Figure 5.2 shows that those aged 25 and over were most likely to have heard about the services through the Job Centre, whilst those aged under 25 were more likely to have heard about them through a careers advisor.

Those under the age of 25 were also more likely to have heard about the services from **friends or family or through school / college**. Those over the age of 25 were slightly more likely to have heard about the services through **social media, an employer, previous engagement with the service or a council website** although the proportions for each of these were much lower.

Interviews with service users who had accessed support delivered through their local authority said they had **previously been unaware that these services were available**. They described being unemployed and/or out of education for a while before friends or family made them aware that there was support available. It was suggested by service users that more could be done to raise awareness of the

services that are available in order to reach more people who could benefit from the support.

Figure 5.2: How did you hear about the employment support services you accessed?
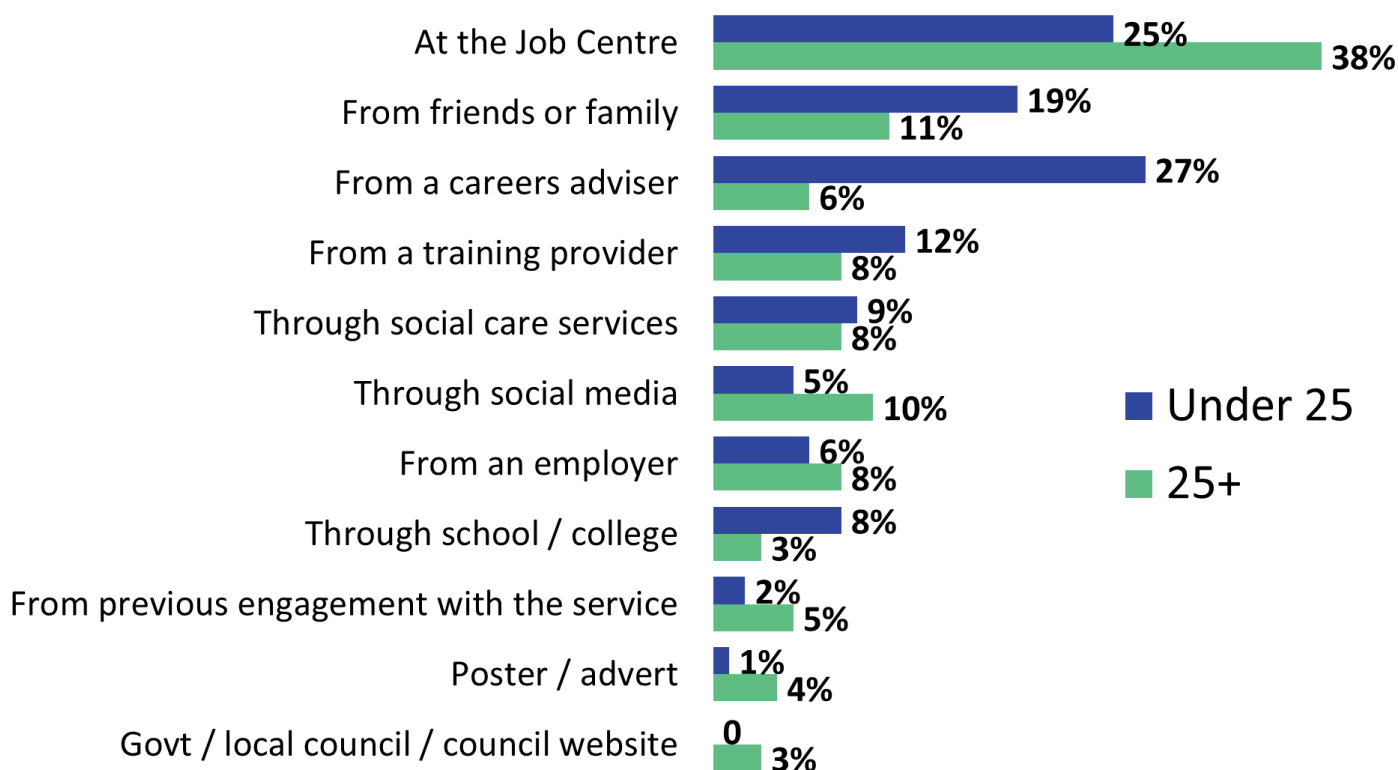
Source: Ipsos survey of service users
Base: Under 25 (271); Over 25 (433)

There were some significant differences found in how different groups of service users first heard about the services they accessed:

- Service users **over the age of 55** were more likely to have heard about the services through the Job Centre (54% relative to 33% overall)

- Those **from a white ethnic background** were more likely to have heard about the services through the Job Centre than those from a minority ethnic background (34% relative to 22%)

- Those who were **care experienced** were more likely to have heard about the services through social care services than those who were not care experienced (13% relative to 8%)

- **Single parents** were less likely to have heard about the services through friends and family, careers advisors or from a training provider compared to those who were not single parents.

Motivations for engagement

Most service users were looking for support to help find a job, but many were also looking for other types of support to address barriers to progression. Around two thirds of survey respondents were hoping for support to find a job (63% for those aged under 25; 66% for those aged 25 and over). The second most frequently mentioned reason for accessing services was to build confidence, cited by two in every five respondents. Service users who were under the age of 25 were more likely to be looking for support to access apprenticeships, whilst those aged 25 or over were more likely to be looking for support to access training (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: What were you hoping to get out of the service?

Category	Under 25	25+
Support to help you find a job	63%	66%
Build confidence	44%	43%
Support to access training	23%	39%
Careers advice / help with what types of work would suit me	34%	32%
Work experience / volunteering	32%	28%
Support to help you remain in work	9%	18%
Support to access education	12%	15%
Support to access apprenticeships	27%	6%
Support to help you return to work from absence / sick leave	3%	18%
General support	0%	1%
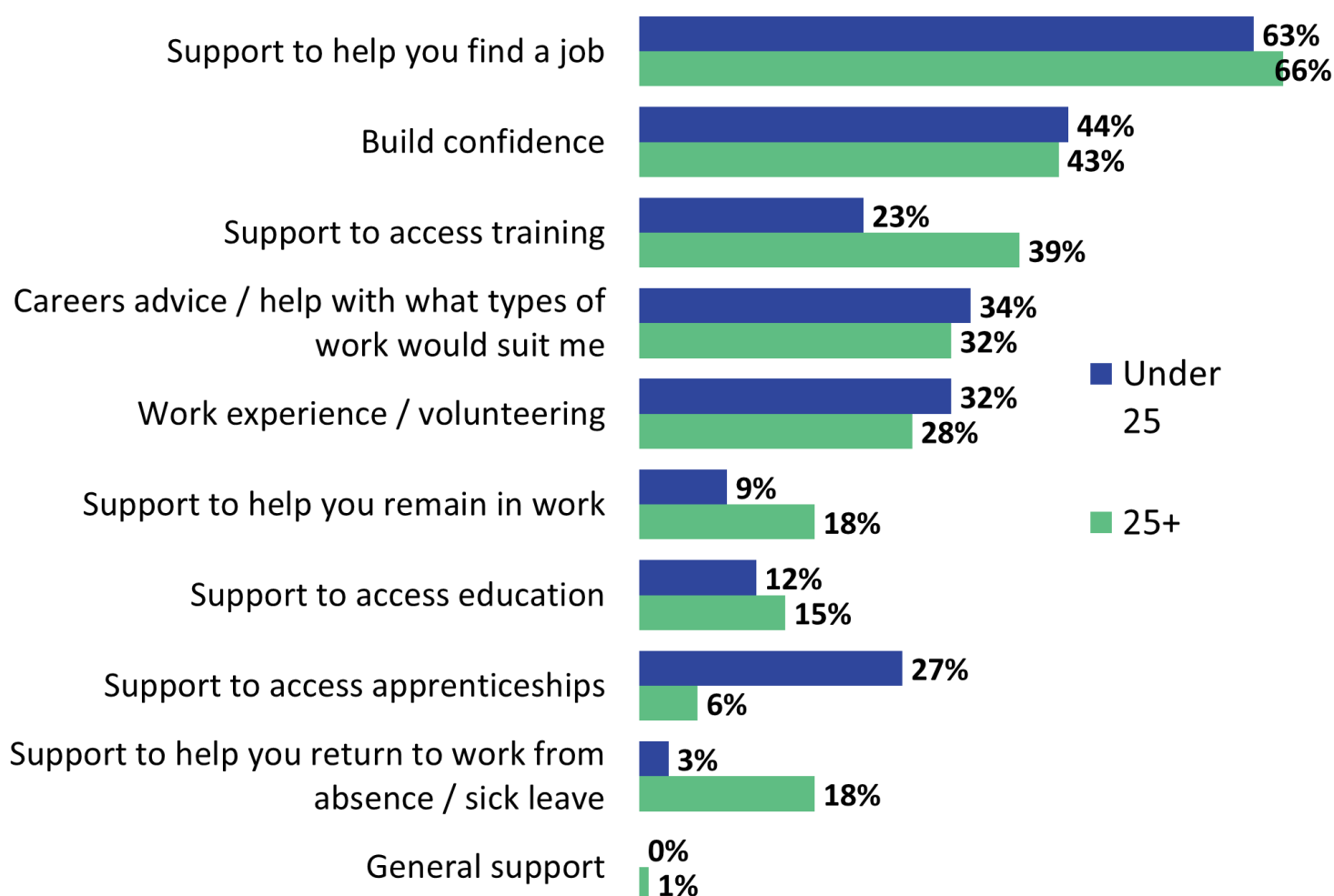
Source: Ipsos survey of service users
Base: Under 25 (271); Over 25 (433)

Access to support to build confidence also emerged as a key theme in the interviews with service users. There were examples of women who wanted to return to the labour market after time away to have children and were looking for support to build their confidence. There were also examples of people over the age of 50 who were lacking confidence to pursue opportunities that they thought would be unavailable to them due to their age or where they would need to consider retraining.

Almost one in ten (9%) service users under the age of 25 and two in ten (18%) of those over the age of 25 had **accessed support to help remain in work**. The interviews and online diaries with service users did not identify any notable differences in the experiences of those who had accessed in-work support and those who had not.
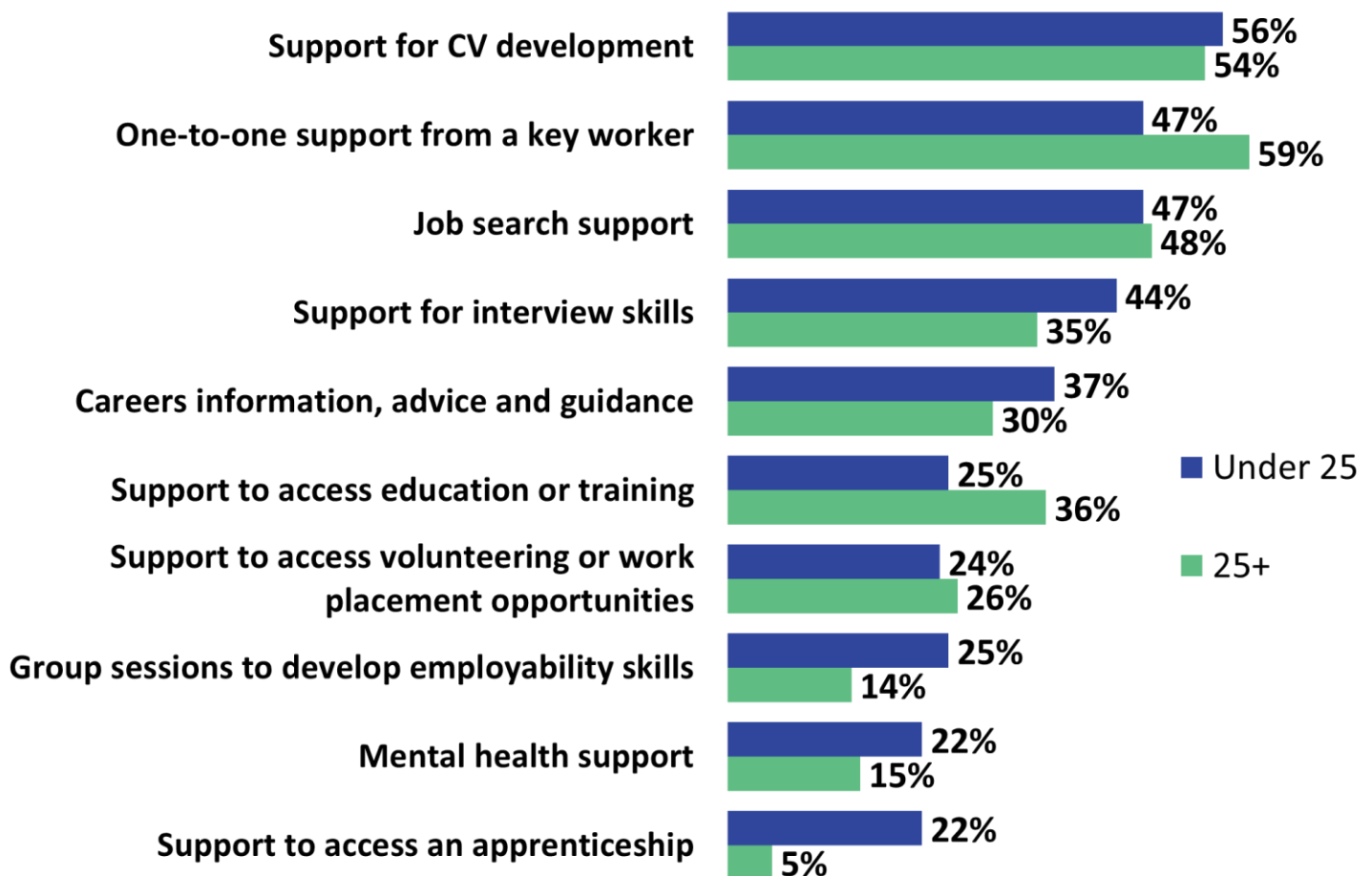
Types of employment support accessed

Service users accessed a wide range of services, with support for CV development, one-to-one support from a key worker and job search support being the most common. Just over half of service users accessed support for CV development and just under half accessed job search support. Those aged 25 or over were more likely to have accessed one-to-one support as well as support for education or training (Figure 5.4). Those under the age of 25 were more likely to have accessed support for interview skills and attended group sessions to develop employability skills. They were also more likely to have accessed mental health support and support to access an apprenticeship.

There were significant differences in the types of services accessed by service users with a disability. People with a disability were less likely to have accessed job search support (42% relative to 51% of those without a disability), less likely to have accessed careers information, advice and guidance (28% relative to 35%) and less likely to have accessed support for an apprenticeship (7% relative to 14%). Service users with a disability were more likely to have accessed support for volunteering or a work placement (33% relative to 21%), mental health support (30% relative to 11%) and support to put in place a reasonable adjustment at work (10% relative to 4%).

Looking at differences in support accessed by other characteristics, men were more likely than women to have received **support to access a volunteering or work placement** (29% relative to 21%). Those from a white ethnic background were more likely to access mental health support than those from an ethnic minority background (19% relative to 9%) and single parents were more likely to access one-to-one support from a key worker compared to all service users (71% relative to 55%).

Figure 5.4: What type(s) of support did you access? [By age, top 10 responses]

Support type	Under 25	25+
Support for CV development	56%	54%
One-to-one support from a key worker	47%	59%
Job search support	47%	48%
Support for interview skills	44%	35%
Careers information, advice and guidance	37%	30%
Support to access education or training	25%	36%
Support to access volunteering or work placement opportunities	24%	26%
Group sessions to develop employability skills	25%	14%
Mental health support	22%	15%
Support to access an apprenticeship	22%	5%

Source: Ipsos survey of service users

Base: Under 25 (271); Over 25 (433)

Service users who participated in interviews also referenced a wide range of different types of support they had accessed through the service. This included funding towards the cost of training, travel to attend interviews, clothes to attend interviews or for starting a new job, and for childcare costs. Some also received phones and iPads to address digital exclusion, which they used for job searches, to create CVs, complete online training and apply for jobs. Others received money advice, help finding accommodation, support with anxiety issues (including to use public transport) and help with getting doctors' appointments. Service users appreciated that that the range of support available to them went beyond a narrow focus on employability or employment issues to encompass wider issues they were facing in their lives.

"She's amazing, really understanding, because I was so paranoid about leaving the house…she helped me, supported me and gave me advice about what to do and not to do."

<div align="right">(Service user)</div>

"The money advice guy did the calculations for better off in work and I couldn't believe how much better off I'd be in work, even with a part time job. He really showed that it would be perfect."

<div align="right">(Service user)</div>

"I've been in the local library today using the computers to do a bit of research to see what courses I may be able to do using the ITA SDS £200 payment that you are able to apply for once a year. I have done this before and took a First Aid course but I've been looking at things that are perhaps a bit more specific for truck driving."
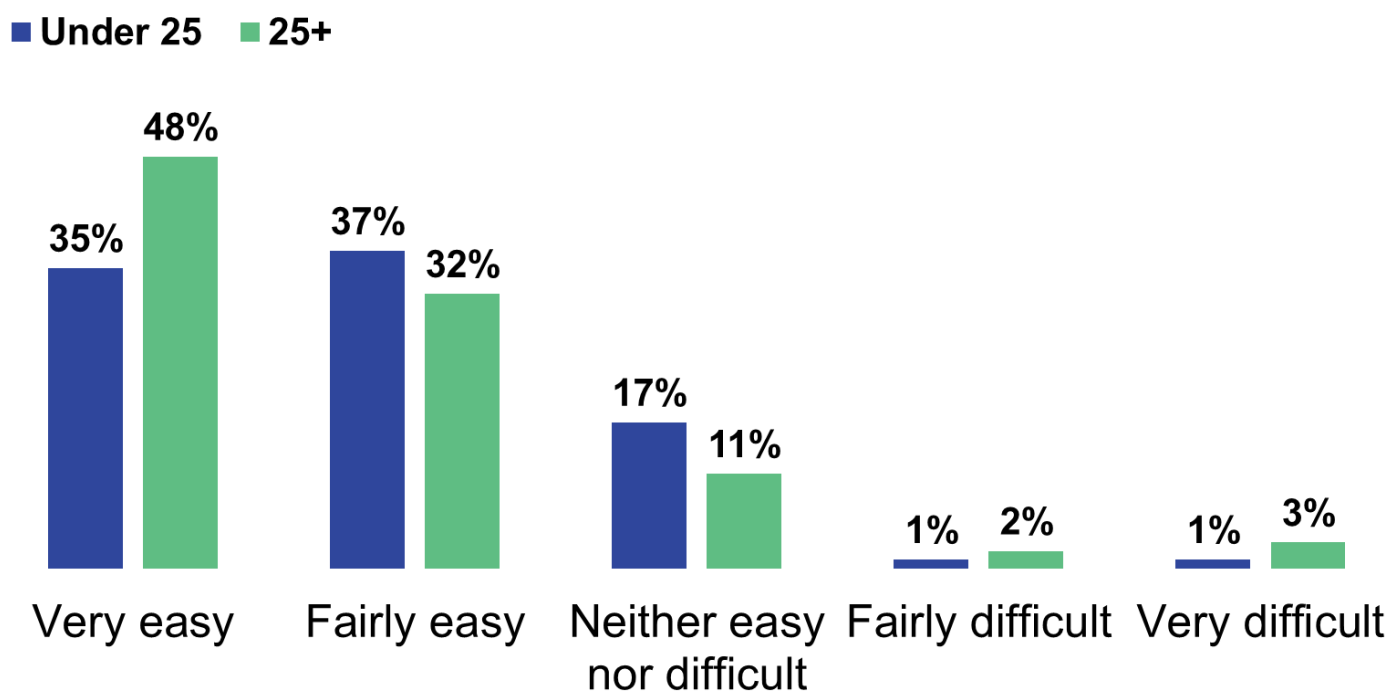
<div align="right">(Service user)</div>

Accessibility of services

Service users were asked how easy or difficult they found it to access employment support services. **Those aged 25 and over were more likely to say they found it very easy** (Figure 5.5). Around three quarters (72%) of those aged under 25 found it very or fairly easy to access services. This increases to 80% for those aged 25 and over. A higher proportion of those under the age of 25 thought it was neither easy or difficult (17% relative to 11%). The proportions of service users who found it difficult to access services was very low (2% of those under the age of 25 and 5% for those aged 25 and over).

The most common reason given for service users finding services easy to access were that staff were **friendly, approachable, supportive and encouraging**. The small number of people who found services difficult to access referenced the services **not been well advertised or well-known** and challenges faced in **making contact**, including phones not being answered, being kept on hold or people not getting back to them.

Figure 5.5: How easy or difficult did you find it to access employment support services?

■ **Under 25** ■ **25+**

Very easy: Under 25 35%, 25+ 48%
Fairly easy: Under 25 37%, 25+ 32%
Neither easy nor difficult: Under 25 17%, 25+ 11%
Fairly difficult: Under 25 1%, 25+ 2%
Very difficult: Under 25 1%, 25+ 3%

Source: Ipsos survey of service users
Base: Under 25 (271); Over 25 (433)

A significantly higher percentage of service users **over the age of 55** found it difficult to access services compared to those under the age of 25, although the proportion who thought this was still low overall (7% relative to 2% across all service users). Service users over the age of 55 were more likely to think that staff were not helpful, supportive or knowledgeable and that the service was not tailored or suited to their needs and age.

A significantly higher percentage of **disabled people or people with a long-term health condition** found it difficult to access services compared to service users without a disability or long-term health condition (6% relative to 2%), although again the proportion who thought this was still relatively low. Respondents in this group were more likely to think that the services were not well advertised or known, that communication was poor, and they didn't feel listened to.

There were **no significant differences** observed between people from different ethnic backgrounds, people who were care experienced, single parents or service users with a conviction.

A significantly lower proportion of service users reported that accessing services was difficult in 2021 (3%) and 2022 (2%) compared to 2019 (11%). This would suggest some improvement in accessibility of services over this time period. Looking at this in more detail:

57

Service users who accessed support in 2019 were more likely to say that **staff were not helpful, supportive or knowledgeable** than those who accessed services in 2022 (7% relative to 1%)

Service users who accessed support in 2019 were more likely to say that they received **poor guidance or support to get a job or work placement** than those who accessed services in 2022 (5% relative to 1%).

Those service users who found it was easy to access support discussed flexibility in scheduling appointments and being offered both online and in-person support as key factors.

"The advisor was happy to work around my schedule and school. Telephone appointments during the pandemic worked well. I could get my daughter and still have the appointment."

(Service user)

"They made it easy and told you what support you could access. I liked that they weren't in an office building, we met in a cafe."
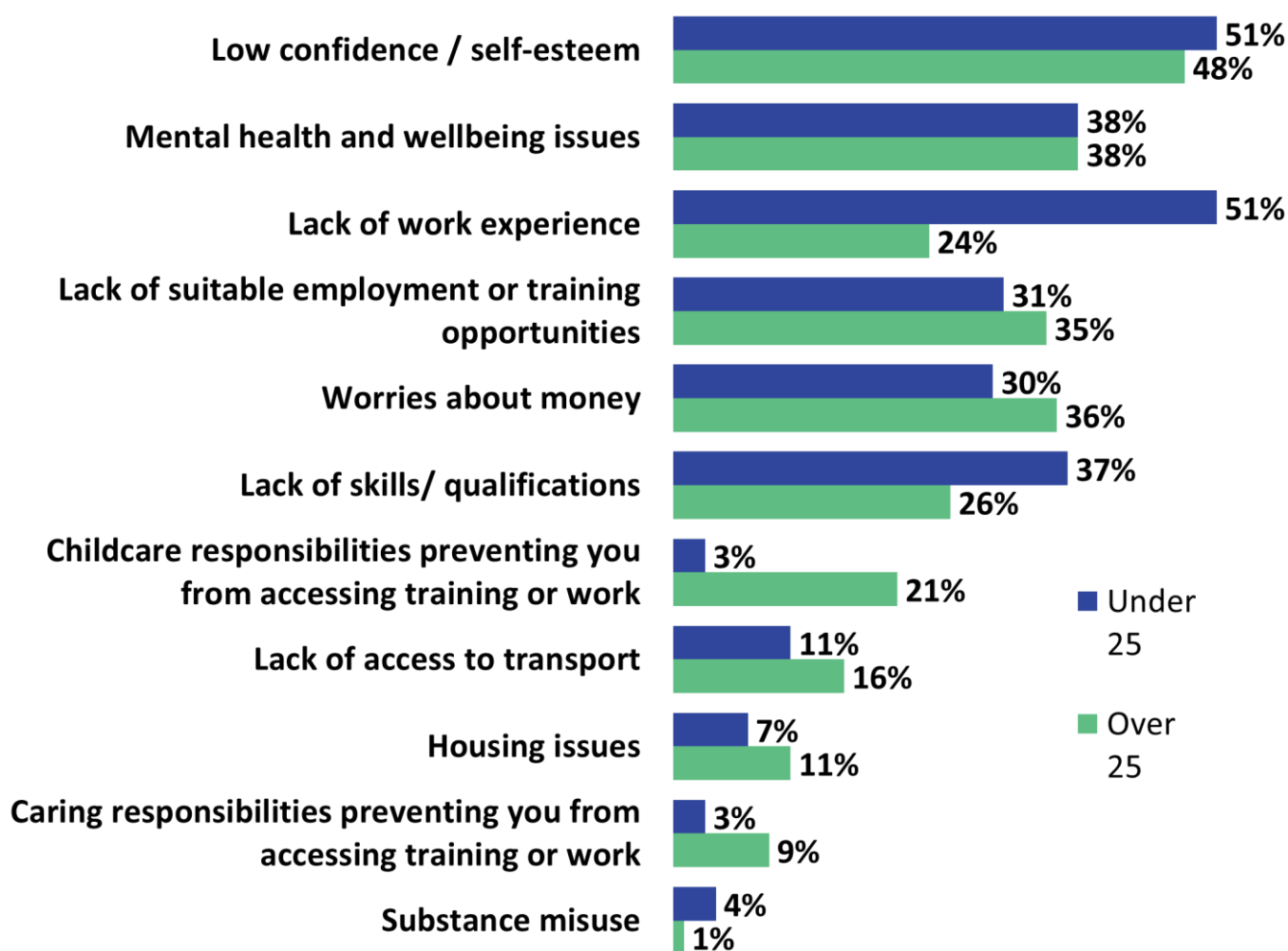
(Service user)

"Much better virtual, it would have been difficult in person as I don't drive and live in a little village."

(Service user)

Barriers to progression

Service users were experiencing a wide range of challenges and barriers to progression in the labour market at first engagement with the service. Around half of survey respondents (51%) reported experiencing low confidence / self-esteem and two fifths (38%) reported experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues at first engagement with the service (Figure 5.6). Young people under the age of 25 were more likely to be lacking work experience or skills or qualifications. Those aged 25 and over were more likely to be experiencing worries about money, childcare or caring responsibilities preventing them from accessing training or work, lack of access to transport or housing issues. This analysis highlights the wide range of barriers that service users are likely to be facing to progressing and key differences in the support needs of those under and over the age of 25.

Figure 5.6: At the time you engaged with the service, were you experiencing any of the following?

	Under 25	Over 25
Low confidence / self-esteem	51%	48%
Mental health and wellbeing issues	38%	38%
Lack of work experience	51%	24%
Lack of suitable employment or training opportunities	31%	35%
Worries about money	30%	36%
Lack of skills/ qualifications	37%	26%
Childcare responsibilities preventing you from accessing training or work	3%	21%
Lack of access to transport	11%	16%
Housing issues	7%	11%
Caring responsibilities preventing you from accessing training or work	3%	9%
Substance misuse	4%	1%

Source: Ipsos survey of service users
Base: Under 25 (271); Over 25 (433)

Low confidence / self-esteem was significantly more likely to be reported as an issue by disabled service users or **service users with a long-term health condition** compared to those without a disability or long-term health condition (65% relative to 41%). Low confidence / self-esteem was also reported by a significantly higher proportion of service users from a **white ethnic background** compared to an ethnic minority background (52% relative to 30%). The same trends were observed in relation to mental health and wellbeing, with 63% of disabled service users or service users with a long-term health condition reporting that they were experiencing this at first engagement with the service compared to 24% of service users without a disability or long-term health condition. Similarly, 41% of service users from a white ethnic background reported experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues at first engagement compared to 17% for those from an ethnic minority background.

Lack of suitable employment or training opportunities was reported as a key challenge by a significantly higher proportion of those who responded to the survey who:

- Were men rather than women (38% relative to 28%)
- Had a disability or long-term health condition (40% relative to 31% who did not)
- Had a conviction (51% relative to 32% who did not).

Worries about money at first engagement with the service were more frequently reported by single parents (47%) and service users with a conviction (63%) relative to all survey respondents (34%).

Childcare responsibilities preventing access to training or work was reported as an issue by 53% of single parents; 25% women and 5% men. One service user was both a parent and a carer for their parents, which created challenges in attending sessions.

Access to transport was a key issue raised by service users who participated in online diaries. This was a particular issue for those living in rural areas and / or with childcare responsibilities:

"The biggest barrier for me is relying on public transport (train or bus). A lot of the jobs I would like to apply for are looking for the employee to start at 6am. Or the distance/location is too far using the train or bus. Some jobs are in areas that public transport does not service. Without my own transport, my job options are limited."

(Service user)

"The two biggest barriers in my employment journey are not being able to drive and my middle son having mental health issues. I live in a rural village which doesn't have many job opportunities. So for me traveling by bus into town would be my only option. The problem with that is that the bus times don't work well for dropping off/picking up my children. Most jobs I've looked at don't want to hire some one who's earliest available is 11am. If I could drive it would open up more options for me."
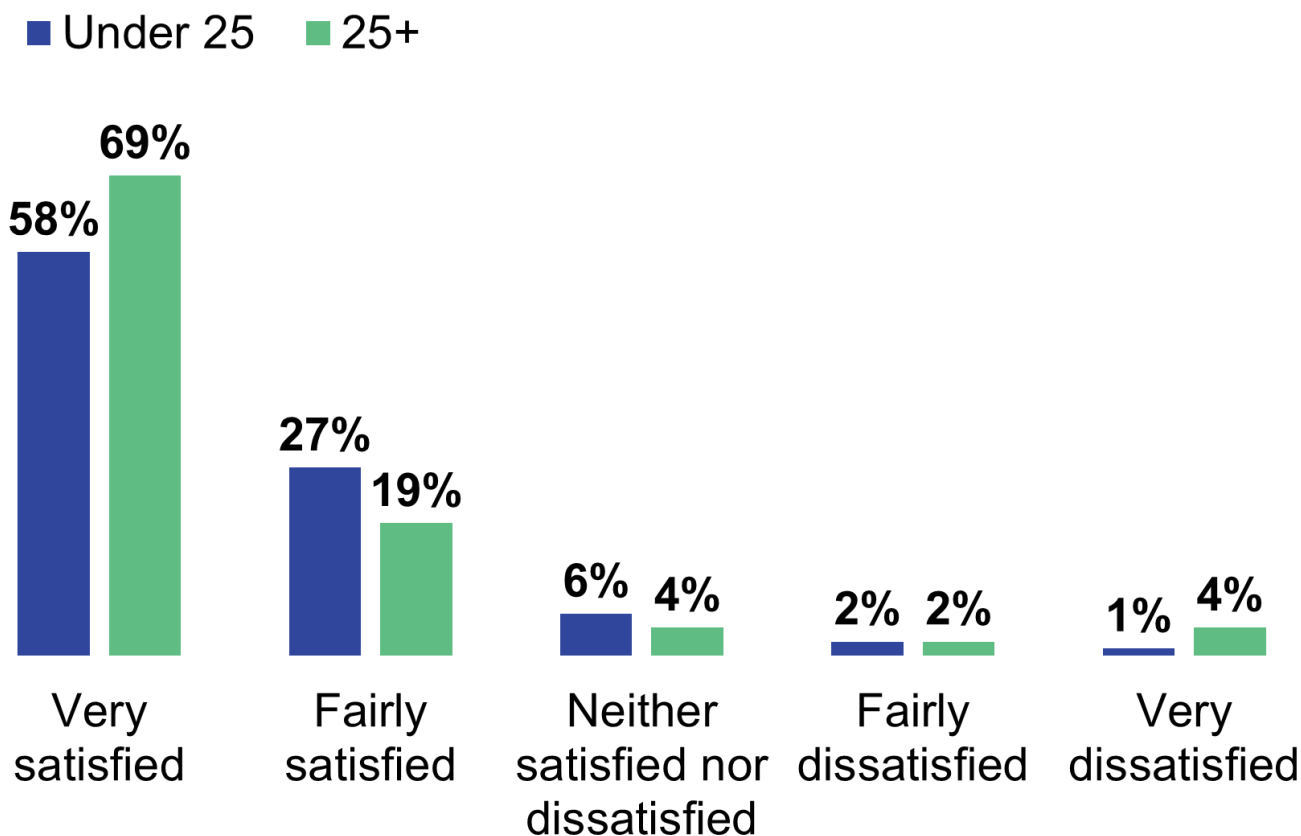
(Service user)

5.3 Experiences of the support

Overall satisfaction

Service users reported high levels of satisfaction with the support they received. Almost nine in every ten service users (87%) were very or fairly satisfied with the support they received and just 5% were fairly or very dissatisfied. A slightly higher proportion of service users aged 25 and over were satisfied overall

compared to those under the age of 25 (88% relative to 85%) and those aged and 25 and over were more likely to say that they were very satisfied (Figure 5.7).

Figure 5.7: Overall, how satisfied were you with the employment support services you received?

Source: Ipsos survey of service users
Base: Under 25 (271); Over 25 (433)

These high levels of satisfaction were also reflected in the feedback from service users who were interviewed, who referenced the **holistic, tailored and person-centred nature of support**. Several also referenced how **open, supportive and encouraging** the staff delivering the services were.

> "So much more than what I expected. Support was tailored to my needs, they took my circumstances into account and didn't encourage me to go for the first job that came up but wanted me to get something that was a good fit. My key worker really lit a fire in me to find work. I changed my whole perspective and I was like I can do this, and I'm now working."

> (Service user)

> "It wasn't just always about what they could do to get you employed, there was also a bit of emotional support as well. They do go above and beyond. They weren't judgemental, especially with my personal situation. They weren't critical

at all. They were just very sympathetic and generally lovely. I spoke to a few of the team and I couldn't fault any of them."

<div align="right">(Service user)</div>

Key themes amongst those who were dissatisfied with the service related to the **time taken to access particular types of support, such as work placements, and a lack of responsiveness**. Some service users thought the services seemed understaffed, which reflects feedback from some staff referenced in the previous chapter (see Figure 4.5).

"I wanted a placement with the council but was told I had to be unemployed for 12 months to be eligible. I felt that was a long time for someone who is eager and keen. Waiting 12 months is soul destroying, they could open that door sooner."

<div align="right">(Service user)</div>

"I am struggling to just hear back from them at the moment. I have been in touch previously and the woman I spoke to was very nice but can't get in touch in recent months - I think they are understaffed."

<div align="right">(Service user)</div>

"I feel the employment support at the moment has been lacking because the staff at [name of services] have been used in other areas of the council. The staff are just over stretched it's not their or the services fault it's just cut backs (the system)."

<div align="right">(Service user)</div>

A significantly higher proportion of **service users aged 55 and over** were very dissatisfied with the services they received (7% compared to 1% of those under the age of 25 and 4% of those aged 25-55). The reasons for being dissatisfied mainly related to not feeling the services were suitably tailored to their needs and did not take account of their length of experience, their digital skills needs or the types of support that might be needed to enable them to re-enter the labour market.

"I know where to look for services but there's not much for the older age group. A lot of services are aimed at younger people. Need more for older age groups. Older people need same amount of support. It's daunting for people coming out of long-term care or a break. More access to training that helps brush up skills that are rusty because you haven't used them. Everything is computer based, there is a generation that didn't grow up with that."

<div align="right">(Service user)</div>

"Everything seemed to be for youngsters, not for people over 60. Annoying, frustrating. When you get to 59 you can't apply for training and grants. I feel older people are written off despite having 30 or 40 years' experience."
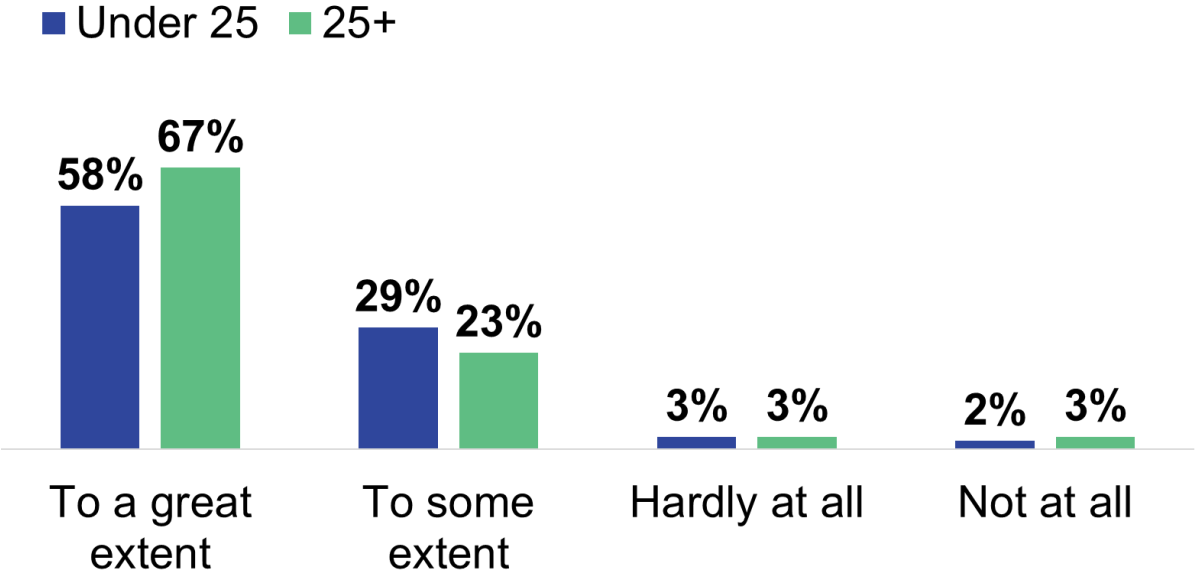
(Service user)

People who accessed employment services in 2021 and 2022 were more likely to be satisfied with the support received than those who accessed services in 2019. Nine in every ten (90%) survey respondents who accessed services in 2022 and 91% of those who accessed services in 2021 were satisfied with the support received, significantly higher than the equivalent figure of 75% for those who accessed services in 2019. Conversely, one in every ten service users who accessed employability support in 2019 were very dissatisfied with the support received (11%), which was significantly higher than the equivalent figure for those who accessed services in 2021 and 2022 (both 2%). A range of reasons were provided as to why they were very dissatisfied with poor / unhelpful service being the most common.

Extent to which service met user needs

Most service users thought the support they received had met their needs. Nine in every ten (90%) of those aged 25 and over thought the employment services had met their needs to at least some extent, with most (67%) saying it had met their needs to a great extent. Service users who were under the age of 25 were slightly less likely to say that the services had met their needs to a great extent, but still 87% thought it had met their needs to at least some extent. No significant differences were observed between service users with or without a disability or long-term health condition, from different ethnic backgrounds, who were care experienced, single parents or those with or without a conviction.

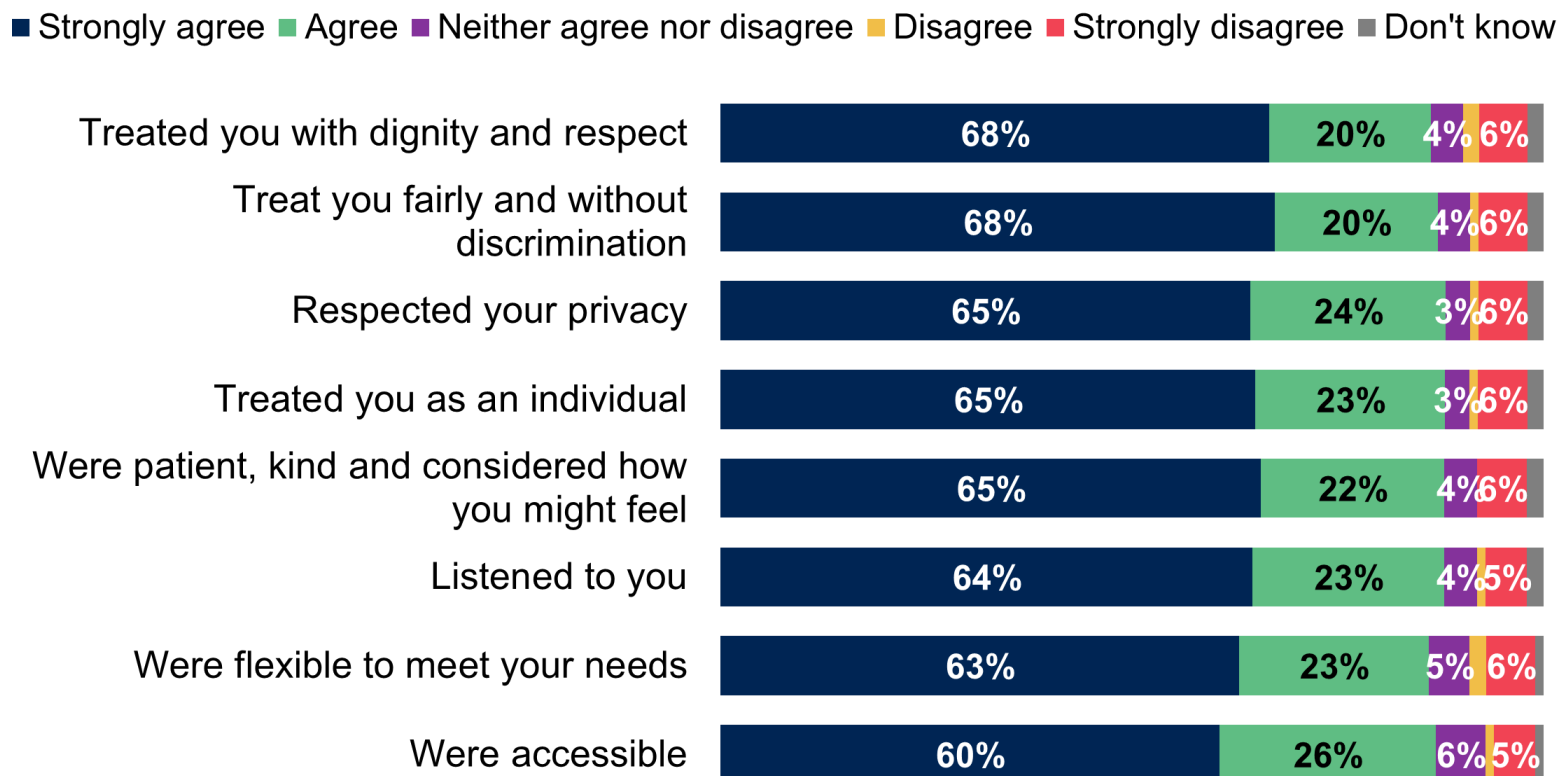**Figure 5.8: To what extent did the employment services meet your needs**?

■ Under 25 ■ 25+

	To a great extent	To some extent	Hardly at all	Not at all
Under 25	58%	29%	3%	2%
25+	67%	23%	3%	3%

Service users who accessed support in 2019 were significantly more likely to say that the services had **hardly at all or not at all met their needs** (14% compared to 5% in 2022). Again, suggesting that those who had accessed services more recently (after the introduction of No One Left Behind) have had a more positive experience of the support received.

Alignment of services to No One Left Behind principles

Feedback from service users suggests that employment services are being delivered in close alignment to these principles and commitments. Around nine in every ten survey respondents agreed that the services they accessed had treated them with dignity and respect, treated them fairly and without discrimination, respected their privacy, treated them as an individual, were patient and kind, considered how they might feel, listened to them, were flexibility to meet their needs and accessible. Around two thirds strongly agreed with each of these statements and between 6-8% disagreed.
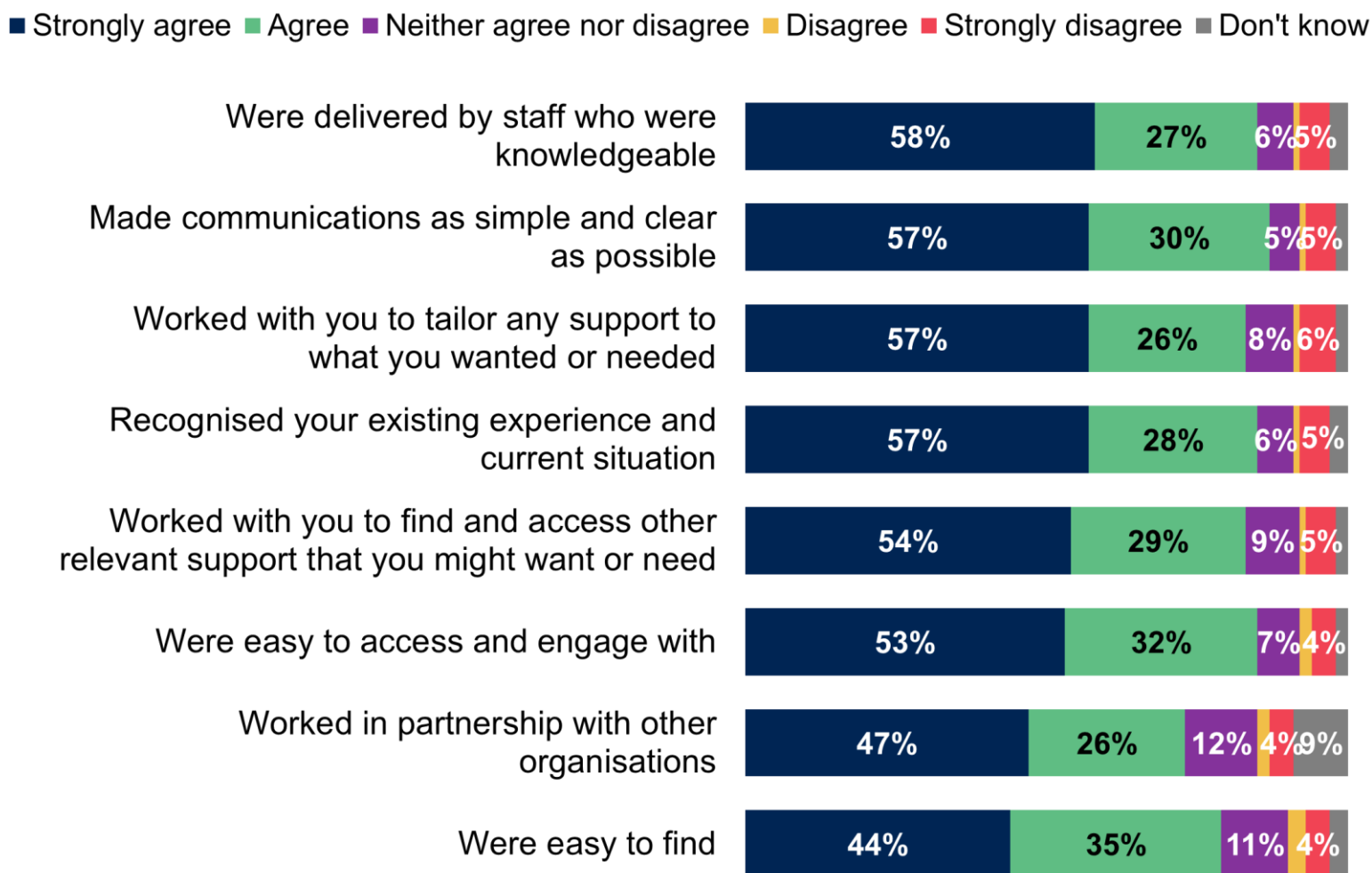
Figure 5.9: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the employment services you accessed…

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly disagree
Treated you with dignity and respect	68%	20%	4%	6%
Treat you fairly and without discrimination	68%	20%	4%	6%
Respected your privacy	65%	24%	3%	6%
Treated you as an individual	65%	23%	3%	6%
Were patient, kind and considered how you might feel	65%	22%	4%	6%
Listened to you	64%	23%	4%	5%
Were flexible to meet your needs	63%	23%	5%	6%
Were accessible	60%	26%	6%	5%

Most service users further agreed that the support they accessed was **delivered by knowledgeable staff, made communications simple and clear, was tailored to their needs, recognised their existing experience and current situation and were easy to access and engage with** (Figure 5.10). Most also agreed that the services worked in partnership with other organisations and were easy to find, although the proportions agreeing with these two statements were lower than for the others mostly because service users did not have an opinion either way (neither agreed nor disagreed) or didn't know.

Figure 5.10: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the employment services you accessed…

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Were delivered by staff who were knowledgeable	58%	27%	6%		5%	
Made communications as simple and clear as possible	57%	30%	5%		5%	
Worked with you to tailor any support to what you wanted or needed	57%	26%	8%		6%	
Recognised your existing experience and current situation	57%	28%	6%		5%	
Worked with you to find and access other relevant support that you might want or need	54%	29%	9%		5%	
Were easy to access and engage with	53%	32%	7%		4%	
Worked in partnership with other organisations	47%	26%	12%	4%		9%
Were easy to find	44%	35%	11%	4%		

Source: Ipsos survey of service users
Base: All (713)

Service users who participated in interviews provided further feedback that the services they accessed had treated them with dignity and respect. They discussed being treated as an individual and not feeling pressured or forced to apply for training or jobs that did not align with their aspirations or would be unsuitable due to caring responsibilities. They appreciated that the support offered was holistic and tailored, taking account of wider issues they were facing.

"It was exactly what I needed. I felt it was person centred - every time we caught up it was not just about the application form. She asked how I was getting on. Made me feel like a real person."

"I felt bereaved losing my job after 33 years during Covid-19. She recognised I was distraught and she was very respectful. It was most important to me that she treated me with dignity and respect."

"I liked the humanness of it, I was treated as an individual. The key worker was really good, really helpful and willing to research things if they didn't know the answer."

"She took into consideration what I was saying. I wanted weekly contact over the phone. If I checked in weekly, I wouldn't lose motivation. I was offered face to face but decided against it because of travel costs and fitting in around school but having the option was good."

A significantly higher proportion of single parents **strongly disagreed** that employment services treated them with dignity and respect (10% compared to 5% of those who were not single parents). Single parents were also more likely to **strongly disagree** that services respected their privacy (9% relative to 4% of those who were not single parents). However, single parents were more likely to **strongly agree** that the employment services they accessed worked in partnership with other organisations (57% relative to 46% for those who were not single parents).

Interviews found some differing experiences of disabled service users or those with a long-term health condition in the support they received.

"If someone has health issues they need extra support – I felt that was available."

"The centre was not geared up for disabled people. Central heating on full blast and chairs not good. Sitting can be uncomfortable so makes training difficult. Doesn't help or encourage you."

People who accessed services in 2021/22 were significantly more likely to say they had been treated with dignity and respect than those who accessed

services in 2019. Nine in ten service users (90%) who accessed support in 2021 or 2022 agreed they had been treated with dignity and respect compared to 79% who had accessed services in 2019. Similarly, around nine in ten service users who accessed support in 2021 or 2022 (91% and 90% respectively) agreed that the services had treated them fairly and without discrimination – significantly higher than the equivalent figure of 75% for those accessing services in 2019.

Figure 5.11: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the employment services you accessed…
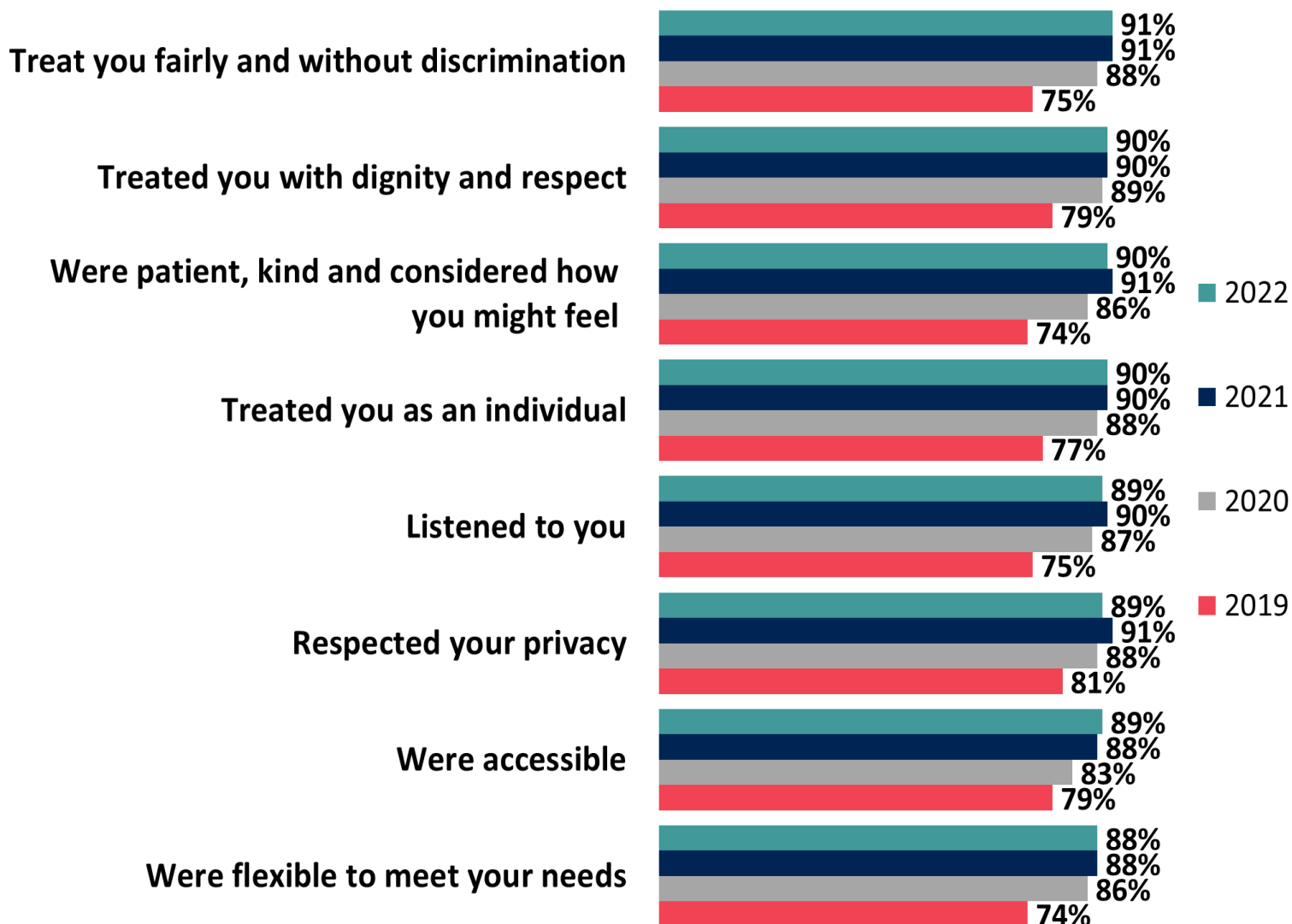
Source: Ipsos survey of service users
Base: All (713)
Figures show the % who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement

Service users who participated in interviews also highlighted **noticeable differences** in their experiences of accessing employment services more recently compared to when they had accessed services previously.

"I've had some [bad experiences] in the past. Felt they were trying to hit targets and not listening to what was suitable for you. It used to make me feel like I'm not capable of anything. My current mentor is really supportive. When asked about extra training before the day's out she got it arranged. She champions all her placements, goes the extra mile."

(Service user)

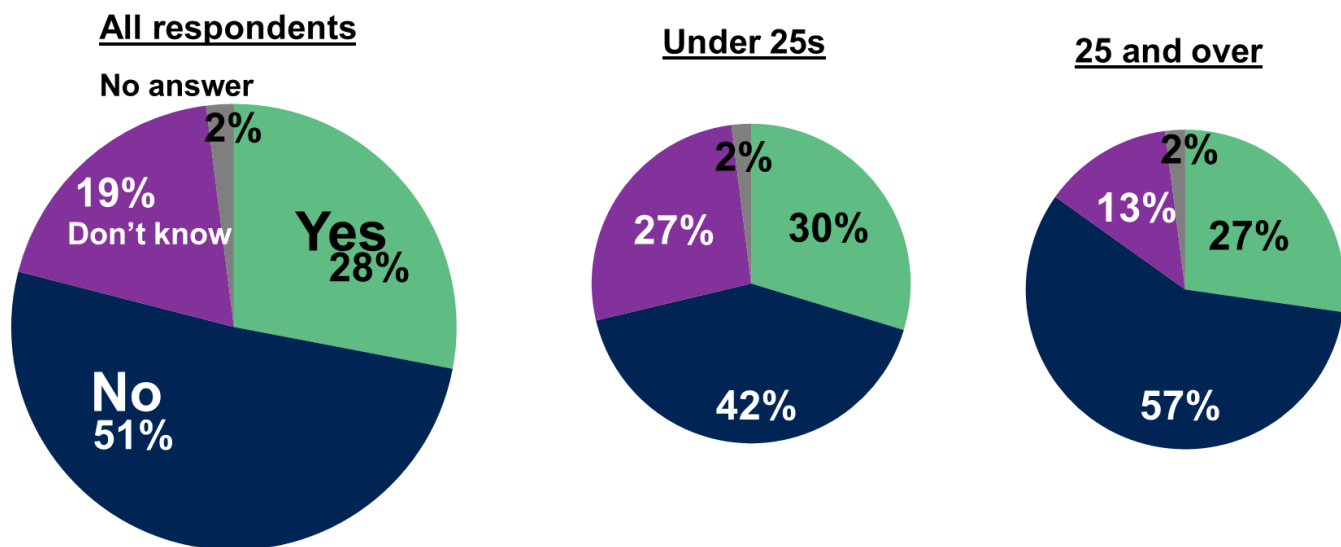"They're so understanding this time around. I like the social aspect. Nice atmosphere, I don't feel pressured into things."

(Service user)

"100% felt treated with dignity and respect, in contrast to previous experiences."

(Service user)

Opportunity to provide feedback

The Customer Charter details an expectation that employment services will **actively seek feedback from service users to learn and continually improved services**. Less than one third (28%) of those who completed the survey said they had been given the opportunity to provide feedback and a further half (51%) said they had not been given this opportunity. A fifth (19%) did not know. Those who were aged 25 and over were more likely to say they had not been asked for feedback (57% relative to 42% for those under the age of 25) and under 25s were more likely to say they didn't know (27% relative to 13%). There were no significant differences on this measure by gender, disability status, ethnicity, whether care experienced, whether a single parent or whether had a criminal conviction.
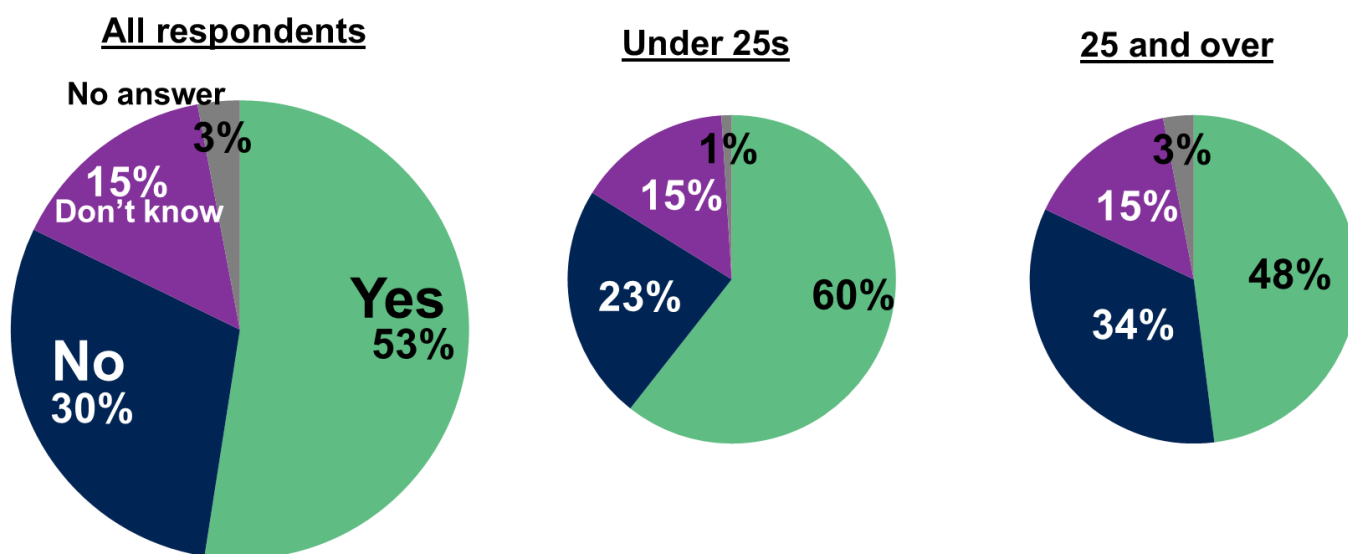
Figure 5.12: Before this survey, has anyone in the employment support service asked you for your feedback on the service?

All respondents

No answer
2%
19% Don't know
Yes 28%
No 51%

Under 25s

2%
27%
30%
42%

25 and over

2%
13%
27%
57%

Source: Ipsos survey of service users
Base: All (713); Under 25 (271); 25+ (433)

Around half (53%) of service users said they **knew how to complain if they were unhappy with the support received**, one in three (30%) said they did not and 18% either didn't know or did not answer. Those under the age of 25 were more likely to say they knew how to complain than those aged 25 and over (60% relative to 48%).

Figure 5.13: Did you know how to complain if you were unhappy with the support you received?

All respondents
No answer 3%
15% Don't know
No 30%
Yes 53%

Under 25s
1%
15%
23%
60%

25 and over
3%
15%
34%
48%

Source: Ipsos survey of service users
Base: All (713); Under 25 (271); 25+ (433)

5.4 Outcomes

Intermediate outcomes

As referenced earlier in this chapter (see Figure 5.6), around half of service users were **experiencing low confidence / self-esteem** when they first accessed employment support services and this was holding them back from progressing in education, training and employment. Those interviewed frequently referenced the positive difference the service had made to their levels of confidence.

> "The support was a confidence boost, learning how to deal with stress a bit better, not let people put me down. It was great getting my CV done because I didn't have a clue what I was doing. It was a bit daunting."

> (Service user)

> "Basically it turned my life around…social connectivity, meeting people again, having a reason to get out of bed."

> (Service user)

> "I wouldn't be who I am today if it wasn't for them helping me back on my feet and I wouldn't be doing the things I'm doing because they've helped me with my confidence."

> (Service user)

70

Service users also shared how accessing volunteering and work experience opportunities through the services had made them **feel valued and positive about the future**. Most were confident that the skills and experience they were gaining would help them to progress in their employment journey.

> "I enjoy been a volunteer because it's giving me the opportunity to engage and help other people. It also give me the opportunity to interact with these people and sometimes these people become friends. Volunteering helps me have a better understanding what I want to do in the future and it will give me more evidence for adding to my CV when I'm ready for work again."

(Service user)

> "I enjoy getting out onsite and doing a bit of work to break the week up. It gives me a small sense of being needed and the responsibility drives me."

(Service user)

Education, training and employment outcomes

The following analysis of education, training and employment outcomes must be treated with caution and not viewed as causal evidence of impact as it does not include comparison with a control group who did not receive support to explore the counterfactual scenario.

There were notable shifts in the employment status of those accessing services through No One Left Behind pre and post engagement with the support. At first engagement with No One Left Behind services, 42% of survey respondents were unemployed and looking for work and a further 16% were in work (employed full-time / part-time or self-employed). At the time of the survey, half (51%) of survey respondents were no longer accessing employment support. Of these, 12% were unemployed and looking for work and 49% were in work (employed full-time / part-time or self-employed) on leaving the service (Figure 5.14).

There were also some shifts in the status of service users who were still receiving support. At the time of the survey, 28% of those still accessing support were unemployed and looking for work, 20% were employed part time and 8% were employed full-time. A higher proportion of those still accessing support (13%) were in training relative to those who were no longer accessing support (4%).

Figure 5.14: Education, training and employment status before, during and after engagement with the service
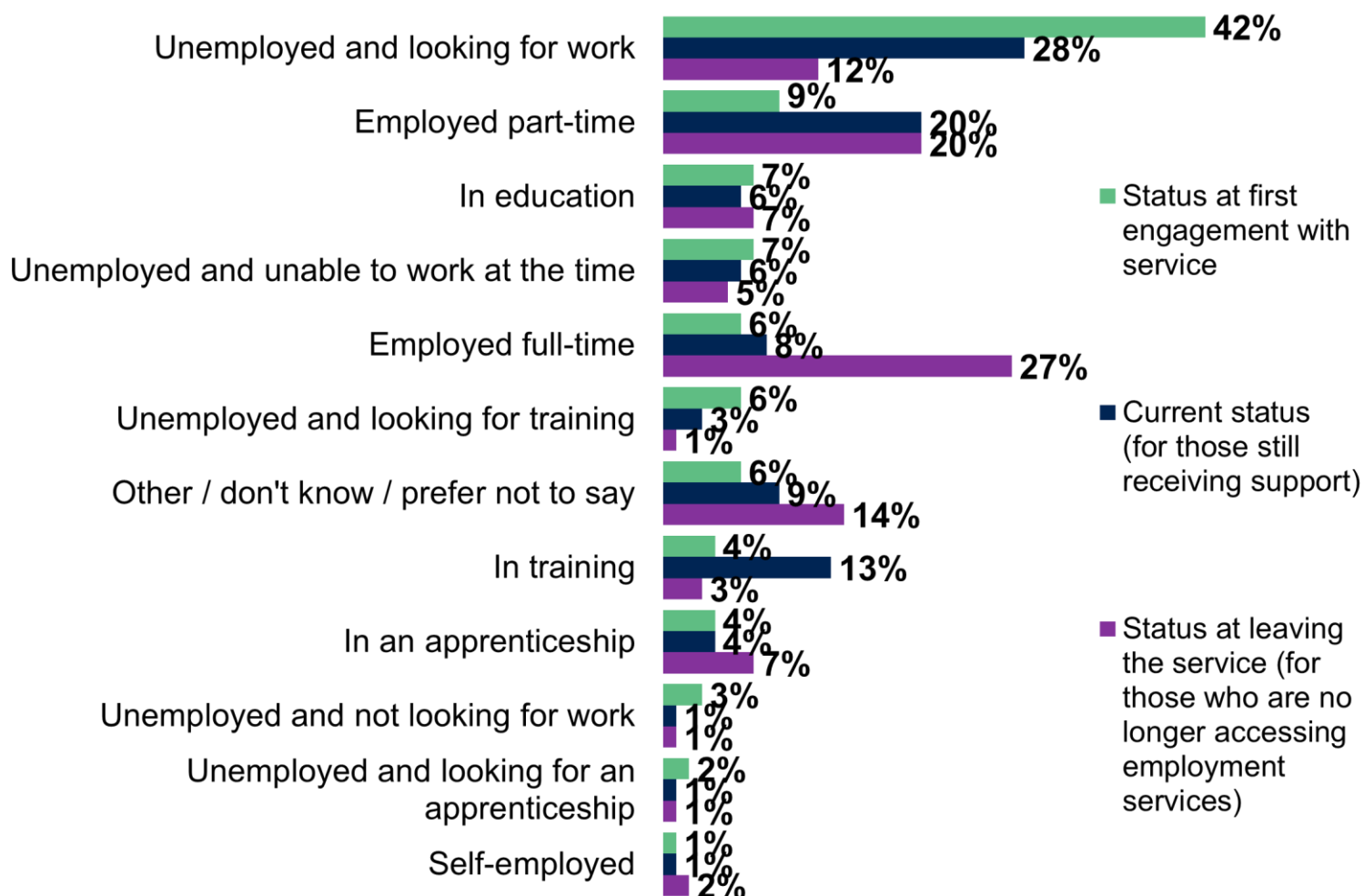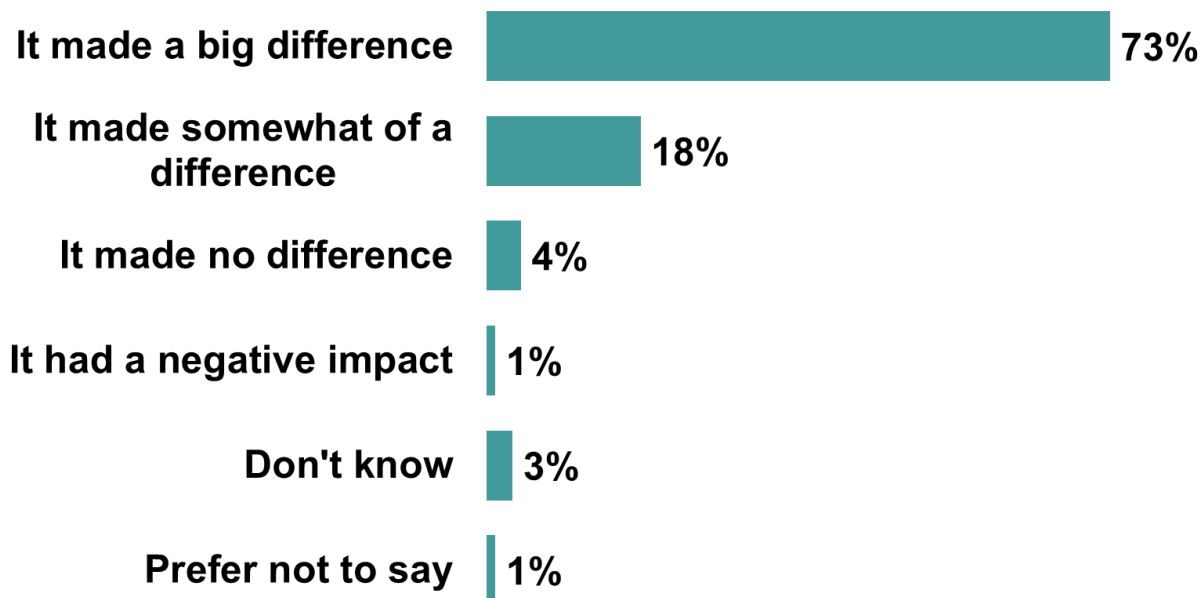

Source: Ipsos survey of service users
Base: Status at first engagement with the service (713); Current status (346);
Status at leaving the service (367)

At the time of the survey, half (51%) of survey respondents were no longer accessing employment support. Of these, 12% were unemployed and looking for work and 49% were in work (employed full-time / part-time or self-employed) on leaving the service.

Most of those whose education, training or employment status had changed since first accessing services said the support they received had made a difference. Almost three quarters (73%) of those whose status had changed said the services had made a big difference and around one in five (18%) said it had made somewhat of a difference. A relatively small proportion thought it had made no difference (4%) or had had a negative impact (1%). Those who were over the age of 25 were significantly more likely to say that the service had made 'a big

difference' to their change of status than those under the age of 25. There were no significant differences found by gender, health status, ethnicity, whether case experienced, whether a single parent or whether had a conviction

Figure 5.15: To what extent did the support you received through the employment services you accessed contribute to your change of status?

Source: Ipsos survey of service users
Base: Those whose status has changed since engaging with employment services (159)

Interviews and online diaries with service users provided further evidence that the employment support accessed had **made a positive difference to their progression in education, training and employment**. Service users discussed how the support had facilitated access to opportunities that they would not otherwise have considered or known about. The mechanisms for success again related to the way in which the services were delivered, which ensured users felt listened to and that their needs and interests were taken into account.

> "Key benefit was getting apprenticeship. This apprenticeship has opened up a lot more doors. I didn't have proper qualifications before this. What made the most difference to me was being listened to and getting the help I actually needed, they knew what you needed."

> (Service user)

> "I have always been unemployed. The service emails me about upcoming courses. They helped me get on to the night course - would have struggled otherwise. I liked having someone sit down with me and explain everything. It has benefitted me a lot. Helped me go and do something. If I didn't, I would have been sitting in the house. It's helping me reach my potential."

"I think it's because of the support/chance they've given me. Completely changed my life around from not going out and severe anxiety/depression. Going out every day now, being happy, seeing the world in a different light."

"I'm really enjoying seeing the progress we have made and it makes me feel proud that we have nearly completed the job in good time… This job is allowing me to work on many personal skills, such as team working, time keeping and efficient working."

5.5   Recommendations from service users

Service users who participated in interviews were asked if they had any recommendations as to how they thought employment services in Scotland could be further developed or improved. Suggestions put forward by service users included **more promotion and advertisement** of the services and what they offer, including through outreach work. It was also suggested that more could be done to make people aware that **they can access support online** and to create **more online opportunities** for training, volunteering and work placements, which would help some service users overcome barriers relating to access to transport, which is a particular challenge for those living in rural areas and / or with childcare responsibilities.

Other suggestions put forward by service users included expanded services to ensure that everyone has access to everything they might need to enable them to progress and more support **tailored to the specific needs of particular groups**, such as army veterans, older people, disabled people and those with health conditions.

6   Conclusions and recommendations

The aim of the implementation evaluation was to assess progress and learning to date from the development and early delivery of No One Left Behind and the element of the Young Person's Guarantee that was invested in local authorities (via Local Employability Partnerships) and delivered within the framework of the No One Left Behind approach. It explored how effectively No One Left Behind and this element of the Young Person's Guarantee had been implemented, the experiences of service providers and service users and lessons from early design and delivery.

There was mixed feedback from local stakeholders on how well No One Left Behind had been implemented locally, although most perceived this positively. It was said to have facilitated better partnership working between employability stakeholders at the local level, including bringing greater focus and purpose to existing partnerships structures, and most agreed that it had contributed to further development and enhancement of services. Most local stakeholders also thought that the element of the Young Person's Guarantee that was distributed via LEPs had been implemented well and was an appropriate response to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on young people's progression in learning and work.

Most employability staff agreed that the services they delivered aligned with No One Left Behind principles, even when they were not fully aware of the details of the strategy, and most thought that it had made a positive difference to service delivery in their area. Examples of positive changes resulting from No One Left Behind included: greater local decision-making; increased partnership working; development of new services; less duplication of service delivery; and increased communication between the local authority and service providers.

Most service users found it easy to access employment support services. The small number who found services difficult to access referenced the services not been well advertised or well-known and challenges faced in making contact. Service users reported high levels of satisfaction with the support they received due to the holistic, tailored and person-centred nature of this and how open, supportive and encouraging the staff delivering the services were. Most service users agreed that the support was delivered by knowledgeable staff, tailored to their needs and recognised their existing experience and current situation.

The evaluation identified some potential areas for improvement in relation to ongoing implementation of No One Left Behind and future employment support programmes. These are set out in the next section as a series of recommendations for discussion and consideration by local and national stakeholders and partners involved in the design and delivery of employment services in Scotland.

6.1 Recommendations relating to ongoing implementation of No One Left Behind

Targeted awareness raising

Recommendation 1: Increase knowledge and understanding amongst service providers of No One Left Behind principles and supporting tools.

The evaluation found limited awareness of the detail of the No One Left Behind strategy beyond local authority management staff, as well as low levels of awareness of the Customer Charter and Service Standards amongst those working directly with service users.

Potential measures to address this include restating the key aims, objectives and principles of No One Left Behind through local and national communications; providing frontline staff with physical copies of the Customer Charter and Service Standards so they are clear on expectations for the service; and ensuring adequate training is in place for all new staff.

Recommendation 2: Increase promotion and awareness of the services on offer to potential and current service users, particularly those who may be facing barriers to engagement.

A significant portion of service users who participated in the evaluation had found out about the support through friends and family and had previously been unaware the of the support that was available to them. This suggests that more could be done to raise awareness of employment support services amongst those who could potentially benefit from them, including those furthest from the labour market.

Consideration should be given as to how national and local communication approaches and measures could be improved to increase awareness of employability support and engagement with this, particularly amongst those who may be facing barriers. Engaging key partners, including third sector organisations working with people with protected characteristics, or agencies working in other policy areas (such as health or criminal justice), to make them aware of the services and how to refer into them could also help reach those who could benefit from the support.

Making best use of data and evidence

Recommendation 3: Increase effectiveness of data use to better tailor service provision, particularly for services aimed at those facing additional barriers to employment.

The evaluation found that service users in older age groups do not always feel that services are suitably tailored to their needs, which can include support for digital inclusion or to retrain or upskill to access available opportunities. Disabled people or those with long term health conditions are also less likely to feel that services are suitably tailored to their needs.

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Consideration should be given as to how services could be better tailored to meet the needs of these potentially marginalised groups. This should be informed by feedback on their needs and the extent to which these are or are not being met (see Recommendation 6), as well as advice and guidance from specialist organisations working directly with priority groups.

Recommendation 4: Provide additional support and resources for data collection and reporting processes associated with No One Left Behind.

The national monitoring and reporting requirements for No One Left Behind were said by local authorities to be time consuming and resource intensive, which was contributing to frontline staff feeling under time pressure. This has been exacerbated by multiple changes to the reporting requirements since the launch of the strategy. Local authorities did not always directly see the value of these reporting requirements and the changes being made to them.

Any future changes to the reporting requirements should be carefully considered given the level of resource required to implement them and be designed to minimise burden on frontline staff. Also, consideration could be given as to whether LEPs could use some of their funding to appoint dedicated staff to work on this, which would free up frontline staff to focus on service delivery. These staff could also have a role in analysing local data to generate insights to inform and support continuous improvement.

Recommendation 5: Increase opportunities for service users to provide feedback on their experiences.

The evaluation found that relatively few service users had been asked to provide feedback on the services they received. Feedback is critical for informing continuous improvement of services, ensuring they are suitably tailored to the needs of all users.

In accordance with the No One Left Behind Customer Charter and Service Standards, all service users should have the opportunity to provide feedback on services and be clear on how to complain if they are not happy with the support received.

6.2   Implementation of future programmes

Learning from Young Person's Guarantee

Recommendation 6: Use learning from the Young Persons' Guarantee to inform future employment support for young people.

The Young Person's Guarantee was introduced to mitigate the potentially damaging effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's transitions from education to employment. The economic and labour market context for young people has changed considerably since the introduction of the Guarantee, although many young people continue to face barriers to education, training and work with employment rates much lower amongst those who are care experienced, disabled

or from a minority ethnic background. The evaluation also found that the barriers faced by young people and the support they need to progress are different to those faced by older age groups.

Learning from implementation of the Guarantee should be used to inform future employment support for young people, including the types of barriers they face in progressing to employment and associated support needs. Consideration should be given as to whether it remains appropriate for ERIs to be available to all young people or whether they should be targeted at those facing particular barriers.

Mental health provision and support

Recommendation 7: Improve access to mental health support for service users.

A high proportion of service users are experiencing mental health or wellbeing issues at first engagement with services. Service providers also stated that the prevalence and severity of these issues has increased since the pandemic and they are now acting as a key barrier to progression for many people.

Further research into what works in addressing mental health and wellbeing issues in the context of employment support would help develop the evidence base to inform future provision. This could potentially include better integration with local mental health services or additional training and support for Key Workers to identify these issues and refer to appropriate support.

Confirmation of available funding

Recommendation 8: Communicate funding for time-limited interventions as early and widely as possible.

A key challenge in implementing the Guarantee was that funding from the UK Government was only made available in November 2020. Local stakeholders understand that this was due to the time required to develop the Guarantee and scope, however it resulted in short timescales to design, develop and deliver services. Out-with the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 Pandemic, future time-limited interventions should be planned as early as possible with wider communication and partner engagement to allow for better planning and preparation and to ensure maximum impact and value for services.

Recommendation 9: Provide more certainty as early as possible on likely future funding to enable longer term planning.

Funding for employment services is confirmed on an annual basis in line with the public sector budgeting cycle. This effects the ability of LEPs to plan longer term and creating pressure to allocate funding at pace. It is also impacting on staff retention and the ability of LEPs to enter into long-term agreements with key delivery partners and other stakeholders, the latter being a key principle of the No One Left Behind approach.

Local stakeholders appreciate that it is not always possible to confirm medium- or longer-term funding, but if an indicative level of annual funding could be confirmed as early as possible (with appropriate caveats) this would help with workforce planning, commissioning of services and engagement and communication with key partners and stakeholders.

6.3 Future research

The implementation evaluation has captured learning from the development and early delivery of No One Left Behind. Future research should consider establishing a baseline of service user views and experiences of employment support against which future progress can be measured. Ideally this should be administered independently, which would require appropriate permissions to be in place to enable contact details of service users to be shared for this purpose.

There would be value in conducting a process evaluation to explore in more detail how services are being designed and delivered locally to identify what is working well, less well and why. This should include assessment of the effectiveness of processes involved in the promotion of services and engagement of service users and how well services are integrated with other local services to enable the provision of 'wraparound' support. Consideration should also be given to a future impact evaluation of No One Left Behind to assess the difference made by services to the education, employment and training outcomes of users.

Annex A – Discussion guides

Discussion guide for interviews with stakeholders in case study areas

Introduction (3 mins)

Ipsos has been commissioned by the Scottish Government to deliver an implementation evaluation of the development and early delivery of No One Left Behind (NOLB) and the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG). This will assess progress and learning to date, identifying enablers and barriers to implementation. It will consider the extent to which the stated aims and objectives of each are on track to be achieved, and any adjustments that might need to be made in future phases to enable this. The findings will generate valuable insights and learning to inform continuous improvement of employability policy and service design and delivery in Scotland.

As part of this, we are conducting interviews with stakeholders who have been involved in the development and/or implementation of NOLB and YGP. The purpose of these discussions is to deepen our understanding of the context, background and processes involved in the development, early set up and perceptions of progress in implementation.

We will discuss the aspects you feel best placed to comment on, and if you do not have information to answer any questions, please just let me know and we will move on. The interview is expected to last up to 60 minutes.

Findings from these interviews will be used to inform the evaluation of NOLB and YGP which will be published. However, everything you say will be treated in the strictest confidence and findings will be reported in aggregate. No identifying information about individuals will be included in the report, for example, if we would like to quote you, we will do it anonymously. The Scottish Government will not receive notes from individual interviews or attributable comments, but they are aware of who is taking part in these discussions and given the small number of people involved and their roles we cannot guarantee anonymity.

Participation is voluntary and you can change your mind at any time, up until the evaluation report is published.

We would like to record the discussion for analysis purposes. It will not be provided to anyone outside of the evaluation team. The recordings will be securely stored and will be destroyed three months after we have completed the evaluation.

Do I have your permission to record?

Turn on the recorder and record consent to take part and for the discussion to be recorded

Do you have any questions before we begin? Are you happy to proceed?

Background and involvement (5 mins)

Note to interviewers: Once you have established the interviewees' role and involvement in NOLB and / or YPG, please ensure you tailor the subsequent questions accordingly to ensure you are covering both NOLB and YPG equally. This will include exploring for differences between employability services / provision delivered to 16-24 year olds through YPG relative to other age groups under the NOLB umbrella.

To start, can you provide an overview of your role and involvement in NOLB and/or YPG, including how long you have been in this role?

Probe for:

- Strategic responsibilities – involved in discussions / decision-making around purpose, aims and objectives and key design elements
- Set up, development and / or implementation of NOLB / YPG
- Delivery of NOLB / YPG
- Performance monitoring / reporting
- Stakeholder engagement / communications
- Whether role / responsibilities have changed over time

Context & rationale (8 mins)

For the next few questions, I'd like to ask a bit about your understanding of the context to NOLB and YPG and their aims at a national level (we will move onto what it means for your area afterwards).

- What is your understanding of the context and rationale for the introduction of NOLB and YPG at a national level?
- What problem(s) were they seeking to address?
- How would you summarise the key aims of NOLB and YPG?
- What would success for NOLB and YPG look like? What would be the way to define and measure it?
- As far as you know, what would other interested stakeholders consider a success for NOLB and YPG?

What is your understanding / interpretation of the relationship between NOLB and YPG? Probe for whether they view YPG as sitting under the NOLB umbrella or separate.

Now, thinking about your local authority area specifically:

- What are the key employability issues in your area?
- Any key challenges/barriers for specific groups such as those with protected characteristics (including disabled people), those with caring responsibilities and care experienced people?
- Are these different for those aged 16-24 relative to other age groups?
- Any differences compared to Scotland as a whole?

Local approach to NOLB/YPG (8 mins)

Could you please give me a brief overview of how NOLB and YPG work in your local authority to address the key issues that you mentioned?

Change the following section depending on interviewee:

- 1. LA: The Employability Lead, frontline staff involved in day-to-day delivery of employability services or staff involved in planning or provision of employability training
- 2. Third sector
- 3. Employer

LA

- What do you commission and what do you deliver yourselves?
- Do you use well-established partnerships or did you form new ones?
- How many providers are you using?
- What is the profile of those providers? Probe on factors such as: size, geographical coverage, type of organisation (e.g. third sector / private sector), types of activities / support delivered, target beneficiaries.
- Approximately how many employers are engaged in the delivery of employability opportunities/apprenticeships in your area?
- Has it been straightforward to engage employers? What, if any, barriers/issues have come up? How have these been resolved/overcome?
- How have you used Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERI) to create and boost opportunities for young people in your area? How has this worked?

- How has the YPG funding been used in your area? What have been the main categories of spend and approximate percentage split of available funding across each? Has there been any underspend? If so, what are the reasons for this?

Third sector

- How are you involved in the delivery of employability services?
- What services do you offer?
- What are some of the challenges or barriers you face when delivering employability services and how have these been overcome?
- How is the partnership and communication with the LA working?
- Do you work across multiple local authority areas? If so, how does the LA partnership and communication compare across these areas?

Employer:

- How are you involved in delivering services? Apprenticeships?
- Have you used the employer recruitment incentives programme?
- How is the partnership and communication with LA working?

Changes due to NOLB and YPG (8 mins)

Thinking about your approach before NOLB and YPG was introduced:

- To what extent has NOLB been a new approach or opportunity to build on existing services?
- How has the YPG funding impacted on your approach?
- What have been the enablers to change?
- What have been the barriers?
- What are the key lessons learned over the past two years through implementation of the NOLB strategy and YPG?
- Overall, do you feel you are currently delivering against the aims of the NOLB strategy and YPG?
- What do you think of the use of YPG to ensure youth employment during a pandemic / economic crisis? Would you endorse this approach in a similar future crisis?
- How well would you say that the YPG integrated into the wider employability landscape?
- What impact, if any, did the timings of the roll out of the YPG have on implementation and delivery?
- What are the next steps are you focusing on in terms of implementing NOLB/YPG?

Progress in implementation (8 mins)

For the next part of the conversation, I would like to ask about your perceptions of progress in implementation of NOLB/YPG.

Early set up

- How did you experience the early set up, design and implementation of NOLB / YPG?

- How did you engage and communicate with stakeholders/partners/LA?

- Did the LA issue any guidance or have information events? If so, was this helpful and were there any changes you would suggest for future iterations?

- Who was involved at each stage and what was their role?

- What are your perceptions of what worked well / less well in this stage? What are the lessons?

Monitoring and reporting

- What processes are involved in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of NOLB / YPG?

- What performance and monitoring data is collected and by whom?

- How frequently is this data collected?

- Have you encountered any challenges collecting monitoring data? What would help in overcoming these?

- What are your perceptions of what is worked well / less well in relation to monitoring and reporting? What are the lessons?

- If not mentioned: Are you aware of the Shared Measurement Framework for NOLB? If yes, what are your thoughts / feedback on this? How useful or otherwise is it in informing your approach?

Progress on outcomes

- I understand it is early to ask this question, but to what extent do you think there has been progress towards achieving the intended outcomes for NOLB in your area? Probe on: 1) outcomes for service users in terms of progression towards education, employment and training and 2) outcomes for the 'system' of employability support in Scotland relating to better partnership working, more integrated service provision, greater focus on need, etc.

Reaching clients (8 mins)

Promotion

- How is NOLB and YPG promoted to clients in your area?
- What have your experiences been of branding and online information provision?
- What went well / not so well?
- Do they think this has impacted on uptake?

Accessibility and target groups

- What are the key target groups for NOLB and YPG support in your area?
- How easy or difficult has it been for you to engage target groups with NOLB and YPG?
- Are some groups more/less difficult to reach/engage?
- Is demand what you expected it to be?
- Does this differ across different groups? (e.g. young people)
- Are you aware of any specific ways in which services are made accessible to those facing additional barriers? For example:
- Disabled people / people with long term conditions
- Care experienced people
- Minority ethnic groups
- People with convictions
- Young parents
- Families experiencing child poverty
- What has worked well/less well to support these groups to engage with NOLB and YPG?
- Do you think there is anything more that could be done to ensure NOLB / YPG funding is reaching these groups?
- Are there any specific ways in which people with caring responsibilities (including parents) are supported to engage with NOLB and YPG?
- What specific barriers do these service users face?
- What are the challenges in supporting this group?
- What has worked well/less well?
- What more could be done?

In summary,   • Is there anything that could be done to improve the reach of NOLB / YPG in general?
Summary (5 mins)
Thank you, we're coming to the end of the interview now, so I'd like to ask a couple of summary questions.   • Could you please give a score 1-5 (1= very poor, 3=neutral and 5= excellent) of how well you think NOLB has been implemented in your local authority area so far?   • Could you please give a score 1-5 (1= very poor, 3=neutral and 5= excellent) of how well you think YPG has been implemented in your local authority area so so far?   • What would you say is working particularly well in implementing NOLB and YPG in your area?   • And overall, what are the key things that would you say could be working better or any recommendations for the future?
Wrap-up (2-3 mins)
Is there anything we haven't discussed already which you think may be helpful for us to be aware of in delivering the evaluation?   Do you have any questions for me?   Thank you very much for speaking with me today.

Discussion guide for groups with employability staff

Introduction (5 mins)

Introduce Self / Ipsos (independent research company) / Tech Support / Anybody Else.

I'd like to thank you all very much for coming today and offering to contribute your views as part of this research. I'll start by going over some details about the research, as well as what we'll cover in this session and how the discussion will work.

Firstly, a reminder about what the research is about. As you will know, Ipsos has been commissioned by the Scottish Government to deliver an implementation evaluation of the development and early delivery of No One Left Behind (NOLB) and the Young Person's Guarantee (Guarantee). The findings will generate valuable insights and learning to inform continuous improvement of employability policy, service design and delivery in Scotland.

As part of this, we are running group discussions with staff members who have been involved in the implementation/early delivery of No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee. We will be asking about your views on employability issues in your area and changes as a result of No One Left Behind and the Young Person's Guarantee, including what is working well and what could be improved.

Findings from these discussions will be used to inform the evaluation and a report will be published. However, everything you say will be treated in the strictest confidence. No identifying information about individuals will be included in the report. We may quote something you say, but this would be done anonymously. For this reason, we ask that you do not discuss the views raised today outside of this session.

Run through practicalities / ground rules:

- The discussion will last up to 90 minutes.

- Keep microphones muted if there is background noise.

- Participation is voluntary - can change mind at any time, up until the report is published. This applies to individual questions, completely fine to skip.

- Explain your role – might need to interrupt/move people on to make sure everyone has the chance to speak / so we can cover everything, and finish on time.

- Acknowledge limitations on anonymity of professional stakeholders (e.g. few people in a relevant post) – let us know if anything off the record / not quoted.

• Reminder that we are not evaluating individual services / local authorities, but trying to get an idea of how well implementation is going as a whole, across Scotland. Case study areas will not be named in the report.
• With your permission, we would like to record the discussion today to help with our notes and to ensure we don't miss anything that you share. This would only be an audio recording – not video. The recording would not be shared with anyone outside of the evaluation team except those transcribing the recordings to help with our notes and it would be securely stored and then securely destroyed three months after we have completed the evaluation.

Do I have your permission to record?

Before I start recording, are there any questions about anything I've just said or about the research in general?

Turn on the recorder and record consent to take part and for the discussion to be recorded.

Introductions (10 mins)

To start off with it would be great if everyone could briefly introduce themselves.
Can you please tell us about the organisation you work for, the types of services you deliver and how long you've been working in employability services.

Awareness and understanding of NOLB / YPG (10 mins)

I'd now like to ask some questions about your understanding / interpretation of the key aims and objectives of NOLB and the Guarantee.
How would you summarise the aims and objectives of the NOLB strategy?
• Why was NOLB introduced? What 'problem' was it seeking to address?
• What would success for NOLB look like? How could this be defined/measured?
How would you summarise the aims and objectives of the Guarantee?
• Why was the Guarantee introduced? What 'problem' was it seeking to address?
• What would success for the Guarantee look like? How would this be defined/measure?
To what extent do you feel the aims and objectives of NOLB and the Guarantee been clearly communicated to you?

- How were they communicated?
- What has worked well / less well in terms of communications relating to NOLB and the Guarantee? Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

Are you familiar with the NOLB Customer Charter and Service Standards?

- Do you have any feedback on these?
- How and in what ways (if at all) are they being used to inform and support your work?
- How do you know if you are meeting the aims and principles of the Customer Charter and Service Standards? What (if any) monitoring or data / evidence gathering is being done in relation to these?
- Are you familiar with the Shared Measurement Framework?

Local approach to employability services (10 mins)

What are the key employability issues / challenges in your local authority area?

- Any challenges/barriers faced by specific groups, such as those with protected characteristics, caring responsibilities or who are care experienced?
- Any differences in the employability issues faced by those aged 16-24 compared to other age groups? What do you think are the reasons for those differences?
- Any issues specific to your local area (i.e. different to Scotland as a whole)?
- Have these issues changed over the time and since NOLB and the Guarantee were introduced? What has been driving these changes?

Implementation of NOLB (15 mins)

The next questions are about what, if anything, has changed about how employability services are designed and delivered in your area since NOLB was introduced in 2019.

What (if anything) is new or different about employability services are delivered under NOLB relative to previously?

- What has changed and why?
- How far do these changes represent an improvement to delivery of employability services in your area? Why?
- Any specific examples of changes introduced and the difference this has made?

What have been the barriers / challenges faced in the early operationalisation and implementation of NOLB / the new Scottish approach to employability in your area?

- How can these barriers / challenges be overcome?
- What is the role of local, regional and national stakeholders in addressing these?

To what extent do you think employability services in your area are being delivered in line with the principles / values set out in the NOLB Customer Charter and Service Standards? Why do you think that?

- Note to facilitators: have the Customer Charter / Service Standards to hand for reference or to quote for those who are not familiar with these.
- What monitoring or evidence gathering do you do in relation to the CC and SS?

What are the lessons learned from early implementation of NOLB that could be used to inform future phases?

Implementation of the Young Person's Guarantee (15 mins)

What has been the impact of the Guarantee on employability services in your area?

- How has the funding been used? (What services / activities have been delivered through the Guarantee and by whom?)
- What is new / different about the Guarantee compared to previous employability support available to young people (under the age of 25) in your area?

How were these decisions made?

Have you used Employer Recruitment Incentives to create opportunities for young people in your area?

- Why / why not?
- If yes: what approach has been taken to this? How well or otherwise has this worked?
- How successful have ERIs been in helping young people to progress into employment? How (if at all) has this been monitored?

What monitoring and/or evaluation has been taking place relating to the YPG generally?

- How well or otherwise is this working?
- What is going well / less well and why?

What have been the enablers to implementation of the Guarantee?

- What has worked well and why?
- What have been the success factors?
- What are the lessons?

What have been the barriers / challenges to implementation of the Guarantee?

- How can these barriers / challenges be overcome?
- What is the role of local, regional and national stakeholders in addressing these?

How did the pace of roll out of the Guarantee impact on implementation and delivery? What are the lessons from this?

- What worked well / could have been done better?

Do you think the Guarantee was the right response to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on young people's progression in learning and work?

- Why do you think that?
- What else / more do you think could have been done?

What are the lessons learned from implementation of the Guarantee that could be used to inform future phases?

Reaching participants / service users (15 mins)

Promotion

How are participants referred to / made aware of the employment support services available in your area?

- What are the main referral routes / partners?
- How well or otherwise are these working?
- Do you feel the service is reaching those people who need it most? Why do you think that?
- How well do you feel employability and other services in your area work together to support participants?

Accessibility and target groups

Who are the key target groups for employability support in your area?

- How did you identify these groups?
- Have these changed over time / since NOLB and the Guarantee were launched?
- How and in what ways? What has driven this change?

How easy or difficult has it been for you to engage these target groups?

- Are some groups more/less difficult to reach/engage? Why is that? What more could be done to reach those groups?

Is demand what you expected it to be?

- Does this differ across different groups? (e.g. young people)

Are there any specific ways in which services in your area are made accessible to those facing additional barriers?

E.g.

- Disabled people / people with long term conditions
- Care experienced people
- Minority ethnic groups
- People with convictions
- Parents

What has worked well/less well to support these groups to engage with NOLB / YPG?

- Do you think there is anything more that could be done to ensure NOLB / YPG services are reaching these groups?

Are there any specific ways in which people with caring responsibilities (including parents) are supported to engage with NOLB and YPG?

- What specific barriers do these service users face?
- What are the challenges in supporting this group?
- What has worked well/less well?
- What more could be done?

How might services be made more inclusive of underrepresented groups?

Recommendations (5 mins)

What (if anything) do you think could be done to further develop or improve employability services in your local authority area?

Is there anything that you think could be done nationally to further develop or improve employability services in Scotland?

What do you think the future priorities for employability services in Scotland should be?

Wrap up (2 mins)
That brings me to the end of my questions now, but is there anything I may have missed that you think may be helpful for us to be aware of? Do you have any questions for me? Thank all for attending the discussion. If any further questions – do get in touch via email. End recording.

Discussion guide for interviews with service users

Introduction (3 mins)

Introduce self and Ipsos

Thank you for completing the online survey about your experiences of accessing employment services and for agreeing for us to contact you to ask some follow up questions.

Introduce the research: Ipsos has been appointed by the Scottish Government to evaluate employment support services in Scotland. As part of this research, we are conducting interviews with people who have accessed services.

The interview will last up to 20 minutes. You will get £30 as a thank you, paid as a voucher.

Provide reassurances of anonymity. No identifying information about individuals will be passed to anyone outside the Ipsos research team. If we would like to quote you, we will do so anonymously. It will not be possible for the Scottish Government or anyone else to identify individuals in any of the reports that Ipsos produce.

No one at the Scottish Government, or in the local authority or organisation through which you access employment support services will know who took part in the research so taking part will not impact any current or future services you might use.

Taking part is voluntary, you can change your mind at any time, up until the evaluation report is published. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to and we can stop the interview at any time.

Request permission to record interview. Explain that this is for transcription and analysis purposes and that recordings will not be shared outside the research team at Ipsos. The recording will be securely stored and deleted three months after the research finishes.

Check if any questions

Turn on the recorder and record consent to take part and for the discussion to be recorded

Background (5 mins)

To start off with could you tell me about your employment journey so far?

If unclear: can you please confirm what you have been doing for the last 12 months? Are you currently in education, training or employment?

Accessing services (5 mins)

You said in the survey it was [easy/difficult/neither nor] for you to find and use employment support services. Can you say why that was the case?

What worked well?

What were the challenges? Barriers? What would have made the experience better for you?

Is your access to employment support services affected by any health needs or caring responsibilities?

Support received (5 mins)

You said in the survey that you were [satisfied/dissatisfied/neither nor] with the services you received. Can you tell me a bit more about why you felt that way? Probe:

- What their expectations were
- What they liked / disliked
- Was it due to the way it was delivered (F2F, group, online)
- How was your relationship with your key worker? What worked well/could have been improved?
- Did you feel treated with dignity and respect? Could you please give an example?

Are you still receiving support? If so, what type of support?

Is there anything that would have made you feel more satisfied with the services or would have helped your journey towards finding work?

Did you also receive any other support, such as childcare or transport, to help you with your search for training or employment?
Outcomes (5 mins)
How, do you feel you the services you accessed benefited you, if at all? What was it about the support you received that made the most difference? Do you think the support you received will help you in future? Why do you think that? What education and employment opportunities do you feel are available to you now? What education and employment opportunities would you like to have going forward?
Recommendations (3 mins)
Do you have any recommendations for how the employment services available to you could be further improved in future? Probe on: • Reasons for any recommendations suggested • What difference these could make to them and others
Wrap up (2 mins)

Is there anything else you would like to say?

Before we finish, we have another paid research opportunity that I think you would be a good fit for. It involves completing some tasks on an app called Ipsos App Life, it's an online diary to share how you're feeling in the moment, for example by sharing photos, short video clips or sound clips, as well as text. There will be 5 tasks over 2 weeks and they will be about how you're feeling about your employability journey. We are giving people £50 as a thank you for taking part in the stage of the research. If you are interested in finding out more, I can share our information sheet with more details. Would you like to receive more information about this? Yes/no?

We have also been asked by The Scottish Government if we could share your contact details with them so they can contact you about the possibility of being involved in a service user panel. Do you give permission for your contact details to be shared with The Scottish Government? Yes/no?

Switch off recorder. Explain next steps, collect details for incentive, thank and close.

Annex B – Surveys

Survey of employability staff

Section A: Intro

Which of the following best describes your organisation? Please select one.

1 - Local authority

2 - College

3 - Third sector (charity or social enterprise)

4 - Private sector

5 - Other (please specify)

Which of the following best describes your main job role? Please select one.

1 - Front line: key worker, employability support worker and others who work directly with clients

2 - Management: employability lead and others who design and manage employability programmes

3 - Work / Careers coach

4 - Employer engagement lead

5 - Training provider

6 - Other (please specify)

How long have you been working in employability services in Scotland? Please select one.

1 - Less than a year

2 - 1-2 years

3 - 3-5 years

4 - 6-10 years

5 - More than 10 years

Section B: Service delivery

What type(s) of employability services do you deliver? Please select all that apply.

1 - Tailored one-to-one support

2 - Mentoring

3 - Group sessions to develop employability skills

4 - Signposting to other sources of support to address barriers

5 - Support to access education and training opportunities

6 - Support to access volunteering or work placement opportunities

7 - Training

8 - Careers information, advice and guidance

9 - Job search support

10 - Support for interview skills

11 - Support for CV development

12 - Other (please specify)

To what extend do you agree that the employability services you deliver are:

1 - Person-centred - people who use our services are at the centre of everything we do

2 - Flexible

3 - Based on dignity and respect

4 - Delivered in partnership with other organisations

5 - Focused on finding solutions for people

Response options: Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree not disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree / Don't know

To what extend do you agree that these are barriers to the employability services you deliver:

1 - Lacking strategic vision

2 - Under-staffed

3 - Under a lot of time-pressure

4 - Too much administration

How aware are you of the No One Left Behind strategy and its aims?

1 - Fully aware of No One Left Behind

2 - Aware of No One Left Behind but not in detail

3 - Not aware of No One Left Behind

4 - Don't know

How well do you think No One Left Behind has been implemented in your local authority area?

1 - Very well

2 - Fairly well

3 - Not very well

4 - Not at all well

5 - Don't know

How much of a difference has No One Left Behind made to the way employability services are delivered in your local authority area?

1 - Great deal – positive

2 - Fair amount – positive

3 - Just a little – positive

4 - Made no difference

5 - Just a little – negative

6 - Fair amount – negative

7 - Great deal – negative

8 - Don't know

To what extent has No One Left Behind made a positive difference to the following aspects of employability services in your local authority area?

1 - Improved partnership working between local authority and delivery partners

2 - Enabled more people to be supported

3 - Improved equality of service provision

4 - More flexible, person-centred support

5 - Made employability services easier for people to navigate

Response options: To a great extent / To some extent / Hardly at all / Not at all / Don't know

Could you describe any other positive or negative differences you think No One Left Behind has made to the way employability services are delivered in your local authority area? Please be as specific as you can.

Open Ended

How aware are you of the Young Person's Guarantee and its aims?

1 - Fully aware of the Young Person's Guarantee

2 - Aware of Young Person's Guarantee but not in detail

3 - Not aware of Young Person's Guarantee

4 - Don't know

How well do you think Young Person's Guarantee has been implemented in your local authority area?

1 - Very well

2 - Fairly well

3 - Not very well

4 - Not at all well

5 - Don't know

How much of a difference has the Young Person's Guarantee made to the way employability services are delivered to young people in your local authority area?

1 - Great deal – positive

2 - Fair amount – positive

3 - Just a little – positive

4 - Made no difference

5 - Just a little – negative

6 - Fair amount – negative

7 - Great deal – negative

8 - Don't know

To what extent has the Young Person's Guarantee made a positive difference to the following aspects of employability services for young people in your area?

1 - Creation of additional training opportunities

2 - Creation of additional apprenticeship opportunities

3 - Enabled more employer engagement

4 - Enabled more use of ERI

5 - Improved partnership working between local authority and delivery partners

6 - More flexible, person-centred support

7 - Made employability services easier for young people to navigate

Response options: To a great extent / To some extent / Hardly at all / Not at all / Don't know

Could you describe any other positive or negative differences you the Young Person's Guarantee has made to the way employability services are delivered in your local authority area? Please be as specific as you can.

Open Ended

To what extent do you agree that the Young Person's Guarantee was the right response to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on young people's progression in learning and work?

1 - Strongly agree

2 - Tend to agree

3 - Neither agree or disagree

4 - Tend to disagree

5 - Strongly disagree

6 - Don't know

Section C: Clients accessing employability services

Approximately what share of the people you deliver employability services to are:

1 - Under the age of 25

2 - Aged between 25 and 50

3 - Over the age of 50

Response options: None or almost none / Less than half / Around half / More than half / All or almost all / Don't know

Approximately what share of the people you deliver employability services to have the following characteristics:

1 - Disabled

2 - Ethnic minority

3 - Pregnancy or maternity

Response options: None or almost none / Less than half / Around half / More than half / All or almost all / Don't know

Approximately what share of the people you deliver employability services to experience the following barriers to accessing and sustaining employment?

1 - Childcare responsibilities

2 - Single parent
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3 - Living in poverty

4 - Caring responsibilities

5 - Experience of being in care

6 - Experience of the justice system / prison

7 - Lack of access to transport

8 - Low confidence / self-esteem

9 - Mental health and wellbeing issues

10 - Housing issues

11 - Substance misuse

12 - Lack of suitable job opportunities

13 - Lack of work experience

14 - Lack of skills/qualifications

Response options: None or almost none / Less than half / Around half / More than half / All or almost all / Don't know

Section D: Recommendations

What (if any) of the following do you think could be done to further improve employability services in your local authority area? Please select all that apply.

1 - Creation of more training opportunities

2 - Creation of more apprenticeship opportunities

3 - More employer engagement

4 - Provision of mental health support within employability services

5 - More partnership working with housing

6 - More partnership working with health

7 - More partnership working with social care

8 - Provision of more individualised support

9 - Creation of more private spaces for confidential discussions

10 - More time available to support each client

12 - More face to face contact with clients

13 - None of the above

Do you have any other thoughts or suggestions as to how employability services in your local authority area could be further developed or improved? Please be as specific as you can.

Open Text Box

Survey of service users

Section A: Engagement with employment support services

How many times have you accessed employment support services?
Please answer this question in relation to the number of different occasions you have accessed employment support rather than the number of individual contacts you have had with the service.

1 - Once

2 - Twice

3 - Three to five times

4 - Six to ten times

5 - More than ten times

6 - Don't know / can't remember

When did you access employment support services? Please select all that apply.

1 - Before 2019

2 - 2019

3 - 2020

4 - 2021

5 - 2022

Don't know / can't remember

[For those that answer 1 - Before 2019 then survey is closed]

How did you hear about the employment support service you accessed? Please select all that apply.

1 - At the Job Centre

2 - From a careers adviser

3 - From a training provider

4 - From an employer

5 - From friends or family

6 - Through social care services

7 - From previous engagement with the employment service

8 - Through social media

9 - Poster / advert

10 - Other, please specify

11 - Don't know / can't remember

What were you hoping to get out of the service? Please select all that apply. Rotate answers

1 - Careers advice / help with what types of work would suit me

2 - Build confidence

3 - Support to access education

4 - Support to access training

5 - Support to access apprenticeships

6 - Support to help you find a job

7 - Work experience / volunteering

8 - Support to help you return to work from absence / sick leave

9 - Support to help you remain in work

10 - Other, please specify

11- Don't know / can't remember

12 - Prefer not to say

What type(s) of support did you access? Please select all that apply.

1 - One-to-one support from a key worker

2 - Job search support

3 - Careers information, advice and guidance

4 - Support for CV development

5 - Support for interview skills

6 - Support to access education or training

7 - Support to access an apprenticeship

8 - Support to access volunteering or work placement opportunities

9 - Support to put in place a reasonable adjustment at work

10 - Support to access childcare

11 - Group sessions to develop employability skills

12 - Mental health support

13 - Other (please specify)

How easy or difficult did you find it to access employment support services?

1 - Very easy

2 - Fairly easy

3 - Neither easy nor difficult

4 - Fairly difficult

5 - Very difficult

6 - Don't know / can't remember

7 - Prefer not to say

Can you say why you found it easy or difficult to access employment support services? Please be as specific as you can.

Respondents Write In Textbox

At the time you engaged with the service, were you experiencing any of the following? Please select all that apply.

1 - Childcare responsibilities preventing you from accessing training or work

2 - Caring responsibilities preventing you from accessing training or work

3 - Lack of access to transport

4 - Low confidence / self-esteem

5 - Mental health and wellbeing issues

6 - Housing issues

7 - Worries about money

8 - Substance misuse

9 - Lack of suitable employment or training opportunities

10 - Lack of work experience

11 - Lack of skills/qualifications

12 - Other, please specify

Which of the following best describes your status at the beginning of your most recent period of support?

1 - In education

2 - In training

3 - In an apprenticeship

4 - Employed full-time

5 - Employed part-time

6 - Self-employed

7 - Unemployed and looking for training

8 - Unemployed and looking for an apprenticeship

9 - Unemployed and looking for work

10 - Unemployed and unable to work at the time

11 - Unemployed and not looking for work

12 - Other, please specify

13 - Don't know

14 - Prefer not to say

Section B: Feedback on employment support services

Overall, how satisfied were you with the employment support services you received?

1 - Very satisfied

2 - Faily satisfied

3 - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

4 - Fairly dissatisfied

5 - Very dissatisfied

6 - Don't know

7 - Prefer not to say

Can you say why you were dissatisfied with the employment support services you received? Please be as specific as you can.

Respondents Write In Textbox

To what extent did the employment services meet your needs?

1 - To a great extent

2 - To some extent

3 - Hardly at all

4 - Not at all

5 - Don't know

6 - Prefer not to say

Can you say why the employment services did not meet your needs? Please be as specific as you can.

Respondents Write In Textbox

Respect: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the employment services you accessed:

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1 - Treated you with dignity and respect

2 - Were patient, kind and considered how you might feel

3 - Listened to you

4 - Treated you as an individual

5 - Respected your privacy

6 - Treat you fairly and without discrimination

7 - Were accessible

8 - Were flexible to meet your needs

Response options: Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree not disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree / Don't know

Working for you: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the employment services you accessed:

1 - Were easy to find

2 - Were easy to access and engage with

3 - Recognised your existing experience and current situation

4 - Worked with you to tailor any support to what you wanted or needed

5 - Worked with you to find and access other relevant support that you might want or need

6 - Made communications as simple and clear as possible

7 - Worked in partnership with other organisations

8 - Were delivered by staff who were knowledgeable

Response options: Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree not disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree / Don't know

What (if any) of the following do you think could be done to further improve employment support services in your area? Please select all that apply.

1 - More time available for one-to-one conversations

2 - Having a single point of contact

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3 - Being listened to by your advisors

4 - Creation of more training opportunities

5 - Creation of more apprenticeship opportunities

6 - More access to employment opportunities that suit your skills and needs

7 - Provision of mental health support within employability services

8 - Access to other support services e.g. child care or transport

9 - Creation of more private spaces for confidential discussions

10 - Provide more informal peer-to-peer support and learning

11 - None of the above

12 - Other, please specify

Before this survey, has anyone in the employment support service asked you for your feedback on the service?

1 - Yes

2 - No

3 - Don't know

4 - Prefer not to say

Did you know how to complain if you were unhappy with the support you received?

1 - Yes

2- No

3 - Don't know

4 - Prefer not to say

Section C: Outcomes from employment services

Are you currently accessing employment support services? Please select one.

1 - Yes

2 - No

3 - Don't know

4 - Prefer not to say

Which of the following best describes your status when you left the service after your most recent contact?

1 - In education

2 - In training

3 - In apprenticeship

4 - Employed full-time

5 - Employed part-time

6 - Self-employed

7 - Unemployed and looking for training

8 - Unemployed and looking for apprenticeship

9 - Unemployed and looking for work

10 - Unemployed and unable to work at the time

11 - Unemployed and not looking for work

12 - Other, please specify

13 - Don't know

14 - Prefer not to say

Which of the following best describes your current status?

1 - In education

2 - In training

3 - In apprenticeship

4 - Employed full-time

5 - Employed part-time

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6 - Self-employed

7 - Unemployed and looking for training

8 - Unemployed and looking for apprenticeship

9 - Unemployed and looking for work

10 - Unemployed and unable to work at the time

11 - Unemployed and not looking for work

12 - Other, please specify

13 - Don't know

14 - Prefer not to say

To what extent did the support you received through the employment services you accessed contribute to you going from [start_status] to [end_ status]?

1 - It made a big difference

2 - It made somewhat of a difference

3 - It made no difference

4 - It had a negative impact

5 - Don't know

6 - Prefer not to say

Section B: About you

We would now like to ask a few questions about you to understand who has participated in our research. This will help us understand if our findings are representative of all people who use employment services in Scotland. You don't have to answer any of the questions that you don't feel comfortable with and can select 'prefer not to say' and continue to the final question.

How old are you? Please select one.

1 - 16 – 17

2 - 18 – 24

3 - 25 – 34

4 - 35 – 44

5 - 45 – 54

6 - 55 – 59

7 - 60 – 64

8 - 65 – 74

9 - 75 +

10 - Prefer not to say

Which of the following best describes your gender? Please select one.

1 - Man

2 - Woman

3 - Non-binary

4 - My gender is not listed

5 - Prefer not to say

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

1 - Yes, limited a lot

2 - Yes, limited a little

3 - No

4 - Prefer not to say

What is your ethnic group?

1 - White

2 - Mixed or multiple ethnic groups

3 - Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian

4 - African, Scottish African or British African

5 - Caribbean or Black

6 - Other ethnic group

7 - Prefer not to say

Would you describe yourself as care-experienced?

The term 'care-experienced' refers to anyone who has been or is currently in care or from a looked-after background at any stage in their life, no matter how short, including adopted children who were previously looked-after.

1 - Yes

2 - No

3 - Don't know

4 - Prefer not to say

Would you describe yourself as a single parent?

1 - Yes, of a child under 1 years old

2 - Yes, of a child/children over the age of 1

3 - No

4 - Don't know

5 - Prefer not to say

Have you ever been convicted (i.e. found guilty) by a court in any country of a criminal offence?

1 - Yes

2 - No

3 - Don't know

4 - Prefer not to say

Annex C – AppLife

Profile of AppLife participants

Profile	Number
Age	
16-24 (YPG)	4
25+ (NOLB)	9
Gender	
Man	6
Woman	7
Limiting health condition or disability	
Yes	3
No	10
Ethnicity	
Ethnic minority	2
Not from an ethnic minority	11
Care experienced	
Yes	3
No	10

Profile of AppLife participants [continued]

Profile	Number
Single parent	
Yes	5
No	8

Profile	Number
Conviction	
Yes	2
No	11
Total participants	**12**

Guide for participants:

Introductory note

The Ipsos AppLife mobile app will provide data on participants' experiences of employment support and how they feel about it in real time.

Details of the app and how it works are outlined below.

How does AppLife work

AppLife can be used to set up diary tasks for participants to complete multiple times. These tasks can include the following options:

Text responses - for entering open ended text messages

Photo - for taking pictures / selecting from gallery

Video - for making videos / selecting from gallery

Single- or multichoice questions, based on list of answers

Scheduled messages/reminders

Participants will download the app, for free, on their smartphone and use it over a one to two week period (but tasks will only be set on weekdays). Over this period, they will post content into the app (either using text, photo or video) and respond to prompts from moderators (the core research team) asking for clarification or more details about the content they have posted.

Participants will be provided with an information sheet explaining how they can access and use the app. The research team will also give them a telephone call in advance, talking them through how to use the app and to check whether anything has changed for them since we last spoke to them.

AppLife Task schedule

Day	Notification	Task text	Questions
Day 1	Task to be showing from beginning of fieldwork	Welcome to AppLife! Thank you for taking part in this diary task. It would be great to know a bit about your employment journey so far. Please introduce yourself by answering the questions below – this can be done via a 60 second recording (video or sound clip) or in writing if you would prefer.	Can you tell us a bit about any education, training or employment you are involved in at the moment? How did you get into this? How easy or otherwise did you find it to access this opportunity? What do you like best about what you are doing / is there anything you don't like about this?
Day 2	2pm: "See today's quick task"	Quick task: Please take a photo of something or somewhere which is connected with your education, training and employment journey so far. Please remember, do not upload a photo that includes anyone else's face in the picture.	Why did you choose this picture?
Day 3	10am: "If you do something related to your education, training or employment journey today, remember to take just 60 seconds to tell us about it"	Please tell us about something you did today that was related to your education, training or employment journey. You can do this by recording and uploading a short 60 second video or sound clip, or by writing about your experience if you would prefer. How did it made you feel?	Researcher to probe on whether participants felt: They were treated with dignity/respect The support they receive was tailored to their needs? Any support services engaged with were easy to access?

		Was there anything in particular that you liked/disliked about doing it?	
Day 4	12pm	There is no new task today. Feel free to catch up on previous tasks or have a break.	
Day 5	10am: "If you do something related to your education, training or employment journey today, remember to take just 60 seconds to tell us about it"	This is the final task for this week – but you are welcome to complete it over the weekend if you prefer. Please tell us about something you did today that was related to your education, training or employment journey. You can do this by recording and uploading a short 60 second video or sound clip, or by writing about your experience if you would prefer. How did it made you feel? Was there anything in particular that you liked/disliked about doing it?	If possible, upload a picture of what you were doing. Please remember, do not upload a photo/video that includes any other people in the picture. Researcher to probe on whether participants felt: They were treated with dignity/respect The support they receive was tailored to their needs? Any support services engaged with were easy to access?
Day 6	2pm: "See today's quick task"	Quick task: Please take a photo of something that you feel represents the barriers/challenges you may have faced in your employment journey so far. Please remember, do not upload a photo that	Why did you choose this picture?

			includes anyone else's face in the picture.
Day 7	10am: "If you do something related to your education, training or employment journey today, remember to take just 60 seconds to tell us about it"	Please tell us about something you did today that was related to your education, training or employment journey. You can do this by recording and uploading a short 60 second video or sound clip, or by writing about your experience if you would prefer. How did it made you feel? Was there anything in particular that you liked/disliked about doing it?	If possible, upload a picture of what you were doing. Please remember, do not upload a photo/video that includes any other people in the picture. Researcher to probe on whether participants felt:They were treated with dignity/respect Support they receive is tailored to their needs? Support services are easy to access?
Day 8	12pm	There is no new task today. Feel free to catch up on previous tasks or have a break.	
Day 9	2pm: "See today's quick task"	Take a photo of something that represents how you are feeling about the employment support you have been receiving recently. Please remember, do not upload a photo that includes anyone else's face in the picture.	Why did you choose this picture?
Day 10	10am: "Today is the final day of AppLife! Take 60 seconds to	Please tell us about something you did today that was related to your education, training or employment journey. You can do this by recording	If possible, upload a picture of what you were doing. Please remember, do not upload a photo/video that includes

record a final diary entry"

5pm: "As today is the final day of AppLife, there are no more taks. However, you can still use the app until Sunday at 11.59pm if you want to use that time to add any final thoughts or catch up on previous tasks."

and uploading a short 60 second video or sound clip, or by writing about your experience if you would prefer.

How did it made you feel?

Was there anything in particular that you liked/disliked about doing it?

any other people in the picture.

Researcher to probe on whether participants felt:They were treated with dignity/respect•	They were treated with dignity/respect

Support they receive is tailored to their needs?

Support services are easy to access?

social
research

GSR
GOVERNMENT SOCIAL RESEARCH

Social Science in Government