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Fair Start Scotland Evaluation Report 1: Implementation and Early Delivery Review (June 2019)



ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET



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1. Executive Summary

In early 2019, the unemployment rates for Scotland (3.2%) and the UK (3.8%) reached record lows.¹ Nevertheless, the Scottish Government's economic, labour market and inclusive growth strategies recognise that, for many people living with poor health, financial disadvantage and other barriers, moving into secure and fair work remains a significant challenge.

In order to support action to help people with barriers the Scottish Government (SG) has developed Fair Start Scotland (FSS). FSS is a service designed at, and for, this time of low unemployment. As such it focuses clearly on those seeking work who are further from the labour market, and who face a range of barriers to participation. Looking to the future, SG is mindful of the need to deliver services that can also respond to a downturn in the economic cycle and to any potential labour market shocks arising from EU exit.

In 2015, SG undertook public consultation to develop a new approach to delivering employment support services. The consultation response *Creating a Fairer Scotland: A new future for employability support in Scotland*² laid the foundation for the design of new services that were devolved to Scotland in 2017, having previously been delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) across the UK. A year of transitional services followed, during which SG worked with Service Providers and partners to successfully implement Work First Scotland (WFS) and Work Able Scotland (WAS).

The fully devolved service (FSS) launched on 3 April 2018, and aims to help at least 38,000 people towards and into employment, including those facing barriers to entering the labour market. The key focus for the service is to provide tailored and personalised support for all those who participate; to provide a service in which participation is voluntary, so people have a choice on whether they want to engage, and to ensure that participants are treated with dignity and respect in their journey towards work. SG have contracted this work out to six different FSS Service Providers across Scotland who will deliver services on their behalf across nine geographical lots, and over a five years to March 2023.

Scottish Ministers have committed to a “test and learn” approach to the ongoing improvement of employment support and both the FSS service design and evaluation reflect this approach.

This first FSS evaluation report identifies initial areas of success and for improvement across the first six months of service delivery (to Sept 2018) and

¹ Scottish Government *Scotland's Labour Market May 2019 (for Jan-Mar 19)*.
<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Labour-Market/LMTrends>

² *Creating a Fairer Scotland: A new future for employability support in Scotland*
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00498123.pdf>

highlights the actions being taken to improve current delivery and longer term development and design. The report summarises findings from commissioned research by Rocket Science UK Ltd, including interviews and online surveys with FSS Service Providers and key delivery partners Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and DWP. It also reports findings from participant focus groups and analysis of management information undertaken by SG analysts.

Positive evidence highlighted through the research includes:

- genuine partnerships established by key players across Lots;
- recognition by Service Providers and JCP/DWP staff of the benefits of a person-centred service model that treats participants with dignity and respect;
- people with a wide range of motivations, characteristics and barriers being attracted to FSS;
- participants seeing FSS as a way to move towards lasting and meaningful employment;
- participants valuing the personalised nature of the service and the wide range of support available to deal with issues at their own pace; and the
- benefits of a wholly voluntary service for participants, Service Providers and delivery partners, where the voluntary offer transforms the nature of this relationship, the character of the initial discussion and the roles of the Adviser/Work Coach and their participant/customer.

The review also highlighted a number of areas for improvement which SG is working on with Service Providers and partners:

- The voluntary offer brings challenges in estimating the potential numbers of participants who *could* benefit from services against the numbers who *wish to engage* at any point in time. This has impacted on the balance of initial high referral numbers through JCP to Service Providers, and the extent to which these referrals are realised as starts on services.
- We know who we want FSS services to reach, and the majority will come through JCP as working age benefit recipients, but we have not yet seen the flows expected. A key reason for this is likely to be the time taken to develop the partnerships and understanding amongst all involved that is required to support implementation of a new service. Particular challenges have arisen in understanding the detail of the eligibility criteria and service offer, and from the continuing public misconception around the voluntary nature of the offer (as also seen in the transitional services evaluation³).

³ *Evaluation of Scottish transitional employment services: interim report August 2018*. Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-scottish-transitional-employment-services-interim-report-august-2018/>

- In terms of eligibility, there is evidence to suggest that we are clearly engaging the disabled population and those with health conditions. However, there is a significant challenge to make improvements in reaching certain groups, particularly those from black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities. SG is committed to working with people and organisations who support BAME communities in understanding the barriers, cultural and otherwise, around why people from these communities may not be engaging, as this is a key part of the person-centred service model.

Finally, SG is working with Service Providers and other partners on a range of actions to improve FSS delivery and to embed learning in the development of the next iteration of employability service design and delivery. These actions and next steps include:

- working on ways of reaching and engaging potential participants. FSS is now in its second year of delivery, and SG is committed to working with partners to explore how to more effectively engage and build credibility with people of different ethnic backgrounds amongst others;
- looking at different ways to raise awareness of the service through new marketing approaches, along with a commitment to support understanding of eligibility for the service;
- Ongoing discussion with Service Providers on their feelings about the challenges arising from administration and monitoring requirements. SG is currently reviewing the performance management framework in consultation with Service Providers with a view to streamlining this where possible.
- Furthermore, SG is reviewing elements of service delivery to ensure that those who face significant health issues are being supported as effectively as possible; and
- Continuing to focus the evaluation activity on participants' experiences of services. The research will measure longer term outcomes and impacts, as well as responding to real-time feedback to inform continuous improvement of service delivery. The next evaluation phase will also explore other measures of success and progression towards work, and the extent to which the voluntary offer impacts on referrals into the service.

2. Introduction

2.1 Purpose of this report

This is the first FSS evaluation report published by the Scottish Government. The report covers evaluation findings and data analysis relating to the implementation and early delivery of FSS employment support services in the first six months of delivery, from mobilisation preparations, through the launch in April 2018, to 30 September 2018.

This report presents information from four different data sources:

- Externally commissioned research by Rocket Science UK Ltd, including:
 - interviews with SG delivery and policy leads (six interviews), FSS Service Provider senior staff (twelve interviews), and DWP/JCP senior staff (eight interviews);
 - online surveys with Service Provider front line staff (171 responses) and JCP Work Coaches (90 responses).
- Scottish Government analysis of FSS Service Provider management information; and
- A series of ten focus groups with FSS participants, conducted by Scottish Government analysts;

Further information about the evaluation methods used to gather the findings reported here can be found in Appendix 4.

2.2 Background

In early 2019, unemployment rates for Scotland (3.2%) and the rest of the UK (3.8%) reached record lows, and the Scottish and UK economies have largely recovered from the 2008-09 recession. However, there remains significant uncertainty around the potential impacts of EU exit. SG has designed a new employability service at, and for, this time of low unemployment, which focuses on those seeking work who are further from the labour market.

Recent forecasts suggest that leaving the EU without a deal could lead to a sharp rise in unemployment in Scotland.⁴ In these circumstances, the target groups for FSS may remain appropriate (i.e. those who need the most help to find work and who, without help, are unlikely to find sustainable work) but the opportunities for employment could shrink significantly.

The evaluation and ongoing performance management and monitoring of FSS services over the coming three years are designed to provide both the real-

⁴ See SG publication: *No-deal Brexit: economic implications for Scotland* (Feb 2019) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/deal-brexiteconomic-implications-scotland/>

time and longer-term impact evidence required to continuously improve current service delivery and develop services fit for the future.

FSS is the Scottish Government's first fully devolved national employment support service. The Scottish Government had taken on employability powers in 2017 and exercised those powers through transitional services WFS and WAS. The learning from those services and the overriding principles of dignity and respect were taken forward in FSS.

On 4 October 2017 the Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills, Jamie Hepburn MSP, announced the award of Contracts up to £96 million to deliver FSS, with provision due to be delivered by a mixed economy of public, private and third sector suppliers, in nine Contract Areas across Scotland. There is more detailed information on the FSS Service Providers and contract areas in Appendix 2.

Launched on 3 April 2018, FSS aims to support at least 38,000 people, including those facing barriers to entering the labour market. The key focus for the service is to provide tailored and personalised support for all those who participate.

Key elements of the service are:

- Participation will be entirely voluntary;
- All participants can expect to receive in-depth action planning to ensure the support they receive is tailored for them and suits their individual needs and circumstances;
- The service will offer pre-work support of 12-18 months;
- The service will offer high quality in-work support for up to 12 months;
- Those who require specialist support to help them find work can expect to receive it;
- There will be national standards to ensure everyone is supported consistently across the nine geographic contract areas across Scotland;
- For disabled customers who require intensive support, Supported Employment and Individual Placement and Support will be available.

The FSS service delivery model is based on evidence of what works in employability support and was developed in consultation with delivery partners, employability providers and the Scottish public⁵.

Scottish Ministers have committed to a “test and learn” approach to the long-term development and continuous improvement of devolved employability services and both the FSS service design and evaluation reflect this approach. The FSS evaluation plan will report annually on the process,

⁵ See: *Creating a Fairer Scotland: A new future for employability support in Scotland*. Ibid.

outcomes and impact of service delivery, capturing the experiences of all those involved in FSS delivery and participation.

For further information on the overall FSS evaluation plan, see Appendix 3.

3. Reach of Fair Start Scotland Services: April – Sept 2018

Even when the labour market is relatively strong, research evidence⁶ and labour market statistics show that people with disabilities and long term health conditions are more likely to encounter barriers to finding and sustaining employment. These barriers may arise from employers' attitudes or limitations, or from individual circumstances, e.g. having a mental health condition or learning disability. Similarly, other individual characteristics and circumstances, such as poverty, substance misuse, criminal convictions and being poorly socially integrated, can also act as a barrier to finding work. These barriers are not mutually exclusive, and can make people more vulnerable to poor health, financial insecurity and long term unemployment.

A full list of the eligibility criteria for FSS is included in Appendix 1.

The following chapter shows how the demographic profile of those starting on FSS up to the end of September 2018 compared to the unemployed population in Scotland as a whole, using data from published employability statistics and the Annual Population Survey⁷ (APS).

The sections look to address three key questions:

- Who started on FSS in the first 6 months?
- What barriers do participants encounter when seeking work?
- Who left the service early and why?

3.1 Who started on Fair Start Scotland in the first six months?

Between April – September 2018, 9789 individuals were referred to FSS, and of these people, 4978 (51%) individuals started on the service in the first six months⁸.

⁶ For a recent summary review of relevant literature on employment barriers for people with disabilities and health conditions, see: *Evaluation of Scottish transitional employment services: interim report*. (Scottish Government) August 2018. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-scottish-transitional-employment-services-interim-report-august-2018/>

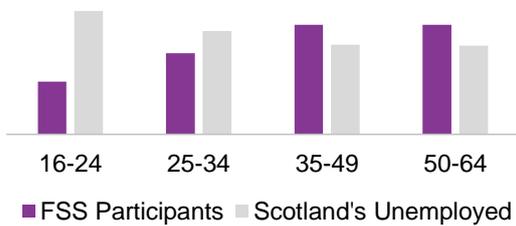
⁷ Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2018, ONS

⁸ Scotland's Devolved Employment Services Statistics Publication - www.gov.scot/ISBN/9781787814189

How do Fair Start Scotland (FSS) participants compare to unemployed people in Scotland?

FSS starts (April-Sept 2018, SG) compared to Scottish unemployment data (Jan-Dec 2018, ONS)

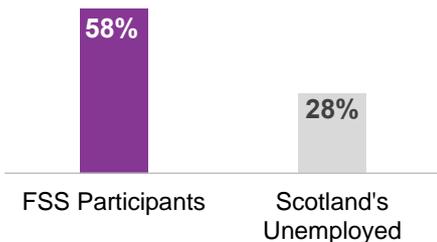
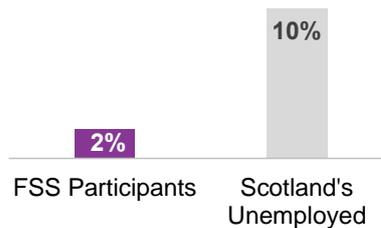
For **gender**, a slightly higher proportion of males took part in FSS compared to the overall unemployed population



Age comparisons with the overall unemployed population in Scotland show FSS starts are

- More likely to be aged over 50 years old
- Less likely to be under 25 years old

FSS starts were less likely to be from **minority ethnic groups** compared with the Scottish unemployed population



FSS starts were more likely to have a **disability** that affected their day-to-day activities, compared with the Scottish unemployed population.

FSS participants reported a range of disabilities, a third (33%) of which were **mental health conditions**.

Of all Scottish people with disabilities and are out of work* 32% have mental health conditions

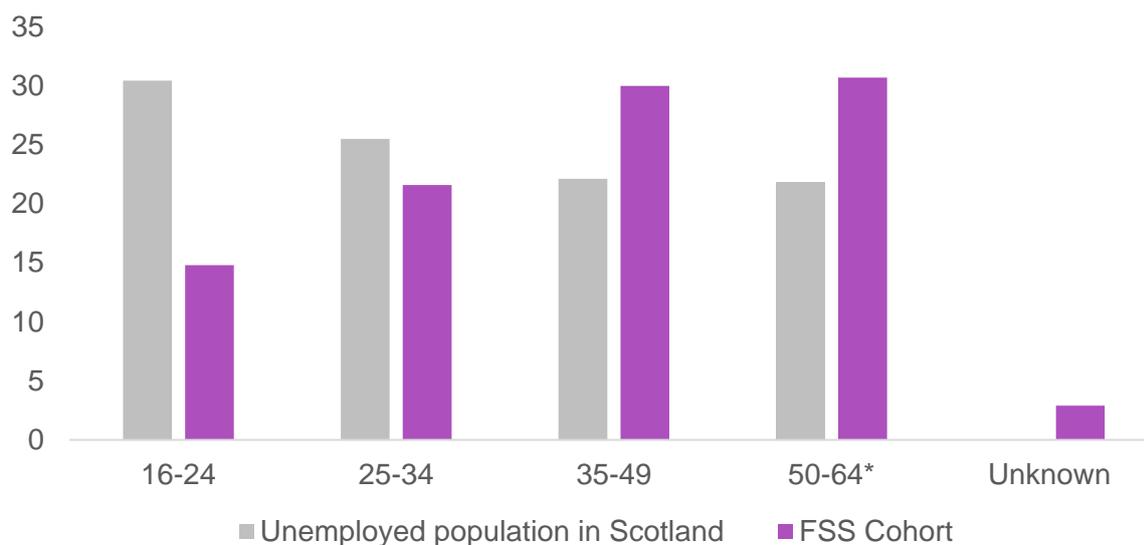


*Out of work refers to unemployment + economic activity. Disability employment data (Jan-Dec 2017, APS).

Age and gender

A higher proportion of men (64.4%) than women (34.7%) started on FSS services in the first six months, and this was consistent across all age groups. This suggests that there is a higher proportion of male participants within FSS, than in the unemployed population across Scotland, where 55% were male, and 45% were female.

Figure 1. Age groups of FSS participants compared to unemployed population in Scotland



* For FSS, this group is aged 50-65+

As shown in Figure 1, a larger proportion of older people, and a smaller proportion of younger people took part in FSS compared to the equivalent proportions of each group in the Scottish unemployed population.

Ethnicity

In terms of self-reported ethnicity, 80.5% of FSS participants identified as white, and 2.3% from a minority ethnic background⁹. This is lower than the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the unemployed population overall.

Providing equalities monitoring information, including self-reported information on ethnicity is not compulsory for FSS participants, and some people choose not to share this information. We are working with FSS Service Providers to maximise collection of equalities characteristics for future publications, so that we can better understand how well services are reaching those who need them most.

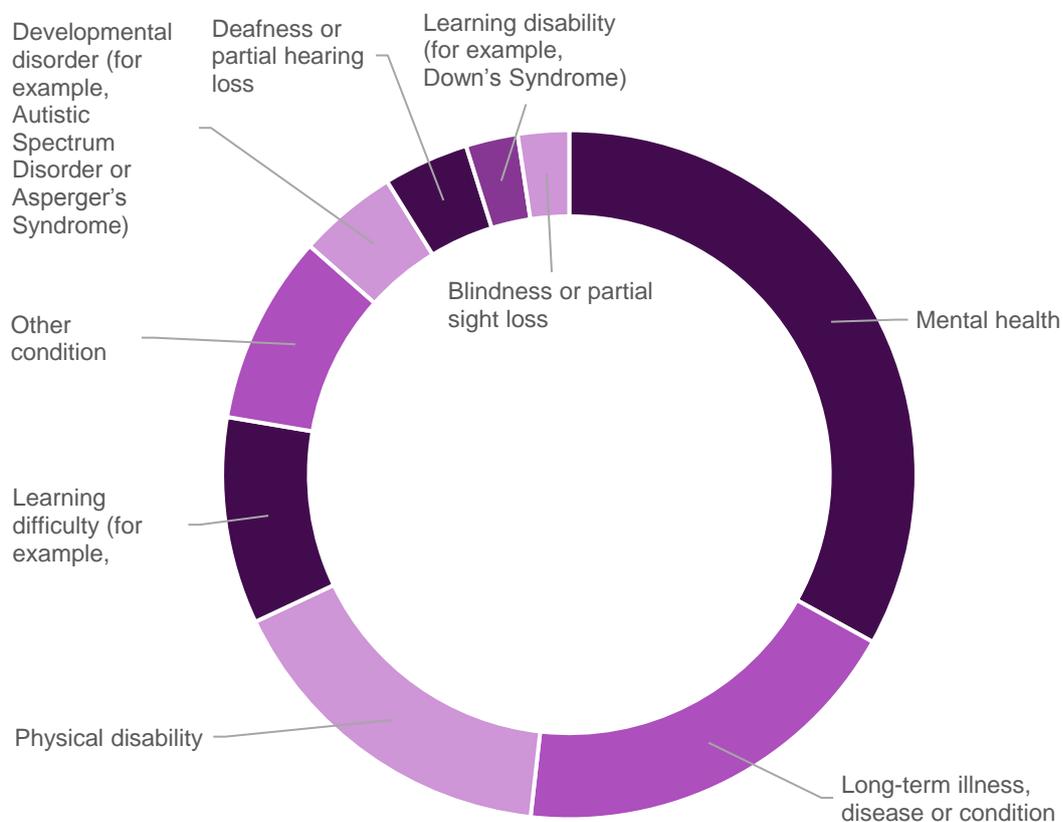
⁹ Minority Ethnic includes Mixed or multiple ethnic groups, Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British, African, Caribbean or Black and Other ethnic groups

3.2 What barriers do participants encounter when seeking work?

Disability and Health Conditions

Over two thirds (69%) of FSS participants reported having a long-term health condition. Mental health conditions were the most common, as reported by a third (33%) of participants (Figure 2). This was also the most prevalent health barrier reported by participants in earlier transitional employability services, WFS and WAS.¹⁰

Figure 2. Long-term health conditions reported by FSS Participants



Of those who reported having a health condition, 85% reported that their ability to carry out day-to-day activities was either 'limited a lot' or 'limited a little' as a result. This means that over half (58%) of FSS participants reported having a disability¹¹.

¹⁰ See Interim Evaluation of WFS/WAS Services: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-scottish-transitional-employment-services-interim-report-august-2018/>

¹¹ Under the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities - <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010>

Therefore, a larger proportion of FSS participants (58%) reported a disability compared to the proportion of disabled individuals in the unemployed population as a whole (28%). This is not unexpected, as individuals with disabilities are one of the main groups that FSS aims to support.

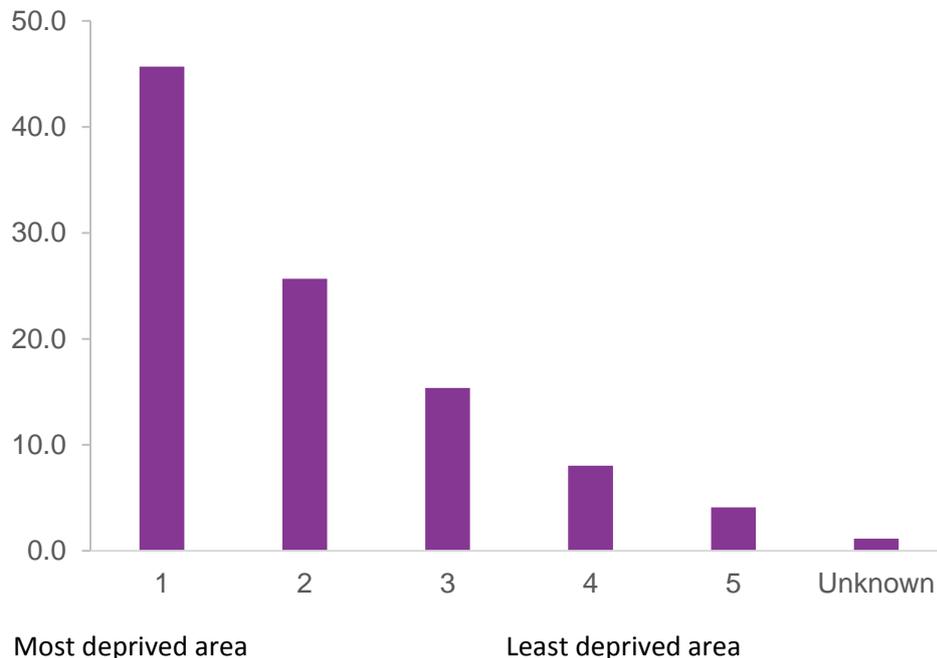
Living in areas of deprivation

People living in areas of deprivation may face barriers to finding and sustaining employment. APS data for January to December 2018 showed that 9% of those living in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland reported being unemployed, compared to 4% of the Scottish population overall.

Individuals who live in the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland represent 26% of the unemployed population, and 37% of FSS participants.

Almost half (46%) of the FSS participants lived in the most deprived 20% of Scotland¹², and the distribution of participants was more strongly grouped in the most deprived areas, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Distribution of FSS participants by SIMD 2016 Quintiles



¹² Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), 2016. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-index-multiple-deprivation-2016/>

Urban and Rural areas

APS data shows that individuals from urban areas tend to have a higher rate of unemployment (5%) than those from rural areas (4%).

Within FSS, the majority of participants (91%) were from urban areas. Individuals from rural areas represent 15% of the unemployed population, and made up 8% of FSS participants.

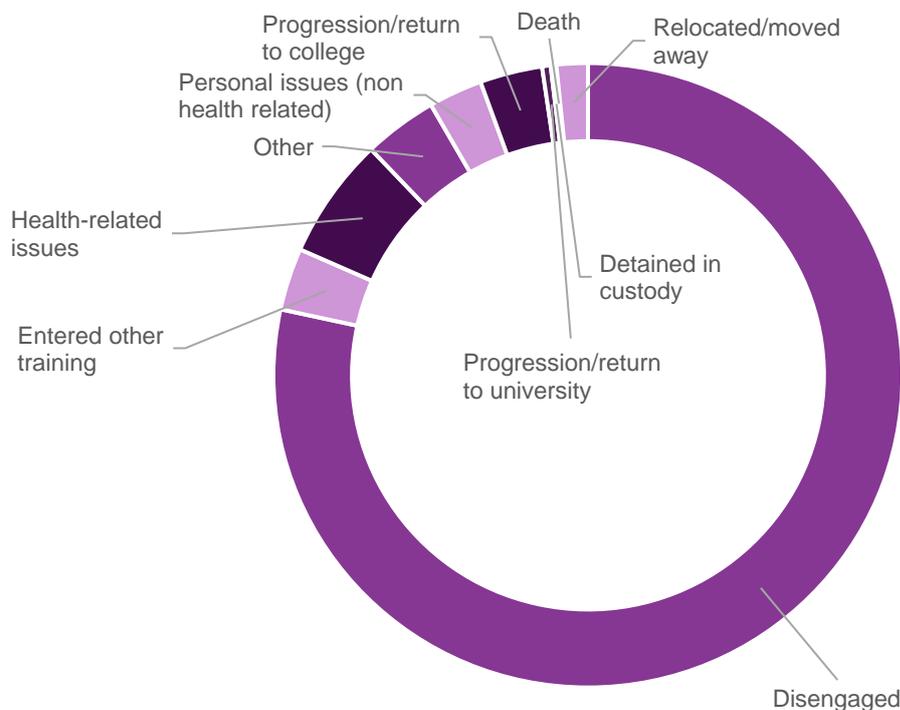
3.3 Who left the service early and why?

Of the total number of starts between April and September 2018, 14% (685) of FSS participants left the service in the first 6 months without completing their pre-employment support period or moving into employment. We have some information on the range of reasons given for leaving services early and have provided some initial analysis on this below.

Reasons for leaving early

As shown in Figure 4, the majority (78%) of FSS participants leaving early had “disengaged” from the service. A small proportion of participants left to attend college, university, or further training (6% in total), or due to health-related issues (6%) or non-health related personal reasons (3%).

Figure 4. Reasons for leaving the service (FSS participants April-Sept 2018)



Early leavers by Age and Gender

As shown in Figure 5 below, older participants were more likely to leave the service early. The largest group of early leavers were aged between 50-65+ (31.5%), followed by those aged 35-49 (28%). Furthermore, as demonstrated in Figure 6, early leavers were more likely to be male (64%) than female (36%).

Figure 5. Age of Early Leavers

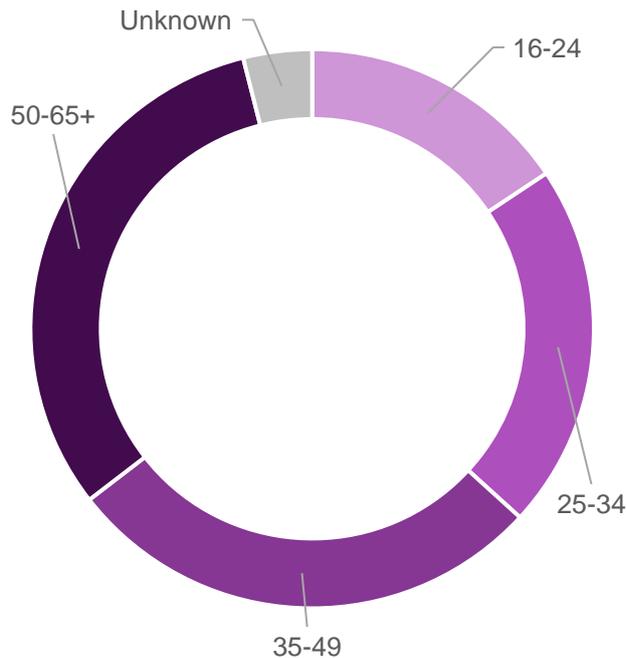
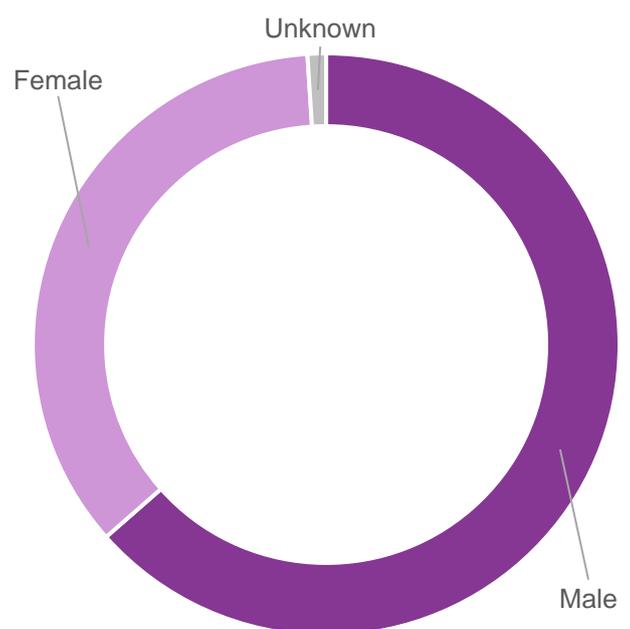


Figure 6. Gender of Early Leavers



Conclusions

- The main groups under-represented across the first six months of service delivery are young people aged 16-25, women and those from minority ethnic groups.
- For young people, this could be partly due to the range of provision already in place to support people aged 16-25 in their journey towards and into work (e.g. Activity Agreements, Opportunities for All, Inspiring Scotland Fund).
- A more targeted approach to awareness and engagement may be required to encourage further participation by women and people from minority ethnic groups.

What is SG doing?

- SG is engaging with BAME stakeholder groups to identify actions to raise awareness of the service amongst BAME communities. This issue was discussed at a session on employability support as part of the SG hosted Race Equality Employment Summit on 21 March 2019.

- Young Parents (aged under 25 years) have been identified as being particularly vulnerable to ongoing unemployment and poverty and are a priority family group for the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan¹³. We plan to gather more information in the coming year to help us identify participants with dependent children and report on their experience of FSS services and longer term outcomes.
- SG is reviewing its FSS Equalities Impact Assessment evidence in light of performance for the first year of service delivery (to March 2019). We will use current regional employment data to identify where FSS Service Providers could better engage with eligible participants as part of our overall Continuous Improvement Plan.
- SG is also working with a range of stakeholder groups to identify and understand more on the needs of the FSS early entry groups, so that we can better support them. Our next evaluation publication will include a more detailed breakdown of participation across eligibility criteria, and the characteristics and barriers associated with early entry to FSS services. This could include comparisons and commentary on:
 - Length of time unemployed for disabled individuals
 - Participants who are ex-offenders or have convictions
 - Care experienced young people
 - Lone parents
 - Benefits received by FSS participants
 - Length of time unemployed
 - Refugee status
 - Qualifications

¹³ For further information see *Every Child, Every Chance: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan* <https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-22/>

4. Mobilisation and pre-launch

This chapter of the report sets out the aims of FSS, and focuses on communications and engagement during the set-up and mobilisation period, as well as the procurement process involved.

The findings reported are mostly derived from the Rocket Science stakeholder review work and are grouped together into the key themes emerging from across all the Service Providers and partners who gave their views.

4.1 Communications and engagement

During the six month mobilisation period ahead of service launch on 3 April 2018, the Scottish Government led an extensive programme of communication and engagements with JCP Managers and Work Coaches, as well as frequent engagement with Service Providers, as they put in place the required staffing and infrastructure. There were specific meetings with each Service Provider that focused on the ethos of FSS and how it differed from previous programmes, in terms of the values and principles established by the Scottish Government to guide its design and delivery. In the mobilisation period the Scottish Government and some of the Service Providers were still delivering transitional services Work First Scotland and Work Able Scotland. Whilst allowing for the building of relationships there may have been a dual focus for those organisations in preparing for FSS while also still delivering transitional services.

The Scottish Government also held Ministerial roundtable events that ran across all contract lot areas during the period January – March 2018, bringing together local partners including Service Providers, delivery partners, supply chain partners, JCP/DWP, Local Authorities, SDS and others representing the local employability delivery landscape, to encourage better partnerships at a local level and building on the November 2017 Employability Summit which focused on FSS partnership approach.

There was regular review and dialogue with the commissioner during mobilisation and regular tweaking and revising of processes – in terms of scope change and Key Delivery Indicator evidence requirements. This involved well managed iterations.

- Lead Provider

A soft launch for early referrals to FSS was implemented by Scottish Government in mid March 2018, towards the end of the mobilisation period. The soft launch allowed SG and JCP to test the IT systems which support referrals, and FSS Service Providers the opportunity to embed their internal

processes and customer journey applications, making adjustments as required. The soft launch was widely seen as valuable, providing opportunities to test and refine approaches and systems, and develop the new working relationships needed between Service Provider front line staff and JCP Work Coaches.

Service Providers considered the 'Test and Learn' approach used in the mobilisation stage as important in easing the introduction of a major new programme across Scotland, and there was general agreement that the approach and the nature of the relationship developed during the mobilisation phase had been collaborative:

It went from being directive to being more collaborative – taking on board everyone's feedback before they came back. This meant there was a delay as it went through policy and procurement, but it helped with ensuring improvements.

- Lead Provider

It has been the best, most organised implementation process I have experienced. A strong collegiate approach by SG, very structured – some may say too many meetings – but great to have regular contact.

- Lead Provider

While there were a number of comments which were very positive about the collegiate approach during the mobilisation stage, there was a feeling from some Service Providers that, despite the engagement with providers and stakeholders, the Scottish Government could have gone further with their innovative approach to procurement and overall design.

The process was very consultative, but when it came to the final bit [we felt that] SG became quite risk averse.

- Lead Provider

There was evidence of a lot of learning on all sides, some of which was related to the scale and scope of a new kind of employability programme, and to thinking through the kinds of information that would be needed to manage it effectively:

The commissioner did not realise that scope changes can take 4 weeks – or up to 3 months if it involved IT.

- Lead Provider

A small number of interviewees mentioned the challenges of prioritising actions against a background of operational mobilisation, new aims and guidance and regular requests from the commissioner. There was a general recognition that all parties were working to challenging deadlines and that there were a variety of assurance processes that needed to be completed to ensure that the service went live on time.

Also central to mobilisation was the briefing of JCP Work Coaches through a Scotland-wide roadshow starting in January 2018. This involved an extensive programme of direct meetings between Scottish Government staff, Service Providers and JCP Work Coaches and Team Leaders, which succeeded in engaging with around 1,500 Work Coaches across Scotland. This was widely regarded by all involved as well designed, appreciated and effective. The engagements were seen as open and interactive with a ready exchange of views and questions and a readiness to identify and seek to respond to practical issues.

All the communication went well, we were determined to get it right this time, having learnt a lot from Work First and Work Able¹⁴.

- JCP/DWP staff

It was a good opportunity to set up links at an early stage. There was still a lot to be sorted out at that stage but it was good to meet face to face.

- JCP/DWP staff

The Work Coaches really engaged, and asked any questions they liked.

- SG staff

The Scottish Government's work with Jobcentre Plus had a positive impact.

- Lead Provider

¹⁴ Work First Scotland and Work Able Scotland were the transition services put in place for 12 months from April 2017 to smooth the transition from DWP led services to a fully devolved Scottish service. Statistics and evaluation reports for these transition services are available on the Scottish Government website.

The Rocket Science surveys were able to give insight into how frontline staff felt about the early stages. Around two thirds (66%) of the frontline Service Provider staff surveyed agreed with the statement "I have felt well informed about the implementation of FSS throughout the early delivery stage", with 98% agreeing that they felt committed to helping make FSS a success.

These positive feelings were also echoed in the Rocket Science survey of JCP Work Coaches, with 91% agreeing that they had felt well informed throughout the early delivery stage, and all agreeing that they were committed to making FSS a success.

Some of the contract areas were affected by the full service roll out of Universal Credit during the mobilisation phase and these areas were omitted from the roadshow. The roll out required JCP Work Coaches to be taken off their front line roles for six weeks of training, and these roles needed to be backfilled by staff from other areas. Service Providers and JCP recognised that this may have compromised the ability of their staff to build working relationships during this time.

In some of the more remote rural areas there was a sense that roadshow presenters (made up of SG, DWP and Service Provider staff) were perhaps unaware of the local geography and the practical issues that JCP Work Coaches and Service Provider staff might face. It was also felt by some Service Providers and JCP staff that, at the time of the engagements, there were not yet answers to some of the practical issues raised. However, they were seen as a useful opportunity to raise these practical issues with SG staff who could ensure that they were fed back into the process of translating policy into practice.

4.2 Procurement

There was near universal recognition by Service Providers of how positive and constructive the procurement process had been.

The Scottish Government is one of the best commissioners we have worked with – they were quite proactive in engagement and quite specific in their requirements.

- Lead Provider

This is unlike our previous funder/Provider relationships – this feels much more human. It feels like we are in the same boat.

- Lead Provider

However, despite early constructive engagement, and a full description of the customer journey in the procurement documentation, a few Service Providers felt that the procurement process had ended up in practice reflecting a more traditional policy approach than they had initially expected.

The procurement focus was quite old school – it focused more on referral and attraction of customers rather than on the full participant journey and retention.

- Lead Provider

Scottish Government were open about the challenges of their desire to develop an innovative and responsive new Scottish approach, which was set against their lack of experience in developing and delivering operational employability services at the scale of FSS.

What worked well?

- The length and use of the six month mobilisation period and the detailed briefing of JCP staff (Work Coaches and team leaders) and Service Providers
- The flexible and responsive approach to issues that arose during the mobilisation phase and early delivery
- The mobilisation process was widely considered to have been thorough and well managed
- There was an effective communication strategy throughout the mobilisation phase and in particular, an appreciation of the extensive and open engagement with JCP Work Coaches
- The six month mobilisation period was considered to be an appropriate length and the soft launch in mid-March was also appreciated, allowing early testing of approaches and systems

What could be improved?

- A few Service Providers felt that the procurement process had ended up, in practice, reflecting a more traditional policy approach than was originally expected.

What are we doing?

- The Scottish Government is moving towards more bespoke local solutions in the employability field as set out in *No One Left Behind*¹⁵.
- As part of *No One Left Behind*, work is under way to reform the employability system with a view to ensuring that user needs are the starting point for how services work and how different partners work together. Most areas have joint partnership groups that discuss employability issues but there is more for all parties to consider in making processes more effective and evidence based.
- Ensuring more time is spent on pre market engagement, including more engagement with stakeholders to develop future service offers, based on greater levels of collaboration.

¹⁵ *No One Left Behind* sets out the steps the Scottish Government will take to develop an employability system which is flexible, joined-up and responsive. See: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/one-left-behind-review-employability-services/pages/6/>

5. Awareness and motivation

This chapter of the report focuses on how participants became aware of FSS services in their area and what motivated them to take part.

The evidence presented here was gathered through a series of focus groups with FSS participants in each of the nine FSS Lots across Scotland. See Appendix 4 for further information on the focus groups methodology.

The service design is based on research evidence and public consultation that has identified what works to encourage participation from, and provide effective support for, those who are further away from the labour market. The FSS service offer reflects these core components:

- Participation is voluntary – there is no element of mandation to participate or threat of DWP benefit sanctions as a result of non-participation;
- Support is person-centred and individually tailored to meet each participant’s needs;
- The service provides a coherent range of specialist support that responds flexibly and effectively to meet the needs of individual participants *and* their employers;
- The service provides a minimum of 3 hour face-to-face contact with dedicated adviser per week;
- The service is focused on supporting participants into *sustainable employment* as its key outcome and measure of success.

The final bullet point above refers to sustainable employment and places FSS services in the wider context of the SG focus on Fair Work¹⁶, which recognises the importance to both individuals and the Scottish economy of good quality, secure employment that pays the living wage and has scope for progression and further skills development.

5.1 Awareness

For some participants, there was a difficulty separating FSS the “service” and their specific Service Provider, with some participants not having heard of ‘Fair Start Scotland’ until they were told about the focus groups. Others were already familiar with their FSS Service Provider, having had recurring contact with them for other support services before starting on FSS.

¹⁶ Further information is available from the Scottish Government Fair Work Action Plan at: <https://economicactionplan.mygov.scot/fair-work/>

To be honest I didn't even know it was called that, that's a new term to me to be honest.

- Hamilton participant

Few participants had seen the SG FSS marketing campaign¹⁷, although a handful of participants across different areas mentioned hearing the local radio adverts. All participants were positive about the idea of advertising the service, with some offering further possible suggestions, such as using social media and television.

For some with literacy issues, and others more generally, there was the idea that **hearing directly from those who are or have recently participated in the service would be useful**, whether this was through short video clips, or by people being there in person at physical locations. Participants also suggested that initial information on FSS should emphasise the wide range of support available through the service, and that it does not focus only on job outcomes.

It's hard for me to read and write, I struggle, so I would be better seeing a video, do you know what I mean? and seeing a video is a lot more...it's easier to understand I think than reading something.

- Kilmarnock participant

This area for example is very different to [other local area] and so forth and if there were case study examples, paragraphs, quotes, whatever you like from people from the area built into the introduction then I think that might give a fair bit of encouragement.

- H&I participant

There was some discussion around the fact that **information, usually in the form of leaflets, about FSS was not freely available within JCP**, which participants felt could have been useful in promoting the service to potential participants.

I think that basically see the leaflets that the Job Centre's got behind their desk sitting on a pile in the corner or something, I think they should have them in the Job Centre as you come in the main door where all the

¹⁷ The first phase of the FSS marketing campaign ran across Bauer radio platforms (Clyde 1, Northsound, Tay FM, Forth, Westsound) 27 August – 2 September 2018 and local print media from 3 – 7 September 2018. Campaign materials were based on case studies and the experiences of FSS participants.

other pamphlets and information are, and that way people who look at that can take one and have a look at it.

- Glasgow participant

Although many participants felt that there should be wider awareness around the service, they also thought there should be a range of different approaches to this, not just relying on a passive method of advertising, but linking in with other services.

I think it would be fairly fatal to rely on putting posters up all over the place...I think there are a number of different organisations who should be willing to pass information along on behalf of the service, for example Tenant Housing Projects and things like that which are very active.

- H&I participant

Some participants suggested that other services and organisations, such as Citizens' Advice, social work, and mental health services, should be more aware of the service. In one area in particular participants felt that **Service Providers could engage with a wider range of employers**, as it was felt that often opportunities were limited to large companies, with opportunities with smaller businesses and organisations not available.

5.2 Motivations

Participants within the focus groups tended to fall into one of two categories in terms of their motivation to take up the offer of support. Firstly, there were those who had been out of work - many for the first time - for a relatively short period of time, and were looking for support to re-enter the job market. Secondly, there were those who had more complex barriers to participation in the labour market, and for whom gaining employment was almost a secondary outcome, after seeking support and access to services to address a range of different barriers.

Participants most commonly mentioned mental health barriers. Many participants described issues with anxiety, depression and low self-confidence, conditions which had been exacerbated, both by time away from the job market, but also by the perceived lack of support they had received up until the point of joining FSS. Some participants had started the service with a specific idea of the support they required, such as updated IT skills, or help with CVs after long periods away from the labour market, as opposed to others who had volunteered for the service with no real expectations, but more of a 'give it a go' attitude.

I was kind of swept into it so I said “well it’s getting me out of the house, I’ll go and see what it’s all about” and it’s good support, which was what I was looking for, because before that it was basically self-help, I couldn’t get a referral or anything.

- Aberdeen participant

I wanted to see what they could offer...it’s more or less about getting back into work. I’ve not been in work since February so I was kind of struggling and they suggested Fair Start to me so I thought I’d give it a go.

- Inverness participant

Many participants described the job market as difficult. This was especially apparent in more rural areas, where participants felt that there was often a mismatch between the jobs they wanted, the jobs available and the jobs that they could easily access. Participants commonly highlighted issues with distance and transport, and older participants reported that they often felt they were overlooked due to employers’ preferences for younger employees.

There’s plenty of Kitchen Porter jobs here, I can get in but I can’t get home again and they know that.

- Inverness participant

I’ve just turned 62, I’m retiring in 4 years and nobody wants a 60 year old, they want younger people.

- Inverness participant

For some participants the motivation was that FSS could provide not just a route into employment, but into sustained, fulfilling employment.

I just don’t want a job, I want a career. I want a job that I’m going to be good at and get better at with maybe the scope for progression.

- Inverness participant

Some participants were motivated to explore a capabilities-style approach to employability, where the individual’s strength and potential was the initial focus of the support. Typically this would focus on the type of

employment that would most suit the individual, the pace and content of the journey towards employment, but could also focus on their capabilities as determined by their physical or mental health.

I just wanted to find out what my capabilities were, what I could do and what I couldn't do. Fair Start sent me to an occupational therapist and I got an examination and that and I got a full report back.

- Falkirk participant

What I'm kind of looking for is something that bridges the gap between an area where I'm basically not well enough to work full-time...and also to help bridge that gap with employers

- H&I participant

Participants also reflected on the personalised nature of the service being a motivation for them, with the opportunity to discuss and work on the underlying causes behind some of their barriers into employment in a supported setting.

I was looking for someone to discuss it with and work out what are the problems, was it here? was it my work ethic that caused these problems? you know, so Fair Start's been more sort of nurturing I suppose as opposed to working it out by yourself and thinking "I can't deal with this".

- Aberdeen participant

What worked well?

- Participants with a wide range of motivations were attracted to the service
- FSS was seen by participants as a way to attain lasting and meaningful employment
- The personalised nature of the service and wide range of support offered were appealing to participants

What could be improved?

- There was some confusion from participants about FSS as a service and the FSS Service Provider
- It was felt that information on the service could be more widely available and available via different communication methods

What are we doing?

- SG has already started to make use of participant suggestions for marketing and promotion activity. We have drafted service user “stories” that describe the lived experiences of our FSS participants and are also making more direct use of cases studies from Service Providers. We will publish these in our reports and use them to bring a direct service user voice to our promotional materials.
- Following evaluation of the first phase of the marketing campaign, we have taken a different approach to the second phase – using more creative radio advertising and extending to community radio stations, advertising on phone kiosks and social media advertising.
- We are also revising our marketing materials to include more quotes from current FSS participants and adding to our suite of marketing materials which includes JCP leaflets, postcards, business cards and developing a generic leaflet for stakeholders and potential participants. This responds to the suggestion that promotion of the service should be less passive and we are working with stakeholders to ensure that they understand the service and eligibility criteria to support informed discussion with potential participants.
- We are continuing to work with FSS Service Providers to source case studies and will use these for promotional activity and on the Employability in Scotland website. We are also making more creative use of the evaluation feedback to create participant ‘stories’ that can be used for a range of different purposes, including marketing materials.
- To extend our reach beyond the website as our main communication channel, we have established an FSS phone line with an 0800 number which members of the public can contact to find out a bit more about FSS and be put in touch with their local Service Provider.

6. Process: referrals and service delivery

This chapter reflects the range of views gathered from participants, Service Providers and JCP staff on their day-to-day experiences of participating in and delivering FSS services.

The findings are grouped together into a number of themes that emerged from both the stakeholder interviews/surveys and the focus groups with participants. These reflect the ‘process’ of referring participants into FSS services, and the broader ‘processes’ of service delivery. The final section of the chapter outlines what worked well, areas for improvement and Scottish Government actions that are planned and already taking place in response to this feedback.

6.1 Referrals

From the outset of FSS service design, it was anticipated that the majority of referrals to FSS would come from JCP. This expectation was set out in the procurement materials and was the foundation of the partnership working and governance structures that were developed in tandem with Service Providers and DWP throughout the mobilisation period.

Now that FSS has become more established, other organisations are also signposting participants to FSS. SG, Service Providers and JCP have an established process to allow the JCP eligibility check and formal referral to take place following identification of a potential participant by a third party organisation.

Both Service Providers and JCP recognised that there had been an initial ‘stockpiling’ of potential FSS participants during the second half of the mobilisation period (i.e. January – March 2018), where JCP Work Coaches had identified potentially eligible FSS participants in advance of the soft launch in mid-March and the service launch on 3 April 2018. This meant that there was initially a high referral rate to Service Providers and this period has made a significant contribution to the positive start in the first year of the service. This situation created an initial spike in demand for the service, which was eased to an extent by the soft launch approach.

While there was widespread concern about the fall in referral numbers after the initial spike, there was also a recognition that referrals are not in themselves a sign of success: lower referrals may mean a stronger client focus – in other words, JCP customers are being referred to other services that better meet their needs and situation.

The findings from the Rocket Science surveys with frontline staff suggest that, to some extent, early teething issues around referrals were resolved at ground level. JCP Work Coaches were generally positive about the referral process, with 83% of them agreeing to some extent that “so far, the referral process has worked well”, and 92% agreeing that JCP staff “were working well with Service Provider staff”. Similarly, frontline Service Provider staff were also very positive about their relationships with JCP staff, with almost three quarters (74%) agreeing that “Staff from my organisation are working well with JCP Work Coaches”.

6.1.1 Eligibility criteria

Both the senior staff of Service Providers and JCP viewed the FSS eligibility criteria as distinctly different from previous programmes – including the transitional employability services of the previous year.

The FSS eligibility criteria were widely seen by JCP senior staff as complex and difficult to understand, and there were issues with different interpretations between Lots, and between JCP Work Coaches and Service Providers in the same contract area.

However, this view differs from that of frontline staff. When surveyed, all responding JCP Work Coaches agreed to some extent with the statement “I am clear about FSS and what it is trying to do”, and 98% of them reported that they agreed (either strongly, agreed, or tended to agree) that “I can describe to potential participants what FSS will be like and how it could help them”.

Similarly, Service Provider frontline staff were confident that they were clear what FSS is trying to do (with 94% of those surveyed agreeing) and also that they are able to describe to potential participants what FSS is like and how it can help them (98% of those surveyed agreeing to some extent).

Some JCP senior staff reported that issues around eligibility have improved over time, perhaps as a result of changes to criteria. There have been no changes to the FSS eligibility criteria to date, so this may more likely be the result of the developing local relationships and growing understanding of both JCP and Service Providers of the intended flexibility of the FSS service design.

6.1.2 Eligibility vs suitability

The stakeholder research led by Rocket Science uncovered early challenges arising from different Service Provider and JCP perspectives on *suitability*, as distinct from the *eligibility*, of prospective participants. The feedback highlighted that while prospective participants may be eligible for FSS services, their personal circumstances, or other factors may in effect mean

that they were not ready or suitable for FSS support at that time. Challenges arose where an individual met the eligibility criteria to be referred on to FSS Service Providers, but once referred, it became clear that they felt unable to move into employment within the 12 month pre-employment support period or attend services regularly due to fluctuating health conditions. Similarly, there were differing perspectives from Service Providers and some JCP management around the expectation that participants on the service would be able to commit to working 16 hours a week¹⁸. Sometimes support services are not appropriate as the timing for the individual just isn't right.

This is an area that requires judgement rather than tangible evidence and it was felt by some Service Providers that, for a variety of reasons, there was a low chance of some customers who were referred to them being able to work 16 hours per week by the end of the [pre-employment] support period.

Ongoing SG discussion with JCP/DWP and FSS Service Providers has emphasised the voluntary nature of FSS services, with the individual making any final decision on their referral into FSS. Both parties also acknowledged that Service Providers are best placed to discuss with potential participants whether they would be in a position to take up 16 hours work after 12 months of personalised support. In reality, we are starting to hear of some participants being supported into working fewer than 16 hours per week. This cannot be claimed financially as an FSS outcome, but is an important step for the individual participant and is recognised as such by the Scottish Government and FSS Service Providers.

6.1.3 Knowledge of service

During the focus groups research, **most participants told us they had first heard about the service through JCP**, though in each focus group there tended to be one or two participants who had become aware through another source, e.g. through word of mouth from friends or family, on Facebook, through their GP, or through a job fair. Many of the participants who were referred through JCP talked about being given a leaflet about FSS by their Work Coach. The suitability of the level of information given at this first discussion was dependent on the participant – some felt that they were given the right amount of information, whereas some felt they could have done with more. For some participants, there was a feeling that Work Coaches possibly didn't know a lot about the service.

They [JCP Work Coach] said it was a new thing and they were told to offer it to you but they didn't know a lot about it

- Aberdeen participant

¹⁸ As stipulated in the FSS Operational Guidance (SG).

I think a lot of Work Coaches and people from the Job Centre actually don't know about Fair Start Scotland, the programme... he [Work Coach] had only recently heard about it.

- Glasgow participant

These findings were echoed in the Rocket Science survey of FSS Service Provider frontline staff, with only a fifth (20%) agreeing that “when referred participants arrive they are clear about the FSS service and what it will offer them”.

At the same time, 80% of JCP Work Coaches surveyed agreed to some extent that they were finding it easy to encourage people to join FSS.

Participants in the focus groups suggested that having staff from a FSS Service Provider within the Jobcentre would be helpful, or in places where those who would benefit from the service may be, such as job fairs.

It would be better if somebody was in there [JCP], sitting at a desk, where you could go up and ask.

- Inverness participant

Participants also suggested that the service was not always brought up by JCP Work Coaches. In some cases participants were told about FSS after them enquiring about what was available, and in a few cases, participants brought it up themselves after hearing about it through advertising, friends and family, or on social media.

I had been asking [about FSS] but no-one knew anything about it at the Job Centre and it wasn't until I changed the person who I saw every second week to sign on with...she told me about it.

- Glasgow participant

In my case I wasn't introduced to Fair Start but I felt ready to go back to work on a part-time basis and I knew I didn't actually have the drive and needed a bit of a push so I actually asked my Work Coach.

- Renfrew participant

The vast majority of participants were aware of the voluntary nature of the service. However, there was some discussion of the meaning of 'voluntary', with some participants worried that there may have been repercussions had they not engaged.

Although the majority of participants felt they had been told upfront by both JCP and their Service Provider about the voluntary nature of the service, there were differences in how participants interpreted this information.

I got the impression she [Work Coach] didn't know too much about Fair Start and she didn't really make it sound like it was voluntary, it was a case of "you've been unemployed for 2 years and nothing's worked, go and do this" so it kind of felt like if I didn't do it...you know.

- Hamilton participant

I thought I had to do it, I thought I had no choice but I was quite happy doing it but I did think I had no choice, that I had to do it.

- H&I participant

Participants highlighted that the information they were given by Service Providers in their first meeting was helpful. There was **particular mention of the time that Service Providers had taken to go through any documentation or information with them at their own pace** – this was especially highlighted by those who has literacy issues, learning disabilities or visual impairments.

I'm dyslexic so I can't read and write a lot... At my first interview every single bit of paper that was there [my advisor] read through, so obviously it took a wee bit longer because he's actually got to read everything to me and he was brilliant that way.

- Kilmarnock participant

[when asked how Providers gave information about FSS services] Verbally and with large print documentation, I don't know whether that was scanned and then made bigger for me, but I got all the brochures in large print and stuff so it was brilliant

- H&I participant (visually impaired)

For others however, **attending the first appointment with their Service Provider was a nerve wracking experience**, for some due to what they felt was not enough information, and for others due to previous experiences on employability programmes. This reinforces the importance of prospective participants having access to information about services beforehand and feeling that this is something relevant to them.

It goes back to that first session where you know I'd been given the details of the service but I was still unsure exactly what I was going into, you know, so I was nervous.

- Edinburgh participant

For a lot of folk, it's just that, you know, the nerves you get because you don't really know what you're stepping into.

- Hamilton participant

There was a feeling from some participants, especially for those who had barriers to attending the Jobcentre, that it was not made clear why the initial referral had to be done in person.

The only thing I found slightly bizarre was, when I met [Work Coach] about Fair Start, I got a note through saying I needed to go see [Work Coach] at the Job Centre. I literally sat down to have a face-to-face chat with her then [she said] away you go, so I found that slightly odd ... I had to get someone to walk me, because I'm visually impaired, to walk me to the Job Centre.

- H&I participant

Many participants highlighted that the time between being referred onto the service and having their first appointment was short. For most this was a positive, as they recounted negative experiences of long waiting times for similar services in the past, and reported that **a quicker transition was more likely to keep them feeling motivated**.

I liked the quickness when we started because I was stuck in bad routines and it was good that it happened quickly and it can get you into good habits.

- Dundee participant

As well as the relatively short waiting times after referral, participants felt that the **length of time that support (12-18 months)¹⁹ was available for was also very positive.**

I think it's a good thing for me because the type of thing I might be looking for might not be right out there just now, it might be a certain time of year it comes up, it might be next week or it might not come up. But the fact is they're in there for the long term, 52 weeks, that's a big help.

- Renfrew participant

6.1.4 Individualised nature of the service

Throughout the focus groups, **participants were positive about the individualised nature of the service.** Many felt that they were being treated as 'a person' rather than 'a number', and that they were being consulted on what they wanted from the service. Individual preference in aspects such as pace of progress and method of communication were also felt to be adjusted to the preferences of individuals.

It's also adapted to everybody's different needs...if you don't like phoning or you don't like emailing or if you can't email ...maybe see you twice a week or three times a week, so it's adapted to everybody's learning pace.

- Glasgow participant

A few participants felt that although the service was meant to be personalised, they were still following a structure which did not always meet their personal needs. The pace of the service was also felt to be directly linked to the needs of the individual participant.

My confidence was shattered, everything was shattered...she's [adviser] not expecting me to jump into a job in two weeks' time, she's doing it slowly, building things up until...I'm capable of holding down a job.

- Dundee participant

Related to the individualised nature of the service was the one to one support from a dedicated advisor. **Participants appreciated having one point of contact** that they could get in touch with when they needed, but also that

¹⁹ Most participants receive up to 12 months support, with a further 6 months available on request to SG for those requiring specialist support.

even if their particular advisor was not available, someone else from the team would most likely be able to help them.

I think that's the nicest thing, it's a person rather than a bit of chippy chapping on the computer...this is just the person you can relate to and you build up a rapport with each other and that is real personal, it's been good.

- Edinburgh participant

Participants also mentioned the **importance of continuity of Adviser throughout their support**, and they expressed a strong preference for remaining with the same individual Adviser once a relationship was established.

This individual and personal approach was also felt to be reflected in the type of employment that was being worked towards – **participants felt they were able to have a say in what they wanted to do, and did not feel pressured into taking unsuitable positions**. Participants felt that the focus of the service was the journey towards sustained employment, where getting a job was the end goal, but not the only goal. Related to this, there was a feeling that the **service also concentrated on the wider benefits of being in a good job**.

There's certain things I hadn't thought about, you know, aside from wanting a job. It's not just about getting money to pay bills obviously, it's the camaraderie with your workmates, it's getting out the house, a sense of purpose, all that stuff.

- H&I participant

Participants were especially in favour of the wide range of support they had been offered, from help with money management and debt, to counselling, as well things like occupational health. It was felt that the concentration on addressing wider or underlying barriers, and linking in with other services was a good way to approach employability, and would lead to more sustainable job outcomes.

I mean it even goes beyond working. I think not long after I joined they were talking about healthy eating and I was like "what has that got to do with a job?" but it was all about building yourself up in a lot of different ways.

- Edinburgh participant

Participants were also **positive about the offer of in-work support**, especially those with a mental health issue, who felt that continued support was crucial in being able to stay in a job.

It's given me hope, plus the fact they support you after you go back to work, when you get a job the support is still there, which is just invaluable because sometimes you think "yes, I've got a job", you start it, and then before you know it, you sort of fall apart and start to tremble and there's just nothing, there's no support.

- Aberdeen participant

In some cases, participants reported that being on the **service had had a positive impact on the relationship with their JCP Work Coach**. Participants felt this was because their Work Coach knew they were involved in something positive and so could provide clear evidence of job search related activities as a result.

My experience has been since I've been on Fair Start my [JCP] Advisor has been far better with me, he's not pressured me into constantly looking for work because he knows I'm actually getting something from Fair Start.

- Inverness participant

The experience and specialist knowledge of the FSS Service Provider advisors was felt by participants to be important, in terms of both being able to relate to participants' circumstances, but also to provide accurate advice around a range of issues.

In summary, a recurring theme for participants was the importance of a combination of both the length of support available, the personalised nature of the support and the focus on sustainable employment, **creating a space for people away from the 'pressure' of the 'norm'**. For some participants, this meant they were able to focus on some of the more significant barriers they faced, and work with advisors to find long-term, sustainable plans.

It does make a vast difference for people who really struggle with maybe health or other issues...this has been a long time coming and whoever has thought this up it's a good thing because it takes the more vulnerable people out, I'm not saying it takes us out the system, but it gives us a break from the norm.

- Falkirk participant

If I'm being honest when I started the Fair Start process I wasn't really thinking about work...I know it's part of it when you sign up but 12 months seemed a long way away at that point and when I was on this 6-monthly cycle with the DWP at the Work Capability Assessment Centre, there's no incentive for you to get a wee bit better and they turn up later and say "you're fine, away and work fulltime" whereas this programme is a breathing space where you think "actually I can just focus on my health for 3 or 6 months" .

- Hamilton participant

6.2 Service delivery

This section provides feedback on the wider experience of service delivery and highlights both elements that worked well and those that participants, Service Providers and delivery partners felt could be improved.

6.2.1 Governance structures

The governance of the service was felt to be well structured and effective, with a clear hierarchy and appropriate escalation of issues where needed. Senior officials from SG and DWP formed a strategic platform for oversight and escalation and an operational group to focus on identifying and resolving delivery issues, gathering and sharing good news stories, and recognising good practice.

The governance structure was seen as a key part of the effective collegiate working, involving appropriate stakeholders at each level in the structure and providing for open discussions about issues and their resolution.

6.2.2 Relationships

There was general agreement amongst the JCP and Service Provider staff interviewed by Rocket Science that FSS service delivery had noticeably improved in the 6 months since the launch of the service. Much of this had been built on enhanced communication across the JCP Scotland estate and between JCP Work Coaches and Service Provider staff at a local level, and an effort to sort issues out locally and avoid escalation.

The positive influence of local working relationships was consistently emphasised across both the interviews and survey responses. The quality of the working relationship between Work Coaches and Service Provider staff was seen as fundamental – this was reflected in the sense that the implementation process and initial performance were better in areas where there were positive pre-existing relationships and local familiarity; where Service Providers and JCP staff had previously worked well together to deliver

other commissioned services, and the need for these relationships to be actively maintained – through regular if not constant engagement about current and evolving service offers.

In terms of accountability there were both positive and negative issues raised. On the one hand there were reports of the quality of the relationship with SG Performance Managers, and on the other, of the perceived micromanagement that this can involve.

We have a good relationship with performance manager – I feel I can pick up the phone to ask any question – it's a really open conversation. On the whole it does feel that the emphasis is less on contractual audit and more on true partnership working, how the programme is evolving.

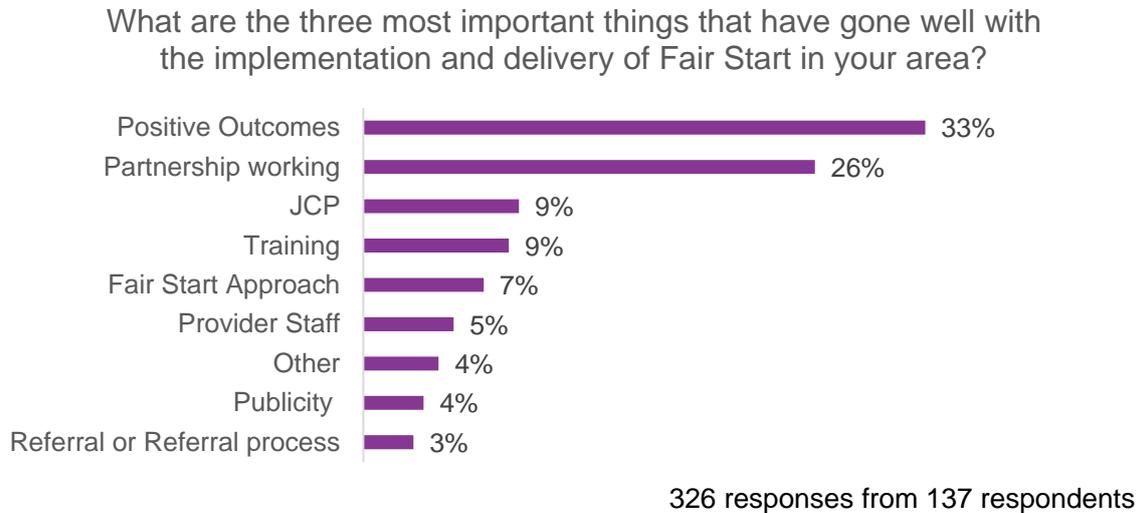
- Lead Provider

It feels like we are sometimes micromanaged – but we are able to be autonomous in some elements like design etc.

- Lead Provider

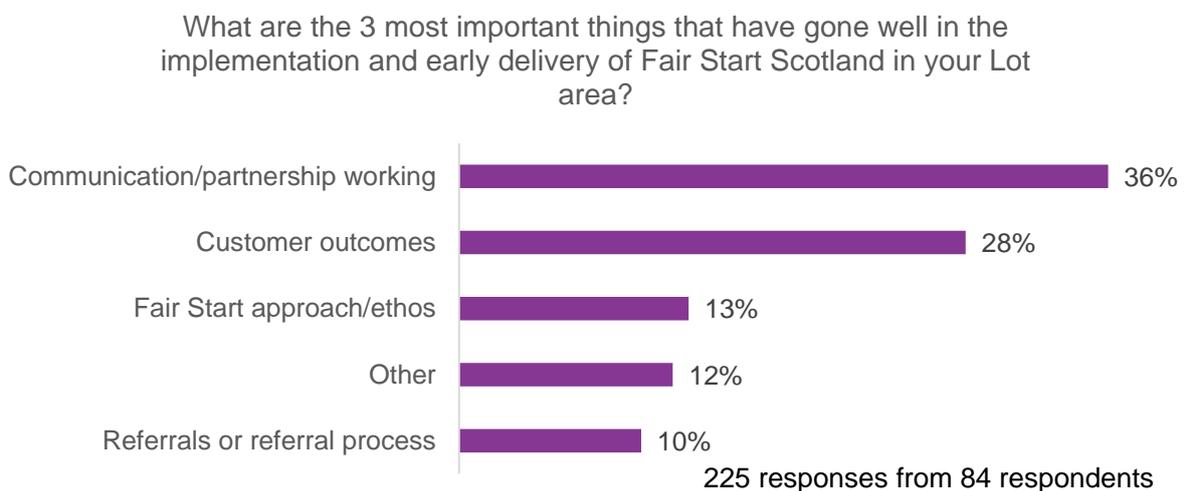
As part of the online survey work led by Rocket Science, Service Provider frontline staff were asked to identify three things that had gone well during the early implementation phase. Figure 7 shows the top three positive elements of the service were: positive outcomes for participants (33%); partnership working 26% and relationships with JCP 9%.

Figure 7: What went well during implementation – Service Provider front line staff responses [Source: Rocket Science analysis of online survey data]



JCP Work Coaches’ responses to the same question are set out in Figure 8. The top three most common responses are again related to communication or partnership working (36%), customer outcomes (28%), and the FSS ethos (13%).

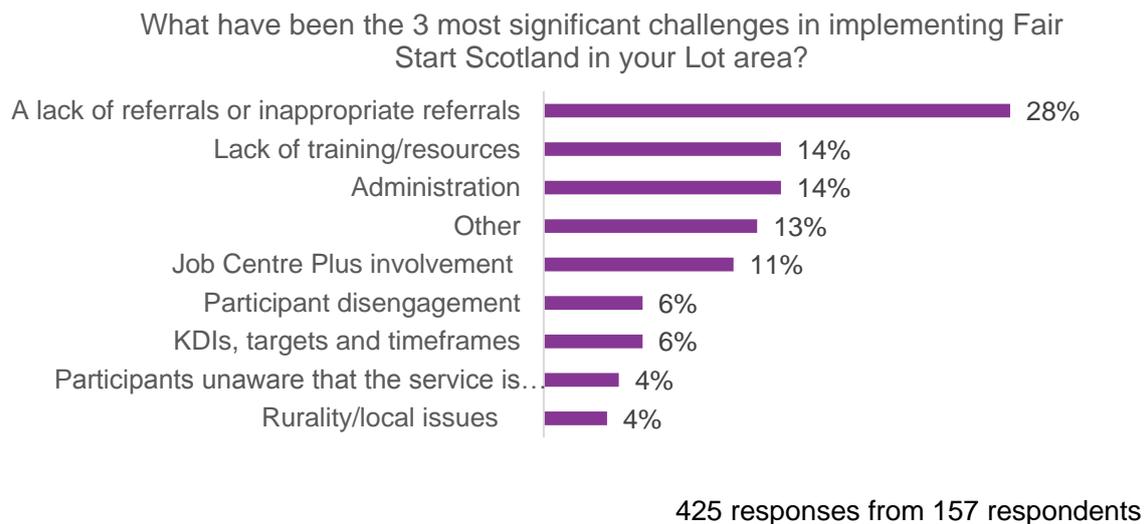
Figure 8: What went well during implementation – JCP Work Coach responses [Source: Rocket Science analysis of online survey data]



Responses from the online surveys with frontline Service Provider staff and JCP Work Coaches also highlight the challenges of referrals and eligibility mentioned earlier.

Figure 9 below shows the main challenges of delivering FSS services, as identified by Service Provider frontline staff. These were initially open-text responses, which were grouped into themes by Rocket Science researchers. Almost a third (28%) of all Service Provider front line staff identified a lack of referrals or appropriate referrals, as a significant challenge in their area.

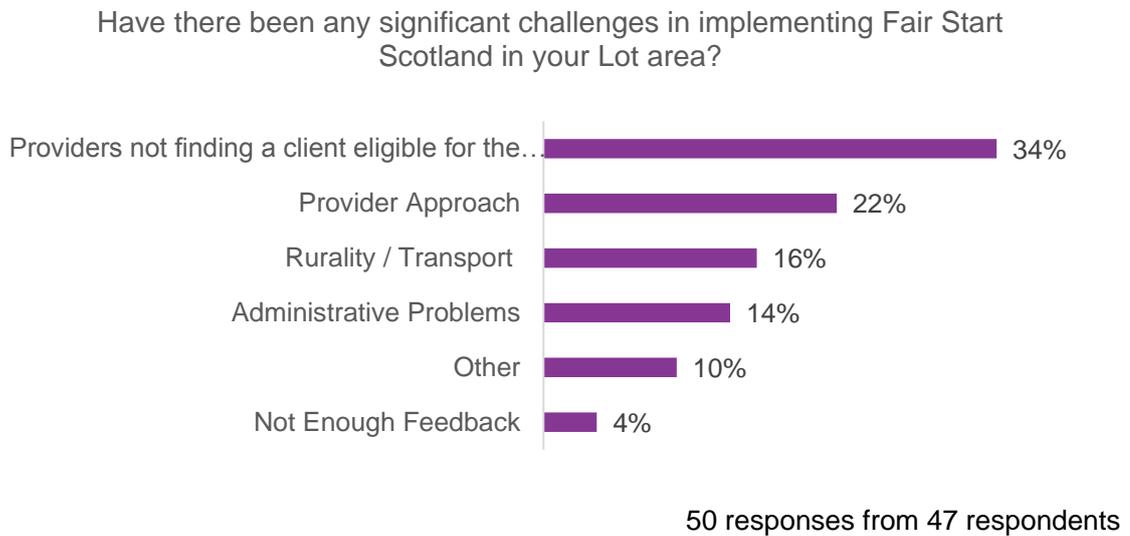
Figure 9. Implementation challenges – Responses by Service Provider front line staff [Source: Rocket Science analysis of online survey data]



Similarly, JCP Work Coaches were asked whether there had been any initial challenges in implementing the service across Jobcentres. Just over half of respondents (53%) felt that there had been implementation challenges.

In a follow-up question asking for further detail on any challenges encountered (Figure 10), over a third (34%) of JCP Work Coaches felt that there had been challenges relating to Service Providers and eligibility criteria, with 22% feeling that ‘Provider approach’ had been a significant challenge.

Figure 10: Implementation challenges – responses by JCP Work Coaches
 [Source: Rocket Science analysis of online survey data]



6.2.3 Rural and remote areas

As part of the stakeholder interviews, Rocket Science spoke with a number of supply chain Service Provider organisations working to deliver FSS in rural and remote areas. They reported some specific challenges relating to the local geography and labour markets:

- Job opportunities were often limited and more likely to be seasonal or short-term / temporary in nature;
- There could be significant distances between Service Providers, participants and employers. Where this was coupled with the costs of travel, poor internet coverage and infrequent public transport, it could lead to limited face to face contact between Service Providers and participants and in the long term could restrict FSS participants' access to available employment opportunities.

Service Providers in more remote areas reported concerns around the impacts that these challenges may have on their ability to deliver their expected levels of job outcomes.

6.2.4 Monitoring

The rationale for the level of monitoring and management information required by SG arose from a need to show that SG were adopting an open and transparent “test and learn” approach to delivery of the first fully devolved Scottish employability support service. This drives a higher level of public and parliamentary scrutiny of FSS performance and impacts, to ensure value for

money and quality of service delivery. As a result, SG recognise the need for a broad suite of management and monitoring information in order to evidence both ongoing service improvement and long term development.

While recognising the need for effective monitoring as part of good governance of the service, Service Providers voiced concerns that the scale, range and rigidity of the monitoring requirements were getting in the way of delivering an effective service. This included regular requests for information; very detailed monitoring which some felt missed the bigger picture of identifying issues and agreeing appropriate responses; the associated range of Key Delivery and Performance Indicators; and issues about how outcomes were measured and verified. Service Providers felt that there were two specific consequences of this:

- that they had to divert front line time onto administration
- that there was a significant risk of underestimating both the conventional outcomes of FSS in terms of jobs, as well as not recording the difference made to people in terms of their health, employability and other outcomes such as FE.

What worked well?

- Frontline Service Provider staff and JCP staff felt they were clear about the purpose of FSS, and able to describe it to potential participants.
- Vast majority of participants knew it was voluntary
- Information given to participants was seen as helpful and clear
- The governance of the service was felt to be well structured and effective
- There was general agreement amongst the JCP and Provider staff that the FSS service delivery had noticeably improved in the six months since the launch of the service, with the positive influence of local working relationships consistently emphasised
- Participants recognised the advantages of the individualised nature of the service, as well as the wide range of support offered

What could be improved?

- There was some concern about the fall in referrals from JCP after the initial burst

- Eligibility criteria were felt not to be clear by JCP staff, which had led to issues around eligibility and suitability of participants, and the concern from Service Provider staff that some referrals were inappropriate
- A small number of participants were unaware or unsure of the voluntary nature of the service offer
- Some Service Provider staff reported that the scale, range and rigidity of the monitoring requirements were getting in the way of delivering an effective service
- There are a set of specific issues about the delivery of the service in more rural and remote areas and local Service Providers feel that many of these issues had not yet been adequately addressed

What are we doing?

- SG recognise the Service Provider resource required to capture the full suite of management and performance information requested and have already implemented changes to the MI required in response to a Service Provider feedback showing concerns over administration.
- SG are committed to the continuous improvement of FSS and are developing a Continuous Improvement Plan to drive this forward.
- SG will review whether Service Providers are delivering the Supported Employment Framework and Individual Placement Support (IPS) appropriately as part of current contracts.
- SG will work closely with Service Providers to make current labour market information available to local supply chain partners in the more remote and rural areas. The next stage of the evaluation will also explore employer perspectives on the delivery process, and participant and Service Provider experiences in rural and remote areas.

7. Values and Principles

This chapter of the report outlines the feedback gathered from participants and Service Providers on the ethos of the FSS service delivery model. In 2015, a public consultation on the shape and design of devolved services received 215 responses and the Scottish Government has built on those responses to develop its new employment services. Creating a Fairer Scotland: A new future for employability support in Scotland²⁰ sets out the key values and principles which underpin the new services. Being treated with dignity and respect is the first of these values, and is central to the FSS service delivery ethos:

Value 1: Dignity and respect

Scottish Ministers are clear that Scotland's public services will be based on a culture of respect. We will have a social contract with the people of Scotland that states Scotland's public services will treat everyone with respect and dignity, and the public will treat staff providing those services in the same way. The Service will be an exemplar of this approach.

Individuals can expect to be treated with dignity and respect through each step of their journey into work.

Overall, the words and phrases used by participants to describe how they felt they had been treated by FSS Service Providers were encouraging.

Participants frequently mentioned the importance of what seemed on the surface to be small gestures from the Service Providers, for example, being offered a tea or coffee when they arrived for their appointment. However, these things made a real difference to how people felt they were being treated. Participants felt that these actions were indicative of the **wider ethos of the service – that each participant was both an individual and a person**, and that they deserved to be listened to and have a say, about not only their FSS journey, but about their future.

When you walk in..."do you want a coffee, the kitchen's up there, there's coffee there, there's tea there, there's biscuits whatever, just go and help yourself" and the banter's amazing, they're not like people you'd expect them to be.

- Glasgow participant

²⁰ Ibid.

With Fair Start they've actually taken an interest in what I really want to do and I've been quite surprised about how much they've actually listened to me and looking for things that I want to do. Even although I didn't have much confidence, they kind of had this belief.

- Edinburgh participant

Amongst participants there was recognition of the **shame and stigma they felt was associated with being unemployed**. They reported feeling that advisors were able to see beyond this stigma to the person, and to offer support.

...it's a public opinion about people who are on minimum wage or no wage, who have addiction problems...I thought I actually have here someone who is open-minded who sees more beyond what she understands...who understands that mental health does not fit in a programme where you can tick the boxes.

- Renfrew participant

[After] I went for the interview with the Call Centre he asked how it went and I actually said to him I felt quite embarrassed because it was all twenty year old kids just out of college and I'm a forty six year old man, been in the army and done security most of my life, never worked in a Call Centre, I don't have English Degrees, a College Degree or anything like that so I was kind of sitting there going...you know that way, getting all emotional because you know you're not getting the job even before you went for the interview. And I said that to him and...we sat down and had a forty five minute talk.

- Renfrew participant

Several participants talked about feeling like they were **treated as an equal by advisors and staff on the service**, and not as 'a burden'. This seemed to reflect an internalisation of both the perceived low public opinion of people who are unemployed, as well as people's experiences of the unemployment system.

[I feel like I've been treated] like I worked here, like I was part of their team, they're brilliant, absolutely amazing, the lassie here has been brilliant, just above and beyond.

- H&I participant

If you needed to see him two or three times a week he would slot you in so you never felt like you were a burden, it was always there, "if you need to come and see me just let us know"

- Aberdeen participant

There was also recognition that people's needs were often complex and interlinked, and that **those with complex needs who were furthest from the labour market were often overlooked.**

It [unemployment] could happen to anyone, your circumstances could change so easy and it opens your eyes because I used to...to always think there must be something they can do. But when you get involved in the system ...you can see with people with mental health issues they get put aside, nobody really bothers about them.

- Dundee participant

The majority of participants used comparators when describing their experience of FSS services to date. Often participants had previous extensive contact with a variety of support services, due to the sometimes complex and/or multiple issues they faced. **Participants most commonly compared their FSS experience with previous experience of employability support from JCP.** This comparison was not always favourable in respect of JCP services. However, many participants made the point that systemic constraints and pressures could often impact on the level of support available from JCP Work Coaches, and described their individual Work Coaches as 'enthusiastic' and 'quite good'.

Even the nice Advisors at the Job Centre just don't have the time to help you with these things, what they're focused on doing is pushing you into jobs even with fewer hours, part-time, minimum wage, whatever...but with Fair Start...they're going to find something that's right for you where you can kind of excel and succeed in and I think that's a better long term strategy.

- Edinburgh participant

The [Job Centre] Advisors have to be under pressure to make sure they're getting the right feedback off you for work...so they're bound to have targets that they've got to hit as well. But it's their job and you've got to see it as a job and that's what they have to do.

- Falkirk participant

For both those who had found work and those who hadn't, there was discussion about the process when starting work, and **the financial impact of the time between any benefits being stopped and receiving an initial wage.**

You know if it's long term and there is no safety pot somewhere, it's hard to survive. I've got incredibly good friends but it's still hard and if I had to wait that period of time [between starting employment and receiving first wage]...you know I've been thinking about that more lately and it kind of spirals me into a bit of a panic.

- Aberdeen participant

Finally, it's worth noting that, in the online surveys of both Service Provider and JCP frontline staff conducted by Rocket Science, both groups mentioned the FSS "approach" or ethos" when asked about the top three aspects of FSS services delivery they felt had gone well. The proportions were small for both groups of respondents in the context of the overall number of comments made (around 13% for JCP Work Coaches and under 10% for frontline Service Provider staff), but this theme was among the most commonly reported for both groups. Figures 7 and 8 show these responses in more detail (see pages 39 and 40).

What worked well?

- Participants were overwhelmingly positive in their feedback about the values and principles of FSS. It should be noted that the focus group participants were recruited through FSS Service Providers for each Lot as a 'convenience' sample. As such, the views and experiences reported here may not be representative of the wider FSS participant population.

What are we doing?

- The next phase of the evaluation will continue to focus on the service user experience and will include feedback on other measures of success, including progression towards work and other positive outcomes, and the extent to which the voluntary offer impacts on referrals into service.

8. Reflections and Next Steps

Reflections

Scottish Ministers have adopted a test and learn approach to developing and delivering the Scottish Approach to employability. As such, all parties involved recognise that it takes time for processes and relationships to bed in and for trusting relationships to be built between new partners. Evidence suggests that most employability services tend to get stronger as the service becomes more recognised and understood.

One year on from the launch, there is evidence that we are building solid foundations for increasingly effective delivery of employment support. There are some significant challenges ahead in terms of reach and visibility, however we are working together to engage and support the specific groups with multiple barriers who we know to be the most vulnerable.

The success of FSS will be based on working in close partnership and collaboration with Service Providers, JCP/DWP, local authorities and the third sector to deliver services that are fit for purpose at a local level but retain a nationally consistent core service quality.

Service users remain at the front and centre of our approach to the design, delivery and continuous improvement of services and we are responsive to both mid to longer-term evaluation feedback as well as real-time performance information from Service Providers.

This early evidence suggests that the principles of dignity and respect are becoming an integral part of FSS service delivery, that participants recognise the value of this Scottish approach and that they are getting the flexible services they need and want to thrive.

It is clear from this analysis and the FSS statistics publications²¹ that some participants have multiple barriers that significantly impact on their ability to move into employment. The evidence base suggests there is no quick fix solution for these participants and Scottish Government and FSS Providers recognise that successfully supporting them will take time.

²¹ *Scotland's Devolved Employment Services Statistics* (Scottish Government) 27 February 2019.
www.gov.scot/ISBN/9781787814189

Next Steps

The Scottish Government will continue to develop and deliver its FSS Continuous Improvement plan based on feedback from evaluation activity and ongoing participant, Service Provider and stakeholder feedback.

Future FSS evaluation activity will reflect the user focus and feed into the design and development of the next iteration of policy and delivery, linking to No One Left Behind as well as other cross-government strategies, such as Tackling Child Poverty and creating A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People²².

The next FSS evaluation report (in Sept 2019) will reflect progress across the first full year of service delivery (to March 2019) and will include findings from:

- further analysis of management information and comparisons against Scottish unemployed people as a whole;
- results of a representative telephone survey of participants looking at their experiences of FSS support;
- in-depth feedback on the experiences of Service Providers, participants and other local partners in three local case study areas; and
- an exploration of reasons for non-participation in FSS services.

²² *A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People* is our delivery plan to 2021 for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. See: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-disabled-people-delivery-plan-2021-united-nations-convention/>

Appendices

Appendix 1: FSS policy and delivery background information

DWP contracted employment provision and the Smith Agreement

The UK Government delivers services to support unemployed people into work through the Department for Work and Pensions. This includes a range of contracted support. The Work Programme and Work Choice (for disabled people) are the two main employment support contracts. Following the Scottish Independence Referendum in 2014, the Smith Agreement set out a range of new powers for Scotland which included devolution of contracted employment support to Scotland. DWP contracts for both Work Programme and Work Choice expired on 31 March 2017, and devolved services commenced from 3 April 2017

Legislation

The 2016 Scotland Act (“the Act”) enables the Scottish Government to implement the further devolution set out in the Smith Agreement in 2014. Clause 31 of the Act gives the Scottish Government the legislative competence to create employment schemes to assist those at risk of becoming long-term unemployed who are receiving UK benefits such as Universal Credit, and to help disabled people into work, including schemes which seek to help employers find suitable employees.

Consultation and the SG response

A consultation in 2015 on the shape and design of devolved services received 215 responses and the Scottish Government has built on those responses to develop its new employment services. Creating a Fairer Scotland: A new future for employability support in Scotland²³ sets out the key values and principles which underpin the new services.

Our Values

- Dignity and respect;
- Fairness and Equality; and
- Continuous Improvement.

Value 1: Dignity and respect

Scottish Ministers are clear that Scotland’s public services will be based on a culture of respect. We will have a social contract with the people of Scotland that states Scotland’s public services will treat everyone with respect and dignity, and the public will treat staff providing those services in the same way. The Service will be an exemplar of this approach.

²³ Ibid.

Individuals can expect to be treated with dignity and respect through each step of their journey into work.

Value 2: Fairness and Equality

Our approach to employment support will not be driven solely by a need to reduce the Welfare Bill and focus on those with the best prospects of moving into work. Instead we will aim to contribute to a broader range of economic and social outcomes by supporting those furthest from the labour market. Customers of the Service will reflect this core value.

Value 3: Continuous Improvement

In the first instance, our priority will be to ensure a smooth transition from existing UK services to our new Scottish arrangements.

Scottish Government policies, processes and systems will evolve in response to individual, employer and community need across Scotland. The Scottish Government will ensure that they remain fit for purpose through close engagement with stakeholders and Service users alike.

Our Principles

We are developing a Scottish approach based on the principles of:

- Delivery of a flexible ‘whole person’ approach;
- Services that are responsive to those with high needs;
- A drive towards real jobs;
- Services designed and delivered in partnership;
- Services designed nationally but adapted and delivered locally; and
- Contracts that combine payment by job outcome and progression towards work.



Transition in 2017

Scottish Ministers agreed a 1 year transition from April 2017. The focus was continuity in support for those who are unemployed with significant barriers to work, while building towards a Scottish programme of support from April 2018. Further information on WFS and WAS services, including evaluation reports, is available on the Employability in Scotland website: <http://www.employabilityinscotland.com/>

Fair Start Scotland

The Scottish programme of support (Fair Start Scotland)²⁴ replaced the transitional arrangements from 3 April 2018. The service focuses on helping people with disabilities and those most disadvantaged in the labour market to move into and sustain fair work.

Eligibility and early entry groups

Through delivery of the FSS service, the Scottish Government is looking to support a minimum of 38,000 Customers' over 3 years of referrals. These Customers must be in receipt of a reserved UK out of work benefit, unless they are disabled, and will be either:

- aged 18 years old and over, out of work and living in Scotland; or
- aged 16 or 17 years old and are either disabled or in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance.

The Service aims to support individuals who:

- have a disability or additional support need (with disability as defined in the Equality Act 2010).
- have been unemployed for a long time (those reaching 2 years on Job Seekers Allowance/ Universal Credit equivalent).
- are currently in the Employment and Support Allowance Work Related Activity Group.
- have caring responsibilities
- are a single parent
- are a care leaver
- are from a minority ethnic community
- are a refugee
- are a person with a conviction
- live in the 15% most deprived Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) areas.
- have a health problem which presents a barrier to employment.

²⁴ Further information on Fair Start Scotland services and Providers is available here: <http://www.employabilityinscotland.com/>

Appendix 2: Fair Start Scotland Service Providers and Contract Areas

On 4 October 2017 the Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills, Jamie Hepburn MSP, announced the award of Contracts up to £96 million to deliver Fair Start Scotland, to be delivered by a mixed economy of public, private and third sector suppliers in 9 Contract Areas across Scotland, as set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: FSS Service Providers and supply chain by contract area and local authority area (current at time of research fieldwork Nov-Dec 2018).				
Contract area	Local authority	Successful Bidder	Delivery Partners/Sub Contracted	Estimated Value (up to £ million)
1 - Glasgow	Glasgow	People Plus Group Ltd (Private)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remploy (Supported Business) • Momentum (Third Sector) • The Lennox Partnership (Third Sector) 	19.1
2 - Lanarkshire	N Lanarkshire S Lanarkshire	Remploy Limited (Supported Business)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENABLE Scotland (Third Sector) • Routes to Work South (Third Sector) 	12.6
3 - Tayside	Angus Dundee City Perth and Kinross	Remploy Limited (Supported Business)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rathbone (Third Sector) 	7.3
4 - Forth Valley	Falkirk Stirling Clackmannanshire	Falkirk Council (Public Sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falkirk Council (Public Sector) • Clackmannanshire Council (Public Sector) • Stirling Council (Public Sector) • NHS Forth Valley (Public Sector) 	5.0
5 - East	City of Edinburgh East Lothian Midlothian Scottish Borders West Lothian Fife	Start Scotland Limited (Private and Third Sector Partnership)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Momentum (Third Sector) • Triage (Private) • Working Links* (Private) 	21.3
6 - Southwest	North Ayrshire South Ayrshire East Ayrshire Dumfries and Galloway	Start Scotland Limited (Private and Third Sector Partnership)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Links* (Private) • Rathbone (Third Sector) • The Lennox Partnership (Third Sector) • The Wise Group (Third Sector) 	10.1
7 - Northeast	Aberdeen City Aberdeenshire	Momentum Scotland (Third Sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Skills Centres Limited (Private) • ENABLE Scotland (Third Sector) • Aberdeen Foyer (Third Sector) 	5.6

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish Association for Mental Health (Third Sector) • Enterprise Mentoring Ltd (Private) 	
8 - Highlands and Islands	Argyll and Bute Eilean Siar Highland Moray Orkney Islands Shetland Islands	People Plus Ltd (Private)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argyll and Bute Council (Public Sector) • Life Skills Centres Ltd (Private) • Lochaber Hope (Third Sector) • Momentum Scotland (Third Sector) • Third Sector Hebrides (Third Sector) • 2020 Clearview Ltd (Private) 	6.2
9 - West	E Renfrewshire Renfrewshire E Dunbartonshire W Dunbartonshire Inverclyde	The Wise Group (Third Sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lennox Partnership (Third Sector) • Working Links* (Private) • ENABLE Scotland (Third Sector) • Royal National Institute for the Blind (Third Sector) 	8.8

(*Working Links went into liquidation in February 2019 and their share of the Start Scotland contract was taken over by FedCap (third sector) in March 2019).

Appendix 3: FSS Evaluation Plan

The Scottish Government is committed to providing a robust, independent evaluation of the delivery process and outcomes of Fair Start Scotland services. All findings will contribute to our understanding of what works in employment support for individuals and to the continuous improvement of policy and service delivery. Scottish Government will also use these findings to help ensure accountability and value for money from the procurement and management of future services from 2021 onwards.

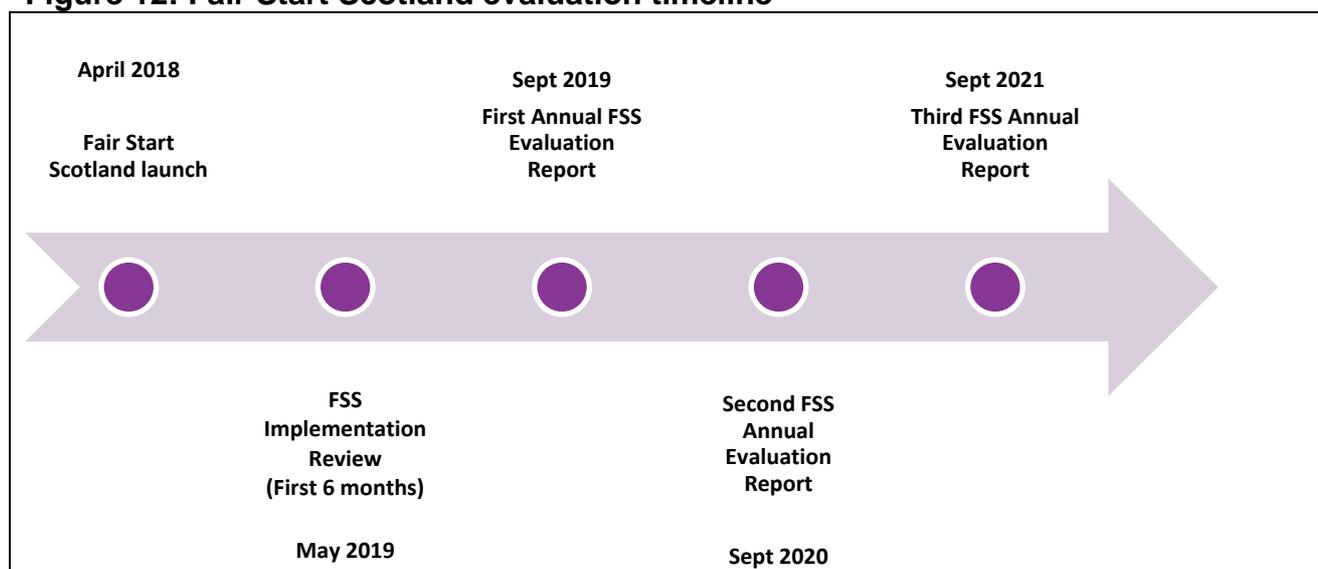
The evaluation will be undertaken by independent research contractors, following a mixed methods approach delivered over three phases (Figure 11):

Figure 11: FSS Evaluation Phases

Phase	Focus	Time period
Phase 1	Implementation and early delivery review	First 6 months of service delivery April – Sept 2018
Phase 2	Ongoing service delivery and participant outcomes	Annual reports covering each full year of service delivery to March 2021
Phase 3	Long term outcomes and impact measures	Final report on impacts up to 18 months after initial delivery ends (Sept 2022).

The Scottish Government will publish a series of reports on the evaluation findings, following the timeline in Figure 12 below.

Figure 12: Fair Start Scotland evaluation timeline



Appendix 4: Evaluation methods used in this report

Stakeholder interviews and online surveys

Rocket Science UK Ltd was commissioned by the Scottish Government to gather stakeholder feedback on the implementation and early delivery of FSS. Interviews took place in November and December 2018, while surveys ran from December 2018 to February 2019.

The work had three components:

- A total of 26 in depth interviews with Service Providers (12 interviews), Scottish Government staff (six interviews) and DWP staff (eight interviews);
- An online survey of Service Provider front line staff across the nine contract areas which attracted 171 responses (approx. 50% of all FSS frontline adviser staff); and
- An online survey of JCP Work Coaches which attracted 90 responses.

Participant focus groups

Ten focus groups took place across Scotland in November 2018, conducted by Scottish Government analysts.

Sample:

Participants in these focus groups were recruited directly by Service Providers, and do not therefore represent the experience of all participants of FSS. Participants in the groups were those who: 1. were engaged with the service; 2. were engaged enough with the service for Service Providers to consider them to participate in the research; and 3. were engaged and confident enough to attend the focus group on the day.

Locations & accessibility:

One focus group was held in each of the nine Lots (with the exception of Glasgow where large numbers of participants led to two groups being conducted concurrently). However, due the size of some of the larger lots, it was also made clear that if potential participants were not able to attend a focus group in person, but still wanted to contribute to the research, that a telephone interview could be arranged. All focus groups were held in locations that were both accessible in terms of public transport, as well as accessible in terms of building access.

Delivery & outputs:

In total, 78 participants took part in the focus groups, with a further 7 taking part in telephone interviews, taking the total number of FSS participants who were directly engaged in this stage of the evaluation to 85.

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this social research publication:

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- are available via an alternative route
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact Kirstie.Corbett@gov.scot for further information.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.



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This document is also available from our website at www.gov.scot.
ISBN: 978-1-78781-930-6

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Produced for
the Scottish Government
by APS Group Scotland
PPDAS597150 (06/19)
Published by
the Scottish Government,
June 2019



Social Research series
ISSN 2045-6964
ISBN 978-1-78781-930-6

Web and Print Publication
www.gov.scot/socialresearch

PPDAS597150 (06/19)